Political Skill, Leadership, and Performance:

The Role of Vision Identification and Articulation

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Accepted for publication in

Handbook of Organizational Politics: Looking Back and to the Future

Eran Vigoda-Gadot and Amos Drory (Eds.)

05-25-15

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Abstract

While previous research has found that transformational and transactional leadership behavior mediate the leader political skill ─ leader effectiveness relationship (Blickle et al., 2013; Ewen, Wihler, Blickle, Oerder, Ellen, Douglas, & Ferris, 2013; Ewen, Wihler, Frieder, Blickle, Hogan, & Ferris, 2014), the purpose of this study is to specify which facet(s) of transformational leadership play(s) the most important role in this mediated relationship. Based on a political lens of leadership processes (Ammeter, Douglas, Gardner, Hochwarter & Ferris, 2004) and the social/political influence theory of organizations (Ferris, Treadway, Perrewé, Brouer, Douglas, & Lux, 2007), we argue that politically skilled leaders should be more effective as a result of their superior abilities to identify and articulate visions. Moreover, we also examine the moderating effect of leaders' positional power as a leader characteristic capable of reinforcing politically skilled leaders' use of vision identification and articulation behaviors. Consistent with argumentation that politically skilled leaders can more effectively use vision articulation to strategically direct, unify, and mobilize followers, results indicated that leaders who were both politically skilled and positionally powerful were perceived by followers to engage in greater amounts of vision identification and articulation behaviors, and these behaviors, in turn, predicted leader effectiveness. As such, this study builds on the small body of research that links leader political skill to leader effectiveness through leader behavior and draws on insight from previous research regarding the interactive effects of multiple sources of leader power. We discuss how this study contributes to the existing literature with an eye towards the future of leadership and politics research.

Keywords: political skill, position power, transformational leadership behavior, leader effectiveness

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No handbook of organizational politics would be complete without the recognition of the intricate connection between social influence and leadership processes. In fact, there is a long standing recognition that organizations are not rational systems, but instead are political arenas in which leaders are tasked with managing and shaping competing interests over time (Mintzberg, 1983, 1985). Accordingly, leadership is inherently a social influence process requiring that leaders induce subordinates to pursue a certain course of action in the absence of coercion or force (Kotter, 2008). Burgeoning interest in politics and leadership has been fueled by the separate, yet complementary acknowledgment by both Pfeffer (1981) and Mintzberg (1983) regarding the necessity of political skill in bringing about successful (i.e., effective) influence attempts. Further, in more recent years, increased/renewed interest in politics and influence within the context of leadership was sparked by calls for political theories of leadership (House & Aditya, 1997), *The Leadership Quarterly's* 2004 special issue on leadership from a political lens, an entire section of the original *Handbook of Organizational Politics* (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006) devoted to the intersection of politics and leadership, and the explication of a social/political influence theory by Ferris and colleagues (Ferris, Treadway, Perrewé, Brouer, Douglas, & Lux, 2007). As a result, a wealth of empirical evidence has amassed positioning political skill as a powerful and comprehensive social competency (Munyon, Summers, Thompson, & Ferris, 2015).

Political skill is formally defined as "the ability to effectively understand others at work and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives" (Ferris et al., 2005; p. 127). Political skill is couched as a critical workplace competency with cognitive, affective, and behavioral manifestations (Ferris et al., 2007) suggesting that politically skilled individuals are able to read and understand people and

situations (interpersonal influence), appear sincere and devoid of ulterior motives (apparent sincerity), behave in situationally effective ways (interpersonal influence), and forge beneficial connections and align themselves with instrumental others (networking ability). As such, political skill is widely considered critical to one's organizational survival and success (Ferris et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2007; Ferris, Treadway, Brouer, & Munyon, 2012; Munyon et al., 2015). Research indicates the benefits of political skill (e.g., task performance, career success, effectiveness, satisfaction) accrue to those in its possession as well as peripheral others (e.g., subordinates; employers; Ferris et al., 2007; Munyon et al., 2015).

Aside from these well-established bivariate relationships, research on political skill has begun to examine the mechanisms through which the positive effects of political skill accrue. From an individual perspective, single-study and meta-analytic evidence suggests that the positive effects of political skill on personal performance and career success are transmitted through personal reputation and self-efficacy (Blickle, Schneider, Liu, & Ferris, 2011; Munyon et al., 2015). Relatedly, research has begun to examine what politically skilled individuals do, not just the personal resources or capabilities they possess, that sets them apart from others especially as it relates to their superior leadership abilities (e.g., Ewen et al., 2013). More specifically, while politically skilled leaders are considered more effective than their non-politically skilled peers (Douglas & Ammeter, 2004), relatively little is known about the manner in which politically skilled leaders are able to evoke heightened performance from their subordinates nor about what makes them more successful as deemed by their subordinates/other-raters.

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to examine *how* politically skilled leaders achieve heightened leadership effectiveness. Based on the integrated model of leadership effectiveness framework (DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011), we examine the mediating effects of leader behaviors on the relationship between leader political skill (a

trait/characteristic) and perceived leader effectiveness. Specifically, we focus on the set of behaviors involved in identifying and articulating a vision and argue that, all other things being equal, leaders' political skill should have an effect on such behaviors above and beyond the other facets of transformational leadership and contingent reward behavior. Moreover, we examine an influential contextual characteristic, namely the positional power of leaders, as a factor capable of amplifying the positive effects of leader traits/characteristics (political skill) on performance through vision identification and articulation. We argue that positional power provides politically skilled leaders with heightened legitimacy and awareness of strategic objectives which increases the power/effectiveness of their vision identification and articulation behaviors.

In doing so, we contribute to the literature on political skill and leadership in three main ways. First, we unpack the dimensions of transformational leadership behavior to examine specific mechanisms through which political skill is thought to operate. Examining the dimensions of transformational leadership behavior provides a more nuanced perspective as to why politically skilled leaders may be more effective than non-politically skilled leaders. Specifically, equipped with an uncanny interpersonal savvy and social astuteness, politically skilled leaders may be especially well-suited to craft for their followers an attractive future state in which they are energized to pursue collective, as opposed to individual goals. Second, researchers have posited that politically skilled leaders would be better suited to identify and articulate powerful visions for their followers (Ferris et al., 2007; Munyon et al., 2015); nonetheless, to our knowledge, empirical research has yet to confirm this association. Therefore, this chapter contributes to the theory of social/political influence (Ferris et al., 2007) and the political skill literature by explicitly examining the link between leader political skill and vision identification and articulation. Finally, we examine the role that two distinct sources of power and influence play on leadership effectiveness. Positional power is thought to provide politically

skilled leaders with additional legitimacy such that followers are more likely to identify with the articulated vision. The complete model of hypothesized relationships is illustrated in Figure 1.

*** Insert Figure 1 about here ***

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

Political Influence in Organizations

The importance and popularity of the political skill construct has accelerated with the realization and acceptance that organizations are political arenas (Mintzberg, 1983) in which individuals work to construct their desired realities through the creation and management of shared meaning (Ferris et al., 2007; Pfeffer, 1981, 2010). While organizational politics were initially regarded as a deleterious and unfortunate fact of organizational life, researchers (e.g., Fedor, Maslyn, Farmer, & Bettenhausen, 2008; Hochwarter, 2012; Vigoda, 2003; Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006) have been successful in shifting the predominant view of organizational politics to one that more accurately reflects both the potential benefits and drawbacks of organizational politics. Thus rather than assuming that organizational politics is automatically undesirable, practitioners (Buchanan, 2008) and academics alike acknowledge that when used properly, organizational politics can serve as "another tool that employees and managers have for promoting goals that cannot be achieved in other ways" (Vigoda-Gadot & Dryzin-Amit, 2006, p. 8).

