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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Workplace Marginalization: In the Group but Out of the Loop

Abstract New-entry employees expect to be involved rather than to be marginalized. This paper proposes a model to examine the process through which employees can be exempt from marginalization in their organization as a "political arena." We argue that an employee, in order not to be marginalized, would like to perform high-quality in-role and extra-role behaviors and also develop good guanxi with his/her immediate supervisor. Moreover, the effects of employee efforts and *guanxi* on workplace marginalization are moderated by the organization political climate. Two studies were performed to examine the hypothesized model. The pilot study employed a sample of civil servants to develop and validate the measurement of workplace marginalization. The main study collected matched data from 343 employees, 662 of their colleagues, and 343 immediate supervisors. Results of hierarchical linear modeling analysis show that employee job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* are negatively related to workplace marginalization. In addition, the negative relationship between *guanxi* and workplace marginalization is stronger in firms with less organizational politics than those with intensive politics.

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1 Introduction

Imagine in your boss's office, you cautiously try to ask for several days off for a family reunion back to your hometown. Your boss nods in approval without any hesitation, and tells that you can stay even longer there. Later when you come back from the trip, you find everything in your division is going well even though you left with much work unfinished, and some social events were hold just when you were away without keeping you informed. You come to realize that it makes no difference whether you are here or not, and feel being out of the loop although you are definitely a member of the group. Finally, you find out that you are marginalized and try to figure it out through your own ways.

The scenario described above is a typical form of "cold-violence" taking place in the workplace, which is a universal organizational phenomenon. We define workplace marginalization as an individual's being left out of meaningful participation in group processes and activities even though she/he is a formal member of the group. Several features are commonly associated with workplace marginalization. First, the victim of marginalization is still in the group rather than being marginalized out from the group. Second, she/he is out of the loop because she/he cannot get involved in the group process or activities and perceives decreasing meaningful existence in the group. Workplace marginalization is a type of social mistreatment, which is commonly experienced in organizations, it significantly frustrates the marginalized target, and may even lead to the victim's anti-social behaviors. Therefore, it is meaningful to explore solutions for workplace marginalization.

In management research, there are two other similar concepts: perceived insider status (PIS) (Stamper & Masterson, 2000) and workplace ostracism (Williams, 1997, 2001). Both perceived insider status and workplace marginalization refer to the degree to which an individual is involved in a group. Perceived insider status is a purely psychological construct, which may not be visually observed, while workplace marginalization indicates the relational status of an individual to a group or other group members. In mathematic terms, we can describe workplace marginalization in analyzing the relationship between an individual(s) and a "set/group." A set, or a group, is formed by multiple constructive individuals. However, the constructive group may centralize into a smaller but still very representative group, which we call a core; and there is a significant group center. One or a few individuals being marginalized are in the

constructive group but are far away from the core, especially the group center as "outsiders." If the outsiders are eliminated from the constructive group, the core remains much more integrated, with a compact structure and group boundary as well. The relative distance of the individual(s) from the group center indicates that whether the individual(s) has been marginalized by others.

Workplace ostracism (Ferris et al., 2008) is defined as the ongoing perceived experience of being ignored, rejected or socially marginalized by another individual or group of individuals in a given social context (Williams, 1997; Wu, Wei, & Hui, 2011). However, being ostracized does not necessarily mean the target is out of the core as she/he may be only ostracized by one individual but still actively involved in the group processes. Numerous studies (Ferris et al., 2008) over the past decade have examined the effects of workplace ostracism on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, leader-member exchange, and deviant behavior. Previous research on this topic attracts much academic attention and lays a solid basis for further research. In this research, we differentiate workplace marginalization from workplace ostracism. The former concerns to which degree an individual has, perceptually, being left out of meaningful participation in the group processes and activities even though she/he is a formal member of the group, whereas the latter is a more general concept. An individual can be ostracized by the group or other individuals in the group. However, being ostracized by another individual (if he or she is not a significant figure) in the group, an individual may not be necessarily marginalized from the core.

