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CONSTRUCT VALIDATION OF POLITICAL SKILL

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Abstract

Social effectiveness is critical to mastering social interactions and "office politics", however there is ambiguity in defining these social effectiveness constructs, in particular, political skill. The purpose of the present study was to investigate the construct validity of political skill utilizing a partial multitrait multimethod approach. The participants were undergraduate students with substantial work experience. Discriminant validity was examined with measures of political skill, emotional intelligence, self-monitoring, and social skill. Convergent validity was assessed with independent interpersonal sensitivity and behavioral measures of political skill. The results indicated a lack of construct validity evidence for political skill, with significant overlap among the scales. In particular, a CFA yielded one general social effectiveness factor. Further, the interpersonal sensitivity and behavioral measures were not significantly related to the political skill scale. The implications for the lack of construct validity for political skill are discussed and directions for future research are proposed.

Construct Validation of Political Skill

Organizations are inherently complex and ambiguous. Successful functioning within an organization requires more than technical skill in one's position. Employees' success and impact are also a product of social skills. That is, employees at every level of the organization need to understand and manage their own behavior while, at the same time, predicting and influencing the behavior of others. The ability to master these goals plays an important role in job performance and contributing effectively to the success of the organization. Organizational functioning requires a wide range of employee interactions. Corporate meetings are common means for discussing issues, considering policy, and making decisions. There are, of course, frequent, less formal contacts between supervisors and employees and collaborative efforts on various projects. In addition, more casual interactions over lunch, during breaks, or around the water cooler provide opportunities for learning more about colleagues and facilitating interpersonal influence. Managing this wide range of social contacts is an important element for success in organizations.

There have been many attempts to define these social skills and there is some agreement on the constituent elements. For example, socially skilled people typically have the following characteristics: (a) a repertoire of effective social behaviors, (b) an awareness of social norms for varying situations, (c) the ability to select the most effective responses, (d) the ability to perceive accurately the feedback from others, and (e) the ability to change one's social behavior based on feedback (Eisler & Frederiksen, 1980).

Although it is difficult to define these social skills precisely, we often intuitively know whether someone is utilizing these skills effectively. For example, when a co-worker in the customer call center uses the speaker phone for her incoming calls, you may determine that she is not aware of the social norms associated with working in close proximity with others. We can determine individuals' social competence based on their ability to uphold social norms and achieve and maintain interpersonal relationships necessary to succeed in a number of social areas (e.g., marriage, education, occupation).

Attempts to distinguish between individuals with good versus poor social skills were originally based on the observation of certain personality traits, such as empathy, emotional stability, maturity, and need for affiliation. Traits such as neuroticism, introversion, and dependency were thought to hinder one's social skill development. More recently, theorists assert that different personality traits are activated by cues from the social environment allowing one's social competence to fluctuate based on the social situation (Lievens, Chasteen, Day, & Christiansen, 2006). For example, a new employee may appear introverted when asked to speak in front of a large board room of upper management, but behave in a more outgoing and extraverted fashion when in the cafeteria with peers.

Origins of Political Skill

In today's corporate world, social skills are critical to master effectively the day to day social interactions and "office politics" within and between organizations. Executives often say, "You just have to know how to play the game" if you want to get ahead. That is, it requires a certain social skill to navigate successfully in organizations. Performing the tasks of the job itself is important, but job knowledge alone is not

sufficient. At one time or another, successful people need to influence others' attitudes and decisions (Ferris, Davidson, & Perrewe, 2005). First, it may be helpful to take a broader look at organizational politics.

Defining Organizational Politics

The idea of organizational politics was noticeably absent in management and organizational theory literature until recent years. Although there was an early reference by Lasswell in 1936, as "the study of who gets what, when, and how," organizational politics did not gain much attention until the 1970's. There are two possible explanations for the lack of management research on organizational politics despite its frequent use in everyday conversation. First, because "politics" is often used in everyday organizational conversations, most managers may assume that it is intuitively understood. According to a sample of over 400 managers, 60% said that "most casual conversation appears to be about things I would consider as workplace politics" (Gandz & Murray, 1980). In fact, in a study of 87 managerial personnel surveyed about organizational political tactics, none of them requested a definition of politics before completing the assignment (Allen, Panian, & Lotz, 1979). Because of this apparent intuitive understanding, it may have seemed unnecessary to develop a precise definition of organizational politics. Second, because politics has a negative connotation, it provides a perspective on analyzing organizational processes that competes with more theoretical perspectives typically presented in management research. Researchers may have eluded the topic in order to avoid the negative connotation of politics (Pfeffer, 1981).

There are two competing views in defining organizational politics: those occurring through sanctioned means versus those occurring through means that are

unsanctioned by the organization. Mayes and Allen (1977) discussed organizational politics in terms of influence to obtain outcomes not sanctioned by the organization or to obtain legitimate organizational outcomes through non-sanctioned means. This definition fails to address the possibility that power and political activity could define what is or isn't sanctioned within the organization (Pfeffer, 1981). That is, it is plausible that powerful individuals would not engage in political activity because what they do is likely to be sanctioned, and, in contrast, the powerless would almost inevitably engage in political activity (Pfeffer, 1981).

Organizational politics may even be a mix of sanctioned and non-sanctioned tactics. For example, Mintzberg (1983) suggested that authority or ideology used to gain coordination and consensus through sanctioned behavior can be a form of political activity within an organization. On the other hand, he also described organizational politics as behavior that is informal, often narrow-minded and disruptive, and not sanctioned by the organization (Mintzberg, 1983). Further, he contended that politics includes three elements: (a) behavior outside of the legitimate systems of influence and often in opposition to them; (b) behavior designed to benefit the individual or group, presumably at the expense of the organization at large (although not always); and (c) as a result of a and b, behavior typically disruptive or conflictive in nature, pitting individuals or groups against the organization at large or against each other.

Many definitions ignore the functionality and beneficial outcomes of political activity for both the individual and the organization (Pfeffer, 1981). Organizational politics, then, can be perceived as positive or negative depending on the viewpoint of the individuals involved. That is, whether one's intentions and behaviors are being

threatened or supported can determine the connotation given to a particular political situation (Kakabadse & Parker, 1984).

As a result of these issues, other authors have attempted to provide a more inclusive definition. In this way, the sanctioned versus unsanctioned debate can be avoided and the positive or negative connotation is left to interpretation. Pfeffer (1981) proposed that organizational politics involves activities within organizations to gain and employ resources such as power, to achieve the preferred outcome in uncertain situations. Explicit in this definition is the idea that political activity is the outcome of discretion in the choices of a decision. Mintzberg (1983) suggested two main reasons behind this discretion: (a) the presence of problems or gaps in the other systems of influence (i.e., decision-making power based on authority, ideology, or expertise), or (b) the needs of the individual are not being satisfied within these systems. Problems and gaps give rise to discretion in work and unsatisfied needs lead to exploitation of that discretion. Similarly, Porter, Allen, and Angle (1981) acknowledge the inconsistencies in defining organizational politics and offer four elements that cover both types of political behavior. They define organizational politics as (a) social influence attempts that (b) are discretionary and neither prescribed nor prohibited by the formal organization, that (c) are intended to promote or protect the interest of individuals or groups, while (d) placing demands on other individuals or groups.

Because organizational politics was typically seen as the discretionary, often secretive, and sometimes illegitimate activity of organizations, the process was cynically referred to as a "game" and the individuals involved became known as "players". Allison (1971) proposed the following:

> The best way to characterize the system of politics in an organization seems to be as a collection of 'games' taking place throughout. Intricate and subtle, simultaneous and overlapping; they are neither as unstructured nor as independent of each other as they may seem. Games proceed neither at random nor at leisure (Mintzberg, 1983, p. 187).

Political Games

Organizational politics can be seen at all levels of the organization, albeit in different forms and to varying degrees. Mintzberg (1983) identified 13 distinct games commonly played within the context of organizations that are categorized by the players, their means of influence, and their motive for playing the game. For example, *insurgency* games are usually used to resist authority and can be played subtly by individuals and small groups or aggressively by large groups. This game is often used when an unskilled individual lower in the hierarchy attempts to gain power by avoiding, delaying, or altering the implementation of a decision from higher levels of the organization. In the same way, *counterinsurgency* games, are used by those in authority to retaliate against insurgency.

Many games in Mintzberg's list describe ways of building power bases. For example, the *sponsorship* game is played by a less powerful individual who pledges allegiance to a more powerful individual within the organization in return for "a piece of the action". Sponsors are often seen as mentors or coaches who support their protégées, enable them to take short cuts toward advancement, and provide a signal to others that their protégées have the support of a powerful person within the organization. All of this is typically offered in exchange for loyal service from the protégées. The *alliance*-

building game is played among peers who organize a network of support for each other. This type of political game requires confidence and a good deal of effort to form the alliance, persuading others to join and gaining momentum, and then addressing and winning important issues.

Some games are played more to defeat rivals than they are to gain individual influence, while others are categorized by their attempts to effect organizational change. For example, the *strategic candidates* game is played by an individual or group of individuals attempting to make changes by promoting their own proposals or candidates through legitimate means. The *whistle-blowing* game typically involves an individual lower in the organizational hierarchy notifying an external source of a social norm violation by others within the organization. This whistle-blowing is often done anonymously, because the player is bypassing the legitimate chain of power by confiding in an outside source.

Although these political games have been documented in some detail by Mintzberg (1983), there is little research on individuals playing multiple games simultaneously. Whether organizational influence takes the form of one of these games or some other tactics, successful implementation still requires social skill and the motivation to use it. In the context of organizational processes, this kind of social skill has been identified as political skill.

Defining Political Skill

Following the game analogy, Mintzberg (1983) described several types of "equipment" used in political games. The most notable elements were political skill and political will. Pfeffer (1981) coined the term *political skill*, in describing the ability to

navigate effectively through the often ambiguous and unstable organizational environments. He characterized individuals with political skill as articulate, sensitive, socially adept, competent, popular, extraverted, self-confident, aggressive, ambitious, devious, highly intelligent, and logical. Mintzberg (1983) added a few other traits of politically skilled players, including charm, physical strength, and attractiveness. Mintzberg contended, however, that it was not enough to possess skill in navigating organizational systems. To be successful, one must also have the energy or *political will* to act on this skill. Political skill, then, according to Mintzberg, demonstrates the ability to carry out behaviors in politically perceptive and effective ways, while political will is the motivation to use personal resources to engage in political behavior.

In his book, Mintzberg (1983) developed a conceptualization of political skill and political will. He explained political skill primarily in terms of power. That is, influence requires a certain amount of power as a foundation, the motivation to act (i.e., political will), and the ability to do it with a certain style; in other words, political skill. Thus, he defined political skill in the following way:

> Political skill is the ability to use the bases of power effectively – to convince those to whom one has access, to use one's resources, information, and technical skills to their fullest in bargaining, to exercise formal power with a sensitivity to the feelings of others, to know where to concentrate one's energies, to sense what is possible, and to organize the necessary alliances" (Mintzberg, 1983, p.26).

Further, Mintzberg (1973) lists many of these indicators of political skill as being critical for leadership, including the ability to establish and maintain social networks, and

the ability to understand and empathize with others. A politically skilled individual must be adept at persuasion, manipulation, negotiation, and have a sense of how power emerges and is distributed within the organization. For example, knowing the issues that stimulate attention, the presence of particular friendships and rivalries, and the implicit rules of the organization (as well as those that can be broken) can provide a distinct advantage in a political system (Mintzberg, 1983). Therefore, political skill requires individuals to be perceptive in interpersonal interactions and able to express themselves appropriately in order to accomplish a goal.

The conceptual development of political skill started by Pfeffer and Mintzberg stalled for the greater part of the next 20 years. It was not until 1999, when Ferris and his colleagues attempted to refine the construct of political skill that empirical research developed (Ferris, et al., 1999). The next section examines how political skill has been operationalized in recent years.

