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Published online: 23 Jun 2017.

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Investment model predictions of workplace ostracism on K–12 teachers' commitment to their schools and the profession of teaching

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine how the ostracism of K-12 teachers influences their commitment to their schools and commitment to the teaching profession. The investment model was used to situate ostracism as a predictor of teacher commitment. Participants were 200 full-time K-12 teachers who completed a survey assessing their experiences with ostracism at work and investment model variables (i.e., investments, quality of alternatives, satisfaction, and commitment). Results confirmed investment model predictions with teachers' investments, quality of alternatives, and satisfaction predicting their commitment to their schools and profession. Results of mediation models also demonstrated that controlling for teachers' investments and quality of alternatives, ostracism predicted commitment indirectly through its effect on satisfaction. This study revealed that teacher commitment is explained by investment model predictions, but after controlling for those predictions, is further explained by ostracism from teacher colleagues.

The profession of teaching is important to society as teachers have one of the most significant impacts on children's development and growth through their formative years. Although teachers are charged with creating significant learning experiences for their students (Fink, 2003), they also play a pivotal role in students' cognitive, psychosocial, and identity development (Silverman & Casazza, 2000). Teachers, then, are faced with the monumental task of fulfilling their pedagogical and personal job duties to help children learn, grow, and mature in critical ways. Even though these duties are of utmost importance to students, teacher turnover rates continue to be a growing problem over the past several decades (Goldring, Taie, & Riddles, 2014). The need to retain quality educators is imperative, but many undesirable aspects of the teaching profession contribute to the teacher retention crisis.

K-12 teachers must deal with a multitude of problems inside and outside the classroom. These problems include student behavior and discipline issues; administrative work; changes in curriculum, parent interactions, changes,

and initiatives in education; and extensive workloads (Moriarty, Edmonds, Blatchford, & Martin, 2001; Pillay, Goddard, & Wilss, 2005), all of which contribute to teacher dissatisfaction. With all of the aforementioned stressors that teachers face, the last added stressor teachers need is mistreatment from their coworkers. Unfortunately, the mistreatment of teachers from coworkers does occur. For example, when principals mistreat their teachers, teachers report increased fear, anxiety, depression, and loneliness, as well as decreased self-esteem and decision making (Blase & Blase, 2004). Likewise, bullying among teachers is associated with exhaustion and subsequent intent to turnover (Pyhältö, Pietarinen, & Soini, 2015). Additionally, Nias (1981) found that teachers do report isolation and negative interpersonal relationships with their coworkers, contributing to dissatisfaction. Especially as research on the prevalence and frequency of teacher mistreatment is limited, the mistreatment of teachers (by teachers) deserves empirical attention as an organizational communication issue that may have dire consequences for the children who depend on quality educators. Therefore, the current study investigated how the mistreatment of teachers, in the form of ostracism, influences their commitment to their school and to the profession of teaching. Specifically, this study situates teacher ostracism within the investment model (Rusbult, 1980) to determine how ostracism influences teachers' satisfaction and, in turn, their commitment.

Ostracism

In most functional organizations, employees create relationships with their coworkers and rely on them for information, task assistance, and support (Kram & Isabella, 1985). However, some employees are excluded from creating and maintaining relationships with coworkers. This exclusion, or separation from coworkers, is known as workplace ostracism and is correlated with negative consequences at work including loneliness, alienation, stress, anxiety, tardiness, absenteeism, and aggression (Sias, 2012). Workplace ostracism occurs when "an individual or group omits to take actions that engage another organizational member when it is socially appropriate to do so" (Robinson, O'Reilly, & Wang, 2012, p. 206). In other words, ostracism occurs as a process of relational exclusion characterized by a lack of communication (Sias, 2012). Ostracism is a communicative act that occurs verbally (e.g., refusing to talk to the individual who is ostracized) or nonverbally (e.g., avoiding eye contact with the individual who is ostracized; Ferris, Brown, Berry, & Lian, 2008). Employees who are ostracized are ignored at work, left out of conversations, avoided in meeting spaces, and treated as if they are not present (Ferris et al., 2008).