Individuals who participate in organizational politics are thought to engage in a variety of sanctioned as well as non-sanctioned and informal behaviors in order to shape competing interests and pursue personal and/or organizational objectives over time. Accordingly, individuals' careers can be thought of as political campaigns throughout which individuals develop positive reputational capital, forge beneficial connections with others, and acquire resources through political activities such as self-promotion, impression management, and networking (Baruch & Bozionelos, 2011). Moreover, individuals in leadership positions must

also undertake such strategic and achievement-oriented campaigns in efforts to affect desirable outcomes for themselves and others (e.g., subordinates, department). In this regard, leadership is considered a "political art" (Windsor, 2003) that requires, among other things, the use of influence rather than coercion to build trust, align interests, encourage collaboration, achieve consensus, overcome resistance, inspire optimism and confidence, and energize subordinates towards goal accomplishment (Gunn & Chen, 2006; Kurchner-Hawkins & Miller, 2006). Nonetheless, the success of one's personal or other-directed political campaigns will depend in large part on the manner in which such political behaviors and/or "political artistry" is executed; individuals who possess a certain political savvy or savoir faire coined "political skill" by Pfeffer (1981) will undoubtedly be better equipped to influence others, obtain desirable outcomes, and ultimately achieve career success.

Political skill is formally defined as "the ability to effectively understand others at work and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives" (Ferris et al., 2005; 127). The theory of social/political influence in organizations proposed by Ferris and colleagues (2007) focuses on the manner in which the political skill construct operates and articulates a meta-theoretical framework detailing how political skill exerts influence on intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group-level processes. As such, politically skilled individuals are able to present themselves as genuine, trustworthy, and well-intentioned (apparent sincerity). Politically skilled individuals demonstrate a sophisticated yet subtle and effective communication style that allows them to accurately determine and subsequently display the most situationally effective behaviors (interpersonal influence). Additionally, those high in political skill are keenly aware of their own and others' motivations, are sensitive to the needs of others, and are skilled at interpreting the complexities of the social environment and those within it (social astuteness). Further contributing to their interpersonal acumen, individuals in possession of political skill are adept at developing, maintaining, and

bridging important social connections; additionally, they are calculating and purposeful networkers with a knack for conflict negotiation (networking ability).

Taken together, political skill is a critical workplace competency with cognitive, affective, and behavioral manifestations (Ferris et al., 2007) and represents a comprehensive set of skills critical to one's organizational survival and success (Ferris et al., 2005; Ferris et al., 2007; Ferris et al., 2012). The cumulative body of empirical research that has been amassed over the better part of the last two decades provides support for the notion of political skill as a powerful workplace competency (Kimura, 2014). For instance, evidence has suggested that politically skilled individuals receive higher promotability ratings (Gentry, Gilmore, Porter, & Leslie, 2012), better career development opportunities (Wei, Liu, Chen, & Wu, 2010), and achieve greater career success in general (Blickle et al., 2011) than their non-politically skilled peers. Moreover, recent extensions of this meta-theoretical framework suggest that the effects of political skill are even more pervasive than originally expected, touching every aspect of organizational life from personal evaluations (e.g., self-esteem), to situational appraisals (e.g., justice perceptions, job satisfaction) and responses (e.g., coalition building, productivity), evaluations by others (e.g., reputation, performance), and group and organizational processes (e.g., vision articulation) (Munyon et al., 2015).

Leader Political Skill

Ultimately, politically skilled employees' organizational successes hinge on their ability to influence others; there is no context in which this is more apparent than with regard to leadership. In support, Balkundi and Kilduff (2005) surmised that the hallmark of effective leadership is the accurate perception and understanding of social relationships. Not surprisingly, in addition to benefits that accrue directly to those in possession of such political savvy, political skill has a well-documented effect in the leadership process. For example, when placed in competitive prediction with emotional intelligence, leadership self-efficacy, and self-

monitoring, political skill appeared to be the strongest predictor of organization-rated job performance above and beyond the aforementioned social effectiveness constructs (Semadar, Robins, & Ferris, 2006).

Additionally, research has found that work units (Douglas & Ammeter, 2004) and teams (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas, & Ammeter, 2004) overseen by politically skilled leaders demonstrated higher performance than those overseen by non-politically skilled leaders. Furthermore, evidence has suggested that politically skilled leaders are able to engender subordinates' affective organizational commitment by way of enhancing subordinates' perceptions of organizational support (Treadway et al., 2004). Taken together, politically skilled individuals are themselves more capable of managing their organizational experiences and coping with the demands and uncertainties with which they are faced; at the same time, the politically skilled are well-positioned to influence the opinions and experiences of target others and artfully capable of adapting their behavior in such ways as to elicit the desired reactions from others and obtain desired outcomes for themselves (Ferris et al., 2012).

Despite these promising findings, little is known regarding *why* politically skilled leaders are more or effective or *how* politically skilled leaders engender heightened performance from their followers. In response, research has begun to examine the mediating mechanisms that could account for the positive relationship between leader political skill and leader effectiveness. For instance, Ewen and colleagues (Ewen et al., 2013) argued that politically skilled leaders would be able to determine, and subsequently demonstrate, the most situationally appropriate leader behavior given their individual followers, desired outcomes, and available resources; accordingly, engaging in the appropriate circumstance-specific leader behaviors was argued to result in the heightened effectiveness of politically skilled leaders; results provided support for these assertions. Specifically, the positive effects of leader political skill on both leadership effectiveness and follower satisfaction were mediated by followers' perceptions of

transformational and transactional (i.e., contingent reward) leadership behavior. Similarly, Blickle et al. (2013) found initiating structure and consideration behaviors (i.e., task- and relationship-oriented behaviors) to mediate the positive relationship between the interactive effect of leader position power and leader political skill and followers' job satisfaction. Finally, Ewen and colleagues (2014) utilized socioanalytic theory to argue that leaders with political skill would be more capable of packaging their motives to get ahead into task-oriented behavior (i.e., initiating structure) which in turn would be positively related to followers' satisfaction with their leader and followers' perceptions of institutional effectiveness; results from a sample of German headmasters and the teachers reporting to them provided strong support for the aforementioned relationships.

Despite the existence of research linking political skill to effective leadership behaviors and ultimately leader effectiveness outcomes, these studies have only examined leader behaviors in the aggregate. As such, we know little regarding which of the specific transformational or transactional leadership behaviors are associated with politically skilled leaders nor do we have insight regarding which of these specific behaviors mediates the positive relationship between leader political skill and effectiveness. In what follows (see Figure 1), we argue that politically skilled leaders will engage in behaviors associated with identifying and articulating a vision because 1) a vision gives direction and mobilizes followers and 2) requires the strategic use of ambiguity to unify and orient followers around common shared goals. Accordingly, we suggest that vision identification and articulation will mediate the relationship between leader political skill and leader effectiveness above and beyond the influence of other types of transformational and transactional leadership behaviors.

Transformational and Transactional Leadership Behaviors

Transformational leadership theory suggests that leaders are able to evoke heightened performance from their followers by articulating an inspirational vision that appeals to

followers' ideals and values (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Transformational leaders create and disseminate compelling visions of the future (inspirational motivation) and behave in a manner that earns followers' respect and cultivates followers' desires to emulate the leader (idealized influence). Additionally, transformational leaders provide coaching and mentoring that is tailored to individual followers (individualized consideration) and encourage followers to question assumptions, take risks, and provide suggestions or ideas (intellectual stimulation).

Where transformational leaders work to change the status quo by orienting followers around visions that are purposefully change-oriented and critical of current norms (Berson, Shamir, Avolio, & Popper, 2001), transactional leaders are focused on maintaining the status quo. Transactional leadership is premised on gaining compliance from subordinates and is rooted in the contractual exchange obligations between leaders and followers (Bass, 1985, 1999; Yukl, 2012). Decades of single-study and meta-analytic research have established the positive relationship between transformational leadership and leader, follower, and group-level in-role and extra-role performance (e.g., Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Not surprisingly, transformational leadership is widely considered the most effective form of leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Nonetheless, while transformational leadership is effective beyond transactional leadership, transactional leadership is thought to provide the foundation for transformational leadership behaviors (Waldman, Bass, & Yammarino, 1990).

