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# Effect of Political Skill on Perception of Organizational Politics and Work Withdrawal among Community College Employees

David John Ross  
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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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David John Ross

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2014

Abstract

Effect of Political Skill on Perception of Organizational Politics  
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by

David John Ross

MA, Montclair State University, 1998

BA, Montclair State University, 1996

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Psychology

Walden University

September 2014

## Abstract

Community college student support services are an important aspect of success among community college students. Theoretical and empirical models of organizational politics and withdrawal guided the expectation that community college employees who perceive their organizations as political may withdraw from their organization, diminishing the services delivered to students at the institution. A multisite cross-sectional survey design was utilized to gather quantitative data via Survey Monkey from national professional organizations. Two-hundred seventeen usable surveys from community college administrators (executive, mid-level managers, and administrators) were gathered. Data were analyzed via correlation and regression models to examine if political skill reduced or moderated the relationship between perception of organizational politics and work withdrawal behaviors. Employee political skill was a partial antidote, reducing the effect of organizational politics on withdrawal behaviors, but there was not a significant interaction moderating effect. Recommendations include political skill training for community college administrators as part of their professional development program, as well as including graduate education components and new employee orientation programs. Such training could lead to positive social change in community college settings by increasing levels of service and job satisfaction and reducing attrition among community college administrators, leading to higher levels of community college student satisfaction and graduation rates.



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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate my dissertation to my family including my parents who encouraged me to pursue a college degree and has ultimately culminated in this research study. This dissertation is also dedicated to my family for their never ending support, especially my wife Agnes and my children Veronica, Angelica, Olivia, and Benjamin.

I would also like to dedicate this research to all of the community college administrators who work tirelessly to support student access to higher education and success in the American higher education system. I hope that this research provides those who read it with insight into how they can become better professionals and continue to contribute to the success of the millions of students in the American community college system.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Background**

The future of the U.S. economy depends upon higher numbers of college graduates and increased training for careers that are in demand. Community colleges enroll over 40% of all students in undergraduate education in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2010). To continue to improve student success and retention in 2-year public institutions, recruiting and retaining talented employees in community colleges is a top priority. The retention of community college employees and the quality of services they provide are important because the impact of college services is often measured through student success and retention from semester to semester, year to year, and ultimately graduation from their degree program. Ensuring that community college employees provide high levels of service to students with diverse needs relates directly to the national agenda to improve college completion, and more importantly, increasing college graduation rates contributes to positive social change in the United States and the world (Hom, 2002; Rutschow et al., 2011).

Individual community college functions, departments and employees, and the services they provide, are often evaluated through measures of student satisfaction. Student measures of satisfaction are assessed through several national instruments (e.g., Community College Survey of Student Engagement and Noel-Levitz National Student Satisfaction and Priorities Report). Students may consider a community college's environment as inviting and supportive due to the students' perceptions of support by their community college manifested through services offered (McClenney & Marti,

2006). Students' perceptions of the college's environment as well as the students' engagement early in their college careers are measures that are collected through the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) as well as the Survey of Entering Student Engagement (SENSE). While these measures were not the central focus of this study, community colleges typically use these measures as part of their assessment process and subsequently may look for ways to improve measures from year to year. Examples of such measures from the SENSE include "The very first time I came to this college I felt welcome" and "At least one college staff member (other than an instructor) learned my name" (SENSE, 2009, p. 3). Similar measures from the CCSSE include student assessments of satisfaction with campus services such as academic advising, financial aid, and tutoring (CCSSE, 2012). The findings of both SENSE and CCSSE are that students who have higher ratings about their experiences and engagement have higher self-reported grade point averages and higher aspirations for achieving high marks.

The level of customer service offered to students can be affected by employee actions and employee reactions to their perceptions of their work environment (Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings, 2011). In addition, the level of service that students receive from the institution assumes a minimal level of organizational dysfunction. In other words, the organizational culture of a community college affects the success and retention of students at the institution (Rasmussen, 2004). As relates to the current study, community colleges that have a highly political organizational culture may also be indirectly causing employees to withdraw from their work due to the perceptions

of the organizational politics within the organization. Subsequently, employees who withdraw from work may be providing lower levels of service to their constituencies (Rasmussen, 2004).

Employee reactions to the dynamics within an organization can be both positive and negative resulting in reduced productivity, job satisfaction, and ultimately the employee's departure from the organization. Mintzberg (1985) specified that organizations are political arenas and politics in organizations are related to influence and competing ideologies. This is especially important in the context of the current study since an employee's ability to navigate the organization's political environment can be partially based on the employee's understanding of the competing ideologies within the organization. Gandz and Murray (1980) tested whether politics within organizations were viewed as focused on individual goals versus focused on the organization. The results suggested that employees who perceive their organization as political may experience lower job satisfaction than employees who do not perceive their organization as political. Perceptions of organizational politics within an organization are dependent upon several types of antecedents (Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989). Negative employee reactions can negatively affect employee tenure or employee length of service at an institution and, ultimately, the levels of service provided to students. Lorden (1998) reported an attrition rate of 61% among higher education employees, student affairs professionals specifically. Similarly, Boehman (2007) reported that perceptions of organizational politics among student affairs professionals are negatively related to employees' commitment to the

organization. Employees who perceive their environment as more supportive had a higher level of affective attachment to the organization (Boehman, 2007).

### **Political Climate**

An organization's political climate is significantly related to employee attitudes (Drory, 1993). Employees who perceive the organization's environment as political have increased levels of negative job attitudes when compared to other employees, and this relationship is moderated by the employee's supervisory position in the organization (Drory, 1993). Drory (1993) reported a stronger relationship between employee perceptions of organizational politics and negative job attitudes from those employees with lower status within the organization than from those with higher status in the organization. Employees who perceive their organizations to be inherently political also may be more likely to perceive their organization as less supportive and subsequently engage in organizational withdrawal behaviors, such as absenteeism or engaging in nonwork-related activities (Eder & Eisenberger, 2008). Frost (1997) stated that employees who want to leave their organization, but may not be able to leave, might manifest their disgruntlement through organizational withdrawal behaviors. Hanisch and Hulin (1991) subdivided organizational withdrawal behaviors into two separate categories: those behaviors that are focused on avoiding job-specific duties (job withdrawal) and behaviors where employees withdraw from other aspects of the organization beyond their specific job duties (work withdrawal behaviors). The latter category of behaviors was the focus of this study.

Researchers who have focused on the perception of organizational politics and the employee's hierarchical level within the organizational hierarchy have reported mixed results (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Parker, Dipboye, & Jackson, 1995). For example, several researchers have reported that an employee's position within the hierarchy is related to perceptions of organizational politics (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Parker et al., 1995). Parker et al. (1995) reported that employees at higher levels within the organizations studied, specifically those employees with project management or supervisory experience, perceived less politics within the organization. Ferris and Kacmar (1992) reported that employees in nonsupervisory roles perceived higher levels of organizational politics than employees in supervisory positions. Ferris et al. (1989) indicated that increased levels of ambiguity and conflict are related to an increased perception of organizational politics by employees at higher levels within the organization's hierarchy and the potential for struggle among employees. Fleming and Spicer (2008) questioned if struggle within an organization is the combination of power and resistance, or if each—power and resistance—individually influences organizational politics. Organizations perceived as highly political also have increased incidents of resistance, and the level of struggle among employees at different levels within the hierarchy may be related to the decision to engage in organizational withdrawal behaviors (Liu, Liu, & Woo, 2010). In some cases, this is related to frustration with career growth potential. Liu et al. (2010) reported that individuals with greater career growth are more skilled at navigating the political environment and this is related to their subsequent career growth within the organization. Conversely, individuals who are less skilled in navigating the political

environment or who perceive their career growth halted may engage in nonterminal work withdrawal behaviors (Liu et al., 2010). Supervisor ratings of career growth potential were higher for individuals with higher levels of political skill and subsequent increases in political behavior (Liu et al., 2010). Fritsch (2010) reported that employees who can navigate the political environment can identify how the forces within the organization operate and integrate, including the key players within the organization that impact the employee's role and function.

In higher education, employee perceptions of organizational politics and subsequent work withdrawal behaviors may be moderated by the employee's political skill. However, research on employee perceptions of organizational politics in higher education, and particularly community colleges, is limited. More often, researchers have studied organizational politics and its impacts in the business sector and other types of public organizations, such as government and health administration (Thau, Crossley, Bennett, & Sczesny, 2007). With the exception of faculty member experiences (Gibson, 2006), few scholars have examined the role of organizational politics in colleges and universities among nonteaching staff, and limited research on the role of employee political skill exists in the literature of higher education in particular. Employee reactions to the political climate can be positive and negative, depending upon their status in the organization and how they react to the presence of organizational politics (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). Negative reactions to the political climate and subsequent withdrawal behaviors by community college employees may result in reduced services to students

that can contribute to their success and completion (Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings, 2011).

### **Problem Statement**

Community colleges provide access to higher education for students who may not otherwise have access to or the desire to pursue higher education. Community college employees must provide high-quality assistance to a student body with a wide range of needs, skills, and abilities. However, employees who perceive high levels of organizational politics and, subsequently, engage in high levels of work withdrawal behaviors may jeopardize the level of service to community college students. Negatively perceived organizational politics are viewed as a source of stress and conflict in the work environment and have the potential to result in dysfunctional outcomes for both the individual and organizational (Gilmore, Ferris, Dulebohn, & Harrell-Cook, 1996). Students who expect good service from community college employees may find that the quality of service they experience is negatively impacted by the employees' involvement or reaction to the college's organizational politics. Researchers who have used the conceptual models proposed by Ferris et al. (1989) as well as Hanisch and Hulin (1990) have not addressed whether employee political skill is inversely related to work withdrawal behaviors or whether employee political skill provides a negating effect on perception of organizational politics and subsequent employee engagement in work withdrawal behaviors. Additionally, while scholars have shown that hierarchical level and tenure within the organization reduce work withdrawal behaviors, it is not known whether hierarchical level and tenure are surrogates of political skill.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine if perceptions of organizational politics among nonteaching employees in community colleges predicted nonterminal work withdrawal behaviors, including absenteeism, lateness, negative job attitudes, and engagement in nonrelated work activities during the work day and whether such reactions to work withdrawal behaviors was moderated by an employee's level of political skill or their ability to navigate the political environment. A specific focus of this study was whether political skill moderated the effects of perceptions of organizational politics on work withdrawal behaviors and whether employee political skill also served as an antidote to the effects of the perception of organizational politics on work withdrawal behaviors. Additionally, I tested whether employee political skill accounted for the relationship between length of service in the organization (employee tenure) and whether the employee reported engaging in work withdrawal behaviors.

### **Nature of the Study**

This research was quantitative in nature, with participants responding to a survey that was delivered via electronic format. The selected methodology included obtaining a sample of community college employees who responded to the electronic survey. The participants were selected from membership directories in multiple professional organizations including the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, the National Association of Academic Advisors, the National Association of Orientation Directors, and the American Association of Community Colleges.

While survey research can have some limitations, I used a combination of established surveys that have been used in previous research. The key study variables included employee political skill, perception of organizational politics, and their interaction (independent variables) and employee work withdrawal behaviors (dependent variable). The covariate effects of level and tenure were also examined after controlling for the independent variables. Employee political skill was measured using the political skill inventory (PSI; Ferris Treadway, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, Douglas, & Frink, 2005). Perception of organizational politics was measured using the perceptions of organizational politics scale (POPS; Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). Employee work withdrawal behaviors (WWB) were measured using organizational withdrawal items from Hanisch and Hulin (1990, 1991). Each of the measures is described in Chapter 3.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The following research questions and associate hypotheses guided this study:

1. Does the positive relationship between perception of organizational politics and work withdrawal behaviors found in other settings extend to a sample of community college employees?

$H_{01}$ . There will not be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between POPS and WWB scores.

$H_{11}$ . There will be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between POPS and WWB scores.

2. Is political skill inversely related to work withdrawal behaviors?

$H_{01}$ . There will not be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between PSI and WWB scores.

$H_{12}$ . There will be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between PSI and WWB scores.

3. Will political skill be an antidote diminishing the effect of perception of politics on work withdrawal behaviors?

$H_{03}$ : In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS and PSI, the PSI coefficient will not be statistically different from zero or will be positive and statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , one-tailed.

$H_{13}$ : In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS and PSI, the PSI coefficient will be negative and statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , one-tailed.

4. Is the effect of perception of politics on work withdrawal behaviors moderated by political skill?

$H_{04}$ : In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, the interaction coefficient will not be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

$H_{14}$ : In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, the interaction coefficient will be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

5. Does political skill account for the relationship between level and tenure with work withdrawal behaviors?

*H<sub>05</sub>*. In a sequential multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, then simultaneously on level and tenure, the Block effect of level and tenure will not be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

*H<sub>15</sub>*: In a sequential multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, then simultaneously on level and tenure, the Block effect of level and tenure will be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

### **Theoretical Base**

Employees who are able to navigate the environment (i.e., high in political skill) have different experiences and reactions to the environment than those who have difficulty navigating the environment (i.e., low in political skill). The conceptual frameworks used in this study were the Ferris Russ, and Fandt (1989) model of organizational politics and the characteristic voluntary organizational withdrawal behaviors model identified by Hanisch and Hulin (1990). Employees within an organization are more likely to display structured patterns of behaviors, and such patterns are reflective of the employees' attitudes. While other scholars (Buch, 1992; Hanisch & Hulin, 1990) have tended to focus on voluntary, terminal work withdrawal behaviors such as retirement, termination, or resignation, in this study, I focused on nonterminal, voluntary work withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism, lateness, engagement in nonrelated work activities while working and participation in potentially harmful

behaviors to the organization. Previous research on organizational politics, work withdrawal behaviors, and political skill are explored in more detail in Chapter 2.

### **Organizational Politics**

The impact of organizational politics, including dysfunctional outcomes, is best measured through the perceptions of employees because most organizations deny the formal existence of politics (Gilmore et al., 1996). The conceptual model of organizational politics selected for this study included both antecedents and outcomes at both the organizational and individual level that impact the perception of organizational politics by the employee (Ferris et al., 1996). The dysfunctional organizational level outcomes include a set of behaviors that can be categorized as work withdrawal behaviors.

### **Work Withdrawal Behaviors**

Work withdrawal behaviors not only result in reduced productivity and service but can also spread to other employees within the organization. Hanisch and Hulin (1990) defined work withdrawal behaviors as a set of behaviors that individuals engage in to avoid their job duties or the organization as a whole due to dissatisfaction with their work environment. Employees who observe other employees displaying work withdrawal behaviors may also be more likely to display similar types of behaviors to conform to the group's norms (Eder & Eisenberger, 2008). In terms of community college employees, managers as well as supervisees, may perceive displayed work withdrawal behavior as the norm for the group and emulate the behaviors of other employees. For the purposes of

this study, organizational withdrawal behaviors and work withdrawal behaviors were considered the same construct.

### **Political Skill**

Political skill is an employee's ability to understand how to work with and influence others in order to advance individual or organizational objectives. (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas, & Ammeter, 2004). Employees who are high in political skill should be able to better navigate their community college's environment more than individuals who are low in political skill. Measures of political skill were obtained using the PSI developed by Ferris, Treadway, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, Douglas, and Frink (2005).