Previous studies on these similar topics mainly focused on the negative consequences. However, this research aims to explore the antecedents rather than the consequences. Moreover, our research participants were all new-entry employees, who were experiencing environmental change—from campus to workplace, i.e., moving from the ivory tower to a "political arena" (Mintzberg, 1983). Therefore, our research framework considers organizational political climate as a contextual boundary factor to examine how individual behaviors and outcomes are influenced by the organizational climate.

Furthermore, our research perspectives on workplace marginalization are totally different from Ferris et al's (2008) research on workplace ostracism. Ferris et al. (2008) mainly investigated the effects of workplace ostracism on employees' attitudinal and behavioral outcomes by answering the question "what are the negative outcomes of workplace ostracism?" However, our research aims to explore the antecedents rather than the outcomes and to answer the question "why are some employees marginalized?" We try to propose a research framework based on the interaction between individual behaviors and

organizational political climate, and to build a scene of "what cause employees' being marginalized?" As mentioned previously, new-entry employees experience a major environmental change. In the workplace as a "political arena," they are faced with organizational politics and have to use all kinds of tactics and political savvy to advance their career. Lacking of political capital and skills, new-entry employees suffer from organizational politics, as they pay much attention to and being sensitive to, political climate. Our research aims to propose a model to examine the process that employees make effort to avoid being marginalized in the politicized organizational context.

2 Theories and Hypothesis Development

An individual tries to avoid workplace marginalization as she/he wants to be actively involved in the group, which is also a process of constructing the meaningful existence of oneself in the group. In this research, social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989) is adopted to explain why certain behaviors can reduce workplace marginalization. Social identity theory clearly distinguishes two typical identities, social identity and personal identity. The former refers to individuals' identity based on the whole social group, whereas the latter refers to individuals' identification of and commitment to a key individual in the social group. Identity construction is also a process of clarification of self concepts. In Brewer & Gardner's (1996) clarification of self-concepts, there are two types of selves, collective self and relational self. That is to say, people may construct themselves based on either the group or the significant individual in the group. Moreover, according to previous research on national culture, China is a society of relational collectivism, which indicates that Chinese identities rely on both the social group to which individuals belong and the significant others to whom they are related (Brewer & Chen, 2007).

Our research investigates employee behaviors based on their two different self concepts. On the one hand, they would make efforts to fulfill job requirements and even engage in extra-role behaviors to improve group performance as they are group-based. On the other hand, they would also try to build good personal *guanxi* with their supervisors to gain personal benefits and to avoid being marginalized as they are relational oriented. By constructing the self-identity in the group, employees feel more meaningful existence and make them less likely to be marginalized.

Mintzberg (1985) has argued that people cannot clearly understand organizational behavior before getting knowledge of power and politics. Our research includes organizational political climate as a moderator in our research

model. Specifically, we investigate that whether the strength of the relationships between individual behaviors and workplace marginalization varies as the level of organizational political climate varies.

2.1 Job Performance, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, and Workplace Marginalization

If an individual has a group-based relationship with the group that he or she belongs to, it means that this individual defines group as a combination of individuals and perceives oneself as an inseparable part of the group. When an employee perceives oneself as an inseparable part from the group, she/he would relate personal benefits to group achievements and thus try to enhance group achievements. She/he would even sacrifice personal benefits when there is a conflict between personal benefits and organizational benefits and perceive improving job performance as an obligation. Moreover, a group-based individual would also engage in organizational citizenship behaviors (Organ, 1988; Zhang, Liao, & Zhao, 2011) to seek meaningful existence in the group. In short, the group-based self-identity would urge an individual to improve job performance and to engage in organizational citizenship behaviors, so as to avoid being marginalized in the work group.

Based on the above discussion, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The better an employee performs, the less likely she/he would be marginalized in the workplace.

Hypothesis 2: The more an employee is engaged in organizational citizenship behaviors, the less likely she/he would be marginalized in the workplace.

