

## **Organizational politics and organizational support as predictors of work attitudes, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior**

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### **Summary**

This study investigated the relationship of organizational politics and organizational support to various work attitudes and behaviors among a field sample of 128 participants. Consistent with our hypothesis, politics and support were related to job satisfaction, commitment, turnover intentions, and supervisor ratings of organizational citizenship behaviors. However, only support was related to job performance. We also examined whether or not organizational politics and organizational support comprise two distinct constructs or one global factor. The evidence here was ambiguous. Fit indices obtained from confirmatory factor analysis suggested that it is more parsimonious to treat politics and support as opposite ends of the same construct, though the two-factor model did show a slightly better fit. On the other hand, subsequent multiple regression analyses showed that support tended to account for additional criterion variance beyond the effect of politics, implying that there may be some practical utility to retaining politics and support as distinct constructs. Copyright © 1999 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

### **Introduction**

Through work people can garner such things as economic advantage, fellowship, and social status (Cropanzano, Kacmar and Bozeman, 1995). However, procuring these benefits necessitates that individuals turn a portion of their energy, time and effort over to their employers. Based on this reasoning, Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey and Toth (1997) have argued that holding a job is analogous to making an investment. Workers provide their talents and motivation in the hope of earning something in return. More generally, a workplace can be viewed as a sort of marketplace in which multiple individuals engage in myriad transactions, each seeking to obtain a favorable return on their investment (Rusbult and Farrell, 1983; Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers and Mainous, 1988). This return would include pay, of course, but also includes more intangible rewards, such

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as esteem, dignity, and personal power (Cropanzano and Schminke, in press). If we extend this reasoning it becomes apparent that—like any investment—the decision to work entails certain risks. An unsavory organization can become the source of negative experiences, such as public humiliation or social sanctions. With so much at stake, individuals will likely monitor their investments carefully, seeking out and remaining with those organizations that offer them the best probability of an advantageous return.

Though work has the potential to provide many rewards, most of these are best obtained through the largess (or at least the cooperation) of other people. The organization allocates pay, for example, while co-workers confer or withhold their respect. For this reason, individuals should be especially attentive to the interpersonal climate at work. We might envision a market where everyone acts out of raw self-interest, with little or no concern for the welfare of their peers. Conversely, we might instead imagine a setting where co-workers attend carefully to the needs of their compatriots. In the former or self-serving case, a person's investment in his or her employer would seem relatively risky. In the latter or benign case, the investment would seem relatively safe. According to Cropanzano *et al.* (1997) previous research has identified two constructs that seem to describe attributes of the social marketplace: organizational politics and organizational support. Though prior work has tended to consider one or the other, the present study examines both. This is because each construct helps capture the character of the interpersonal transactions within an organization. More specifically, this study seeks to fulfill two objectives.

First, we examine the correlates of politics and support to a variety of work outcomes. Some of these, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, have previously received research attention. We replicate these earlier findings. However, the prior work is limited. While it is certainly important to know how people feel about their jobs, it is also important to know how they behave at work. Unfortunately, relatively little research has assessed whether politics and support predict actual work activities, such as job performance and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). Furthermore, as we discuss below, some of the research that does exist is limited. Consequently, while prior work offers substantial assurance that politics and support both predict individuals' evaluations of their work and employers, we cannot yet be certain that the two predict work behaviors. The omission of information regarding performance ratings and OCB is troubling for another reason. Most of the available data concerning politics and support has been collected via self-report. A skeptic could plausibly maintain that the observed associations were largely due to method variance, thereby compromising the importance of these two constructs (Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997). The paucity of nonself-report measurement, particularly of work behaviors, raises both practical and theoretical concerns regarding both the politics and support literatures.

Our study has a second objective that follows from our social marketplace perspective. Very little work has examined politics and support in the same study. Most researchers assume that the two are separate constructs (e.g. Cropanzano *et al.*, 1995). Alternatively, if both characterize the same social marketplace, then it is possible that politics and support are opposite ends of a single continuum. In support of this, Nye and Witt (1993) have presented data suggesting that politics and support could be represented as a single factor rather than as two separate ones. Our study will investigate this possibility as well.

## Organizational Politics

According to Drory and Romm (1990) and Mayes and Allen (1977), politics has been defined in a variety of ways. Some have approached it as an extremely broad social phenomenon (e.g. Bies

and Tripp, 1995; Cobb, 1986; Pfeffer, 1992). Pfeffer (1981), for example, defined organizational politics as 'the study of power in action' (p. 7). This kind of definition, of course, would include virtually all influence processes that occur in work settings. Other work treats politics more narrowly, defining it as unsanctioned influence attempts that seek to promote self-interest at the expense of organizational goals (e.g. Cropanzano and Grandey, in press; Drory and Romm, 1990; Ferris, Frink, Beehr and Gilmore, 1995; Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Ferris and Judge, 1991; Ferris, Russ and Fandt, 1989; Kacmar and Ferris, 1993).