Employees who are ostracized experience decreased work performance, engagement, and creativity (Leung, Wu, Chen, & Young, 2011; Zhang &

Kwan, 2015), increased psychological distress (Wu, Yim, Kwan, & Zhang, 2012), lower organizational commitment (Hitlan, Kelly, Schepman, Schneider, & Zárate, 2006), and fewer organizational citizenship behaviors (Wu, Liu, Kwan, & Lee, 2015) but more counterproductive work behaviors (Zhao, Peng, & Sheard, 2013). As organizational members, teacher ostracism leads to increased burnout (Sulea, Filipescu, Horga, Orţan, & Fischmann, 2012). Outside of the workplace, ostracism leads to negative spillover, including decreased family satisfaction, work-family conflict, and decreased quality of sleep (Liu, Kwan, Lee, & Hui, 2013; Pereira, Meier, & Elfering, 2013). Ostracism also creates an increased intention to turnover (Renn, Allen, & Huning, 2012), which may be one of the reasons why teachers are becoming less committed to their schools and to the profession of teaching and seeking other forms of employment (Goldring et al., 2014). Organizational scholars concerned with explaining why employees stay committed to their jobs often turn to the investment model as their theoretical framework (Rusbult & Farrell, 1983).

Investment model

Derived from interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), the investment model (Rusbult, 1980) predicts that individuals with high investment size, high relational satisfaction, and low quality of alternatives will be more committed to a relationship. In turn, commitment increases the probability that a relationship will persist. The investment model has been widely supported throughout previous empirical studies (e.g., Allen, Babin, & McEwan, 2012; Dixon, Edwards, & Gidycz, 2016; Le & Agnew, 2003; Webster et al., 2015).

Although often applied to interpersonal relationships, the investment model (Rusbult, 1980) has been successfully applied to organizational contexts as well (e.g., Bolkan & Goodboy, 2015; Bolkan, Goodboy, & Bachman, 2012; Madlock & Dillow, 2012; Rusbult & Farrell, 1983; van Dam, 2005). Within the organizational context, the investment model predicts that employees' increased investments in their current job, perceptions of low-quality job alternatives, and increased job satisfaction lead to organizational commitment. *Investments* refer to resources individuals obtain through their jobs, such as tenure, training, housing arrangements, and friends at work, that they would lose if they left their jobs (Rusbult & Farrell, 1983). The more individuals have invested in a particular job, the more they are committed to the job and less likely to quit.

Perceptions of alternatives also influence organizational commitment. *Quality of alternatives* refers to perceptions of possible employment opportunities in comparison to a current job. Individuals who perceive available higher quality job alternatives are more likely to leave their current jobs than

individuals with perceived lower quality job alternatives (Swider, Boswell, & Zimmerman, 2011; Yücel, 2012).

Job satisfaction, another predictor of organizational commitment in the investment model, refers to an individual's attitude toward his or her job, usually based on perceived costs and rewards associated with the job (Rusbult & Farrell, 1983). Individuals with high job satisfaction enjoy working at their current job. Higher job satisfaction is associated with increased organizational commitment and less intention to turnover (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002; Yücel, 2012). Support for the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment has also been found among teachers (Anari, 2012; Nagar, 2012).

In addition to job satisfaction, this study examines another type of satisfaction—the importance of teacher satisfaction in predicting commitment to teaching. *Teacher satisfaction* refers to teachers' attitudes toward their profession and their students (Plax, Kearney, & Downs, 1986). Differing from job satisfaction, teacher satisfaction is focused on individuals' attitudes toward teaching as a profession, as opposed to attitudes toward a teaching job within a specific school. Although distinct constructs, job satisfaction and teacher satisfaction are important predictors of teacher retention (Perrachione, Rosser, & Petersen, 2008).

Commitment has been defined in various ways throughout organizational research (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Organizational commitment is conceptualized as "the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974, p. 604). Individuals committed to their organization internalize the goals of the organization (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). Thus, organizational commitment is directly tied to the degree to which individuals are motivated to stay at their current job (Rusbult & Farrell, 1983). Organizational commitment is linked with feeling bound to the organization, thus making intent to turnover unlikely (Allen & Meyer, 1990). This commitment is influenced by investment size, quality of job alternatives, and satisfaction (Rusbult, 1980). To test investment model predictions, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: K-12 teachers' organizational commitment will be a function of their investments, job satisfaction, and quality of alternatives.

