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## Political skill and outcomes in social life<sup>☆</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

The concept of political skill has been extensively studied in work and professional life but not yet in social life. To study how political skill relates to social life outcomes, participants engaged in a videotaped interaction in the laboratory that was rated for likeability and intelligence by naïve perceivers and coded for behavior by trained coders. Participants also took the Political Skill Scale (PSI; Ferris et al., 2005) (with workplace references removed) and other personality questionnaires. Finally, ratings from participants' friends were gathered. Political skill was related to self-rated social life quality, perceiver-rated likeability, and friend-rated positive sociality. When controlling for extraversion, self-monitoring, and social self-efficacy, all relations stayed significant except ones with self-rated social life quality. Results were strongest for the PSI's subscales for networking ability and interpersonal influence. Sounding confident and initiating topics mediated relations between political skill and perceiver ratings.

Ordinary social life has long been thought to be strategic in nature (Blau, 1964; Goffman, 1959; Rose-Krasnor, 1997). While “strategic” can suggest duplicitousness, we simply mean that the day-to-day behaviors conducted during interactions are often used to advance one's social goals. In fact, social goals are not always self-serving (Ellen III, 2014); a boss might want a subordinate to succeed or a pastor might try to console a distraught parishioner. These desired outcomes often dictate the kinds of social behaviors initiated and enacted in life (Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007).

Because social life is often a complicated landscape of goals and situations, successfully achieving desired outcomes such as being perceived as likeable or socially skilled frequently involves both picking an appropriate strategy and having the right competencies to pull off the strategy effectively. But which social competencies specifically are conducive to achieving outcomes in social life? This article explores competencies originally conceptualized within work life as they are relevant to social life outcomes. Specifically, we consider a construct called *political skill*, which has been extensively studied in the organizational literature (Kimura, 2015), but less so in other fields.

Similar to social life, complex social situations also pervade work life, or the day-to-day affairs conducted in work settings (e.g., business firms). Mintzberg (1985) argued that professional institutions operate like political arenas, because they are often comprised of actors with rival interests. Hence, the term “political” in “political arena” was used

to characterize the strategic and typically informal ways conflict (in particular) and social complexity (more generally) are navigated in work life.

To better understand political and strategic behavior in organizations, Ferris et al. (2005) developed the Political Skill Inventory (PSI), designed to capture *political skill*, or one's ability to maneuver the work-related political arena to achieve personal and professional goals. The measure conceptualizes political skill as four social competencies (Ferris et al., 2007):

*Networking ability* involves identifying and developing diverse contacts and networks of people, which help individuals develop friendships, create alliances, and capitalize on opportunities within a social network.

*Interpersonal influence* is defined as the ability to exert a powerful influence or elicit desired responses from others via effective communication, being likeable, developing rapport, and making others feel at ease.

*Social astuteness* is the ability to comprehend social interaction and accurately interpret own and others' behaviors.

Finally, *apparent sincerity* is the ability to appear to others to have integrity, authenticity, and genuineness. The term “apparent” in “apparent sincerity” suggests one does not necessarily need to be decent and forthright, but appearing so is what matters.

When averaged, these four competencies comprise one's overall

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political skill. Impressively, political skill has predicted numerous work-related outcomes including higher job satisfaction, better personal reputation, decreased stress, and higher income (Kimura, 2015; McAllister, Mackey, Hackney, & Perrewé, 2015; Munyon, Summers, Thompson, & Ferris, 2015). With such outcomes, political skill has shown predictive validity above and beyond conceptually similar constructs such as emotional intelligence, leadership self-efficacy, self-monitoring, social intelligence, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Banister & Meriac, 2015; Semadar, Robins, & Ferris, 2006). These results suggest the ability to navigate socially complex arenas truly matters for securing (at the very least) work-related outcomes.

