

# **POLITICAL SKILL AND WORK OUTCOMES: A THEORETICAL EXTENSION, META-ANALYTIC INVESTIGATION, AND AGENDA FOR THE FUTURE**

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This quantitative review explored the political skill construct and its predictive ability across a number of organizational outcomes. First, we extended the Ferris et al. meta-theoretical framework of political skill. Next, incorporating meta-analysis, we found political skill is positively related to self-efficacy, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work productivity, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), career success, and personal reputation, and negatively related to physiological strain. Political skill was not significantly related to psychological strain or perceptions of organizational politics. Using meta-regression and dominance analyses, political skill predicted task performance after controlling for the Big Five personality characteristics and general mental ability. In a test of indirect relationships, our results suggest that personal reputation and self-efficacy partially mediate the political skill–task performance relationship. Finally, in a post hoc test of political skill dimensions, we found that networking ability, interpersonal influence, and apparent sincerity (but not social astuteness) predicted task performance. Our findings provide a comprehensive assessment of theory and research to date on political skill and extend theoretical foundations to stimulate new inquiry into the operation of this important construct.

The increasingly social and equivocal nature of work has heightened emphasis on the ability to understand and navigate the social fabric of

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organizations (Grant, Fried, Parker, & Frese, 2010). It is within these types of job demands that Pfeffer (1981) and Mintzberg (1983, 1985) characterized political skill as an interpersonal savvy and style construct, enabling individuals to successfully secure resources and influence others at work in ways to ensure effectiveness. A rapidly growing stream of research suggests that political skill is a critical personal characteristic for employees, demonstrating a broad impact on a range of organizational outcomes (see Ferris, Treadway, Brouer, & Munyon, 2012, for qualitative review).

Since the early conceptualizations of Pfeffer and Mintzberg, political skill largely lay dormant for nearly 2 decades, before Ferris and his colleagues developed a research program that defined the construct (Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005), created a measurement instrument (Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005), distinguished political skill from other related constructs (e.g., Ferris, Perrewé, & Douglas, 2002; Semadar, Robins, & Ferris, 2006), and offered an initial theoretical foundation (Ferris et al., 2007). Ferris, Treadway et al.'s (2005) and Ferris et al.'s (2007) work on the theoretical foundations and measurement of political skill provided the impetus for a burgeoning research agenda focused on the antecedents, outcomes, and contingencies related to political skill at work.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the increased importance and empirical research activity generated by the political skill construct, only a very narrow attempt to understand its cumulative effects across studies has been undertaken. A quantitative review by Bing, Davidson, Minor, Novicevic, and Frink (2011) evaluated political skill's relation to task and contextual performance through a relatively small number of studies (i.e.,  $k = 17$ ), confirming political skill's positive impact on performance in the social context of work. However, they did not test or extend other existing conceptual foundations in the Ferris et al. (2007) theoretical framework.

Accordingly, the primary goal of this study is to test and extend the metatheoretical framework proposed by Ferris and colleagues (2007) across 130 studies. By doing so, this investigation also implicitly replicates, validates, and extends the Bing et al. (2011) meta-analytic findings on political skill with regard to task and contextual performance, but with a more extensive set of studies (i.e.,  $k = 74$  studies). Because of the importance of task performance as a critical outcome in organizational behavior (Staw, 1984), we also examine the impact of political skill on task performance after controlling for the Big Five personality characteristics and general mental ability using meta-analytic regression and dominance

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<sup>1</sup>The political skill construct's annual citations per year based on the *Google Scholar* index have increased significantly since its inception, reaching over 800 citations in 2012, up from less than 200 in 1999.

analysis. Similarly, we examine indirect, moderating, and dimensional relationships between political skill and task performance. Finally, we offer new areas of inquiry and establish an agenda for future political skill research. In combination, these efforts provide the most comprehensive empirical review of political skill to date, establishing a foundation from which to stimulate future research on this construct.

### *Understanding Political Skill*

Ferris, Treadway et al. (2005, p. 127) defined political skill as: “The ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one’s personal and/or organizational objectives.” Later, Ferris et al. (2007) characterized political skill as “a comprehensive pattern of social competencies, with cognitive, affective, and behavioral manifestations, which have both direct effects on outcomes, as well as moderating effects on predictor–outcome relationships” (p. 291), while further articulating the four dimensions of political skill: apparent sincerity, social astuteness, interpersonal influence, and networking ability (Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2007). The four dimensions of political skill are assumed to relate to one another, although they remain distinct constructs.

Apparent sincerity enables individuals to appear authentic, genuine, and honest, which modifies how others perceive behavioral intentions. Social astuteness involves the incisive observation of others, as well as the ability to understand people, the self, and social interactions, and to accurately interpret the behavior of oneself and others. Interpersonal influence incorporates a flexible, adaptive nature that allows individuals to adjust and calibrate their behavior to different and changing situations, which tends to elicit the targeted and desired attitudinal and behavioral responses from others. Finally, networking ability vests individuals with the capacity to identify and develop diverse networks of relationships. Politically skilled individuals develop friendships easily, and theoretically build beneficial coalitions and alliances (Ferris et al., 2007).

Because political skill is a social effectiveness construct, a discussion of related constructs is warranted, and we make particular reference here to self-monitoring, political savvy, and emotional intelligence. First, self-monitoring reflects the ability to read situations and make behavioral adjustments (Snyder, 1987), which overlaps to a degree with the social astuteness dimension of political skill in that both constructs enable situational diagnoses and reactions. The moderate empirical relationship between the two reflects this overlap (e.g.,  $r = .33$ ; Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005). Second, political savvy reflects an understanding of power and

political dynamics in organizations (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994). As such, political savvy influences the extent to which individuals process information concerning their work environment, which shares overlap with the social astuteness dimension of political skill.

Empirical research suggests a moderate relationship between political skill and political savvy (e.g.,  $r = .47$ ; Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005). Third, political skill is also related to emotional intelligence, defined as the "ability to carry out accurate reasoning about emotions and the ability to use emotions and emotional knowledge to enhance thought" (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008, p. 511). Scholars generally consider emotional intelligence to encompass the dimensions of emotion perception, emotion understanding, and emotion regulation (e.g., Joseph & Newman, 2010; Mayer, Salovey, & Carusco, 2000), which would suggest some overlap with the interpersonal effectiveness and apparent sincerity dimensions of political skill. Empirical research to date suggests a moderate relationship between political skill and emotional intelligence (e.g.,  $r = .53$ , Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005). Thus, political skill has some degree of conceptual overlap with other interpersonal effectiveness constructs but with adequate discriminant validity (Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2007).

To date, three scales have been used to measure political skill in the literature. The first is a unidimensional six-item scale developed by Ferris and colleagues (1999), and characterized as "political skill." The second is a unidimensional seven-item scale developed by Ferris, Witt, and Hochwarter (2001), and referred to as "social skill." The third is a multidimensional 18-item scale developed by Ferris, Treadway et al. (2005),<sup>2</sup> and referred to as the "*Political Skill Inventory*." Despite differences in dimensionality and nomenclature, Ferris and his colleagues (2012) argued that the measures reflect the same core social effectiveness construct and should be labeled as "political skill" to promote consensus and precision in future research.

Political skill is believed to have both developmental and dispositional influences (Ferris et al., 2007, 2001), and is conceptualized as a competency that can be substantially developed through training, mentoring, and socialization (Ferris, Anthony, Kolodinsky, Gilmore, & Harvey, 2002; Ferris et al., 2008; Pfeffer, 2010). In addition, it is believed to have dispositional and personal ability antecedents as well, and extant evidence

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<sup>2</sup>The number of studies using the Ferris et al. (1999) unidimensional scale was 14, whereas the Ferris et al. (2001) unidimensional social skill scale accounted for another eight studies. The number of studies reporting the Ferris, Treadway et al. (2005) multidimensional scale was 103, for a total of 125 studies. The other measures combined totaled five.

