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Political Skill and Emotional Cue Learning via Voices: A Training Study

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ABSTRACT

The ability to discern emotional expressive cues represents an important interpersonal emotional skill at the workplace. In a training study with 123 employee-peer dyads, we examined whether political skill enhances the learning of emotional expressive cues via voices. Controlling for the effects of extraversion and self-monitoring, it was found that political skill was significantly related to the accurate recognition of emotions via voices after a training session. As predicted, other-reported political skill was found to be a stronger predictor of such learning than self-reported political skill. In addition, social astuteness and networking ability were the most predictive of emotional cue learning among the different dimensions of political skill. Implications and limitations are discussed.

Key words: Political skill; emotion recognition via voice; training

## Political Skill and Emotional Cue Learning via Voices: A Training Study

Political skill as a social effectiveness construct has received significant scholarly attention over the past few years (Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2007). Political skill refers to “the ability to effectively understand others at work and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one’s personal and/or organizational objectives” (Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005, p. 127). Politically skilled persons are described as individuals who are good at reading people, understanding situations, and adapting their behaviors to situational demands. They relate well with people, handle stressful situations with strength, and they are able to find the balance among potentially conflicting social demands, and gain favourable reputations and performance outcomes (e.g., Ferris, Hochwater et al., 2002; Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2007; Meurs, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2011; Perrewé et al., 2004; Liu et al., 2007).

Ferris and colleagues (2007) developed a meta-theoretical framework of political skill, in which they discuss the intra-psychic, interpersonal, and group-level processes involved in the functioning of political skill, recognizing the intricate interplay of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements pertaining to political skill and its effects on the political actors themselves and others. In terms of the intra-psychic processes, they suggest that political skill both is a personal resource itself, and enables those politically skilled to acquire other valuable resources in organizations and achieve their personal goals. Pertaining to this self-relevant aspect of political skill, it was argued that those high in political skill possess a favourable self-view that they express to both self and others, which enables them to develop a comfortable sense of personal security, as well as perceived control and mastery in their work environment (Ferris et al., 2007; Perrewé et al., 2004).

In terms of the interpersonal and group-level processes, it was argued that those high in political skill have such abilities as accurately understanding social dynamics, engaging in influence tactics skilfully to generate favourable target reactions, and being able to build,

maintain and use a diverse networks of people, which in turn, lead to effective interpersonal influence, favourable personal reputations, and performance- and career-related outcomes (Ferris et al., 2007; Meurs, Gallagher, & Perrewé, 2010).

These theoretical propositions are consistent with evidence from empirical research. For example, political skill has been found to be associated with lowered strain under stressful situations (e.g., Perrewé et al., 2004). Further, there has been remarkable evidence suggesting political skill's ability to enhance one's reputation, performance and career success (e.g., Blickle, Kramer et al., 2011; Ferris et al., 2008; Liu et al., 2007; Semadar et al., 2006).

The current study focuses on the linkage between the intra-psycho processes and interpersonal processes of political skill. We ask the question of whether there is some intrapersonal skill that enables politically skilled individuals to be effective in the interpersonal arena. Specifically, we seek to uncover the cognitive element of political skill that enables them to perceive social situations accurately. Ferris and colleagues (2007) suggest that those high in political skill are astute observers of others and they comprehend social interactions well. They identify the nuances of social interactions, and accurately interpret behaviors of themselves and others in social settings, which help them to strategically position themselves in social networks beneficial for reliable resource exchanges. It appears that such ability to quickly identify and interpret social cues serves as foundation of political skill (Momm et al., 2010).

In a recent study, Momm and colleagues (2010) examined the relationship between political skill and the skill to identify emotional cues, a form of social cues, in nonverbal modalities. Participants were trained to recognize emotional cues in faces or voices. They found that those high as opposed to low in political skill significantly improved their emotion recognition accuracy after training, and the improvement remained significant after controlling for the effects of the personality traits of self-monitoring and extraversion. The

findings from this study provided the first empirical link between political skill and the ability to identify emotions in faces and voices.

Such ability to recognize emotion in others represents an important interpersonal competency. Supportive evidence for the positive effects of emotion recognition ability stems from research on the relationship between emotion recognition ability and adaptive social behavior. Children and youth who have higher scores on tests of nonverbal recognition accuracy are more socially adaptive and better adjusted (Halberstadt, Denham, & Dunsmore, 2001). Further, individuals with better nonverbal recognition skills indicate higher satisfaction in close relationships (Carton, Kessler, & Pape, 1999), and are assessed as more socially competent or warm and sympathetic (Funder & Harris, 1986).