Although teachers may remain committed to a particular organization (i.e., school), occupational commitment, or commitment to teaching as a profession, is another important factor in determining intention to turnover. *Occupational commitment* refers to an attitude or motivation to a specific chosen career (Blau, 1985; Carson & Bedeian, 1994). Specifically, *commitment to teaching* refers to the degree to which an individual is motivated to persist within the teaching career. Commitment to teaching includes commitment to the purpose of the school and commitment to students (Tyree, 1996).

Administrative support is directly linked with increased organizational commitment and commitment to teaching (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Riehl & Sipple, 1996; Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Weiss, 1999).

As commitment to teaching concerns an employee's motivation to stay within a profession, satisfaction with that profession is an important predictor of professional commitment (Fu & Chen, 2015). Like job satisfaction, as teacher satisfaction relies on individuals' attitudes, teacher satisfaction directly affects commitment to teaching. In line with investment model predictions, teachers' investment, satisfaction, and quality of alternatives should influence commitment. Because teacher satisfaction concerns attitudes toward teaching as a profession (Plax et al., 1986), we expect teacher satisfaction to influence commitment to teaching. Thus, in an additional test of the investment model, the following hypothesis is posited:

> Hypothesis 2: K-12 teachers' commitment to teaching will be a function of their investments, teacher satisfaction, and quality of alternatives.

As outlined previously, commitment is negatively affected by ostracism (Hitlan et al., 2006). Individuals who are ostracized report less commitment and increased intent to turnover than those who are not excluded (Renn et al., 2012). Applied to the current context, ostracism may negatively influence organizational commitment and commitment to teaching; the investment model (Rusbult, 1980) may help explain how the process of mistreatment influences commitment. The investment model demonstrates why employees are committed to their jobs, explained by investments, satisfaction, and quality of alternatives. We extended investment model predictions to explain how mistreatment (i.e., ostracism) influences satisfaction in light of investments and alternatives. The mediation models we tested predict the following multivariate hypotheses:

> Hypothesis 3: Controlling for investments and quality of alternatives, the ostracism of K-12 teachers will indirectly affect organizational commitment through job satisfaction as a mediator.
> Hypothesis 4: Controlling for investments and quality of alternatives, the ostracism of K-12 teachers will indirectly affect commitment to teaching through teacher satisfaction as a mediator.

Method

Participants and procedures

Participants ($N = 200$, 167 female, 30 male, three did not specify their sex) were K-12 teachers, currently teaching, and not currently enrolled as either part- or full-time students. Participants were between the ages of 22 and 62 ($M = 35.55$, $SD = 10.84$). The majority of participants identified as White or

Caucasian (93%, $n = 186$), followed by 1.5% ($n = 3$) Hispanic, 1% ($n = 2$) Asian or Asian American, .5% ($n = 1$) Black or African American, 3% ($n = 6$) identified as "Other," and 1% ($n = 2$) did not specify an ethnicity. Overall teaching experience ranged from 1 to 38 years ($M = 10.17$, $SD = 8.71$), with participants reporting that they had been employed at their current school between 1 and 37 years ($M = 6.08$, $SD = 6.80$) and employed at their current position between 1 and 37 years ($M = 6.48$, $SD = 7.28$). As our sample consists mostly of Caucasian and female participants and is relatively young and less experienced than the national average,[1] these differences may limit the generalizability of the results.

After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval, network sampling was used to recruit participants. Recruitment scripts that detailed the nature of the study were posted to online communities (i.e., Imgur, Reddit, online forums of K-12 teachers) and the first author's social media websites (i.e., Facebook, Twitter). Once participants agreed to participate, they were directed to follow a link to an online survey. The survey assessed participants' experiences with workplace ostracism, commitment to teaching, organizational commitment, teacher satisfaction, job satisfaction, quality of alternatives, and investment.

Instrumentation

Ostracism

Ostracism was measured using Ferris et al.'s (2008) Workplace Ostracism Scale. The original scale contains 10 items measuring perceived ostracism from coworkers (e.g., "Within the past year *at work,* others refused to talk to me"[2]). Using a 7-point Likert-type scale, participants were asked to indicate the frequency of occurrence of each statement. Responses ranged from 1 (*never happens*) to 7 (*always happens*).