Given its seemingly universal positive effects, researchers have taken interest in identifying the antecedents of transformational leader behavior. From an individual standpoint, most of this research has examined the dispositional bases of transformational leadership. In this regard, meta-analytic research found the Big 5 personality traits were significantly, albeit weakly, related to the inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and intellectual stimulation dimensions of transformational leadership (Bono & Judge, 2004). Recognizing that

transformational leadership requires that leaders appeal to and elevate followers' emotions (Huy, 1999) and build relationships with followers characterized by warmth and trust (Atwater & Yammarino, 1993), Rubin and colleagues (Rubin, Munz, & Bommer, 2005) found leaders' emotion recognition abilities, agreeable dispositions, and positive affectivity to be positively related to transformational leader behavior.

Research indicates that politically skilled individuals have greater emotion recognition abilities (Blickle, Momm, Kramer, Mierke, Liu, & Ferris, 2009; Momm, Blickle, & Liu, 2010; Momm, Blickle, Liu, Wihler, Kholin, & Menges, 2015) and are able to appear trustworthy, sincere, and genuine (Ferris et al., 2007); thus, consistent with Rubin and colleagues' findings (2005), leaders with political skill should be more likely to be perceived by followers as transformational. In support, previous research has argued and found support for the positive relationship between political skill and transformational leadership behaviors (in the aggregate; Ewen et al., 2013). Specifically, Ewen and colleagues (2013) found that after controlling for leader personality, leader political skill was positively related to both transformational and transactional leadership behaviors which in turn were positively related to follower satisfaction and leader effectiveness. This makes intuitive sense as politically skilled leaders should be best able to determine, and subsequently package, the most effective leader behaviors given the specific needs and motivations of their followers. Nonetheless, no research to our knowledge has examined the relationship between leader political skill and specific transformational and transactional leader behaviors.

Vision Identification and Articulation

A vision is mental image of an ambitious and idealized, but not already attainable future state that leaders evoke to mobilize followers into purposeful, goal-directed action (Conger, 1989; Nanus, 1992). Visions tend to challenge existing standards, defy conventional wisdom, communicate high performance expectations, and imbue followers with the confidence

necessary to achieve the vision (Awamleh & Gardner, 1999; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Accordingly, visions are powerful tools that leaders use to create meaning for their followers, unite followers around common goals, inspire and energize followers to action, and mobilize followers towards an attractive future state (Nanus, 1992).

Not surprisingly, leaders' ability to garner follower support is thought to depend on leaders' ability to create and articulate transcendental visions (Galvin, Waldman, & Balthazard, 2010). Some scholars view vision creation as the first step in leaders' efforts to affect change among individuals or groups (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1987) or more precisely, as a necessary precondition in order for leaders to be considered transformational (Bass, 1990; Conger, 1991). In fact, Kurchner-Hawkins and Miller (2006, p. 332) suggest that "building support for the vision and for projects and activities aligned to that vision is one of the first steps for building positive political strategies." Nonetheless, vision creation and articulation is not a unidirectional process; instead, collaboration is needed between leaders and followers such that visions created by leaders are accepted and internalized by followers (Kotter, 2001). Regardless of whether leaders establish a vision based on the needs and desires of the collective (i.e., bottom-up approach) or request buy-in from followers regarding a pre-formulated vision (i.e., top-down approach), vision creation and articulation requires leaders use influence to foster acceptance and buy-in (Ferris et al., 2007). Further, in order to be effective, leaders must acknowledge and actively manage the politics involved in the strategic management process; as such, positive political tactics such as vision identification and articulation are thought to increase subordinates' buy-in, promote collaborative behavior, and facilitate implementation (Gunn & Chen, 2006). Thus, we expect that political skill will be influential in this regard.

Specifically, politically skilled leaders should be both 1) better able to identify visions that resonate with followers and 2) adept at articulating such visions in ways that mobilize followers into action. First, leaders must have a keen understanding of followers' needs and

aspirations (Raelin, 2006) so that the commensurate vision fully inspires and mobilizes followers into action. Politically skilled individuals are not only highly self-aware, but they are also sensitive, keen observers of others; accordingly, politically skilled individuals are able to identify the needs and motivations of those around them. Thus, as a function of their social astuteness, politically skilled leaders should be better able to create visions that are consistent with followers' motives and objectives. Additionally, politically skilled individuals maintain well-developed networks of close friends and organizational allies (Cullen, Gerbasi, & Chrobot-Mason, 2015). Because they are so well-connected, politically skilled leaders should have a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing their followers; this should further contribute to their abilities to identify visions with content that resonates deeply with followers.

We hypothesize that politically skilled leaders are also better equipped to articulate compelling visions. Even the most inspiring visions require followers' understanding and commitment. Politically skilled leaders are advantaged in this regard as their convincing, yet subtle, personal style and behavioral flexibility (Pfeffer, 1992) enables them to evoke desired responses from their followers. Additionally, politically skilled individuals present themselves in an apparently open, honest, and forthright manner; regardless of whether they are or not, politically skilled individuals are considered sincere, trustworthy, and of high integrity. Given that influence attempts are more successful in the (perceived) absence of ulterior motives (Jones, 1990), politically skilled leaders should be more effective at articulating their visions.

Finally, identifying and articulating a vision requires the strategic use of ambiguity to promote unified diversity, facilitate organizational change, amplify existing source attributions, and preserve privileged positions (Eisenberg, 1984). Vision identification and articulation, like other strategic management directives, is intentionally change-oriented; accordingly, visions are likely to be met with (at least some) opposition and/or conflict as they stand to threaten

individuals' existing personal interests and allegiances (Gunn & Chen, 2006). Nonetheless, given that leadership involves the creation and management of shared meaning (Smirchich & Morgan, 1982), politically skilled leaders may use fundamentally ambiguous language to allow followers to individually interpret and internalize the vision (Eisenberg, 1984).

In this manner, individual followers can attach themselves to those pieces of the vision that resonate directly with them, and leaders are not locked in to inflexible courses of action (Eisenberg, 1984). Leaders must gain the collective support and blessing of followers if followers are to assist with the implementation of such a vision; thus, "a balance between being understood, not offending others, and maintaining one's self-image" (Eisenberg, 1984, p. 228) must be achieved. Politically skilled leaders should be able to use their trustworthy and sincere persona, understanding of followers' motivations, behavioral flexibility, and sophisticated personal style to articulate visions that are simultaneously inspiring, energizing, unifying, and strategically vague. Taken together, we expect that politically skilled leaders will be perceived as identifying and articulating strong and inspiring visions.

Moreover, vision creation and articulation provides the foundation for the other effective (i.e., transformational) and necessary (i.e., transactional) leader behaviors (Bass, 1990; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Conger, 1991; Conger & Kanungo, 1987). In support, research has found visions to be positively related to the extent to which followers were inspired and intellectually stimulated by leaders (Kirkpatrick & Lowe, 1996). As such, we argue that political skill is associated with vision creation and articulation above and beyond the other transformational (i.e., providing an appropriate model, fostering acceptance of group goals, setting high performance expectations, individualized support, intellectual stimulation) and transactional (i.e., contingent reward) leader behaviors. Therefore we offer the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Political Skill will be positively related to the perceived transformational leader behavior identifying and articulating a vision.