### **Definition of Terms**

I used a variety of terms that are operationally defined for the reader:

*Absenteeism*: Employees who miss 1 or more work days (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990).

*Job withdrawal behavior*: "An employee's effort to remove themselves from a specific organization and their work role; withdrawal from their job" (Hanisch & Hulin, 1991, p 111).

*Lateness*: "The frequency with which the individual reports to work late" (Blau, 1985, p. 444).

*Organizational politics*: Political behaviors not sanctioned by the organization (Gilmore et al., 1996).

*Organizational withdrawal*: “A general construct composed of a variety of acts, or surrogate intentions, that reflect both the negativity of the precipitating job attitudes and the target of these negative job attitudes” (Hanisch & Hulin, 1991, p. 111).

*Political skill*: “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” (Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas, & Ammeter, 2004, p. 311).

*Work withdrawal behavior*: “Behaviors dissatisfied individuals use to avoid aspects of their specific work role or minimize the time spend on their work task while maintaining their current organizational and work-role memberships” (Hanisch & Hulin, 1991, p. 111).

### **Assumptions**

Several assumptions are understood within this study:

1. Employees responding to the survey are non-teaching employees of a community college.
2. Employees responded honestly to the questions contained within the survey instrument.

These assumptions are important to the context of this study because most organizations deny the existence of formal politics (Mintzberg, 1983), and using an anonymous survey reduces any fear or intimidation of participants to respond honestly to the survey items.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of the study included the use of self-report data collected via an electronic survey. The survey was compiled using inventories that have already been used in research by experts in their respective fields. This helped to address potential limitations from using self-report data. The participant data collected were assumed to be accurate; however, there is no guarantee that respondents have answered truthfully to any or all responses on the survey. Data were reviewed and cleaned prior to analysis to eliminate outliers and incomplete surveys that may skew the significance of the statistical analyses.

### **Significance of the Study**

Services provided to the large numbers of undergraduates in community colleges may be negatively affected by employees who perceive their environments as highly political and whose political skill moderates the employees' engagement in organizational withdrawal behaviors. Employees who observe other employees displaying organizational withdrawal behaviors may be more likely to display similar behaviors to conform to the group's norms (Eder & Eisenberger, 2008). Employees who engage in voluntary organizational withdrawal behaviors subsequently provide diminished services through reduced time focus on work-related tasks. As community colleges continue to provide access to higher education for individuals who might otherwise not pursue a college degree, retaining a talented workforce remains a high priority and college completion depends upon maintaining effective services for students. Employees who perceive their organizations as political and who engage in voluntary

organizational withdrawal behaviors ultimately provide diminished levels of services for students, as well as contribute to organizational dysfunction.

In contrast, an employee's political skill may impact or be the antidote to their experience with perceptions of organizational politics, as well as organizational withdrawal behaviors (or lack thereof). Community college human resources programs and graduate education programs are encouraged to develop political skill training for employees to help individuals navigate their institution's environment reducing employee engagement in organizational withdrawal behaviors and subsequently increase service and productivity to the community college's constituencies.

### **Summary and Transition**

Organizations, in this case community colleges, which deny the existence of politics may be negatively affecting the level of services provided to their student clients because such politics may negatively affect the quality of the work community college employees produce. In this study, I sought to understand if employees' perceptions of organizational politics positively predicted the employees' decisions to engage in nonterminal organizational withdrawal behaviors and whether understanding and assessing employee political skill assisted community colleges in reducing perceptions of organizational politics and organizational withdrawal behaviors at their institutions.

The study is organized into the following chapters. Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the research study, as well as an overview of organizational politics and organizational withdrawal behaviors. The problem statement, purpose of the study, assumptions, limitations, and theoretical base are also located in this chapter. Chapter 2

of the study includes the literature review, which includes a review of previous and related research conducted on the targeted population, the study's theoretical concepts and framework, and other relevant research. In Chapter 3, I described the research design, methodology, data collection methods, and the selected data analysis techniques used in this study. In Chapter 4, I review the results of the survey instrument. In Chapter 5, I discuss the significance of the findings in this study, limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to determine whether employee perceptions of organizational politics predicted voluntary work withdrawal behaviors in employees in public, 2-year community colleges and whether this relationship was moderated by an employee's level of political skill. To approach this question, several different theories, including leadership theories, were reviewed to better understand the complexity of the relationship between the antecedents of organizational politics and the resulting outcomes. I examined employees at varying levels within community colleges to better understand the impact of the employee's hierarchical level as it related to employee perceptions of organizational politics. I sought to understand the role of an employee's hierarchical level, related perception of organizational politics, and resulting voluntary, nonterminal organizational withdrawal behaviors. Chapter 2 provides a literature review related to the problem statement, including an integrative review and a methodological review. In addition, I review relevant literature on the topics of organizational politics, organizational withdrawal behaviors and political skill, including other characteristics of the work environment that influence each area such as leadership ability and organizational culture.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

In this study, I used several published books, but the majority of research was taken from peer-reviewed research studies. The literature search was conducted using the following library databases: EBSCO's Academic Search Premier, PSYCArticles,

PSYCInfo, Education Research Complete, Management & Organization Studies, and Business Source Complete. Key search terms used in the literature search strategy included *organizational politics*, *employee perceptions of organizational politics*, *perceptions of organizational politics*, *organizational withdrawal behaviors*, *employee organizational withdrawal behaviors*, *employee political skill*, *higher education research*, *organizational politics and higher education*, *organizational withdrawal behaviors and higher education*, and *political skill and higher education*. Organizational politics and work withdrawal have been widely researched, whereas research on political skill is less prevalent in the literature. In this context, the scope of literature review included seminal works in the literature of organizational politics, organizational withdrawal, and political skill with additional time period focus of 10 years for subsequent research

### **Organizational Politics**

Organizational politics are present in every organization and various definitions exist that qualify the term organizational politics. Organizational politics, more specifically political behavior, is described as a “‘self-serving’ behavior that is not sanctioned by the organization and that likely produces conflict and disharmony by pitting individuals and/or groups against one another or the organization” (Gilmore et al., 1996, p. 482). Additional definitions include unwritten rules within an organization, or culturally “how things are done” (Buchanan & Badham, 2008) and behaviors that occur informally within an organization that include intentional acts of influence intended to protect or enhance individuals’ professional careers when conflicting courses of action are possible (Drory, 1993; Porter, Allen, & Angle, 1981). For the purpose of this study

Mintzberg's (1983) definition was used to define organizational politics: "political behavior as individual or group behavior that is informal, ostensibly parochial, typically divisive and illegitimate" (p. 172). Political behavior in organizations is not sanctioned and is focused on personal gain, regardless of the impact to others. However, in modern organizations, power and resistance that often characterize organizational politics are becoming increasingly connected, which makes identifying the source and reactions of organizational politics increasingly difficult to isolate (Fleming & Spicer, 2008).

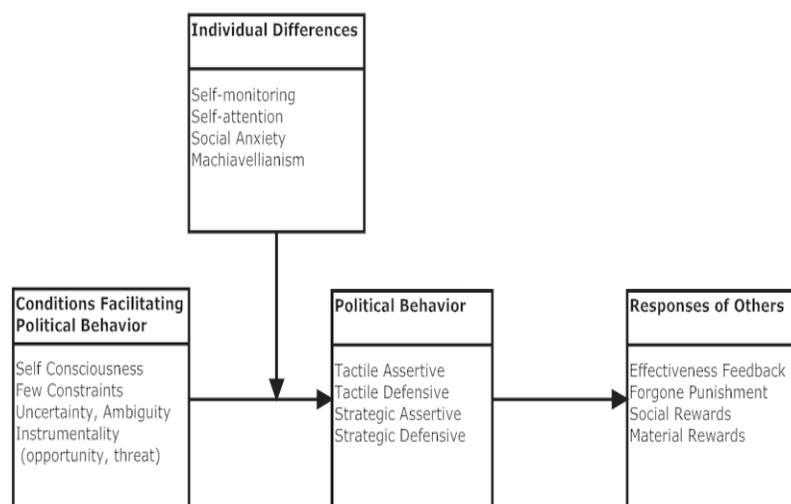
The features and characteristics that define political behavior in organizations are essential to understanding role of organizational politics in shaping behaviors of the organization and employee. Buchanan and Badham (2008) defined five features that characterize political behavior in organizations: influence, self-interest, damage, backstage, and conflict. Influence refers to getting others to act or think in specific ways, self-interest is focused on the attainment of individuals' goals rather than organizational goals, damage includes behaviors that act in opposition to the organization and its effectiveness, backstage refers to decisions and deals made outside of the formal work environment that excludes other people in the organization, and conflict is disagreement over how to use resources and how to achieve the goals of the organization. These characteristics describe the conditions under which political behavior occurs and reasons individuals engage in negative political behavior specifically (Buchanan & Badham, 2008).

Influence is characterized by engaging in behaviors that advance an individual's own ideas. This can include behaviors that are appealing (such as rewards and exchange

of favors) as well as behaviors that involve direct or indirect conflict (delaying, subverting, undermining, and restricting access to information). Self-interest is more complex to isolate, as the individual's goals may closely align with the organization's goals and subsequently may not be easy to decipher. In general, self-interest is characterized by an either/or perception, where the self-interest is perceived either as benefitting the individual or as benefitting the organization (Buchanan & Badham, 2008). Damage is a result of inappropriate political behavior, but can be characterized by dual effects (i.e., positive and negative benefits to the organization). The final two characteristics, backstage and conflict, concern how and where political behavior occurs and which situations political behavior is used. Because political behavior is typically not condoned by the organization, it occurs in areas difficult for other members to witness. The outcomes of political behavior have a public face, according to Buchanan and Badham (2008). However, the purpose for political behavior is often not understood nor visible to the public. The public face of backstage includes conflict, which is used when differences in goals exist between competing individuals or areas within the organization. The five characteristics of political behavior are open to some level of interpretation by the individual through his or her perceptions of the purpose of the political behavior.

The relationship between organizational politics, organizational behavior, and individual employee behavior is difficult to analyze due to differences in perception. Miller and Nicols (2008) stated that organizational politics are "interpreted through the perceptions of individual organizational members" (p. 214). The complexity inherent in examining organizational politics requires researchers to understand various sources of

influence that facilitate political behavior in organizations. The conceptualization of organizational politics within organizations establishes two antecedent groups: individual differences and conditions that facilitate political behavior in organizations (see Figure 1). The antecedent groups facilitate political behavior, including employees observing others successfully engaging political behavior (Ferris et al., 1989). According to Figure 1, one or more factors, such as an employee's level of self-monitoring and conditions of uncertainty or ambiguity can affect the decision to engage in and which type of political behavior to engage in to produce a desired response from others or the organization. Antecedent groups can also include political subgroups within the organization that collectively can influence political behavior in the larger organization (deVries, 2007). This can complicate understanding how organizational politics influences outcomes in the organization due to individual group differences.



*Figure 1.* Conceptualization of politics in organizations. Reprinted

“Conceptualization of politics in organizations,” by G.R. Ferris, G.S. Russ, and P.M.

Fandt, 1989, *Impression management in the organization*, p. 146. Copyright 1989 by Lawrence Earlbaum Associates, Inc.

### **Conceptual Models of Organizational Politics**

According to one of the most widely studied conceptual models of organizational politics (see Figure 2), organizational politics is comprised of both antecedents (employee influences, job/work influences, and organizational influences) and outcomes based on how those characteristics influence the employee's perception of organizational politics (Ferris et al., 1989). Although Figure 1 depicts a conceptualization of how organizational politics occurs in organizations, Figure 2 depicts the influences that facilitate and moderate the perception of organizational politics and resulting outcomes. One aspect of the Ferris et al (1989) model is the role of perceived control and understanding in the development of outcomes. In cases where individuals perceive more control and understanding due to higher political skill outcomes of perceptions, organizational politics may include reduced outcomes, including organizational withdrawal behaviors. Outcomes such as absenteeism, turnover, job involvement, and job satisfaction are not necessarily moderated by understanding or perceived control. In these cases, the antecedents and resulting perceptions of organizational politics are directly related to the outcomes, including job involvement, job satisfaction, job anxiety, and organizational withdrawal.

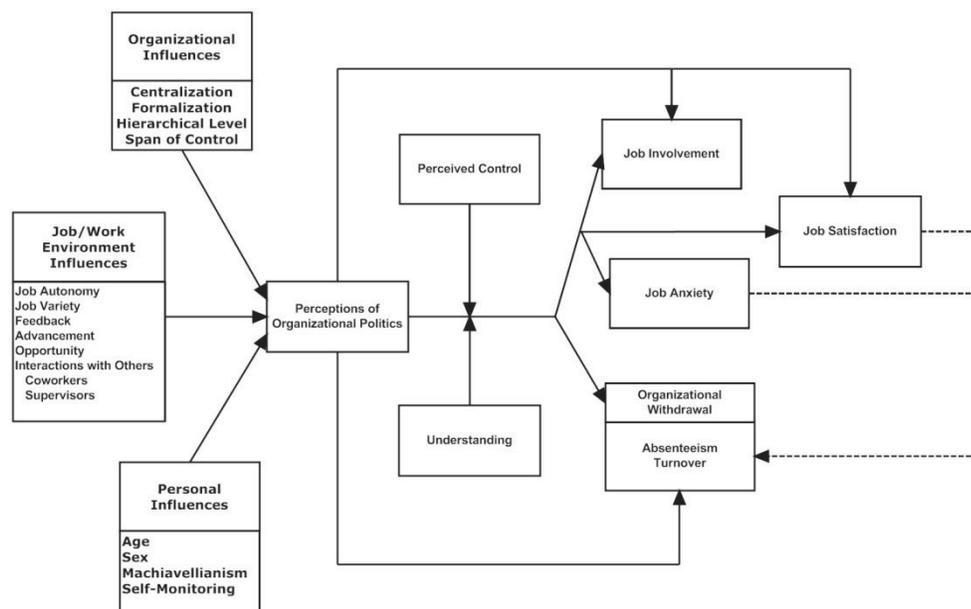


Figure 2. Perceptions of Organizational Politics Model. Reprinted “Perceptions of Organizational Politics,” by G.R. Ferris and M.C. Kacmar, 1992, *Journal of Management*, 18(1), p. 95. Copyright 1992 by Sage Publishing.

Research focused on the role of antecedents in employees’ perception of organizational politics in the Ferris et al. (1989) model produced mixed results. Parker, Dipboye, and Jackson (1995) examining the effects of antecedents in the Ferris et al. (1989) model on employee perceptions of organizational politics, indicated that only minority status positively predicted perceptions of organizational politics. However, Miller and Nicols (2008) reported that the additional employee personal influence antecedents in the conceptual framework of Ferris et al. (1989) are related to perceptions of organizational politics. Employees who are skilled in manipulating political conditions in an organization are more likely to move up the ladder within the organization’s hierarchy; employees who understand the political environment and dynamics within the

organization are able to use organizational politics to affect a positive outcome for themselves (Kolodinsky, Ferris, & Treadway, 2007).

While the Ferris et al. (1989) model of organizational politics has been the most widely researched theory, several other theories have been proposed to address the issue of organizational politics. Buchanan and Badham (2008) proposed that organizational politics in organizations is a social construction of many factors and aspects of the organization, and therefore it is not feasible to view the relationship of organizational politics in terms of predictable antecedents and outcomes. Similarly, Bergquist and Pawlak (2007) proposed that understanding the political dynamics within higher education institutions, specifically, is best viewed through six separate but related cultures that interact to shape the organization's culture. While constructivist theories may provide additional insight into the origins and factors related to organizational politics, it is difficult to design and conduct empirical research that reaches a deep level of meaning and understanding (Buchanan & Badham, 2008). The most relevant aspect of both models is that they emphasize the impact of organizational culture on the development and perception of organizational politics within organizations.

### **Organizational Culture**

Brown (1995) defines organizational culture as the ideas, values and activities that are unique to a given organization and have specific importance and provide a context to its members. Ferris et al. (1989) do not identify organizational culture as a specific antecedent, but do reference organizational antecedents that share attributes with organizational culture, including centralization, formalization, hierarchical level, and

span of control. For example, Ferris, Frink, Galang, Zhou, Kacmar, and Howard (1996) reported that higher levels of ambiguity and uncertainty, which facilitates an environment conducive to political activity, accompany lower levels of formalization within an organization. Formalization of political activity within the organization is related to negative perceptions of political activity within the organization. If organizations are to be viewed, as Mintzberg (1983) suggests, as inherently political, then the organization's specific culture should be considered a contributing factor in employee perceptions of organizational politics. This is reflected in the Ferris et al (1989) model through a combination of antecedents such as centralization and formalization as well as work environment influences (see Figure 2).

The culture within an organization also can be divided into subcultures, with one subculture defined as the dominant, corporate culture. Employees who perceive themselves as removed from the dominant culture may perceive the political dynamics as affecting negative outcomes (Clarke, Hall, Jefferson, & Roberts; 1987; Rodrigues, 2006;). In a study conducted over a 27-year period changes in organizational culture revealed a drastic transformation, from an integrated culture to one of fragmentation and differentiation (Rodrigues 2006). Severe changes in organizational culture can facilitate the outcomes in the Ferris et al (1989) model, as employees experience less understanding and perceived control over the change in organizational culture. Furthermore, subcultures within an organization can result in counterculture groups that oppose the dominant culture within the organization (Gagliardi, 1986).

### **Hierarchical Level and Employee Characteristics**

Relationships involving politics in organizations are often characterized by the use of power and potential resistance by individuals or groups of individuals when decisions involve politics (Madison, Allea, Porter, Renwick, & Myers, 1980). In a study of managers from 30 different organizations, perceptions of organizational politics were reported to relate to power and uncertainty by 25% of managers. 60% of managers also reported that political behavior occurred “frequently” or “very frequently” (Madison, et al., 1980, p.86). In each organization studied, employees with a higher-level position within the organization reported a higher perception of organizational politics within their organization, with 90% of managers indicating that political behavior occurs more frequently at upper and middle management within the organization (p. 87). However, other studies have not indicated that higher-level status within the organization’s hierarchy is related to perceptions of organizational politics (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Parker, Dipboye, & Jackson, 1995). The mixed results illustrate the need to better understand how managers perceive and experience organizational politics within their organization.

Employees at lower levels within the organization’s hierarchy experience the consequences of political activity more directly than employees at higher levels within the organization (Ferris, Frink, Galang, et. al, 1996). Employees in lower-level positions within the hierarchy may be more pessimistic regarding their opportunities within the organization and subsequently, attribute organizational politics as the reason for their lack of advancement (Gandz & Murray, 1980). Factors associated with employee perceptions

of organizational politics, (organizational climate, formalization, work locus of control, and Machiavellianism) explained 52% of the variance in employee perceptions of organizational politics (O'Connor & Morrison, 2001).

Work locus of control coupled with power existence, can be examined as a single construct called struggle (Fleming & Spicer, 2008). Front-line employees perceive higher levels of organizational politics and subsequently have limited views of their opportunities for advancement, training and salary increases (Karadal & Asali, 2009). Managers should empower front-line employees to increase levels of work commitment and customer satisfaction through reducing the perception of organizational politics through incentives and transparent processes (Karadal & Asali, 2009). These suggestions can increase an employee's perceived work locus of control and subsequently reduce the perceived level of struggle the employee experiences in attempting to understand their work environment.

If struggle, as identified by Fleming and Spicer (2008) defines the modern workplace, then individuals who survive this struggle must be politically skilled individuals. Struggle and subsequent perceptions of work locus of control are related to antecedents in the Ferris et al (1989) model (see Figure 2). All three antecedent groups (personal influences, organizational influences, and job/work influences) affect struggle through self-monitoring (personal influences), span of control (organizational influences) and job autonomy (job/work influences).

Kolodinsky, Treadway, and Ferris (2007) reported that an employee's political skill is positively associated with supervisor perceptions and employee evaluations

(supervisor). Similarly, Kacmar, Harris, Collins and Judge (2009) reported that perceptions of organizational politics results in higher supervisor performance ratings and higher employee core-self evaluations in political situations, perceived as favorable as compared to employees in situations that are perceived as unfavorable. The result is that for employees with unfavorable evaluations, lower perceived control, and lack of understanding can facilitate a higher perception of organizational politics and subsequent negative outcomes.

### **Political Skill**

The control an employee has over their work environment including how they perceive and react to the workplace political environment is dependent the employee's political skill (Zellars, Perrewé, Rossi, Tepper, & Ferris, 2008). The term "political skill" was defined by Mintzberg (1983) to describe the characteristic needed for individuals to be effective within their organization. An employee's political skill relative to perceived organizational politics within an organization is positively related to levels of job performance. The relationship between political skill and the impact on how an employee experiences and performs in their work environment is well documented in the research (Kapoutsis, Papalexandris, Nikolopoulos, Hochwarter, & Ferris, 2011; O'Connor, 2001; Parker, et al., 1995). Kapoutsis et al. (2011) reported that politically skilled employees who perceive low levels of organizational politics have higher levels of job performance compared with employees who perceive a high level of organizational politics within their organization. The findings of Kapoutsis et al. (2011) controlling for supervisor bias in employee evaluations as well as personality aspects such as neuroticism confirm that

employees who are politically skilled demonstrate higher job performance than individuals who have lower levels of political skill. Bickle et al. (2011) report similar benefits, as political skill accounted for difference in job performance while controlling for general mental ability and select personality factors.

Additional research has shown that employees who are more politically skilled also report increases in perceived locus of control and self-efficacy and decreased physiological strain (Zellers, et al., 2008). Individuals who have higher levels of self-confidence should allow employees with high levels of political skill to perceive workplace stressors differently than individuals with low political skill, resulting in lower levels of stress and/or anxiety (Kanter, 2004). The findings of Kanter (2004) are supported by Todd, Harris, Harris, and Wheeler (2009) who reported employee political skill is associated with promotions, career satisfaction, life satisfaction, and perceived external job mobility. The characteristics examined in Todd et al. (2009) can be sources of stress and anxiety for employees based on how they perceive politics within the organization. The stress and anxiety employees experience can be managed through the use of emotional labor. The concept of emotional labor was established by Hochschild (1983) to characterize suppressing feeling in oneself as an impact of stress and anxiety. Although the relationship between emotional labor and employee political skill is outside the scope of this study, the antecedents in the Ferris et al. (1989) conceptual model of perceptions of organizational politics lend itself to the same characteristics identified by Hochschild (1983) as emotional labor, specifically stress and anxiety.

**Employee Political Skill.**

Employees' level of political skill influences antecedents in the Ferris et al. (1989) model of organizational politics, including antecedents of job autonomy and relationships with others as well as outcomes such as job anxiety. Ferris et al., (2007) and Perrewé, Ferris, Frink, and Anthony (2000) suggest that understanding individual differences of employees, including categorizing employee political skill as an individual difference is important to understanding an employee's perceptions of organizational politics as well as their reactions to organization politics. Perrewé, Zellars, Ferris, Rossi, Kacmar, & Ralston (2004) reported that political skill moderates employee role conflict within the organization and specific types of strain such as job anxiety, including psychological and physiological effects. Treadway, Hochwarter, Kacmar, and Ferris (2005) reported that employee's political skill moderated employee political behavior-emotional labor relationship. Employees low in political skill experience higher levels of emotional labor due to political behavior whereas employees high in political skill did not. An employee's level of political skill can result in higher levels of psychological strain and subsequently may increase the likelihood of employees engaging in organizational withdrawal behaviors. Political skill has been found to decrease negative effects of an organizations' political environment (Brouer, Ferris, Hochwarter, Laird, & Gilmore, 2005).

**Political Skill and Hierarchical Level.** In terms of an employee's level within the hierarchy, Semadar, Robins, and Ferris (2006) studied several social effectiveness constructs of managers, including political skill, self-monitoring, leadership self-efficacy

and emotional intelligence, and subsequent prediction of employee job performance. In terms of predicting managerial performance, political skill was identified as the strongest predictor among the four social effectiveness constructs ( $\beta=.31, p < .05$ ). In addition, a significant positive correlation exists between managerial job performance and emotional intelligence ( $r = .25, p < .01$ ) as well as job performance and political skill ( $r = .34, p < .01$ ). (Semadar, et al., 2006).

Positive perceptions of subordinates by supervisors have been reported to relate to supervisor ratings of both task performance and contextual performance (Ferris et al., 1994; Turban & Jones, 1988; Wayne et al., 1997). Subordinates who are more politically skilled may achieve higher supervisor ratings than their peers (Kolodinsky, et al., 2007). In terms of employee job satisfaction and turnover intentions, Harris, Harris, and Brouer (2009) studied the supervisor-subordinate relationship via leader-member exchange theory (LMX) and subordinate political skill. While employee political skill is related to turnover intentions and job satisfaction, the quality of the relationship was also found to interact with employee political skill in predicting an employee's level of job satisfaction and their intent to leave the organization.

**Assessing Employee Political Skill.** Valle (2006) specifies that although organizational politics typically excites negative connotations, that becoming politically skilled is essential to an employee's ability to advance within the organization.

Employees that impact student success, such as mentors, are reported to not necessarily be wiser but rather more politically skilled (Moberg, 2008). Using 88 students in a management course, Moberg compared four areas of practical wisdom with employee

responses to the Ferris et al. (2005) Political Skill Inventory (PSI). Using discriminate analysis Moberg (2008) reported that only political skill is significant for those who mentor others versus those who do not engage in mentoring of others.

Although organizational characteristics may influence the political environment, antecedents such as individual employee characteristics also have a significant role in the perception of organizational politics and subsequent reactions and outcomes (Ferris, et al, 1989). Ferris et al. (1989) identified four specific personal characteristics (age, sex, Machiavellianism, and self-monitoring). However additional research has reported that emotional intelligence, which is related to self-monitoring, does not moderate the employee perceptions of organizational politics and subsequent job performance (Samad, 2011). Similarly, Ferris et al. (2005) reported that employee political skill is positively related to self-monitoring ( $r = .39, p < .001$ ), upward appeal ( $r = .25, p < .001$ ), and coalition ( $r = .21, p < .001$ ).

More recent research reports that employee political skill moderates the perceived politics-outcome relationship (Brouer, Harris, & Kacmar, 2011). Brouer et al. (2011) analyzed a three-way interaction between employee perceptions of organizational politics, employee political skill and employee perceptions of manager skill reporting a significant relationship between job satisfaction ( $\Delta R^2 = 3$  percent) and job performance ( $\Delta R^2 = 4$  percent). Additionally the interaction between perceptions of organizational politics and job satisfaction and perceptions of organizational politics and job performance were most negatively associated with employees and subordinate-manager ratings of low political skill (Brouer et al, 2011).

## **Outcomes of Organizational Politics**

There are two general categories of outcomes of organizational politics: positive and negative. Positive outcomes of political behavior occur when the behavior is congruent with organizational goals, and subsequently not viewed as entirely self-serving (Buchanan & Badham, 2008). Negative outcomes of organizational politics include increased feelings of stress, organizational withdrawal, reduced job involvement, increased job anxiety, and reduced job satisfaction (Ferris, et al., 1989). Ferris and Kacmar (1992, p. 97) noted that the perception of organizational politics as positive or negative, display differing outcomes depending upon the perception of politics within the organization and by the individual. Harris, Harris, and Wheeler (2009) studied perceptions of organizational politics and subsequent intention to turnover and job frustration. Harris et al. (2009, p. 2670) describe intent to turnover or leave the organization, and job frustration as important since these intentions “are a withdrawal behavior that has been related to decreased effort and morale.”

**Organizational Stress.** The outcomes of employee of perceptions of organizational politics in the Ferris et al. (1989) conceptual model include a broad category title Job Anxiety. However more generally, high levels of employee perceptions of organizational politics result in higher levels of employee stress and subsequently make the employee vulnerable to emotional exhaustion. Cole, Bernerth, Walter, and Holt (2010) reported increased levels of emotional exhaustion in employees who perceive low levels of organizational justice within the organization. This is also related to terminal organizational withdrawal behaviors as measured as intent to turnover. Employees who

also have lower perceptions of organizational politics have decreased turnover intentions resulting from reported work stress (Zhang & Lee, 2010). Zhang and Lee (2010) reported that when perceptions of organizational politics are low, employees reported lower levels of turnover intentions regardless of work stress level, but that increased work stress levels combined with high perceptions of organizational politics resulted in higher turnover intentions.

In one of the few studies found to directly study organizational stress on work withdrawal behaviors, Chen and Spector (1992, p.181) reported that workplace stress correlated positively to absenteeism (.05,  $p < .05$ , two-tailed) and intent to turnover (.30,  $p < .05$ , two-tailed). The role of perception of organizational politics has also been found to moderate the relationship between stress (job strain) and withdrawal behaviors (intent to turnover) (Harris, James, & Boonthanom, 2005). These findings lend more support to the role of employees' perceptions of organizational politics and related work withdrawal behaviors, and the potential for employee political skill to moderate this relationship.

### **Organizational Withdrawal Behaviors**

It has been established in the literature that negative outcomes of employee perceptions of organizational politics are positively related to organizational and work withdrawal behaviors, including terminal and non-terminal withdrawal behaviors (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Hanisch & Hulin, 1990, 1991). Non-terminal behaviors include absenteeism and engaging in non-work related activities and terminal behaviors include leaving the organization both voluntarily and involuntarily. As previously discussed, Ram and Prabhakar (2010) reported that perceptions of organizational politics

moderate employees' intent to turnover and elevates job tension. Although different leadership styles (Transformational and Transactional) were reported to reduce job tension and subsequent intent to turnover, the role organizational politics has a more profound effect on employees within the organization (Ram & Prabhakar, 2010).

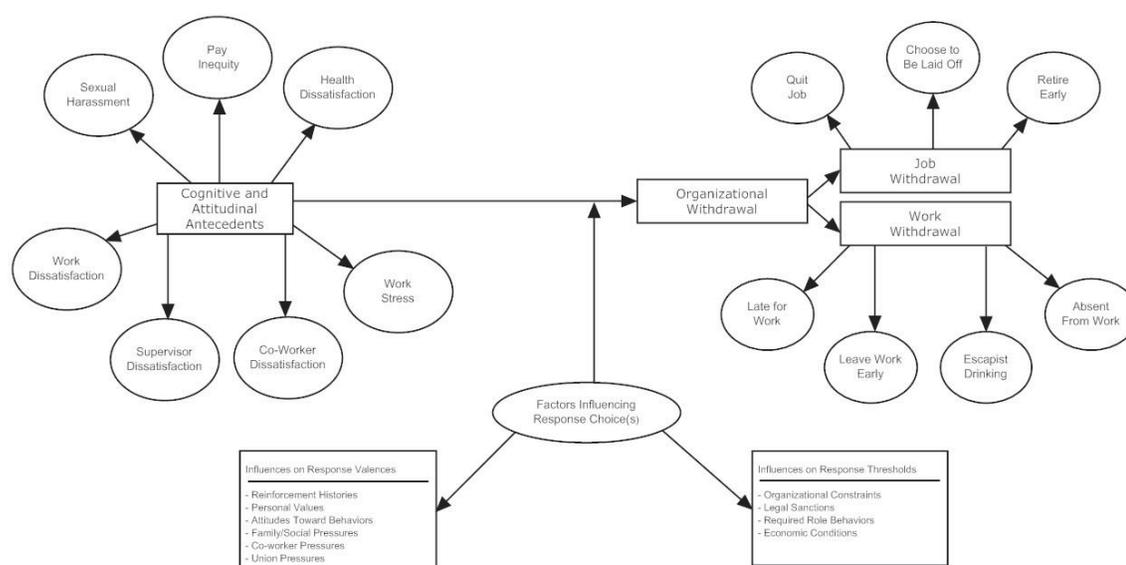
Levels of job involvement (increased or decreased) also relate to work withdrawal, as employees' perceptions of organizational politics can positively and negatively affect an employee's level of job involvement. Job involvement is considered a separate outcome from organizational withdrawal in the Ferris, et al (1989) model (see Figure 1). Employees may choose only to perform the minimum requirements for their job (decreased job involvement) due to negative perceptions of organizational politics, including limited or no involvement in organizational activities, such as committees or work teams. Employees whose job involvement decreases to very low levels increase the potential for work withdrawal behaviors. The perceptions of organizational politics has been linked to a number of withdrawal behaviors in the Ferris et al. (1989) model, some of which are further defined by the organizational withdrawal model proposed by Hanisch (1995).

As stated previously, organizational withdrawal behaviors may be voluntary (retirement) or non-voluntary (termination) (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990). Regardless of the voluntary or non-voluntary withdrawal behavior enacted by the individual employee, the role of length of time in current position and in the organization (tenure) is another factor that must be addressed in the discussion on perceptions of organizational politics, political skill, and work withdrawal behaviors (Blau, 1987; Gilmore, et al, 1996).

Employees who have worked a shorter time for their supervisor were more likely to have higher absenteeism, whereas the same was not true for employees with higher tenure with their supervisor (Gilmore et al, 1996). Controlling for the quality of the employee-supervisor relationship, employees with lower tenure reported more negative consequences of politics. Employees with higher tenure have a better understanding of their work environment and subsequently experienced less negative effects from politics. This understanding does not imply that the employee agrees with the supervisor's decisions or actions, but that the employee has accepted such behavior and made adjustments that reduce the stress associated with perceived organizational politics and subsequently results in lower levels of employee absenteeism (Gilmore, et al, 1996). Valle, Harris, and Andrews (2004) reported that employees who perceived high levels of organizational politics, lower perceived support, and shorter tenure within the organization reported higher turnover intentions. These findings are especially important for new professionals entering the higher education environment after graduate school as the preparation to enter the higher education political environment may be limited. Subsequently newer professionals with shorter tenure may need more support and guidance to minimize the chances of engaging in withdrawal behaviors and turnover intentions.

Organizational withdrawal behaviors can be divided into two general categories: work withdrawal and job withdrawal (See Figure 3) (Hanisch, 1995; Hanisch & Hulin, 1990). Job withdrawal includes behaviors that employees engage in to distance themselves from the organization; whereas work withdrawal includes those behaviors

employees engage in to distance themselves from the specific work responsibilities while still maintaining organizational membership (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990). While job withdrawal may have a more significant impact on the individual's work career, work withdrawal not only has negative effects for the employee, but also for the organization contributing to organizational dysfunction (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990).



*Figure 3. Organizational Withdrawal Behaviors. Reprinted “Behavioral Families and Multiple Causes: Matching the Complexity of Responses to the Complexity of Antecedents,” by K.A. Hanisch, 1995, *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 4(5), p. 159. Copyright 1995 by American Psychological Society.*

A variety of factors can influence the emergence of organizational withdrawal behaviors including perceived organizational support and co-worker engagement in withdrawal behaviors (Eder & Eisenberger, 2008). Liao, Chuang, and Joshi (2008) reported that personality antecedents (agreeableness and extroversion) impact an

employee's job attitude. Similarly, employee accountability within the organization can also moderate the perceptions of organizational politics– job satisfaction relationship. Breaux, Munyon, Hochwarter, & Ferris (2008) reported that employees with inconsistent levels of accountability with higher levels of perceptions of organizational politics reported lower levels of job satisfaction. Ambiguity in accountability, coupled with high levels of perceptions of organizational politics, may hinder employees' ability to become integrated into the organization's culture. Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg (2003) reported that employees who engage in work withdrawal behaviors have difficulty integrating into the organization and have lower levels of commitment. Liao et al. (2008) indicated that perceived dissimilarity with the organization is a complex relationship among employee job attitudes and organizational characteristics.

### **Organizational Politics and Organizational Withdrawal Behaviors**

The specific relationship between employee perceptions of organizational politics and organizational withdrawal behaviors has been well-documented in research (Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997; Harrell-Cook, Ferris, & Dulebohn, 1999; Rosen, Harris & Kacmar, 2009). In some cases, employee emotions resulting from their perceptions of organizational politics within the organization mediate outcomes, including decreased levels of performance and organizational withdrawal behaviors (Rosen, et al., 2009). Vigoda (2000) reported among public employees in Israel that not only did perceptions of organizational politics have a negative relationship and predict job satisfaction and job commitment ( $\beta = -.23, p < .001$  and  $\beta = -.29, p < .001$ , respectively), but also were positively related to withdrawal behaviors such as turnover

intentions and negligent behavior. Ferris et al. (1989) indicated that antecedent groups (organization influences, job/work environment influences, personal influences) affect an employee's perceptions of organizational politics. The relationship between employee perceptions of organizational politics and resulting organizational withdrawal behaviors is usually moderated by one or more factors. As noted previously, Hanisch (1995) suggested that to better understand antecedents and outcomes of organizational withdrawal behaviors both should be studied as behavioral families. Outcomes of negative perceptions of organizational politics are some factors, such as work stress and work dissatisfaction, in antecedent groups identified by Hanisch (1995) that influence organizational withdrawal. The cognitive and attitudinal factors identified by Hanisch (1995) are moderated by personal influences, similar to the antecedents in the Ferris et al. (1989) perception of organizational politics model.

### **Leadership**

In collectivist cultures, the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, two outcomes of the Ferris et al (1989) model of organizational politics can be moderated by transformation leadership which in addition also may reduce work withdrawal behaviors (Walumbwa & Lawler, 2003). Leadership also shapes the employee's perceptions of organizational politics as well as increases job stress levels and potential withdrawal behaviors (turnover) (Ram & Prabhakar, 2010). For mid-level managers, who may be in the position of leading employees, their own approach to leadership may influence how they and their employees perceive the

organization's environment and subsequently whether the manager or employee engages in work withdrawal behaviors.

Vigoda-Gadot and Beeri (2012) in a study of public health care employees reported that leadership has positive effect on employees organizational citizenship behavior, which can viewed as the opposite to withdrawing from the work environment. In addition, Vigoda-Gadot and Beeri (2012) reported that perceptions of organizational politics have a moderating effect between leadership and organizational citizenship behavior. In a similar study Kacmar, Bachrach, and Harris (2010) reported that citizenship behaviors between males and females depend upon the employees' perceptions of organizational politics in the organization. Kacmar et al. (2010) used social exchange theory as the context for the study, social role behavior in particular, which is relevant to the current study since employee political skill can be viewed as influencing the social role behavior and social exchange that employees have with their supervisor and other employees in the organization.

Social exchange theory also includes formal and informal interactions that can impact employee attitudes, job performance and the employee's perception of organizational politics (Kacmar et al, 2010). Rosen, Levy and Hall (2006) reported that increased informal supervisor and coworker feedback regarding behaviors that are acceptable and reinforced as positive to their job and the organization have lower perceptions of organizational politics and increased work outcomes. Employees who have access to information feedback systems may also possess higher levels of political skill making such informal exchanges easier to develop on a consistent basis (Rosen et

al., 2006). Harris et al. (2009) reported that the quality of supervisor communication moderated the employee perceptions of organizational politics and subsequent employee intent to turnover and reported employee job frustration. However, all outcomes in the model related to perceptions of organizational politics (with the exception of job anxiety) can either be direct outcomes of the employee's perceptions of organizational politics or be moderated by the employee's perceived control and understanding of organizational politics within the organization (Harris et al, 2009).

### **Organizational Politics Research in Higher Education**

Limited research exists in higher education, in particular among administrators and staff members, on the subject of organizational politics. However, Lorden (1998) reported that in some areas of higher education, specifically student affairs, the attrition rate among professionals might be as high as 61%. Research in this area is limited as to the effects of organizational politics on employee behavior and work commitment. Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010) discussed the role of employee characteristics, such as emotional intelligence, in the perception of organizational politics and work outcomes for public sector employees. Since community colleges in the United States can be considered public sector organizations due to affiliations with either state government, local government or both, the impact of understanding this relationship is important to understand how employees can develop and grow to minimize the impact of organizational politics on outcomes identified in the Ferris et al. (1989) conceptual model of organizational politics, specifically absenteeism, intent to turnover, job involvement, and job satisfaction. Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010) reported that perceptions of

organizational politics were negatively related to job satisfaction ( $\beta = -.52, p < .001$ ) and with the emotional commitment to public service ( $\beta = -.43, p < .001$ ). Perceptions of organizational politics were also positively related with job burnout and exit intentions ( $\beta = .26, p < .001$ ) and with negligent work behavior ( $\beta = .34, p < .001$ ). Other research has shown that outcomes of perceptions of organizational politics, such as job stress moderate turnover intention when both factors are high (Zhang & Lee, 2010).

Although previous research has focused on the impact of constructs such as job attitudes (Hanisch & Hulin, 1991) which are related to perceptions of organizational politics on specific outcomes including organizational withdrawal behaviors little research has been conducted to determine if employee political skill can account for employee perceptions of organizational politics and subsequent engagement in organizational withdrawal behaviors such as work withdrawal. For employees working in community colleges, the perceptions of organizational politics may impact not only personal aspects of their work such as job satisfaction, but also the level of service they provide to the students and other constituents of the college. Similar to the findings of Perrewé et al. (2004), the challenge for employees in community colleges is to understand how their knowledge and utilization of political skill can help them to better navigate the political environment of their organization to better manage their reactions to perceptions of organizational politics, mitigating involvement in organizational withdrawal behaviors.

Prior research in higher education has tended to focus on organizational politics in terms of faculty members, particularly women and members of recognized minority

groups (Boehman, 2007; Gibson, 2006) and employees at universities (Bush, 1992; Hanisch & Hulin, 1990; Vigoda-Gadot, Talmud, & Peled, 2011). Vigoda-Gadot et al. (2011) tested the role of employee perceptions of organizational politics at employees at a large public University in Israel. Vigoda-Gadot et al. (2011) indicated that the relationship between organizational politics and organizational outcomes is important since each employee has some level of power and uses their power to their benefit. Vigoda-Gadot et al. (2011) reported a mediating effect between employees' perception of organizational politics, specifically academic staff, and organizational outcomes. Hutchison (1997) reported that among faculty and staff at large state university that perceived organizational support was related to the employee's commitment to the organization. Commitment to the organization can be considered related to reduced intent to turnover or engage in work withdrawal behaviors.

The focus on public community colleges in this study is related to Gandz and Murray's (1980) hypothesis that employees in public organizations perceive their environment as more political than employees in private sector organizations. In *Engaging the Six Cultures of the Academy* (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008) proposed that organizational politics in higher education is best understood through the division of the institution into six separate cultures that interact, overlap, and can become intertwined. This approach, examined in the context of the Ferris et al. (1989) model of POPS, implies that self-monitoring, a personal level antecedent may be more important than organizational influences in determining employee reactions to politics within the organization. Ferris et al (2005) and Perrewé et al. (2004) support this notion and

reported that political skill, including self-monitoring, influences the effects employees experience from perceptions of organizational politics.

The Collegial and Managerial Cultures are identified as the “twin pillars of twentieth century higher education in the United States and Canada” (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. 43). Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) state that the goal of understanding the six cultures within higher education institutions is to further increase the functioning of each area and the institution as a whole. However, it is within and between these cultures that political activity occurs within organizations in higher education. The most vulnerable cultures are the Managerial, Advocacy, and Tangible, as each culture is linked strongly to the organization’s core values (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). Challenges to the institution’s values could result in organizational conflicts and subsequent perceptions of political behavior in the organization.

Additional research in educational institutions has revealed a negative relationship between employee perception of organizational politics and employee commitment (Chan, Lau, Nie Lim, & Hogan, 2008). Chan et al. (2008) reported that among primary and secondary teachers surveyed, perceptions of organizational politics were negatively related to teacher commitment. Teachers who perceived the organizational environment has highly political reported reduced levels of commitment measures such as job satisfaction and less favorable views of their profession (Chan et al., 2008). Similar to Boehman (2007), the findings of Chan et al. (2008) support that regardless of culture and subculture (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008), an employee’s perception of organizational politics has a negative relationship with employee organizational and affective

commitment. Commitment to the organization is not related to not only identification within a particular culture or subculture (Begquist & Pawlak, 2008), but also the supervision of the employee that helps to clarify the employee's role within the organizational unit and the organization as a whole. Tull (2006) reported that supervision and orientation to the organization can be important aspects of reducing the attrition of college administrators, especially student affairs professionals. The role of supervision and leadership in reducing role ambiguity, role conflict, and job stress is important in helping new professional acclimate to the organization's environment (Tull, 2006).

Nordquist and Grigsby (2011) proposed the perspective that there would be a positive impact of increased political skill on leadership in medical schools, specifically on the policy-making process and leadership decisions. The authors proposed that similar antecedents which are presented in the Ferris et al. (1989) conceptual model of organizational politics, such as formalization and span of control (presented as power and networks), can inform leaders in health profession education to improve the quality of education. Specifically, Nordquist and Grigsby (2011) identified that front-line staff or those who are charged with implementing policies and procedures should be given special attention through networks in order to effectively navigate the political landscape of the health profession educational institution. Nordquist and Grigsby's (2011) proposal that political skill can provide a positive impact in medical school education can be extended to the current problem of providing high levels of service to community college students by reducing employee work withdrawal behaviors through increased political skill as an antidote to perceptions of organizational politics within the institution.

Prior research has established the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and organizational withdrawal behaviors (Vigoda-Godot & Talmud, 2010; Zhang & Lee, 2010; Chen & Spector, 1992) and reducing employee stress and political skill (Harvey, Harris, Harris, & Wheeler (2007). However the role of political skill in mitigating organizational withdrawal behaviors is not known. Bickle, Kramer, Schneider, Ferris, Meurs, Mierke, et al. (2011) indicate that political skill has been established as a construct with both construct and criterion-related validity and that employee political skill is a significant predictor of employee job performance regardless of other factors (personality and intelligence). Similarly, Ferris, Davidson, and Perrewé (2005) recommend that political skill cannot only be assessed in employees, but also developed and increased.

### **Summary and Transition**

Research into organizational politics and organizational withdrawal has established that increased employee perceptions of organizational politics leads to negative consequences (increased stress, lower job satisfaction) including work withdrawal behaviors (Breux et al, 2008; Ferris et al., 1996; Ram & Prabhakar, 2010). Hanisch and Hulin (1990; 1991) reported that negative job attitudes predict work withdrawal behaviors. Perrewé et al. (2004) reported that political skill is an antidote against work stressors including role conflict. Similarly, Gallagher and Laird (2008) reported that combined political skill and political decision-making has a positive effect on employee job satisfaction levels. If organizations are inherently political as Mintzberg (1983) indicates, employees need assistance in understanding and navigating the political

environment. However what was not known is whether or not political skill's benefits extend beyond individual-specific emotional outcomes such as role conflict, job satisfaction and affective commitment to reduce behavioral outcomes such as employee engagement in work withdrawal behaviors.

The current study has extended the knowledge in the discipline by examining the role of employee political skill as an antidote to perceptions of organizational politics and subsequent withdrawal behaviors. Possible applications based on the results of this study include development of political skill training for employees to help mitigate perceptions of organizational politics and subsequent withdrawal behaviors. Service providing organizations, such as community colleges, must find ways to minimize the negative impact(s) of employee perception of organizational politics, such as work withdrawal behaviors, to help increase employee job satisfaction, commitment to the organization and ultimately the service(s) provided to their constituencies (Boehman, 2007). Chapter 3 reviews the methods and procedures used to answer the research questions, including detailed review of the study's participants, and the survey instrument used in this study.

Chapter 4 reviews the results of the study, including participant demographics, data cleaning, and analyses for each research question. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of this study, including recommendations for community colleges and community college administrators, and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### Introduction

The impact of organizational politics on subsequent customer service delivery for community college students can be manifested through employee withdrawal behaviors. In higher education, this phenomenon has been observed through anecdotal evidence but has not been quantified using systematic and scientific method. In this study, I linked previous research on organizational politics and organizational withdrawal behaviors by studying whether the effects of organizational politics on work withdrawal behaviors extend to employees in community colleges. I examined the moderating effects of political skill on perceptions of organizational politics and work withdrawal behaviors. The objective was to help organizations identify and recognize factors, specifically employee political skill, that negatively impacted employee job performance allowing community colleges to develop programs that increase employee political skill.

### Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions and associated research questions guided this study:

1. Does the positive relationship between perception of organizational politics and work withdrawal behaviors found in other settings extend to a sample of community college employees?

$H_0$ 1. There will not be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between POPS and WWB scores.

$H_{11}$ . There will be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between POPS and WWB scores.

2. Is political skill inversely related to work withdrawal behaviors?

$H_{02}$ . There will not be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between PSI and WWB scores.

$H_{12}$ . There will be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between PSI and WWB scores.

3. Will political skill be an antidote diminishing the effect of perception of politics on work withdrawal behaviors?

$H_{03}$ : In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB scores simultaneously on POPS scores and PSI scores, the PSI coefficient will not be statistically different from zero or will be positive and statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , one-tailed.

$H_{13}$ : In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS and PSI, the PSI coefficient will be negative and statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , one-tailed.

4. Is the effect of perception of politics on work withdrawal behaviors moderated by political skill?

$H_{04}$ : In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, the interaction coefficient will not be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

*H<sub>14</sub>*: In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, the interaction coefficient will be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

5. Does political skill account for the relationship between level and tenure with work withdrawal behaviors?

*H<sub>05</sub>*. In a sequential multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, then simultaneously on level and tenure, the Block effect of level and tenure will not be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

*H<sub>15</sub>*: In a sequential multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, then simultaneously on level and tenure, the Block effect of level and tenure will be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

## **Methods**

In this study, I used a self-report method by administering an online survey using the online tool Survey Monkey. Community college employees nationally were surveyed as to their perceived political climate (independent variable), reported engagement in work withdrawal behaviors (dependent variable), and their level of political skill (independent variable). The study was designed to collect measures from participants that were analyzed to directly answer the research questions.

The survey used was based on the POPS, WWB measures developed by Hanisch and Hulin (1990, 1991), the PSI (Ferris, Treadway, Kolodinsky, Hochwater, Kacmar, et

al., 2005), and demographic factors (gender, number of years in current position, number of years working at current institution, number of year in higher education, ethnicity, unified state system). The survey design was also based on guidelines and standards established by Saris and Gallhofer (2007).

### **Participants**

Participants for this study were nonteaching employees (classified staff, administrators, and executive level staff members) at 2-year institutions as classified by the Carnegie Foundation's criteria. Participants were selected at random from membership in selected national higher education professional organizations through membership listservs and through direct invitation via email. The National Association of Personnel Administrators, the National Academic Advising Association, the National Orientation Directors Association, the American College Personnel Association, and the American Association of Community Colleges agreed to provide access to the study's participants either through direct invitation or via an organizational listserv. The target number of respondents was 250 usable surveys with the goal of achieving 10 respondents from at least 25 community colleges across the United States. A minimum of 20 employees at 100 community colleges each were invited to participate in the survey to reach the target number of respondents. Participants included employees from all levels within the organization as to make comparisons between employees' level within the organizational hierarchy and respective levels of political skill.

## **Procedures**

Study participants were invited to complete the anonymous survey via an e-mail invitation that included an initial presentation of the study's purpose and scope, as well as more information regarding informed consent, including the institutional review board (IRB) approval number for the study (09-17-13-0039562). Informed consent was also presented a second time to participants prior to beginning the survey, which again included the IRB approval number for the study. A progress monitor was presented to participants via the electronic tool so that they could monitor their progress throughout completing the survey process. At the conclusion of the survey, participants were presented with a message thanking them for their participation with additional information for follow-up or questions they may have about the survey or study in general and how their responses would be used, including data storage.

## **Instruments**

The survey used in this study was a combination of previous validated measures such as the POPS and the PSI, as well as other measures of organizational withdrawal behaviors that have been used in empirical research (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990, 1991, 1995; Laczó & Hulin, 1999) and select demographic variables of survey respondents.

### **Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale**

Participants' perception of organizational politics within their community college was measured using the POPS (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991). The POPS has been developed through a number of empirical studies (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Hochwarter, Kacmar, Perrewé, & Johnson, 2003; Kacmar & Ferris, 1991; Nye & Witt, 1993) and subsequently

is available in a variety of lengths. The POPS is a 12-item survey that is reported on a 5-point Likert scale 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*). The POPS measures employee's perceptions of organizational politics across three subscales: general political behavior, going along to get ahead, and pay and promotion (Ferris & Kacmar, 1991). For the purposes of this study, only the overall composite score was used for analysis. Sample items included "Favoritism not merit gets people ahead" and "Don't speak up for fear of retaliation." Four items on the POPS (promotions go to top performers, rewards come to hard workers, encouraged to speak out, and no place for yes men) required reverse scoring. Internal consistency estimate for reliability for the POPS was reported as .87. I

### **Measures of Work Withdrawal Behaviors**

Measures of WWB included 20 items designed specifically for use in Hanisch and Hulin's 1990 and 1991 studies on voluntary organizational withdrawal behaviors and used in subsequent studies by Hanisch and Hulin (1995) and Laczko and Hanisch (1999). Some limitations exist in measuring organizational withdrawal behaviors individually (absenteeism, lateness) due to difficulties in establishing consistent operational definitions for withdrawal behaviors as constructs (Harrison, 2002). However the approach of Hanisch and Hulin (1990; 1991) to categorize organizational withdrawal behaviors into withdrawal families, such as work withdrawal and job withdrawal has been measured with increased, but low reliability with Cronbach's alpha ranging from .51 to .62 (Hanisch & Hulin, 1991). For the purposes of this study work withdrawal behavior measures were used.

Items were scored on a five-point scale with varying endpoints for each item. One item, engaging in unfavorable job behaviors, is dichotomously scored. A score of 0 indicates that individual reports never engaging in an unfavorable work behavior or “maybe once a year.” A score of 1 is assigned if an individual reports engaging in unfavorable work behaviors “two to three times a year” through “once a week.” Sample items include: “Making excuses to go somewhere to get out of work,” “How often are you later for work,” and “How often do you expect to be absent from your job?” The measures developed by Hanisch and Hulin (1990; 1991) were appropriate measures as the original measures were first used with similar employees as the current study, including both academic and nonacademic staff members at a large public university.

### **Political Skill Inventory (PSI)**

The PSI developed by Ferris et al. (2005) is an 18-item survey that participants rate items using a 7-point Likert scale. The ratings on the PSI range from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The PSI assigns items based on four areas related to political skill: networking ability (NA), interpersonal influence (II), social astuteness (SA), and apparent sincerity (AS). For the purposes of this study the overall composite score on the PSI was used in the analysis. The PSI was developed and validated across three studies using employees from undergraduate students, professionals working in law firms, administrators in public K-12 schools, and financial services office branch managers. The samples used in the development and validation of the PSI included individuals from various levels within the organization including supervisors, peers, and subordinates. No items on the PSI require reverse scoring. Sample items include: “At

work, I know a lot of important people and am well connected “ and “I am good at building relationships with influential people at work.” Ferris et al. (1999) report acceptable reliability of the final 18 PSI items ( $\alpha = .86$ ,  $M = 3.89$ ,  $\sigma = .38$ )

### **Demographic Measures.**

The final survey contained nine self-report demographic items including: participant gender, race, ethnicity, position tenure (number of years working in current position), organization tenure (number of years at current institution), career tenure (number of years working in higher education), position within organizational hierarchy (Executive/VP/Assistant/ Associate VP Dean; Assistant/Associate Dean/Executive Director/Director; Associate/ Assistant Director; Administrator; Classified or Support Staff), highest degree earned (No degree; Associate’s; Bachelor’s; Master’s; Ph.D. or Ed.D.; J.D.; or Other), and whether the employee’s current institution is a member of unified-state system.

Categorical variables in the survey instrument included:

Sex: measured as 0 (*male*) or 1 (*female*)

Race: measured as 0 (*Caucasian*) or 1 (*African-American*) or 2 (*Asian*) or 3 (*Hispanic/Latino*) or 4 (*Other*) It included a second analysis level with 0 (*majority*) and 1 (*minority*) with all reported measures other than Caucasian collapsed into the minority analysis level.

Ethnicity: measured as 0 (*Not of Hispanic Origin*) or 1 (*Hispanic Origin*)

Career Tenure: self-reported as number of total years working in higher education

Organization Tenure: self-reported as number of total years working at institution

Position Tenure: self-reported as number of total years working in current position

Current Position in Organization: Reported as Executive Level (Assistant/Associate Dean, Dean, Assistant/Associate Vice President or Vice President), Director Level (Assistant/Associate Director, Director), Administrator (Non-managerial level within organization), Classified or Support Staff

Highest degree earned: (No degree, Associate's, Bachelor's, Master's, Ph.D or Ed.D., J.D., or Other),

Unified State System reports as: 0 (*No*) or 1 (*Yes*)

The final survey included 60 items including demographic information and measures from three empirically tested surveys: Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale (Hochwarter, Kacmar, Perrewé, & Johnson, 2003), Work Withdrawal Behavior measures (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990), and the Political Skill Inventory (Ferris, Treadway, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, Kacmar, Douglas & Frink, 2005). Permission to use each survey, including requesting full versions of the organizational withdrawal behavior measure (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990), was obtained from the applicable researchers (see Appendices E, F, and G).

### **Survey Administration**

Participants received an invitation to complete the electronic survey via email. The email invitation to participate included a link to access the survey. The researcher excluded his current place of employment from the study to eliminate any potential

conflict of interest. Potential participants were provided with an email stating the all results are anonymous and that no personally identifiable information was collected.

**Data Collection.** All data was collected via the online survey tool Survey Monkey. Internet protocol filtering was used for the survey administration to reduce the possibility of participants responding to the survey multiple times. Participants were also prompted at the beginning of the survey with information about the nature of the study, how their participation would benefit the proposed research topic, and informed consent.

At the end of the survey participants were prompted with debriefing information that include the nature of the research and how to obtain copies of the final research once approved. No follow-up was required, however participants were provided with the researcher's contact information if they have any specific questions about the research after they completed the online survey.

### **Data Analysis**

Survey responses were reviewed and incomplete or unusable surveys were eliminated from the final data set prior to analysis. Survey data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 21.0. Correlations and regression techniques were used to test the hypotheses and answer the research questions. Responses to the research specific items were compared to determine the frequency of self-reported participation in organizational withdrawal behaviors. Intercorrelations for study variables (perceptions of organizational politics, organizational withdrawal behaviors and political skill) in regression analyses were calculated prior to regression analysis. Data cleaning included elimination of outliers that may skew the statistical

analyses. The predictor variables in this study were employee perceptions of organizational politics, employee political skill, position within organizational hierarchy (level), and tenure. The criterion variable was employee work withdrawal behaviors.

### **Justification for Methods**

The use of self-report survey data increased in the Industrial/Organizational Psychology field between the years of 1980 and 2000 (Austin, Scherbuam, & Mahlman, 2004). In addition, there has been a significant increase in the use of self-report data in industrial/organizational research between 1990 and 2000, with an increase from 30% to 80% respectively. Rogelberg, Church, Waclawski, and Stanton (2004) indicated that internet survey research in organizational psychology research allows the researcher to be able to collect a higher number of responses from a large sample, including the ability to access participants in typically hard to reach locations/areas. In addition, the software that is used to develop and administer the survey also provides tools that allow the data to be analyzed and manipulated in a shorter time frame. While there are concerns with self-report data, since the focus is on employee perceptions and attitudes using an anonymous survey design was designed to alleviate anxiety and apprehension of the participants.

### **Potential Limitations**

The current study has several potential limitations. First, the use of self-report data, while widely-used in research, assumes that the participants responded honestly to the survey items. Second, although the survey was anonymous, participants may have been hesitant to respond to the survey items that were sensitive towards their current position at their college.

### **Risks to Participants**

The current study was designed to minimize the risk to participants. Participants in the study were presented with Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of the proposed study via informed consent that also included details about participant responses and how they were used. All participants were informed of how their responses were recorded and that all information contained within their individual responses are to remain anonymous. The survey items, while designed to minimize any risks to participants, may provide some source of stress and anxiety. Participants were presented with this possibility at the time of informed consent and had the option to stop the survey at any point.

### **Summary and Transition**

A quantitative methodology was used in this study to answer the research questions. The researcher collected responses from participants via an anonymous electronic survey to minimize the risk to participants as well as encourage as many participants as possible to participate in the study, especially due to the sensitive nature of the topic and measures of interest in the study.

Chapter 4 reviews the results of the study, including participant demographics, data cleaning procedures, descriptive statistics, and data analyses conducted for each research question. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of this study, including recommendations for community colleges and community college administrators, and recommendations for future research.

## Chapter 4: Results

Organizational politics is a widely researched topic in organizational psychology; however, little is known about employee characteristics, such as the role of employee political skill that might reduce employees' perception of organizational politics and subsequent decisions to engage in work withdrawal behaviors. In this study, I sought to better understand the role of employee political skill in moderating community college employees' perception of organizational politics and decision to engage in work withdrawal behaviors. The following research questions guided this study:

1. Does the positive relationship between perception of organizational politics and work withdrawal behaviors found in other settings extend to a sample of community college employees?

*H<sub>01</sub>*. There will not be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between POPS and WWB scores.

*H<sub>11</sub>*. There will be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between POPS and WWB scores.

2. Is political skill inversely related to work withdrawal behaviors?

*H<sub>02</sub>*. There will not be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between PSI and WWB scores.

*H<sub>12</sub>*. There will be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between PSI and WWB scores.

3. Will political skill be an antidote diminishing the effect of perception of politics on work withdrawal behaviors?

*H*<sub>03</sub>: In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB scores simultaneously on POPS scores and PSI scores, the PSI coefficient will not be statistically different from zero or will be positive and statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , one-tailed.

*H*<sub>13</sub>: In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS and PSI, the PSI coefficient will be negative and statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , one-tailed.

4. Is the effect of perception of politics on work withdrawal behaviors moderated by political skill?

*H*<sub>04</sub>: In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, the interaction coefficient will not be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

*H*<sub>14</sub>: In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, the interaction coefficient will be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

5. Does political skill account for the relationship between level and tenure with work withdrawal behaviors?

*H*<sub>05</sub>: In a sequential multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, then simultaneously on level and tenure, the Block effect of level and tenure will not be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

*H*<sub>15</sub>: In a sequential multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, then simultaneously on level and

tenure, the Block effect of level and tenure will be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

Prior to the inferential analysis to answer these research questions, I present a description of the actual data collection frame, address data cleaning issues, and provide descriptive statistics for demographic variables and key study variables. Results of inferential analyses are then presented, and a summary of results ends the chapter.

### **Data Collection**

Participants for the study were recruited through select national professional organizations, including the National Academic Advisors Association (NACADA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). Due to lower than expected response rates, the Association of American Community Colleges (AACC), originally listed as a targeted community partner, was added as well as two additional community partners that were not initially specified in the study's original design. The additional community partners added were the National Orientation Directors Association (NODA) and the Association of College Personnel Administrators (ACPA). The Walden University IRB approved these changes in procedure.

Participants completed an online survey that included the POPS, the PSI, and the WWB, as well as select demographic information related to the study. The survey was duplicated for each professional organization to maintain their responses separate from the other organizations. This was done to better identify response rates for each group of participants invited to participate in the study since each community partner organization differed in how participants were invited to participate in the study. The data collection

time period spanned from November 15, 2013 through May 14, 2014 with a total of 217 usable responses collected. This time frame was longer than anticipated due to low response rates from the initial community partners that were selected.

A total of 500 community college members of NASPA were randomly selected by the staff and were invited via e-mail to participate in the study. A reminder e-mail was sent 2 weeks after the initial invitation to participate in the study. This yielded a total of 69 responses (13.8% response rate). ACPA also randomly selected 208 community college members and invited the members via e-mail to participate in the study. A reminder e-mail was also sent 2 weeks after the initial invitation. A total of 12 responses were received out of the total 208 initially invited to participate (5.8%). The AACC declined to distribute e-mail invitations to members but did provide me with access to members via the AACC LinkedIn group. I posted four invitations to participate over a 90 day period. At the time of posting to LinkedIn, the AACC group had 8,204 members, with a total of six responses (>1% response rate).

NODA and NACADA preferred to have the surveys distributed via targeted listservs. The total number of responses received via the NODA listserv was 59; however, a response rate is not available because the data were not available as to how many members were subscribed to the listserv. The total number of responses received via the NACADA listserv was 92, and similar to NODA, a response rate could not be calculated since the number of members on the listserv was not available.

## Data Cleaning

Incomplete surveys and those that did not fit the criteria for inclusion in the study were eliminated. Of the 240 responses received, 15 cases were excluded because of substantially incomplete data, seven cases were excluded because they identified as faculty rather than management or staff, and one case was excluded because it came from a 4-year college. A total of 217 usable surveys remained for analysis.

Six items in the POPS scale were reverse scored prior to analysis (promotions go to top performers, rewards come to hard workers, encouraged to speak out, no place for yet men, I spend a lot of time at work developing connections with others, and I am good at getting people to like me). Due to an error in labeling, POPS12 was deleted and, therefore, was not a part of the POPS composite score used in the data analysis. Four items in the WWB scale were reverse coded (working with new or younger coworkers to help them learn their job in the organization, helped new or younger coworkers learn their job, took responsibility for initiating positive changes in your work, and done things that are not required but make your organization a better place to work).

For the 21 WWB items, two cases had missing data on one item. Their respective case mean value across the other WWB items was imputed. Another case was identified as an extreme outlier (5.32 *SD* above the mean) on the WWB composite, which affected skewness and kurtosis. The case's value was modified to 3.3 *SD* above the mean, corresponding to a reasonably expected value at  $p = .001$ , which greatly improved skewness and kurtosis.

## Descriptive Statistics

Tables 1 - 5 list the frequency and overall percent of sample by community partner organization; system type (unified system or not); sex, race and ethnicity; and highest degree completed, respectively. Table 1 lists the distribution of responses by partner organization. Most respondents were members of NACADA, NASPA, or NODA, with the lowest number were affiliated with AACCC and ACPA.

Table 1

*Frequency and Percent of Respondents by Partner Organization (N = 217)*

Organization	# of Respondents	Valid-%
NACADA	84	38.7
NASPA	64	29.5
NODA	52	24.0
AACCC	4	1.8
ACPA	13	6.0

Table 2 presents the frequency of respondents by system type, specifically whether the community college at which the respondent was employed is part of a unified state system. A higher percentage of respondents worked at a community college (62.7%) that is part of a unified state system. Community colleges that are part of a unified system are perceived to have greater politics because major decisions about policies and curriculum are made on a state-wide basis rather than at each individual community college.

Table 2

*Frequency and Percent of Respondents by System Type (N = 217)*

Unified System	# of Respondents	Valid-%
Yes	136	62.7
No	81	37.3

Table 3 presents the frequency of respondents by gender, with females making up the clear majority (72.1%). In higher education, more women are employed than men in both administration and faculty roles.

Table 3

*Frequency and Percent of Respondents by Sex (N = 215)*

Sex	# of Respondents	Valid-%
Male	60	27.9
Female	155	72.1

Table 4 presents the frequency of respondents by race and ethnicity. It was not a variable used in the analysis for this study, but is important in describing the sample.

Table 4

*Frequency and Percent of Respondents by Race and Ethnicity (N = 214)*

Category	# of Respondents	Valid-%
Race		
Not of Hispanic Origin	196	91.6
Hispanic Origin	18	8.4
Ethnicity		
Black or African-American	23	10.7
White	177	82.7
Asian	4	1.9
American-Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.5
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	0.5
Two or more races	8	3.7

Table 5 lists the numbers of respondents and highest degree earned. While not a variable used in the analysis, the majority of respondents (70.0%) reported having earned a master's degree that is typically the minimum requirement in most professional level positions in higher education.

Table 5

*Frequency and Percent of Respondents by Highest Earned Degree (N = 217)*

Degree	# of Respondents	Valid-%
Ph.D. or Ed.D.	35	16.1
J.D.	2	0.9
Master's	152	70.0
Bachelor's	27	12.4
Associate's	1	0.5

Respondents were asked to identify their position within the community college as administrative support, staff, midlevel manager, or executive. Frequency and percent of respondents in each category are presented in Table 6. This variable was contrast coded for use in the analysis to answer Research Question 5. Although only nine respondents identified as administrative support, which reduced its power, it was retained as a distinct contrast category conceptually different enough from the category of staff.

Table 6

*Frequency and Percent of Respondents by Position Level (N = 217)*

Position	# of Respondents	Valid-%
Administrative Support Staff	9	4.1
Staff	59	27.2
Mid-level Manager: Assistant Dean, Director, Coordinator	118	54.4
Executive Staff: Dean, Vice President, President	31	14.3

Respondents were asked to report the number of years working in higher education, the number of years at their current institution, and the number of years in their current position. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 7. For inferential analysis purposes to answer Research Question 5, these tenure variations were consolidated using principal components analysis, which extracted a very strong unidimensional component that accounted for 72.3% of total variance with high loadings for each variable; specifically, .82 for higher education, .89 for current institution, and .84 for current position.

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics for Tenure Variables (N = 217)*

	Tenure (in years)		
	Higher Education	Current Institution	Current Position
Mean	12.87	6.56	3.89
<i>SD</i>	8.60	6.28	3.93
Minimum	1.00	0.00	0.10
Median	10.00	4.50	2.50
Maximum	37.00	30.00	28.00

Descriptive statistics for the PSI, POPS, and WWB composite variables are presented in Table 8. All three scales were highly internally consistent as measured by Cronbach's alpha. Although WWB had some items with negative inter-item correlations, they did not appreciably affect the validity of the scale as Cronbach's alpha would not have improved by their removal. Skewness and kurtosis values were within the  $\pm 1.0$  normal range except for the WWB kurtosis value of 3.01. However, correlation and regression are robust to normality violations (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

Table 8

*Descriptive Statistics for PSI, POPS, and WWB Composite Variables (N = 217)*

	PSI	POPS	WWB
Mean	5.97	3.13	0.93
Std. Deviation	0.58	0.77	0.41
Minimum	4.11	1.36	0.10
Median	6.00	3.09	0.90
Maximum	7.00	4.91	3.10
Skewness	-0.65	0.26	0.88
Kurtosis	0.23	-0.44	3.01
Minimum inter-item correlation	.04	.20	-.14
Mean inter-item correlation	.33	.44	.18
Maximum inter-item correlation	.68	.66	.85
Cronbach's alpha	.90	.90	.80

### **Inferential Statistics**

Research Question 1. Does the positive relationship between perception of organizational politics and work withdrawal behaviors found in other settings extend to a sample of community college employees?

$H_0$ 1. There will not be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between POPS and WWB scores.

$H_1$ 1. There will be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between POPS and WWB scores.

POPS and WWB were statistically significantly positively correlated,  $r_{(215)} = .244$ ,  $p < .001$ , a medium-sized effect accounting for 6% of the variance. The null hypothesis was rejected—as perception of politics scores increased, withdrawal behavior scores tended to increase.

Research Question 2. Is political skill inversely related to work withdrawal behaviors?

*H*<sub>02</sub>. There will not be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between PSI and WWB scores.

*H*<sub>12</sub>. There will be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between PSI and WWB scores.

PSI and WWB were statistically significantly negatively correlated,  $r_{(215)} = -.281$ ,  $p < .001$ , a medium-sized effect accounting for nearly 8% of the variance. The null hypothesis was rejected—as political skill scores increased, withdrawal scores tended to decrease.

Research Question 3. Will political skill be an antidote diminishing the effect of perception of politics on work withdrawal behaviors?

*H*<sub>03</sub>: In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS and PSI, the PSI coefficient will not be statistically different from zero or will be positive and statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , one-tailed.

*H*<sub>13</sub>: In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS and PSI, the PSI coefficient will be negative and statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , one-tailed.

In the regression model, both POPS and PSI were statistically significant predictors of WWB—PSI:  $t_{(214)} = -3.64$ ,  $p < .001$ ; POPS:  $t_{(214)} = 2.94$ ,  $p = .004$ .

Combined they accounted for 11.5% of the variance in WWB,  $F_{(2, 214)} = 13.84$ ,  $p < .001$ .

The VIF was 1.05, well below the 2.00 critical value for any multicollinearity concern.

For PSI to have any potential antidote effect it would need to be negatively correlated with POPS, which it was,  $r_{(215)} = -.213, p = .002$ . However, there was not a total antidote effect because PSI was, itself, significant in the regression. So, the conditions stated in the alternative hypothesis were reviewed. As hypothesized in  $H_{13}$ , PSI was negative. Also, the POPS-WWB bivariate correlation was reduced from .244 to a partial correlation (i.e., controlling for PSI) of .197 and a semipartial correlation of .189. Therefore, PSI is somewhat of an antidote for the POPS relationship with WWB.

Table 9

*WWB Regressed on PSI and POPS*

Predictor	<i>B</i>	95%CI	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	<i>sr</i> <sup>2</sup>
PSI	-0.16	[-0.25, -0.07]	-.24	< .001	.055
POPS	0.10	[0.03, 0.16]	.19	.004	.036
Constant	1.58	[0.98, 2.18]			

Note.  $F_{(2, 214)} = 13.84, p < .001, R^2 = .115$ . *sr*<sup>2</sup> = squared semipartial correlation.

Research Question 4. Is the effect of perception of politics on work withdrawal behaviors moderated by political skill?

$H_{04}$ : In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, the interaction coefficient will not be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

$H_{14}$ : In a standard multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, the interaction coefficient will be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

Following standard practice to reduce nonessential collinearity, POPS and PSI were centered and their interaction computed from the centered linear transforms (Aiken

& West, 1991). Table 10 reports the results of the moderation model. As reported in Table 10, the interaction term was not significant,  $t_{(213)} = 1.03$ ,  $p = .302$ ; so, PSI does not moderate the effect of POPS. Therefore, we are unable to reject  $H_{04}$  in Research Question 4.

Table 10

*WWB Regressed on PSI, POPS, and Interaction*

Predictor <sup>a</sup>	<i>B</i>	95%CI	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	<i>sr</i> <sup>2</sup>
PSI	-0.16	[-0.25, -0.07]	-.24	< .001	.054
POPS	0.09	[0.03, 0.16]	.19	.005	.033
PSI*POPS	0.07	[-0.06, 0.19]	.07	.302	.004
Constant	0.93	[0.88, 0.98]			

*Note.*  $F_{(3, 213)} = 8.59$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .119$ .  $sr^2$  = squared semipartial correlation. <sup>a</sup>For this analysis, the predictors were centered.

Research Question 5. Does political skill account for the relationship between level and tenure with work withdrawal behaviors?

$H_{05}$ . In a sequential multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, then simultaneously on level and tenure, the Block effect of level and tenure will not be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

$H_{15}$ : In a sequential multiple regression regressing WWB simultaneously on POPS, PSI, and the interaction between POPS and PSI, then simultaneously on level and tenure, the Block effect of level and tenure will be statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed.

Since the interaction was not significant in the analysis between PSI and POPS on WWB it was excluded from the analysis for Research Question 5. Contrasts were created

in the position level variable since it was nominal and had four categories. Three contrast variables were created based on the original four categories (administrative support staff, staff, and mid-level manager). The reference category for this analysis was executive staff. The three position level contrast variables in the regression model were compared to the reference category. Table 11 reports the results of the sequential model with POPS and PSI entered in Block 1, and the three position level contrast variables and the tenure composite created from the principal components analysis entered in Block 2.

The block effect of position level and tenure was statistically significant,  $R^2 = .161$ ,  $F_{(4, 210)} = 2.93$ ,  $p = .022$ . Inspection of the coefficients for Model 2 showed that tenure was significant, but none of the position level contrast variables were significant (i.e., position level did not affect WWB while controlling for PSI, POPS, and tenure.) Based on this result, a follow-up standard regression was conducted to examine the combined and relative effects of PSI, POPS, and tenure on WWB (see Table 12).

Table 11

*Sequential Regression Analysis of Position Level and Tenure After Controlling for PSI and POPS*

Block and predictors	$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$\Delta F$	$p$
Block 1: PSI, POPS	.115	.115	13.84	< .001
Block 2: Position level, Tenure	.161	.047	2.93	.022

The combined effect of PSI, POPS, and tenure accounted for 14.3% of the variance in WWB,  $F_{(3, 213)} = 11.85$ ,  $p < .001$ . All three predictors were significant. Based on absolute value of the part correlations (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), PSI had the strongest effect, uniquely accounting for 4.9% of the WWB variance, semipartial- $r = -$

.221,  $t_{(213)} = -3.48, p = .001$ . POPS had the next strongest effect, uniquely accounting for 4.1% of WWB variance, semipartial- $r = .202, t_{(213)} = 3.18, p = .002$ . Tenure uniquely accounted for 2.9% of WWB variance, semipartial- $r = -.169, t_{(213)} = 2.66, p = .008$ . All predictors were in expected direction of effect. As PSI increased, WWB decreased. As POPS increased, WWB increased. As tenure increased, WWB decreased.

Table 12

*WWB Regressed on PSI, POPS, and Tenure*

Predictor <sup>a</sup>	<i>B</i>	95%CI	$\beta$	<i>p</i>	<i>sr</i> <sup>2</sup>
PSI	-0.15	[-0.24, -0.07]	-.23	.001	.049
POPS	0.11	[0.04, 0.17]	.21	.002	.041
Tenure	-0.07	[-0.12, -0.02]	-.17	.008	.029
Constant					

*Note.*  $F_{(3, 213)} = 11.85, p < .001, R^2 = .143$ . *sr*<sup>2</sup> = squared semipartial correlation.

### Summary and Transition

A series of analyses answered five separate research questions regarding (a) the relationship between POPS and WWB, (b) the relationship between PSI and WWB, (c) the antidote effect of PSI on the POPS-WWB relationship, (d) the moderating effect of PSI on the POPS-WWB relationship, and (e) the effect of position level and tenure on WWB after controlling for PSI and POPS.

As hypothesized, POPS and WWB were statistically significantly positively correlated. As politics increased, withdrawal behaviors tended to increase. Also as hypothesized, PSI and WWB were statistically significantly negatively correlated. As political skill increased, withdrawal behaviors decreased. When considered simultaneously, there was evidence that PSI diminished the POPS effect on WWB,

serving as a partial antidote. However, PSI did not moderate the POPS effect on WWB—that is, the POPS-WWB relationship did not wholly depend on one’s level of political skill. Finally, it was found that tenure, but not position level, added to prediction of withdrawal behaviors while controlling for PSI and POPS. As tenure increased, withdrawal behaviors tended to decrease.

Chapter 5 discusses the contribution of the results to the literature on political skill, perceptions of organizational politics, and organizational withdrawal behaviors. This includes limitations of the current study and recommendations for further research.

## Chapter 5: Results and Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to examine whether or not the positive relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and organizational withdrawal behaviors found in other settings extended to a sample of community college employees. In addition, the role of employee's political skill was researched to determine if it was an antidote to organizational withdrawal behaviors. As can be seen in Table 10, the relationship between perception of organizational politics and organizational withdrawal behaviors is positively correlated ( $r=.244, p<.001$ ).

### **Political Skill, Perceptions of Organizational Politics, and Withdrawal Behaviors**

Employee political skill was hypothesized to be a potential antidote for the effect of perception of organizational politics on organizational withdrawal behaviors. As this research has shown, employee political skill is somewhat of an antidote for the effect of POPS on WWB. While political skill may moderate the effect of POPS on WWB, I was unable to find evidence that the effects of POPS on WWB are moderated by PSI. This is contrary to prior research that has reported POPS as a moderator between predictor and outcome variables (Ferris et al. 1996).

Employee tenure and level within an organization has been central to the research on POPS in the literature and, therefore, was an aspect of the research. Not only is tenure prominent in the research on POPS, but it is also a defining characteristic among higher education administrators. The clearly defined levels within most higher education institutions are accompanied by clearly defined job roles. I used contrasts in the level variable between three lower levels and the highest level, executive staff. While tenure

was significant, there was no significant variation among the three levels (see Table 11). A follow-up standard regression was conducted (see Table 12). The combined effect of PSI, POPS, and tenure accounted for 14.3% of the variance in WWB,  $F_{(3, 213)} = 11.85, p < .001$ . The strongest effects were for PSI and POPS.

### **Recommendations for Community College Administrators**

The results of the current study provide several recommendations to help community college administrators, both seasoned and new professionals, adjust and navigate the political environment. Tull, Hurt, and Saunders (2009) recommended that new professionals and their supervisors, specifically in student affairs administration, be conscientious of the socialization process of new professionals. This is supported by the current study since tenure was found to moderate the PSI-POPS-WWB relationship. The combined effect of PSI, POPS, and tenure accounted for 14.3% of the variance in WWB,  $F_{(3, 213)} = 11.85, p < .001$ . As new professionals may be more impressionable due to their lower tenure both in the higher education professional landscape and their respective institution, accounting for their socialization process, which includes assistance in navigating the political landscape is recommended. Collins recounted the experience of one student affairs administrator at a small college who experienced the impact of a political environment and made adjustments to their work style to successfully navigate the political environment (as cited in Tull et al. 2009). These adjustments included learning the “rules of the game” as well as clarifying expectations.

The recommendation to include an orientation to navigating new higher education professionals to the political landscape can be expanded to graduate programs that

prepare new professionals for they tend to not prepare graduates for the realities of working within an organization of higher education (Clientele, Henning, Jackson, Kennedy, & Sloane, 2007; Helm, 2004). Kuk and Cuyjet recommended that the curriculum in graduate programs that prepare new college administrators should focus on the socialization aspect of working in higher education and student affairs (as cited in Tull et al., 2009). This is similar to the recommendations for the corporate sector where employees are recommended to embrace the politics within the organization in order to experience success and higher levels of tenure (Coates, 1994). A recommendation based on the results of the current research is to include a capstone component to graduate programs that focuses on preparing individuals to enter the professional workplace, including a focus on understanding organizational realities such as organizational politics. This recommendation is supported by the recommendations of Evans (1988) who recommends organizations consider some redesign to help reduce attrition as well as provide employees with strategies to acclimate to their organization's environment. Graduate assistantship programs might also consider adding a self-reflection and report component to the assistantship program, especially in graduate programs that require field experience hours where assistantship programs are used to fulfill said field experience requirements (Kuk & Cuyjet as cited in Tull et al., 2009).

### **Limitations of the Current Study**

There are several practical limitations to the current study. First, while measures of PSI, POPS, and WWB have all been used in empirical research, the use of self-report

measures increases the chance of bias, including social desirability bias, due to the sensitive nature of this topic.

A second potential limitation of the study relates to the nature of the community college employee's role within the organization. While tenure and level were used as a measure in this study, some employees may have multiple roles. Administrators may also teach as adjunct faculty, or were faculty members (or vice versa). Because roles may sometimes overlap, the responses to all three measures may be skewed.

A third limitation is that one of the POPS measures, due to a labeling issue, had to be eliminated from the final analysis. While multicollinearity was not a concern in this study, the composite score was not as robust since it only included 11 items of the 12 item POPS scale.

A fourth limitation of the current study is the sample size. The resulting sample size was limited due to differing protocols among the higher education professional organizations selected. The current study was short by 33 responses of the desired sample size in the design. The sample also was skewed in terms of respondents by professional organization type; more responses were received from organizations that are smaller in size (NACADA and NODA) as compared to the larger professional organizations (AACC, NASPA, and ACPA).

### **Future Implications for Research**

In this study, I extended the research on organizational withdrawal behaviors and the impact of perception of organizational politics and employee political skill, especially in the field of higher education and community colleges. The potential for future research

in this area is a replication of the study with the additional POPS measure and a larger sample size. Additional WWB constructs could be included in future studies, including turnover intentions and attrition as measured by number of years at the current institution and prior employment in a college or university setting. While my focus was on the moderating effects of PSI on POPS and WWB, an intermediary effect may be the role of job burnout that may precede WWB. Additional studies could be conducted on the role of PSI in moderating the effects of POPS and job burnout similar to Jawahar, Stone, and Kisamore (2007).

Future studies in this area should also focus on the positive aspects of both organizational politics and being an employee in higher education through a mixed methods approach that measures quantitative variables such as PSI and POPS but also uses qualitative information through structured interviews. Fedor, Maslyn, Farmer, and Bettenhausen (2008) report that among graduate students in a master's of business administration program who were also working in various sectors, positive aspects of organizational politics resulted in higher reported values for job satisfaction and organizational commitment via the psychological contract with the organization. Focusing on positive aspects of organizational politics should include using Bluedorn's (1982) conceptual model of organizational turnover, specifically focusing on job satisfaction as an antecedent among community college administrators and related POPS, PSI, and WWB measures. Rosser and Javinar (as cited in Tull et al., 2009) indicated the antecedents mediate the individual's response to the organization based on their experiences and subsequent turnover intentions. Recommended research should include

PSI and job satisfaction as specific antecedents to measure both job withdrawal behaviors, work withdrawal behaviors, intent to turnover, and turnover rates among community college administrators.

The current study was limited to the role of political skill in mitigating organizational withdrawal behaviors. Prior researchers (Falkenburg & Schyns, 2007) have identified that a complex relationship exists between various factors (such as work satisfaction and organizational commitment and employee work withdrawal behaviors. Future studies should include additional aspects related to working in a political climate, including perceived workloads related to positions, perceived organizational justice, work satisfaction, and organizational commitment in the context of organizational politics and work withdrawal behaviors. Similar results are reported by Carmeli (2005) with employees in service industries who perceive their jobs as challenging. Employees with challenging jobs report lower levels of organizational withdrawal behaviors. Future researchers should focus on the aforementioned characteristics as they relate to employee perceptions of organizational politics and organizational withdrawal behaviors. This includes assessing employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment as it relates to employee political skill and subsequent organizational withdrawal behaviors. Organizational fit and job security are also recommended characteristics to explore as explaining the role of tenure in reducing employee organizational withdrawal behaviors. These characteristics should be examined as relates to employee tenure within the organization and hierarchical level.

Additional characteristics and theoretical perspectives may also provide insight into the factors that reduce employees' perception of organizational politics and subsequent engagement in organizational withdrawal behaviors. Rosser and Javinar (2003) identified six dimensions of quality of work life among college administrators across the five Carnegie classifications, including community college administrators. Lawler (1994) suggested that drive theory and unmet drives, such as the dimensions identified by Rosser and Javinar (2003), are causes for cessation of behaviors. Future researchers should examine each of these dimensions as they relate to an employee's level of political skill and subsequent organizational withdrawal behaviors. Research in this area is recommended using a mixed methods approach including structured interviews to better understand characteristics and experiences of community college administrators related to each dimension. Dimension 4, building external relationships, is recommended as a focus because it is related to understanding organizational culture, including the organization's political landscape.

Similarly, future research should focus on what factors contribute to the political landscape and subsequent perception of organizational politics within an organization, including whether such factors are co-dependent with other factors (such as organizational culture) in the community college work environment and whether such factors are dependent upon the culture or ethnic background of the individual employee. Ochieng, Walumbwa, and Lawler (2003) reported that job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and transformational leadership are effective in reducing organizational

withdrawal behaviors and that this impact is not dependent upon an individual's culture or ethnic background.

The results from this study also indicate that employee tenure has a role in reducing employee engagement in work withdrawal behaviors. Similar support has been reported by Indartono and Chen (2011) regarding the role of formal academic tenure in an educational environment. Future studies may also want to review differences in tenure among employees who work in administrative roles, but are by classification faculty members, who are eligible for tenure and not eligible for tenure. The focus in community colleges on teaching rather than research or other academic activities is another factor to explore in future studies, as the stronger focus on teaching may provide insights into perception of organizational politics among both faculty and administrators. The community college, while uniquely American, may include individuals from a wide variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, who sometimes hold multiple roles and subsequently who perceive the political landscape through different perspectives.

### **Potential Impact for Positive Social Change**

The current study focus has several implications of positive social change in the American community college system. The first is finding ways to decrease attrition rates among community college administrators. Community college administrators typically provide services to students that support the academic and non-academic aspects of pursuing a college degree. Researchers in the field of student retention report that a student's connection to the institution can be a key factor in a student's retention and persistence at any college or university (Tinto, 1994). College administrators who make

such a connection to students and subsequently leave the institution, breaking the connection, may indirectly reduce the student's decision to continue at the college or delay their progress (Tinto, 1994).

The focus on community college administrators is more significant, as open access institutions, they provide access to students who might otherwise not have access to a college education. Finding ways to help reduce the attrition of community college administrators is a key aspect of the college completion agenda. The current study's findings indicate that keeping individuals longer at institutions reduces organizational withdrawal behaviors.

The second impact for positive social change relates to promoting the development and growth of new professionals in community colleges. Preparing new professionals to enter the higher education political landscape should be an essential part of graduate programs and experiential opportunities in graduate school. While research exists that discusses the socialization of new professionals (Tull et. al., 2009), the direct connection with organizational politics is rather weak. The results of the current study indicate that employee political skill is somewhat of an antidote of the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and organizational withdrawal behaviors.

The current study has extended the literature on employee political skill, organizational politics, and organizational withdrawal behaviors through the first direct use of such measures among college administrators, specifically community college administrators. Service industries, such as higher education, must focus on delivering high quality, effective services both inside and outside of the classroom. However,

preparing new and current professionals, as well as retaining the people who deliver these services, for the realities of the higher education political landscape is a key aspect of the quality and effectiveness as services.

Chapter 5 has reviewed the significance of the current study, implications for practice, and recommendations for future research. The results of the current study support the need for employees to navigate the political environment through development of political skill. The implications of continued research in this area benefit both the employees in community colleges but also the students who attend community colleges. The current goal of increasing college completion rates, especially in the community college sector, will not be possible without supportive and nurturing environments for students that help to address their needs while in college. This can only be possible through well-trained staff and faculty who provide effective services and innovative and engaging educational opportunities. Employees in community colleges who are not prepared to engage the political landscape will not be able to provide the services needed to assist students in the pursuit of their academic and career goals. In order to better prepare current and future professionals additional research is needed that expands on the results of the current study providing an increased depth of understanding of the relationship between political skill, organizational politics, and resulting organizational withdrawal behaviors.

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	<p><b>ASSOCIATION FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE</b>          1133 15th Street, NW - Suite 1000 - WASHINGTON, DC 20005 USA          Tel: +1 202.293.9300 x146   Fax: +1 202.293.9350  <a href="mailto:llockman@psychologicalscience.org">llockman@psychologicalscience.org</a>   <a href="http://www.psychologicalscience.org">www.psychologicalscience.org</a></p>
	<p><b>International Convention of Psychological Science (ICPS)</b>          Amsterdam, The Netherlands   12-14 March 2015  <i>Be part of the Inaugural event exploring the latest in Integrative science. Read about ICPS and see the list of distinguished speakers <a href="#">here</a>.</i>          Call for submissions <a href="#">NOW OPEN</a>.</p>

—Original Message—

From: david.ross@waldenu.edu [mailto:david.ross@waldenu.edu]  
 Sent: Tuesday, August 05, 2014 12:19 AM  
 To: APS  
 Subject: Request for Permission

The following information was submitted through the Contact form on August 5, 2014.

Name: David Ross  
 Email: [david.ross@waldenu.edu](mailto:david.ross@waldenu.edu)  
 Subject: Request for Permission

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/2/?ui=2&ik=3f68eab0e6&view=pt&search=inbox&th=147a...> 8/6/2014

## Appendix D: Proposed Survey Instrument

**POPS Measures (Ferris & Kacmar, 1991)**

1-5 Likert Scale

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Factor 1: General Political Behavior

- 1) One group always get their way
- 2) Influential group no one crosses
- 3) Policy changes only help a few
- 4) Build themselves up by tearing others down
- 5) Favoritism not merit gets people ahead
- 6) Don't speak up for fear of retaliation

Factor 2: Going along to get ahead

- 7) Promotions go to top performers (RS)
- 8) Rewards come to hard workers (RS)
- 9) Encouraged to speak out (RS)
- 10) No place for yes men (RS)

Factor 3: Pay and promotion

- 11) Pay and promotion policies are not politically applied
- 12) Pay and promotion rules are consistent with policies

\*\*(RS) Requires reverse scoring

**Work Withdrawal Behaviors** (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990;1991)

Scale 0(Never) 1(Seldom) 2(Sometimes)-4(Many times)

- 13) Took frequent or long breaks
- 14) Using equipment (including the phone) for personal purposes without permission
- 15) Working with new or younger co-workers to help them learn their job in the organization
- 16) Constantly looking at your watch or clock
- 17) Ignored non-essential tasks
- 18) Spent time on non-work activities (e.g., talking, emailing, web browsing) while at work
- 19) Wanted to leave work early
- 20) Doing poor quality work
- 21) Did not want to work to the best of your ability
- 22) Made excuses to go somewhere to avoid the workplace
- 23) Stayed home from work when you had even a minor illness
- 24) Drank alcohol after work because of things that happened at work
- 25) Made excuses to miss meetings
- 26) Went to work late
- 27) Failing to attend scheduled meetings
- 28) Helped new or younger co-workers learn their jobs
- 29) Took responsibility for initiating positive changes in your work
- 30) Made excuses to get out of the office

- 31) Completed work assignments late
- 32) Done things that are not required, but that make your college a better place to work
- 33) Hesitated to volunteer for a committee (new item)

**Political Skill Inventory** (Ferris et al. 1999)

*Instructions:* Using the following 7-point scale, please place the number on the blank before each item that best describes how much you agree with each statement about yourself.

- 1 = *strongly disagree*  
 2 = *disagree*  
 3 = *slightly disagree*  
 4 = *neutral*  
 5 = *slightly agree*  
 6 = *agree*  
 7 = *strongly agree*

34. \_\_\_\_\_ I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others. (NA)\*
35. \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to make most people feel comfortable and at ease around me. (II)†\*
36. \_\_\_\_\_ I am able to communicate easily and effectively with others. (II)\*
37. \_\_\_\_\_ It is easy for me to develop good rapport with most people. (II)†\*
38. \_\_\_\_\_ I understand people very well. (SA)†\*
39. \_\_\_\_\_ I am good at building relationships with influential people at work. (NA)\*
40. \_\_\_\_\_ I am particularly good at sensing the motivations and hidden agendas of others. (SA)\*
41. \_\_\_\_\_ When communicating with others, I try to be genuine in what I say and do. (AS)\*
42. \_\_\_\_\_ At work, I know a lot of important people and am well connected. (NA)\*
43. \_\_\_\_\_ I spend a lot of time at work developing connections with others. (NA)\*
44. \_\_\_\_\_ I am good at getting people to like me. (II)\*
45. \_\_\_\_\_ It is important that people believe I am sincere in what I say and do. (AS)\*
46. \_\_\_\_\_ I try to show a genuine interest in other people. (AS)\*
47. \_\_\_\_\_ I am good at using my connections and network to make things happen at work. (NA)\*
48. \_\_\_\_\_ I have good intuition or savvy about how to present myself to others. (SA)\*
49. \_\_\_\_\_ I always seem to instinctively know the right things to say or do to influence others. (SA)\*
50. \_\_\_\_\_ I pay close attention to people's facial expressions. (SA)\*
51. \_\_\_\_\_ I usually try to find common ground with others.†

\*(NA) Networking Ability, (AS) Apparent Sincerity, (SA) Social Astuteness, (II) Interpersonal Influence

Demographic Measures

52. Sex  Male  Female

53. Ethnicity Caucasian, African-American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Other

54. Race:  Hispanic Origin  Not of Hispanic Origin

55. Career Tenure: # of Years working in higher education \_\_\_\_\_

56. Organization Tenure: # of Years at Institution \_\_\_\_\_

57. Position Tenure: # of Years working in current position \_\_\_\_\_

58. Current Position in Organization:

- Executive Level (Assistant/Associate Dean, Dean, Assistant/Associate Vice President, or Vice President)
- Director Level (Assistant/Associate Director, Director)
- Administrator (Non-managerial position at the institution)
- Classified Staff

59. Highest Degree Earned:

- No degree
- Associate's
- Bachelor's
- Master's
- Ph.D. or Ed.D.
- J.D.
- Other

60. Unified State System

Yes  No

## Appendix E: Permission to Use POPS and PSI

Printable Format

Page 1 of 2

**Subject :** RE: Permission Request**Date :** Fri, Dec 28, 2012 02:42 PM CST**From :** "Ferris, Gerald" <gferris@cob.fsu.edu>**To :** David Ross <david.ross@waldenu.edu>

Mr. Ross,

Your research sounds very interesting - I hope all goes well for your dissertation. Yes, you have my permission to use both measure - i.e., the POPS measure and the Political Skill Inventory.

GRF

**From:** David Ross [david.ross@waldenu.edu]**Sent:** Friday, December 28, 2012 12:34 PM**To:** Ferris, Gerald**Subject:** Permission Request

Dear Dr. Ferris,

Good afternoon. My name is David J. Ross and I am currently a doctoral student at Walden University in the Organizational Psychology program. I am currently in the dissertation phase and am seeking permission to utilize the 12-item version of the Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale as well as the Political Skill Inventory for use in my research. I also intend to use measures of organizational withdrawal behaviors developed by Hanish and Hulin (1991). I am currently finalizing my proposal and completing the required checklist before defending my proposal. I have included my proposed research questions and hypotheses as a reference for this request:

Research Question 1. Does the positive relationship between perception of organizational politics and work withdrawal behaviors found in other settings extend to a sample of community college employees?

$H_0$ : There will not be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between POPS and OWB scores.

$H_1$ : There will be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between POPS and OWB scores.

Research Question 2. Is political skill inversely related to work withdrawal behaviors?

$H_0$ : There will not be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between PSI and OWB scores.

$H_2$ : There will be a statistically significant correlation at  $p < .05$ , two-tailed, between PSI and OWB scores.

Research Question 3. Will political skill be an antidote diminishing the effect of perception of politics on work withdrawal behaviors?

$H_0$ : In a standard multiple regression regressing OWB simultaneously on POPS and PSI, the PSI coefficient will not be statistically different from zero or will be positive and statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , one-tailed.

$H_3$ : In a standard multiple regression regressing OWB simultaneously on POPS and PSI, the PSI coefficient will be negative and statistically significant at  $p < .05$ , one-tailed.

## Appendix F: Permission to Use Work Withdrawal Measures – Dr. Hulin

Printable Format

Page 1 of 3

Subject : Re: Permission and Materials Request

Date : Tue, Feb 05, 2013 12:13 PM CST

From : Chuck Hulin <[chlulin@cyrus.psych.illinois.edu](mailto:chlulin@cyrus.psych.illinois.edu)>To : David Ross <[david.ross@waldenu.edu](mailto:david.ross@waldenu.edu)>

I have written to Professor Hanisch at Iowa State University and asked her to forward a copy of the scales to you. Her email address is <[kathann@iastate.edu](mailto:kathann@iastate.edu)>.

At 11:45 AM 2/5/2013, you wrote:

Hi Dr. Hulin,

Thank you very much for your reply and permission to use the scales in my dissertation research. I have attempted to find the complete scales and items you and Dr. Hanisch utilized in your 1990 study but have not been able to locate them. If it is not too inconvenient would you mind sending the complete list of items and related scales?

I would be very happy to send a brief summary of my findings when I finish.

Thank you again!  
Sincerely,

David J. Ross

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Original E-mail

From : Chuck Hulin [[chlulin@cyrus.psych.illinois.edu](mailto:chlulin@cyrus.psych.illinois.edu)]

Date : 02/05/2013 11:01 AM

To : David Ross [[david.ross@waldenu.edu](mailto:david.ross@waldenu.edu)]

Subject : Re: Permission and Materials Request

Sorry for the delay. I was out of the country for a while.

You have my permission to use the Organizational Withdrawal Behaviors scale for your dissertation research.

I would appreciate a brief summary of your findings when you finish...just to satisfy my curiosity.

At 08:56 PM 1/24/2013, you wrote:

Dear Dr. Hulin,

Good afternoon. I hope this message finds you well. My name is David J. Ross and I am currently a doctoral student at Walden University in the Organizational Psychology program. I am currently in the dissertation phase and am seeking permission to utilize the measures of Organizational Withdrawal Behaviors. developed by yourself and Dr. Hanisch in your 1990 article entitled "Job Attitudes

## Appendix G: Permission to Use Work Withdrawal Behaviors – Dr. Hanisch

E-mail : Work and Job Withdrawal

Page 1 of 1

 Reply	 Reply All	 Forward	 Delete	 Attachments	Move to Folder ▾	Add to ▾	 
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**Subject :** Work and Job Withdrawal  
**Date :** Tue, Feb 12, 2013 04:31 PM CST  
**From :** "Hanisch, Kathy [PSYCH]" <kathann@iastate.edu>  
**To :** David Ross [david.ross@waldenu.edu] <david.ross@waldenu.edu>  
**Attachment :**  [Work and Job Withdrawal Items Sent.rtf](#)

**Hi David,**

**I apologize for not getting back to you last week, but things have been very hectic.**

**I have attached the file with the work and job withdrawal items that I have sent to others. Some of the items have been modified since the published article. Some of the items you will need to check/rewrite for relevance to your organization and its employees (some items may not be relevant and others may not be interpreted the same way given the employees' jobs, etc.) so please check that closely. The same would be true for the response scales.**

**This is a file I received from one of Hulin's students and where it says in the comments, "appears to be a work withdrawal item but asked on this scale;" those are all work withdrawal items. The distinction is avoiding your work VS. avoiding the job, hence the constructs of work and job withdrawal, respectively we found in the 1990 and 1991 studies.**

**Good luck with your project.**  
**Kathy Hanisch**

## Curriculum Vitae

DAVID J. ROSS

**OBJECTIVE**            A challenging and engaging position as a psychology or social sciences faculty member at a research-oriented college or university.

**EDUCATION**

B.A., Latin, 1996, Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ 07043  
 M.A., Counseling, 1998, Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ 07043  
 Ph.D., Psychology, 2014, Walden University, Minneapolis, MN  
     Concentration: Organizational Psychology  
     **Dissertation Topic:** Effect of Political Skill on Perception of Organizational Politics and Work Withdrawal among Community College Employees

**HONORS AND AWARDS**

National Resource Center on the First Year Experience Conference Proposal Review Committee, 2010 - Present  
 Golden Lion Award Winner, 2008  
 Division Red Ribbon Award Winner for Teamwork, 2005  
 Outstanding Young Men of America, 1998  
 Who's Who in America's Colleges & Universities, 1996  
 Resident Manager of the Year, 1995  
 Doris Kibbe Scholarship

**PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

11/2012 – Present	Eastern Psychological Association
09/2012 – Present	National Orientation Directors Association
12/2007 – Present	Society for the Teaching of Psychology
12/2006 – Present	Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology
12/2006 – 9/2011	National Association of Developmental Education
12/2006 – 9/2011	College Reading and Learning Association
11/2005 – Present	American Psychological Association
03/2004 – Present	National Academic Advising Association

## RESEARCH INTERESTS

I have broad interests in educational and organizational psychology, particularly the impact of student and employee self-efficacy on student success and employee job satisfaction respectively. Specifically, I am interested in the role of the perception of organizational politics and employee political skill in moderating employee job satisfaction and organizational withdrawal behaviors in institutions of higher education.

## CURRENT RESEARCH

Current research is focusing on the moderating role of employee political skill between the perception of organizational politics and the desire to engage in organizational withdrawal behaviors among community college administrative employees.

Future research interests include understand the role of the faculty member in promoting high student self-efficacy in undergraduate psychology courses and related student success.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

I am prepared to teach the following courses:

Introductory Psychology  
 Educational Psychology  
 Introduction to Statistics  
 Research Methods in Psychology  
 Industrial/Organizational Psychology  
 First Year Seminar

Thomas Edison State College      Trenton, New Jersey  
 October 2013 – Present  
**SOS 150 – Career Development and Exploration (online)**

March 2013 – Present  
**PSY101 – Introduction to Psychology (online)**

October 2008 - Present  
**SOS 110 Living in the Information Age (online)**

Raritan Valley Community College    North Branch, New Jersey  
 Spring 2014 – Present  
**INTDH299 – Honor Research Capstone**

Spring 2013 - Present  
**PSYC 103 – Introduction to Psychology**

Fall 2012  
**PSYC 213 – Educational Psychology**

Fall 2007 - Present  
**STDV 100 – The College Experience (course co-designer)**

**STDV 013 – Student Success Seminar**

Montclair State University                      Montclair, New Jersey

Fall 2004, Fall 2005  
**PSYC 104 – Freshman Experience**  
**GNEC 199 – New Student Seminar**

Spring 2005, Fall 2005, Summer 2006  
**GNEC 100 – Adult Academic Success Seminar**

Ramapo College of New Jersey                      Mahwah, New Jersey

Fall 2000, 2001, 2002  
**ZINT 100 – Freshman Seminar**

**Spring 2001, 2002**  
 ZINT 101 – Pathways Linking Academic and Career Experience (course co-designer)

#### PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

- 10/2013            New Jersey Association of New Student Advocates – 3<sup>rd</sup> Biennial Conference  
*The Impact of Academic and Career Planning on Community College Student Retention*
- 05/2011            Lehigh Carbon Community College  
*Developing and Assessing a Community College First-Year Experience Committee*
- 02/2010            National Conference on the First-Year Experience  
*Developing and Assessing a Community College First-Year Experience Committee*

- 10/2009 Raritan Valley Community College – Title III Conference  
*Utilizing Individualized Academic Plans to Increase Student Retention*
- 03/2008 New Jersey/Pennsylvania Chapter Conference – College Reading and Learning Association  
*Best Practices in Student Success and Retention*
- 10/2007 New Jersey Association of New Student Advocates – 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference  
*Utilizing E-Portfolios to Enhance Student Success*
- 10/1996 Mid-Atlantic Association of College and University Housing Officers Annual Conference  
*Increasing Student Retention through Residential Life Programming*