Investment

Investment was measured using a modified version of the Investment Size subscale of Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, and Manious' (1988) Investment Model Scale. The original scale contains 12 semantic differential items measuring investment size in individuals' current job (e.g., "If I was to quit my current job, to what degree would I feel that I was giving up friends at work"). Modified to use a 7-point Likert-type scale, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they felt they were giving up each of the items. Responses ranged from 1 (*to no extent*) to 7 (*a very great extent*).

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction was measured using Spector's (1997) Job Satisfaction Scale. The original scale contains three items measuring individuals' global

satisfaction with their current job (e.g., "In regards to my current job, all in all, I am satisfied with my job"). Using a 7-point Likert scale, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agree with each statement. Responses ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Teacher satisfaction

Teacher satisfaction was measured using Plax et al.'s (1986) Teacher Satisfaction Scale. The original scale contains six items measuring satisfaction with teaching (e.g., "Everything considered, how satisfying has teaching been for you?"). Using a 5-point Likert-type scale, participants were asked to answer each question concerning how they feel about teaching in general. Response categories differed for each question, with responses ranging from 1 (e.g., *very dissatisfying*) to 5 (e.g., *very satisfying*).

Quality of alternatives

Quality of alternatives was measured using Burris, Detert, and Chiaburu's (2008) Alternative Employment Scale. The original scale contains two items measuring individuals' perceptions of alternative jobs in comparison to individuals' current job (e.g., "In regards to my current job, I could easily get as good a job as this one in this city or area"). Using a 7-point Likert scale, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agree with each statement. Responses ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment was measured using a modified version of Mowday, Steers, and Porter's (1979) Organizational Commitment Scale. The original scale contains 15 items measuring individuals' perceived commitment to their current organization. Items were modified to fit the current context (e.g., "When I think about *my current school,* I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this school be successful"). Using a 7-point Likert scale, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agree with each statement. Responses ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Commitment to teaching

Commitment to teaching was measured using a modified version of Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew's (1998) Commitment Subscale of the Investment Model Scale. The original subscale contains seven items measuring relational commitment. Items were modified to fit the current context of teaching (e.g., "When I think about teaching *in general,* I want to teach for a very long time"). Using a 7-point Likert scale, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agree with each statement. Responses ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Results

Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alphas of all measures, and Pearson correlations among all variables are presented in Table 1. The average score on the ostracism scale was 1.80, meaning that on average, participants seldom experienced ostracism within the past year at work. Specifically, 65.15% ($n = 129$) of participants reported that instances of ostracism never to seldom occurred in the last year, 25.76% ($n = 51$) of participants reported that instances of ostracism seldom to occasionally occurred in the last year, 6.57% ($n = 13$) of participants reported that instances of ostracism occasionally to sometimes occurred in the last year, 2.02% ($n = 4$) of participants reported that instances of ostracism sometimes to frequently occurred in the last year; and 0.51% ($n = 1$) of participants reported that instances of ostracism frequently to often occurred in the last year. A closer look at the 65.15% of participants who reported ostracism never or seldom occurred demonstrates that only 10% ($n = 20$) of the sample reported that, within the past year, they never experienced any instance of ostracism listed on the ostracism measure.

The first and second hypotheses were tests of the investment model predicting that K-12 teachers' organizational commitment and commitment to teaching would be a function of their investments, satisfaction, and quality of alternatives. Pearson correlations revealed that organizational commitment was correlated positively with investments ($r = .66$, $p < .001$) and job satisfaction ($r = .79$, $p < .001$) and correlated negatively with quality of alternatives ($r = -.38$, $p < .001$). Pearson correlations revealed that teaching commitment was correlated positively with investments ($r = .44$, $p < .001$) and teaching satisfaction ($r = .64$, $p < .001$) but was not correlated with quality of alternatives ($r = -.13$, $p = .07$). Overall, because the first two hypotheses confirmed the investment model predictions, mediation models were tested next with investment model variables serving as covariates to test the third and fourth hypotheses.

The third and fourth hypotheses predicted that, controlling for investments and quality of alternatives, K-12 teachers' organizational commitment and

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alphas, and correlations of all study variables.