The Mediating Effect of Vision Identification and Articulation

Primary and meta-analytic research has established the positive effects of both political skill (Munyon et al., 2015) and transformational leadership behaviors (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Wang, Oh, Courtright, & Colbert, 2011) on important leadership outcomes. Specifically, child welfare casework teams lead by politically skilled leaders had higher rates of permanency (i.e., team performance) after controlling for average workload, team empowerment, and leader and follower experience (Ahearn et al., 2004). Similarly, leader political skill was positively related to work unit performance beyond the effects of leader self-efficacy and self-monitoring (Douglas & Ammeter, 2004). Along these lines, research has provided consistent support for the incremental validity of political skill in predicting managerial effectiveness beyond other social (i.e., leader self-efficacy, self-monitoring, emotional intelligence; Semadar et al., 2006) and managerial skills (e.g., technical skills; Snell, Tonidandel, Braddy, & Fleenor, 2014). Beyond performance effects, Treadway and colleagues (2004) found a positive association between leader political skill and followers' job satisfaction as well as perceptions of organizational support and commitment.

With regard to transformational leadership, evidence suggests that followers who perceive their leaders to be transformational report higher levels of job and leader satisfaction (DeRue et al., 2011; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990) as well as organizational commitment (Avolio, Zhu, Koh, & Bhatia, 2004). In addition, transformational leadership behavior has been consistently linked to various types of task (Liao & Chuang, 2007; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Rich, 2001) and contextual performance (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006; Podsakoff, Mackenzie, & Bommer, 1996), team/organization performance (Keller, 2006; Jung, Wu, & Chow, 2008), leader performance (Podsakoff et al., 1990), and leader effectiveness (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Wang et al., 2011).

Recent integrations of trait and behavioral leadership paradigms have suggested that three sets of leader traits and characteristics, namely demographics, task competence (e.g., intelligence, self-efficacy), and interpersonal attributes (e.g., agreeableness, political skill) are related to various leader effectiveness outcomes through leader behaviors (e.g., transformational leadership behavior) (DeRue et al., 2011). In keeping with DeRue and colleagues' (2011) model and recent research linking political skill to leader effectiveness outcomes through leader behavior (Blickle et al., 2013; Ewen et al., 2013; Ewen et al., 2014), we hypothesize that leader political skill will be positively related to followers' perceptions of leader effectiveness through transformational and transactional leader behaviors.

In general, politically skilled leaders should be able to engage in situationally specific behavior, whether it be change and relationship-oriented (i.e., transformational) or maintenance-oriented (i.e., transactional) behavior, that is tailored to meet the needs of their specific followers. Followers who perceive their leaders to address their needs and elevate their esteem, confidence, and aid in goal accomplishment should perceive their leaders as more effective (Wang et al., 2005). However, since vision creation is considered the precursor to, or starting point of, transformational leadership (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Bass, 1990, Conger, 1991; Conger & Kanungo, 1987), we expect leaders' vision identification and articulation behaviors will mediate the positive relationship between leader political skill and leader' effectiveness (i.e., performance) over and above other transformational and transactional behaviors. Specifically, the vision identified and articulated by the leader sets the groundwork on which all other behaviors (e.g., soliciting acceptance of goals, setting performance expectations) are premised. Politically skilled leaders are able to identify, tailor, and articulate immensely inspirational and energizing visions for their followers; by crafting visions that appeal to their needs, desires, and personal/organizational objectives, followers should perceive politically skilled leaders as more inspiring, motivating, and instrumental to followers' goal pursuits (Vroom, 1964), or in short,

more effective. Taken together, politically skilled leaders should be perceived as more effective because they provide deeply inspirational visions that directly appeal to followers' need and objectives (Berson et al., 2001).

> *Hypothesis 2. Perceived transformational leader behavior identifying and articulating a vision will be positively related to enterprising performance over and above the remaining transformational leader behaviors.*

> *Hypothesis 3. Identifying and articulating a vision will mediate the relationship between political skill and enterprising performance over and above the remaining transformational leader behaviors.*

The Moderating Effect of Leader Position Power

Up until this point, we have argued that politically skilled individuals are effective not because of their hierarchical superiority, but because of the comprehensive set of social competencies they possess that allows them to carefully select and package situationally appropriate behaviors needed to influence, rather than coerce, their followers into purposeful, goal-directed action. Nonetheless, there is reason to consider both the interplay of leaders' political skill and positional power on followers' perceptions of leaders' behavior and effectiveness. Within traditionally structured organizations, leaders are in positions of hierarchical superiority over their followers. As a function of their formal hierarchical position, leaders are capable of controlling followers' organizational outcomes which positions followers as dependent on their leaders for the tangible (e.g., budgets) and intangible resources (e.g., support, encouragement; Farmer & Aguinis, 2005) needed to accomplish personal and organizational objectives.

Leaders who are regarded as powerful are not necessarily perceived by followers as effective, because the capacity to control followers' organizational outcomes does little to inform what or how leaders behave (Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008; Morgeson, Campion,

Dipboye, Hollenbeck, Murphy, & Schmitt, 2007). Research on positive politics has drawn the distinction between power used simply to maintain compliance and assert control and power used to champion ownership, responsibility and commitment to change (Kurchner-Hawkins & Miller, 2006). The latter use of power, power used for stewardship, is likely to require political skill as leaders must be socially astute enough to adopt such a mindset and make the conscious choice to work in partnership with their subordinates towards goal pursuits.

In support, research has found that leaders with substantial position power but low levels of political skill were perceived by followers as engaged in less consideration and structuring behaviors which ultimately negatively affected followers' satisfaction (Blickle et al., 2013). Additionally, grounded in research on symbolic power (Hardy, 1985; Pfeffer, 1981), qualitative political skill research found that the most successful (plant) managers employed a cogent leadership style consisting of both overt (e.g., position power) and unobtrusive power (i.e., political skill; Smith, Plowman, Duchon, & Quinn, 2009). Moreover, it has been noted that visions are not articulated in vacuums, but depend on factors such as the leader's style (e.g., political skill) and role characteristics (e.g., position power) (Berson et al., 2001).

Thus, it is important to consider the interplay of leader political skill and position power on followers' reactions to leader behaviors. For instance, politically skilled leaders without positional power may be less able to fulfil followers' dependencies, and therefore may be considered less effective. Alternatively, leaders in positions of power but lacking political skill may be able to fulfill followers' basic dependencies (e.g., in exchange for compliance), but may not be able to elicit heightened performance by appealing to followers' ideals and values. We argue that leader positional power will augment the effects of leader political skill on followers' perceptions of the extent to which leaders engage in identifying and articulating a vision, which in turn, should be related to heightened levels of perceived leader effectiveness. As we have argued previously, politically skilled leaders should be able to utilize their abilities to understand

and influence others so as to craft visions that deeply resonate with followers and articulate such visions in profoundly compelling ways. Politically skilled leaders who also have high levels of position power should be perceived as more legitimate and more capable of guiding followers successfully to goal accomplishment. More formally, we posit the following:

> *Hypothesis 4. Leader position power will augment the relationship between political skill and perceived transformational leader behavior identifying and articulating a vision. With high position power the effect of political skill on identifying and articulating a vision will be stronger, whereas there is no relationship between political skill and identifying and articulating a vision when the leader has low position power.*
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> *Hypothesis 5. There will be a moderated mediation relationship between political skill and enterprising performance. The effect will be mediated by perceived transformational leader behavior identifying and articulating a vision over and above the remaining transformational leader behaviors only when positional power is high. There will be no mediating effect when position power is low.*

Method

Participants and Procedure

We sampled leaders and their followers in a large industrial region in the western part of Germany[1]. We identified leaders (i.e. individuals with supervisory functions in organizations) through private referrals, personal contacts or societies for leadership who were currently in an active leadership position and had at least five followers directly reporting to them. Potential participants were sent an introductory email describing the study procedure and asking them to participate. Leaders who agreed to participate were sent a follow-up email containing the link to the online survey. After completion of the online survey, participants were given the opportunity to receive personalized feedback regarding their political skill.