Operationalizing Political Skill

Earlier work on the political behavior in organizations failed to examine the political skill of the players involved (Ferris et al., 1999). Without a clear operational definition of political skill, determining the effectiveness of political skill is difficult. Ferris et al. (1999) conceptualized political skill as a construct overlapping the domains of other interpersonal style constructs such as social, emotional, and practical intelligence and self-monitoring. They defined it as a combination of social astuteness, the ability to display emotions appropriately, and to demonstrate situationally appropriate behavior in a way that inspires trust, confidence, and genuineness (Ferris et al., 1999). On the behavioral side, politically skilled individuals know how to present themselves in

different social situations to appear honest and sincere, regardless of their underlying motives. These individuals remain focused on the end objectives and therefore can emotionally detach from the situation in order to calibrate their behavior to elicit particular responses. On the social judgment side, politically skilled individuals are astute observers, with a sensitivity to others that allows them to discern social interactions and interpret behavior (Ferris, Davidson, & Perrewe, 2005). Ferris and colleagues (1999, 2005) argued that political skill differs from other social skills because it is geared specifically toward achieving success in organizations.

Inherent in this conceptualization is the idea that political skill is comprised of multiple, complex dimensions. As the first to attempt empirical research on political skill, Ferris and colleagues (Ferris et al., 1999; Ferris, Treadway, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, Kacmar, Douglas, et al., 2005) focused on developing an inventory to measure self and others' ratings of the construct. This research has yet to utilize other methods of validating political skill, such as tests of self-presentation and interpersonal sensitivity. The initial attempt at measurement, focused on constructing a simple, unidimensional scale, with the intention of demonstrating convergence with related constructs without redundancy (Ferris et al., 1999).

The first measure of political skill, the Political Skill Inventory (PSI; Ferris et al., 1999), was comprised of just six items. They focused on issues such as ease and confidence in social interaction, empathy, and encouraging positive responses. The authors found adequate reliability for the measure, with $\alpha = 0.73$.

Although the authors recognized that this six item scale was only an initial attempt at representing political skill, subsequent studies accepted and utilized the scale

without hesitation (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas, & Ammeter, 2004; Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, & Ferris, 2004; Perrewe, Zellars, Ferris, Rossi, Kacmar, & Ralston, 2004; Perrewe, Zellars, Rossi, Ferris, Kacmar, Liu, et al., 2005). For example, Kolodinsky and colleagues (2004) found that, after controlling for several demographic variables, political skill, as measured by the six item PSI, had a curvilinear relationship with job satisfaction and job tension. That is, moderate scores on the PSI were associated with the highest job satisfaction and the lowest job tension scores.

Several of these early studies focused on political skill as a means of reducing workplace stressors. In one such study, political skill moderated the relationship between perceived role overload and strain more than general self-efficacy did (Perrewe et al., 2005). In other words, higher scores on the 6-item PSI led to a reduction in role overload related to job strain. While many of these studies supported the unidimensionality of the political skill measure, Ferris and colleagues (2005) specifically focused on the potential multidimensionality of the political skill construct in a revised version of the PSI.

Measurement Refinement

The revised version of the PSI was developed to capture the multidimensionality of the political skill construct proposed with the original measure (Ferris et al., 1999). Political skill was again defined as the ability to understand others at work effectively and to use this knowledge to influence others in enhancing one's personal and/or organizational objectives (Ferris et al., 2005). Inherent in this definition, according to the authors, is the indication that several aspects should be included in a representative measure of the construct. In their revised construct, Ferris et al. (2005) suggested that

political skill was comprised of four dimensions: social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity.

Social astuteness reflects individuals' ability to comprehend social interactions and accurately interpret their own behavior and that of others. This dimension has also been called "understanding" or "sensitivity to others" and is probably most similar to emotional intelligence and self-monitoring. Individuals who are socially astute are adept at dealing with others and possess the ability to present themselves in a positive light (Ferris et al., 2005). Socially astute individuals are generally very self-aware and have insight into their own behavior and the behavior of others. A measure of political savvy developed by Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein and Gardner (1994) was highly correlated with the social astuteness dimension of political skill (r = .60).

Interpersonal influence represents the subtle ability to project power. People scoring highly on this dimension are adaptable and can alter their behavior according to the context of the situation in order to elicit the desired response from others (Ferris et al., 2005). These individuals have a way of making people at ease and can readily establish a good rapport with others. They can typically remain emotionally detached from the situation in focusing on their end goal. Because interpersonal influence allows individuals to calibrate their behaviors to the situation effortlessly and convincingly, this dimension is probably most similar to self-monitoring.

People with networking ability are able to develop and employ networks of people who hold valuable assets essential to the success of the person or their organization. Individuals high in networking ability use a subtle personal style to build relationships beneficial for success and future business opportunities (Ferris et al., 2005).

Networking ability facilitates the creation and utilization of opportunities that increase "social capital" and enhance their reputation. High networking people are also likely to excel in conflict management (Ferris, Davidson, & Perrewe, 2005).

The final dimension identified by Ferris and associates (2005) is apparent sincerity, which includes integrity, authenticity, and genuineness. In some ways, this aspect of political skill determines whether a person's influence attempts will be successful because it focuses on the believability of intentions. Apparent sincerity shapes the way actions are perceived (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). Individuals high in apparent sincerity are perceived as honest and open and not manipulative or coercive, despite the possibility of ulterior motives. Politically skilled individuals do not necessarily have ulterior motives, but their behavior will be the same regardless of motive (Ferris, Davidson, & Perrewe, 2005). The apparent sincerity dimension proved to be the weakest dimension by far, due to questionable reliability estimates during scale development (Ferris et al., 2005).

In the development of this four dimension measure, an original pool of 40 items was eventually reduced to 18 items that did not significantly correlate with social desirability, or have significant cross loadings. Only three of the six items from the original measure of political skill were preserved in the 18 item scale (Ferris et al., 2005). Preliminary confirmatory factor analysis supported an adequate fit of the four dimensional model (Ferris et al., 2005). The networking ability dimension comprised the largest number of items (6 items) and accounted for the largest percentage of variance (39%). In a second study, the four factor structure was again the best fit of the data, however, the apparent sincerity dimension demonstrated low internal consistency (α =

.58). This could be an artifact of the respondents' perspective, because the sincerity of individuals' actions is likely a function of others' perceptions and not easily accessible for self-report (Ferris et al., 2005).

Other researchers have attempted to replicate the factor structure of both the 6-item and 18-item political skill measures. For example, Ahearn and colleagues' (2004) factor analysis of the 6-item PSI supported the unidimensionality of the scale. In addition, Ahearn et al. (2004) suggested that a leader's political skill score could explain incremental variance beyond leadership experience. Douglas and Ammeter (2004) found that a two-dimensional model fit their data best on the 18 PSI items assessing subordinates' perceptions of leader political skill. The dimensions of interpersonal influence and networking ability were the only two that emerged in a sample of teachers in a public school district (Douglas & Ammeter, 2004).

Factor analysis evidence, then, is inconsistent across samples. Specifically, Ferris et al.'s (2005) confirmatory factor analysis supported a four factor model in the development of the 18-item political skill measure. However, other researchers have derived a two-factor model using the same 18-item PSI with a different sample (Douglas & Ammeter, 2004). CFA is a popular method for providing support of construct validity. Eliminating alternative models is essential to providing support for one theoretical perspective over another in construct development (DiStefano & Hess, 2005). Therefore, it is suggested that the factor structure of political skill needs additional study.

Construct Validity of Political Skill

Several studies report evidence relevant for the construct validity of political skill. Preliminary validation work was conducted throughout the development stages of

political skill using 6- or 12-item measures. These studies laid the groundwork for construct validation of the 18-item, multidimensional measure.

Early Scale Development

Early construct validity work on political skill was conducted using 6- and 12-item measures. Reliability estimates for the 6-item PSI (PSI-6) in two large samples were adequate (α = .75 for a clerical sample and α = .81 for an administrative sample). No reliability estimates were provided for the 12-item measure (PSI-12). Convergent validity, in these studies, was defined as demonstrating a relationship between the PSI and other measures presumed to assess portions of the construct, without suggesting redundancy (Ferris et al., 1999). Discriminant validity was defined as establishing the distinctiveness of the construct by demonstrating that the PSI was different from potentially similar constructs.

Six-item scale research. The development of the PSI-6 measure included two primary validation studies (Ferris et al., 1999). Political skill was described as a social influence construct that combines social astuteness, confidence, and the ability to demonstrate situationally appropriate behavior. The PSI-6 was compared to measures of understanding of events, positive and negative affect, and self-monitoring. Significant correlations in the hypothesized direction were found for understanding of events (r = .35 and .52), positive affect (r = .36 and .36), negative affect (r = -.16 and -.16), and self-monitoring (r = .13 and .21) in both the clerical and administrative samples, respectively. Extraversion (r = .45 and .28) and conscientiousness (r = .24 and .25) were correlated significantly with the PSI-6 (Ferris et al., 1999).

Another study evaluated the extent to which political skill was related to empathetic concern, an original factor in the conceptual development of the construct domain (Ferris et al., 1999). Empathetic concern was significantly, positively related to the PSI-6 (r = .28) as anticipated. Thus, it appears that political skill as measured by the PSI-6 was correlated, but not redundant, with other social influence constructs. Ferris et al. (1999) claim this evidence supports convergent validity.

The PSI-6 was then evaluated with a measure of job-induced tension. Specifically, political skill could potentially reduce stress or tension in the workplace (Ferris et al., 1999). The relationship with job-induced tension was small and not significant (Ferris et al., 1999). The authors concluded that this relationship supported discriminant validity. Perrewe et al. (2004) also conducted an analysis using role conflict (r = -.05), negative affect (r = -.40), and self-efficacy (r = .31) to assess the uniqueness of the PSI-6. They concluded the correlations between political skill and these constructs supported discriminant validity as well. They also found that individuals low in political skill experienced increased role conflict measured by perceptions of role conflict and physiological symptoms (e.g., blood pressure; Perrewe et al., 2004). In contrast, those scoring high on the PSI-6 experienced less role conflict.

Twelve-item scale research. In an early validation study, Ferris et al. (1999) compared a set of 12 political skill items with measures of delayed gratification, understanding of events, and the Big Five personality characteristics. Three of the six PSI-6 items were included. According to the authors' conceptualization, those high in political skill would display high personal control, reflected in delayed gratification, and balanced interpersonal style, reflected in several fundamental personality characteristics.

As expected, PSI-12 scores were significantly, positively related to delayed gratification (r = .32), understanding of events (r = .45), and the Big Five traits of extraversion (r = .39), agreeableness (r = .42), and emotional stability (r = .24; Ferris et al., 1999). No significant relationship was predicted or found with conscientiousness (r = .24) or openness to experience (r = .14). The authors claimed that this pattern of results supported the convergent validity of political skill (Ferris et al., 1999).

The PSI-12 was also compared to general cognitive ability. Because Ferris et al. (1999) described political skill as an interpersonal style construct, they expected it to be independent of general mental ability. Political skill was not significantly correlated with general mental ability (r = -.08). The authors acknowledge that, because this was a relatively small sample (N = 62) and employed only a preliminary set of 12 items, the results should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, this result suggests that political skill is distinct from general mental ability.

Later Scale Development

The PSI-6 and PSI-12 were initial steps in operationalizing the multidimensional construct of political skill (Ferris et al., 1999). The 18-item PSI (PSI-18) was developed to be more representative of the political skill construct (Ferris et al., 2005). In the development of the four-dimension political skill measure, several validation studies were conducted.