In the current study, we extend the Momm et al. (2010) investigation in a number of ways. First, we focus on emotional cue learning via voices. Although Momm et al. presented evidence suggesting that political skill enhances learning of both facial and vocal expressive cues, their finding on emotion recognition via voices is rather preliminary in nature.

The current focus on emotional cue recognition via voices as the outcome is an important extension because emotional cues via voices are more difficult to recognize (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002; Nowicki, 2009), yet vocal tone represents an emotion modality that may communicate more authentic emotions because it is less subject to conscious expressor control (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). Therefore, if we demonstrate that political skill is predictive of the learning of vocal emotional cues, then there is evidence that not only does political skill entail basic facial cue learning skills, but it may also involve the learning of a wider spectrum of emotional cues varying in their subtlety and usefulness for social understanding.

Second, we examine political skill's different predictability of emotional cue learning when it is measured with self-reported versus peer-reported measures. The relative validity of self- vs. other-reported measures has long been a topic of discussion in applied psychology.

Although Momm et al. (2010) examined the effects of both self- and other-reported political skill on emotional cue learning, they did not make any predictions about, nor did they explicitly examine the relative strength of these two measures to predict relevant outcomes. Finally, in an attempt to better understand the political skill – emotion linkage, we take a closer look at the various facets of political skill in order to examine which facet is most relevant in explaining political skill's relationship with emotional cue learning.

### Hypotheses Development

#### *Emotion Recognition via Voices*

According to Ekman and Friesen (1969), emotional expressive channels differ in the degree to which expressors can exercise conscious control over the intended expressions. They suggest that individuals have the greatest control over facial expressions of emotions and the least control over vocal expressions. Because of its lower controllability, the voice represents a more “leaky” emotional communication channel that provides a truer window into a person's feelings. This is especially the case when a certain level of emotional suppression or faking is involved in the expression, which is very common (Mann, 1999), especially in organizations and occupations that have strong display norms guiding social emotional expressions (Hochschild, 1983). Therefore, the ability to discern vocal emotional expressive cues represents an important interpersonal emotional skill (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002).

Generally, because of the subtle nature of voices in expressing emotions, recognizing emotions through voices is more difficult and requires more deliberate effort, as compared to recognizing emotional cues from other channels such as faces, which are more visible and predominant in interpersonal settings. Consistent with this supposition, Elfenbein and Ambady (2002) reported lower means of emotion recognition (measured with the Diagnostic Analysis of Nonverbal Accuracy - *DANVA2*) via voices than those via faces, indicating the relative difficulty in recognizing emotions via voices (Nowicki, 2009). Thus, the ability to

recognize emotions via voices should serve as an important differentiator between those who are socially effective and those who are less so. Because politically skilled individuals are quick at gearing the attention toward expressive cues with high utility (Momm et al., 2010), they should also be able to learn quickly during the voices training session in terms of what specific vocal cues to focus on in order to improve their accuracy in understanding vocal emotional cues.

*Hypothesis 1.* Individuals high in political skill will show greater improvement on emotional recognition via voices after training than those low in political skill.

#### *Validity of Self- versus Other-reported Political Skill*

The issue of validity of self- versus other-reported measures has long been a topic of discussion, particularly in the areas of personality and job performance literatures (e.g., Campbell & Lee, 1988; Fletcher, 1986; Hogan & Holland, 2003; Hogan & Shelton, 1998; Hough, Keyes, & Dunnette, 1983; Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Mount, Barrick, & Strauss, 1994; Oh, Wang, & Mount, 2011). As to personality, Hogan (1991) suggested that one's self-assessment of personality reflects one's identity, and observers' assessment of one's personality reflects his or her reputation. Identity is the driver of social behaviors, and reputation reflects one's characteristic ways of behaving in the public. Thus, theoretically the two aspects of personality should align well with each other. However, observers do not have full access to the identity (or private self) that drives publicly observable behaviors (Mount et al., 1994; Spain, Eaton, & Funder, 2000), which may cause inconsistency between the self-reported and peer-reported measures.

Some have suggested that self-reported and other-reported personalities may in fact be very different constructs (Hogan & Shelton, 1998), with differential predictability of various criterion variables (Mount et al., 1994). The same argument has been made regarding self-report and other-report of job performance ratings (e.g., Fried et al., 2008).

