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**Why and when workplace ostracism inhibits organizational citizenship behaviors:  
An organizational identification perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Why and when do employees respond to workplace ostracism by withholding their engagement in citizenship behavior? Beyond perspectives proposed in past studies, we offer a new account based on a social identity perspective and propose that workplace ostracism decreases citizenship behavior by undermining employees' identification with the organization. We also theorize that perceived job mobility influences the extent to which employees identify with the organization when being ostracized. These hypotheses were examined in two time-lagged studies conducted in China. The proposed hypotheses were supported by results in Study 1, and findings were generally replicated in Study 2, where effects of other known mediators (i.e., organization-based self-esteem, job engagement, and felt obligation towards the organization) and moderators (i.e., collectivism, power distance, and future orientation) suggested by previous perspectives were controlled. Results of Study 2 provided further support of the hypothesized directional effect of workplace ostracism on citizenship behavior via organizational identification. Our studies support the identification perspective in understanding workplace ostracism and also strengthen the application of this perspective in understanding workplace aggression broadly.

**Keywords:** Workplace ostracism, organizational identification, citizenship behavior, job mobility

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Workplace ostracism, defined as “the extent to which an individual perceives that he or she is ignored or excluded by others” in the workplace (Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008, p. 1348), is prevalent in organizations (Williams, 2007). Workplace ostracism as a type of interpersonal mistreatment has been found to bring negative consequences on employees’ attitudes toward work, such as lower job satisfaction, higher turnover intention (e.g., Ferris et al., 2008), and reduced personal well-being, such as emotional exhaustion and psychological distress (Ferris et al., 2008; Wu, Yim, Kwan, & Zhang, 2012). Because of the negative attitudinal impact, workplace ostracism can be detrimental to organizational effectiveness, as ostracized employees may reduce their engagement in citizenship behavior that can benefit others individually or the organization collectively (e.g., Ferris, Lian, Brown, & Morrison, 2015). Nevertheless, experimental studies suggest that workplace ostracism can increase employees’ prosocial behavior to benefit others and the work group, for the sake of being accepted (e.g., Derfler-Rozin, Pillutla, & Thau, 2010; Williams & Sommer, 1997). These inconsistent findings suggest the need to delve more deeply into why and when workplace ostracism affects employees’ citizenship behavior.

To date, several perspectives have been applied to unpack the association between workplace ostracism and employees’ citizenship and work behavior. Drawing from the self-esteem threat perspective, Ferris et al. (2015) theorized and found that when ostracized, employees showed lower self-esteem and engaged less in citizenship behavior in order to be consistent with their deficient self-views. Following a resources depletion perspective, Leung, Wu, Chen, and Young (2011) reported that being ostracized depletes employees’ regulatory resources and leads to a lower level of engagement at work, and thus less citizenship behavior. In addition, a social exchange perspective suggests that being ostracized will decrease employees’ felt obligation to benefit others at work or the organization (Balliet & Ferris, 2013; Zellars &

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Tepper, 2003). Recently, Balliet and Ferris (2013), using a social dilemma perspective, proposed that ostracized employees will consider whether they want to incur a short-term cost and still treat others nicely in order to receive a longer-term benefit. They found that those who were less oriented towards future outcomes were less likely to engage in interpersonal prosocial behavior when ostracized.

Although these perspectives provide diverse views, they ignore that individuals can view the organization as part of their self-conceptions through social identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Tajfel, 1978) and thereby possess an intrinsic reason to perform citizenship behavior. As indicated by Ellemers, Gilder, and Haslam (2004, p. 461), “a self-conception in collective terms would *energize* people to exert themselves on behalf of the group, facilitate the *direction* of efforts toward collective (instead of individual) outcomes, and help workers *sustain* their loyalty to the team or organization through times in which this is not individually rewarding.” The potential impact of workplace ostracism on an individual’s self-conception, in terms of the relationship between one’s self and the organization and its subsequent impact on citizenship behavior has not been explored.

The aim of this study is to explain the association between workplace ostracism and citizenship behavior based on a social identification perspective. We focus on the mediating role of organizational identification, the “perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization, where the individual defines him or herself in terms of the organization(s) in which he or she is a member” (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 104). As suggested by social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), when individuals are not satisfied with their condition of being in a social group, such as being ostracized, they are more likely to leave the social group when they “feel they have attractive employment alternatives” (or higher perceived job mobility) (Tepper, 2000, p. 179)

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than those who do not. Employees who feel capable of finding comparable jobs in other organizations can satisfy their belongingness need elsewhere when ostracized, which directs their attention away from the current work and thus decreases their identification with the organization and their engagement in citizenship behavior. Consistent with our reasoning, Smart Richman and Leary (2009, p. 370) also suggest that when an individual is ostracized, “the possibility of other ...work options...motivates a response to disengage from the current relationship in order to pursue others.” In contrast, the negative impact of workplace ostracism on organizational identification and thus citizenship behavior will be weaker for employees with low perceived job mobility because these employees are less capable of finding alternatives to satisfy their belongingness need.

Our investigation contributes to the workplace ostracism literature in four major aspects. First, we offer an alternative perspective (i.e., social identification perspective) to understand how workplace ostracism can influence employees’ citizenship behavior. Second, examining the moderating effect of perceived job mobility helps to understand when employees will engage in more or less citizenship behavior when ostracized, via an identification mechanism. Ostracism has been found to motivate individuals to engage in prosocial behavior to benefit others and the work group in some studies (e.g., Derfler-Rozin et al., 2010; Williams & Sommer, 1997), but it was negatively related to citizenship behavior in other studies (e.g., Ferris et al., 2008; Ferris et al., 2015). The moderating role of perceived job mobility provides a different account from previous research (e.g., Balliet & Ferris, 2013) to explain inconsistent findings on the association between ostracism and citizenship behavior.

Third, following Chiaburu, Oh, Berry, Li, and Gardner (2011), we examine both affiliative- and change-oriented citizenship behavior. Previous studies on workplace ostracism

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have examined its effect on affiliative citizenship behavior, such as individual-directed citizenship behavior (OCBI; i.e., actions aiming to benefit work colleagues) and organization-directed citizenship behavior (OCBO; i.e., actions aiming to benefit the organization as a whole) (Williams & Anderson, 1991), but have not yet examined its effect on change-oriented citizenship behavior or actions aiming to identify and implement changes in order to improve work effectiveness (Choi, 2007). Workplace ostracism will be detrimental to these three forms of citizenship behavior via the identification mechanism, as employees who do not identify with their organizations will not devote effort to benefit their colleagues and the organization as a whole. Including both affiliative- and change-oriented citizenship behavior in our examination thus strengthens the value of using an identification perspective to understand the link between workplace ostracism and the three different forms of citizenship behavior.

Finally, our investigation also contributes to the workplace aggression literature broadly by underpinning an identification perspective to understand workplace aggression. The identification perspective has been used to explain the link between abusive supervision and employees' ethical intentions and behaviors (Hannah et al., 2013) and the link between workplace bullying and job satisfaction (Loh, Restubog, & Zagenczyk, 2010). Our study strengthens the identification perspective by focusing on a different workplace aggression construct (i.e., workplace ostracism) and a different behavioral outcome (i.e., citizenship behavior) while examining its boundary conditions (i.e., perceived job mobility). Our investigation helps establish a theoretical framework to understand the consequences of workplace aggression broadly. Figure 1 presents our research model.

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## Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

### Workplace Ostracism and Citizenship Behavior: The Mediating Role of Organizational Identification

Organizational identification is a prominent type of social identification and often comprises a major component of an individual's self-concept and identity. Several principles are related to this conceptualization. First, organizational identification involves cognitive (i.e., I am A; self-definition), evaluative (i.e., I value A; importance), and affective (i.e., I feel about A; affect) components (Ashforth, Harrison, & Cor, 2008, Figure 1) that jointly denote the perception of oneness or belongingness to an organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). This characteristic of organizational identification was suggested in social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63), which defines social identity as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership." Second, organizational identification is a relational and a comparative concept because it defines the individual relative to individuals in other organizations. Third, organizational identification is organization specific and is different from other types of social identification, such as occupational identification and union identification, which are not specific to any one organization. Finally, although organizational classifications tend to be categorical in nature (my organization vs. other organizations), the intensity of organizational identification is a matter of degree (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

We argue that workplace ostracism undermines employee organizational identification for several reasons. First, organizational identification easily develops when employees perceive high similarity between themselves and their organizations in values and attitudes (Ashforth &

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Mael, 1989). In essence, employees become attached to their organizations by integrating perceived attributes of the organization into their own self-concept (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). However, workplace ostracism signals a differentiation between the ostracized target and others in the workplace and thus mitigates the sense of similarity and organizational identification.