Variables	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Ostracism	1.80	.79	.91	–					
2. Quality of alternatives	3.76	1.80	.84	.10	–				
3. Teacher satisfaction	3.51	.69	.78	−.31**	−.17*	–			
4. Job satisfaction	5.48	1.35	.91	−.37**	−.31**	.64**	–		
5. Investment	4.23	1.34	.90	−.28**	−.33**	.43**	.57**	–	
6. Commitment to teaching	5.08	1.32	.90	−.16*	−.13	.64**	.68**	.44**	–
7. Organizational commitment	4.87	1.16	.92	−.32**	−.38**	.57**	.79**	.66**	.52**

**$p < 01. *$p < 05, two-tailed.

commitment to teaching would be negatively influenced by ostracism through job satisfaction and teacher satisfaction as respective mediators. Two mediation models were estimated using ordinary least squares path analysis to incorporate the investment model predictions while treating satisfaction (job or teaching) as a mediator between ostracism and organizational commitment and commitment to teaching.[3] These mediation models were estimated in PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) using 10,000 bootstrap samples with bias-corrected confidence intervals.

The first mediation model (Hypothesis 3) tested the indirect effect of ostracism on organizational commitment through job satisfaction, holding investments and quality of alternatives constant. Figure 1 reports the path model coefficients (*a, b, c'*) and variance accounted for by the investment model variables. The bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval indicated mediation for the indirect effect ($ab = -.183$) as it was entirely below zero [−.310, −.082]. The completely standardized indirect effect was −.156, CI [−.250, −.067]. That is, as reports of ostracism increase by one unit (e.g., from "never" to "seldom"), organizational commitment decreases by −.183 units, through ostracism's negative effect on job satisfaction. Ostracism also had a direct effect on organizational commitment independent of its effect on job satisfaction ($c' = -.146$, $p = .03$).

The second mediation model (Hypothesis 4) tested the indirect effect of ostracism on teaching commitment through teaching satisfaction, holding investments and quality of alternatives constant. Figure 2 reports the path model coefficients. The bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval indicated mediation for the indirect effect ($ab = -.274$) as it was entirely below zero [−.453, −.140]. The completely standardized indirect effect was −.163, CI
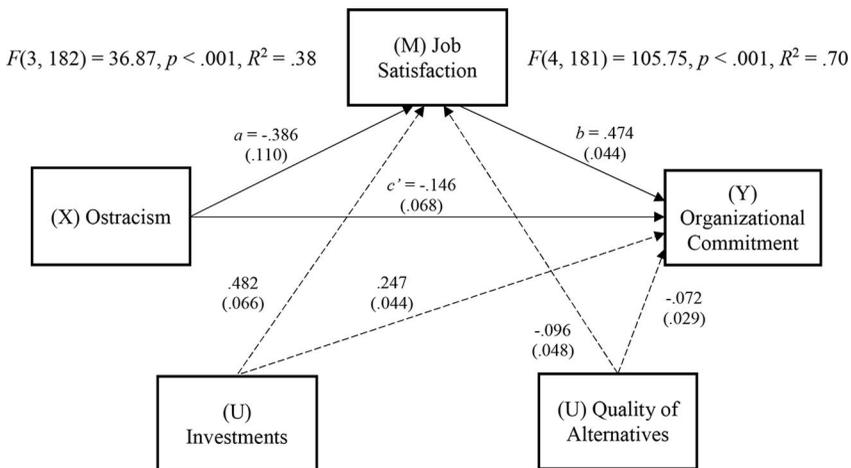
Note: Unstandardized coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