Drawing on prior research on personality and job performance, Meurs and colleagues (2010) suggested that self-report and other-report measures of political skill also may have substantive, rather than methodological, differences. They suggested that whereas the self-relevant aspects of political skill are germane to one's intrapersonal experiences and perceptions, the other-relevant aspects are better reflected in the actual interpersonal dynamics in terms of power, control, and performance. Meurs et al. (2010) suggested that whereas the self-relevant aspects of political skill are best reflected in self-reports of political skill, the other-relevant aspects of political skill are best captured by other-reports of political skill.

Because the emotion recognition tasks in the training study involves interpersonal contact (*albeit* via a computer screen in the experiment) and activities of decoding and interpreting emotional cues of others, rather than psychological activities that are internally directed, and because we are concerned with actual performance on a given task rather than one's perceived mastering of the task, we argue that, it should be best captured by other-reports of political skill. In comparison, self-reported political skill, when used to predict actual performance on emotion recognition, should demonstrate comparably lower predictability because individuals' self-assessments of political skill may not reflect their actual skills demonstrated in real social situations as well as other-reports do.

For example, although self-perception of high political skill may enhance one's self-confidence in handling stressful situations, thus reducing strain, it does not necessarily translate to one's actual control of the situation. In addition, factors such as imperfect self-awareness or motives related to self-presentation may also distort self-ratings of political skill, thus lower its predictive validity of objectively measured outcome variables such as performance on emotion recognition, as compare to other-ratings of political skill.

*Hypothesis 2.* Compared with self-ratings of political skill, other-ratings of political skill will demonstrate a stronger relationship with improvement on emotional cue learning via voices after training.

*Four Dimensions of Political Skill*

There are four dimensions of political skill, which are social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity (Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005). Social astuteness refers to the ability to be socially perceptive and understand situations and people well. Interpersonal influence refers to the ability to elicit desirable responses in others based on the demonstration of situationally appropriate behavior. Networking ability is the ability to establish a diverse set of contacts and networks of people. Apparent sincerity is the ability to appear to others as having high levels of integrity and as being authentic, sincere, and genuine.

Although it has long been proposed that political skill is a multi-dimensional construct, prior research has rarely differentiated the possible roles each dimension plays. This is likely due to the fact that prior research has focused on outcomes such as job performance and career success, in which all the dimensions likely work together to influence these outcomes. In linking political skill to emotion, however, an understanding of the relative contribution of each dimension to the learning of emotional cues becomes important, because it is likely that the various dimensions of political skill are not equally important for the understanding and using of emotional cues.

We suggest that among the four dimensions of political skill, social astuteness should demonstrate a stronger relationship with the skill to learn about emotional cues than interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity. Social astuteness reflects a keen interest in observing and understanding the social surroundings and behaviors of others (Ferris et al., 2007). It is directly related to the receiving and decoding of social cues, an important part of which is people's emotional expressive cues. Thus, there should be a relatively strong relationship between social astuteness and emotional cue learning.

In contrast, we do not expect as strong a relationship between *interpersonal influence* and emotional cue learning. Although effective interpersonal influence takes place when one

can accurately understand others' motives and intentions, the essence of this dimension of political skill is the skill to adapt and calibrate behaviors to the demands of different situations (Ferris et al., 2007). Thus, it has a strong behavioral and control orientation, and should exhibit a relatively weaker relationship with learning and attention to others. *Networking ability* requires the skill to assess accurately who could be useful in the social environment in providing information, resources, and support. Thus, the active creation of social capital by developing social ties, coalitions, and alliances is the focus of networking ability (Seibert, Kraimer, & Liden; 2001). Therefore, we do not expect as a strong a relationship between networking ability and social-emotional cue learning. Regarding *apparent sincerity*, the focus is inward toward controlling behaviors and expressions of self to control the responses of others, as compared to outward toward understanding and learning about others. Thus, we do not expect a strong relationship between apparent sincerity and emotional cue learning.

*Hypothesis 3.* Social astuteness is the facet of political skill that will demonstrate the strongest relationship with the improvement on emotional cue learning via voices after training.

## Method

### *Sample*

Participants were 123 German employee-peer dyads (44.75% response rate) from a broad variety of jobs. Participants provided online self-ratings of political skill, extraversion, and self-monitoring in random orders. They also sent a link to a peer at work who knows them well, who was asked to provide another set of ratings of the above variables. Self- and other-ratings were linked by a randomly generated common code. One week after the peer ratings were provided, the participants received an online link for a feedback-training on emotion recognition via voices. The employee sample included 54 males and 69 females with a mean age of 37.7 and an average work experience of 14.9 years. The participants reported an average of 37.5 working hours per week.