Ferris et al. (2005) suggest that convergent validity reflects the extent to which a measure relates to similar constructs. They claimed support for convergent validity with significant correlations between political skill and a variety of similar social constructs. In two separate studies, the PSI-18 was significantly related to self-monitoring (r = .39

and .33) and the influence tactic of coalition building (r = .21 and .28; Ferris et al., 2005). In one study, the PSI-18 was significantly correlated with conscientiousness (r = .31) and upward appeal (r = .25), however, the correlations were slightly lower in a second study (r = .17 and .17). No other Big 5 personality traits were included in these analyses, as they were for the validation of the PSI-6. The authors expected that, because assertiveness often involves demanding, ordering, and checking up on people, it would not be exhibited by those high in political skill. As hypothesized, assertiveness was not significantly related to the PSI-18 (r = .09). In addition, the authors found that the PSI-18 scores were significantly correlated with political savvy (r = .47), a measure of understanding others' behavior (Chao et al., 1994). In another sample, Ferris et al. (2005) found that the PSI-18 and emotional intelligence were significantly correlated at r = .53. The authors also suggested that these results supported the convergent validity of political skill.

More recently, Meurs, Gallagher, and Perrewe (2010) found some evidence for the convergent validity for political skill with a significant, moderate correlation (r = .30) between employees' self-reported political skill scores and supervisors ratings of employees' political skill. In other words, political skill contains both self-relevant and other-relevant characteristics that are best captured via self- and other-report as independent measures of the political skill construct. Thus, this study provides some convergent validity evidence for political skill.

Additional indirect support for construct validity may be seen in studies of criterion-related validity. Criterion-related validity contributes to the construct validity of a measure by providing empirical evidence of relevant relationships and highlighting the

utility of the measure for an applied purpose (Messick, 1995). The PSI-18 predicted job performance and effectiveness ratings collected from two different organizational samples (Ferris et al., 2005). Specifically, the PSI-18 explained a significant amount of variance in effectiveness ratings (R^2 = .16) and, after accounting for control variables, including self-monitoring and several influence tactics, provided incremental validity evidence in predicting supervisor performance ratings (ΔR^2 = .04).

In another study, leaders high in political skill were more effective at influencing perceptions of organizational support in their subordinates, and in turn, increased organizational commitment (Treadway, Hochwarter, Ferris, Kacmar, Douglas, Ammeter, et al., 2004). In addition, individuals high on political skill neutralized the effects of emotional labor (the act of evoking, shaping, or suppressing feeling in oneself) on subsequent behavior (Treadway, Hochwarter, Kacmar, & Ferris, 2005). That is, political skill facilitated successful influence, while dissipating the dissonance of monitoring emotions. Managers' political skill also predicted job performance better than other constructs, including self-monitoring, leadership self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence (Semadar, Robins, & Ferris, 2006). Thus, criterion-related validity evidence provides some support for convergent validity of political skill.

Evidence for the discriminant validity of political skill was also assessed in the development of the PSI-18 (Ferris et al., 2005). The authors described discriminant validity as political skill's independence from constructs that are conceptually distinct. Discriminant validity was supported by showing political skill was, again, not related to general mental ability; however, the correlation was not reported. General mental ability is the only construct examined in two separate discriminant validation studies of political

skill (Ferris et al., 1999, 2005) and these studies used two different measures of the political skill construct (PSI-6 and PSI-18). Ferris et al. (2005) also claimed support for discriminant validity by finding a negative correlation between the PSI-18 and trait anxiety (r = -.31 and -.27) for two different samples in the validation of the PSI-18.

Evaluating Construct Validity Evidence

In evaluating the evidence on the construct validity of political skill it is useful first to review the basic principles of construct validity. First, there is inconsistency in the definition of convergence as it relates to the construct validity of political skill. In the development of the PSI-18, Ferris et al. (2005) suggest convergent validity reflects the extent to which a measure relates to similar constructs. Rather, convergent validity is reflected in significant correlations between independent measures of the same construct (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Consequently, evidence for the convergent validity for political skill should be assessed by measuring political skill with different methods, for example, the PSI self-report measure, behavioral measures, and peer or supervisor ratings.

Second, according to Campbell and Fiske (1959), discriminant validity is a vital part of construct validity. Discriminant validity evidence should discount alternative constructs as plausible rival hypotheses (Messick, 1995). That is, the new construct should be distinct from existing similar constructs and not be substantially correlated with them. In contrast, Ferris et al. (2005) defined discriminant validity as the extent to which a measure does not relate to constructs from which it should differ (e.g., job-induced tension). The majority of analyses conducted in the development of both the PSI-6 and PSI-18 political skill measures are, in fact, more relevant for discriminant validity, than

for convergent validity, as the authors proposed (Ferris et al., 1999, 2005). For example, low to moderate correlations with constructs like self-monitoring (r = .39 and .33) and emotional intelligence (r = .53; Ferris et al., 2005) could be evidence of discriminant validity. In fact, the relationship between emotional intelligence and political skill may warrant additional research because potentially related constructs should not correlate too highly.

Another concern with the construct validity evidence of political skill reported by Ferris et al. (1999, 2005) is that it uses three different sets of items. Without replicating the majority of these relationships with the PSI-18, it is difficult to determine the extent to which these results represent political skill as we currently operationalize it. It appears that a different pattern of results emerges with each of the scales. For example, the Big 5 personality dimensions were hypothesized to relate differently with each of the three measures. Conscientiousness and extraversion were the only traits from the Big 5 showing significant relationships with the PSI-6 measure. In the study using the PSI-12, however, no relationship was hypothesized or found with conscientiousness. Then, conscientiousness was the only Big 5 trait predicted to relate to the PSI-18, which resulted in a non-significant correlation (Ferris et al., 2005).

Thus, the existing evidence for the current construct validation of political skill is marginal. This is particularly the case for the most recent version, the PSI-18. Factorial validity is also useful in establishing the internal structure, or dimensionality, of a construct (Schwab, 1980). Here, too, researchers have failed to replicate the factor structure of the PSI-18 established by Ferris et al. (2005). Criterion-related validity evidence provided some support for convergence. Nevertheless, no studies have yet

employed the independent measures of political skill necessary to establish the convergent validity of the construct. Low to moderate correlations with general mental ability and several interpersonal style constructs (e.g., self-monitoring) provide some evidence for the discriminant validity of political skill, but other constructs (e.g., emotional intelligence) require further analysis, and still others (e.g., social skill) have not been assessed.

Potential Related Social Effectiveness Constructs

As work with the political skill construct continues, researchers have found relationships between the PSI and a variety of organizational constructs and outcomes including influence effectiveness (Kolodinsky, Treadway, & Ferris, 2007), accountability and job tension (Hochwarter, Ferris, Gavin, Perrewe, Hall, & Frink, 2007), subordinate performance (Treadway, Ferris, Duke, Adams, & Thatcher, 2007), role conflict and burnout (Jawahar, Stone, & Kisamore, 2007), personality and job performance (Blickle, Meurs, Zettler, Solga, Noethen, Kramer, et al., 2008), and occupational choice (Kaplan, 2008).

Although many of these relationships are important in distinguishing political skill as a beneficial construct, construct validation is primary in developing research questions (Schwab, 1980). There are other constructs, potentially related to political skill, that have yet to be studied. Ferris and Judge (1991) developed a model to distinguish political skill from a variety of social skills such as emotional intelligence, self-monitoring, and social self-efficacy. The model proposed that political skill differed from other social skills because it is geared specifically toward achieving success in organizations, but it was not empirically tested.

Even if one accepts the conceptual distinction, that is, that political skill is focused on success in organizations, clear evidence for the convergent validity and discriminant validity of the construct is required. Some potentially related constructs (e.g., emotional intelligence, self-monitoring) have been examined via self-report, but other independent measures, including behavioral measures are necessary to establish construct validity. Other related constructs, such as impression management and social skill have not even been mentioned in development and construct validity analyses of political skill.

In this paper, I further examine several constructs that seem to be most relevant for political skill. Specifically, this includes emotional/social intelligence, self-monitoring, impression management, and social skill. I address the mixed results from previous research on political skill and emotional/social intelligence, and self-monitoring. In addition, I examine impression management, a construct ignored in previous research on political skill. Finally, I clarify the distinction between political skill and social skill, which is often used interchangeably in the literature.

Construct Landscape

Emotional Intelligence

Like political skill, emotional intelligence is a relatively new construct. It was originally described by Solovey and Mayer (1990) as a set of abilities to deal with emotions. These researchers identified five components of emotional intelligence, namely, knowing one's own emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself, recognizing others' emotions, and handling relationships (Solovey & Mayer, 1990). More recently, Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2004, 2008) refined their definition of

emotional intelligence as the ability to use information processing about emotions to guide thinking and behavior. For example, individuals high in emotional intelligence can identify, use, understand, and manage emotions to benefit themselves and others.

In 1995, Goleman wrote a popular book that increased the exposure of emotional intelligence to management and business practitioners. He presented emotional intelligence as the ability to control impulses, delay gratification, regulate mood, empathize, and keep emotion from impeding cognitive functioning (Goleman, 1995). Goleman (1995) emphasized the importance of emotional intelligence for effectiveness at work, even though there was little empirical research on its impact in business settings. He identified a set of five dimensions similar to Solovey and Mayer's (1990) original conceptualization that constitute the emotional intelligence construct. Specifically, Goleman (1995) identified these components as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. In fact, subsequent research indicates these dimensions are highly correlated with one another (Rahim & Psenicka, 2002).

A frequently used measure of emotional intelligence identifies a hierarchical structure of the construct, ranging from perceiving emotions, to using emotions to facilitate thinking, to understanding emotions, and finally to managing emotions (Mayer et al., 2008). That is, perceiving emotions is considered a lower level skill, while managing one's emotions is a higher level skill. Improving one's skill in a lower level will, in turn, improve skills in others (Mayer et al., 2008). Further, each of these four levels is seen as a continuum (Mayer et al., 2008). For example, individuals may begin with the ability to perceive basic emotions in facial expressions and progress to detecting micro-expressions, the very brief flashes of emotional reactions that are quickly masked.

An alternative view suggests that emotional intelligence reflects "the ability to read and understand others in social contexts, to detect the nuances of emotional reactions, and to utilize such knowledge to influence others through emotional regulation and control" (Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003). The ability to read and understand others to influence behavior has been applied in defining similar social effectiveness constructs, such as political skill. These authors argue that social effectiveness skills, particularly those of emotional intelligence, are critical in an organizational setting (Prati et al., 2003). For example, they propose that emotionally intelligent leaders are able to motivate others and increase their team effectiveness. In fact, Ashford and Humphrey (1995) argue that organizations cannot exist without emotion. Emotion guides individuals in ordering priorities, practicing discretion in their actions, and fitting into the organizational setting.

As a result, emotional intelligence has often been studied in social settings. The ability to process emotional information and manage emotional dynamics astutely is critical in navigating social situations (Lopes, Brackett, Nezlek, Schutz, Sellin, & Salovey, 2004). These authors suggest that emotional intelligence can predict a variety of successful outcomes in social settings. Specifically, in a sample of college students, emotional intelligence was positively related to the quality of interactions with friends and the opposite sex (Lopes et al., 2004). In another study, emotional intelligence was positively correlated with self-enhancing humor, cheerfulness, and social competence (Yip & Martin, 2005).

More specific to organizations, individuals high in emotional intelligence may be better decision makers because emotions help to prioritize and facilitate thinking (Mayer,

Roberts, & Barcade, 2008). These authors suggest that individuals able to respond to organizational issues with positive emotions can inspire greater creativity in solutions. Results from an international study indicate that emotional intelligence is positively related to successful problem solving strategies (Rahim & Psenicka, 2002). The authors speculated that managers with high emotional intelligence would be better able to encourage employees to enhance their own problem solving strategies. Emotional intelligence demonstrated a positive relationship with problem solving strategies such as integrating both parties' needs to satisfy both sides' concerns. A negative relationship was found between emotional intelligence and bargaining strategies that seek to satisfy only one party's needs (Rahim & Psenicka, 2002). Therefore, these researchers concluded that enhancing the emotional competency of managers can, in turn, enhance their subordinates' focus on problem solving strategies that represent both parties' pursuits.