Figure 1. Investment mediation model predicting organizational commitment through job satisfaction.
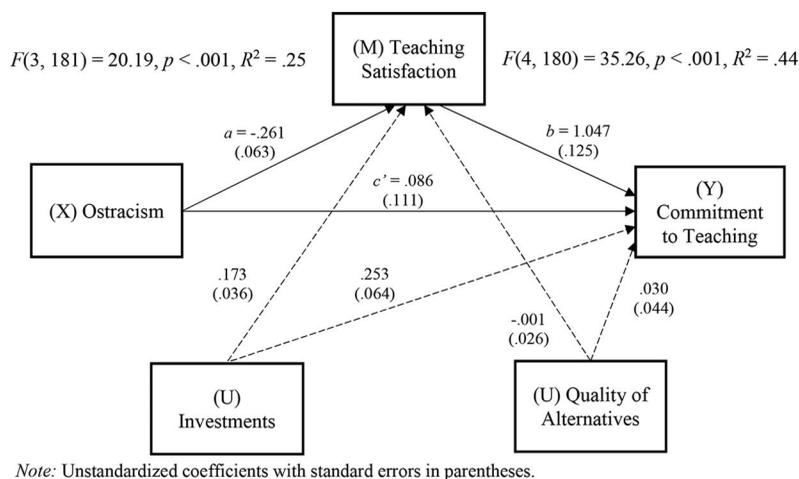
Figure 2. Investment mediation model predicting commitment to teaching through teaching satisfaction.

[−.254, −.084]. That is, as reports of ostracism increase by one unit (e.g., from "never" to "seldom"), commitment to teaching decreases by −.274 units, through ostracism's negative effect on teaching satisfaction. There was no evidence that ostracism had a direct effect on teaching commitment independent of its effect on teaching satisfaction ($c' = .086$, $p = .44$).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how coworker mistreatment among K-12 teachers influences commitment by situating ostracism within the investment model. The results of this study provide a possible mechanism by which teacher commitment is affected by ostracism. These findings, along with previous research surrounding K-12 teachers' experiences at work, demonstrate the importance of teachers' job satisfaction and teaching satisfaction on motivation to stay in a particular school and persist within the profession respectively.

Replicating tests of the investment model, the first and second hypotheses predicted that K-12 teachers' organizational commitment and commitment to teaching would be influenced by their investments, quality of alternatives, and job and teacher satisfaction. The findings support existing research as higher investments, lower perceived quality of job alternatives, and higher satisfaction correlated with increased commitment. When K-12 teachers felt like they had something to lose by leaving their current job, perceived that they could not easily find equivalent or better teaching job, and were satisfied with their job, they were more motivated to stay at their current school and remain in the teaching profession.

The results of the first and second hypotheses were expected as predicted by the investment model (Rusbult & Farrell, 1983) and supported by previous

organizational research (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2015; Bolkan et al., 2012; van Dam, 2005). The unique findings in this study emerged from testing the models proposed in the third and fourth hypotheses. The third hypothesis predicted that job satisfaction would mediate the relationship between ostracism and organizational commitment, controlling for investments and quality of alternatives. Similarly, the fourth hypothesis posited that teacher satisfaction would mediate the relationship between ostracism and commitment to teaching, controlling for investments and quality of alternatives. Although the mean ostracism score for this sample was 1.80, suggesting that ostracism seldom occurs among K-12 teachers, even a slight increase in instances of ostracism decreases teachers' satisfaction and, in turn, commitment. Furthermore, this follows workplace bullying research as although employees self-identify as targets of bullying relatively infrequently, employee mistreatment still negatively affects workplace experiences (e.g., decreased job satisfaction, increased stress; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007).

Results demonstrated that, even after accounting for investments and quality of alternatives (holding them constant), ostracism negatively affected teachers' desire to work at their school and remain in the teaching profession because of the dissatisfaction it created. One potential explanation for this finding can be explained by a lack of basic need fulfillment. Teachers, like any other organizational member, require the basic psychological need of relatedness to stay motivated to work (Deci & Ryan, 2000). As commitment involves employees' motivation to persist within an organization or profession, it follows that the satisfaction of these needs would be directly tied to commitment. The resultant lack of relatedness associated with ostracism compiled with the stressors of the teaching profession could decrease teachers' motivation to stay at their current school (i.e., organizational commitment) or within the teaching profession (i.e., commitment to teaching). Thus, regardless of teachers' perceptions of other possible jobs and how much they have invested in their career, poor relationships with their coworkers may also affect, albeit negatively, their organizational commitment. Teachers may consider working at another school to escape their fellow teachers who ostracize them and thwart their ability to relate meaningfully as coworkers.