### *Training Procedure*

The training started with a *warming-up stage* consisting of 8 voice items of children expressing 4 emotions (happy, sad, angry, and fearful). The voices items were drawn from voices of children of the *DANVA2* (Nowicki, 2009; Rothman & Nowicki, 2004). The *DANVA2* measures the emotion perception ability, which is considered the most basic and fundamental component of emotional intelligence (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002). It involves the capacity to identify emotion in one's physical state, feelings, and thoughts, to recognize emotion in others' facial and postural expressions, as well as nonverbal perception and expression of emotion in the face, voice, and related communication channels (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Mayer et al., 2004). The items were presented to the participants and they were told to select the appropriate emotion that was expressed. Participants in the warming-up stage received no feedback as to whether their judgement was correct or not.

After the warming-up stage, the *pre-test* was conducted. The pre-test consists of the *DANVA2* version for adults (Baum & Nowicki, 1998; Nowicki, 2009). During the *training stage*, participants were presented 12 vocal expression items. After each item, a feedback screen appeared with the correct label of the emotion expressed. After receiving the feedback on a specific voice item participants could, as often as they liked, repeat the same voice item before going to the next. The voice items used in the training stage were drawn from the children's version of *DANVA2* (Nowicki, 2009; Rothman & Nowicki, 2004). In the post-test stage, the participants were presented again with the *DANVA2* adult voices as in the pre-test stage. When the participants finished the post-test *DANVA2* they received feedback on their *DANVA2* scores in the pre-test and the post-test.

### *Measures*

*Political skill inventory (PSI)*. The German translation (Blickle et al., 2008) of the *PSI* was used. The *PSI* (Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005) is comprised of four dimensions and 18 items. Six items are designed to measure *Networking Ability*, five for *Social Astuteness*, four

for *Interpersonal Influence* skills, and three for *Apparent Sincerity*. Items are responded on a 7-point Likert-type agreement scale. For the other-ratings, all items were converted into the third person perspective (e.g., “This person always seems to understand people well”).

*Emotion Recognition.* Emotion recognition via voice was measured with the *DANVA2* (Nowicki, 2009; Rothman & Nowicki, 2004)). The *DANVA2* is an advanced version of *DANVA* that was developed by Nowicki and Duke (1989) to measure children’s ability to recognize emotional expressions. The *DANVA2* has four subscales that measures the ability to recognize emotions via facial expressions, voices, posture, and gesture, respectively. The facial expressions and voices subscales have both a children and an adult version. In the current study, the *DVANVA2* voice (both children and adults versions) subscale was used. The *DANVA2* children items were used for feedback training on emotion recognition, and the *DANVA2* adult items were used as measures of emotion recognition via voices in both pre- and post-tests.

The *DANVA2* children scale comprises 24 emotional expression items expressed via audiotapes of voices. The *DANVA2* adult scale comprises 24 emotional expression items expressed via audiotapes of voices. There are 6 items each for the emotions of anger, fear, happiness, and sadness. The original *DANVA* score represents the percentage of errors participants make. We reverse coded the score such that it reflects the correct rate of recognition of each emotion expressed as a percentage and ranges between 0 and 100 per cent. Thus, higher scores indicate higher accuracy in emotion recognition.

The *DANVA2* test has been extensively validated (Nowicki & Duke, 1994, 2001), and used widely in at least 36 published papers, 33 doctoral theses, and 19 master-level theses (cf. Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002). Criterion validity tests link *DANVA2* scores to social adjustment, discriminant validity tests distinguish between *DANVA2* scores and traditional test of general mental ability, and convergent validity tests link *DANVA2* to Rosenthal, DiMatteo, Rogers, and Archer’s (1979) Profile of Nonverbal Sensitivity (PONS) test.

*Control variables.* We additionally controlled two theoretically relevant variables, extraversion and self-monitoring, to exclude the possibility that the effect of political skill on emotional cue learning was due to other sources of influence. Among personality variables, the highest correlation of political skill is with extraversion ( $r \approx .50$ , Ferris et al., 2008). To demonstrate the specificity of the effect of political skill on emotional cue learning, extraversion was controlled. Extraversion was measured with the German version of the NEO-FFI (Borkenau & Ostendorf, 1993). For the other-ratings, all items were converted into the third-person perspective.