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[1] The same data set has been analyzed in a previous paper (Blickle et al., 2013), however using different mediator and outcome variables.

We contacted 1320 leaders of which 499 agreed to participate in the study; those 499 individuals who agreed to participate received an invitation email containing a web link and anonymized code. Next, leaders invited at least three followers by email to join the study. Data from participating leaders was included in the analyses if at least one of their followers responded to the follower survey. In total, we received responses from 190 leaders with at least one response from a direct follower; of the 190 unique leaders represented, 22 were unique leader-follower dyads, 50 leaders received responses from two followers, and118 leaders received responses from three direct followers. This resulted in an overall response rate of 38% for leaders and 82% for followers.

Of the 190 leaders for which there was usable data (i.e., at least one follower response), 128 (67%) were males and 62 were females. On average, leaders were 46 years old and 66% had at least a masters-level degree. Leaders reported their average tenure in their current job was 8.6 years and indicated that 26 individuals reported directly to them on average.

Measures

Leader political skill. We used the German version (Blickle et al., 2008) of the Political Skill Inventory (PSI; Ferris et al., 2005) to measure leaders' self-reported political skill. The PSI consists of 18 items and uses a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). A sample item is "I always seem to instinctively know the right things to say and do to influence others." The reliability estimate for this measure was adequate (α = .91).

Leader position power. Leaders self-rated their position power using three items. "I control …for hiring new followers …for increase in pay of my followers, and …for promotions of my followers." (5 = complete control, 4 = main control, 3 = partial control, 2 = minor control, 1 = no control). These items build upon previous research on power in organizations (Podsakoff & Schriesheim, 1985; Raven, Schwarzwald, & Koslowsky, 1998). Because of Germany's "*work safety act*" (Stürk, 1998), measuring direct work assignments, schedules or other conditions

controlled by the leader would not have served to adequately differentiate the position power between leaders and were thus not included. Position power in Germany represents a formative composite construct (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Jarvis, 2005), and therefore, it is not appropriate to report internal consistency reliability estimates. Thus, the full meaning of the composite construct is derived from its facet measures, which are not assumed to be highly correlated.

Perceived transformational leader behavior facets. We used the German version (Heinitz & Rowold, 2007; Krüger, Rowold, Borgmann, Staufenbiel, & Heinitz, 2011) of the Transformational Leadership Inventory (TLI) by Podsakoff and colleagues (1990) to assess follower's perceived transformational leader behavior. The TLI consists of 26 items that capture six subfacets of the transformational leader behavior and contingent reward behavior. The TLI uses a five-point Likert-type scale (i.e., 1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, and 5 = always). Given that multiple followers rated leader behaviors, prior to aggregating the follower ratings, we computed the intraclass correlation ICC(1,1) and r_{WG} (James, Demaree, & Wolf, 1993) for each TLI facet. For the ICC(1,1) the common cut-off value is .10, where higher values provide heightened justification for the aggregation of data (James, 1982). Acceptable values for the r_{WG} are usually higher than .80 (LeBreton & Senter, 2008). The introduction for all items read: "The person that I am evaluating…"

Identifying and articulating a vision (IAV). This facet was measured by 5 items including "… paints an interesting picture of the future of our group" and "… is able to get others committed to his/her dreams." The ICC(1,1) was .37 and the r_{WG} equaled .82. The Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate of the aggregated measure was $\alpha = .89$.

Providing appropriate model (PAM). The TLI captured this facet with three items, namely "… leads by "doing," rather than simply by "telling", "… provides a good model for me to follow", and "… leads by example." The ICC(1,1) was .28 and the r_{WG} reached a value of .80. The Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate of the aggregated measure was $\alpha = .82$.

Fostering acceptance of group goals (FOS). Four items were used to capture this TLI facet. Sample items include "… fosters collaboration among work groups" and "… gets the group to work together for the same goal." The ICC(1,1) of this measure was .39 and the r_{WG} had a value of .80. The Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate of the aggregated measure was $\alpha = .89$.

High Performance expectations (HPE). This facet was captured by 3 items. Sample items are "… shows us that he/she expects a lot from us" and "… insists on only the best performance." The ICC(1,1) was .19 and the r_{WG} equaled .76. The Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate of the aggregated measure was $\alpha = .73$.

Individualized support (ISU). Individualized support was measured by four items, such as "… acts without considering my feelings" (reverse-coded) and "… shows respect for my personal feelings." The ICC(1,1) of this measure was .38 and the r_{WG} had a value of .80. The Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate of the aggregated measure was $\alpha = .90$.

Intellectual Stimulation (IST). The last TLI facet was measured with 3 items. Sample items read: "…has stimulated me to rethink the way I do things" and "…challenges me to think about old problems in new ways." The ICC(1,1) was .39 and the r_{WG} equaled .82. The Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate of the aggregated measure was $\alpha = .84$.

Contingent reward behavior (CR). Followers also assessed leaders' contingent reward behavior using four items. The items read: "The person that I am evaluating …always gives me positive feedback when I perform well", "…frequently does not acknowledge my good performance" (reverse coded), "…commends me when I do a better than average job" and "…. personally compliments me when I do outstanding work." The ICC(1,1) for this measure was .45 and the mean r_{WG} was .77. Cronbach's alpha (α) reliability estimate was $\alpha = .89$.

Enterprising Performance (EP). Followers assessed leaders' perceived effectiveness utilizing the 12-item enterprising performance measure developed and validated by Blickle and

colleagues (Blickle et al., 2012; Blickle, Meurs, Wihler, Ewen, Merkl, & Missfeld, 2015). The items read: How is this person in (1) leading a group at work, (2) leading a business, (3) leading discussions, (4) advertising, (5) organizing meetings, (6) supervising others, (7) selling, (8) persuading others, (9) monitoring compliance, (10) bargaining, (11) speaking on behalf of a group, and (12) motivating others? Followers provided ratings of enterprising performance using a 5-point Likert-type scale (i.e., 1 = much worse than other persons in a comparable position; 2= worse than other persons in a comparable position; 3 = as good as other persons in a comparable position; 4 = better than other persons in a comparable position; 5 = much better than other persons in a comparable position). Again, prior to aggregation we computed the $ICC(1,1)$ and the r_{WG} values in efforts to justify aggregating follower ratings; $ICC(1,1)$ and r_{WG} values were acceptable ($ICC(1,1)$ = .22 and r_{WG} = .81). The Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate of the aggregated measure was α = .91.

Control variables. Recent research has demonstrated the impact of leader gender (Taylor & Hood, 2011) and age (Zacher, Rosing, Henning, & Frese, 2011) on perceptions of leaders' social skill and success. Therefore, we controlled for both leaders' gender and age.

Data Analysis

Because the leaders were asked to provide the names of the followers who would assess them, there existed the possibility of a selection bias. We tested this possibility by examining the distribution of the variables prior to our analyses. We checked skewness and kurtosis in our mediators and criterion variables. Following Curran, West, and Finch (1996), skewness $> \pm 2$ and kurtosis $> \pm 7$ would indicate non-normal distributions. The results indicated that our measures were normally distributed: EP: skewness = -.373, kurtosis = .722; IAV: skewness = -.418, kurtosis = .346; PAM: skewness = -.828, kurtosis = .971; FOS: skewness = -.459, kurtosis = .382; HPE: skewness = -.874, kurtosis = 1.631; ISU = -.223, kurtosis = -.587; IST: skewness =

-.622, kurtosis = 1.369; CR: skewness = -.312, kurtosis = -.485. Overall, these results provide us with confidence that our data is not plagued by selection bias.