Other research showed that managers high in emotional intelligence were better able to develop working relationships with colleagues (Rosete & Ciarrochi, 2005) and were more likely to behave in ways that supported the organization's goals (Cote & Miners, 2006). One study reported that emotional intelligence correlated up to $r = .45$ with performance measures such as rank in the company, merit increases, sociability ratings, and contributions to a positive work environment (Mayer, Roberts, & Barcade, 2008). Emotional intelligence has also been linked with leadership effectiveness and team outcomes (Prati et al., 2003) in addition to predicting managerial job performance (Semadar, Robins, & Ferris, 2006).

A model of leader and follower emotional intelligence abilities and team effectiveness was developed by Prati et al. (2003). Specifically, leader emotional intelligence should facilitate leader characteristics such as charisma, emotional control, and influence, which, in turn, should enhance the team's overall effectiveness. In the same way, follower emotional intelligence should enhance team dynamics, such as role awareness and cohesion, which lead to collaboration and effective decision making, and, ultimately, promote team effectiveness (Prati, et al., 2003). In a study using 300 Australian managers, emotional intelligence predicted managers' job performance ratings such that emotionally intelligent managers received higher performance ratings. The strength of this relationship was reduced, however, when other social effectiveness constructs such as political skill and self-monitoring were included in the regression analyses (Semadar, et al., 2006).

Debate exists, however, regarding the extent to which emotional intelligence can distinguish between exceptional and just average performance (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2008). Specifically, Goleman (1995) claimed that emotional intelligence could account for the majority of the difference between average and star performers. Watkins (2000) made a similar assertion, attributing as much as 85% of success in outstanding performers to emotional intelligence. Mayer and colleagues (2008) are skeptical about these claims because they offer no empirical support. Although the results are somewhat mixed, research generally shows a positive relationship between emotional intelligence and a variety of positive organizational and performance outcomes.

Social Intelligence

Social intelligence is simply defined as the ability to understand and manage people (Ferris, Perrewe, Anthony, and Gilmore, 2000). The original idea of social intelligence appeared in Harpers Magazine in 1920 when Thorndike described social intelligence as the ability to understand and manage people and act wisely in human relations (Heggestad, 2008).

Typically, the social intelligence domain is defined in terms of two factors. The first describes social intelligence as the decoding of social information through social-cognitive skills. For example, this might include the ability to read nonverbal cues or make accurate inferences, putting oneself in the others' position to predict behaviors, or interpersonal awareness of situationally appropriate behaviors (Ford & Tisak, 1983). Second, social intelligence is described in terms of behavioral outcomes as the effectiveness or adaptiveness of social performances (Ford & Tisak, 1983).

A model of social intelligence, conceptualized by Goleman (2006), organizes the construct into two broad categories, namely, social awareness and social facility, similar to the two factors described previously. Social awareness, or what we sense about others, is sudivided into four factors: primal empathy, attunement, empathic accuracy, and social cognition. Goleman (2006) defines primal empathy as sensing non-verbal, emotional signals from others. Attunement is listening and "tuning in" to cues from others. Empathic accuracy is described as understanding others' thoughts, feelings, and intentions, while social cognition is about knowing how the social world works (Goleman, 2006).

Social facility, also comprised of four factors, is what we do with that awareness. The four social facility factors, according to Goleman (2006), are synchrony, self-presentation, influence, and concern. Synchrony is defined as facile and smooth non-verbal behaviors. Self-presentation focuses on the effectiveness of presenting oneself in social settings and influence is described as shaping social interaction outcomes. Finally, Goleman describes the concern factor as caring about and acting on others' needs. Although Goleman (2006) describes social intelligence as distinct from emotional intelligence, he acknowledges that it is likely difficult to identify separate emotional and social intelligence behaviors.

Impression Management

Goffman's (1959) work on self-presentation accelerated interest in impression management. Impression management refers to the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Through this process, individuals strive to behave in ways that create desired impressions and evaluations and, ultimately, affect others' behavior. Impression management involves behaving in a way that leads a target audience to a particular conclusion or outcome (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992).

In the last two decades, there has been a shift toward considering impression management as a fundamental interpersonal process. That is, researchers are now considering the effects of impression management on a variety of interpersonal interactions such as recruitment and selection, and performance management. In describing impression management as an interpersonal process, a distinction is made between impression motivation and impression construction. Impression motivation is

the desire of individuals to control others' impressions of themselves. Impression construction is the behavioral manifestation of this desired impression. While individuals may be motivated to create certain impressions, they may refrain from doing so (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

There are several situational and dispositional factors that increase individuals' attentiveness to how others perceive them and, in turn, may lead to impression motivation. For example, conveying the right impression can increase the likelihood of obtaining desired interpersonal outcomes, such as approval or power, or material outcomes, such as a raise in salary. Impression management can also help to avoid undesired outcomes (Schlenker, 1980), such as unwanted work schedules. More generally, impression management allows individuals to maximize their cost-benefit ratio (Schlenker, 1980). Target characteristics can also affect an individual's motivation to manage impressions. People are more likely to manage their impressions for others who are powerful, attractive, or of higher status and have greater control over consequences to others (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Finally, motivation to manage impressions can also stem from individuals' desire to maintain or enhance their own self-esteem or as a means of creating their own identities (Jones, Gergen, Gumpert, & Thibaut, 1965). That is, maintaining a positive impression on others can increase individuals' own sense of self-worth.

Once impression motivation is present, impression construction can activate appropriate behavior changes (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). There are a variety of ways that people can create desired impressions, including verbal and nonverbal behaviors, physical appearance, material possessions, and even associations with other people (Jones

& Pittman, 1982). Additionally, some researchers distinguish between two categories of verbal impression management behaviors. Specifically, assertive behaviors are used to promote actively a favorable image while defensive behaviors are used to protect or repair an image (Van Iddekinge, McFarland, & Raymark, 2007). Thus, an assertive behavior might be an applicant's telling an interviewer that he is intelligent and hard working whereas a defensive behavior might be an applicant's attempting to justify why he has not worked in the past six months.

There are several factors that affect the content of these impressions. For example, specific social roles dictate expectations of how individuals in those roles should behave (Sarbin & Allen, 1968). In these situations, people tend to match their self-presentation to those around them, only revealing as much or as little as those with whom they are interacting. Thus, impression management is a dynamic process with people continually monitoring and adjusting their behavior to maintain the desired impression (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

Impression management is particularly important for selection and performance in organizational settings. Van Iddekinge et al. (2007) found that impression management mediated the effects of personality and interview format on interview performance. Specifically, they suggested that acquaintance personality ratings and interview format (i.e., behavioral or situational) were antecedents of interview performance and found that both assertive (e.g., self-promotion) and defensive (e.g., justification) impression management tactics mediated this relationship. In another study, impression management was highly correlated with supervisor's liking (r = .70), which led to a higher quality exchange (Wayne & Ferris, 1990). Additionally, these researchers found a strong

relationship between impression management and performance appraisals (r = .65; Wayne & Ferris, 1990). Specifically, student participants playing the role of supervisor provided performance ratings for confederate subordinates displaying varying degrees of impression management. A personality dimension that has considerable relevance for impression management is self-monitoring.

Self-Monitoring

Self-monitoring refers to the extent to which people observe, regulate, and control their behavior to achieve a more desirable self-presentation (Snyder, 1987). Snyder's approach to self-monitoring may be seen as an extension of Goffman's (1959) observational research on self-presentation. Goffman (1959) maintained that people present different selves to different others. Further, he claimed that people have many motives for managing and influencing the impressions they make on others. People can then determine which self to present to others based on those motivations. For example, desire for approval or a desire to control the outcome of a social interaction could be motivation to monitor one's self-presentation (Snyder, 1974, 1987).

High self-monitors are usually described as having the ability to choose the appropriate behaviors to fit a situation while low self-monitors behave quite consistently across situations. High self-monitors are better than low self-monitors in controlling their image in social interactions. Additionally, high self-monitors are more sensitive and responsive to interpersonal nuances and social cues than are low self-monitors. In contrast, low self-monitors pay less attention to social information and do not possess the same repertoire of self-presentation skills (Snyder, 1987). In contrast to the situationally

modulated behavior of high self-monitors, the words and actions of low self-monitors typically represent the individual's true attitudes and feelings.

In validation work on this scale, Snyder (1974) found that individuals with high self-monitoring scores were also identified as high self-monitors by their peers. Groups thought to be skilled in managing self-presentation, such as professional actors, score substantially higher on the Self-Monitoring Scale than university students do (Snyder, 1974). Another study indicated that high self-monitoring individuals were better able to read others and infer their emotional states (Geizer, Rarick, & Soldow, 1977).

The self-monitoring construct is multi-dimensional. Specifically, the Self-Monitoring Scale includes the dimensions of expressive self-control, social stage presence, and other-directed self-presentation (Snyder, 1987). Debate exists, however, on the number of content domains and the degree of overlap among them. For example, Snyder and Gangestad (1986) suggest that a single latent factor accounts for the majority of the variance of the Self-Monitoring Scale. To develop a clearer single factor measurement, a revised version of the Self-Monitoring Scale was developed which removed seven low correlating items (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986). Conversely, Briggs and Cheek (1988) identified two general factors in the self-monitoring construct; one representing the *other-directedness* factor identified by Snyder (1974) and the other representing a *social surgency* factor. These authors claim that previous studies identifying a single factor do so because they focus on interpersonal behavior more typical of extraversion and social surgency than image control directed toward others (Briggs & Cheek, 1988). For example, the revised Self-Monitoring Scale eliminated items that primarily loaded on the other-directedness factor to maintain a single latent

factor. Although Briggs and Cheek (1988) recognized that researchers will continue to use the current self-monitoring scale, they feel a better two-factor measure is needed.

Over the last decade, several studies have focused on the role of self-monitoring in organizational settings. A meta-analysis of self-monitoring and work-related outcomes found that higher levels of self-monitoring predicted higher performance ratings, eventually leading to more frequent leader promotions (Day, Schleicher, Unkless, & Hiller, 2002). High self-monitors were also more likely to emerge as leaders than were low self-monitors. Further, the authors suggested that differences between the number of men and women at higher levels within organizations could be partially attributed to differences in self-monitoring (Day, et al., 2002). That is, according to the results of the meta-analysis, high self-monitors tend to be male, more involved in their jobs, and perform at a higher level as compared to low self-monitors. Another study found that high self-monitors are better at strategic networking than their low self-monitoring counterparts (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 2001). Additionally, Anderson (2001) reported positive correlations between self-monitoring and job effectiveness, particularly for individuals in nontraditional roles (e.g., men in nursing). Results revealed that high self-monitoring allowed men in nursing and women in management to be more effective than those in traditional roles (e.g., women in nursing) in the same positions (Anderson, 2001).

In contrast, Caligiuri and Day (2000) reported mixed results between self-monitoring and performance of expatriates in 25 countries. Supervisors of expatriate subordinates provided ratings on three areas of performance, namely, technical, contextual, and expatriate assignment-specific performance. Specifically, they found a negative relationship between self-monitoring and contextual performance, a positive

relationship between self-monitoring and expatriate assignment-specific performance and no relationship between self-monitoring and technical performance.

Social Skill

Social skill is the final construct in this section. Research on social skill, or social competence, as it is sometimes called, is plentiful. Nevertheless, consensus on a single definition is still lacking. Early conceptualizations of social skill were founded in the social intelligence literature. Meichenbaum, Butler, and Gruson (1981) defined social skill as the knowledge of what behaviors to display and when to display them, coupled with flexibility and behavioral control. Others characterized social skill as socially effective behavior that allows people to achieve social goals. This approach included cognitive and affective antecedents, such as reading the behavior of others (Schneider, Ackerman, and Kanfer, 1996). Inherent in these definitions is the premise that social skill has both a cognitive and a behavioral component. In other words, social skill includes the cognitive component of reading and understanding social situations and the behavioral component of acting on that understanding to influence others (Witt & Ferris, 2003). Further, many researchers suggest social skill reflects both an innate ability and a skill that can be learned (Witt & Ferris, 2003).