Self-monitoring is a social facilitator variable that has conceptual overlap with political skill (Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2008). Previous research has shown that self-monitoring positively associated with emotion recognition (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Momm et al., 2010). A German adaptation of the self-monitoring scale by Nowack and Kammer (1987) was used in the present study. For the other-ratings, all items were converted into the third person perspective.

## Results

The means, correlations, and reliabilities of the variables are shown in Table 1. Other-ratings of extraversion, self-monitoring, political skill, social astuteness, networking ability, and interpersonal influence correlated positively with DANVA2 voices post-training scores. The test-retest reliability of the DANVA2-Voice scores was  $r_{\text{test-retest}} = .73$  ( $p < .01$ ). In line with previous research, Cronbach's alpha of the self-monitoring self-rating scale was low ( $\alpha = .65$ , Nowack & Kammer, 1987), whereas self-ratings and other-ratings of political skill had good Cronbach's alpha values ( $.85 \leq \alpha \leq .86$ ).

\*\*\* insert Table 1 and 2 about here \*\*\*

We analyzed the data with a hierarchical regression analysis (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). The dependent variables were the DANVA2 voices post-training scores. We tested two models: Model I used the *PSI* composite score. Model II used the dimensions of

political skill (i.e., social astuteness, networking ability, apparent sincerity, and interpersonal influence).

*Hypothesis 1* stated that individuals high in political skill will show greater improvement on emotional cue learning via voices after training than those low in political skill. This was tested in Model I (confer left half of Table 2). In the first step, we entered the composite-score of self-ratings of political skill. Additionally, we controlled for DANVA2 voices pre-test scores, self-ratings of extraversion and self-monitoring. The higher self-ratings of political skill the lower assessment errors in the DANVA2 voices post-training ( $\beta = .14, p < .05$ ) (cf. Table 2). Neither self-ratings of extraversion nor self-ratings of self-monitoring predicted emotional cue learning via voices; these findings supported Hypothesis 1.

*Hypothesis 2* stated that compared with self-ratings of political skill, other-ratings of political skill will demonstrate a stronger relationship with improvement on emotional cue learning via voices after training. To test this hypothesis, we entered the other-ratings of extraversion, self-monitoring, and political skill in Model I. In line with Hypothesis 2, the strongest predictor of emotional cue learning from the voices training was the composite other-rating of political skill ( $\beta = .37, p < .01$ ).

*Hypothesis 3* stated that social astuteness is the facet of political skill that will demonstrate the strongest relationship with improvement on emotion cue learning via voices. We tested this hypothesis with Model II (confer right half of Table 2). We used the facets of political skill as predictors of emotional cue learning instead of the political skill composite scale in order to analyse which facets of political skill drive its effect on emotional cue learning. As expected, we found, that other-ratings of social astuteness ( $\beta = .17, p < .05$ ) predicted emotional cue learning from the voices training. However, we found that networking ability ( $\beta = .23, p < .01$ ) was numerically even a stronger predictor of emotional cue learning as was social astuteness. Thus, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the possible linkage between political skill and emotional cue learning (Momm et al., 2010). We found that individuals high in political skill showed greater improvement than others on learning to identify emotions in voices after a training session. Because of the lower controllability by the expressor, voice represents a more “leaky” emotional communication channel than faces and postures (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). Therefore, the significant association between political skill and emotional cue learning via voices provides evidence suggesting that political skill includes the ability to discern subtle social cues useful for the understanding of one’s interactive partner.

### *Research Implications*

Besides providing further evidence for Momm et al.’s (2010) contention that political skill predicts emotional cue learning, the study also added richer insights both to the understanding of the political construct itself, and its relationship with emotional skills. Whereas empirical evidence has accumulated to suggest that political skill is a valuable personal resources that help individuals to function effectively in social contexts, to accumulate power and resources for themselves and others in organizations, and to achieve favourable career outcomes, its intra-psycho processes still needs to be better understood. Specifically, to date, we are not certain what exactly enables those possessing political skill to understand social situations accurately. This study contributes to uncover, at least partially, the essence of political skill, suggesting that an important element of political skill is the cognitive ability to process social cues, such as emotional cues.