Perhaps political skill matters for social life outcomes as well. After all, ordinary social life resembles a political arena too, with no shortage of complex social situations requiring skillful navigation. Therefore, if social life is indeed a political arena, then political skill's four competencies may also be well suited to achieve social life outcomes. For instance, by appearing sincere to others, one can pursue desired outcomes without looking two-faced or making enemies, thereby increasing social success (Sitkin & Bies, 1993). Likewise, similar to work life, informal hierarchies exist within social networks (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001), and one's social life quality often depends on one's position within a hierarchy (Brown & Lohr, 1987; Hellhammer, Buchtal, Gutberlet, & Kirschbaum, 1997). Here, networking ability might help one make and leverage a diversity of friendships in order to climb the social ladder. Also, power struggles often occur between members within a peer group for greater status (Faris & Felmlee, 2011). Understanding how power-grabbing behavior is perceived (social astuteness) and using that knowledge to better influence and build rapport (interpersonal influence) may help one more easily achieve status within a group. There are numerous other ways in which the competencies under political skill could help a person navigate day-to-day social life.

Yet, despite good reasons to believe political skill predicts social life outcomes, other constructs already exist that predict these outcomes (Ferris, Perrewé, & Douglas, 2002). Most of these constructs (including political skill) fall under the general concept of social effectiveness. What then, if anything, sets political skill apart from these other constructs? To assess this, we compared political skill to three other constructs: social self-efficacy, self-monitoring, and extraversion.

Social self-efficacy is defined as confidence in one's friend-making abilities. Unlike political skill, the items in its most used measure (Sherer et al., 1982) do not describe specific competencies that lead to making friends but are more like statements that one *has* the ability. The construct has been correlated with increased relationship satisfaction and support, decreased social anxiety, and greater assertiveness (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 2001; Holahan & Holahan, 1987; Wheeler & Ladd, 1982). While political skill's emphasis is not on making friends, it still resembles "friend-making ability" in its networking ability and interpersonal influence factors. Importantly, political skill's factors reflect the strategic use of befriending others (e.g., to access coveted peer groups), something social self-efficacy (at least in its main measure) does not seem to address.

Self-monitoring is one's tendency to monitor, observe, and control self-presentation across social situations (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986). Self-monitoring has been correlated with outcomes like social self-esteem, sociability, and likeability (Ambady, Hallahan, & Rosenthal, 1995; Bell, McGhee, & Duffey, 1986; Musser & Browne, 1991). Although conceptual descriptions of political skill's interpersonal influence factor include changing one's behavior situationally to achieve one's goals (Ferris et al., 2007), this is not reflected in any PSI items. Thus, self-monitoring could be viewed as describing something different than political skill's four factors, although factors like apparent sincerity and interpersonal influence probably make use of behavioral change when befriending and influencing others (such as to manage one's impressions). Moreover, the items in the self-monitoring scale (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986) do not reflect *utilizing* behavioral change in

strategic ways, therefore they arguably measure more of a tendency (which is not necessarily goal-oriented) rather than an ability used to achieve social goals with (whereas political skill describes a set of abilities used to achieve strategic aims).

Extraversion is characterized by outgoing, energetic, and socially-oriented behavior (Ashton, Lee, & Paunonen, 2002), and is even considered a facet of other constructs like self-monitoring (Briggs, Cheek, & Buss, 1980). Extraverts enjoy and participate in more social activities (Argyle & Lu, 1990), which contribute to outcomes such as social support, likeability, and social status (Anderson et al., 2001; Swickert, Rosentreter, Hittner, & Mushrush, 2002; Van der Linden, Scholte, Cillessen, te Nijenhuis, & Segers, 2010). In fact, extraversion may play a role in how political skill itself secures social outcomes. For example, the process of connecting with multiple people for various social purposes (networking ability) conceivably requires a proactive and sociable lifestyle. Here, political skill is a skilled and purposeful manifestation of extraversion, whereas extraversion itself is the inclination toward social situations.

While more social life constructs could be named, social self-efficacy, self-monitoring, and extraversion together cover many aspects of social life, so naming more may add redundancy. Compared to these three constructs, political skill more greatly emphasizes the strategic nature of competencies that predict social outcomes. In contrast, extraversion and self-monitoring are not even necessarily goal-oriented (although it is presumed that some self-monitor to appear socially appropriate; Snyder, 1979), and while social self-efficacy is about successfully making friends, it does not describe specific competencies to do so. Thus, determining whether political skill is distinct in predicting social life outcomes is a primary goal of the present study.