We used a combination of hierarchical moderated multiple regression analyses (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003) and PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) to test our hypotheses. For regression analyses, control variables (i.e., leader gender, age) were entered as controls followed by the focal predictors. Hypothesis 1 would be supported if political skill demonstrated a significant positive effect on the identifying and articulating a vision facet of transformational leadership behaviors. Hypothesis 2 would be supported if the TLI facet identifying and articulating a vision had a significant positive effect on enterprising performance. Hypothesis 3 would be supported if indirect effect of leader political skill on leader effectiveness through identifying and articulating a vision is significant (i.e., the $95\%\,CI$ does not include 0) and the other TLI facets do not mediate the relationship between political skill and leader effectiveness.

Hypothesis 4 would be supported if the political skill × position power interaction is positively and significantly related to identifying and articulating a vision. Finally, support for Hypothesis 5 would be found if the conditional indirect effect of the identifying and articulating a vision is significant at high, but not at low, levels of position power; additionally, there should be no other significant indirect effects of the other TLI facets depending on leader position power.

Results

Table 1 shows the bivariate correlations of study variables. Political skill was positively correlated with perceived identifying and articulating a vision ($r = .26$, $p < .01$), high performance expectations ($r = .30$, $p < .01$), and positional power ($r = .22$, $p < .01$). On the other hand, all TLI facets were positively related to enterprising performance ($.28 \le r \le .57$, $p < .01$).

*** Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here ***

The results of the regression analyses are shown in Table 2. As Model 1a shows, political skill was positively related to identifying and articulating a vision ($\beta = .26$, $p < .01$); thus, support was found for Hypothesis 1. Interestingly, political skill was also positively related to the high performance expectations facet of the TLI (Model 4a: $\beta = .30$, $p < .01$). However, as can be seen in Model 8, only identifying and articulating a vision had a significant effect on enterprising performance ($\beta = .41$, $p < .01$). Thus, results provided support for Hypothesis 2.

The indirect effects of the TLI facets are shown in Table 3. Again, only identifying and articulating a vision significantly mediated the relationship between political skill and leader effectiveness (estimate of indirect effect ($a \times b$) = .08, *boot S.E.* = .04, *95%CI*[.029; .194]). The remaining TLI facets did not produce a significant indirect effect. Taken together, these results provided support for Hypothesis 3.

*** Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here ***

Analyses also revealed that there was a significant positive interaction effect between leader political skill and position power ($\beta = .15$, $p < .05$). To evaluate the form of the interaction, we plotted the interaction and conducted simple slope tests according to the guidelines provided by Cohen and colleagues (2003). The interaction is shown in Figure 2. At high levels of position power, increases in political skill were associated with increases in identifying and articulating a vision ($b = .32$, p < .01). However, when position power was low, increases in political skill were not related to changes in identifying and articulating a vision ($b = .06$, *ns*.). Thus, these results provided support for Hypothesis 4, which argued that high position power would strengthen the positive effects of political skill on identifying and articulating a vision. Interestingly, there was also a significant interaction effect of political skill and position power on high performance expectations (Model 4b: $\beta = .18$, $p < .05$), but since high performance expectations were not significantly related to enterprising performance (Table 2, Model 8), we did not further evaluate this effect.

*** Insert Figure 2 about here ***

Finally, Table 4 reports the conditional indirect effects of the TLI facets at low and high levels of position power. Hypothesis 5 stated that only identifying and articulating a vision would mediate the effect between political skill and enterprising performance *if* leader position power was high. The results of our moderated mediation analyses provided support for this hypothesis. Specifically, the indirect effect of leader political skill on leader effectiveness via identifying and articulating a vision was significant when position power was high (*estimate* of indirect effect $(a \times b)$ = .12, *boot S.E.* = .06, *95%CI*[.027; .269]), but not when position power was low (*estimate* of indirect effect $(a \times b)$ = .02, *boot S.E.* = .04, *95%CI*[-.052; .104]). Compared to the indirect effect without considering position power, it is interesting to note, that high position power again amplified the positive effects of political skill on leader effectiveness via identifying and articulating a vision. The conditional indirect effects of leader political skill and position power on leader effectiveness through the remaining TLI facets were not significant. Consequently, Hypothesis 5 was supported.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the mechanisms through which leader political skill influences followers' perceptions of leader effectiveness. Unlike previous studies that have examined aggregate transformational and transactional leader behaviors as mediators of the leader political skill – leader effectiveness relationship, we sought to decouple leadership behaviors in order to glean a more nuanced understanding of how politically skilled leaders transmit their influence. We argued that politically skilled leaders would be better able to both identify visions that resonate with their followers and articulate such visions convincingly such that followers are inspired and mobilized into purposeful, goal-directed action; in turn, leaders who are able to tailor visions to the needs and motivations of followers were hypothesized to be more effective (as perceived by followers). Additionally, we argued that politically skilled

leaders who were in positions of hierarchical superiority would have heightened awareness of the organization's strategic initiatives, allowing them to more fully identify and articulate visions that align with such initiatives, and be perceived as more legitimate and more capable of guiding followers successfully to goal accomplishment.

In short, results provided support for our study hypotheses. Specifically, politically skilled leaders were more likely to be perceived by followers' to engage in identifying and articulating vision behaviors (H1). Followers' perceptions of leaders' identifying and articulating vision behaviors were positively associated with leader effectiveness, and this effect was significant above and beyond the effects of all of the other transformational leadership and contingent reward behavior facets (H2). Additionally, followers' perceptions of identifying and articulating vision behaviors significantly mediated the leader political skill – leader effectiveness relationship (H3). Finally, leader political skill and positon power interacted to significantly predict followers' perceptions of identifying and articulating vision behaviors (H4) and this interactive effect significantly predicted leader effectiveness through followers' perceptions of identifying and articulating vision behaviors (H5).

Taken together, this chapter contributes to the political skill and leadership literatures in several ways. Political skill has been consistently linked to leader effectiveness outcomes (e.g., team performance, follower satisfaction, leader effectiveness; Douglas & Ammeter, 2004; Semadar et al., 2006). Only recently has research begun to examine the mediating mechanisms that might transmit the positive effects of political skill. While research has examined effective leader behaviors in the aggregate (e.g., transformational leadership, consideration and structure; Ewen et al., 2013, 2014), we employed a more nuanced approach. Specifically, we unpackaged the facets of transformational and transactional leadership behaviors in efforts to better understand *how* and *why* politically skilled leaders may be rated as more effective by their followers. We hypothesized that followers would be more likely to perceive politically skilled

leaders to engage in identifying and articulating vision behaviors, because they are able to understand the needs and desires of their followers and tailor visions so as to mobilize and inspire followers to pursue such visions.

While the association between leader political skill and vision identification and articulation has been articulated conceptually (e.g., Ferris et al., 2007), no research to our knowledge has explicitly tested this theoretical association. Thus, this manuscript contributes to social/political influence theory and political skill literatures by explicitly examining the link between leader political skill and vision identification and articulation. Additionally, consistent with the theoretical framework advanced by Vigoda-Gadot and Dryzin-Amit (2006) in the original *Handbook of Organizational Politics*, this study contributes to research undertaken to understand the complex relationships between organizational politics, leadership, and leader effectiveness. Moreover, results provided empirical support for the notion that leader political skill can be influential in building and communicating positive political strategies (Kurchner-Hawkins & Miller, 2006) and that politics are necessary in transmitting micro-level strategic management directives (Gunn & Chen, 2006).

Moreover, vision identification and articulation behaviors were hypothesized to transmit the effects of leader political skill above and beyond the other transformational and transactional leader behavior facets, because vision identification and articulation provides the foundation on which leaders are able to be perceived as transformational. Thus, findings contribute to the transformational leadership literature in that we explicitly test whether the effects of vision identification and articulation are predictive of leader effectiveness outcomes beyond the other transformational leadership dimensions; doing so establishes the importance of this particular set of leader behaviors above and beyond the other transformational leader behaviors.