Ferris, Perrewé, and Douglas (2002) discussed the proliferation of social constructs and the need to more precisely define their distinctive construct domains, recognizing that there might be some degree of covariation among these constructs. Ferris et al. (2007) commented that there are natural overlaps among such social effectiveness constructs as political skill, social skill, emotional intelligence, and self-monitoring. One common element

among many of these constructs is a cognitive understanding and perceptiveness component, and therefore, may all be reflective of one higher-order construct (Ferris et al., 2002). At this point, we are not certain what exactly this higher-order construct is, however, empirical examinations of the interplay among these constructs will help discover the answer to this question (Ferris et al., 2007). Our study serves as one small step toward such direction by uncovering the overlap between political skill and emotion recognition skills, and we suggest that perhaps the ability to identify and accurately interpret social cues germane to the understanding of a social situation lies at the core of these constructs.

Drawing on prior research, we made theoretically derived predictions about the differential relationships of self- and other-reported political skill with emotional cue learning. As hypothesized, other-reported political skill was more strongly related to the learning of emotional cues via voices than self-reported political skill. That is, although self-reported political skill was significantly related to emotional cue learning before other-reported political skill was entered into the model, the effects became non-significant in the presence of other-reported political skill. This finding provided support for Meurs et al.'s (2010) argument that there are substantive differences between self- and other-reported political skill measures, and that other-reports capture the other-relevant aspects of political skill better than the self-reports. This finding also informs research on the relative validity of self- vs. other-reports of measures in general.

Further, looking into the various facets of political skill, we found, as expected, that social astuteness demonstrated a substantial correlation with effectiveness of training on recognizing emotional cues via voices. Unexpectedly, networking ability showed an even stronger relationship with recognizing emotional cues via voices than social astuteness. This may be due to the fact that networking ability also requires the ability to relate well with others. Besides the skill to assess accurately who could be useful in the social environment to enhance one's social capital, networking ability also entails a willingness to get to know

others and establish a sense of personal connection and rapport. To effectively connect with people, attentiveness is needed, as well as the ability to understand others' emotions well. This may explain why we additionally found a substantial relationship between networking ability and social-emotional cue learning. The effects of networking ability are also in line with findings by Ferris, Blickle et al. (2008) that among the political skill facets networking ability had the strongest relationship with income. However, future replications of the result are needed to assess the robustness of the finding.

There is one caveat about the use of the *DANVA2* that is worth mentioning. One might argue that the *DANVA2* focuses on four extremely basic emotions (i.e., happiness, sadness, anger, and fear) that are easily recognizable, and yet, theory on political skill suggests that people high on this trait are emotional sophisticates capable of discerning subtle and complex nonverbal cues (Ferris et al., 2007). While we agree that these are basic emotions, vocal emotional cues are much more difficult to interpret accurately than facial emotional cues. In addition, we believe it only strengthens the validity of the results when we observe, as we did, that even with basic emotions, political skill predicts improvement after training. However, we do agree that even with the significant results, our findings may be an underestimate of the emotional cue learning skills of the politically skilled.

### *Strength and Limitations*

This study has some strength, namely the objective pre- and post-measures of emotional skill, the combination of different data sources (objective measure of training performance, self- and other-ratings of predictors), and a clear temporal ordering in the predictor-training success relationship with a one-week time interval. Additionally, two control variables (extraversion, self-monitoring) were used to exclude other possible explanations. A limitation is that the study did not use a control group. However, in previous research Momm et al. (2010) have used a control group but have found no significant pre-post-test difference in the control group.

### *Implications for Future Research*

The study suggests a few possible future research directions. For example, as a natural next step, it would be important to find out if politically skilled individuals are better than others at discerning incongruent emotional expressions (e.g., a smiling face combined with a melancholy vocal tone). It will be interesting to see if they are capable of focusing their attentions to cues of high utility. Findings could provide additional insights as to whether political skill is related to selective cue utilization, which is critical to accurate social understanding. Following Ferris et al. (2007), we also encourage empirical research that examines the overlaps among various social effectiveness constructs, such as emotional intelligence, social competence, social skill, self-monitoring, etc., with the goal of ultimately identifying the higher-order construct underneath them.

Moreover, future research also may examine the relationship between political skill and overall emotional intelligence. Prior research suggests that political skill and emotional intelligence may share significant conceptual domain because both are interpersonal competencies constructs (Ferris, Treadway et al., 2005). The current research suggests that political skill is closely associated with the emotion recognition component of emotional intelligence. Future research may investigate whether politically skilled individuals also demonstrate greater skills in emotion regulation, and using emotions to facilitate thoughts and actions.