2.2 Supervisor-Subordinate *Guanxi* and Workplace Marginalization

Guanxi is an indigenous Chinese construct, which describes an informal connection between two or more individuals or groups involving shared social experience, the exchange of favors and trust (Bian, 1997; Hwang, 1987; Luo, 1997). *Guanxi* is often translated in English as "relationships," but the concepts differ in that relationships can be positive or negative, while *guanxi* can be only strong or weak. The concept of *guanxi* goes beyond the friendly cooperation often found in Western business relationships, because it has deep Chinese historical and cultural roots. King (1991) described the five cardinal relationships (*wulun*) of Confucian ethics between ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, and between friends. These were seen as underpinning the order and hierarchy of ancient Chinese societies, and

are still considered important today. Although the structure and nature of *guanxi* have been evolving, modern Chinese societies remain very much *guanxi*-oriented (Chen & Chen, 2004). Supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* (s-s *guanxi*) in a Chinese organization is still seen as corresponding to the "ruler-subject *guanxi*" of old, and it is the most critical interpersonal relationship in various Chinese organizational settings.

S-s *guanxi* is similar to the concept of LMX in the west, reflecting the quality of exchange between the supervisor and the subordinate. However, unlike LMX, which is usually restricted to the workplace only, the cultivation of s-s *guanxi* involves more after-work activities (Law et al., 2000). Chinese subordinates work through informal channels such as various after-work social activities to establish *guanxi* with their supervisors (Wei et al., 2010).

In addition, the Chinese society is characterized by rule of man (where *guanxi* matters) than rule of law (Walder, 1991). Decision making and resource allocation in a group are strongly influenced by the key person's favor. If an employee has high quality *guanxi* with the key figures (i.e., the supervisor), he or she will have the advantage of acquiring valuable resources and distinctive competitiveness (Braendle, Gasser, & Null, 2005), and also be involved in important activities or even decision making processes in the group. For instance, Law et al.'s (2000) study has shown that s-s *guanxi* was related to the supervisor's decisions on employee promotion and bonus allocation beyond task performance. In addition, Wei et al.'s (2010) study has determined s-s *guanxi*'s effects on the subordinate's career prospect. Otherwise, if s-s *guanxi* is weak, the subordinate would more likely be marginalized by other employees who are more close to the power center. Thus it is reasonable for us to propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: The stronger the supervisor-subordinate *guanxi*, the less likely a subordinate would be marginalized in the workplace.

2.3 The Moderating Role of Organizational Political Climate

Organizational political climate exhibits through decisions made in the organizations, and the degree to which the superior have more decision power the subordinates (Drory, 1993). In an organization with intensive politics, the decision making process is dictated more by politics than by formal rules and regulations. Under this circumstance, the supervisors will have more decision power and can control organizational resources for the purpose of maximizing personal benefits. In such a climate, employees are more likely to engage in informal activities (such as building personal *guanxi* with their supervisors) to

get more personal benefits or to avoid being marginalized (Breland et al., 2007). These informal activities are more likely to get things done than formal activities (job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors). Therefore, this research includes organizational political climate as a moderator in the research model and predicts that in highly politicized organizations good job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors are less likely to reduce workplace marginalization than strong s-s *guanxi*. Based on the above discussion, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4: Organizational political climate moderates the relationship between job performance and workplace marginalization such that job performance is less likely to reduce the possibility of being marginalized in organizations with higher organizational political climate.

Hypothesis 5: Organizational political climate moderates the relationship between organizational citizenship behavior and workplace marginalization such that organizational citizenship behavior is less likely to reduce the possibility of being marginalized in organizations with higher organizational political climate.

Hypothesis 6: Organizational political climate moderates the relationship between supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* and workplace marginalization such that supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* is more likely to reduce the possibility of being marginalized in organizations with higher organizational political climate.

The above discussion suggests a research framework as illustrated in Fig.1.