To relate political skill, a construct originally studied in workplace settings, to outcomes in social life, we removed workplace wording from the PSI. These outcomes included ratings of likeability and intelligence made by video raters (called perceivers) of participants in an unstructured get-acquainted conversation; friend-rated likeability, intelligence, closeness, and social skill; and self-rated social life quality. Importantly, we emphasized likeability and intelligence impressions as outcomes because appearing likeable and competent are two of the most commonly pursued goals in social life (Bergsieker, Shelton, & Richeson, 2010; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007; Ryan & Shim, 2006).

We predicted PSI would be positively correlated with self-rated social life quality, friend-rated likeability, intelligence, closeness, and social skill, and perceiver-rated likeability and intelligence. How the four PSI subscales were individually related to the various social outcomes was also explored. We also predicted that when controlling for social self-efficacy, self-monitoring, and extraversion, each separately and all together, political skill would explain unique variance in the social life outcomes.

If there are relations between political skill and social outcomes, an obvious question is what behaviors might mediate these relations. Because we had videos of the participants in interaction, we examined behaviors as mediators between political skill and perceiver impressions of likeability and intelligence. In previous literature, smiling and eye contact have been associated with likeability (Godfrey, Jones, & Lord, 1986; Mason, Tatkov, & Macrae, 2005), while speaking time and eye contact have been correlated with appearing intelligent (Murphy, 2007).

## 1. Method

### 1.1. Participants

Participants were 77 students (13 males, 63 females, 1 gender unknown; *M* age = 18.58) recruited from Northeastern University. Ethnicity was 49.4% White/Caucasian, 41.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, 6.5% Black/African American, and 3.8% other.

## 1.2. Friends

397 friends (121 males, 273 females, 3 gender unknown;  $M$  age = 18.83) responded to questions about the participant.

## 1.3. Perceivers

Perceivers were 40 undergraduate students (17 males, 23 females;  $M$  age = 19.50) recruited from Northeastern University. None was a participant or confederate in the study.

## 1.4. Confederates

Confederates were 10 Northeastern University undergraduate students (3 males, 7 females;  $M$  age = 20.03).

## 1.5. Procedure

Participants filled in some of the questionnaires, had an unstructured 5-min conversation with another “student” (confederate) in front of a visible camera, and then completed the remaining questionnaires.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.6. Materials

### 1.6.1. Political Skill Inventory (participants)

The PSI (Ferris et al., 2005) consists of 18 items (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Vocational phrasing (e.g., “at work”) was deleted from items such as “I am good at building relationships with influential people at work,” resulting in items like “I am good at building relationships with influential people.” Six items assessed networking ability ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ,  $M = 4.45$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ), four assessed interpersonal influence ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ,  $M = 5.47$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ), five assessed social astuteness ( $\alpha = 0.80$ ,  $M = 5.03$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ), and three assessed apparent sincerity ( $\alpha = 0.76$ ,  $M = 6.18$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ). Items were averaged for each subscale, and for total; a higher score indicated higher political skill ( $\alpha$  for total = 0.91,  $M = 5.13$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ).

### 1.6.2. Extraversion (participants)

Extraversion items were from the Big Five Aspects Scale (DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007). The four items were rated on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) and were averaged ( $\alpha = 0.63$ ,  $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ). The items included statements such as “I seem to be someone who warms up quickly to others” and “I seem to be someone who takes charge.”

### 1.6.3. Social self-efficacy (participants)

This six-item scale (Sherer et al., 1982) measured belief in one's abilities to make friends on a 21-point scale (–10 = not at all, 10 = very much). Items were averaged ( $\alpha = 0.64$ ,  $M = 12.19$ ,  $SD = 2.92$ ) and included statements like “When I'm trying to become friends with someone who seems uninterested at first, I don't give up easily” and “I have acquired my friends through my personal abilities at making friends.”

### 1.6.4. Self-monitoring (participants)

This scale (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986) consisted of 18 true or false items, such as “In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons” and “I would probably make a good actor.” Responses indicating high self-monitoring were summed for a total score ( $KR-20 = 0.63$ ,  $M = 9.45$ ,  $SD = 3.11$ ).

<sup>1</sup> Dyads also participated in a second interaction unrelated to the purpose of this study.