Finally, this chapter contributes to the limited body of research that examines the interactive effects of both hard and soft sources of leader power on leader effectiveness. Position

power was argued to enhance the extent to which politically skilled leaders were perceived as identifying and articulating visions for their followers. Not surprisingly, results indicated that position power alone did not predict any of the transformational or transactional leadership behavior facets; this reinforces the notion that power, especially hierarchically-derived power, is a latent capacity (French & Raven, 1959). Consistent with qualitative research on political skill (Smith et al., 2009), the combination of more subtle, unobtrusive sources of power (i.e., political skill) and more overt sources of power (i.e., position power) was associated with maximal perceived leader effectiveness.

Strengths and Limitations

The results of this study should be interpreted in light of a number of noteworthy strengths and limitations. In terms of strengths, data were collected utilizing a multi-source design that guaranteed both leaders and followers anonymity. As a result of these procedural remedies, the likelihood of common method variance was substantially reduced (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). Additionally, constructs were operationalized with previously validated scales that have undergone rigorous empirical validation; moreover, all of the scales behaved consistently with prior research and demonstrated adequate psychometric properties. In terms of limitations, the most notable shortcoming of this research is the cross-sectional nature of our data; as a result, we were unable to draw causal conclusions from the data regarding the associations between leader political skill, perceived vision identification and articulation, and leader effectiveness.

Additionally, the data were collected from leaders and followers employed in Germany, which could reduce the generalizability of our study findings. Nonetheless, previous research has indicated that the cultural differences between the United States and Germany are not pronounced (see Erez, 2011 for a review). For instance, Germany and the United States are both characterized by low power distance and high masculinity, two factors that seem especially

important in the context of this study examining power and leadership. Finally, it is worth noting that because leaders were asked to identify at least three of their followers, there exists the possibility of a selection bias. If leaders only nominated followers with whom they had an effective working relationship, we would expect to see much higher (negatively skewed) leader effectiveness ratings; nonetheless, the descriptive statistics did not indicate any such pattern. Therefore, we feel confident that we can rule out the possibility that our results were adversely affected by a selection bias.

Politics and Leadership Moving Forward

While research has advanced substantially since the publication of the original *Handbook of Organizational Politics* (Vigoda-Gadot & Drory, 2006), research has only begun to scratch the surface of politics and leadership research. As we look to the future, we foresee numerous opportunities for additional research. We outline these opportunities both with respect to this study in particular and with respect to politics and leadership research in general. First, while this manuscript is the first to our knowledge to examine the mediating role of the *facets* of transformational leadership behaviors, little research has examined the predictive power of the individual dimensions of political skill. Nonetheless, our argumentation for the hypothesized relationship between political skill and vision identification and articulation is implicitly rooted in the dimensional conceptualization of political skill. Specifically, we argued that politically skilled leaders would be better able to identify visions that resonate with their followers as a function of their social astuteness and networking abilities; additionally, we argued that politically skilled leaders would be better able to articulate their visions as a function of their interpersonal influence and apparent sincerity. While this was not the focus of the current research, future research should examine whether individual dimensions of political skill more strongly predict followers' perceptions of leaders' behaviors and effectiveness.

In doing so, we may begin to more fully understand *how* politically skilled individuals are able to garner positive outcomes for themselves and others. While researchers have made great strides over the last decade to establish political skill as a uniquely predictive (Semadar et al., 2006) and critical workplace competency (Ferris et al., 2007, 2012), as we look to the future, researchers must begin to decouple the dimensions of the construct in order to more fully understand its origins and its operation. Thus, in our opinion, one of the most promising ways to move research on politics and leadership forward is to develop and test theory regarding how the dimensions of political skill operate, whether the dimensions are additively or multiplicatively related, and which dimensions are most beneficial in various workplace scenarios.

Additionally, consistent with other studies examining transformational and contingent leadership behaviors as the mediating mechanisms through which leader political skill influences followers' perceptions of leader effectiveness, we examined the mediating effect of followers' *perceptions* of leader behaviors as opposed to actual leader behaviors. It would be especially interesting to examine what specific behaviors leaders engage in to be considered transformational, in general, or to identify and articulate a vision, in particular. Moreover, given that politically skilled individuals are very adept at influencing others, it would be interesting to examine whether leaders' accounts of the extent to which they engage in vision identification and articulation behaviors are consistent with followers' perceptions. Ultimately, individuals' perceptions shape their concomitant realities (Gandz & Murray, 1980; Lewin, Lippit, & White, 1939); however, it would provide greater insight into the political skill construct if researchers could determine if politically skilled leaders actually know what leadership behaviors are most effective and therefore engage in them, or if they are simply masterfully able to craft the world they want their followers to see. This is an important distinction that has yet to be explored, and would provide immense insight into politics and leadership research going forward.

Similarly, for the purposes of this study, leaders were asked to self-report their own political skill. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to examine whether leaders' self-rated political skill is consistent with followers' perceptions. Ostensibly, truly politically skilled leaders should not be able to be "found out" by their followers. For instance, by all accounts, followers should believe their leaders to be truly, not apparently, sincere. Thus, additional insight into the political skill construct may be gained by examining the outward manifestations of political skill from the perspective of followers and peripheral others; case studies, observational studies, or phenomenological investigations of politically skilled leaders may be influential in this regard.

Additionally, future research should continue to examine the mechanisms through which leader political skill operates to affect leader effectiveness. Treadway and colleagues (2004) found that politically skilled leaders evoked heightened commitment from their followers through followers' perceptions of organizational support and job satisfaction. Nonetheless, the role of relational judgments (e.g., trust, liking, perceived support), subordinates' attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction, commitment), and climate perceptions (e.g., justice, psychological safety) are noticeably absent in this model. Needless to say, examining followers' perceptions of leaders' behavior and their concomitant attitudes is likely to provide a more complete picture of how leader political skill relates to leader effectiveness. In other words, leader behaviors are likely to positively influence followers' relational judgments and concomitant work attitudes; over time, these positive relational judgments and work attitudes should influence the formation of positive group-level climate outcomes. With regard to the latter, recent reviews of the literature pointed out that political skill remains largely unexamined in the context of groups and teams (Munyon et al., 2015). Future research should examine this expanded multi-level, multi-mediational model.

Finally, future research should continue to examine the interactive effects of hard (e.g., position) and soft (e.g., political skill) sources of power. Hierarchical power is often considered a necessary component of effective leadership as having organizationally-sanctioned control over resources enables leaders to adequately address followers' dependencies. Nonetheless, as organizational structures continue to flatten, individuals who find themselves in leadership positions may not have as much hierarchically-driven power as they once had. Thus, leaders will have to draw on other sources of power to induce followers' participation; political skill seems especially influential in this regard.

Conclusion

Leadership is inherently a social influence process that requires leaders utilize effective leader behaviors to transmit their traits/characteristics into effectiveness outcomes (DeRue et al., 2011). This study demonstrated that leaders' possession of both political skill (unobtrusive) and position (overt) power was positively associated with followers' perceptions of leaders' use of vision identification and articulation behaviors, which were in turn associated with perceived leader effectiveness. In examining the interactive effects of hard and soft sources of power on perceived leader effectiveness and the mediating effects of the specific transformational leadership behavior facets, we contribute to theory and research on political skill, power and influence, and transformational leadership behaviors. We hope that research continues to examine how politically skilled leaders achieve effectiveness outcomes for themselves and their followers, what politically skilled leaders do that sets them apart from their non-politically skilled peers, and the impact of multiple sources of power on leadership processes and followers' perceptions of their leaders.