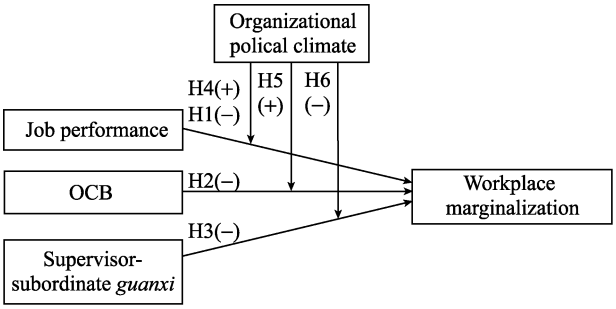

Fig.1 Conceptual Model of Workplace Marginalization

3 Methods

3.1 Development and Validation of a Measure for Workplace Marginalization

We developed an instrument in the Chinese organizational context as there was

no validated scale for workplace marginalization. The process of instrument development was as follows:

Based on the definition of workplace marginalization, the authors first wrote three items for this construct. After that, in MBA courses in a top university in China, we presented our research thoughts on workplace marginalization and collected detailed description of the students' experiences of being marginalized. We did this in four courses for 202 students and got 23 detailed descriptions from 10 MBA students. We then analyzed and categorized the descriptions with two senior professors in management. We got other three items and revised the three items directly derived from the definition. Among these six items for this construct, four were reverse-coded.

We did a pilot study by including these six items in a survey for the civil servants working in 11 national ministries in China. The objective of the survey was to examine the emotional state of these civil servants, to understand the existing problems, and to provide solutions of how to regulate emotions. The survey included background information, emotional intelligence, ways to release negative emotions, application of emotion regulation, and organizational justice. We mixed the measuring items for workplace marginalization and other items randomly in the survey. We sent out 500 questionnaires and got responses from 169 civil servants.

Finally, to refine the instrument, we used the data to conduct exploratory factor analyses (EFAs). Principal components analyses with varimax rotation were performed to obtain the factor structure among the 6 items and to refine the measurement scales. After analyses, we found that workplace marginalization is a unidimensional construct. Furthermore, we found that interpersonal justice is more related to workplace marginalization than other constructs. Thus we included interpersonal justice as a criterion variable to help refine the measurement of workplace marginalization. After the validation process, 4 items for workplace marginalization were eventually maintained.

Table 1 presents the EFA results. The table summarizes the rotated factor pattern, eigen-values and interpreted percentage of total variance of items involved in the analysis. Furthermore, reliability analysis was also performed. The Cronbach's alpha value for the measurement of workplace marginalization is 0.72, which is higher than the conventional critical value 0.70, indicating a satisfactory measuring reliability.

Table 1 Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis

	Factor 1 (IJ)	Factor 2 (WM)
Interpersonal justice (IJ)[a]		
1. My supervisor cares about my esteem during work	0.87	–0.16
2. My supervisor respects me during work	0.87	0.07
3. My supervisor avoids improper comments during work	0.85	0.02
4. My supervisor is polite to me during work	0.80	–0.03
Workplace marginalization (WM)		
1. My behaviors have no impact on organizational image	0.02	0.79
2. My absence has no impact on my job	0.07	0.77
3. My supervisor always adopts my advice[b]	0.19	–0.74
4 People who know me are more than people I know[b]	–0.01	–0.65
Eigenvalues	2.93	2.22
Percentage of total variance explained	36.60	27.75
Cronbach's α	0.87	0.72

Note: n = 169; Extraction Method: Principle components analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; ** indicates $p < 0.01$, * indicates $p < 0.05$.

a. In this study, the measurement of interpersonal justice was only used to refine the measurement of workplace marginalization;

b. reverse coding item.

3.2 Sample and Procedures of the Main Study

Data for this study were collected from 16 large construction material manufacturing firms in southern China. The firms' total employment ranged from 780 to 3,300. Each firm's HR professionals assisted in identifying survey respondents who had graduated from university two years previously. 20 to 38 subordinates were identified in each firm and in total, 426 subordinates were our targets for the survey.

Each subordinate was surveyed along with two of their peer workers and his or her direct supervisor. A research team visited each firm and distributed the questionnaires to the selected respondents in person. The subordinates were asked to evaluate their own performance over the past two years, including job performance and contextual performance such as organizational citizenship behaviors. They were also asked to assess their *guanxi* with their supervisors, the organization's political climate as well as their perception of being marginalized. With the help of each firm's HR professionals, the subordinates' peers and supervisors were then asked to respond to another set of questionnaires. These questionnaires named the subordinates for the purpose of matching. The peers were asked to rate the subordinate's performance as well as the organization's political climate. The supervisors rated the subordinate's job performance and

his/her own *guanxi* with the subordinate. Mutual evaluation was avoided in the design. All the respondents were told that the purpose of the study was to research the general issues of the firm's HRM practices, and each respondent received a gift to encourage completion of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were returned via either the HR professionals, who collected and mailed them, or the subordinates who mailed the completed instruments themselves.

We finally received responses from 368 subordinates, 755 coworkers, and 359 direct supervisors after three months (with two reminding mails during that period). The response rate was 86%, 89% and 84%, respectively. This yielded 343 matched sets of questionnaires (343 subordinates, 662 peers and 343 direct supervisors). The overall response rate after matching was 80%. Among the subordinates we focused on, 59% were male with an average age of 25 (S.D. = 1.98), and the average number of years of working experience was 2.1 (S.D. = 0.45).

3.3 Measures

Job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, supervisor-subordinate *guanxi*, organizational political climate, and workplace marginalization are key variables of the study.

Job performance. The 5-item job performance scale was developed by Williams & Anderson (1991) and later used by Hui et al. (1999) in the Chinese context to capture the essential aspects of respondents' performance. Sample items included: "The subordinate always completes the duties specified in his/her job description," "Fulfills all responsibilities required by his/her job," and "Never neglects aspects of the job that he/she is obligated to perform." The Cronbach's alpha values for the self, peer and supervisor ratings were 0.85, 0.91, and 0.89.

Organizational citizenship behavior. Researchers have identified many different "types" of OCBs, but this study focused on five dimensions: altruism, courtesy, conscientiousness, sportsmanship, and civic virtue. Podsakoff et al. (1990) devised a scale comprising 26 items, but most scholars have preferred a shortened form of their questionnaire with one or two questions for each dimension. In this study, Podsakoff's scale was abridged to 6 items covering the five dimensions. Each dimension was assessed by one item, except that two items assessed altruism. The Cronbach's alpha values for the self, peer and supervisor ratings were 0.82, 0.77, and 0.84.

Supervisor-subordinate guanxi. The 6 items developed by Law et al. (2000) were employed to measure s-s *guanxi*. Both the subordinate and his/her direct supervisor were asked to provide the rating. Sample items for the subordinate's

rating included: "My supervisor invites me to meals," "I stand by my supervisor when there is any dispute," "I visit my supervisor and give him/her gifts during festivals," and "I take the initiative to talk to my supervisor, telling him/her my thoughts, worries, and needs." The Cronbach's alpha values of the self and supervisor's ratings were 0.85 and 0.86, indicating acceptable reliability.

Organizational political climate. Nine items developed by Drory (1993) were adopted to measure the political climate of the organization. The subordinates and their peers were asked to indicate how the decisions related to promotion, task assignments, allocation of personal benefits and so forth are usually made in the organization. The Cronbach's alpha values of the subordinates' and peers' ratings were 0.89 and 0.91, respectively. As organizational political climate is an organizational level variable and a firm has a unique organizational climate, we aggregated the scores provided by individuals to the firm level. According to James (1982), if Rwg of the variable is over 0.70, aggregation is reasonable. We calculated Rwg of the variable and results justified our aggregation.