### 1.6.5. Social life quality (participants)

Six items assessed participants' the time spent enjoying oneself with friends, acquaintances, and other people and frequency of socializing in general, with friends, and at the dormitory (if applicable). In each of these areas, quality of social life was rated from 1 (not very good) to 5 (very good), and frequency of socializing was rated from 1 (hardly ever) to 5 (all the time). The items for time spent and frequency of socializing were averaged ( $r = 0.71$ ). Higher scores indicated greater quality of social life ( $\alpha = 0.75$ ,  $M = 3.97$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ).

### 1.6.6. Friend ratings

Participants were asked to provide the emails of 10 friends varying in familiarity from casual acquaintances to close friends (not family members). Between 0 and 10 friends responded to an emailed questionnaire for each participant ( $M = 5.29$ ). Friends were given 13 items rated on a scale from 0 to 100. Items fell onto four subscales: intelligence (two items,  $\alpha = 0.82$ ,  $M = 83.90$ ,  $SD = 7.99$ ); likeability (two items,  $\alpha = 0.84$ ,  $M = 83.05$ ,  $SD = 10.73$ ); closeness (two items,  $\alpha = 0.91$ ,  $M = 77.58$ ,  $SD = 13.39$ ); and social skill (seven items,  $\alpha = 0.94$ ,  $M = 75.75$ ,  $SD = 12.81$ ). Based on their intercorrelations, the latter three were combined to form a positive sociality composite ( $\alpha = .92$ ,  $M = 78.79$ ,  $SD = 10.29$ ).

### 1.6.7. Perceiver video ratings

Two 30-s video clips were excerpted from each 5-min video, one starting at the 1-min mark (early) and the second starting at the 3-min mark (late). Only the participant was in frame. Perceivers rated either the early or late 30-s clip and either the likeability or intelligence questions (randomly assigned). The likeability questions were “If you ever met this person in real life, how much would you want to see this person again?”, “How likeable did you find this person to be?” (relative to other university students), and “If you ever met this person in real life, how likely would you guys be good friends?”. Intelligence questions were “How intelligent did you find this person to be?”, “How well-informed did you find this person to be?”, and “How competent overall did you find this person to be?” (all rated relative to other university students). Each question was rated on a scale from –10 (not at all) to 10 (very much).

Interrater reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was calculated as follows. Each target was judged by 40 perceivers altogether, 10 who rated the three likeability questions for early clips, 10 who rated the three likeability questions for late clips, 10 who rated the three intelligence questions for early clips, and 10 who rated the three intelligence questions for late clips. Cronbach's alpha for interrater reliability was calculated for each question separately for early and late clips, making for six reliability coefficients for ratings of likeability (early/late clip X three questions) and six reliability coefficients for ratings of intelligence (early/late clip X three questions). These interrater reliability coefficients ranged from 0.67 to 0.76 for the likeability questions and from 0.57 to 0.66 for the intelligence questions. Next, because we wanted to combine the three questions within likeability and within intelligence, we calculated the internal consistency of the three likeability questions and of the three intelligence questions (Cronbach's alpha), after averaging across perceivers and across early/late clips to produce one mean rating (20 perceivers altogether) for each of the three likeability questions, and the same for each of the three intelligence questions (20 different perceivers). Internal consistency reliability among questions was 0.98 for the three likeability questions ( $M = 0.94$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ) and 0.97 for the three intelligence questions ( $M = 1.84$ ,  $SD = 0.98$ ). Perceivers' ratings were thus highly reliable for both likeability and intelligence.

### 1.6.8. Video coding

Participants were coded for 10 behaviors. Leaning in, eye contact, humor/telling stories, smiling/laughing, speaking about partner, and speaking about self were rated on a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5

(constantly). Sounding confident was rated on a scale of 1 (not very confident) to 5 (extremely confident). New topics initiated and questions asked were counted. Speaking amount was timed.

Two female coders each watched half of the 5-min interactions entirely, coding each behavior every min. As a reliability check, 10 interactions were independently coded by both coders ( $M r$  across behaviors = 0.62). Below, we used only the minutes that corresponded to the portions of the video rated by the perceivers. Also, two different female coders each coded half of the interactions for the exact same 30-s clips the perceivers viewed. As a reliability check, 40 interactions were coded by both coders ( $M r$  across behaviors = 0.76). To further boost reliability, ratings were averaged across excerpts and coders for each behavior.