Another explanation might explain the results obtained from the models testing the third and fourth hypotheses. It is possible that ostracism's negative effects on commitment are due to a lack of social support available at work. Social support, or the availability of social support, has been shown to alleviate the negative effects of stress and promote overall well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985). Because teachers' jobs inherently include many stressors (Moriarty et al., 2001; Pillay et al., 2005), the availability of social support from coworkers may be especially important. Among teachers, increased job resources, such as administrative support and a comfortable social climate between coworkers, helps teachers cope with the demands of the teaching profession

(Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). On the contrary, coupled with the job characteristics and emotional demands of the teaching profession, teachers who lack support at work experience burnout (Näring, Briët, & Brouwers, 2006). Additionally, aside from ostracism, the nature of a teachers' workday often requires that they remain with students in the classroom, physically separated from their coworkers, which makes it difficult to communicate with one another. Ostracized teachers are often left out of conversations, ignored, and avoided (Ferris et al., 2008), which may deprive them of needed social support when they do have the chance to communicate with coworkers (e.g., during lunch period, before first period, after school, during in-service meetings, etc.). Ostracized teachers are left out of coworker interactions and may lack the benefits of coworker support. Consequently, the stressors of the teaching profession may become too severe for ostracized teachers, and it may prove too difficult for ostracized teachers to remain committed to their career when they lack social support (Russell, Altmaier, & Van Velzen, 1987).

Finally, the mental distress associated with ostracism (e.g., Wu et al., 2012) could also explain why ostracized teachers would want to leave their organization, regardless of how attractive other jobs seem in comparison and of how much they have invested in their current job. Ostracism and other forms of exclusion are considered to be forms of workplace bullying (Einarsen, Hoel, & Notelaers, 2009). Research on employee mistreatment, in the form of workplace bullying, suggests that employees often leave their jobs to escape bullying from coworkers (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006; Zapf & Gross, 2001). In fact, teachers who are bullied by their coworkers report a greater intent to leave their jobs (Pyhältö et al., 2015). Lutgen-Sandvik's (2006) scholarship on workplace bullying suggests that employees tend to be extremely angry, resentful, and hurt when they are bullied; although some employees become confrontational when bullied, other employees voice their intent to leave and abandon their commitment to the organization because of the mental distress. Likewise, ostracized teachers may leave their current school to escape ostracism from coworkers with the belief they would be happier at a more inclusive school.

Taken together, the results from this study demonstrate that even rare instances of mistreatment of teachers at work in the form of ostracism can create a dissatisfying work environment and negative beliefs about the teaching profession; dissatisfied teachers, in turn, become less committed to their schools and to the teaching profession. Because retaining teachers has become a recent growing problem (Goldring et al., 2014), the importance of keeping teachers satisfied at work is magnified. Furthermore, as teachers already deal with a myriad of problems within the scope of their profession (e.g., student behaviors and discipline; Moriarty et al., 2001), being ostracized by coworkers only heightens the concern of dissatisfied teachers.

Although this study provided important insight into the deleterious effects of K-12 teacher ostracism on commitment, it is not without limitations. First,

though commitment is a strong predictor of retention, we did not assess retention directly. Therefore, future studies should examine actual retention and turnover rates beyond teacher reports of commitment. Second, we examined ostracism as one form of coworker mistreatment. However, mistreatment by coworkers can manifest in less obvious ways such as organizational backstabbing (Malone & Hayes, 2012). The low mean of ostracism in our sample suggests that ostracism may be an important, but infrequent, predictor of satisfaction and commitment. It may be that other factors (i.e., other forms of mistreatment) not included in our model occur more frequently than ostracism, which could explain the negative impact on satisfaction and commitment. Perhaps ostracism, though seemingly damaging, is not a prominent form of mistreatment among K-12 teachers, and other forms of mistreatment may be more important for future research. The models suggested by our results may be applied to these other, more common forms of employee mistreatment. Future studies can add to our understanding of the deleterious impact of mistreatment on teacher commitment by examining additional forms of mistreatment not typically examined by organizational communication scholars, as well as also considering the amount of social support mistreated teachers receive and the stressors they experience within the context of their jobs. Similarly, workplace ostracism is suggested to negatively impact job performance (Zhang & Kwan, 2015). In the current context of K-12 teachers, future studies should examine how teacher mistreatment negatively impacts teacher performance, for example communication within the classroom.

Additionally, the measures we used to assess job satisfaction and organizational commitment were highly correlated, which suggests these scales may be measuring similar constructs. This could be the result of similarly worded items or participants not distinguishing between nuanced differences in the items. Conceptually, in regard to Hypothesis 3, which predicted that ostracism would indirectly affect organizational commitment through job satisfaction, this might indicate that ostracism negatively affects general workplace affect, and that it may be unnecessary to distinguish between specific affective components (e.g., job satisfaction and organizational commitment).[4] The measures we used to assess job satisfaction and quality of alternatives were three and two items, respectively. Although we chose these measures for the sake of survey brevity and to avoid participant fatigue, scales with more items could have allowed for more quality responses and more fully capturing all aspects of the constructs. Additionally, relying on bootstrapping to create pseudopopulation requires a sample representative of the target population. Because our sample consists of relatively more White younger female teachers than the national average, the generalizability of these results may be limited, especially because in our sample, instances of ostracism were relatively rare.

Lastly, our results demonstrate that ostracism does occur and that this mistreatment has a negative impact on teachers' commitment. However, we

did not investigate why ostracism occurs among teachers. Extant research suggests that individuals ostracize coworkers as a form of control to correct or improve destructive or unhelpful behavior (Feinberg, Willer, & Schultz, 2014; Masclet, 2003). Additionally, studies suggest that deviant and destructive behaviors at work (e.g., bullying) are the result of high-strain working environments characterized by high job demands, a lack of job control, and limited support (Baillien, De Cuyper, & De Witte, 2011; Goodboy, Martin, Knight, & Long, 2017). Future studies should investigate what factors contribute to ostracism of teachers for a more comprehensive understanding of the antecedents of employee teacher ostracism and mistreatment.

Teachers have one of the most important, yet stressful jobs, and much of teachers' career success relies on their commitment to educating our youth. In addition to all of the stressors teachers face in their daily work, ostracism from their coworkers only exacerbates their occupational challenges by affecting their commitment despite how much effort and investment they have already put into their career. Therefore, administrators should focus on fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace culture to retain quality and committed educators. By doing so, instead of being distracted and dissatisfied by mistreatment from their coworkers, teachers will be able to focus on what is most important—teaching their students.

Notes

1. In 2011 and 2012, of the national population of K-12 teachers, 76% were female and 24% were male; 82.7% were White/non-Hispanic, 7.5% were Hispanic, 6.4% were Black, 1.8% were Asian, and less than 1% were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, or two or more races; the average age of teachers was 42.6 years, the average years of teaching experience was 13.8 years, and the average number of years at current school was 8 years (Goldring, Gray, & Bitterman, 2013). Our sample has more female participants (in comparison to male participants), is less ethnically diverse, and is slightly younger and less experienced than the national population.
2. Participants were provided with the stem "Within in the past year *at work* … " and were asked to respond to the following items: (1) others ignored me, (2) others left the area when I entered, (3) my greetings have gone unanswered, (4) I involuntarily sat alone in a crowded lunchroom, (5) others avoided me, (6) I noticed others would not look at me, (7) others shut me out of the conversation, (8) others refused to talk to me, (9) others treated me as if I weren't there, and (10) others did not invite me or ask me if I wanted anything when they went out for a coffee break.
3. Considering the national statistics of K-12 teachers (Goldring et al., 2013), when controlling for age and sex, the results of both mediation models did not change. Please contact the first author for the results of the mediation models controlling for age and sex.
4. We conducted a CFA with robust maximum likelihood to examine the factor structure of organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Results of a two factor solution provided a poor fit $\chi^2(134) = 352.284$, $p < .001$, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .090, 90% confidence interval (CI) [.079, .102], Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = .885, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .057. Much like the

correlation between scale averages, the correlation between the two latent variables was also rather large (.87). We ran a one-factor solution to see if items were isomorphic, measuring the same single latent construct. The single factor model also provided a poor fit, $\chi^2(135) = 417.560$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .102, 90% CI [.091, .114], CFI = .851, SRMR = .057. Results of a chi-square difference test suggested that the one-factor solution is slightly worse $\chi^2_D = 65.276$, $p < .001$.

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