Control variables. As described previously, the survey's design has controlled for some other important demographics of the subordinates. We surveyed subordinates with two years' working experience, which yielded subjects similar in education, organizational tenure and job position. We controlled age for its effect on the possibility of being marginalized in the organization. In anticipation of "glass ceilings" (e.g. Pang & Lau, 1998; Powell & Butterfield, 1994), gender was also controlled for so as to minimize confounding influences on estimates of the employees' efforts for not being marginalized. Gender was represented by a dummy, with male coded as "0" and female as "1."

4 Results

Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) was employed to analyze the cross-level data. This method takes into account the individual-level error in estimating firm-level coefficients. It can simultaneously estimate two models: one identifying the relationships within each firm, and the other representing how these within-firm relationships vary among firms (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Liu, Fu, & Wu, 2008). The relationships among job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, s-s *guanxi* and workplace marginalization were modeled at the individual level, while the firm-level variable (organization's political climate) was modeled to explain inter-firm variation of workplace marginalization.

The results of the HLM analyses are presented in Table 2. As shown, Model 1 specified the effects of the control variables. Model 2 included job performance, organizational citizenship behavior and s-s *guanxi* as the predicting variables of

workplace marginalization. Model 3 included the firm-level variable (organization's political climate) to explain the relationships between three independent variables (job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, s-s *guanxi*) and dependent variable (workplace marginalization). In Model 2, job performance ($\beta = -0.21$, $p < 0.01$), organizational citizenship behavior ($\beta = -0.24$, $p < 0.05$), and s-s *guanxi* ($\beta = -0.09$, $p < 0.10$) showed negative relationships with workplace marginalization after controlling for gender and age. Hence Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were supported.

Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 were tested in Model 3. Model 3 suggested that the interaction between job performance and political climate on workplace marginalization is not significant ($\beta = 0.05$, n.s.), and that between organizational citizenship behavior and political climate is not significant either ($\beta = -0.02$, n.s.), thus Hypotheses 4 and 5 were not supported. In addition, Model 3 suggested that the interaction between s-s *guanxi* and political climate on workplace marginalization is significant ($\beta = 0.11$, $p < 0.10$). Following the procedure recommended by Aiken & West (1991), we plotted Fig. 2 to demonstrate the pattern of the interactional effect. The figure suggests that the relationship between s-s *guanxi* and workplace marginalization is stronger in highly politicized organizations than in the less politicized organizations. The finding is opposite to our prediction. Therefore, Hypothesis 6 was not supported, and our data supported the opposite of Hypothesis 6.

Table 2 Results of Hierarchical Linear Modeling Analysis

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Individual-level variables			
1.Gender	–0.09	–0.08	–0.08
2.Age	0.02	0.04*	0.04*
3.Job performance (JP)		–0.21**	–0.22**
4.Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)		–0.24*	–0.24*
5.Supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* (GX)		–0.09†	–0.10†
Organizational-level variable			
6.Organizational political climate's			
Impact on the JP-WM linkage			0.05
Impact on the OCB-WM linkage			–0.02
Impact on the GX-WM linkage			0.11†
Increase in variance explained (%)	2.4	20.5[a]	1.5[b]

Note: a. Increase in variance explained compared with Model 1;
b. Increase in variance explained compared with Model 2;
** indicates $p < 0.01$, * indicates $p < 0.05$, † indicates $p < 0.10$.