## 2. Results

Supplemental Tables S1 and S2 show means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the PSI subscales and among the social life outcome variables.

### 2.1. Political skill and social life outcomes

Political skill was significantly positively associated with self-reported social life quality, perceiver-rated likeability, and friend-rated positive sociality, with the significant correlations ranging from  $r = 0.24$  to  $r = 0.52$  across the various social life outcomes (Table 1). That political skill was positively related to social life outcomes from three different sources (self, perceiver, and friends), thus broadly capturing skillful and positive social interactions, suggests that political skill is indeed related to better social life quality and commonly desired social outcomes. Two PSI subscales, interpersonal influence and networking ability, predicted the social outcomes best, although apparent sincerity was also positively related to social life quality, and social astuteness was related to friend-rated positive sociality. Perceived intelligence was not well predicted by political skill except for the interpersonal influence subscale predicting perceiver ratings of intelligence.

Next we asked whether political skill had unique explanatory value beyond the conceptually overlapping constructs of social self-efficacy, self-monitoring, and extraversion. We did this by calculating semi-partial correlations in a series of regression models (Tables 2-4). These analyses showed that most of the significant correlations from Table 1 remained significant after controlling individually for the three constructs. Socially self-efficacy reduced the correlations the most, which is perhaps not surprising considering it is a self-report instrument like the PSI and is likely to have shared method variance. Overall, networking ability and interpersonal influence accounted for political skill's significant relationships with the various outcomes.

To explore how much unique variance political skill and its

subscales contributed toward the various social life outcomes, political skill (and in a separate analysis, its subscales, one by one) was entered along with social self-efficacy, self-monitoring, and extraversion in hierarchical regression analyses (Supplemental Table S3). For perceiver-rated likeability, overall political skill ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.07, p < .05$ ) and interpersonal influence ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.13, p < .005$ ) contributed significant variance, and for friend-rated positive sociality, overall political skill ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.08, p = .01$ ), networking ability ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.09, p = .01$ ), and interpersonal influence ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.14, p < .001$ ) contributed significant variance. Additionally, interpersonal influence contributed significant variance for perceiver-rated intelligence ( $\Delta R^2 = 0.05, p = .04$ ).

### 2.2. Behavioral mediation

Lens models (Brunswick, 1956) were created to visualize how behaviors were predicted by political skill and, in turn, predicted perceiver ratings. A lens model was created for each of the three significant associations between political skill and perceiver ratings: overall political skill predicting perceiver-rated likeability (Fig. 1), interpersonal influence predicting perceiver-rated likeability (Fig. 2), and interpersonal influence predicting perceiver-rated intelligence (Fig. 3). In the figures, the lines show significant correlations.

Fig. 1 shows participants higher on overall political skill asked more questions, initiated more new topics, spoke for longer, and sounded more confident. However, only initiating new topics and sounding confident predicted the perceiver ratings, suggesting these were the mediating cues between political skill and likeability. Figs. 2 and 3 further suggest that although several behaviors were manifestations of political skill, initiating new topics and sounding confident appeared consistently as the cues most operative in creating the impression of likeability or intelligence. Bootstrapping confirmed that initiating new topics and sounding confident (as underlined in the figures) emerged as significant mediators (Hayes, 2009; Cullen, Fan, & Liu, 2014; see Supplemental Table S4).

## 3. Discussion

Social life often resembles a political arena, where strategic considerations are made to achieve desired outcomes. Because political skill describes competencies used to navigate political arenas, political skill may be closely related to outcome achievement in social life. Until now, however, political skill has only been studied in workplace contexts (Harris, Kacmar, Zivnuska, & Shaw, 2007).

Analyzing ratings by self, friends, and perceivers, we found political skill is indeed related to a variety of social life outcomes. Political skill (especially networking ability and interpersonal influence factors) was positively correlated with all social life outcomes except friend-rated intelligence, and interpersonal influence was significantly correlated

**Table 1**  
Correlations between political skill and social life outcomes.

Political skill	Self ratings		Perceiver ratings		Friend ratings	
	Social life quality	Likeability	Intelligence	Positive sociality	Intelligence	
Overall	0.39***	0.27*	0.20†	0.45***	0.11	
Networking ability	0.38**	0.22†	0.14	0.47***	0.18	
Interpersonal influence	0.41***	0.34**	0.33**	0.52***	0.11	
Social astuteness	0.20†	0.18	0.07	0.24*	0.01	
Apparent sincerity	0.24*	0.12	0.16	0.04	-0.08	

Note. Positive sociality = average of friend-rated social skill, closeness, and likeability.

†  $p < .10$ .

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Table 2**  
Semipartial correlations between political skill and social life outcomes (social self efficacy held constant).

Political skill	Self ratings		Perceiver ratings		Friend ratings	
	Social life quality	Likeability	Intelligence	Positive sociality	Intelligence	
Overall	0.18 <sup>†</sup>	0.25*	0.14	0.29**	0.11	
Networking ability	0.16	0.18	0.06	0.30**	0.21 <sup>†</sup>	
Interpersonal influence	0.18 <sup>†</sup>	0.34**	0.30*	0.36**	0.11	
Social astuteness	0.08	0.15	0.03	0.14	0.00	
Apparent sincerity	0.16	0.10	0.13	−0.03	−0.09	

Note. Positive sociality = average of friend-rated social skill, closeness, and likeability.

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$   
\*  $p < .05$ .  
\*\*  $p < .01$ .

with perceiver-rated intelligence. Thus, the political skill construct is relevant outside the workplace.

Political skill was more correlated with friend-rated positive sociality than friend-rated intelligence. Here, two possible ideas arise about the role of political skill in social life: first, people may be more likely to comply with individuals they like compared to those who are solely perceived as intelligent (which may even turn off others if one looks like a braggard or know-it-all). Second, people high in political skill may prioritize being socially rewarding more than appearing intelligent in social life. In fact, striving to appear personable is reflected in several PSI items (e.g., “it is easy for me to develop good rapport with most people,” “I am good at getting people to like me”) while arguably no items reflect striving to appear intelligent. Many of these items come from the interpersonal influence subscale (and networking ability to a lesser extent), which predicted the most social life outcomes compared to the other subscales.

Why would networking ability and interpersonal influence have more predictive power than social astuteness and apparent sincerity? One possibility is that networking ability and interpersonal influence represent abilities more *active* in nature and amenable to volitional control; and, because they are active and deliberate, individuals can provide accurate self-reports on their usage—either because they observe themselves, or they observe the results of their efforts. On the other hand, social astuteness and apparent sincerity describe abilities more *passive* in nature, which are perhaps less within the individual's awareness or control, and which are less likely to have observable consequences. In fact, research shows that people have only a weak ability to judge their own abilities in interpersonal perception (Hall, Andrzejewski, & Yopchick, 2009).

Interpersonal influence was also correlated with both kinds of perceiver ratings (likeability and intelligence) while networking ability was significantly correlated with neither. This makes sense considering participants could not do much networking in a 5-min interaction, and

networking ability is more likely to capture longitudinal-type outcomes like friend ratings (networking requires one to *develop* friendships and alliances presumably across multiple interactions; Ferris et al., 2007; Todd, Harris, Harris, & Wheeler, 2009) while interpersonal influence likely works both in-the-moment and longitudinally.

Because many social life constructs already exist, we controlled for several to more precisely look at political skill's unique relationships with these outcomes. After controlling for social self-efficacy, self-monitoring, and extraversion one-by-one, political skill was still significantly correlated with numerous outcomes, with networking ability and interpersonal influence being the most predictive. Similarly, when overall political skill (and its subscales) were included in hierarchical regression along with social self-efficacy, self-monitoring, and extraversion, R squared increased significantly for several outcomes. This was especially true for the interpersonal influence and networking ability subscales.

Participants higher in political skill asked more questions, initiated more new topics, spoke more, and sounded more confident, but mediational analyses revealed that not all of these contributed to the outcomes. Sounding confident mediated three relationships: between total political skill and perceiver-rated likeability, between interpersonal influence and perceiver-rated likeability, and between interpersonal influence and perceiver-rated intelligence. Topics initiated also mediated the relationship between total political skill and perceiver-rated likeability. Indeed, sounding confident and initiating new topics may have helped one look more involved or comfortable during interaction, leading to a more positive impression. While past literature has shown that eye contact relates to both appearing likeable and intelligent (Mason et al., 2005; Murphy, 2007), it was related to neither in this study. Finally, although other behaviors in this study (e.g., smiling and laughing) contributed to positive perceiver impressions, they were not candidates for mediation because they did not correlate significantly with political skill or its subscales.

**Table 3**  
Semipartial correlations between political skill and social life outcomes (extraversion held constant).

Political skill	Self ratings		Perceiver ratings		Friend ratings	
	Social life quality	Likeability	Intelligence	Positive sociality	Intelligence	
Overall	0.25*	0.27*	0.09	0.40***	0.16	
Networking ability	0.25*	0.20 <sup>†</sup>	0.03	0.42***	0.23*	
Interpersonal influence	0.25*	0.36**	0.24*	0.48***	0.17	
Social astuteness	0.10	0.16	0.00	0.19	0.03	
Apparent sincerity	0.13	0.10	0.08	−0.03	−0.07	

Note. Positive sociality = average of friend-rated social skill, closeness, and likeability.

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$ .  
\*  $p < .05$ .  
\*\*  $p < .01$ .  
\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

**Table 4**  
Semipartial correlations between political skill and social life outcomes (self-monitoring held constant).

Political skill	Self ratings	Perceiver ratings		Friend ratings	
	Social life quality	Likeability	Intelligence	Positive sociality	Intelligence
Overall	0.37**	0.28*	0.14	0.41***	0.10
Networking ability	0.35**	0.22†	0.08	0.43***	0.18
Interpersonal influence	0.38**	0.34**	0.29*	0.48***	0.10
Social astuteness	0.15	0.17	0.00	0.18	0.00
Apparent sincerity	0.23*	0.12	0.14	0.03	−0.08

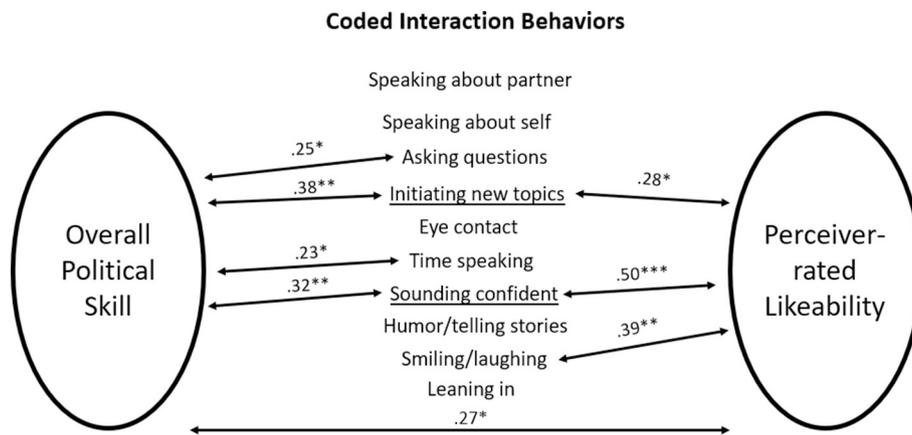
Note. Positive sociality = average of friend-rated social skill, closeness, and likeability.

†  $p < .10$ .

\*  $p < .05$ .

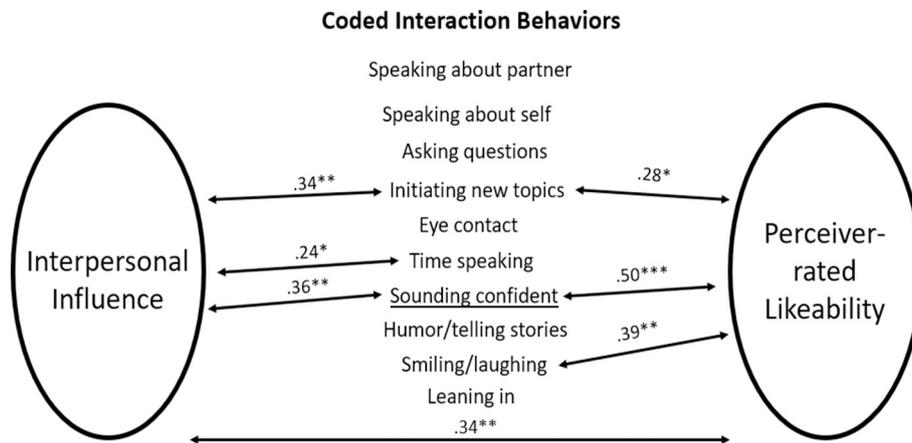
\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .



**Fig. 1.** Behavioral lens model between overall political skill and perceiver-rated likeability.

Note. Correlations are shown above. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . The underlined behaviors mediated overall political skill and perceiver-rated likeability via bootstrapping.



**Fig. 2.** Behavioral lens model between interpersonal influence and perceiver-rated likeability.

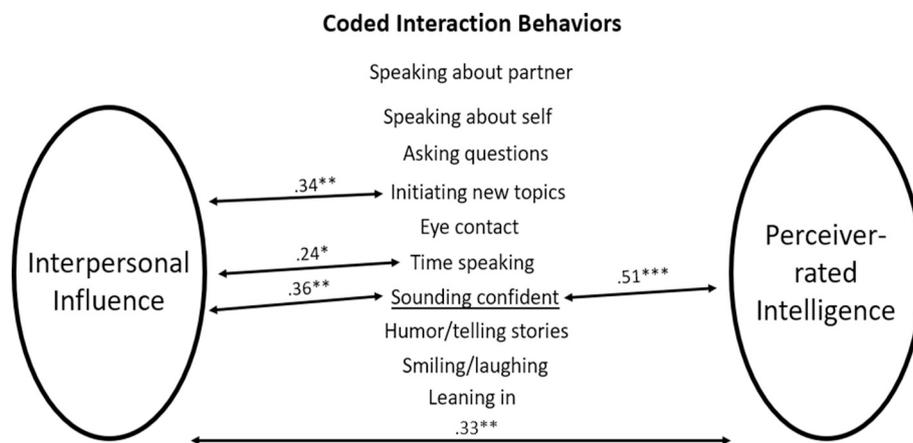
Note. Correlations are shown above. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . The underlined behaviors mediated interpersonal influence and perceiver-rated likeability via bootstrapping.

**3.1. Limitations and future directions**

First, because social self-efficacy, self-monitoring, and extraversion demonstrated borderline acceptable reliability, they may not have functioned as optimal control variables. Although we used standard instruments to measure these constructs, alternative scales exist, such as the Scale of Perceived Social Self-Efficacy for social self-efficacy (Smith & Betz, 2000), the Revised Self-Monitoring Scale for self-monitoring (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984), and the Revised NEO Personality

Inventory Extraversion subscale for extraversion (Costa Jr & McCrae, 1995), which may demonstrate higher reliability and, thus, should also be considered for future studies.

Second, because there were only 13 males in the sample, it is unclear how much these results would generalize across genders. While males and females in our study did not significantly differ on traits and behaviors (see Supplemental Table S5), future studies should seek larger samples of both men and women to test gender differences in political skill and social life outcomes more robustly.



**Fig. 3.** Behavioral lens model between interpersonal influence and perceiver-rated intelligence.

Note. Correlations are shown above. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . The underlined behavior mediated interpersonal influence and perceiver-rated intelligence via bootstrapping.

Third, we pitted political skill against only three of the many related social life concepts that one could measure. Our results showed that political skill accounted for significant variance in the social outcomes, above and beyond these three measures. However, future research should test more constructs that may bear a relation to political skill (e.g., emotional intelligence) to further establish political skill's unique predictive validity in the social life domain.

Fourth, because cultural norms often dictate the nature and conduct of social interactions (Wheeler, Reis, & Bond, 1989), they likely influence resulting outcomes in social life as well. Future research ought to look at how the relation between political skill and social life outcomes varies between different cultures (e.g., individualistic vs. collectivistic).

Lastly, this study measured only a few of the many desirable outcomes in social life such as achieving social status or impressing a romantic interest. In time, these other outcomes will hopefully be studied; they may even broaden the scope of what politically skilled individuals are shown to be capable of in social life.

## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2019.05.010>.

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