<p><b>Political Skill Effects on Self-Evaluations</b></p> <p><b>Intrapyschic Processes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal resource assessments</li> <li>- Assessments of self-efficacy<sup>1</sup> and self-esteem<sup>2</sup></li> <li>- Assessments of motivation<sup>2</sup></li> <li>- Opportunity recognition<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Personal values and goal setting<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<p><b>Political Skill Effects on Situational Appraisals</b></p> <p><b>Intrapyschic Processes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work attitudes</li> <li>- Job satisfaction<sup>1</sup></li> <li>- Organizational commitment<sup>1</sup></li> <li>- Job embeddedness and Turnover intentions<sup>2</sup></li> <li>- Fit perceptions<sup>2</sup></li> <li>- Justice perceptions<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Stress management</li> <li>- Physiological<sup>1</sup></li> <li>- Psychological<sup>1</sup></li> <li>* POPS,<sup>1</sup> POS<sup>2</sup></li> <li>* Role stressors<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Appraisals of others<sup>2</sup></li> <li>- Knowledge of others<sup>2</sup></li> <li>- Perspective taking; empathy<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<p><b>Political Skill Effects on Situational Responses</b></p> <p><b>Behavioral Processes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Productivity<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Influence tactics and strategies<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Networking and positioning<sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Coalition building<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Negotiation and conflict resolution<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Citizenship and helping<sup>2</sup></li> <li>- Help-seeking<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Counterproductive behavior<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Turnover and absenteeism<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Approach/avoidance behavior<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<p><b>Political Skill Effects on Evaluations by Others</b></p> <p><b>Interpersonal Processes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Task performance<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Citizenship and helping evaluations<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Career success<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Personal reputation evaluations<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Leadership assessments<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Relationship assessments<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Ethicality assessments<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Stress crossover<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Mentoring<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<p><b>Political Skill Effects on Group and Organizational Processes</b></p> <p><b>Interpersonal Processes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of vision<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Informal leader emergence<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Framing<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Diagnosis of team climate<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Facilitation of team member interaction<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Facilitation of group resource acquisition<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Contagion effects<sup>2</sup></li> <li>• Facilitation of safety behavior<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
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Figure 1. Meta-Theoretical Framework of the Effects of Political Skill (Extension of Ferris et al., 2007).

Note. POPS = Perceptions of organizational politics; POS = Perceived organizational support. <sup>1</sup>Tested in this review; <sup>2</sup>Less than five studies to date or not able to be tested in this review.

suggests that each dimension of political skill is predicted by a different set of personality and ability antecedents (Ferris et al., 2008, 2007).

### *A Theoretical Perspective on Social/Political Influence in Organizations*

The Ferris et al. (2007) theory of social/political influence in organizations focused on the operation of the political skill construct and how it affects self, others, and group processes in ways that manage shared meaning (i.e., employing the definition of influence/politics proposed by Ferris & Judge, 1991 and Sederberg, 1984). Ferris and colleagues characterized influences on *self* as intrapsychic processes, consisting of political skill's proposed operation on personal resource development and personal goals. Influence on *others* referred to interpersonal processes primarily encompassed by social influence, including influence tactics and responses, networking and coalition formation activities, performance evaluations, and citizenship and helping behaviors. Finally, effects on *groups* constituted group-level processes (e.g., establishment of vision, evaluating team climate, and facilitating team member interaction).

Although empirical work has advanced significantly from this framework, we sought to extend the Ferris et al. (2007) model to provide a more nuanced perspective from which to understand political skill's operation and identify gaps in our knowledge. Therefore, we both interpolate (i.e., consider specific manifestations of particular work outcome categories they mentioned in their model, like job attitudes) and extrapolate (i.e., add additional outcome variables to the Ferris et al. (2007) model and formulate specific hypotheses regarding these outcomes) in our extension of their framework, presented in Figure 1.

Broadly, we have conceptualized political skill's effects on (a) self-evaluations, (b) situational appraisals, (c) situational responses, (d) evaluations by others, and (e) group and organizational processes. Self-evaluations and situational appraisals capture political skill's intrapsychic influence. Situational responses include behavioral responses affected by political skill, which then influence evaluations by others. Finally, group and organizational processes generally subsume multilevel behavioral processes where the political skill of one individual affects others (as in leadership) or compositions (as in groups and teams).

### *Political Skill's Effects on Self-Evaluations*

Self-evaluations are intrapsychic and reflect the effects of political skill within self-regulation and determination processes (Bandura, 2001; Deci & Ryan, 1987). Political skill theoretically modifies how individuals

assess personal resources and establish values and goals. With regard to personal resources, theorists (e.g., Blumberg & Pringle, 1982; Ferris et al., 2007; Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006) have argued that self-appraisals are made regarding one's efficacy (i.e., confidence; Bandura, 1982), motivation, and the ability to recognize opportunity. Individuals also make intrapsychic assessments of personal resources accrued to one individual (Hobfoll, 1989). For example, individuals are theorized to build and appraise resources germane to the individual (i.e., personal resources), the individual's status (i.e., conditions), instrumental resources such as time and money (i.e., energies), and physical possessions (i.e., objects; Hobfoll, 1989, 2002).

To date, political skill's effects on self-evaluations have focused primarily on its relationship with self-efficacy, which is defined as one's judgments of "how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (Bandura, 1982, p. 122). Essentially, it is the belief that one can adequately perform throughout a variety of situations (Bandura, 1986). Politically skilled individuals are theorized to be personally secure and perceive themselves as masters over their work environment, as well as those within it (Ferris et al., 2011). The ability to understand and influence others should imbue individuals with a sense of self-efficacy as they navigate the social context of work (Ferris et al., 2007). Thus, we propose:

*Hypothesis 1:* Political skill is positively related to self-efficacy.

#### *Political Skill's Effects on Situational Appraisals*

Similarly, political skill theoretically affects situational appraisals. Although appraisals are made on a broad range of potential targets (Lazarus, 1991), we categorized appraisals aimed toward one's work environment or social environment, with resultant stress and strain reactions. Individuals appraise their respective work and social situations, and form attitudes based on those reactions (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). Such appraisals are foundational in stress perception and strain reactions (Lazarus, 1991).

*Work attitudes.* Individual appraisals of work and social situations predict overall positive and negative assessments of these environments, which constitute attitudes (Petty, Wegener, & Fabrigar, 1997). Arguably, the two most important work attitudes are job satisfaction and organizational commitment, respectively referring to positive or negative evaluations of one's job situation (Weiss, 2002) and the level of attachment directed toward one's employer (Tett & Meyer, 1993). Politically skilled individuals view work as a viable platform for personal goal achievement

(Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2007), which is reflected in attitudinal evaluations of job satisfaction (Locke, 1970). Therefore, political skill should positively predict attitudes toward work (i.e., job satisfaction) and attitudes toward the source of work (i.e., organizational commitment) because politically skilled individuals use this mechanism to achieve their own goals. Thus, we propose:

*Hypothesis 2a:* Political skill is positively related to job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 2b:* Political skill is positively related to organizational commitment.

*Stress management.* The Ferris et al. (2007) model suggests that political skill should enhance stress management through feelings of control over others and their work environment. Political skill endows individuals with a calm self-confidence and personal security (Perrewé et al., 2004), so those high in political skill should perceive environmental stressors as less threatening. Theoretically, this is an indirect effect operating through control and personal security. However, it is also probable that political skill enables stress management by allowing individuals to avoid aspects of work that represent potential stressors.

For example, perceptions of organizational politics are a pervasive hindrance stressor in organizations (Chang, Rosen, & Levy, 2009) and generally reflect self-interested behaviors (Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989). Politics are stressful and threatening because they create ambiguous links between performance and outcomes (Ambrose, 2012), introducing greater uncertainty into work environments (Breux, Munyon, Ferris, & Hochwarter, 2009). However, politically skilled individuals have a well-developed understanding of the workplace, which allows them to accurately gauge their work environment and the motives of others (Ferris, Davidson, & Perrewé, 2005).

Furthermore, through their extensive networking ability and authentic nature, politically skilled individuals are able to gain access to information about their work environment and those around them (e.g., Ferris et al., 2007; Perrewé et al., 2004; Treadway et al., 2004). These factors, combined with their sense of personal security (i.e., self-confidence) to navigate political arenas (Ferris et al., 2007), likely result in politically skilled individuals not perceiving their environment as threatening, which should lead to lower perceptions of organizational politics. Thus, we formulate the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 3a:* Political skill is negatively related to perceptions of organizational politics.