In keeping with much contemporary research (e.g. Ferris, Fedor, Chachere and Pondy, 1989; Ferris, Frink, Galang, Zhou, Kacmar and Howard, 1996; Ferris and Judge, 1991) this study will utilize the specific definition. In part, this is because the particularistic terminology is more amenable to empirical testing (Drory and Romm, 1990). In addition, this seems to be the understanding of politics possessed by working people. When individuals are asked to describe political behaviors, they tend to list actions that are manipulative and self-serving (Drory and Romm, 1988; Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Gandz and Murray, 1980; Madison, Allen, Porter, Renwick and Mayes, 1980; Romm and Drory, 1988). Finally and most importantly, the narrow definition of politics as self-interested machinations fits well with our notion of a social marketplace. It offers a particularistic description of how interpersonal transactions could proceed. The broader definition acknowledges that these exchanges occur, but does not specify their substance.

According to our model, political environments make for risky investments. For this reason, workers should attempt to contribute as little effort to the organization as is reasonably possible. Thus, politics should lead to lower performance and reduced OCB. Unfortunately, few studies have examined these associations and the findings are not encouraging.<sup>1</sup> In one study, Cropanzano *et al.* (1997, Study 1) found no relationship between politics and OCB; however, this investigation was hampered by a small sample size ( $n = 59$ ). Despite the paucity of supportive evidence, we anticipated a significant relationship between perceived politics and supervisory ratings of OCB and between politics and in-role job performance. The character of the social marketplace should impact attitudinal and perceptual variables as well. Generally speaking, people should feel worse about, and desire to depart, settings where their needs are not likely to be met. Consistent with this, several studies have found that organizational politics is negatively related to job satisfaction (Bozeman, Perrewé, Hochwarter, Kacmar and Brymer, 1996; Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997; Drory, 1990; Ferris, Brand, Brand, Rowland, Gilmore, King, Kacmar and Burton; 1993; Ferris, Frink, Beehr and Gilmore, 1995; Ferris, Frink, Galang, Zhou, Kacmar and Howard, 1996; Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Gandz and Murray, 1980; Nye and Witt, 1993; Parker, Dipboye and Jackson, 1995) and positively related to turnover intentions (Bozeman *et al.*, 1996; Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997; Ferris *et al.*, 1993).

The relationship of politics to organizational commitment requires a bit more explanation, as there are at least two varieties of commitment (e.g. Allen and Meyer, 1990; Mathieu and Zajac, 1990; Meyer and Allen, 1984; Meyer, Allen and Gellatly, 1990; Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly,

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<sup>1</sup> For simplicity, our study treats politics as a unidimensional construct. This approach is in keeping with much previous research (for reviews see Ferris *et al.*, 1993; Ferris and Judge, 1991). However, it should be emphasized that this is not the only reasonable representation of politics (Witt, 1995). Kacmar and Ferris (1991), for example, used a three factor-solution: general political behavior, going along to get ahead, and pay and promotion. In a later study, Nye and Witt (1993) also found that the Kacmar and Ferris (1991) model produced a good fit. However, these gains were offset by a loss in parsimony. Nye and Witt (1993) suggest the use of the more parsimonious single-factor model. For the present data, we conducted a preliminary CFA of the POPS data. Our findings were virtually identical to those of Nye and Witt (1993). The three-factor model produced a slightly better, but less parsimonious, fit than the one-factor model. When the evidence is taken together, the POPS can be reasonably described with either a three-factor or a one-factor solution. Since we are presently concerned with the predictive value of overall perceptions of politics, we will utilize a one-factor model. This is also in keeping with most recent empirical research, which tends to utilize the one-factor model.

Goffin and Jackson, 1989). One type of commitment is 'affective'. This is the extent to which the individual feels an emotional tie or bond to the organization. It was expected that individuals would form such ties with firms that are nonpolitical, because in the long run such organizations are most likely to meet their needs. Another type of commitment is 'continuance' or 'calculative'. Continuance commitment refers to one's decision to remain in an organization due to the potential economic losses that might result from departing. For example, it might be difficult to find a new job with comparable pay. Relative to its affective counterpart, continuance commitment is based less on the prevailing social climate at work and more upon the value of available alternatives. In addition, continuance commitment tends to emphasize narrow economic goals (e.g. pay) rather than broader socioemotional goals (e.g. status, dignity, and a sense of worth). Given that continuance commitment is heavily influenced by economic alternatives, we did not expect that it would be related to politics. According to our marketplace model, politics is a broader construct. It includes many transactions that would not be characterized as economic, such as the allocation of power and respect within a group. Even more importantly, politics is a rating of one's current work setting, not of the available options. There is a *no priori* theoretical reason to expect that politics will be related to one's alternatives vis-à-vis other companies. Available work suggests that politics is negatively associated with organizational commitment in general (e.g. Bozeman *et al.*, 1996; Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997; Drory, 1990; Ferris and Kacmar, 1992; Nye and Witt, 1993), but the relationship of politics to the different types of commitment has not been investigated previously. This study will address this need.

From these considerations we derived hypothesis 1—Perceived politics will be negatively related to affective commitment, job satisfaction, performance and OCB, and positively related to turnover intentions. Politics will not be correlated with continuance commitment.

## Organizational Support

In contrast to a political environment, some organizations are perceived as being concerned with the welfare of their employees. This environment could be thought of as one characterized by organizational support (George, Reed, Ballard, Colin and Fielding, 1993; Shore and Shore, 1995; Fasolo, 1995). Supportive organizations are seen as taking pride in their employees, compensating them fairly, and looking after their needs. In this setting one's investment in time and effort is relatively safe. For this reason we expected individuals to raise their investments in the form of higher job performance and more helpful citizenship behaviors. The evidence for this proposition is supportive, but we caution that it is also extremely limited. In one study involving multiple organizations, Eisenberger and his colleagues (1990) obtained a positive relationship between perceptions of support and ratings of job performance. However, these findings were not replicated by Settoon, Bennett and Liden (1996). Wayne, Shore and Liden (1997) found that support was significantly correlated with both performance OCB. Though consistent with our argument here, the Wayne *et al.* (1997) study was limited in that it only considered a single dimension of OCB. Most research suggests that OCB is multidimensional (Organ, 1988). With regard to OCB, less supportive findings were obtained by Cropanzano *et al.* (1997, Study 1) and Settoon *et al.* (1996). However, we have already mentioned sample size issues involving the Cropanzano *et al.* study. In the present work, we hope to extend the limited available evidence by investigating the relationship of organization support to both job performance and two dimensions of OCB.

Heightened support also seems to engender more positive work attitudes. For example, Cropanzano *et al.* (1997) and Nye and Witt (1993) both obtained a positive relationship between perceptions of support and job satisfaction. Likewise, field studies by Cropanzano *et al.* (1997) and Wayne *et al.* (1997) both found that perceived support is negatively correlated with turnover intentions. Similarly, Eisenberger *et al.* (1990) determined that absenteeism is lower when a company is perceived as supportive. Positive associations also exist with regard to support and organizational commitment (Cropanzano *et al.*, 1997; Eisenberger *et al.*, 1990; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison and Sowa, 1986; Nye and Witt, 1993; Settoon *et al.*, 1996; Shore and Tetrick, 1991; Wayne *et al.*, 1997). However, we are aware of no research that has simultaneously considered its affective and calculative components. For the reasons we discussed earlier, we anticipate that support will predict affective, but not continuance, commitment.

All of these issues are addressed in our hypothesis 2—Perceived organizational support will be positively related to affective commitment, job satisfaction, performance and OCB and negatively related to turnover intentions. Support will be uncorrelated with continuance commitment.

## Politics and Support Together

Despite the evidence reviewed thus far, there seems to be some disagreement regarding the relationship between organizational politics and organizational support. According to one perspective, politics and support are opposite poles along a single conceptual dimension. This single continuum would range from self-interest (politics) to altruism (support) (cf. Witt, 1995). There is some evidence to support this reasoning. Based on the results of a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), Nye and Witt (1993) concluded that politics and support are best viewed as opposite ends of a single construct. Moreover, Cheng (1983) operationalized the absence of politics as the presence of support.

Though this previous work is plausible, there seem to be conceptual differences between the two constructs (Cropanzano *et al.*, 1995). Being supportive is not necessarily the same as being nonpolitical. A work environment in which policies and practices are carried out fairly and in which the same rules apply equally to everyone would likely not be perceived as political. Yet if the same organization is unwilling to extend itself, it may not be seen as supportive either. Moreover, politics and support, as operationalized in the existing literature and as measured here, have a somewhat different focus. Political perceptions are made in reference to one's co-workers and superiors; they are about other individuals. Perceived organizational support, on the other hand, concerns the organization as a whole. Organizational support is empirically and conceptually distinct from social support, as the former focuses on groups and the latter focuses on individuals (George *et al.*, 1993). For this reason, organizational politics and organizational support have slightly different frames of reference,<sup>2</sup> and each may afford a unique perspective on the social marketplace. These theoretical issues led to the formulation of hypothesis 3—politics and support will show discriminant validity.

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<sup>2</sup> We are grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out to us.

## Method

### *Subjects and procedure*

Subjects were obtained from three different organizations in three different cities. Two organizations were private manufacturing firms. In one, the surveys were distributed to 12 people by an internal contact person. All 12 surveys were returned. In the other manufacturing company, 103 instruments were distributed by the researchers. Several participants were unable to complete their surveys on site; these were returned by mail. In all 80 individuals provided complete data. The third organization represented the public sector. Seventy-five instruments were distributed via an internal contact person. Thirty-six were returned. Due to the modest samples for each of the three organizations, the data were combined. This resulted in an overall sample of 128 subjects, and a respectable response rate of 67 per cent. Of these 59 per cent were female. Eighty-nine per cent were White/nonHispanic, 7 per cent were Hispanic, and 2 per cent were Native American. The remaining 2 per cent were Asian or other. The average age of the employees was 41 years. Average job tenure was 10.4 years.

### *Survey instruments*

#### **Predictor variables**

*Organizational politics* was measured using the 12-item Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale (POPS). The POPS was written and validated by Kacmar and Ferris (1991). Sample items include: 'There is a group of people in my department who always get things their way because no one wants to challenge them' and 'promotion policies are applied politically'. *Organizational support* was assessed with the 17-item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS). The SPOS was originally developed by Eisenberger *et al.* (1986) and has received additional validation evidence by Shore and Tetrick (1991) and Shore and Wayne (1993). Two representative items are: 'The organization strongly considers my goals and values' and 'the organization would ignore any complaint from me' (reverse scored).

#### **Self-report criterion variables**

*Job satisfaction* was measured using the 3-item Job Satisfaction Scale. Validation evidence is discussed by Seashore, Lawler, Mirvis and Camman (1982) and Cropanzano, James and Konovsky (1993). The scale contains such items as: 'All in all, I am satisfied with my job' and 'in general, I don't like my job'. *Turnover intentions* was assessed with three items used by Cropanzano *et al.* (1993, in press). Two questions were: 'I intend to leave this organization within the next year' and 'I intend to remain with this organization indefinitely' (reverse scored). The two dimensions of *Organizational commitment* were investigated using the Affective and Continuance Commitment Scales developed by Meyer and Allen (1984) and Allen and Meyer (1990). Validation evidence can be found in Meyer *et al.* (1989, 1990). Affective commitment involves such items as: 'I do not feel "emotionally attached" to this organization' (reverse scored) and 'this organization has a great deal of personal meaning to me'. Typical continuance commitment items are: 'It wouldn't be too costly for me to leave my organization now' (reverse scored) and 'I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization'.

### Behavioral measures

Supervisors provided ratings of in-role performance and two dimensions of OCB using a 20-item measure devised by Williams and Anderson (1991). The Williams and Anderson (1991) scale was originally validated on 127 employees working in a variety of different organizations and their supervisors completed measures of job cognitions and work attitudes. The supervisors provided the ratings of OCB and performance. Factor analysis recovered three correlated but distinct behavior factors. Seven items measure the first factor, *job performance*. Example questions include 'fulfills responsibilities specified in the job description' and 'meets formal performance requirements of the job'. Seven items measure the second factor, OCB that benefits a specific individual (*OCBI*). This scale includes such things as 'helps others who have been absent' and 'goes out of way to help new employees'. The third and final factor was OCB that benefits the organization as a whole (*OCBO*). This dimension is assessed by six items, represented by such things as 'adheres to informal rules devised to maintain order' and 'complains about insignificant things at work' (reverse scored). Importantly, the Williams and Anderson (1991) validation study also found that employee reports of job cognitions predicted both types of OCB.

## Results

Table 1 displays means, standard deviations, internal consistency reliabilities, and inter-correlations. As shown, all reliabilities were acceptable. More importantly, the correlational matrix in Table 1 provides the most straightforward test of hypotheses 1 and 2. As predicted by hypothesis 1, political perceptions were negatively related to affective commitment, job satisfaction, and both varieties of OCB. They were positively related to turnover intentions and uncorrelated with continuance commitment. Contrary to hypothesis 1, politics was not significantly associated with performance, though a strong trend was evident ( $p < 0.10$ ). Strong support was also apparent in the case of hypothesis 2. Organizational support was positively related to affective commitment, job satisfaction, job performance, and both varieties of OCB. Also, as anticipated, support was negatively correlated with turnover intentions and uncorrelated with continuance commitment. These findings extend earlier research by examining both types of commitment and obtaining significant associations with three nonself-report measures: performance, OCBI, and OCBO.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, internal consistency reliability, and intercorrelations

Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Organizational politics	3.19	1.20	0.87								
2. Organizational support	4.98	1.16	-0.77	0.94							
3. Affective commitment	4.78	1.19	-0.58	0.71	0.84						
4. Continuance commitment	5.10	1.21	0.03	-0.02	0.01	0.70					
5. Job satisfaction	5.82	1.34	-0.49	0.71	0.62	0.00	0.88				
6. Turnover intentions	3.06	1.52	0.46	-0.60	-0.61	0.01	-0.68	0.80			
7. In-role job performance	6.07	0.84	-0.18	0.22	0.20	0.09	0.21	-0.14	0.88		
8. OCBI	5.32	0.90	-0.19	0.25	0.22	-0.08	0.17	-0.23	0.54	0.80	
9. OCBO	5.78	1.02	-0.35	0.26	0.29	-0.15	0.15	-0.26	0.57	0.41	0.70

All variables were measured with 7-point scales. Correlations greater than 0.18 are significant at  $p < 0.05$ , correlations greater than 0.30 are significant at  $p < 0.01$ . Coefficient alpha reliabilities are displayed in the diagonal.

*The relationship of politics and support to work attitudes and work behaviors*

According to Table 1, politics and support show a very high and negative correlation. For this reason, we examined whether either politics or support explained any incremental criterion variance beyond the other. Results are shown in Table 2. From this table, it appears that for affective commitment, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and (though we can be less confident here) OCBI, support explains variance beyond politics. For OCBO, politics explains additional variance beyond support. For most of the dependent measures, only one predictor or the other showed a significant regression coefficient. In no case did both variables simultaneously predict unique criterion variance. The most telling findings are those for job performance and OCBI. Table 1 shows that support predicted performance and OCBI, while politics only predicted OCBI. However, when politics and support were simultaneously entered into the regression equation, neither of these two variables, nor both together, was statistically significant. Apparently, when both politics and support were included the loss of a degree of freedom resulted in a nonsignificant *F*-ratio.

Table 2. Effects of politics and support on employee attitudes. In-role job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors

	Perceived politics		Perceived support		Variance accounted for	
	<i>b</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Affective commitment	-0.08	0.12	0.65*	0.13	0.51*	0.49
Continuance commitment	0.04	0.15	0.02	0.16	0.00	-0.02
Job satisfaction	0.15	0.15	0.99*	0.15	0.51*	0.50
Turnover intentions	0.00	0.18	-0.77*	0.19	0.36*	0.34
In-role job performance	-0.01	0.12	0.15	0.13	0.05	0.02
OCBI	0.01	0.13	0.21†	0.14	0.08†	0.04
OCBO	-0.31‡	0.15	-0.01	0.15	0.12*	0.10

\*  $p < 0.01$ ; †  $p < 0.10$ ; ‡  $p < 0.05$ .

These regression analyses suggest that politics and support may add some explanatory power beyond each other, but they do not tell us precisely how much. One method of obtaining this information is to conduct a 'usefulness analysis' (Darlington, 1968). For each criterion variable, we assessed whether politics explained any variance when support was entered first. We next reversed the order of entry. As shown in Table 3, the significant  $\Delta R^2$  values were of small to moderate size.

Table 3. Results of the usefulness analysis

Outcome measure	Politics, given Support, $\Delta R^2$	Support, given Politics, $\Delta R^2$
Affective commitment	0.00	0.17*
Continuance commitment	0.00	0.00
Job satisfaction	0.01	0.27*
Turnover intention	0.00	0.15*
In-role job performance	0.00	0.02
OCBI	0.01	0.03†
OCBO	0.05‡	0.00

\*  $p < 0.01$ ; †  $p < 0.10$ ; ‡  $p < 0.05$ .



### *Discriminant validity for the POPS and SPOS*

To determine whether or not politics is distinct from organizational support, two Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) models were fitted to the SPOS and POPS data. These included a one-factor model in which all politics and support items loaded on a single factor and a two-factor model in which politics and support items loaded on separate factors. A comparison of these two hierarchically-nested models would reveal whether or not politics and support can be differentiated.

#### **Preliminary considerations: constructing indicators**

In the present study the number of scale items was large relative to the number of respondents. If we had treated each item as a separate indicator there may have been too many unknown parameters to yield stable estimates (Bentler, 1985). To reduce the ratio of subjects to parameters we followed a procedure outlined by Brooke, Russell and Price (1988). Rather than separately examining each item, the Brooke *et al.* method constructs three composite indicators for each latent trait (in this study that is three indicators for politics and three for support).

For each latent variable, the Brooke *et al.* (1988) procedure was conducted in four steps. In the first step, a one-factor model was fit to the scale. This yielded a factor loading for each scale item. In the second step, these factor loadings were used to assign the items to each indicator as follows. The item with the highest and the item with the lowest factor loadings were combined first and assigned to the first indicator. Next, the second highest and lowest items were combined and assigned to the second indicator. This process continued until all scale items were assigned to one of the three indicators. Because this procedure required a sample size somewhat larger than the one presently available, we used data from another study that used identical measures of politics and support. This larger sample was used to assign items to indicators using the Brooke *et al.* (1988) method. This previous study is described by Randall, Cropanzano, Bormann and Birjulin (1994). The Brooke *et al.* (1988) procedure resulted in three indicators for the POPS, each composed of four items, and three indicators for the SPOS, two with six items and one with five. In the third step, indicator scores were generated by averaging across the items comprising each indicator. In the fourth step, covariances were then generated among these indicator scores, and these values were used in EQS analyses (Bentler, 1989).

#### **Assessing model fit**

Model fit was assessed in several ways. Because such things as the sample size may produce significant chi-square values even when the model fits the data (Loehlin, 1987), the Bentler–Bonett Normed Fit Index ( $\Delta$ ) (Bentler and Bonett, 1980) and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (Browne and Cudeck, 1993) were calculated. The normed fit index indicates the amount of improvement in explaining variance in the data a particular model provides as compared to a highly restricted null model (in this case, a model containing no paths among the latent and manifest variables). Values range from 0.0, reflecting no fit whatsoever, to 1.0, reflecting perfect fit. Index values of 0.90 or higher are generally taken to indicate adequate fit (Bentler and Bonett, 1980). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) estimates the discrepancy between the predicted and observed covariance matrices per degree of freedom (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). Browne and Cudeck (1993) specify that RMSEA values of 0.10 or greater indicate a lack of fit. Additionally, when models were hierarchically nested (e.g. a one-factor versus a two-factor model), a difference in  $\chi^2$  values for the two models was used to

test improved fit of the alternative model. In addition, a parsimonious fit index (pfi) (James, Mulaik and Brett, 1982) was also calculated. While a standard for the pfi has not been set, the closer the value is to 1.0, the more efficient is the model. Given our earlier theoretical discussion, we expected politics and support to be associated. Thus, the two-factor model included a path to model the correlation between the two constructs.

As shown in Table 4, both models fit the data quite well, with  $\Delta$  values for both the one- and two-factor models of 0.996 and 0.998, respectively. While RMSEA and the hierarchical  $\chi^2$  test revealed that the two-factor model provided an improvement in fit over the one-factor model, the latent trait correlation between politics and support generated for each model indicate that the one-factor model is more efficient than the two-factor model. Thus, the CFA results are not conclusive. According to  $\Delta$  the one- and two-factor models fit the data about equally well, according to the RMSEA and the hierarchical  $\chi^2$  the two-factor model fits slightly better, and according to the pfi the one-factor model is best. In addition, the latent traits are very highly correlated, suggesting a single underlying factor.

## Discussion

The study presented here had two objectives. The first objective was summarized in hypotheses 1 and 2. To test these predictions, we examined the relationships of politics and support to various external criteria. Especially important to this first objective was the examination of three nonself-report measures. Our second objective was summarized in hypothesis 1. We assessed the putative independence between politics and support. With regard to our first objective, the results are clear: of the 12 relationships predicted by hypotheses 1 and 2, 11 were significant. This includes dependent measures taken through self-report (job satisfaction, affective commitment, and turnover intentions) and supervisory ratings (job performance, OCBI, and OCBO). This also includes several outcomes that have received little previous attention in the politics/support literature, especially job performance, two dimensions of OCB, and two dimensions of commitment. There can be little doubt that politics and support are important variables that merit future research attention.

Unlike hypotheses 1 and 2, hypothesis 3 was not unambiguously supported. The conclusions one might draw depend on how one interprets the evidence. Technically, the CFA results were consistent with hypothesis 3. Treating politics and support as distinct constructs (i.e. the two-factor model) provided a *slightly* better fit according to the RMSEA and (though to a much lesser

Table 4. Results of confirmatory factor analysis of the SPOS and the POPS

Model	Model fitting					Hierarchical comparison		
	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	$\Delta$	RMSEA	pfi	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
SPOS and POPS								
(1) One-factor model*	35.95	9	0.996	0.15	0.598			
(2) Two-factor model†	16.35	8	0.998	0.09	0.532	19.60	1	<i>p</i> < 0.001

SPOS, Survey of Perceived Organizational Support, POPS; Perceptions of Politics Scale;  $\Delta$ , Bentler–Bonett Normed Fit Index; PFI, parsimonious fit index.

\*  $\chi^2$  values for these models are all significant at the 0.001 level.

†  $\chi^2$  value for this model is significant at the 0.05 level.

extent) the  $\Delta$ . However, it is also important to take into account the size of the observed effects. The differences in fit between the one- and two-factor models were small. For this reason, the pfi values suggested that the one-factor model was the more parsimonious one. These results were quite similar to the findings of Nye and Witt (1993).

As the CFA findings did not clearly demonstrate whether or not politics and support are best viewed as two constructs or one, we can also approach this question pragmatically. Based on the regression analyses, we can ask whether or not it is practically useful to take both predictors into account. Once more, the results were ambiguous. As shown in Table 2, politics and support exhibited similar relationships to the criterion variables examined here. When both variables were simultaneously entered into the regression equation, at least one of them always dropped to nonsignificance. Perhaps most notable are the findings for performance and OCBI. Pearson correlations showed that support was related to performance, while both support and politics were related to OCBI. However, when politics and support were simultaneously used to predict these two variables, neither showed a statistically significant regression coefficient. Such results are to be expected, given the high correlation between these constructs.

On the other hand, the usefulness analysis reported in Table 3 affords a slightly different picture. Politics and support were predicted to be associated with six criterion variables. Support accounted for significantly more variance beyond politics in three of these. The  $\Delta R^2$  values ranged from 0.15 to 0.27. Politics accounted for significant variance beyond support in one,  $\Delta R^2 = 0.05$ . Previous research has produced very similar findings. In two studies Cropanzano *et al.* (in press) found that when both support and politics were considered, at least one tended to add small to moderately sized  $\Delta R^2$  values beyond the other. When these studies are taken together, they seem to suggest at least some utility in separating politics and support.

From the data reviewed here, an empirical case can be made for either collapsing politics and support together (a one-factor model) or retaining their separate identities (a two-factor model). However, if researchers do decide to combine politics and support, they will need to resolve some conceptual issues. As defined here, when an individual engages in political behavior, he or she is behaving in a self-serving way. On the other hand, when an organization is supportive, it is 'going beyond the call of duty' to benefit a worker. If politics and support are opposite ends of the same conceptual continuum, then this would imply that being self-serving (low politics) is the same thing as being altruistic (high support), while not being altruistic (low support) is the same as being self-serving (high politics). However, one can envision settings that are either high or low on both politics and support. For example, an individual might see the workplace as being both generally political and personally supportive if he or she recognizes the dysfunctional dynamics in the organization but is benefiting in some way (cf. Ferris *et al.*, 1993). Conversely, a firm characterized by low morale and worker apathy might be neither supportive nor political.

Another problem was mentioned earlier. Politics and support have different frames of reference. At least in theory, politics refers to people's behavior, while support refers to the behavior of the organization as a whole. Of course, supportive behavior can be considered at the level of individuals. However, George and her colleagues (1993) have presented data suggesting that this individual 'social support' is distinct from the 'organizational support' investigated in the present study. Of course, it could be that one definition or the other is inadequate. Future research could resolve this issue by having respondents explicitly consider politics and support for different social entities. For example, one might compare politics and support within a work team to politics and support within the organization as a whole. When these theoretical considerations are juxtaposed with the usefulness analysis, there is some indication that politics and support have separate identities. On the other hand, when the pfi and certain regression analyses are considered, there is evidence that the two variables behave very similarly.

It is hoped that this paper will stimulate more research on this topic. In the past, examinations of politics and support have tended to proceed in parallel streams, research on either one has done little to inform the other. In contrast, the present study has shown that politics and support are closely related—and perhaps even overlapping—constructs, thereby underscoring the need for future inquiry. In accordance with this, we would suggest at least three lines of investigation.

First, politics and support were both measured by way of self-report. This common method could have inflated the correlation between them. Fortunately, there is a way around this problem. In principle, both organizational politics and organizational support could be rated by multiple observers. Thus, one could estimate the method variance problem using multiple raters. One could then examine the relationships between politics and support using a multi-trait/multi-rater matrix. It might be that the relationship between politics and support is greatly attenuated when different respondents are utilized. However, this can only be answered by future work.

Second, it is important to discover whether or not the same pattern of results occurs among a wider variety of dependent measures, such as employee theft, aggression, and whistle-blowing. It might be that politics and support are differentially useful depending upon the criteria. If this is so, then it would argue for keeping each variable distinct. As an example, Cropanzano *et al.* (1997, Study 2) examined the usefulness of politics and support for predicting both attitudinal and stress outcomes. Generally, support was the stronger predictor of work attitudes (as found in the present investigation), while politics was the stronger predictor of stress outcomes. Each contributed more or less, depending upon the criteria in question.

Third, part of the overlap between these two constructs may be due to the way they have been measured. In keeping with previous work, we have treated politics and support as unifactorial variables (see our footnote 1). However, Kacmar and Carlson (in press) and Kacmar and Ferris (1991) have argued that it is also reasonable to view politics as having multiple factors. One could also imagine a multidimensional model of organizational support, though as yet no one has attempted this. It is conceivable that broadly focused, single-factor scales engender certain biases, such as halo error, which tend to inflate relationships. It follows from this that multifactorial instruments might reduce the association between politics and support. Even more simply, it could be that some dimensions of politics are more highly correlated with support than others. Investigation of this question requires multidimensional indices of politics and support. In regard to politics, important first steps in this area have been taken by Kacmar and Carlson (in press).

Regardless of the outcome of future research, we should not lose sight of an essential point: whether they are one thing or two, politics and support predict a variety of critical work outcomes. While it is important to ascertain the best factor structure, it is even more crucial to demonstrate these variables are worth any attention at all. By confirming hypotheses 1 and 2, this present study provides evidence attesting to their relevance.

With regard to the predictor–criterion relationships, while our findings much reduce concerns over method variance, they do not fully resolve them. Many of our variables were measured through self-report, and these relationships may have been inflated due to response bias. Fortunately (and unlike most previous research), we included nonself-report measures of OCB and performance. Our data also provide another test for method variance. Though measured via self-report, continuance commitment was not hypothesized to be related to either politics or support. As expected, the relationship of continuance commitment to these predictors was quite small. If strong method bias were in operation, one would have expected a larger relationship between the two predictors and continuance commitment.

It should be emphasized that the present study does not allow us to draw firm causal inferences. This is an important limitation in much of the literature pertaining to politics and support. Fortunately, some work is beginning to fill this need. For example, Parker *et al.* (1995) tested a

causal model of the antecedents and consequences of politics. They found that various characteristics of the organization and the job were associated with perceived politics. Politics, in turn, predicted various work outcomes. In a similar study by Wayne *et al.* (1997), support was the variable of interest. Wayne and her colleagues found that various aspects of the work environment predicted perceptions of support, while support predicted affective commitment, turnover intentions, and OCB. The Parker *et al.* and Wayne *et al.* studies are valuable because they tested detailed causal models. However, like the present study they were limited in that they utilized cross-sectional designs. To examine the issue of causality, longitudinal research is greatly needed.

Finally, we have here focused on the main effects for politics and support. We found that these two variables are associated with a variety of important work outcomes. However, there is also an emerging literature which suggests that all people do not react to politics in the same way. Though the findings are not perfectly consistent, research by Ferris *et al.* (1993, 1996) and Bozeman *et al.* (1996) suggests that those individuals who understand or can control political dynamics respond less negatively than those who lack understanding or control. Similarly, two field studies by Drory (1990) and Drory and Romm (1988) found that politics has a more deleterious impact on the attitudes of low status employees and a less deleterious impact on the attitudes of high status individuals. Drory (1990) posited that this occurred because the higher status individuals were in a better position to shape and benefit from political decision making. While research on main effects is necessary, it is also important not to neglect interactions.

Taken together, the present data indicate that politics and support are associated with what employees think about their work (i.e. job satisfaction, turnover intentions, and affective commitment) and also how they behave on their jobs (i.e. performance, OCBI and OCBO). These two constructs predict a variety of outcomes that are important to both workers and to their employers. In addition, these data also suggest that politics and support are more similar than previously believed. It could be the case that these two variables anchor a global dimension that indicates workers' reactions to the social marketplace of the work environment. Clearly, perceptions of politics and support merit additional research attention.

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