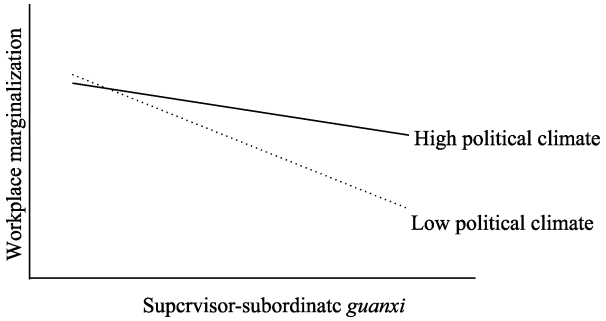

Fig. 2 Interaction between Supervisor-Subordinate *Guanxi* and Political Climate

5 Discussion

5.1 Theoretical Implications

A sociable person defines himself or herself based on both the significant others and the group that he or she belongs to. He or she is more likely to have the reason and motivation to accept the values, rules, and assignments of organization when he or she has the consciousness and obligation aroused by being accepted. Otherwise, a person would be in the constructive group but substantially out of the core. In this case, it is difficult to make full usage of his or her talents and efforts for group achievements and cause human capital loss for the organizations. Our research systematically demonstrates the widely existed workplace marginalization and adopts social identity theory to explain the interaction effects between individual factors (job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and s-s *guanxi*) and organizational factor (organizational political climate) on workplace marginalization.

The results of the study indicate that job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* have significantly negative associations with workplace marginalization. In highly politicized organizations, employees who tend to build *guanxi* with supervisors are more likely to be marginalized, which is opposite to the hypothesis that we propose. The hypotheses about main effects are all supported, while there is only one significant moderation effect, which is opposite to our prediction. We offer two explanations for this. First, in highly politicized organizations, supervisors are always politically skilled and can easily distinguish “a good actor” from “a good soldier.” An employee who tends to build *guanxi* with the direct supervisor may

always be regarded as "a good actor." Moreover, in highly politicized organizations, employees are more sensitive to political behaviors. When an employee makes efforts to build a close connection with the direct supervisor, the colleagues feel threatened as they have to compete for the limited organizational resources. Both the two situations may cause the employee to be marginalized.

The theoretical values of this study are mainly reflected in the following two aspects. First, our theoretical and empirical research on workplace marginalization is a meaningful exploration in this research field. In our research, we adopt social identity theory to explain the mechanism in workplace marginalization and develop a measuring scale for workplace marginalization. Second, the key variables in our research are job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, s-s *guanxi*, workplace marginalization, and organizational political climate. We use hierarchical linear modeling to test our multilevel research model, making our conclusion more convincing.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

There are, of course, limitations inherent in this study. The first one relates to our research design. Our design specified collecting data from multiple sources, which helps control common-source bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Despite this merit, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits our inference of the causality. It is thus expected that future research with longitudinal data will better infer the causality. Second, we sampled junior staff in 16 manufacturing firms only. Although this sampling strategy helps constrain the timing effect in *guanxi* formation, such a design may limit the generalizability of the conclusions to other types of employees as well as firms. Future studies might profitably be designed with samples from other industries and employees with broader demographic characteristics. Third, our research on workplace marginalization is based on individuals' perceptions in organizations. Some employees are marginalized by the higher-level organizations (such as the companies) but are actively involved in the lower-level organizations (such as the project teams). On the contrary, some employees are marginalized by the lower-level organizations but accepted by the higher-level organizations. The research participants may feel puzzled about which organization-level our research refers to. Future research on workplace marginalization should be based on a combination of individual level and team level. Fourth, the supervisors in our research are direct supervisors of the new-entry employees. They are in relatively lower level of the organization and are not significant figures in organizations. High quality *guanxi*

with these not-so-significant figures in organizations may become an excuse for being marginalized by significant figures in higher organization-level. This may also explain why the results are opposite to Hypothesis 6. Additionally, we adopt the measuring scales that developed in the Western culture and working settings in order to investigate the relations and phenomena existing in the Chinese organizations. Although some scales have been proven to have stable measurement both in Chinese and Western populations, the best choice is to use indigenous measuring scales. For example, Ma, Lin, & Fang (2006) developed the measurement of organizational politic perceptions, which might be a proper substitute of political climate in this study.

Future studies, conducted in the Chinese organizational context, should make efforts to develop or adopt indigenous measures. Via these efforts, Chinese scholars could contribute substantially to the knowledge base in management field.

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