Second, people tend to form a group identity to fulfill the need of belongingness (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In line with this conceptualization, organizational identity serves to fulfill the belongingness need (Wiesenfeld, Raghuram, & Garud, 2001). Workplace ostracism, as a harsh and unpleasant organizational experience, threatens the target employee's sense of belonging because ostracism is often perceived as a punishment (Ferris et al., 2008; Williams, 2007). Workplace ostracism conveys implicit information to the ostracized target that he or she has done something unacceptable and symbolizes social death in the organization (Ferris et al., 2008). It deprives the targeted employee of a sense of meaningful existence by reminding him or her of the fragility of life and by implying that he or she is unworthy of attention (Ferris et al., 2008; Williams, 2007). Accordingly, being ostracized by others may lessen employees' sense of belongingness and their identification with the organization.

Third, employees are more likely to identify with their organization when they have respect and appreciation in the organization (Fuller et al., 2006). Workplace ostracism is likely to undermine an employee's judgment of his or her own value in the organization and lead to lower levels of organizational identification (Fuller et al., 2006; Tyler & Blader, 2003). When employees perceive that the organization and its representatives (such as managers, or senior colleagues) care about their well-being and value their contributions, they are likely to perceive themselves as insiders, which fosters identification with the organization (Fuller et al., 2006; Stamper & Masterson, 2002; Tyler & Blader, 2003). In contrast, if the organization and its



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representatives have little concern, do not care about employees' well-being and/or do not value their contributions, the employees are likely to doubt their value in the organization. In this situation, the ostracized employees are likely to reduce their identification with the organization.

Organizational identification, in turn, can facilitate three forms of citizenship behavior (e.g., individual-directed, organizational-directed, and change-oriented citizenship behavior) because employees with high levels of organizational identification tend to feel psychologically intertwined with their organization (Ellemers et al., 2004) and have a higher sense of shared fate with the organization and those belonging to it (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). This identification motivates employees to devote more effort to benefit their colleagues and the organization as a whole. In contrast, lower levels of organizational identification often make employees feel psychologically separated from the fate of their organizations and decrease their motivation to take extra effort to benefit the organization and others within it. Empirical evidence indicates that organizational identification is positively related to the three different forms of citizenship behavior (e.g., Dick, Grojean, Christ, & Wieseke, 2006; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). Based on above reasoning, we propose that workplace ostracism will have a negative association with citizenship behavior via the mediation effect of organizational identification. As such, we propose:

*H1: Organizational identification mediates the negative relationship between workplace ostracism and citizenship behavior.*

### **The Moderating Role of Job Mobility in the Association between Workplace Ostracism and Organizational Identification**

We further propose that higher job mobility will strengthen the negative impact of workplace ostracism on organizational identification. Job mobility reflects an employee's

assessment of his or her own marketability and employability (Tepper, 2000). When job mobility is high, employees view themselves as highly marketable and employable elsewhere (Ng & Feldman, 2012). Because of the ease with which an employee can find another “home” or belong to another organization, those with higher job mobility will have more choices to pursue identification with other organizations. Therefore, when these employees are ostracized in their organizations, they are more likely to emphasize the differences in values between them and the organizations, leading to lower organizational identification. Such emphasis will be weaker for those with lower job mobility because they have more difficulty finding other organizations with which to identify.

In addition, people with higher job mobility who are ostracized can fulfill the need for belonging and regain status loss at other organizations. Because people can develop multiple identities to different social entities (Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), those with higher job mobility have more opportunities to fulfill their belongingness need by identifying with organizations that treat or include them as organizational members. Accordingly, when ostracized, people with higher job mobility will decrease their willingness to belong in that specific organization, which may result in lower organizational identification. In contrast, people with lower job mobility have trouble finding another place to fulfill their need to belong. The organizational identification of these low mobility ostracized employees will not be dampened as strongly as will those with higher job mobility.

Finally, given their higher external market value, high job mobility employees are likely to expect favorable treatment by their organizations. Failure to do so would increase their likelihood of leaving the organization. As an aversive interpersonal mistreatment, workplace ostracism of high job mobility employees breaks this favorable treatment expectation because

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ostracism often conveys the implicit information to the target employees that they have little value in the organization and do not deserve to be respected (Ferris et al., 2008; Williams, 2007). In contrast, employees who are lower in job mobility have low external market value, so they are less likely to expect favorable treatment by their organizations. Therefore, organizational mistreatment will not be as detrimental to their organizational identification as those who have higher job mobility. All these reasons suggest that workplace ostracism will have a stronger negative association with organizational identification when one's job mobility is higher. Thus, we propose the following:

*H2: Job mobility moderates the relationship between workplace ostracism and organizational identification, such that the negative relationship is stronger when employees are higher in job mobility.*

Overall, we propose that workplace ostracism will evoke a psychological mechanism to de-identify with the organization and thus prevent ostracized employees from engaging in citizenship behavior. We suggest that this psychological impact is more prominent for those with higher job mobility because they have more chances to leave the organization than those with lower job mobility. Our proposed model represents a first-stage moderated mediation model. To examine the moderated mediation effect implied in the model, we propose a formal hypothesis:

*H3: Job mobility moderates the mediation effect of organizational identification on the relationship between workplace ostracism and citizenship behavior, such that the mediation effect is stronger when employees are higher in job mobility.*

### **The Present Studies**

We conducted two time-lagged studies to examine our hypotheses. In Study 1, we first established the proposed moderated-mediation process from workplace ostracism to citizenship

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behavior. In Study 2, we examined whether our proposed mechanism could provide an additional account of the association between workplace ostracism and citizenship behavior by controlling other mediating and moderating effects identified in previous studies. We also controlled for the cultural context effects of power distance and collectivism when examining the moderating role of job mobility. In order to establish the directional association between workplace ostracism to citizenship behavior, we also examined the cross-lagged effects between workplace ostracism to citizenship behavior in Study 2. These two studies together provide a solid platform on which to examine our hypotheses.

As organizational identification reflects the extent to which one includes the organization in one's self-concept and "is more than just considering oneself a member of an organization [situated identification]" (Ashforth et al., 2008, p. 332), organizational identification is a deep structure identification, or a self-schema that incorporates the organization into one's self, which will not change easily and immediately as environment changes (Rousseau, 1998). Accordingly, in order to observe the negative impact of workplace ostracism on organizational identification and then citizenship behavior, we conducted our first study with a six-month time lag, which has been applied to examine the consequence of workplace ostracism (e.g., Liu, Kwan, Lee, & Hui, 2013) or workplace mistreatment (e.g., Lian, Ferris, Morrison, & Brown, 2014; Tepper, 2000). Because "no one time lag by itself can give a complete understanding of a variable's effects" (Gollob & Reichardt, 1987, p. 82), and several studies have found that workplace ostracism and workplace mistreatment can predict psychological consequences with a two- to three-month lag (e.g., Leung et al., 2011; Sakurai & Jex, 2012), we used a different time frame in Study 2 (10 weeks) to explore the role of time in shaping the identification mechanism.

## **Study 1**

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## Method

### *Participants and Procedure*

We tested our hypotheses using multisource data collected from two large oil and gas companies in China. Participants were technical or administrative employees and their supervisors. We collected our data in three separate waves to reduce impact of common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In the first wave survey (Wave 1), employees were asked to provide information on their demographics (e.g., age, gender, and education), workplace ostracism, job mobility, and ratings on a control variable (i.e., proactive personality). Six months later (Wave 2) employees were asked to provide information on their organizational identification and a control variable (i.e., general self-efficacy). Finally, six months after Wave 2 (Wave 3), supervisors evaluated employees' citizenship behavior.

With the assistance of the human resource managers from the two companies, we prepared a randomly selected list of 732 employees and 244 supervisors (one supervisor rated three subordinates, and these subordinates were randomly selected by the researchers rather than by the supervisors). The participation of employees and supervisors was voluntary. All participants were informed that the purpose of the survey was to examine human resource practices and assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

During the first wave of data collection, we distributed 732 questionnaires to the focal employees. We received 618 valid employee questionnaires, for a response rate of 84.42%. Six months later, we distributed questionnaires to the 618 employees who completed the first wave and received 433 responses, for a response rate of 70.06%. Finally, in Wave 3, we distributed 201 questionnaires to the supervisors of the 433 employees and received 282 usable questionnaires from 150 supervisors, for a response rate of 82.87%. The final sample consisted of 282

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employees and 150 supervisors. Of the 282 employees, 58.2% percent were men. In terms of age, 19.9% were aged 29 or below, 51.4% were between 30 and 39 years of age, 20.9% were between 40 and 49 years of age, and 7.8% were aged 50 or above. Regarding education, 30.1% finished high school, 38.0% held junior college degrees, and 31.9% held bachelor or above degrees.

To examine attrition effect, we compared three subject groups: group 1 completed all three waves ( $n = 282$ ), group 2 completed the first two waves but not the third ( $n = 151$ ), and group 3 completed the first wave only ( $n = 185$ ), and found they were not different in terms of gender, tenure, and education. The three groups did not have different levels of workplace ostracism at Wave 1.

### ***Measurement***

We created Chinese versions for all measures following the commonly used translation–back translation procedure (Brislin, 1970). All measures use the same response scale, ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

*Workplace ostracism.* A ten-item scale developed by Ferris et al. (2008) was used. A sample item was: “Others avoided me at work.” Cronbach’s alpha was .90.