The lack of consensus in defining social skill results in difficulty measuring the construct. The majority of social skill measures focus on a specific type of skill, for example, assertiveness, rather than a basic social skill construct. Often, these measures claim to be assessing a single dimension of social skill yet are, in fact, multidimensional. For example, Riggio (1986) developed a measure of social skill based on the assumption that social skill is comprised of many basic skills. This general social skill framework

identified six basic skill dimensions, including the following: (1) emotional expressivity, (2) social expressivity, (3) emotional sensitivity, (4) social sensitivity, (5) emotional control, and (6) social control (Riggio & Riggio, 2001). Although Riggio (1986) conceded that this list was not exhaustive, it represents the primary cognitive and behavioral components included in most definitions of social skill.

Research identifies several benefits of high social skill. For example, a study on leader emergence and effectiveness found that leaders' scores on the Social Skill Inventory were significantly correlated (r = .46) with employees' rated satisfaction with the leader (Riggio, Riggio, Salinas, & Cole, 2003). Leaders high in social skill, however, did not have better performing groups. Specifically, leader social skill was not related to the group's performance. Another study found that high social skill was related to liars' increased success in deceiving others (Vrij, 2001). In a complementary fashion, liars' social skill impacted the ability of detectives to identify liars such that the accuracy of the detectives was low, while confidence in their judgments was high. A similar study also found that individuals high on social skill were better at deceiving others than those low on social skill (Feldman, Tomasian, Coats, 1999). Another study found that skilled liars were viewed as having more dominance and social power (Keating & Heltman, 1994). Thus, the kind of impression an individual makes (i.e., the impression of honesty or dishonesty) is dependent on social skill (Vrij, 2001).

Although the constructs of emotional/social intelligence, impression management, self-monitoring, and social skill are nominally distinct they seem to share some communality. These constructs and political skill all address how people perceive, react,

and interact with the social world (Heggestad, 2008). The next section will examine key personality and performance correlates of these constructs.

Correlates of Central Constructs

The literature on these constructs struggles with consistency and clarity of terminology, making specific comparisons and conclusions difficult. For example, in his books on social and emotional intelligence, Goleman uses the terms social intelligence, social competence, and social effectiveness interchangeably. Heggestad (2008) suggests that this line of social effectiveness research suffers from two central fallacies: (a) distinct constructs that are given the same name, and (b) similar constructs that are given different names. Further, Heggestad (2008) suggests that a reliable nomological network of the social effectiveness content domain has not been developed.

Emotional Intelligence

A number of studies have examined the relationship of emotional intelligence to other psychological constructs with varying results (Zeidner, Roberts, & Matthews, 2008). In fact, Keele and Bell (2007) discussed differences in methods of measuring emotional intelligence as an ability or a trait. Specifically, emotional intelligence as an ability relates to perceiving, generating, understanding, and regulating emotions to assist thought, build knowledge, and promote emotional growth. Alternatively, emotional intelligence as a trait describes the difference between individuals who are warm, outgoing, and successful and those who are oblivious and impolite (Keele & Bell, 2007). The trait approach adopts Goleman's (1995) framework while Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso's (1999) Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) fits the ability approach. Measuring emotional intelligence as an ability may result in lower correlations with

personality traits (Brackett & Mayer, 2003) compared to studies measuring emotional intelligence as a trait (Petrides & Furnham, 2003). For example, a study comparing trait emotional intelligence with several personality dimensions found a strong negative relationship with neuroticism (r = -.70) and a strong positive relationship with extraversion (r = .68; Petrides & Furnham, 2003). Another study reported a strong negative relationship (r = -.80) between trait emotional intelligence and trait anxiety (Newsome, Day, & Catano, 2000). In contrast, Brackett and Mayer (2003) reported non-significant correlations for emotional intelligence as an ability with neuroticism (r = -.08) and extraversion (r = .11) but low, significant, positive relationships between emotional intelligence and openness to experience (r = .25) and emotional intelligence and agreeableness (r =.28). Because the relationship between emotional intelligence and personality has produced varying results, attention must be paid to trait versus ability measures. In addition, Ferris et al. (2005) found emotional intelligence as an ability and political skill to be subtantially correlated at r = .53. Thus, closer scrutiny is warranted for relationships between emotional intelligence and social effectiveness constructs such as political skill.

Social Intelligence

Social intelligence has been studied in relation to a variety of personality constructs. In one study, moderate correlations were reported between dimensions of social intelligence and several interpersonal personality traits (Vyrost & Kyselova, 2006). Specifically, the correlations between the *social skill* dimension of social intelligence and dominance (r = .49) and the *social awareness* dimension of social intelligence and introversion (r = -.57) were the strongest. In addition, the *social information processing*

dimension of social intelligence was less strongly correlated with dominance (r = .31; Vyrost & Kyselova, 2006). Another study of social intelligence correlates indicated that extraversion was correlated with the social information processing dimension of social intelligence (r = .35) and with the social skill dimension of social intelligence (r =.71; Friborg, Barlaug, Martinussen, Rosenvinge, & Hjemdal, 2005). In addition, social awareness, the third identified dimension of social intelligence was most closely related to emotional stability (r = .62; Friborg, et al., 2005). In fact, Heggestad (2008) claims that many of the social intelligence factors align more appropriately with personality than with intelligence. In particular, the dimensions of social intelligence appear to overlap with extraversion/introversion, dominance, and emotional stability (Friborg, et al., 2005; Vyrost & Kyselova, 2006).

Ford and Tisak (1983) claim social intelligence is specific to social settings, including organizations. For example, Ascalon, Schleicher, and Born (2008) developed a measure of cross-cultural social intelligence to assess employees working as expatriates in multicultural organizations. According to Ferris et al. (2000), social intelligence overlaps with political skill, but the latter is more specific to the work setting. Since social intelligence is currently being studied in work settings (e.g., Ascalon et al., 2008), the distinction between social intelligence and political skill is blurred. Thus, it is important that this relationship be empirically investigated in order to understand better their differences and similarities.

Impression Management

A number of studies have examined the relationship between impression management and other social effectiveness constructs. Fontana (1971) reported that

people high in Machiavellianism were more likely than those low in Machiavellianism to engage in strategic impression management in order to accomplish their goals. For example, individuals are more likely to manage impressions when they expect future interactions with the target. Because individuals high in need for approval place more value on others' acceptance, need for approval is related to high impression management (Leary, 1983). Another study found that increased agreeableness led to defensive impression management tactics, while increased emotional stability led to assertive behaviors (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). Specifically, acquaintance-rated agreeableness predicted defensive impression management behaviors (e.g., apologies) and acquaintance-rated emotional stability predicted assertive impression management behaviors (e.g., self-promotion) in a sample of students participating in mock selection interviews.

In a study of supervisor-subordinate dyads, self-reported impression management tactics and political skill were compared to supervisor ratings of performance. Political skill had a relatively small correlation with five separate impression management tactics but the overall relationship between political skill and impression management was not reported (Harris, Kacmar, Zivnuska, & Shaw, 2007). Without this comparison, it is difficult to determine the unique contributions of political skill on impression management.

Self-Monitoring

Self-monitoring also has relevance for other social effectiveness constructs. In one study, self-monitoring was compared with need for approval (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964). Synder (1987) makes a distinction between self-monitoring and Machiavellianism

on the basis of the methods used to accomplish a goal. Although self-monitoring and Machiavellianism appear similar, a high self-monitor relies on impression management techniques, while a Machiavellian uses manipulation and exploitation to accomplish a task (Snyder, 1987). Further, self-monitors typically focus on bringing their own behavior in line with expectations, whereas Machiavellians often pursue their own purpose and goals.

In a study of student volunteers, the personality traits extraversion and neuroticism accounted for 20% of the variance in self-monitoring (Furnham, 1989). Similarly, Lennox and Wolfe (1985) found that approximately one-fifth of the self-monitoring items loaded on extraversion. Furnham (1989) also reported a significant, positive relationship between self-monitoring and Type A behavior across three samples (r = .25 to .61). These results complement earlier research by Snyder (1987), who found a relationship between self-monitoring and job level. Specifically, employees in manager and supervisor roles were more likely to be high self-monitors while employees with lower level jobs were typically low self-monitors. That is, high self monitors are more likely to prefer higher status jobs.

The effects of self-monitoring and other social effectiveness constructs have been studied on various performance measures. Semadar, et al., (2006) reported that managerial political skill predicted high ratings of manager performance (r = .34) in a large Australian manufacturing organization. This correlation was significantly higher than correlations between other social effectiveness constructs and performance, including self-monitoring and rated performance (r = .16). In fact, self-monitoring was not a significant predictor of managers' job performance ratings (β = .07). Conversely,

political skill accounted for a significant amount of variance in job performance (β = .31; Semadar, et al., 2006). Since political skill and self-monitoring were significantly related (r = .27) and because self-monitoring did not account for incremental variance beyond that explained by political skill, the authors contend that portions of self-monitoring overlap with political skill (Semadar et al., 2006). These results conflict with previous findings that indicate that higher levels of self-monitoring lead to higher performance ratings (Day et al., 2002).

Social skill

Social skill is also related to a variety of personality and other interpersonal effectiveness constructs. According to Witt and Ferris (2003), the positive effects of many personality traits require some degree of social skill. In a series of four studies, social skill was found to moderate the relationship between conscientiousness and job performance. Specifically, those high in social skill exhibited a positive relationship between conscientiousness and job performance, measured by supervisor ratings of interpersonal facilitation and contextual performance. There was no significant relationship between conscientiousness and job performance for those low in social skill (Witt & Ferris, 2003). In a study of 121 student volunteers, social skill was positively correlated with self-esteem and negatively related to social anxiety and loneliness (Riggio, Throckmorton, DePaola, 1990). The researchers suggested that possession of social skill provides a sense of mastery of social situations that results in increased social self-esteem.

The relationship between social skill and political skill is important to determine because the two constructs are sometimes used interchangeably (Ferris, Treadway,

Perrewe, Brouer, Douglas, & Lux, 2007). The relationship between political skill and social skill has not yet been empirically tested. Although some researchers have argued for the uniqueness of the two constructs (Peled, 2000), others claim that the two constructs are moderately related (Ferris et al., 2007). For the organizational context, Peled (2000) defined social skill as the ability for leaders to communicate with their employees, peers, superiors, and clients easily and comfortably. In contrast, he describes political skill as a manager's ability to manipulate interpersonal relationships with employees, peers, superiors, and clients to ensure success (Peled, 2000). Argyle & Williams's (1969) definition of social skill as the effective use of persuasion, explanation, and influence to control others, appears to overlap with earlier definitions of political skill. Further complicating the distinction is the suggestion that the specific dimensions of each construct be clearly differentiated (Ferris et al., 2007).

Preliminary Qualitative Analysis

Adding to the evidence of the need for further validation work on political skill, a content analysis was conducted to assess the face validity of the Political Skill Inventory (Ferris et al., 2005). This analysis looked at the extent of overlap among the PSI and other social effectiveness measures. The 18 items of the PSI were individually compared with items from measures of emotional intelligence (EQ-i:Short; Bar-On, 1997), social intelligence (Tromso Social Intelligence Scale; Silvera, Martinussen, & Dahl, 2001), impression management (Impression Management Scale; Bolino & Turnley, 1999), self-monitoring (Self-Monitoring Scale; Synder, 1974), and social skill (Social Skill Inventory, Riggio, 1986) to determine the degree of overlap. These items were compared for similar content and wording. For example, the PSI item "I pay close attention to

people's facial expressions" is similar in content and language to the social intelligence item "I can often understand what others really mean through their expressions, body language, etc". Results are presented in Figure 1. Social skill appears to have the greatest degree of overlap with 14 of the 18 PSI items being represented in the Social Skill Inventory content (78% overlap). This seems to be in line with previous research often using these terms interchangeably (Peled, 2000). The Self-Monitoring Scale also contains highly similar content to the PSI with 56% overlap. Emotional intelligence and social intelligence were both identified as overlapping with political skill on seven of 18 items. This is comparable to previous research that has grouped emotional and social intelligence with a more general intelligence construct (Hedlund & Sternberg, 2000). In this analysis, impression management had the least amount of overlap with the PSI with six of the 18 PSI items represented in the Impression Management Scale content. The results of this qualitative analysis provide additional support for the need to examine the distinctiveness of political skill from other social effectiveness constructs.