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Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables

		M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Age	46.28	9.55												
2	Gender	1.33	.47	-.09											
3	Leader Political Skill	5.52	.72	.17*	.05	(.91)									
4	Leader Positional Power	3.67	.65	.14	.07	.22**									
5	p. TL Identifying & Articulating a Vision	3.45	.63	.09	-.08	.26**	.12	(.89)							
6	p. TL Providing Appropriate Model	3.49	.60	.04	-.11	.11	-.01	.63**	(.82)						
7	p. TL Fostering Acceptance of Group Goals	3.66	.66	-.10	-.03	.09	-.02	.72**	.72**	(.89)					
8	p. TL High Performance Expectations	3.63	.62	.14	-.07	.30**	.09	.50**	.26**	.22**	(.73)				
9	p. TL Individualized Support	3.93	.60	-.11	.13	-.06	-.05	.45**	.60**	.65**	-.03	(.90)			
10	p. TL Intellectual Stimulation	3.12	.62	.03	-.03	.07	.09	.66**	.60**	.58**	.42**	.32**	(.84)		
11	p. Contingent Reward	3.60	.71	-.10	.09	.04	.04	.55**	.50**	.59**	.24**	.68**	.41**	(.89)	
12	Enterprising Performance (subordinate-rated)	3.52	.55	.01	.02	.09	.08	.57**	.47**	.46**	.28**	.34**	.49**	.43**	(.91)

Note. $N = 190$ leaders with 476 followers; Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female; p. = perceived by followers; Cronbach's alpha reliabilities are in the diagonal; Interrater-Agreement: Identifying & Articulating a Vision: ICC (1,1) = .37, r_{WG} = .82; Providing Appropriate Model: ICC (1,1) = .28, r_{WG} = .80; Fostering Acceptance of Group Goals: ICC (1,1) = .39, r_{WG} = .80; High Performance Expectations: ICC (1,1) = .19, r_{WG} = .76; Individualized Support: ICC (1,1) = .38, r_{WG} = .80; Intellectual Stimulation: ICC (1,1) = .39, r_{WG} = .82; Contingent Reward: ICC (1,1) = .45, r_{WG} = .77; Enterprising Performance: ICC (1,1) = .22, r_{WG} = .81; *p < .05, **p < .01.

Table 2

Regression Analyses of perceives transformational leadership facets and enterprising performance

	IAV		PAM		FOS		HPE		ISU		IST		CR		EP
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 3a	Model 3b	Model 4a	Model 4b	Model 5a	Model 5b	Model 6a	Model 6b	Model 7a	Model 7b	Model 8
Leader Age	.03	.02	.01	.01	-.13	-.13	.08	.07	-.09	-.09	.02	.01	-.11	-.11	-.02
Leader Gender	-.09	-.09	-.11	-.11	-.05	-.04	-.08	-.07	.12	.13	-.03	-.03	.08	.08	.06
Leader Political Skill (PSI)	.26**	.22**	.11	.11	.12	.10	.29**	.26**	-.05	-.05	.07	.04	.05	.03	-.04
Leader Positional Power		.09		-.02		.00		.05		-.02		.09		.06	
PSI x Positional Power		.15*		.10		.14		.18*		.09		.12		.09	
p. Identifying & Articulating a Vision (IAV)															.41**
p. Providing Appropriate Model (PAM)															.16
p. Fostering Acceptance of Group Goals (FAG)															-.08
p. High Performance Expectations (HPE)															-.03
p. Individualized Support (ISU)															-.04
p. Intellectual Stimulation (IST)															.14
p. Contingent Reward (CR)															.14
R^2	.08**	.10**	.03	.04	.03	.04	.11**	.14**	.03	.04	.01	.03	.02	.03	.38**
ΔR^2		.02*		.01		.02		.03*		.01		.01		.01	

Note. $N = 190$ leaders and 476 followers; standardized regression-coefficients are reported; political skill and positional power were centered; p. = perceived by followers; IAV = Identifying and articulating a vision; PAM = Providing appropriate model; FOS = Fostering acceptance of group goals; HPE = High performance expectations; ISU = Individualized support; IST = Individualized stimulation; CR = Contingent reward; EP = Enterprising performance; ΔR^2 = explained variance by interaction term; *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Table 3

Indirect effects of leader political skill on enterprising performance

Mediator	Estimate	Boot s.e.	95% confidence interval
Path of Leader Political Skill → Mediator → Enterprising Performance			
p. Identifying & Articulating a Vision	.08*	.04	(.029, .194)
p. Providing Appropriate Model	.01	.01	(-.005; .058)
p. Fostering Acceptance of Group Goals	-.01	.02	(-.084;.007)
p. High Performance Expectations	-.01	.02	(-.078; .026)
p. Individualized Support	.00	.01	(-.010; .029)
p. Intellectual Stimulation	.01	.01	(-.007; .050)
p. Contingent Reward	.01	.01	(-.006; .051)

Note. N = 190 leaders and 476 followers; Confidence intervals based on 10000 bootstrapping

samples; p. = perceived by followers. *p < .05.

Table 4

Indirect effects of leader political skill on enterprising performance at conditional values of
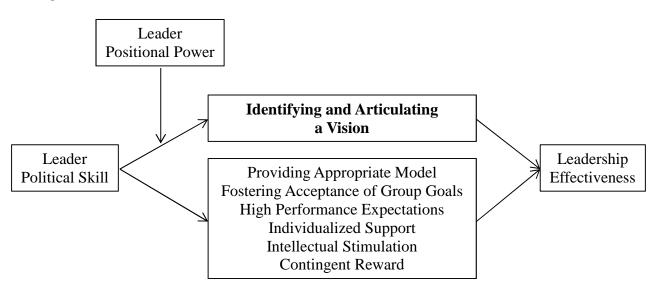
leader positional power

Path of Leader Political Skill moderated by Leader Positional Power → Mediator → Enterprising Performance

Mediator	Positional Power	Estimate	Boot s.e.	95% confidence interval
p. Identifying & Articulating a Vision	low	.02	.04	(-.052; .104)
p. Identifying & Articulating a Vision	**high**	**.12***	**.06**	**(.027; .269)**
p. Providing Appropriate Model	low	.00	.02	(-.029; .040)
p. Providing Appropriate Model	high	.02	.02	(-.006; .096)
p. Fostering Acceptance of Group Goals	low	.00	.02	(-.015; .053)
p. Fostering Acceptance of Group Goals	high	-.01	.03	(-.128; .013)
p. High Performance Expectations	low	.00	.01	(-.045; .011)
p. High Performance Expectations	high	-.01	.04	(-.111; .036)
p. Individualized Support	low	.00	.02	(-.017; .060)
p. Individualized Support	high	.00	.01	(-.036; .013)
p. Intellectual Stimulation	low	-.01	.02	(-.060; .015)
p. Intellectual Stimulation	high	.02	.02	(-.008; .079)
p. Contingent Reward	low	-.01	.02	(-.057; .015)
p. Contingent Reward	high	.01	.02	(-.007: .086)

Note. $N = 190$ leaders and 476 followers; Confidence intervals based on 10,000 bootstrapping samples; p. =

perceived by followers; boldface indicates significant effect. $*p < .05$.
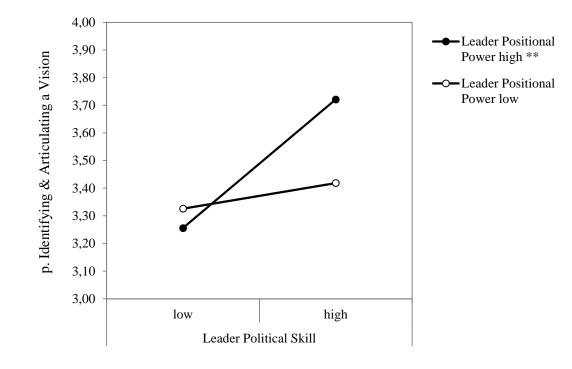
Figure 1

Conceptual Model

Note. Boldface typing indicates that this Transformational leader behavior (TLI) facet should have an effect on leadership effectiveness over and above the other TLI facets.

Figure 2

Interaction of Leader Political Skill x Positional Power on perceived Identifying &

Articulating a Vision

Note. N = 190 leaders and 476 followers; p. = perceived by followers; **p < .01.