*Job mobility.* We measured job mobility using three items from Tepper (2000). A sample item was: “I would have no problem finding an acceptable job if I quit.” Cronbach’s alpha was .80.

*Organizational identification.* The six-item scale developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992) was used. This scale contains items referring to cognitive (i.e., When I talk about my organization, I usually say “we” rather than “they”), evaluative (i.e., My organization’s successes are my successes) and affective (i.e., When someone criticizes my organization, it feels like a personal insult) components of organizational identification. Cronbach’s alpha was .83.

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*Citizenship behavior.* Following Chiaburu et al. (2011), we measured citizenship behavior with three dimensions: individual-directed, organization-directed, and change-oriented. Individual-directed citizenship behavior (e.g., “Helps others who have been absent”) and organizationally-directed citizenship behavior (e.g., “Conserves and protects organizational property”) were measured using items reported by Williams and Anderson (1991). Each concept was measured by seven items. Change-oriented citizenship was measured using the eight items for proactive behavior reported by Parker, Williams, and Turner (2006) (e.g., “suggests ideas for improvements to manager, supervisor, or others”). This measure focuses on proactive idea implementation and proactive problem solving, specifically. Although the measure was developed to fit the research context in Parker et al. (2006), most of the items they used are generic and can be applied to different contexts. We revised items referring to their specific context (such as reject levels, supplier and wire/rod) to fit our context. For example, the item “Trying to figure out why reject levels are increasing” was revised as “Trying to figure out why problems occurred.” The item “Informing the supplier about the problem” was revised as “Informing relevant departments when observing problems.” The item “Trying to find out why the wire/rods are of poor quality” was revised as “Trying to find out why the work is of poor quality.” Cronbach’s alphas for these three citizenship measures were .93, .91 and .94, respectively.

*Control variables.* We controlled for organization effect and employees’ age, gender, and education because of their potential effects on employee behavior (e.g., Ng & Feldman, 2008). We created a dummy variable to represent the two organizations in our sample. Age was self-reported in years. Gender was dummy-coded with male respondents coded as “0” and female respondents coded as “1.” Education was coded as “1” for employees who finished high school or below, “2” for employees who held junior college degrees, and “3” for employees who held

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bachelor degrees or higher. To recognize that employees have different tendencies and perceived capabilities of performing citizenship behavior, we controlled for employees' proactive personality (Bateman & Crant, 1993) and general self-efficacy (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001), both of which are not shaped by workplace ostracism. Research has found that proactive personality (e.g., Li, Liang, & Crant, 2010) and self-efficacy (e.g., Walumbwa, Hartnell, & Oke, 2010) predict citizenship behavior. For assessing proactive personality, we used four items with the highest factor loadings in Bateman and Crant's (1993) report, which has been used in prior research (e.g., Wu, Parker, & de Jong, 2014). Cronbach's alpha for this measure was .84. We used an eight-item scale (Chen et al., 2001) to measure general self-efficacy. A sample item was: "I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks." Cronbach's alpha was .82.

## **Results**

### ***Confirmatory Factor Analyses***

We examined the hypothesized measurement model with eight factors—namely, proactive personality, general self-efficacy, workplace ostracism, job mobility, organizational identification, and three forms of citizenship behavior. This model fits well ( $\chi^2(1297) = 1959.47$ , CFI = .92, TLI = .91; RMSEA = .043; SRMR = .047). All factor loadings were significant. This model is better than alternative models, including a single-factor model ( $\chi^2(1325) = 6922.91$ , CFI = .29, TLI = .26; RMSEA = .123; SRMR = .140); a two-factor model in which items rated by employees and citizenship items rated by supervisors were influenced by two factors ( $\chi^2(1324) = 6016.93$ , CFI = .41, TLI = .38; RMSEA = .112; SRMR = .132); a four-factor model in which items rated by employees were influenced by one factor and citizenship items rated by supervisors were influenced by three factors ( $\chi^2(1319) = 3751.26$ , CFI = .69, TLI = .68; RMSEA = .081; SRMR = .103); and a six-factor model in which items rated by employees were



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influenced by their posited factors and citizenship items rated by supervisors were influenced by one factor only ( $\chi^2(1310) = 4241.02$ , CFI = .63, TLI = .61; RMSEA = .089; SRMR = .094). These findings support discriminant validity of the research variables.

### ***Hypothesis Testing***

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations of variables. We examined our hypotheses with the nested-equation path analytic approach (Edwards & Lambert, 2007; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007) in Mplus 7.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 2012). To deal with the non-independence data due to the nested structure of performance ratings (i.e., 150 supervisors rated 282 subordinates), we used a design-based modeling approach that “takes the multilevel data or dependency into account by adjusting for parameter estimate standard errors based on the sampling design” (Wu & Kwok, 2012, p.17) (TYPE = COMPLEX, ESTIMATOR = MLR in Mplus). This design-based modeling approach is appropriate for our research because it handles non-independence data structures when mechanisms at a single level (i.e., employee level in this study) are examined (Wu & Kwok, 2012). We estimated two path models with the composite scores of our research variables. In the first model, we consider only mediating effects. In the second model, we additionally take moderating effects into account, which thus provides a comprehensive test of our hypotheses.

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In the first model, where mediating effects were considered, both the direct effects and indirect effects of workplace ostracism via organizational identification on the three forms of citizenship behavior were specified. As for control variables, we also specified direct effects of

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company, age, gender, education, proactive personality, and general self-efficacy on organizational identification and the three behavioral outcomes. Because this is a saturated model, it has a perfect fit with zero degrees of freedom ( $MLR-\chi^2(0) = 0$ ,  $CFI = 1.00$ ,  $TLI = 1.00$ ;  $RMSEA = .00$ ;  $SRMR = .00$ ). Results showed that workplace ostracism was negatively related to organizational identification ( $B = -.27$ ,  $S. E. = .07$ ,  $p < .01$ ), which was positively related to individual-directed ( $B = .18$ ,  $S. E. = .06$ ,  $p < .01$ ), organization-directed ( $B = .16$ ,  $S. E. = .05$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and change-oriented citizenship ( $B = .26$ ,  $S. E. = .06$ ,  $p < .01$ ). We estimated indirect effects and their 95% confidence intervals based on a distribution-of-the-product method implemented in the RMediation program (Tofiqhi & MacKinnon, 2011). MacKinnon, Lockwood, and Williams (2004) and Pituch, Whittaker, and Stapleton (2005) have provided evidence to show that the distribution-of-the-product method was more accurate than other methods in constructing confidence limits of an indirect effect. Results show that organizational identification had significant mediation effects on the links of workplace ostracism with individual-directed (indirect effect =  $-.049$ ,  $S. E. = .022$ , 95% C.I. =  $-.097$  to  $-.013$ ), organization-directed (indirect effect =  $-.044$ ,  $S. E. = .018$ , 95% C.I. =  $-.084$  to  $-.013$ ), and change-oriented citizenship (indirect effect =  $-.069$ ,  $S. E. = .025$ , 95% C.I. =  $-.123$  to  $-.027$ ). Overall, H1 is supported.

Next, in the second model (see unstandardized estimates in Table 2), we additionally included job mobility as a moderator and introduced an interaction effect between workplace ostracism and job mobility to predict organizational identification. The rest of specification in the model is exactly the same as that in the first model. The model fit well ( $MLR-\chi^2(6) = 5.05$ ,  $CFI = 1.00$ ,  $TLI = 1.00$ ;  $RMSEA = .00$ ;  $SRMR = .013$ ). In order to ensure that the model with an interaction effect was better than the model without it, we compared the second model with a model that constrained the interaction effect as 0 ( $MLR-\chi^2(7) = 10.58$ ,  $CFI = .98$ ,  $TLI = .88$ ;

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RMSEA = .043; SRMR = .019). The result of a Chi-square difference test was significant ( $\Delta\text{MLR-}\chi^2 = 5.53, df = 1, p < .01$ ), suggesting that the model with an interaction effect was better. Table 2 presents unstandardized estimates of the model. In this model, we found a negative interaction effect between workplace ostracism and job mobility in predicting organizational identification ( $B = -.15, S. E. = .07, p < .05$ ). Figure 2 displays the interaction plot based on values plus and minus one standard deviation from the means of the moderating variable (i.e., job mobility) (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). The plot shows that workplace ostracism had a negative association with organizational identification when job mobility was high (simple slope =  $-.41, S. E. = .10, p < .01$ ), but this association was not significant when job mobility was low (simple slope =  $-.13, S. E. = .10, n.s.$ ), supporting H2.

We then calculated the conditional mediation effect of organizational identification at different levels of job mobility. Specifically, the indirect effect of workplace ostracism on three forms of citizenship behavior through organizational identification was stronger when job mobility was high (conditional indirect effect =  $-.075, S. E. = .031, 95\% \text{ C.I.} = -.143 \text{ to } -.021$  for individual-directed citizenship behavior;  $-.067, S. E. = .026, 95\% \text{ C.I.} = -.125 \text{ to } -.023$  for organizational-directed citizenship behavior;  $-.106, S. E. = .035, 95\% \text{ C.I.} = -.180 \text{ to } -.046$  for change-directed citizenship behavior) than when job mobility was low (conditional indirect effect =  $-.023, S. E. = .020, 95\% \text{ C.I.} = -.068 \text{ to } .010$  for individual-directed citizenship behavior;  $-.021, S. E. = .017, 95\% \text{ C.I.} = -.060 \text{ to } .009$  for organizational-directed citizenship behavior;  $-.033, S. E. = .026, 95\% \text{ C.I.} = -.088 \text{ to } .014$  for change-directed citizenship behavior), supporting H3. We also examined alternative moderated-mediation models and found that job mobility did not moderate the effect of organizational identification on different forms of citizenship behavior. Finally, our hypotheses were supported without including control variables in the model.<sup>1</sup>

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Insert Table 2 and Figure 2 Here  
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## **Discussion**

Results of this study support using an identification perspective to understand the association between workplace ostracism and citizenship behavior. We found that being ostracized can mitigate employees' organizational identification and thus citizenship behavior, when employees believe that they have employment alternatives. Despite the supportive findings, there are several limitations, and these limitations will be addressed in Study 2.

First, we did not examine whether the identification mechanism makes a unique contribution relative to mechanisms that have been identified. To address this concern, in Study 2 we included three additional mediators, organization-based self-esteem, job engagement, and felt obligation towards the organization, which respectively represent mechanisms derived from perspectives of self-esteem threat, resources depletion, and social exchange.

Second, although we suggest a directional association from workplace ostracism to citizenship behavior, our design cannot provide a cogent examination. A better way to unpack the directional association between workplace ostracism and citizenship behavior is to control for prior citizenship behavior and examine the time-lagged effect of citizenship behavior on workplace ostracism at the same time, which is implemented in Study 2.

Third, because our sample is from China, our findings may be influenced by Chinese cultural values such as collectivism and power distance dimensions that may influence workplace aggression and its effects (Loh et al., 2010; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007; Samnani & Singh, 2012). For example, employees high in collectivism may be more aversive to ostracism, as

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it challenges their values of being a member in a collective entity. In contrast, Loh et al. (2010) proposed that employees embracing the value of power distance may be less aversive to ostracism because they are more tolerant to interpersonal mistreatment from authorities such as supervisors or senior colleagues in the workplace. Although this notion received support in the Loh et al. cross-cultural comparison study, the moderating effect of power distance was not empirically examined, so its effect remains unknown. In Study 2, we included collectivism and power distance as additional moderators to control for the potential culture effects.

Finally, relating to the moderating effect as well, following a social dilemma perspective proposed by Balliet and Ferris (2013), it could be argued that employees who are more concerned about their future will be less influenced by the negative impact of ostracism on organizational identification, as they may focus on the long-term benefit of staying in the organization where they are ostracized. That is, employees' future orientation could moderate the link between workplace ostracism and organizational identification based on the social dilemma perspective. If this speculation is supported, our proposed identification mechanism can be understood from a social dilemma perspective. As such, to fully examine the unique role of the identification perspective beyond the social dilemma perspective, we also have included future orientation as an additional moderator in Study 2. Overall, we have strengthened our research design in Study 2 by providing a more conclusive examination for our hypotheses.

## **Study 2**

### **Method**

#### ***Participants and Procedure***

Participants were technical or administrative employees and their supervisors recruited from an offshore oil and gas producer in China. Similar to Study 1, we collected our data in three

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separate waves. In Wave 1, an author and his team visited the company and collected the employee data in person. A total of 385 employees randomly selected on site were asked to provide information of their demographics (e.g., age, gender, and education), workplace ostracism, job mobility, and other moderating variables (i.e., collectivism, power distance, and future orientation). A total of 371 useful responses were received (response rate was 96.36%). At the same time, direct supervisors were asked to evaluate employees' three forms of citizenship behavior in the last month. Supervisors returned their completed surveys in anonymous envelopes to the human resources department, which then returned the surveys to the researchers. A total of 330 useful responses from supervisors were received (one supervisor rated one employee) (response rate is 85.71%). Ten weeks later (Wave 2), employees were asked to provide information on their organizational identification and other mediating variables (i.e., organization-based self-esteem, felt obligation towards the organization, and job engagement) on site. A total of 338 useful responses were received. Finally, ten weeks after the second (Wave 3), employees rated ostracism again. A total of 323 useful responses were received. The direct supervisors were asked to evaluate employees' three forms of citizenship behavior in the last month. A total of 320 useful responses from supervisors were received. The final sample consisted of 297 one-to-one employee-supervisor pairs. Of the 297 employees, 62.6% were men. In terms of age, 25.9% were aged 29 or below, 41.1% were between 30 and 39 years of age, 23.2% were between 40 and 49 years of age, and 9.8% were aged 50 or above. Regarding education, 28.6% finished high school, 27.6% held junior college degrees, and 43.8% held bachelor or above degrees. The participation of employees and supervisors was voluntary. All participants were informed that the purpose of the survey was to examine human resource practices and were assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

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## ***Measurement***

Similar to Study 1, we created Chinese versions for all measures following the commonly used translation–back translation procedure (Brislin, 1970). All measures use the same response scale, ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

*Workplace ostracism.* The same scale used in Study 1 was applied in Wave 1 and Wave 3. Cronbach’s alphas were .89 and .92, respectively.

*Job mobility.* The same scale used in Study 1 was applied in Wave 1. Cronbach’s alpha was .76.

*Organizational identification.* The same scale used in Study 1 was applied in Wave 2. Cronbach’s alpha was .88.

*Citizenship behavior.* The same scales developed by Williams and Anderson (1991) were used to measure individual-directed and organization-directed citizenship behavior in Wave 1 and Wave 3. Cronbach’s alphas for individual-directed citizenship behavior were .86 and .92 for Wave 1 and Wave 3 respectively and Cronbach’s alphas for organization-directed citizenship behavior were .92 and .94 for Wave 1 and Wave 3, respectively. Change-oriented citizenship behavior was measured using six items with highest factor loadings from the taking charge behavior scale (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). A sample item is “institute new work methods that are more effective for the company.” This scale has been used to indicate employees’ change-oriented citizenship behavior (e.g., Bettencourt, 2004; Choi, 2007). Change-oriented citizenship behavior was also measured in Wave 1 and Wave 3. Cronbach’s alphas were .84 and .91, respectively.

*Control variables.* We controlled for employees’ age, gender, and education. Age was coded as “1” for those aged 29 or below, “2” for those aged between 30 and 39, “3” for those aged

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between 40 and 49 and “4” for those aged 50 or above. Gender was dummy-coded with male respondents coded as “0” and female respondents coded as “1.” Education was coded as “1” for employees who finished high school or below, “2” for employees who held junior college degrees, and “3” for employees who held bachelor degrees or higher.

We also included organization-based self-esteem, felt obligation towards the organization, and job engagement in Wave 2 as control variables for their potential mediating effects on the association between workplace ostracism and citizenship behavior. Organization-based self-esteem was measured using a 10-item scale developed by Pierce, Gardner, Cummings, and Dunham (1989). A sample item is “I am an important part of this place.” Cronbach’s alpha was .90. Six items from Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, and Rhoades (2001) were used to measure employees’ felt obligation towards the organization. A sample item is “I feel a personal obligation to do whatever I can to help my organization achieve its goals.” Cronbach’s alpha was .93. A total of nine items developed by Rich, Lepine, and Crawford (2010) were used to measure employees’ engagement at work. We selected three items with highest factor loadings to assess physical engagement (e.g., I exert my full effort to my job), emotional engagement (e.g., I feel energetic at my job), and cognitive engagement (e.g., at work, I am absorbed by my job). In line with Rich et al. (2010), we focus on the concept of job engagement as a whole rather than its specific dimensions. Cronbach’s alpha for the three subscales was .79.

Finally, in Wave 1, we included collectivism, power distance and future orientation to control for their potential moderating effects on the association between workplace ostracism and organizational identification. Six items from Dorfman and Howell (1988) were used to measure collectivism at the individual level. A sample item is “Employees should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group.” Cronbach’s alpha was .87. Six items from Dorfman



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and Howell (1988) were used to measure power distance at individual level. A sample item is “Managers should make most decisions without consulting.” Cronbach’s alpha was .79. Four items developed by Shipp, Edwards, and Lambert (2009) were used to measure an individual’s future orientation. A sample item is “I focus on my future.” Cronbach’s alpha was .81.

## **Results**

### *Confirmatory Factor Analyses*

We first examine measurement validity. To reduce model size, we examined measures from employees and supervisors separately. Regarding measures from employees, we first built a nine-factor model with workplace ostracism in Wave 1, and job mobility, collectivism, power distance, future orientation, organizational identification, organization-based self-esteem, felt obligation towards the organization, and job engagement in Wave 2. Except for job engagement, indicated by three subscales, each factor was indicated by items for the posited constructs. Errors of items were not correlated. This model was acceptable ( $\chi^2(1341) = 2011.12$ , CFI = .91, TLI = .90; RMSEA = .042; SRMR = .049) and was better than a one-factor model ( $\chi^2(1377) = 6553.18$ , CFI = .27, TLI = .25; RMSEA = .115; SRMR = .131); a five-factor model, in which items in Wave 1 (workplace ostracism and four moderators) were influenced by one factor, and items in Wave 2 were influenced by their posited factors ( $\chi^2(1367) = 3819.07$ , CFI = .66, TLI = .64; RMSEA = .079; SRMR = .098); and a six-factor model, in which items in Wave 1 were influenced by their posited factors, and items in Wave 2 (the four mediators) influenced by one factor ( $\chi^2(1362) = 3904.66$ , CFI = .64, TLI = .63; RMSEA = .081; SRMR = .091).

Regarding measures from supervisors, we built a six-factor model that incorporates individual-directed, organization-directed, and change-oriented citizenship behavior in Wave 1 and Wave 3. Each factor was represented by items of the posited constructs. Except for errors of

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the same items across time, errors of items were not correlated. This model was acceptable ( $\chi^2(705) = 1394.44$ , CFI = .91, TLI = .90; RMSEA = .059; SRMR = .055) and was better than a two-factor model in which all items in Wave 1 were influenced by one factor and all items in Wave 3 were influenced by the other ( $\chi^2(719) = 3128.80$ , CFI = .68, TLI = .66; RMSEA = .109; SRMR = .100).

We also examined measurement invariance of factor loadings and item intercepts for measures of workplace ostracism and the three types of citizenship behavior over the two waves (Waves 1 and 3). These tests were helpful in ensuring that the change phenomena that we capture in the following analysis related to changes in constructs (true or alpha change), rather than to changes resulting from scale re-calibration (beta change) or construct re-conceptualization (gamma change) (Golembiewski, Billingsley, & Yeager, 1976). We first examined an eight-factor model in which workplace ostracism and the three types of citizenship behavior assessed in Wave 1 and Wave 3 were influenced by different factors. Similarly, except the same items across time, errors of items were not correlated. This model was acceptable ( $\chi^2(1652) = 2770.22$ , CFI = .89, TLI = .89; RMSEA = .049; SRMR = .055). We then additionally imposed equality of factor loadings of the same items over time and obtained good model fit ( $\chi^2(1684) = 2816.16$ , CFI = .89, TLI = .89; RMSEA = .049; SRMR = .057). Next, we additionally imposed equality of intercept of the same items over time and received good model fit ( $\chi^2(1707) = 2874.12$ , CFI = .89, TLI = .89; RMSEA = .049; SRMR = .058). These findings supported invariance of workplace ostracism and the three types of citizenship behavior over time.

### ***Hypothesis Testing***

Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations of variables. The same approach used in Study 1 was applied, except for using a design-based modeling approach to

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deal with non-independent data, as we do not have a nested data structure in this study.

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Insert Table 3 Here  
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Similarly, we estimated two models. In the first model, we focus on mediating effects. In the second model, we additionally take moderating effects into account to provide a comprehensive test of our hypotheses. We first examined a mediational model to corroborate the unique effect of organizational identification and the directional effect from workplace ostracism to citizenship behavior by controlling for the mediating effects of organization-based self-esteem, felt obligation towards the organization, and job engagement. To examine the directional associations of workplace ostracism with other variables, we also used the four mediators (i.e., organizational identification, organization-based self-esteem, felt obligation towards the organization, and job engagement; all of them assessed in Wave 2) and three types of citizenship behavior assessed in Wave 1 to predict workplace ostracism in Wave 3, while the effect of workplace ostracism in Wave 1 was included. Finally, age, gender and education were used to predict all research variables in the model. Research variables assessed at the same time were allowed to be correlated. The mediation model was acceptable despite a lower value of TLI ( $\chi^2(30) = 87.35$ , CFI = .94, TLI = .84; RMSEA = .080; SRMR = .069).

In this model, supporting H1, workplace ostracism at Wave 1 was negatively related to organizational identification ( $B = -.30$ ,  $S. E. = .07$ ,  $p < .01$ ), which in turn, was positively associated with individual-directed ( $B = .12$ ,  $S. E. = .05$ ,  $p < .05$ ), organization-directed ( $B = .11$ ,  $S. E. = .05$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and change-oriented ( $B = .09$ ,  $S. E. = .05$ ,  $p = .07$ ) citizenship behavior in Wave 3, when effects of other mediators (i.e., organization-based self-esteem, felt obligation

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towards the organization, and job engagement) and citizenship behavior in Wave 1 were also considered. Results of indirect effect tests based on the RMediation program indicated that organizational identification had significant mediation effects on the links of workplace ostracism with individual-directed (indirect effect =  $-.035$ ,  $S. E. = .019$ , 95% C.I. =  $-.076$  to  $-.004$ ), and organization-directed (indirect effect =  $-.034$ ,  $S. E. = .018$ , 95% C.I. =  $-.072$  to  $-.004$ ) citizenship behavior, but change-oriented citizenship behavior (indirect effect =  $-.026$ ,  $S. E. = .016$ , 95% C.I. =  $-.062$  to  $.003$ ) was only significant at the  $p < .10$  (90% C.I. =  $-.055$  to  $-.002$ ) level. In this model, we also found that except for workplace ostracism in Wave 1 ( $B = .54$ ,  $S. E. = .05$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and organization-based self-esteem ( $B = -.13$ ,  $S. E. = .06$ ,  $p < .05$ ), other research variables did not have significant associations with workplace ostracism in Wave 3, providing support for the directional impact of workplace ostracism on the other variables, as we proposed.

In examining our second hypothesis regarding moderating effects, we estimated a model by additionally including job mobility as well as collectivism, power distance and future orientation as moderators, to address potential cultural effects in addition to examining the role of the social dilemma perspective (see unstandardized estimates in Table 4). We introduced their interaction effects with workplace ostracism to predict the organizational identification. The rest of specification in the model is exactly the same as that in the mediational model described above. This model ( $\chi^2(130) = 264.76$ , CFI =  $.88$ , TLI =  $.86$ ; RMSEA =  $.059$ ; SRMR =  $.070$ ) was slightly better than a model that constrained all interaction effects as 0 ( $\chi^2(134) = 273.62$ , CFI =  $.87$ , TLI =  $.86$ ; RMSEA =  $.059$ ; SRMR =  $.071$ ). The result of the Chi-square difference test was not significant, but the  $p$  value is  $.06$  ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 8.86$ ,  $df = 4$ ). We found a negative interaction effect between workplace ostracism and job mobility in Wave 1 in predicting organizational identification ( $B = -.19$ ,  $S. E. = .08$ ,  $p < .05$ ), while the interaction effects of workplace ostracism

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in Wave 1 with collectivism (*n.s.*), power distance (*n.s.*), and future orientation (*n.s.*) were included. Figure 3 displays the interaction plot, which shows that workplace ostracism had a negative association with organizational identification when job mobility was high (simple slope =  $-.44$ ,  $S. E. = .10$ ,  $p < .01$ ), more so than when job mobility was low (simple slope =  $-.14$ ,  $S. E. = .10$ , *n.s.*), supporting H2.

We then calculated the conditional mediation effect of organizational identification at different levels of job mobility. Supporting H3, the indirect effect of workplace ostracism on individual-directed and organizational-directed citizenship behavior through organizational identification was stronger when job mobility was high (conditional indirect effect =  $-.053$ ,  $S. E. = .027$ , 95% C.I. =  $-.112$  to  $-.006$ , for individual-directed citizenship behavior;  $-.050$ ,  $S. E. = .026$ , 95% C.I. =  $-.106$  to  $-.006$ , for organizational-directed citizenship behavior) than when job mobility was low (conditional indirect effect =  $-.017$ ,  $S. E. = .015$ , 95% C.I. =  $-.053$  to  $.006$ , for individual-directed citizenship behavior;  $-.016$ ,  $S. E. = .014$ , 95% C.I. =  $-.050$  to  $.005$ , for organizational-directed citizenship behavior). Organizational identification showed a weaker mediating effect on the association between workplace ostracism and change-directed citizenship behavior when job mobility was high ( $-.039$ ,  $S. E. = .024$ , 95% C.I. =  $-.091$  to  $.004$ ) or when job mobility was low ( $-.013$ ,  $S. E. = .012$ , 95% C.I. =  $-.042$  to  $.005$ ). We also examined alternative moderated-mediation models and found that job mobility did not moderate the effect of organizational identification on different forms of citizenship behavior. There were no significant three-way interaction effects among workplace ostracism, job mobility and collectivism/power distance/future orientation in predicting organizational identification. Finally, our hypotheses were supported without including control variables in the model.<sup>1,2</sup>

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Insert Table 4 and Figure 3 Here

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## **Discussion**

Consistent with results in Study 1, in Study 2, we in general obtained evidence supporting the use of an identification perspective to understand the association between workplace ostracism and citizenship behavior. We found that organizational identification significantly mediated associations of workplace ostracism with individual-directed and organizational-directed citizenship behavior. The mediating effect of organizational identification on the association between workplace ostracism and change-oriented citizenship behavior was marginally significant. One reason for this finding is that we have controlled for the effect of job engagement, and this may mitigate the predictive effect of organizational identification in predicting change-oriented citizenship behavior, since being energized is critical for employees to initiate change at work (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010). Supporting this explanation, when we removed the effect of job engagement on change-oriented citizenship behavior from the model, we found that organizational identification significantly mediated the associations of workplace ostracism with change-oriented citizenship behavior.

Moreover, the results show that the identification mechanism linking workplace ostracism and individual-directed/organizational-directed citizenship behavior was prominent among employees with higher perceived job mobility. The identification mechanism was not contingent on employees' collectivism, power distance or future orientation, thus ruling out the alternative explanations based on a culture or a social dilemma perspective. Finally, the results also support the directional association from workplace ostracism to citizenship behavior. While controlling for prior citizenship behavior, our findings further indicate that workplace ostracism was related

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to a decrease in citizenship behavior from Wave 1 to Wave 3 via organizational identification. Citizenship behavior, however, did not predict change of workplace ostracism in the same time period. Overall, findings in Study 2 provide strong evidence to adopt an identification perspective to understand the association between workplace ostracism and citizenship behavior.

### **General Discussion**

Our studies contribute to the workplace ostracism literature by offering an additional account to understand the relationship between workplace ostracism and employee citizenship behavior. This extension is meaningful because it suggests that workplace ostracism, a mistreatment at the interpersonal level, can shape one's perception of his or her relationship with the organization and thus influence an intrinsic force driving citizenship behavior. The identification perspective widens the scope of psychological consequences of workplace ostracism by considering the conception of a relationship between an individual and the organization, moving away from the concern on individual's feelings and states such as self-esteem and job engagement. This perspective also offers a different framework from previous perspectives in conceptualizing citizenship behavior in workplace ostracism research. As mentioned earlier, although perspectives of self-esteem threat, resources depletion, social exchange, and social dilemma theorize different reasons for why employees will perform more or less citizenship behavior after being ostracized, they ignore the motivation behind the core force that drives citizenship behavior. Accordingly, the identification perspective directs us to understand the nature of workplace ostracism and citizenship behavior from another angle.

Our findings on the moderating role of perceived job mobility also strengthen the applicability of an identification perspective in explaining the link between workplace ostracism and citizenship behavior. We found that those with high perceived job mobility are more likely

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than their low job mobility counterparts to engage in a de-identification process to leave the organization psychologically and thus perform less citizenship behavior after being ostracized.

Our findings extend the scope of boundary conditions beyond the moderating effects of personal characteristics emphasized in past studies (e.g., Balliet & Ferris, 2013; Leung et al., 2011) by showing that employees' potential relationships with other organizations can exacerbate or mitigate the negative impact of workplace ostracism on work behavior. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the moderating results indicate that for those low in job mobility, workplace ostracism did not have a negative association with organizational identification, suggesting that for these people, workplace ostracism is not as detrimental as for those with high job mobility. One potential explanation is that people with lower perceived job mobility may suppress or explain away the negative feelings of workplace ostracism in order to justify their stay in the organization. As they are more likely to stay, they may also engage in more impression management behavior, such as ingratiation (Wu et al., 2012), to mitigate the negative impact of workplace ostracism. More studies are necessary to understand how and when ostracized employees can prevent their suffering.

Our research also contributes to the workplace aggression literature broadly by underpinning the value of using an identification perspective to understand the impact of workplace mistreatment on employees' outcomes. As mentioned earlier, the identification perspective has been used to explain the link between abusive supervision on employees' ethical behaviors (Hannah et al., 2013) and workplace bullying and job satisfaction (Loh et al., 2010). Our research extends the application of an identification perspective to understand consequences of workplace aggression by examining a different form of workplace aggression (i.e., workplace ostracism) and employee outcomes (i.e., citizenship behavior). Moreover, in contrast to the focus



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on value identification and the emphasis on the role of leaders in conveying organizational values to employees examined in Hannah et al.'s (2013) study, our research focuses on an identification mechanism that involves not only a cognitive component (e.g., value identification), but also the evaluative and affective components. Although organizational identification was also examined by Loh et al. (2010), we extend their work by providing a thorough examination on the boundary conditions of workplace aggression in influencing organizational identification. For example, they used the concept of power distance without empirically examining the cultural difference between Australians and Singaporeans in the association between workplace bullying and organizational identification. We directly examined this moderating effect of power distance and also other moderators to offer a thorough examination. As discussed above, we found perceived job mobility, but not others, moderated the association between workplace ostracism and organizational identification.

Accordingly, our investigation extends the application of an identification perspective to understand why and when workplace aggression influences employee outcomes. As organizational identification plays a key role in shaping employees' various attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (see Riketta, 2005, for a meta-analytic review), identification process renders an important pathway through which workplace aggression can influence employees' work outcomes. In recent years, research on workplace aggression has become more diverse due to a focus on specific forms of workplace aggression, such as abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), workplace ostracism (Ferris et al., 2008), social undermining (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002), etc. Nevertheless, these different forms of workplace aggression have considerable overlap (see Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Hershcovis, 2011), which leads to a question that "various measures used by researchers who claim to be tapping different constructs may actually be tapping into the

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same general construct” (Aquino & Thau, 2009, p. 732). As such, another research approach to workplace aggression is to establish a theoretical framework to capture the commonality of different forms of workplace aggression and explain its consequences on employee outcomes (e.g., Aquino & Thau, 2009; Hershcovis, 2011; Smart Richman & Leary, 2009; Spector & Fox, 2005). Based on findings in previous studies (Hannah et al., 2013; Loh et al., 2010) and our research, an identification perspective based on social identity theory can offer a theoretical foundation to explain the commonality of different forms of workplace aggression (e.g., abusive supervision, workplace bullying, and workplace ostracism) in influencing employee outcomes. Future studies are encouraged to build on our notion to strengthen this foundation for workplace aggression research.

### **Limitations**

Several limitations should be noted. First, we did not examine the association between research variables using a rigorous longitudinal design, which prevents us from exploring the change effects of the key constructs over time (e.g., by measuring organizational identification at different points in time, researchers can determine whether and how organizational identification levels change over time), which is theoretically important but empirically understudied. Second, even though we have examined directional associations between workplace ostracism to citizenship behavior in Study 2 with a time-lagged design, we cannot unequivocally claim a causal relationship between workplace ostracism and citizenship behavior. Third, we tested the hypotheses among employees from oil and gas companies in both studies. Although this approach has the advantage of holding organizational and job context factors constant, it restricts generalizability of the findings to other occupations and sectors. In light of this, researchers should replicate this study in other organizations and job categories. Fourth, we conducted the two studies

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in China. Although the potential cultural effect has been taken into account in Study 2, validating our finding in other cultural contexts is still desirable to verify the generalizability of the findings.

Finally, we focused on three forms of citizenship behavior in this study, which of course cannot depict a full picture of the association between workplace ostracism and behavior at work. For example, we did not include counterproductive work behavior and impression management behavior, which have been examined in previous ostracism studies (e.g., Derfler-Rozin et al., 2010; Hitlan & Noel, 2009). Counterproductive work behavior and impression management behavior have been theorized as behavior for ostracized employees to restore their sense of control and sense of belongingness respectively in responding to the ostracized experiences (Robinson, O'Reilly, & Wang, 2013; Williams, 2007). In addition, engagement of these two types of behavior may enhance or reduce employees' ostracized experiences over time such that those taking more counterproductive work behavior may be excluded even more and those taking more impression management behavior may be more likeable over time. To date, when ostracized employees will engage in counterproductive work behavior or impression management behavior and how those behaviors can shape employees' workplace ostracism experiences over time have not been fully examined (Narayanan, Tai, & Kinias, 2013; Robinson et al., 2013). To extend our work based on an identification perspective, future studies are encouraged to examine whether this perspective also can be applied to understand the associations between workplace ostracism and other types of work behavior.

### **Practical Implications**

In practical terms, our findings show that workplace ostracism is costly for employees and organizations because employees who encounter high levels of workplace ostracism are likely to have low levels of organizational identification and are less willing to engage in citizenship

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behavior. A direct approach is to reduce the occurrence of ostracism, which can be achieved by treating ostracism as any other act of aggression or hostility and encouraging employees to use face-to-face discussion to solve problems (Williams, 2007). In addition to the general approach to mitigating workplace ostracism, our findings indicate the importance of individual differences in reacting to workplace ostracism, which also deserve attention for managerial practices.

Based on our finding, the focal attention should be paid on employees higher in perceived job mobility, as they are more averse to ostracism and are more likely to engage in a de-identification process to withdraw their effort in performing citizenship behavior. For those higher in perceived job mobility, rather than challenging their belief of having higher job mobility, managers may help them find effective ways to increase their social acceptance at work and to cope with their discomfort from being ostracised, such as by building their social and political skills (Ferris et al., 2007; Hogan & Shelton, 1998). Increasing their social awareness may help them engage impression management tactics to construct positive images, such as promoting themselves in a way to be perceived as being competent instead of conceited (Turnley & Bolino, 2001), and thus mitigate the levels of ostracism. Based on the role of organizational identification, managers or organizations can also seek to strengthen employees' organizational identification in other ways, such as building a shared organizational vision, showing organizational support to employees, and promoting communication and cooperation among employees (Scott, 1997). Such tactics would mitigate the significance of ostracism experiences in influencing organizational identification.

In conclusion, drawing on an identification perspective, we offer a new account to explain why and when workplace ostracism can influence employee citizenship behavior. By doing so, we unpack multiple psychological mechanisms behind the link between workplace ostracism and citizenship behavior and enrich our understanding of the consequences of workplace ostracism.

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## Footnotes

1. In both Study 1 and Study 2, we examined a model with key research variables only (i.e., workplace ostracism at Time 1, job mobility at Time 1, organizational identification at Time 2, and individual-directed, organization-directed, and change-oriented citizenship behavior at Time 3). In both studies, we consistently found that job mobility had a negative interaction effect with workplace ostracism on organizational identification ( $p < .05$ ), which in turn, positively associated with the three forms of citizenship behavior ( $p$ 's  $< .01$ ). When job mobility was high, workplace ostracism had a negative association with organizational identification and the indirect effect of organizational identification on the association between workplace ostracism and the three forms of citizenship behavior was significant ( $p$ 's  $< .05$ ). When job mobility was low, workplace ostracism was not significantly related to organizational identification and the indirect effect of organizational identification was not significant, either. These findings support our hypotheses.
2. We additionally explored whether job mobility, collectivism, power distance and future orientation moderate associations of workplace ostracism in Wave 1 with organization-based self-esteem, felt obligation towards the organization, and job engagement. We additionally found that job mobility had a negative interaction effect with workplace ostracism in predicting organization-based self-esteem ( $B = -.15, S. E. = .07, p < .05$ ). Workplace ostracism has a negative association with organization-based self-esteem when perceived job mobility is high (simple slope =  $-.32, S. E. = .08, p < .01$ ), more so than when perceived job mobility is low (simple slope =  $-.09, S. E. = .08, n.s.$ ). We also found that collectivism had a negative interaction effect with workplace ostracism in predicting organization-based self-esteem ( $B = -.11, S. E. = .06, p = .055$ ), felt obligation towards the organization ( $B = -.22, S. E. = .08, p <$

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.01), and job engagement ( $B = -.13$ ,  $S. E. = .06$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Workplace ostracism had a negative association with organization-based self-esteem, felt obligation, and job engagement among employees high in collectivism (simple slope =  $-.31$ ,  $-.41$  and  $-.26$ ,  $S. E. = .07$ ,  $.10$ , and  $.07$ ,  $p$ 's  $< .01$ ), rather than those low in collectivism (simple slope =  $-.10$ ,  $.02$  and  $.00$ ,  $S. E. = .09$ ,  $.13$ , and  $.09$ , *n.s.*). Finally, we found that future orientation had a negative interaction effect with workplace ostracism in predicting job engagement ( $B = -.13$ ,  $S. E. = .07$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Workplace ostracism had a negative association with job engagement among those high in future orientation (simple slope =  $-.24$ ,  $S. E. = .07$ ,  $p < .01$ ), rather than among those low in future orientation (simple slope =  $.01$ ,  $S. E. = .09$ , *n.s.*).

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*Table 1*  
*Descriptive statistics of variables in Study 1 (n = 282)*

Variables	M	S.D.	Correlations													
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11			
1. Company <sup>a</sup>	0.41	0.49														
2. Employee age <sup>b</sup>	2.17	--	.06													
3. Employee gender <sup>c</sup>	0.42	0.49	.12 <sup>†</sup>	-.01												
4. Employee education <sup>d</sup>	2.02	--	.05	-.04	-.02											
5. Proactive personality	3.57	0.69	.00	-.01	.03	.07										
6. General self-efficacy	3.58	0.47	.09	.06	-.03	.06	.11 <sup>†</sup>									
7. Workplace ostracism	2.23	0.69	-.07	-.02	.00	.03	-.10 <sup>†</sup>	-.14 <sup>*</sup>								
8. Job mobility	3.19	0.97	.16 <sup>**</sup>	-.03	-.03	-.02	-.05	-.09	-.03							
9. Organizational identification	3.36	0.79	.05	-.07	-.02	.03	.11 <sup>†</sup>	.21 <sup>**</sup>	-.27 <sup>**</sup>	.04						
10. Individual-directed citizenship behavior	3.49	0.78	.11 <sup>†</sup>	.07	-.03	-.05	.13 <sup>*</sup>	.05	-.09	-.10 <sup>†</sup>	.20 <sup>**</sup>					
11. Organization-directed citizenship behavior	3.33	0.66	.07	-.03	-.10 <sup>†</sup>	-.03	.10	.22 <sup>**</sup>	-.20 <sup>**</sup>	-.04	.27 <sup>**</sup>	.41 <sup>**</sup>				
12. Change-oriented citizenship behavior	3.32	0.81	.13 <sup>*</sup>	.01	-.09	-.02	.19 <sup>**</sup>	.25 <sup>**</sup>	-.19 <sup>**</sup>	-.04	.33 <sup>**</sup>	.23 <sup>**</sup>	.31 <sup>**</sup>			

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

a. Company: 0 = Company A; 1 = Company B.

b. Employee age: 1 = aged 29 or below; 2 = aged between 30 and 39; 3 = aged between 40 and 49; and 4 = aged 50 or above.

c. Employee gender: 0 = Male; 1 = Female.

d. Employee education: 1 = high school or below; 2 = junior college degree, and 3 = bachelor or above degree.



*Table 2*  
*Unstandardized estimates (standard error) of the moderated mediation path model in Study 1*

	Organizational identification	Individual-directed citizenship behavior	Organization-directed citizenship behavior	Change-oriented citizenship behavior
<b>Control variables</b>				
Company <sup>a</sup>	.03 (.09)	.17 <sup>†</sup> (.09)	.08 (.08)	.19* (.10)
Employee age <sup>b</sup>	-.08 (.05)	.07 (.05)	-.02 (.04)	.01 (.05)
Employee gender <sup>c</sup>	-.01 (.09)	-.06 (.09)	-.13 <sup>†</sup> (.08)	-.16 <sup>†</sup> (.09)
Employee education <sup>d</sup>	.03 (.05)	-.07 (.05)	-.05 (.04)	-.05 (.06)
Proactive personality	.08 (.07)	.14* (.06)	.06 (.06)	.17** (.06)
General self-efficacy	.28** (.09)	-.03 (.10)	.22* (.09)	.28** (.10)
<b>Independent variable</b>				
Workplace ostracism	-.27** (.07)	-.03 (.07)	-.12* (.06)	-.10 (.07)
<b>Moderator</b>				
Job mobility	.05 (.04)			
<b>Interaction effect</b>				
Workplace ostracism × Job mobility	-.15* (.07)			
<b>Mediator</b>				
Organizational identification		.18** (.06)	.16** (.05)	.26** (.06)
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.134	.074	.133	.188

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

a. Company: 0 = Company A; 1 = Company B.

b. Employee age: 1 = aged 29 or below; 2 = aged between 30 and 39; 3 = aged between 40 and 49; and 4 = aged 50 or above.

c. Employee gender: 0 = Male; 1 = Female.

d. Employee education: 1 = high school or below; 2 = junior college degree, and 3 = bachelor or above degree.

*Table 3*  
*Descriptive statistics of variables in Study 2 (n = 297)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	Correlations																	
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
<b>Wave 1</b>																				
1. Employee age <sup>a</sup>	2.17	--																		
2. Employee gender <sup>b</sup>	0.37	0.48	.03																	
3. Employee education <sup>c</sup>	2.15	--	-.14*	.07																
4. Workplace ostracism	1.94	0.67	.09	.05	-.10 <sup>†</sup>															
5. Job mobility	3.22	0.79	-.12*	-.06	.07	.05														
6. Collectivism	3.64	0.99	.14*	.02	-.09	.09	-.06													
7. Power distance	3.23	0.72	.04	.03	-.03	.04	.08	.16**												
8. Future orientation	3.50	0.85	-.01	-.05	.06	.09	.20**	.01	.19**											
9. Individual-directed citizenship behavior	3.69	0.72	-.01	-.05	-.01	-.04	-.01	.00	.05	.06										
10. Organization-directed citizenship behavior	3.94	0.76	-.01	-.08	-.06	-.16**	-.03	.00	-.04	.06	.58**									
11. Change-oriented citizenship behavior	4.16	0.63	-.05	.06	.08	-.07	-.07	-.13*	-.11 <sup>†</sup>	-.01	.36**	.34**								
<b>Wave 2</b>																				
12. Organizational identification	3.39	0.85	-.07	-.09	.00	-.24**	-.03	.00	.10 <sup>†</sup>	.07	.03	.13*	.01							
13. Organization-based self-esteem	3.78	0.65	-.03	.00	.02	-.22**	-.10 <sup>†</sup>	.03	.08	.22**	.12*	.24**	.09	.26**						
14. Felt obligation towards the organization	3.42	0.91	-.01	-.10 <sup>†</sup>	.09	-.17**	.00	.01	.09	.09	-.07	.06	.03	.24**	.38**					
15. Job engagement	3.34	0.63	-.03	-.09	.07	-.18**	.01	.03	.11 <sup>†</sup>	.07	.08	.18**	.07	.49**	.30**	.25**				
<b>Wave 3</b>																				
16. Workplace ostracism	1.95	0.69	.10 <sup>†</sup>	-.01	-.03	.58**	.11 <sup>†</sup>	.11 <sup>†</sup>	.02	.12*	-.09	-.16**	-.07	-.18**	-.26**	-.13*	-.21**			
17. Individual-directed citizenship behavior	3.67	0.87	-.07	.00	.09	-.28**	-.02	-.09	.01	.09	.51**	.45**	.41**	.28**	.33**	.23**	.30**	-.27**		
18. Organization-directed citizenship behavior	3.85	0.84	-.08	.05	.07	-.32**	-.07	-.06	.02	.05	.43**	.58**	.36**	.28**	.25**	.20**	.28**	-.26**	.72**	
19. Change-oriented citizenship behavior	4.08	0.80	-.06	.08	.14*	-.33**	-.06	-.13*	.02	.07	.27**	.28**	.50**	.26**	.25**	.21**	.32**	-.30**	.66**	.58**

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

a. Employee age: 1 = aged 29 or below; 2 = aged between 30 and 39; 3 = aged between 40 and 49; and 4 = aged 50 or above.

b. Employee gender: 0 = Male; 1 = Female.

c. Employee education: 1 = high school or below; 2 = junior college degree, and 3 = bachelor or above degree.

Table 4

*Unstandardized estimates (standard error) of the moderated mediation path model in Study 2*

Predictors/outcomes	Organizational identification	Organization-based self-esteem	Felt obligation towards the organization	Job engagement	Individual-directed citizenship behavior (Wave 3)	Organization-directed citizenship behavior (Wave 3)	Change-oriented citizenship behavior (Wave 3)	Workplace ostracism (Wave 3)
<b>Control variables</b>								
Employee age <sup>a</sup>	-.06 (.05)	-.01 (.04)	.02 (.06)	-.01 (.04)	-.03(.04)	-.04 (.04)	-.01 (.04)	.04 (.04)
Employee gender <sup>b</sup>	-.11 (.10)	.02 (.08)	-.18 (.11)	-.12 (.07)	.10(.08)	.21** (.08)	.16* (.08)	-.06 (.07)
Employee education <sup>c</sup>	-.05 (.06)	-.01 (.05)	.09 (.06)	.04 (.04)	.05(.05)	.05 (.05)	.07 (.04)	.03 (.04)
Individual-directed citizenship behavior (Wave 1)					.44** (.05)	--	--	-.04 (.06)
Organization-directed citizenship behavior (Wave 1)					--	.49** (.05)	--	-.01 (.05)
Change-oriented citizenship behavior (Wave 1)					--	--	.42** (.05)	.02 (.06)
<b>Independent variable</b>								
Workplace ostracism (Wave 1)	-.29** (.07)	-.21** (.06)	-.21** (.08)	-.16** (.05)	-.21** (.06)	-.23** (.06)	-.28** (.06)	.54** (.05)
<b>Moderator</b>								
Job mobility	-.04 (.05)							
Collectivism	-.01 (.04)							
Power distance	.07 (.06)							
Future orientation	.03 (.05)							
<b>Interaction effect</b>								
Workplace ostracism × Job mobility	-.19* (.08)							
Workplace ostracism × Collectivism	.07 (.07)							
Workplace ostracism × Power distance	.06 (.10)							
Workplace ostracism × Future orientation	-.06 (.08)							
<b>Mediator</b>								
Organizational identification (Wave 2)					.12* (.05)	.11** (.05)	.09 <sup>†</sup> (.05)	.02 (.04)
Organization-based self-esteem (Wave 2)					.19** (.07)	.01 (.06)	.08 (.06)	-.13* (.05)
Felt obligation towards the organization (Wave 2)					.11* (.05)	.09* (.05)	.07 (.04)	.02 (.04)
Job engagement (Wave 2)					.16* (.07)	.12 <sup>†</sup> (.07)	.22** (.07)	-.10 <sup>†</sup> (.06)
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.089	.049	.039	.039	.351	.386	.338	.372

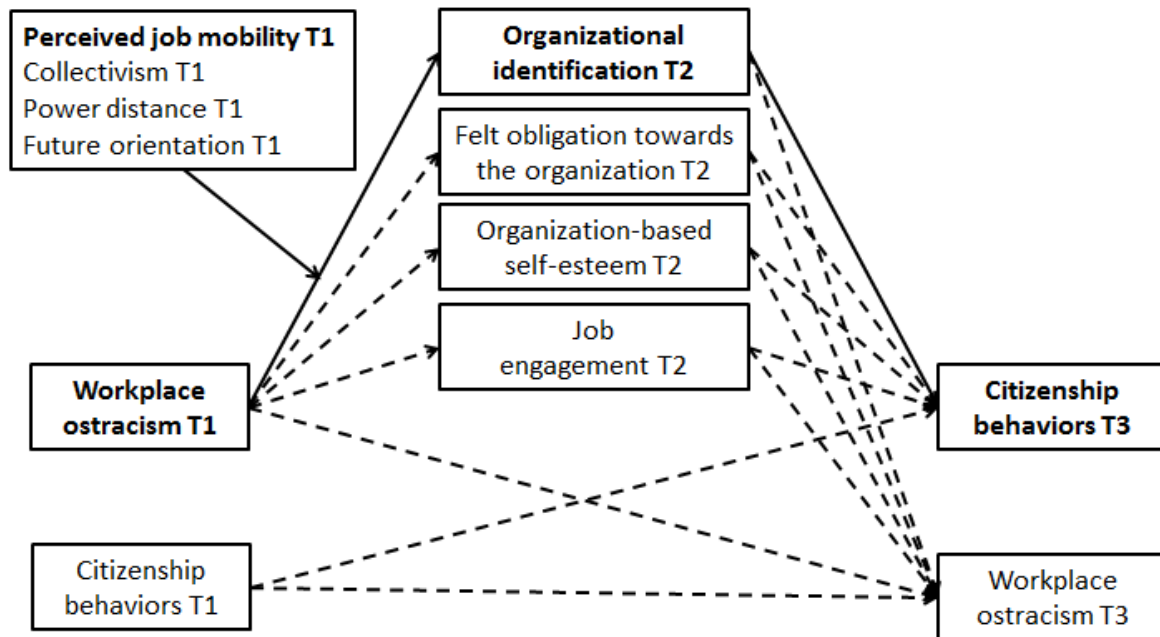
<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

a. Employee age: 1 = aged 29 or below; 2 = aged between 30 and 39; 3 = aged between 40 and 49; and 4 = aged 50 or above.

b. Employee gender: 0 = Male; 1 = Female.

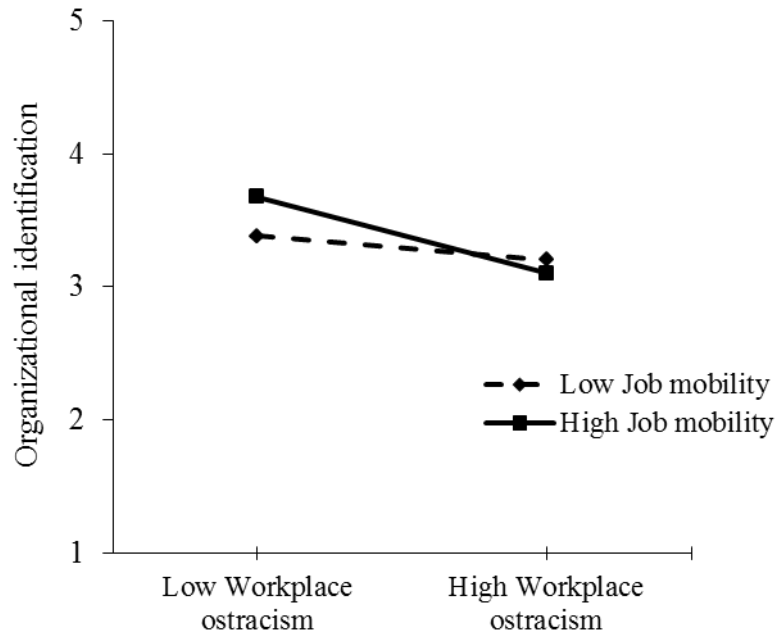
c. Employee education: 1 = high school or below; 2 = junior college degree, and 3 = bachelor or above degree.

Figure 1  
Research model



Note. Variables in bold and solid lines represent key research variables and hypothesized associations in our research. Other variables represent control variables for their potential mediating or moderating effects.

*Figure 2*  
*Interactive effects of workplace ostracism and job mobility on organizational identification in Study 1*



*Figure 3*  
*Interactive effects of workplace ostracism and job mobility on organizational identification in Study 2*