### *Practical Implications*

Our study provides some useful guidance in the training of political skill. Ferris and colleagues (Ferris, Davidson et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2007) suggested that although political skill has its dispositional antecedents, it is a skill that can be enhanced through training. As many organizations seek ways to improve their employees' "soft skills," such as political skill, it becomes imperative not only to know what benefits political skill may lead to, but also *how* to improve the skill to facilitate interpersonal effectiveness at work. The association

between political skill and emotion recognition skill we found in our study suggests that for political skill training programs to be effective, one viable, and perhaps essential, way is to enhance trainees' emotion recognition skill, along with increasing their emotional knowledge.

In addition, the knowledge about the overlap between political skill and emotional skills also helps organizations operating on a budget to make sound assessment plans for candidate selections. Soft, interpersonal skills have been increasingly used by corporations as personnel selection criteria. Yet, some assessment tools, such as emotional intelligence tests, can be expensive or time-consuming to administer. The ability to accurately recognize emotional cues have been considered an important, and most empirically validated, component of emotional intelligence (Elfenbein & Ambady, 2002). Given the demonstrated association of political skill and emotion recognition ability, it may be a plausible alternative for organizations interested in hiring people for their people skills to use PSI instead of emotional intelligence tests as a selection tool (Blickle & Schnitzler, 2010).

In terms of implications for vocational practices, training emotional skill is becoming more and more important in business and in work organizations (Elfenbein et al., 2007). Previous research on training has identified a number of individual factors which promote training success, such as general mental ability, conscientiousness (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998), low anxiety, internal locus of control, and self-efficacy (Colquitt, LePine, & Noe, 2000). The results of the present research suggest that when it comes to training emotional skill an important predictor of training success is trainees' other-rated political skill. Thus, emotional skill trainings generally might be more fruitful with participants are high in political skill, or when administered along with training on political skill.

Finally, political skill is a newly minted construct based on self-assessments or other-ratings which has already demonstrated some impressive evidence of construct and criterion-related validity. Thus, the political skill inventory meets the necessary conditions to be used as an assessment tool in personnel selection (Blickle, von Below, & Johannsen, 2011).

However, a major concern of many organizational stakeholders in using assessment devices based on self-reports by applicants in applied personnel selection settings has been the potential for response distortion (e.g., claiming unlikely virtues, denying personal weaknesses, exaggerating personal strengths). Dilchert, Ones, Viswesvaran, and Deller (2006) concluded that all high-stakes assessments are likely to elicit deception from assessees. At the same time, other-reports may not resolve this problem because they also may be biased. For example, Connelly and Ones (2010) suggested that due to friendship biases, people may be unwilling or unable to disclose negative information about the target. Our results pertaining to self- vs. other-rated political skill do indicate, however, that a more valid way to assess an employee's political skill, when using it as an assessment of interpersonal effectiveness, is to use other-rated, rather than self-rated data.

Further, it appears an alternative way, and perhaps a more objective way, to assess political skill, is to use the pre-post-test increase in DANVA2 scores as a proxy. Of course, pre-post-test increases in DANVA2 scores do not cover the whole construct of political skill. So, additional objective assessment devices are necessary to assess objectively the political skill construct.

### *Conclusion*

In sum, the current study provided additional evidence that the skill to recognize emotion via voices, which represents a more "leaky" communication channel than faces and postures, is an important aspect of political skill. We hope that future research will lead to a deeper understanding of self- and other-related aspects of political skill, the differential role its various facets may play in the processes through which it exerts its already demonstrated strong social impact, as well as the search for an objective measure of political skill.

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Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics, Correlations, and Reliabilities of Variables*