Summary

The political skill construct domain appears to intersect the domains of several other social effectiveness constructs. Specifically, a number of studies indicate an overlap among political skill, emotional and social intelligence, impression management, self-monitoring, and social skill. Furthermore, most of these constructs show similar relationships to various personality dimensions, such as extraversion, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Ferris, Perrewe, and Douglas (2002) suggest that political skill includes a portion of each of these constructs specifically applied to a work setting. Further, Ferris et al. (2007) argue that many of these constructs share a cognitive understanding

component and a behavioral component applying the acquired knowledge. Following this acknowledgement and evidence of similarities among social effectiveness constructs, it is imperative that research empirically investigate the extent of this overlap and the degree to which a work setting distinguishes political skill from other, similar constructs.

Self-monitoring has been compared to political skill in previous studies (Semadar et al., 2006). Since impression management stems from the same self-presentation literature as self-monitoring, only one of these constructs needed to be included in the present study. Further, impression management had the least degree of overlap with the PSI items and therefore was not the priority for the present study.

The qualitative analysis shows emotional intelligence and social intelligence both have 39% overlap with the PSI. However, researchers often group emotional and social intelligence together as nonacademic intelligences (Sternberg, 1985). Ferris et al. (2005) found political skill and emotional intelligence to be substantially correlated at $r = .53$. Because emotional intelligence has been included in previous validation studies for political skill, it was also used in the present study.

Finally, social skill has never been included in construct validity analyses for political skill, even though these terms are often used interchangeably (Peled, 2000). Since both past research and the qualitative analysis show similar patterns in the relationships between political skill and emotional intelligence, self-monitoring, and social skill, the present study focused on these relevant constructs.

The focus of the current research was to investigate further the political skill construct. Specifically, the construct validity of political skill was examined using a partial multitrait-multimethod (MTMM) approach (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). In order to

have construct validity, a construct must exhibit both convergent and discriminant validity. Convergent validity is reflected in significant relationships between independent measures of the same construct (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Discriminant validity requires a construct to be distinct from, and not be substantially correlated with, existing similar constructs (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Political skill, as it is currently operationalized, does not appear to be distinct from other similar social effectiveness constructs.

The scope of the present research was limited to the primary constructs potentially related to political skill. This includes emotional intelligence, self-monitoring, and social skill. Although these constructs are nominally distinct, there is considerable overlap among them.

Therefore, two hypotheses were presented to address the construct validity of political skill:

Hypothesis 1. There will be a lack of discriminant validity for political skill with self-report measures of political skill, emotional intelligence, self-monitoring, and social skill being moderately to highly (r = .5 to .8) correlated.

Hypothesis 2. Convergent validity will be supported for political skill with significant correlations between independent measures of political skill. Specifically, a self-report measure of political skill, an interpersonal sensitivity task, and a behavioral measure of social effectiveness will be low, but significantly (r = .2 to .4) correlated.

Political skill is presumably distinct from other social effectiveness constructs because it is unique to organizational settings; however, this proposition has yet to be empirically tested. Ferris, et al. (2002) suggest that political skill includes a portion of

several other constructs (e.g., emotional intelligence, social skill) specifically applied to a work setting. One way to examine this difference is by comparing the "at work" frame of reference for political skill items to a more general reference used for other social effectiveness construct items.

Frame-of-reference effects can be tied to several social effectiveness theories. For example, the theory of conditional dispositions (Wright & Mischel, 1987) suggests that, while individuals may consistently respond in one way at home or in social settings, they may respond in a very different way in at work. In addition, the cognitive-affective system theory of personality (Mischel & Shoda, 1995) states that the prediction of individuals' behavior can be enhanced when they are given a frame-of reference to describe themselves. Further, according to self-presentation theory, non-referent items can hinder accurate self-presentation because they are ambiguous (Schmit, Ryan, Stierwalt, & Powell, 1995). In contrast, applying a specific context should standardize interpretation and improve face validity (Bing, Whanger, Davison, & VanHook, 2004). Thus putting items into a work-specific context should reduce variability between respondents as well as inconsistencies within individuals and, in turn, increase test validity and reliability (Lievens, De Corte, & Schollaert, 2008).

Research on frame-of-reference effects indicates that adding a referent (e.g., "at work") makes a difference in participant responses (Bing et al., 2004; Hunthausen, Truxillo, Bauer, Hammer, 2003; Schmit, et al., 1995). Specifically, Schmit et al. (1995) examined the influence of an "at work" frame-of-reference on personality measure responses in comparing the NEO Five-Factor Inventory to an altered form of the inventory with a reference to work appended to the beginning or end of each statement.

The results indicated that individuals had more positive mean scale scores when responding to items with a work reference than when responding to items without a specific frame-of-reference. Bing et al. (2004) built on this research and found that items with a specific referent added incremental validity above and beyond items with a more general frame-of-reference. Furthermore, an "at work" frame-of-reference moderated the validity of personality measures. Specifically, using an "at work" referent increased the relationship between personality and job performance (Bing et al., 2004). While these results show benefits for using an "at work" frame-of-reference for some personality traits, this effect has yet to be studied for political skill.

In the Political Skill Inventory, Ferris et al. (2005) appended an "at work" referent to six of the18 items in order to specify the organizational context. For example, one such item is "I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others." Because, the original PSI only included six items with the "at work" referent, the modified PSI removed the "at work" referents from these same six items. Thus, this led to the following research questions:

Research question 1. Does removing the "at work" referent from the six PSI items affect scores on the PSI?

Research question 2. Does removing the "at work" referent affect the relationship between the PSI and other social effectiveness constructs (i.e., emotional intelligence, self-monitoring, and social skill), the interpersonal sensitivity measure, and self-presentation measure?

Overview

The traditional MTMM approach requires a balanced matrix with each construct measured by multiple methods. The present research utilized a partial MTMM matrix because it is difficult to identify distinct behaviors that might be uniquely characteristic of each construct. First, each construct was assessed using a paper and pencil self-report measure. In addition, a separate measure of interpersonal sensitivity and a behavioral measure of social effectiveness, potentially relevant for all of these constructs, were used. The Interpersonal Perception Task (IPT) consists of 15 scenes for which viewers make judgments about relationships, competition, deception, and status (Costanzo & Archer, 1989). The behavioral measure consists of a self-presentation (SP) task in which participants are videotaped presenting both truthful and deceptive statements. A panel of participant judges subsequently evaluated how sincere and genuine the truthful and deceptive statements were. The ability to influence others through sincere and genuine presentations is a basic component of political skill (Ferris et al., 2005).

Method – Part I

Design and Participants

The correlational design used in this study was a partial multitrait-multimethod matrix (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Four constructs (political skill, emotional intelligence, self-monitoring, and social skill) were assessed in a single inventory. In addition, an interpersonal perception task and a behavioral measure of social effectiveness were used to assess political skill.

Undergraduate students enrolled in introductory psychology or organizational behavior courses participated in this study. Students' participation qualified for extra

credit in their courses. Two hundred eighteen (108 females and 103 males, with 7 not reported, *M* age = 25.2, *SD* = 6.99) completed the inventory in Part I of this study. One hundred fifty-eight (mean age = 25.36, *SD* = 7.36) participants completed all three components of Part I. Of these 158 participants, 82 were female and 71 were male, with five participants electing not to identify their gender. Participants reported working an average of 28.95 hours per week (*SD* = 13.94) with a mean of 7.83 years (*SD* = 6.67) of work experience and 1.93 years (*SD* = 4.55) of management experience. Participants completing all three components (inventory, IPT, SP task) scored significantly lower on the social skill (t = -2.07, p = .04) and emotional intelligence (t = -1.50, p = .04) scales than participants (N = 60) who only completed the inventory (see Table 1). There was no significant difference in scores on the political skill and self-monitoring scales between those completing all study components and those only completing the inventory.

Inventory

Items from the four scales were randomly ordered in the inventory. The response format for all of the items was a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) Likert-type scale. Scores on all of the scales were computed by accounting for several reverse coded items and then summing all responses.

First, the *Political Skill Inventory* (PSI; Ferris et al., 2005) contained 18 items related to social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity. To address the research questions, 6 items were added to examine the affect of the "at work" reference. Therefore, a *Non-Work PSI* subset of items was created by removing the "at work' reference from the six work referent PSI items. It should be noted that one of the six items with "at work" removed was inadvertently omitted from

the final inventory, thus the Non-Work PSI subset used in the present research contained a total of 5 items.

Second, the short version of Bar-On's (1997) *Emotional Quotient Inventory* (EQ) was used as the measure of emotional intelligence. This scale contained 51 items covering the following content areas: Intrapersonal (e.g., assertiveness), Interpersonal (e.g., empathy), Stress Management, Adaptability, General Mood and Positive Impression. Next, the *Self-Monitoring Scale* (SM; Snyder, 1974) was comprised of 25 items. Finally, Riggio's (1986) *Social Skill Inventory* (SS) contained 90 items assessing six key areas; including emotional expressivity, emotional sensitivity, emotional control, social expressivity, social sensitivity, and social control.

Participants were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire including items on their age, years of work experience, years of managerial experience, and number of hours worked per week. Participants' race/ethnicity and sex were also requested. Demographic information was gathered on a separate sheet following the other scales with a statement reinforcing confidentiality.

Interpersonal Perception Task

The revised *Interpersonal Perception Task* measures judgment accuracy of social perceptions (Costanzo & Archer, 1993) which is a critical component of political skill. Higher scores on the IPT indicate individuals who are more social, less socially anxious, and are perceived as more socially skilled by their friends (Schroeder, 1995; Schroeder & Ketrow, 1997). The IPT contained 15 separate videotaped scenes of interpersonal interactions involving content relevant to relationships, competition, deception, and status among the individuals in the scenes. Transparent verbal content was edited out of the

scenes so that respondents had to rely primarily on appearance and nonverbal cues. Scores were based on the number of correctly answered questions.

Self-Presentation Task

The *Self-Presentation Task* developed by Keating and Heltman (1994) served as the behavioral measure of political skill. Specifically, participants were requested to make a presentation that was inconsistent with their experience. After tasting a sweet drink and a bitter drink, participants were asked to give deceptive and truthful responses to the question "Which drink do you like better and why?" Participants were videotaped as they made their presentations.

Procedure

After they were given a brief overview of the study, participants were asked to give informed consent for their participation in the experiment. It took approximately 1.5 hours to complete Part I of this experiment (approximately 45 minutes for the inventory and 45 minutes for the interpersonal perception and self-presentation tasks). Participants were asked to make up an arbitrary six digit number to provide a unique code for all of their measures.

Time 1: Inventory. Participants were asked to complete a series of paper and pencil scales including the PSI, Non-Work PSI, EQ, SM, and SS, and a demographics questionnaire. Items from all scales were randomly ordered, and the demographics questionnaire followed the inventory. The experimenter remained in the room with participants to answer any questions about the study and to ensure that participants did not discuss their answers with each other. Once the inventory and demographic

questionnaire were collected, the experimenter scheduled participants for the second part of this study.

Time 2: Social effectiveness tasks. Groups of five or fewer were first asked to complete the IPT. Participants were seated facing a monitor that displayed the IPT. They were told that they were to watch a videotape containing 15 brief scenes and answer a question about each scene. They were told to try to answer each question, even if they felt they would be guessing.

After completing the IPT, participants were called, one at a time by an experimenter, to an adjacent room to complete the self-presentation task. The experimenter asked the participant to sit facing a video camera. After receiving a brief overview of the task, the participant was given two drinks (one sweet and one bitter) in identical cups and asked to taste each. Participants were asked to record which drink they preferred on a piece of paper provided by the experimenter (most likely the sweet drink). As a manipulation check, participants were also asked to rate how much they liked each drink on a 7-point scale.

They were then told that they were to be videotaped and were asked to sign a separate permission form to allow their videotaped statements to be viewed by other participants. That is, participants were to be videotaped presenting a total of two statements, one truthful and one deceptive, which would later be judged by a second set of participants. Specifically, participants made an affirmative statement about both drinks saying that they liked it better than the other one. Thus, one statement was the truth and one statement was a lie. The experimenter prompted the start of the first statement for each participant with a standard question (“Which drink do you like better

and why?") and the participant made a truthful statement about the drink they liked better (e.g., the sweet drink). The experimenter then prompted the start of the second statement for each participant using the same standard question ("Which drink do you like better and why?"). This time participants made a deceptive statement, pretending that they liked the other drink best (e.g., the bitter drink). The experimenter alternated the participants to make either the truthful or deceptive statement first and videotaped the first 20 seconds of each statement for all participants. Participants were allowed to start a statement over one time if needed.

Method – Part II

Participants

An additional 162 participants took part in Part II of this study. Participants in Part II were asked to make judgments of statements made by the participants in the behavioral measure of Part I. Part II participants were primarily Caucasian/white (54%) and female (74%) with an average age of 23.31 (*SD* = 6.55).

Videotapes

The statements from the self-presentation task in Part I were split among four different videotapes to be viewed by participant raters. Each participant's presentations were separated so that a participant did not appear on a videotape twice. This ensured that the raters made judgments based only on the presentations they viewed and not on a comparison between presentations by the same person. The order of presentations on each videotape was randomized with an equal number of truthful and deceptive statements on each tape. An approximately equal number of participants viewed each one of the four videotapes.

Procedure

Participants viewed the videotape in small groups ranging in size from 1 to 8. Participants were instructed to judge the truth or falsity of each presentation and circle "truth" or "lie" on their answer sheets after each presentation. Raters were instructed to make their judgments independently and in silence so as not to influence others' judgments. The experimenter collected participants' answer sheets once all presentations were viewed.

Results

Scale Statistics

Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of the inventory variables are presented in Table 2. Alpha reliabilities for all four scales were adequate, with self-monitoring having the lowest reliability coefficient ($\alpha = .70$). Item means for each scale ranged from 4.11 to 5.14 on a 7-point scale.

PSI Work and Non-work Items

To simplify reporting of analyses, it is useful first to address the research questions related to the "at work" referent because, according to Ferris et al. (1999, 2005), relevance for the work setting makes political skill unique. Specifically, if removing the "at work" referent from the six PSI items does not affect scores on the PSI, then the subsequent analyses can be conducted on the original scores. The original PSI items and Non-Work PSI items were highly correlated ($r = .90$ for the combined items and item level correlations ranged from $r = .58$ to .77). Furthermore, there was no significant difference ($t = -1.07$, $p = .277$) between the mean of the "at work" referent PSI items ($M = 22.80$, $SD = 6.31$) and the mean of the Non-Work PSI items ($M = 23.00$,

SD = 5.70). Thus, the answer to Research Question 2 is that there was no significant effect of the "at work" referent on the relationships with the social effectiveness constructs and, consequently, attention can be focused on the main analyses of the present study.

Discriminant Validity

MTMM correlation patterns. First, the patterns of construct and method correlations were systematically examined in a partial MTMM matrix (see Table 3). Support for the discriminant validity of political skill requires that self-report measures of emotional intelligence, self-monitoring, and social skill are not substantially correlated with the political skill measure. In evaluating the heterotrait-monomethod correlations, five of the six correlations were significant at the $p = .01$ level. In particular, the high correlation between political skill and social skill ($r = .74$) suggests a lack of discriminant validity for political skill. In addition, political skill was moderately correlated with emotional intelligence ($r = .58$) and self-monitoring ($r = .41$).

Factor analysis of scales. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is the most widely applied methodological approach to MTMM data analysis (Eid, Nessbeck, Geiser, Cole, Gollwitzer, & Lischetzke, 2008). AMOS (Arbuckle, 2006) was used to conduct CFA analyses. First, a CFA, using the maximum likelihood extraction method, was conducted with the total scale scores of the four constructs loading on four separate higher order latent constructs (i.e., PSI, EQ, SM, and SS) to assess discriminant validity for political skill. If political skill were a distinct trait, then the political skill measure should be distinct from the measures of emotional intelligence, self-monitoring, and social skill. That is, four factors should fit the data best, with each measure loading only on the

appropriate latent construct. Results of the four-factor model (see Table 4) indicated mediocre fit ($\chi^2 = 73.01$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). Specifically, goodness-of-fit statistics for the four-factor model (CFI = .79) did not meet the expected thresholds (e.g., CFI ≥ .90).

Because the initial correlations among all four scales indicated considerable overlap, a second CFA was conducted to determine if all four constructs loaded on a single factor. The results (Table 4) showed better overall fit for the one-factor model ($\chi^2 = 32.16$, $df = 2$, $p < .001$). Specifically, goodness-of-fit statistics for the one-factor model (CFI = .91) were better than those of the four-factor model (CFI = .79). Further, factor loadings for the measures loading on a common factor ranged from moderate (SM = .527 and EQ = .598) to high (PSI = .838 and SS = .900; see Table 5). In addition, the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) statistic, used to compare non-nested models, was lower for the one-factor model (AIC = 56.16) than for the four-factor model (AIC = 99.01), confirming a better fit. Thus, a comparison of the two models showed that the four constructs, as they are currently operationalized, were not four distinct factors.

Next, the subscales for each of the four measures were used to assess further the relationship among constructs. Table 6 reports descriptive statistics for the subscales of political skill, emotional intelligence, self-monitoring, and social skill. The correlation matrix for all subscales in Table 7 indicated a high degree of overlap between subscales across constructs. For example, 17 correlations between subscales from different constructs were greater than $r = .50$. In Table 7, the correlations across subscales **within** a construct are located within the highlighted triangles, whereas the correlations across subscales **across** constructs are located within the highlighted rectangles. For example, the *social astuteness* subscale of the political skill construct was correlated $r > .50$ with

four subscales from the other social effectiveness constructs. Further, the pattern of correlations across constructs was similar to the pattern within constructs, indicating a lack of uniqueness. In addition, ten correlations between the *networking ability* subscale of political skill and subscales from other constructs were comparable to, or higher than (r = .24 to .61), the correlations between the *networking ability* subscale of political skill and the other three political skill subscales (r = .22 to .45). Thus, results of the factor analysis and subsequent subscale analyses provided additional support for the predicted lack of discriminant validity for political skill.

Convergent Validity

Support for the convergent validity for political skill would be reflected in low to moderate correlations between political skill scores and performance on the interpersonal sensitivity and self-presentation tasks. Descriptive statistics for the IPT and SP can be found in Table 8. The Cronbach alpha for the IPT was only r = .05. Reliability coefficients for the IPT have consistently been low, although there is evidence for the validity of the IPT (Schroeder, 1995; Schroeder & Ketrow, 1997). The mean IPT score (M = 8.76, SD = 1.78) was greater than a chance score of 6.33.

The manipulation check for the SP task took two forms. First, 152 of the 158 participants gave higher favorability ratings to the same drink that they selected as their preferred drink choice in the forced response question. Second, the preferred drink (M = 5.85) was rated significantly more favorable (t = -41.85, p < .001) than the non-preferred drink (M = 1.37). Thus, there was clear evidence that the taste manipulation worked and that participants' truthful statements about their preferred drink were truthful and deceptive statements were deceptive.

Raters evaluated participants' truthful statements (M = .62, SD = .18) as truthful with significantly more accuracy (t = 6.35, p < .001) than they evaluated participants' deceptive statements (M = .48, SD = .21) as deceptive. Kuder-Richardson reliabilities computed on the four separate tapes of participants' statements ranged from .85 to .90. Performance on the SP task was assessed in raters' accuracy of judgments on the participants' deceptive statements, which was significantly lower than chance (M = 47%, t = 30.86, p < .001). Thus, raters in the second part of the experiment were significantly less accurate than chance in detecting the truth or falsity of self-presentations.

Political skill scores were not significantly related to scores on the IPT (r = -.09) and the correlations between the other social effectiveness constructs and the IPT were low and non-significant as well (r = -.07 to -.14). Further, scores on the IPT were not significantly correlated with the subscales scores of the political skill scale (r = .04 to -.11). The correlation between political skill scores and proficiency on the SP task was small and non-significant (r = .02) and proficiency on the SP task was not significantly related to the political skill subscale scores (r = -.03 to .12). Similarly, the SP task was weakly correlated with the other social effectiveness constructs, ranging from r = -.08 to .11 (Table 2). Thus, the IPT and SP task results did not provide evidence for the convergent validity for political skill.

Discussion

The results of the present research indicated a lack of construct validity for political skill. First, moderate to high correlations between political skill and the other scales suggest considerable overlap among the constructs. In addition, a confirmatory factor analysis on the four scales indicated that a one-factor model provided a better fit

for the results than a four-factor model. In other words, combining the constructs into a single factor yielded a better fit for the results than a model in which political skill, social skill, self-monitoring, and emotional intelligence were treated as four distinct factors. Thus, there was a clear lack of discriminant validity for political skill. Finally, the correlations between the scales and the IPT and SP task did not provide evidence for convergent validity of political skill. Let's take a closer look at the results in context and examine the implications for the viability of a political skill construct.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity evidence for political skill should discount alternative constructs as plausible rival hypotheses (Messick, 1995). There are several issues to consider here. First, earlier attempts to validate political skill failed to include some relevant constructs for comparison. Specifically, the inclusion of social skill in this study addressed a need to examine empirically the relationship between two constructs often used interchangeably (Ferris et al., 2007; Peled, 2000). The results of the present study indicated that political skill and social skill were highly correlated (r = .74). In fact, the correlation between political skill and social skill was slightly higher than the reliability for the self-monitoring scale (α = .70) and approached the reliabilities of the other scales (see Table 3) – a critical comparison in the MTMM approach to construct validity (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Further, CFA results indicated that both constructs fit better on a common factor than as separate factors. Specifically, political skill and social skill loaded .838 and .900, respectively, on the same factor.

A similar pattern of overlap between political skill and social skill was found in the comparisons across subscales of the two constructs. Specifically, correlations

between subscales across political skill and social skill were often higher than correlations between subscales within the political skill construct. For example, correlations between the social astuteness subscale of political skill and three of the six social skill subscales (r = .52 to .67) were higher than the correlations between the social astuteness subscale of political skill and the other political skill subscales (r = .34 to .51). Thus, while previous researchers have argued that political skill and social skill are distinct constructs (Peled, 2000), results from the current study indicated significant overlap between the two constructs and a lack of uniqueness for political skill.

Next, although the moderate correlations between political skill and emotional intelligence (r = .58) and political skill and self-monitoring (r = .41) did not approach the level of overlap between political skill and social skill, they merit some discussion. Specifically, the relationships between political skill and these two constructs in the present study were roughly comparable to those found in previous studies (r = .53 with emotional intelligence and r = .13 to .39 with self-monitoring; Ferris et al., 1999, 2005). The results for these relationships in the present study, while not critical to the discriminant validity evidence for political skill, are consistent with the pattern of a single factor.

Convergent Validity

Evidence of convergent validity is demonstrated by significant correlations between **independent methods** of measuring the political skill construct. Previous validation studies of political skill applied inappropriate comparisons for operationalizing convergent validity. For example, the correlations between the PSI and self-monitoring (r = .13 and .39) and the PSI and emotional intelligence (r = .53) were reported by Ferris

et al. (1999, 2005) as support for convergent validity. In fact, these correlations were relevant for discriminant validity, not convergent validity, because all of the measures were self-report inventories. The current study is the first attempt at assessing the convergent validity of political skill by examining the relationships between political skill and separate measures of interpersonal sensitivity and self-presentation skill.

The results showed low, non-significant correlations between the political skill scores and both accuracy on the IPT and performance on the self-presentation task. Thus, the relationships found in the present study did not provide any convergent validity evidence for political skill. Nevertheless, this pattern of low, non-significant correlations was also found between scores on the SM, EQ, and SS scales and performance on the IPT and SP tasks. This is not surprising, if all of the scales measure a common construct, but it is still important to consider the possible reasons for the lack of a relationship between political skill and the IPT and SP measures.

The first issue relates to the external validity of the IPT and SP tasks. That is, is it possible that these tasks may not be representative of the kinds of judgments and behaviors common in organizational settings? This seems unlikely. First, the judgments required on the IPT are similar to those made in most social situations, including judgments of status and relationships salient for organizational settings. Further, comprehending social situations and interpreting behaviors are primary components in the operational definition of political skill. In addition, the SP task used in the current research was not unlike self-presentation behaviors required in everyday social settings. That is, people frequently misrepresent their candid feelings and judgments to those around them (Vrij, 2001). In addition, the believability of a person's intentions is

fundamental to successful influence attempts (Ferris, et al., 2005). Furthermore, this may be particularly relevant for successfully influencing others in organizational settings. Consequently, one would expect that political skill might be related to such self-presentations.

Second, the low reliabilities for these measures could adversely affect the convergent validity correlations. Even though other studies point to the validity of the IPT (Costanzo & Archer, 1989; Iizuka, Patterson, & Matchen, 2002; Schroeder, 1995; Schroeder & Ketrow, 1997) and to the SP task (Keating & Heltman, 1994), their low reliabilities decrease the likelihood of significant correlations with political skill and with the other scales. It is possible that measures with better reliabilities might provide evidence for convergent validity. Whatever the limitations of the IPT and SP tasks in the present study for assessing convergent validity, the critical evidence here relates to the failure in establishing the discriminant validity of political skill.

Implications

Political skill has been an important concept in recent research, with dozens of studies published in the last few years (e.g., Blickle, Frohlich, Ehlert, Pirner, Dietl, Hanes, et al., 2011; Kapoutsis, Papalexandris, Nikolopoulos, Hochwarter, & Ferris, 2011; Meriac, Braddy, & Blair, 2009; Meurs, et al., 2010; Momm, Blickle, & Lui, 2010; Treadway, Breland, Adams, Duke, & Williams, 2010). As a result, it is essential that construct validity evidence be thoroughly examined. The present study found significant overlap between political skill and other constructs, providing evidence that political skill may not be a unique construct.

Nevertheless, a broader construct that might be called *social effectiveness* has considerable relevance for a wide variety of situations, including success in organizations (Kapoutsis, et al., 2011; Semadar, et al., 2006), politics (Blickle, Oerder, & Summers, 2010), interpersonal influence (Kolodinsky et al., 2007), and social networking (Mehra, et al., 2001; Treadway, et al., 2010). This more general construct lends support to Heggestad's (2008) assertions that social effectiveness research suffers from the fallacy that similar constructs are given different names. Thus, the present study brings clarity to the nomological network of the social effectiveness content domain.

Additional evidence supporting a broader social effectiveness construct comes from examining the "at work" referent, posited to differentiate political skill as specific to an organizational setting (Ferris et al., 1999, 2005). However, results of the present study indicated that the "at work" referent items were not significantly different from the items without a referent and the presence of the referent did not significantly change the relationship of political skill with the other constructs. Further, although the present study was conducted in a university setting, the participants had substantial work experience (M = 7.90 years, SD = 6.39 years). Therefore, there is confidence that these results are reflective of participants in organizational or institutional settings. Thus, these results reinforce the overlap between political skill, social skill, self-monitoring, and emotional intelligence, and further emphasize the relevance for a more general social effectiveness construct.

There are undoubtedly individual differences in the skill of relating to and influencing others in organizations and institutions. The results of the present study indicate that this skill is, however, a more general social effectiveness skill and not a

"political" skill specific to organizations. There is still good reason to study this general skill and its effects on organizations, but little reason to frame this as political skill.

Future Research

While the present study does not support construct validity for political skill, there are a number of directions for future research related to a more general skill. First, researchers should work to clarify further the social effectiveness content domain. Results supported a more general social effectiveness construct that encompassed political skill, social skill, self-monitoring, and emotional intelligence concepts. A follow-up study should be conducted to include other related constructs (i.e., social intelligence and impression management) that were out of scope for the present study. It is anticipated, given the results of the current study, that additional constructs in this content domain could overlap with this general skill as well.

Second, future research should address the need for independent methods of measuring a general social effectiveness construct in order to establish convergent validity evidence. Previously, researchers have applied inappropriate comparisons and failed to use independent methods for operationalizing convergent validity of political skill. Specifically, Ferris et al. (1999, 2005) relied solely on self-report measures to demonstrate convergent validity evidence for political skill. Further, Meurs, et al. (2010) used supervisor-rated political skill and supervisor-rated performance (interdependent measures) as evidence of criterion-related validity for political skill. Thus, it is critical that researchers are conscientious to use independent methods of measurement to assess appropriately the construct validity evidence for this general social effectiveness skill.

Finally, the relevance of social effectiveness for success in organizations makes it important to understand how best to develop or strengthen this skill. Previous research has described social skill as partially learned (Ferris et al., 2002; Witt & Ferris, 2003) and, therefore, it can be affected by training, practice, and experience (Ferris, et al., 2007). Specifically, Ferris, Perrewe, & Davidson (2005) advocate for the use of role play, behavioral modeling, and mentoring to bolster one's social skill; however the usefulness of these techniques has not been empirically tested. A natural next step in this line of research is to examine empirically the effects of training and practice on individuals' social effectiveness. Thus, there is still a great deal to learn about this skill and its utility in organizations.

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Table 1

Scale Scores for Participants Completing the Study and Completing Only the First Part of the Study

Scale	Participants	*M*	*SD*
PSI	All components	92.08	12.13
	Inventory only	93.54	14.69
SS	All components	398.01	37.10
	Inventory only	410.21	47.77
SM	All components	101.67	14.04
	Inventory only	104.69	13.88
EQ	All components	245.71	25.15
	Inventory only	254.08	32.56

Note. N = 158 participants completing all components of the study and N = 60 participants completing only the inventory.

Table 2

Inventory Descriptive Statistics

	N items	*M*	*SD*	α	item *M*
PSI	18	92.56	13.02	.88	5.14
SM	25	102.70	14.00	.70	4.11
EQ	51	248.36	27.98	.89	4.87
SS	90	402.04	41.22	.88	4.47

Note. $N = 218$; Response format was a 1 (*strongly disagree*) – 7 (*strongly agree*) scale.

Table 3

Correlation Matrix for Social Effectiveness Constructs

	PSI	SM	EQ	SS	IPT
PSI	.88				
SM	.41	.70			
EQ	.58	.12	.89		
SS	.74	.54	.52	.88	
IPT	-.09	-.07	-.14	-.08	.05
SP	.02	.11	-.08	.06	.05

Note. $r \geq .41$; $p < .01$. Inventories $N = 218$; IPT $N = 158$; SP $N = 158$. PSI = Political Skill Inventory; SM = Self-Monitoring Scale; EQ = Emotional Quotient Inventory; SS = Social Skill Inventory; IPT = Interpersonal Perception Task; SP = Self-Presentation Task. Cronbach Alpha reliabilities are reported in the diagonal.

Table 4

CFA Fit Statistics for Models using Total Scale Scores

Model	χ^2	*df*	*p*	RMSEA	CFI	AIC
4 factor	73.01	1	.00	0.56	0.79	99.01
1 factor	32.16	2	.00	0.26	0.91	56.16

Table 5

Factor Loadings for One-Factor Model

Scale	Factor Loading
PSI	0.838
SS	0.900
SM	0.527
EQ	0.598

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for Social Effectiveness Constructs' Subscales

Scale	Subscale	N items	*M*	*SD*	α
Political Skill	pssa	5	25.50	4.21	.729
	psii	4	22.50	3.22	.724
	psna	6	27.44	7.21	.903
	psas	3	17.13	2.53	.638
Social Skill	ssee	15	62.51	9.93	.648
	sses	15	73.17	10.00	.721
	ssec	15	63.77	11.05	.754
	ssse	15	66.72	14.68	.887
	ssss	15	66.89	11.84	.792
	sssc	15	68.98	13.56	.861
Self-Monitoring	smex	5	22.73	4.41	.540
	smod	10	38.82	7.56	.632
	smact	5	19.61	5.77	.645
Emotional Intelligence	eqintra	10	62.61	10.198	.758
	eqinter	10	61.30	7.480	.807
	eqsm	8	43.57	7.283	.637
	eqadapt	7	37.80	5.591	.768
	eqmood	10	33.81	5.838	.839
	eqpi	6	9.39	3.924	.516

Note. pssa = Social Astuteness, psii = Interpersonal Influence, psna = Networking Ability, psas = Apparent Sincerity; ssee = Emotional Expressivity, sses = Emotional Sensitivity, ssec = Emotional Control, ssse = Social Expressivity, ssss = Social Sensitivity, sssc = Social Control; smex = Extraversion, smod = Other Directedness, smact = Acting; eqintra = Intrapersonal, eqinter = Interpersonal, eqsm = Stress Management, eqadapt = Adaptability, eqmood = General Mood, eqpi = Positive Impression. Self-Monitoring subscales were created according to Briggs & Cheek (1980) therefore 5 SM items were not included.

Table 7

Correlation Matrix for All Construct Subscales

	ps sa	ps ii	ps na	ps as	ss ee	ss es	ss ec	ss se	ss ss	ss sc	sm ex	sm od	sm act	eq inter	eq intra	eq sm	eq adapt	eq mood
pssa																		
psii	.51																	
psna	.43	.45																
psas	.34	.38	.22															
ssee	.29	.21	.31	-.02														
sses	.67	.43	.45	.43	.31													
ssec	.27	.29	.21	.18	-.20	.15												
ssse	.52	.49	.61	.26	.61	.52	.22											
ssss	-.14	-.06	-.11	.17	.04	.04	-.33	-.07										
sssc	.58	.54	.49	.25	.39	.43	.38	.69	-.41									
smex	.43	.52	.40	.15	.36	.33	.35	.57	-.21	.65								
smod	.05	.07	.03	-.01	.01	.03	.21	.09	.33	-.12	.20							
smact	.47	.31	.32	-.03	.28	.28	.40	.50	-.28	.51	.42	.15						
eqinter	.54	.48	.42	.57	.25	.69	.21	.53	.03	.50	.38	-.08	.15					
eqintra	.44	.37	.39	.23	.24	.36	.30	.45	-.45	.68	.47	-.24	.30	.46				
eqsm	.16	.23	.15	.40	-.13	.20	.32	.15	-.22	.34	.18	-.22	.01	.35	.42			
eqadapt	.40	.32	.24	.52	-.06	.40	.31	.24	-.16	.44	.21	-.10	.12	.49	.45	.48		
eqmood	.28	.34	.35	.39	.09	.32	.34	.37	-.27	.47	.30	-.13	.13	.43	.58	.61	.48	
eqlie	-.13	-.14	-.12	-.02	-.32	-.15	.06	-.21	-.10	-.10	-.17	-.20	-.02	-.17	-.08	.15	.01	.12

Table 8

Task Descriptive Statistics

	M	*SD*
IPT	8.76	1.78
SP percent of raters deceived	53%	21%

Note. $N = 158$; IPT maximum score is 15.

Figure 1

Content Analysis of the Degree of Overlap among Social Effectiveness Measures and the Political Skill Inventory

	SM	EQ	SS	SI	IM
Total number of items in inventory	25	51	90	21	25
Number of PSI items that overlap	10/18	7/18	14/18	7/18	6/18
Percentage of PSI content that overlaps	56%	39%	78%	39%	33%

Note. SM = Self-Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974); EQ = Emotional Quotient Inventory - Short version (Bar-On, 1997); SS = Social Skill Inventory (Riggio, 1986); SI = Tromso Social Intelligence Scale (Silvera et al., 2001); IM = Impression Management Scale (Bolino & Turnley, 1999); PSI = Political Skill Inventory (Ferris et al., 2005).