Aside from its anticipated operation on hindrance stress perceptions, political skill also should affect psychological and physiological reactions to stressors (i.e., strain). Within the stress literature, political skill is categorized as an effective characteristic for coping (Hochwarter, Ferris, Gavin, Perrewé, Hall, & Frink, 2007; Perrewé et al., 2004, 2005; Zellars, Perrewé, Rossi, Tepper, & Ferris, 2008). Therefore, consistent with this body of literature, we would anticipate political skill to attenuate personal evaluations of stressful circumstances (Ferris, Kane, Summers, & Munyon, 2011).

Because politically skilled individuals are capable of securing needed resources (Perrewé et al., 2004), they can buffer themselves from the negative effects of stressors, resulting in reduced strain (Hobfoll, 1989). Alternatively, individuals who possess low levels of political skill are more likely to experience adverse outcomes in strain-inducing environments as they do not have the same capability to secure resources. Low levels of political skill have been related to higher job tension and general anxiety (Perrewé et al., 2005). Moreover, individuals with low political skill perceive more threats, less control, and less security in their environments (Ferris et al., 2007; Zellars et al., 2008). Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 3b:* Political skill is negatively related to psychological strain.

*Hypothesis 3c:* Political skill is negatively related to physiological strain.

#### *Political Skill's Effects on Situational Responses*

Behavioral adaptability is an increasingly important characteristic in organizations today, and political skill affects behavioral responses to situational appraisals (Ferris et al., 2012). Bandura's (1991) social cognitive theory suggests that individuals determine socially appropriate behavior based on information and cues from others and their surroundings. Because political skill enables information processing and the interpretation of cues in one's work environment (Jones, 1990), politically skilled individuals should be able to effectively tailor behavior to enhance productivity, which reflects the ratio of outputs versus inputs for a given employee (see Schmidt, Hunter, & Pearlman, 1982, for discussion).

We anticipate that political skill will positively affect productivity through several channels: First, because political skill enables individuals to diagnose and understand situations (Ferris et al., 2007), it should allow employees to prioritize and complete work more effectively. Second, such

understanding should also enable more accurate forecasts of resource inputs, which should reduce waste. Third, the ability to network with others should increase the transactional knowledge of politically skilled individuals, who can more readily solicit instrumental help and assistance from others (see Bamberger, 2009, for discussion). Fourth, enhanced coping resources suggest that politically skilled individuals will spend less time attempting to manage stressors, with anticipated concomitant positive effects for productivity. Finally, politically skilled individuals will be more productive because they possess the ability to secure resources and effectively influence others in order to complete tasks and assignments (Ferris, Davidson et al., 2005). Consequently, we propose:

*Hypothesis 4:* Political skill is positively associated with work productivity.

#### *Political Skill's Effects on Evaluations by Others*

Thus far, our discussion has focused on the effects of political skill on oneself. However, theoretically, political skill's most significant effects occur in the images politically skilled individuals convey to others (Ferris et al., 2007). First, individuals high in political skill employ effective interpersonal influence attempts, and their capacity to appear genuine and sincere in their behavior, with no ulterior motives, enhances influence effectiveness (Harris, Kacmar, Zivnuska, & Shaw, 2007). Furthermore, politically skilled individuals employ networking behavior in ways that allow them to build and leverage social capital when needed. That is, politically skilled individuals possess the capacity to control or self-regulate their behavior in ways that convey positive and sincere intentions, and influence and manage the reactions and behavior of others (Treadway, Ferris, Duke, Adams, & Thatcher, 2007).

Perhaps the two most frequently appraised and evaluated work-related behaviors are task performance and contextual performance (or organizational citizenship behaviors; OCBs) because these two sets of behaviors comprise a wide range of within-role and extra-role behaviors that contribute to organizational effectiveness (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Organ & Ryan, 1995). Multiple studies (e.g., Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas, & Ammeter, 2004; Brouer, Douglas, Treadway, & Ferris, 2013; Ferris et al., 2001; Witt & Ferris, 2003) and qualitative reviews (Ferris et al., 2012, 2007) have demonstrated the positive impact of political skill on task and contextual performance (see also, Bing et al., 2011), yet the theoretical mechanisms underlying these findings often have varied, thus necessitating more comprehensive review and analysis.

Overall, politically skilled individuals are successful in organizations because they possess the ability to secure resources and effectively influence others in order to complete tasks and assignments (Ferris, Davidson et al., 2005). Individuals who are politically skilled also are socially astute, meaning they reflect a keen understanding of social interactions and contexts (Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2012, 2007). In addition, because of their ability to effectively leverage past accomplishments while avoiding the appearance of arrogance, politically skilled individuals, it has been suggested by researchers, enact image-enhancing behaviors in a manner that is convincing yet nonthreatening to others (Baron & Markman, 2000). Thus, political skill facilitates the accomplishment of tasks, both by uniquely positioning employee successes in such an understated, unassuming, and humble manner, and also enabling the ability to pick up situational cues and calibrate their behavior appropriately to the situation, all the while appearing genuine and well-intentioned (Ferris, Kane et al., 2011).

Although direct effects are anticipated between political skill and task performance evaluations, it is important to distinguish its incremental effects beyond known predictors of performance. For example, the Big Five personality characteristics (i.e., extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience) are known to affect work-related behavior (Barrick & Mount, 1991), and conscientiousness, extraversion, and emotional stability have been linked to performance (see Judge & Erez, 2007, for discussion). Likewise, to date, general mental ability has been shown as the single best predictor of task performance evaluations (Schmidt, Shaffer, & Oh, 2008). Thus, to fully understand political skill's operation, it is important to demonstrate its predictive ability in conjunction with these additional individual differences. Such evidence would help demonstrate political skill's unique operation and contribution toward task performance evaluations. Thus, we propose:

*Hypothesis 5a:* Political skill is positively associated with task performance evaluations after controlling for general mental ability and the Big Five personality characteristics.

We also expect political skill to positively affect evaluations of contextual performance, or contextual performance and OCBs. First, unlike task performance evaluations, OCBs are discretionary (Organ et al., 2006). Thus, employees exercise discretion on acts of citizenship. Because politically skilled individuals theoretically assess and understand situations well (Ferris et al., 2007), political skill should relate to OCBs because these types of behaviors involve an understanding of what is important to both employees and the organization, and this knowledge may be used to execute appropriate helping behaviors (Jawahar, Meurs, Ferris,

& Hochwarter, 2008). Politically skilled individuals also may engage in OCBs as a means to achieve recognition (Liu et al., 2007).

Finally, beyond the quantity of OCBs performed, we believe that political skill also modifies the salience of OCBs performed by an individual to others. Because of the desire to develop and maintain positive impressions, politically skilled individuals may not engage in more helping than others, per se, but such behaviors are more likely to be salient in the eyes of others. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 5b:* Political skill is positively associated with OCBs/contextual performance evaluations.

Over time, individuals develop a reputation in the eyes of others based on observed contributions, which form the basis for future exchanges (Flynn, Reagans, Amanatullah, & Ames, 2006). Reputation has been defined as a “complex combination of salient personal characteristics and accomplishments, demonstrated behavior, and intended images presented over some period of time as observed directly and/or as reported from secondary sources” (Ferris, Blass, Douglas, Kolodinsky, & Treadway, 2003, p. 213), and recent evidence suggests that it is a cross-level phenomenon, reflecting similar properties and operation at individual, unit/team, and organization levels of analysis (Ferris, Harris, Russell, Ellen, Martinez, & Blass, in press). The benefits of a favorable reputation include possessing a higher level of status and effectiveness than others, as these individuals are seen as more legitimate, competent, and trustworthy (e.g., Bromley, 1993; Tsui, 1984). As a result, positive perceptions of reputation allow individuals to accumulate power and influence over others (Pfeffer, 1992), while acquiring autonomy and decision latitude (Ferris et al., 2003).

Scholars have argued that political skill serves as a key antecedent of both personal reputation (Ferris et al., 2003; Zinko, Ferris, Blass, & Laird, 2007) and leader reputation (Ammeter, Douglas, Gardner, Hochwarter, & Ferris, 2002; Blass, Brouer, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2007; Blass & Ferris, 2007; Hall, Blass, Ferris, & Massengale, 2004). In fact, Ferris et al. (2007) argued that politically skilled individuals inspire greater trust and confidence in others through their influential, situationally appropriate behavior, and genuineness. This transmits signals conducive to a favorable image to others, which results in higher evaluations of reputation.

Because of their social astuteness and ability to exert interpersonal influence with effective tactics (Harris et al., 2007; Kolodinsky, Treadway, & Ferris, 2007; Treadway et al., 2007), politically skilled individuals know what behaviors and images are necessary in order to establish and maintain positive impressions. Further, politically skilled individuals, via their networking ability, are able to build social capital, which increases their favorable reputation effectively among target persons and/or work

groups (Zinko, Ferris, Humphrey, Meyer, & Aime, 2012). Consequently, politically skilled individuals are more likely than others to benefit from a favorable personal reputation at work. As such, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 6:* Political skill is positively associated with personal reputation.

To this point, we have hypothesized political skill's effects on multiple work outcomes and contexts that are more proximal in nature. The next relationships hypothesized are more distal in nature and concern career success in its objective (i.e., income and position) and subjective (i.e., career satisfaction) forms (see Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005, for review). Career success has been actively investigated for years and found to be influenced by traditional factors, including job-related skills and one's performance record, and also by networking, politics, and social effectiveness competencies (Ng et al., 2005). It seems appropriate, then, to examine the role political skill plays in career success and satisfaction.

When viewed through a lens of organizational politics, careers can be seen as political campaigns (Inkson, 2004), involving contact hunting (Granovetter, 1974), networking (Treadway, Breland, Adams, Duke, & Williams, 2010), self-promotion (Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003), impression management (Bolino & Turnley, 2003), and use of influence tactics (Judge & Bretz, 1994). Therefore, success depends significantly on individual competencies, such as political skill (Blickle, Oerder, & Summers, 2010), that enable the effective management and projection of positive images across various work environments, especially for images that influence the evaluation of performance and career potential. Further, because politically skilled individuals are able to more successfully achieve their desired career objectives, they are more likely to be satisfied with their careers. Thus, we propose the following:

*Hypothesis 7a:* Political skill is positively related to overall career success.

*Hypothesis 7b:* Political skill is positively associated with career success as measured by income.

*Hypothesis 7c:* Political skill is positively associated with career success as measured by position.

*Hypothesis 7d:* Political skill is positively associated with subjective career success, as measured by career satisfaction.

*Mediators of the Political Skill–Task Performance Relationship*

Thus far, we have hypothesized political skill's direct and additive relationships with a number of outcomes. We now shift our focus to understand more complex relationships with task performance, primarily because this is a critical outcome in organizational behavior and industrial psychology (Staw, 1984). First, we examine the indirect role of reputation in the political skill–task performance relationship. Second, we examine the indirect role of self-efficacy in the political skill–task performance relationship. We consider how political skill potentially moderates task and contextual performance/OCBs relationships.

Ferris et al. (2003) suggested that reputation is related to performance evaluations, promotions and mobility, and compensation. This assessment was based on research demonstrating that career success is founded more on social factors than on actual performance (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Zajac & Westphal, 1995). Several other studies have supported the reputation–job performance link. Gioia and Sims (1983) found that managerial reputation significantly influenced perceptions of legitimate, referent, and expert power. Pfeffer (1992) linked personal reputation to power, stating that individuals who hold a reputation for being powerful often become more powerful as their reputation spreads. Furthermore, reputation also has been shown to demonstrate a positive and significant relationship with job performance (Hochwarter, Ferris, Zinko, Arnell, & James, 2007).

We have already hypothesized that political skill is positively related to personal reputation (Ferris et al., 2003). Recent calls for research (Ferris et al., 2011) have sought to investigate mediating mechanisms through which political skill impacts job outcomes. Because political skill serves as a key antecedent of both personal reputation (Ferris et al., 2003; Zinko et al., 2007) and leader reputation (Ammeter et al., 2002; Blass et al., 2007; Blass & Ferris, 2007; Hall et al., 2004), and that reputation has demonstrated a positive relationship with job performance (Gioia & Sims, 1983; Hochwarter, Ferris, Gavin, et al., 2007), we expect personal reputation to mediate the relationship between political skill and task performance.

*Hypothesis 8:* Personal reputation mediates the relationship between political skill and task performance.

Although political skill affects how individuals are viewed in the eyes of others (Ferris et al., 2007), it also influences self-assessments. To date, self-efficacy consistently has been linked to performance (see Gist & Mitchell, 1992, for review), acting through goal setting, motivation, and self-regulation to enhance performance (e.g., Wood & Bandura, 1989). Thus, if political skill, as a social understanding and influence ability, imbues individuals with a sense of self-efficacy, we would expect that

higher levels of such efficacy to positively predict performance, acting as an indirect relationship. Therefore, we propose:

*Hypothesis 9:* Individual self-efficacy mediates the relationship between political skill and task performance.

#### *Moderators of the Political Skill–Outcome Relationship*

Because unidimensional and multidimensional measures of political skill have been used in the literature, we sought to explore the effects of measure dimensionality as a potential moderator in political skill–task performance and political skill–contextual performance/OCBs relationships. If there are significant differences, this will bear on future research designs that incorporate survey methodology. Because of its broader range of items, it is reasonable that the multidimensional Political Skill Inventory (*PSI*; Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005) will explain more variation in task performance and contextual performance/OCB estimates than the unidimensional measure. Thus, we propose:

*Hypothesis 10a:* Political skill measure dimensionality moderates the political skill–task performance relationship such that the multidimensional measure explains more variance than unidimensional measures.

*Hypothesis 10b:* Political skill measure dimensionality moderates the political skill–contextual performance/OCBs relationship such that the multidimensional measure explains more variance than unidimensional measures.

#### *Method*

##### *Literature Search*

We searched the *PsychINFO* and *Google Scholar* databases through July 15, 2012, for studies (i.e., articles, dissertations, working papers, and book chapters) that included the terms *political skill*, *social skill*, or *interpersonal competency*, and *sample*. We also searched for studies that included *social influence effectiveness/competency* in the hope that some of these studies would include effect sizes of constructs similar to that of political and social skill. To identify studies not captured in the electronic searches, we reviewed the reference lists of relevant qualitative reviews (e.g., Ferris et al., 2012, 2007). We also examined programs and proceedings of national conferences that were in our possession to identify useful studies. Finally, we e-mailed researchers who have published widely in

the political skill area to request copies of working papers, unpublished data, and additional studies missing from our search.

*Inclusion criteria.* Our search yielded 1,824 articles and unpublished manuscripts. We reviewed and eliminated those that did not include primary data or an effect size between political skill and a criterion variable. When applicable study effect sizes were not available or could not be calculated, we contacted the primary authors for these data. We then examined each of the remaining 153 papers in order to identify those that included enough information to calculate at least one relevant effect size. Next, because the meta-analytic procedures used in this study are sensitive to the independence assumption (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004), we reviewed each data set for independence. Specifically, for each sample correlation, we evaluated the sample context and location, sample size, demographic characteristics, and study measures to ensure that samples were independent of one another. When the independence of a sample was questioned due to overlap among these characteristics, we used the first reported sample. One-hundred thirty studies ( $k = 130$ ) met the criteria and were included in the final database. These studies reported 5,472 correlations from 120 unique samples ( $n = 19,825$ ,  $M = 175.8$ ,  $SD = 103.9$ ).

Prior to coding studies, the authors met and discussed the coding protocol. The complete coding list included 22,578 potential bivariate relationships, not including potential study moderators. One author coded the studies, and another coded a randomly selected sample (15%, 20 of 130) of the total studies to calculate interrater reliability. When coding the papers, the authors discussed ambiguous constructs to ensure uniformity. After coding was finalized, the authors reviewed the coding for errors or discrepancies among the common coded sets and calculated interrater reliability estimates. Errors and discrepancies were discussed and corrected. Of 3,674 potential study characteristics coded by both authors, there was 94% agreement on study characteristics, 99.2% agreement on reported study numbers, and an overall agreement of 97% between both raters. The complete set of study constructs, rules, and interrater reliability calculations is available from the authors.

### *Meta-Analytic Procedures*

We relied on meta-analytic methods from Hunter and Schmidt (2004) and Hedges and Olkin (1985) in conducting this study. For a study with more than one reported correlation of the same effect, we created composite correlation values to prevent double counting (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004). Composite correlations were adapted to accommodate subsequent moderator tests. Studies were also corrected for measurement unreliability

in the predictor and criterion variable using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. When studies did not report this coefficient, we used an average value from other studies for perceptual measures, or 1.0 for measures of objective data (i.e., sales, reported income, tenure, number of reports, and number of successful placements).

Several statistics are presented concerning bivariate population correlation estimates. First, the number of studies ( $k$ ) and number of participants ( $n$ ) for each relationship are reported. Second, the uncorrected ( $\bar{r}$ ) and corrected ( $\hat{\rho}$ ) bivariate estimates are presented. Third, we present 95% credibility intervals around the corrected population estimate and 95% confidence intervals around the sample size weighted correlation (Whitener, 1990).

For metaregression testing, we constructed a matrix of population estimates among the Big Five personality variables, political skill, general mental ability, and task performance. The full matrix of population estimates, studies, and total sample sizes are included in Table 2. Because matrix cells had uneven samples, we calculated a harmonic mean (Viswesvaran & Ones, 1995) for each set of predictors to enable a hierarchical multistep regression. Harmonic means provide a conservative estimate because they give less weight to large samples (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007).

To ascertain political skill's relative importance in the prediction of task performance, we then incorporated dominance analysis (Budescu, 1993) using significant predictors of task performance (i.e., political skill, conscientiousness, and general mental ability). Such an approach provides an enhanced picture of predictor importance not possible when interpreting beta weights alone. We performed two tests to ascertain the extent to which personal reputation and generalized self-efficacy indirectly affect the political skill–task performance relationship. First, we modeled the magnitude of change in the effect of political skill on task performance after each respective intervening variable was entered (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Second, as described by MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, and Sheets (2002), we ran a Sobel (1982) test on the indirect effects (i.e.,  $ab$ ) to determine their statistical significance.

To justify moderation, we also calculated a  $Q$  statistic (Hedges & Olkin, 1985) for each population estimate, which is an indicator of the homogeneity of a population sample. A statistically significant  $Q$  statistic indicates that the sample is heterogeneous, suggesting the presence of moderators. A significant  $Q$  statistic and wide credibility interval suggest the presence of moderators affecting a bivariate relationship. Congruent with Hypotheses 10a and 10b, we tested how the measure of political skill (i.e., unidimensional vs. multidimensional) affected both task performance and OCB/contextual performance evaluations.

*Results**Bivariate Relationships*

Table 1 shows bivariate outcomes of political skill, including the relationship with self-efficacy, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, perceptions of organizational politics, physiological strain, psychological strain, work productivity, task performance, OCB/contextual performance evaluations, reputation, and career success income, position, and satisfaction. Table 2 shows a matrix of political skill's relationships with the Big Five personality characteristics, general mental ability, and task performance. Table 3 shows the results of meta-regression analyses of political skill, the Big Five personality characteristics, and general mental ability on task performance. Table 4 shows dominance analyses of significant task performance predictors. Table 5 shows a test concerning the indirect effects of personal reputation in the political skill–task performance relationship, whereas Table 6 shows a test concerning the indirect effects of self-efficacy on the political skill–task performance relationship.

We began by evaluating the magnitude and direction of the reported results. The effects of political skill generally were modest in magnitude (mean  $\hat{\rho} = .23$ ) throughout the outcomes. Political skill was positively associated with self-efficacy ( $\hat{\rho} = .45$ ; 95% CI:  $.29 < .38 < .47$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1. Next, political skill was positively associated with job satisfaction ( $\hat{\rho} = .29$ ; 95% CI:  $.20 < .25 < .29$ ) and organizational commitment ( $\hat{\rho} = .28$ ; 95% CI:  $.18 < .23 < .28$ ), providing support for Hypotheses 2a and 2b. Political skill was negatively associated with physiological strain ( $\hat{\rho} = -.10$ ; 95% CI:  $-.12 < -.09 < -.05$ ), supporting Hypothesis 3c, but was not significantly related to perceptions of organizational politics ( $\hat{\rho} = .01$ ; 95% CI:  $-.09 < .01 < .10$ ) or psychological strain ( $\hat{\rho} = -.03$ ; 95% CI:  $-.07 < -.02 < .02$ ). Therefore, Hypotheses 3a and 3b were not supported.

In support of Hypothesis 4, political skill was positively associated with work productivity ( $\hat{\rho} = .14$ ; 95% CI:  $.07 < .13 < .20$ ). Political skill also explained variance in task performance ( $\beta = .21$ ; 95% CI:  $.18 < .21 < .23$ ) above and beyond the Big Five personality characteristics and general mental ability, as can be seen in Table 3. Thus, Hypothesis 5a was supported. Interestingly, extraversion became a nonsignificant predictor of task performance when political skill was entered in a subsequent regression step. Post hoc dominance analyses suggest political skill uniquely accounted for 18.3% of the variance in task performance, compared with 12.6% for conscientiousness and 69.1% for general mental ability. In support of Hypothesis 5b, political skill also was positively associated with

TABLE 1  
*Bivariate Effects of Political Skill*

Bivariate relationship	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	$\rho$	Lower 95% CV	Upper 95% CV	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI	<i>Q</i>
<i>Intrapsychic effects</i>									
Self-efficacy	7	1,679	0.38	0.45	0.18	0.58	0.29	0.47	36.98**
Situational assessments and attitudes									
Job satisfaction	15	2,779	0.25	0.29	0.07	0.42	0.20	0.29	25.40*
Organizational commitment	8	1,818	0.23	0.28	0.08	0.38	0.18	0.28	12.95
<i>Stressor and strain reactions</i>									
Perceptions of organizational politics	6	1,244	0.01	0.01	-0.23	0.24	-0.09	0.10	17.85**
Physiological strain	4	846	-0.09	-0.10	-0.16	-0.02	-0.12	-0.05	1.13
Psychological strain	16	3,412	-0.02	-0.03	-0.20	0.15	-0.07	0.02	26.16*
<i>Behavior and ratings of behavior</i>									
Work productivity	7	975	0.13	0.14	-0.04	0.31	0.07	0.20	8.44
Task performance ratings	50	7,428	0.22	0.26	-0.07	0.52	0.18	0.26	204.33**
Contextual performance/organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) ratings	17	3,539	0.33	0.38	-0.05	0.71	0.24	0.42	169.72**
Reputation	5	617	0.40	0.46	0.30	0.51	0.36	0.45	2.32
Career success overall	22	2,452	0.25	0.27	0.02	0.48	0.19	0.32	11.94**
Subjective (career satisfaction)	7	1,595	0.28	0.33	0.11	0.44	0.22	0.34	13.16*
Objective (career success income)	7	1,076	0.14	0.14	-0.05	0.33	0.07	0.21	10.21
Objective (career success position)	8	1,993	0.28	0.30	0.12	0.44	0.22	0.34	16.48*

Note. *k* = Number of studies; *N* = respondents per correlation; *r* = sample size weighted mean correlation;  $\rho$  = corrected estimated population effect size; 95% CV = 95% credibility interval around  $\rho$ ; 95% CI = 95% confidence interval around *r*; *Q* = chi-square test of homogeneity.  
 \**p* ≤ .05. \*\**p* ≤ .01.

TABLE 2  
*Meta-Analytic Correlation Matrix of Political Skill, the Big Five, General Mental Ability, and Task Performance*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Political skill	–							
2. Extraversion	.48 <sup>1</sup>	–						
3. Agreeableness	.24 <sup>1</sup>	.17 <sup>2</sup>	–					
4. Conscientiousness	.28 <sup>1</sup>	.00 <sup>2</sup>	.27 <sup>2</sup>	–				
5. Emotional stability	.23 <sup>1</sup>	.19 <sup>2</sup>	.25 <sup>2</sup>	.26 <sup>2</sup>	–			
6. Openness to experience	.07 <sup>1</sup>	.17 <sup>2</sup>	.11 <sup>2</sup>	–.06 <sup>b</sup>	.16 <sup>2</sup>	–		
7. General mental ability	.04 <sup>1</sup>	.02 <sup>3</sup>	.00 <sup>6</sup>	–.04 <sup>c</sup>	.09 <sup>3</sup>	.22 <sup>3</sup>	–	
8. Task performance	.26 <sup>1</sup>	.09 <sup>4</sup>	.07 <sup>4</sup>	.21 <sup>4</sup>	.11 <sup>4</sup>	.06 <sup>4</sup>	.44 <sup>5</sup>	–
	50/7,428	56/9,664	56/9,702	64/12,434	53/9,184	48/7,797	425/32,124	

*Note.* Each correlation contains the population estimate corrected for attenuation, followed by the *k* number of effect sizes and *N* sample size.

<sup>1</sup> Original meta-analysis.

<sup>2</sup> Ones (1993).

<sup>3</sup> Judge et al. (2007).

<sup>4</sup> Hertz and Donovan (2000).

<sup>5</sup> Hunter and Hunter (1984).

<sup>6</sup> Joseph and Newman (2010).

TABLE 3  
*Meta-Regression Results Predicting Task Performance*

Steps	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3			
	$\beta$	95% CIL	95% CIU	$\beta$	95% CIL	95% CIU	$\beta$	95% CIL	95% CIU	
General mental ability	.44	0.43	0.45	.46	.45	.47	.45	.43	.47	
Conscientiousness				.23	.22	.24	.23	.15	.20	
Extraversion				.09	.08	.10	.09	-.03	.02	
Agreeableness				.00	-.01	.01	.00	-.04	.01	
Emotional stability				.00	-.01	.01	.00	-.04	.01	
Openness to experience				-.04	-.05	-.03	-.04	-.06	-.01	
Political skill							.21	.18	.23	
Model $R^2$		19%			25%			28%		

Note.  $\beta$  = beta; CIL = lower bound of 95% confidence interval; CIU = upper bound of 95% confidence interval.

TABLE 4  
*Dominance Analysis of Individual Difference Task Performance Predictors*

Predictors	Raw weights	Relative weights
General mental ability	.192	69.1%
Conscientiousness	.035	12.6%
Political skill	.051	18.3%
Model $R^2 = 27.8\%$		

TABLE 5  
*Indirect Effects of Reputation in the Political Skill–Task Performance Relationship*

Steps	$\beta$	$\rho$	$R^2$
Step 1: Political skill $\rightarrow$ Task performance	.26*	.26	.07
Step 2: Political skill $\rightarrow$ Reputation	.46*	.46	.21
Step 3: Reputation $\rightarrow$ Task performance controlling for political skill	.25*	.32	.12
Step 4: Political skill $\rightarrow$ Task performance controlling for reputation	.14*	.26	.12

Note.  $\beta$  = standardized beta;  $\rho$  = estimated population correlation corrected for attenuation and no controls;  $R^2$  = model variance explained.

\* $p < .01$ .

OCB/contextual performance evaluations ( $\hat{\rho} = .38$ ; 95% CI:  $.24 < .33 < .42$ ).

Political skill was positively associated with personal reputation ( $\hat{\rho} = .46$ ; 95% CI:  $.36 < .40 < .45$ ) and all forms of career success (overall:

TABLE 6  
*Indirect Effects of Self-Efficacy in the Political Skill–Task Performance Relationship*

Steps	$\beta$	$\rho$	$R^2$
Step 1: Political skill → Task performance	.26*	.26	.07
Step 2: Political skill → Self-efficacy	.45*	.45	.20
Step 3: Self-efficacy → Task performance controlling for political skill	.33*	.38	.15
Step 4: Political skill → Task performance controlling for self-efficacy	.11*	.26	.15

*Note.*  $\beta$  = standardized beta;  $\rho$  = estimated population correlation corrected for attenuation and no controls;  $R^2$  = model variance explained.

\* $p < .01$ .

$\hat{\rho} = .27$ ; 95% CI:  $.19 < .25 < .32$ ; income:  $\hat{\rho} = .14$ ; 95% CI:  $.07 < .14 < .21$ ; position:  $\hat{\rho} = .30$ ; 95% CI:  $.22 < .28 < .34$ ; subjective career satisfaction:  $\hat{\rho} = .33$ ; 95% CI:  $.22 < .28 < .34$ ), providing respective support for Hypotheses 6, 7a, 7b, 7c, and 7d. As shown in Tables 5 and 6, the coefficients between political skill and task performance changed with the introduction of both personal reputation and self-efficacy. Our results suggest the indirect effect of political skill through personal reputation ( $Z = 6.06$ ;  $ab = .117$ ,  $SEab = .019$ ) and self-efficacy ( $Z = 23.47$ ;  $ab = .149$ ,  $SEab = .006$ ) were statistically significant, providing support for Hypotheses 8 and 9.

### *Moderators*

Our results suggest that the political skill–task performance evaluation relationship is acted on by moderators (95% CV =  $-.07$  to  $.52$ ;  $Q = 204.33^{**}$ ). Thus, we tested the effects of dimensionality in this relationship. Our results suggest that the multidimensional political skill measure explained more variance in task performance ( $\hat{\rho} = .26$ ; 95% CI:  $.18 < .23 < .28$ ) than the unidimensional political skill measure ( $\hat{\rho} = .21$ ; 95% CI:  $.13 < .18 < .23$ ) but not at a statistically significant level ( $Z = 1.39$ , *ns*). Thus, Hypothesis 10a was not supported.

Similarly, the data also suggested the presence of moderators in the political skill–contextual performance/OCBs relationship (95% CV =  $-.05$  to  $.71$ ;  $Q = 169.72^{**}$ ). Our results suggest that the multidimensional political skill measure ( $\hat{\rho} = .41$ ; 95% CI:  $.25 < .36 < .47$ ) explained more variance in contextual performance/OCBs than the unidimensional measure ( $\hat{\rho} = .29$ ; 95% CI:  $.13 < .24 < .35$ ) but not at a statistically significant level ( $Z = 1.51$ , *ns*). Thus, Hypothesis 10b was not supported.

*Post Hoc Dimensionality Test*

There exists a degree of ambiguity concerning how the dimensions of political skill differentially affect task performance. Thus, we incorporated metaregression analyses to test the effects of political skill dimensions on task performance. The results suggest that networking ability was the strongest predictor of task performance ( $\hat{\rho} = .27$ ; 95% CI:  $.13 < .24 < .35$ ), followed by interpersonal influence ( $\hat{\rho} = .24$ ; 95% CI:  $.12 < .21 < .30$ ) and apparent sincerity ( $\hat{\rho} = .21$ ; 95% CI:  $.10 < .18 < .26$ ). Surprisingly, social astuteness did not significantly predict task performance ( $\hat{\rho} = .16$ ; 95% CI:  $.00 < .14 < .28$ ).

*Discussion*

The Ferris, Treadway et al. (2005) and Ferris et al. (2007) theoretical work on social/political influence theory, and the central role played in that theory by the political skill construct, has received extensive empirical attention during the past decade. The primary goal of this study was to summarize this body of research and extend the metatheoretical framework of Ferris and his colleagues (2007). Whereas this model originally conceptualized political skill's operation on self, others, and group and organizational processes, we revised and extended the model to encapsulate political skill's effects on self-evaluations, situational appraisals, situational responses, evaluations by others, and group and organizational processes. At each stage, we reviewed and quantified the extant empirical research to understand political skill's operation.

Our meta-analytic results showed that political skill is positively related to self-evaluations (i.e., self-efficacy beliefs), work attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction and organizational commitment), and negatively related to physiological strain. Surprisingly, political skill had no significant direct effect on perceptions of organizational politics or psychological strain reactions. However, political skill was positively related to behavioral processes and, more specifically, to work productivity. Political skill explained incremental variation in task performance after controlling for the Big Five personality characteristics and general mental ability, and it also predicted contextual performance/OCBs. These results corroborate the findings of Bing et al. (2011) by showing that political skill's effects were stronger for contextual performance/OCBs than for task performance.

Interestingly, the strongest association found was political skill's positive relationship with personal reputation. This suggests that political skill enables individuals to craft signals and impressions they convey to others, developing strong reputations in the process. Theoretically, the ability to

understand and adapt one's behavior to situations is a significant asset (Ferris et al., 2007), and to do so in a manner that conveys trust and confidence is even more important for employees and the organizations in which they function.

The results related to overall career success ( $k = 12$ ,  $\hat{\rho} = .25$ ) are similar to the findings of Ng et al.'s (2005) meta-analysis on the predictors of career success (i.e., for the salary measure of career success,  $k = 5$ ,  $\hat{\rho} = .29$ , but not for the promotion measure of career success,  $k = 2$ ,  $\hat{\rho} = .07$ , *ns*). However, they used the term "political knowledge and skills," which implied two measures: (a) political knowledge (e.g., Chao et al., 1994; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001) and (b) supervisor-focused influence tactics (e.g., Wayne, Liden, Graf, & Ferris, 1997), which may have accounted for the different results. Further, as an individual difference variable, political skill predicted career success (i.e., salary) at close to the same level as cognitive ability ( $k = 8$ ,  $\hat{\rho} = .27$ ; Ng et al., 2005). However, for career satisfaction, the two meta-analyses differed dramatically, as our results reported a much higher correlation ( $k = 6$ ,  $\hat{\rho} = .26$ ) than did the Ng et al.'s meta-analysis ( $k = 2$ ,  $\hat{\rho} = .05$ ,  $p < .05$ ), although both were statistically significant.

Examining political skill from a differential psychology approach (Barratt, 1995; Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985; Guilford, 1959), the results of this study are similar to quantitative reviews of emotional intelligence (e.g., Joseph & Newman, 2010). Further, in a very limited number of studies that examined political skill and emotional intelligence concurrently (i.e., Semadar et al., 2006), political skill was found to predict leadership effectiveness beyond that of emotional intelligence. Although further research is needed to examine these two social effectiveness competencies concurrently, Joseph and Newman (2010) noted that measurement inadequacies continue to impede inquiry into emotional intelligence. Thus, it is unlikely that strong comparisons may be made between the two until further consensus develops regarding the measurement of emotional intelligence.

Political skill's peripheral effects also represent an interesting contribution. First, political skill was not significantly related to general mental ability ( $\hat{\rho} = .04$ , *ns*), suggesting political skill is not an artifact of intelligence alone, which is consistent with prior theoretical development in this area (Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2007). Our meta-regression results also showed extraversion to be a significant predictor of task performance until political skill was entered, after which point it became a nonsignificant predictor. Further research is needed to understand this relationship.

Contrary to our expectations, political skill was not significantly directly related to perceptions of organizational politics, a hindrance stressor,

and psychological strain. Given that the literature has treated political skill as a boundary condition in stressor–strain relationships, it is likely that direct effects are contingent upon the presence of another moderating condition and thus not reflected by direct bivariate effects. We also are the first to estimate reputation’s effects on task performance evaluations, finding a significant positive bivariate and incremental effect after controlling for political skill (see Table 5).

Next, we pursued potential mediators of the political skill–work outcome relationship. Specifically, we identified personal reputation and self-efficacy as potential intervening variables in the political skill–task performance relationship (cf. Blickle, Schneider, Liu, & Ferris, 2011), finding support for the intervening effects of personal reputation and self-efficacy in the political skill–task performance relationship. These results suggest that political skill shapes how others perceive and form reputational assessments of individuals and also provide individuals with a degree of self-efficacy, which enhances subsequent performance. Causally, our findings also are congruent with theoretical specification (i.e., Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2007) and research showing that ability predicts self-efficacy beliefs (see for review Bandura, 1991).

### *Practical Implications for Organizations*

The results of our research suggest that enhancing political skill offers many practical implications for organizations and individuals. Political skill is an individual difference characteristic that is theoretically malleable (Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2007). That is, individuals who lack political skill can seek avenues to develop it, and those who are highly politically skilled can engage in behaviors to cultivate it. Because political skill can be taught, organizations that provide ongoing training and professional development opportunities for their employees could include workshops on political skill in their course offerings. In addition, for employees who may exhibit periods of poor task performance, organizations might implement mandatory training in political skill as a remediation method in an effort to improve employee task performance and productivity.

Organizations may also provide formal mentoring programs to help employees develop political skill through interpersonal influence (see Blass & Ferris, 2007, for discussion). Organization-sponsored, team-based training that includes simulations, roleplay, and feedback mechanisms would be helpful in developing political skill. Finally, organizations can refine their organizational bench strength and human capital by identifying

employees who are highly politically skilled and placing them in contexts requiring a high degree of social interaction.

Our results also demonstrated the substantial influence of political skill on personal reputation and career success, positioning political skill as a viable characteristic through which to improve those outcomes. First, we would encourage individual self-assessments for employees to determine their scores on the political skill measure, as well as its underlying dimensions. Our results suggest that individuals seeking to improve their task performance should focus on increasing their networking ability and interpersonal influence scores. We suggest behavior modeling in professional as well as personal situations as a manner by which to achieve this goal. Highly politically skilled individuals should identify additional methods by which to leverage their social influence as a gateway to promotion, advancement, or other desired professional outcome. Executive coaching is one such method where individuals may gain assistance in navigating the complexities of social influence as it relates to maximizing professional potential. Participation in acting classes is another method by which individuals can develop an executive presence, gather useful feedback, and build influence capabilities.

### *Best Practices for Research*

This meta-analysis identified several important relationships between political skill and work outcomes. We believe the results also bear on future political skill designs, particularly those designs incorporating survey data from field study sources. The first best practice is to present political skill's dimensions and latent scores together in correlation matrices. This should enable primary and secondary researchers to more adequately explore how the separate dimensions of political skill (i.e., social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity) differentially predict various outcomes. A second best practice is to measure specified mediators. Particularly within the stress literature, political skill is thought to operate through control, yet we are aware of no study concurrently measuring political skill and its mediating mechanism, control. Similarly, political skill is thought to instill trust in others regarding one's capabilities and intentions, yet this relationship remains underexplored.

A third best practice is to incorporate additional social effectiveness constructs as well as contextualized personality variables in designs and analyses. Head-to-head comparisons of social effectiveness constructs and contextualized personality variables accompanied by dominance analyses

will help improve our understanding of each construct's respective contribution toward a given outcome. Fourth, because political skill's operation is contingent upon the social context of one's job (Bing et al., 2011), we recommend a description of context and coding of such context whenever possible. Finally, we recommend that scholars use the "political skill" nomenclature for terminological precision and consistency in the literature.

### *Directions for Future Research*

In this meta-analytic investigation, we introduced an extension of the original Ferris et al. (2007) in order to provide a more informed, updated, and expansive perspective from which to understand political skill's operation, as well as to identify gaps in our knowledge base in this area. This extended framework served as the principal organizing mechanism for the foregoing meta-analysis of political skill effects on outcomes. However, in remaining true to the original Ferris et al. (2007) theoretical model, there are a couple of additional points and observations of research results that need to be made for purposes of comprehensiveness.

Specifically, key portions of the original framework on political skill and its operation include two sets of interaction effects, where political skill moderated the relationships between the influence tactics and performance and the workplace stressors and strain reactions. Political skill has been theorized to demonstrate neutralizing effects on the strain consequences resulting from workplace stressors. Politically skilled individuals are positioned to perceive workplace stressors as less threatening, perhaps due to their own sense of control and calm self-confidence, which tends to serve as an antidote to the potentially dysfunctional strain reactions such stressors can produce (Ferris et al., 2012, 2007; Perrewé, Ferris, Frink, & Anthony, 2000). Given a nonsignificant direct effect between political skill and psychological strain, meta-analytic moderator tests are needed when sufficient power exists.

The other key interaction effect in the Ferris et al. (2007) original framework focuses on the moderating role of political skill on the influence tactics–performance/outcomes relationships, arguing that political skill allows influence attempts to be delivered and executed more successfully, thus rendering them more effective on target reactions and evaluations. A handful of studies have found support for this proposition (Harris et al., 2007; Kolodinsky et al., 2007; Treadway et al., 2007); however, additional research is needed on these critical components of the Ferris et al. (2007) framework to enable meta-analytic testing, particularly with regard to potential moderating effects. In addition to the aforementioned areas of

research, we also highlight new or underexplored areas of inquiry in Figure 1.

*Political skill's effects on self-evaluations.* In addition to its effects on self-efficacy beliefs, Ferris, Treadway et al. (2005) and Ferris et al. (2007) proposed that political skill would enhance the self-esteem of individuals by endowing them with a sense of purpose at work. Specifically, political skill should enable individuals to understand how they contribute toward the organization, strengthening self-esteem as they find value in work, with anticipated positive effects on work motivation and performance (Dodgson & Wood, 1998; Locke, McClellan, & Knight, 1996).

Future research also is needed to understand how political skill affects goal setting. We posit two channels through which political skill may affect goal setting processes. First, political skill should enable more accurate diagnoses of situations and a broader social network, with concomitant effects on opportunity exposure and recognition. Thus, political skill should result in heightened opportunity exposure and recognition. Second, we anticipate that politically skilled individuals will be prone to set challenging, but feasible, goals for themselves that result in heightened performance and career success (e.g., Blickle, Schneider et al., 2011).

*Political skill's effects on situational appraisals.* Having established political skill's effects on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, we also believe the construct will operate on job embeddedness, which refers to the on-the-job and off-the-job factors that keep employees in a given role (Mitchell & Lee, 2001). Politically skilled individuals should be more valued as a function of their perceived contribution to the organization (Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005). Because political skill enables network and work relationship formation, we expect it will further embed individuals in their jobs via fit and links mechanisms, reducing turnover intentions and actual turnover (see Mitchell & Lee, 2001, for discussion).

Limited research has evaluated how political skill affects the diagnosis of, and reaction to, one's environment based on equity and justice. Aside from positive or negative attitudinal evaluations, employee appraisals also include assessments of the fairness regarding organizational decisions, processes, interactions, and information (Colquitt, 2001). Collectively, these facets reflect on overall justice perceptions employees possess concerning work (Ambrose & Schminke, 2009). However, only limited research (e.g., Andrews, Kacmar, & Harris, 2009) has evaluated moderated relationship between political skill and justice on outcomes. Because politically skilled individuals are astute observers of situations (Ferris et al., 2007), we would expect them to better understand organizational processes and routines, with concomitant effects on justice perceptions.

Similarly, at the interpersonal level, a central assumption of political skill theory is the ability to understand others (Ferris, Treadway et al.,

2005; Ferris et al., 2012, 2007). Yet, virtually no research has empirically examined the effects of political skill on knowledge of others. We anticipate that political skill will enable individuals to engage in perspective taking, which refers to the process by which individuals adopt others' viewpoints to understand their preferences, values, and needs (Rupp, McCance, Spencer, & Sonntag, 2008). Such an application also may result in empathic processes and the display of sympathy directed toward others.

With regard to stressor–strain relationships, further research is needed on the perceptions of resources available to individuals and how political skill modifies those perceptions in oneself and others. For example, perceived organizational support (POS) reflects assessments of support toward employees from their employers (see Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011, for recent meta-analytic review and linkages). This support represents a potentially important resource useful in buffering negative stressors, and we anticipate that political skill will be positively related to POS.

Finally, regarding situational appraisals, additional research is needed to evaluate how political skill affects, and is affected by, work characteristics found in the job design literature (Humphrey et al., 2007). For example, we anticipate that political skill will be positively related to autonomy, as politically skilled individuals gain additional discretion through social influence mechanisms within the hierarchy of an organization. Similarly, empirical research has established political skill's importance for middle managers (e.g., Smith, Plowman, Duchon, & Quinn, 2008), yet virtually no research has examined political skill's operation for top managers, including the relationship between political skill and their work context.

*Political skill's effects on situational responses.* Behaviorally, we found that political skill positively affected work productivity, but the effect was relatively weak. This suggests the presence of moderating or intervening variables between political skill and work productivity, which should be investigated further. Similarly, a limited set of empirical studies has researched political skill's operation on influence tactics as per the Ferris et al. (2007) model, and these studies generally include only a small number of impression management tactics extrapolated in prior research (e.g., Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980) and only using a field-study design. Future research examining these factors in an experimental setting would be useful.

Perhaps the most interesting area of potential inquiry reflects the positive and negative discretionary behaviors in which individuals engage at work. For example, helping behavior (Flynn et al., 2006), counterproductive work behavior (Mount, Ilies, & Johnson, 2006), compassion organizing (Madden, Duchon, Madden, & Plowman, 2012), and coalition

building (Komorita & Parks, 1995) remain largely unexplored, despite the probability that these factors positively enhance one's influence and power within organizations (Flynn et al., 2006). Similarly, the literatures on power and negotiations are tightly interconnected (Kim, Pinkley, & Fragale, 2005), yet we are aware of no study to date evaluating political skill's operation in a negotiation or conflict resolution context. We anticipate that political skill will enhance the accuracy of perspective taking and empathic processes, which facilitate improved negotiation and conflict resolution outcomes (Neale & Bazerman, 1982).

*Political skill's effects on evaluations by others.* Considering each of the categories within the expanded Ferris et al. (2007) model, we know the most about political skill's effects on evaluations by others. This is congruent with the nature of political skill as an influence on encoded information and images. Yet, there is additional research to be done even here. First, scholars have noted the potential effects of political skill on perceptions of leader authenticity (see Douglas, Ferris, & Perrewé, 2005, for discussion), yet empirical research has not yet explored the role of political skill in the development of leader authenticity.

Political skill also should positively affect evaluations of relationship quality. First, we anticipate that political skill of a mentor and protégé will facilitate improved mentoring outcomes (Perrewé & Nelson, 2004). In particular, the ability to understand one another and inspire trust should increase the efficacy of mentoring relationships. Political skill also may affect the perceived quality of work relationships as such relationships become more productive to both parties (Ferris, Liden et al., 2009).

We also anticipate that political skill will affect nonwork relationships, including the operation of stress crossover between couples and within families. Crossover stress occurs when the stress of one individual from work results in the strain of his or her partner or family relations (Westman, 2001). Because of its effects as a buffering resource (Perrewé et al., 2004), we anticipate that political skill will attenuate the negative effects of crossover stress within couples. Such effects also may occur in group contagion processes.

*Political skill's effects on group and organizational processes.* Despite recognition of its potential importance on group and organizational processes in the Ferris et al. (2007) model, research remains very limited regarding the operation of political skill within follower, group, and team contexts. Even less research has examined unit-level effects of political skill. We anticipate that this deficiency in empirical inquiry reflects the added complexity of conducting these studies compared with studies that rely on individual or dyadic designs. With that said, there is incredible

promise for political skill research in group and organizational processes, and we highlight a few areas of future inquiry.

First, with regard to leadership, the ability to establish and frame a vision of an organization is a critical capability to catalyze follower support (e.g., Galvin, Waldman, & Balthazard, 2010). We anticipate that leader political skill will enable a more effective transmission of one's vision via communication mechanisms (cf. Cleavenger & Munyon, 2013). Such assessments also should predict perceptions of charisma by followers (Galvin et al., 2010).

Second, regarding teams, we anticipate that political skill will affect team process outcomes (Marks, Mathieu, & Zaccaro, 2001). The possession of political skill by team leaders and team members may also enable greater levels of team productivity, representing deep-level composition effects. Similarly, political skill may positively impact the development of consensus by acting on group emergent states and social norms (DeChurch & Mesmer-Magnus, 2010), including norms for safety behavior. Beyond these team composition and process effects, strategic core theory (Humphrey, Morgeson, & Mannor, 2009; Summers, Humphrey, & Ferris, 2012) proposes that some team role holders contribute a disproportionate amount toward the team's performance. For these critical role holders, we anticipate the possession of political skill will be particularly important, enabling core role holders to better leverage resources and manage team value-creating processes.

*Additional designs.* With the exception of limited qualitative research (Smith et al., 2008), political skill has been investigated largely utilizing field study survey designs. We see great potential merit in experimental designs that attempt to manipulate and develop political skill on participants. Such explorations represent a critical next step in our understanding of political skill and will enable an improved extrapolation on the development of political skill by organizations within their respective workforces.

### *Conclusion*

Theory and research on political skill has generated considerable empirical scholarship over the past decade in particular, prompting the need for the accumulation of results across studies to accurately assess true effects and thus the impact of this work on the field. One objective of this study was to conduct a comprehensive meta-analytic review, which evaluated the outcomes of political skill in work contexts, and thus contributing to theory. Our results demonstrated the impactful role of political skill across a wide range of work outcomes, providing support for both the Ferris et al. (2007) theoretical conceptualization of social/political

influence in organizations, as well as the conceptual extensions to theory provided that can help shape and guide future scientific inquiry into this important area of research.

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