| Variables                                                          | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     | 8     | 9     | 10    | 11    | 12    | 13    | 14    | 15    | 16    |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|--|
| 1. DANVA2 Voices – Pre-test                                        | 66.47    | 13.38     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |  |
| 2. DANVA2 Voices – Post-test                                       | 71.00    | 12.86     | .73** |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |  |
| 3. Extraversion – Self-rating                                      | 3.52     | .52       | .00   | .00   | (.77) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |  |
| 4. Extraversion – Other-rating                                     | 3.47     | .49       | .08   | .23** | .42** | (.77) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |  |
| 5. Self-monitoring – Self-rating                                   | .38      | .17       | -.12  | -.02  | .34** | .19*  | (.65) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |  |
| 6. Self-monitoring – Other-rating                                  | .37      | .18       | .06   | .18*  | .22*  | .36** | .32** | (.73) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |  |
| 7. Political Skill – Self-rating                                   | 5.02     | .64       | -.04  | .10   | .44** | .26** | .24** | .11   | (.86) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |  |
| 8. Political Skill Scale "social astuteness" – Self-rating         | 4.77     | .84       | -.14  | -.03  | .15   | .10   | .23** | .02   | .76** | (.68) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |  |
| 9. Political Skill Scale "networking ability" – Self-rating        | 4.36     | 1.01      | .04   | .12   | .45** | .22*  | .24** | .10   | .79** | .36** | (.84) |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |  |
| 10. Political Skill Scale "apparent sincerity" – Self-rating       | 5.83     | .77       | -.06  | .04   | .12   | .02   | -.20* | -.02  | .47** | .32** | .14   | (.60) |       |       |       |       |       |       |  |
| 11. Political Skill Scale "interpersonal influence" – Self-rating  | 5.13     | .92       | -.01  | .11   | .46** | .34** | .25** | .15   | .76** | .55** | .38** | .36** | (.73) |       |       |       |       |       |  |
| 12. Political Skill – Other-rating                                 | 5.14     | .63       | -.02  | .36** | -.03  | .44** | .16   | .37** | .25** | .11   | .28** | .06   | .16   | (.85) |       |       |       |       |  |
| 13. Political Skill Scale "social astuteness" – Other-rating       | 4.81     | .85       | -.06  | .22*  | -.22* | .17   | .09   | .29** | .14   | .20*  | .09   | .04   | .05   | .71** | (.66) |       |       |       |  |
| 14. Political Skill Scale "networking ability" – Other-rating      | 4.71     | 1.07      | .03   | .34** | .03   | .42** | .12   | .33** | .22*  | .00   | .35** | .04   | .10   | .86** | .45** | (.86) |       |       |  |
| 15. Political Skill Scale "apparent sincerity" – Other-rating      | 5.61     | .83       | -.09  | .10   | -.09  | .16   | .04   | -.05  | .02   | -.02  | -.04  | .12   | .06   | .39** | .09   | .14   | (.58) |       |  |
| 16. Political Skill Scale "interpersonal influence" – Other-rating | 5.43     | .86       | .04   | .29** | .16   | .43** | .19*  | .37** | .27** | .18*  | .25** | -.01  | .26** | .78** | .44** | .55** | .26** | (.71) |  |

Note.  $N = 123$ ; \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ ; Cronbach's Alphas in the diagonal.

Table 2

*Hierarchical Regression of Emotion Recognition via Voices in the Post-Test*

|        |                                                                | Model I   |              | Model II  |              |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
|        |                                                                | Std.Betas | $\Delta R^2$ | Std.Betas | $\Delta R^2$ |
| Step 1 | Emotion Recognition via Voices in the Pre-Test                 | .75 **    |              | .74 **    |              |
|        | Extraversion – Self-rating                                     | -.08      |              | -.12      |              |
|        | Self-monitoring – Self-rating                                  | .06       |              | .09       |              |
|        | Political Skill – Self-rating: composite score                 | .14 *     |              |           |              |
|        | Political Skill Scale "social astuteness" – Self-rating        |           |              | -.05      |              |
|        | Political Skill Scale "networking ability" – Self-rating       |           |              | .08       |              |
|        | Political Skill Scale "apparent sincerity" – Self-rating       |           |              | .09       |              |
|        | Political Skill Scale "interpersonal influence" – Self-rating  |           |              | .10       |              |
|        |                                                                |           | .56**        |           | .57**        |
| Step 2 | Extraversion – Other-rating                                    | .01       |              | .00       |              |
|        | Self-monitoring – Other-rating                                 | -.01      |              | -.01      |              |
|        | Political Skill – Other-rating: comp. score                    | .37 **    |              |           |              |
|        | Political Skill Scale "social astuteness" – Other-rating       |           |              | .17 *     |              |
|        | Political Skill Scale "networking ability" – Other-rating      |           |              | .23 **    |              |
|        | Political Skill Scale "apparent sincerity" – Other-rating      |           |              | .10       |              |
|        | Political Skill Scale "interpersonal influence" – Other-rating |           |              | .04       |              |
|        |                                                                |           | .12 **       |           | .13 **       |

*Note.* Dependent variable = Emotion Recognition via Voices in the Post-Test;  $N = 123$ , \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .