



Perceptions of Organizational Politics

Gerald R. Ferris

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

K. Michele Kacmar

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

The political nature of work environments has been discussed for quite some time; however, surprisingly little is known about the personal and situational factors that influence employees' perceptions of organizational politics. In this study, portions of a model of organizational politics perceptions proposed by Ferris, Russ, and Fandt (1989) were tested in two studies using samples reflecting considerable variability on jobs, age, sex, and education, as well as hierarchical level, across four different organizations. In Study 1, regression analyses, used to empirically examine a proposed model of organizational politics perceptions, demonstrated that feedback, job autonomy, skill variety, and opportunity for promotion contributed significantly to the explanation of variance in perceptions of organizational politics, after controlling for variance due to organization. In Study 2, a new expanded measure of organizational politics perceptions was used to provide a more refined analysis of the antecedents and consequences of politics perceptions. Directions for theoretical and empirical research on organizational politics are discussed in light of the present results.

Politics in organizations is simply a fact of life. Personal experience, hunches, and anecdotal evidence for years have supported a general belief that behavior in and of organizations is often political in nature. More recently, some conceptual and empirical research has added further support to these notions. The directions that research in this area has taken have primarily focused on the conditions under which political behavior occurs and the nature and consequences of specific types of political behaviors for individual and organizational outcomes. Virtually ignored has been systematic inquiry into organizational politics perceptions: that is, the factors that contribute to employees perceiving a work environment as political in nature and the consequences of forming such perceptions on individual attitudes and behavior. The purpose of the present research is to increase the knowledge base concerning the phenomenon of organizational politics by testing

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Address all correspondence to Gerald R. Ferris, Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 504 East Armory Avenue, Champaign, Illinois 61820-6297.

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portions of a model of organizational politics perceptions proposed by Ferris, Russ, and Fandt (1989).

Perceptions of Organizational Politics

In suggesting directions for research on politics in organizations, Ferris et al. (1989) proposed more work needed to be done on the conditions under which political behavior occurs, as well as the types of political behaviors that are demonstrated and their consequences. However, a third area of research was proposed that to date has been neglected: that is, the determination of antecedents and consequences of individuals perceiving a work environment as political. This area of research varies somewhat from the other two because it focuses on the experience of organizational politics as a subjective perception. Although one would assume that typically there is a strong correspondence between actual political behavior (i.e., to the extent that an indication of "objective" political behavior could be obtained) and behavior that is perceived as political, it must be acknowledged that perceptual differences occur and it is important to try to better understand how and why this happens.

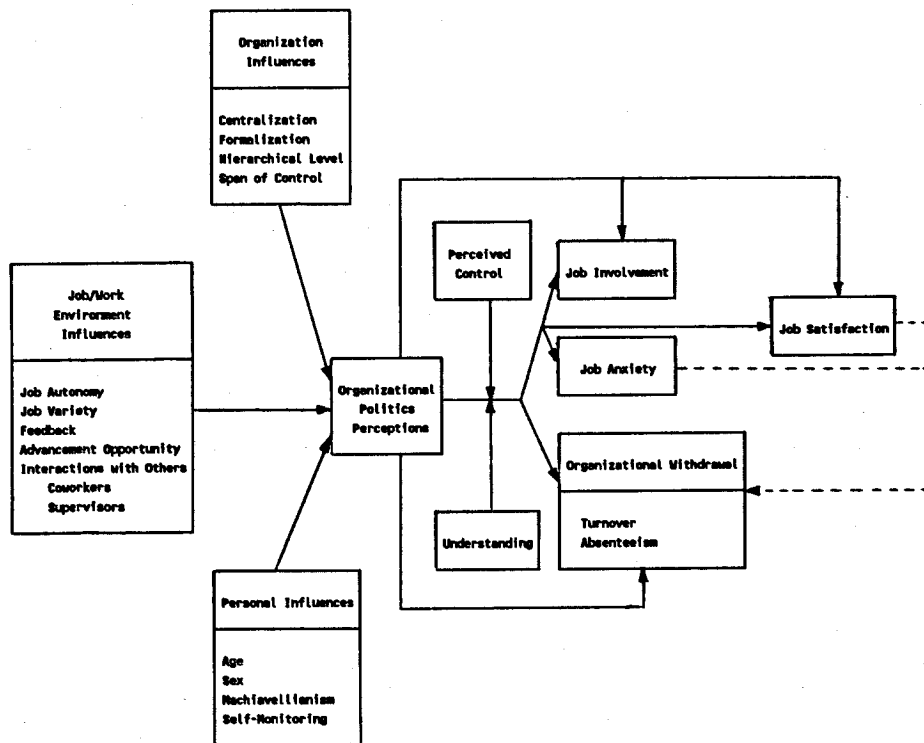
In this area of research, we agree with Gandz and Murray (1980) who suggested that rather than exclusively an objective state, it is appropriate to construe organizational politics as a subjective experience and, thus, as a state of mind. Many years ago, Lewin (1936) suggested the very important notion that people respond on the basis of their perceptions of reality, not reality per se, and later on, Porter (1976) argued that perceptions are important to study and to understand, even if they are misperceptions of actual events, with particular reference to organizational politics. Furthermore, researchers interested in other aspects of work environments (e.g., organizational climate), in discussing true versus perceived attributes, have argued for a definition of work environments based on perceived attributes (James & James, 1989; Naylor, Pritchard, & Ilgen, 1980; Schneider, 1975).

In summary, then, the interest we have in organizational politics for purposes of the present research is to conceptualize and investigate the nature of perceptions of organizational politics. Themes and issues emerge from existing theory and research concerning just what constitutes political behavior in organizations. We are interested in the cognitive evaluation and subjective experience of those behaviors and events occurring in the work environment that seem to constitute political behavior.

Model of Organizational Politics Perceptions

It is quite likely that research on perceptions of organizational politics has lagged behind other directions of research activity in this area due to a lack of theory development. Ferris et al. (1989) recently proposed a conceptualization of organizational politics perceptions that is presented in Figure 1. The present research is designed to test portions of this model. As noted in this conceptualization, the perceptions of politics are influenced by organizational, environmental, and personal factors and in turn influence organizational outcomes such as job involvement, job anxiety, job satisfaction, and withdrawal from the organization.

Figure 1.
Model of Organizational Politics Perceptions (From: Ferris, Russ & Fandt, 1989).



The complete development of this model was presented in Ferris et al. (1989) based upon an extensive review of relevant literature and rationale. In this section, we provide a recapitulation of that development.

The first category, Organizational Influences, consists of several factors: centralization, formalization, hierarchical level, and span of control. As suggested by Ferris et al. (1989) and Fandt and Ferris (1990), political behaviors are most likely to occur when a reasonably high degree of uncertainty or ambiguity exists in the work environment. For this reason, lower perceptions of politics should be present when formalization (i.e., formal rules and procedures) is high, and higher perceptions of politics should be present when formalization is low. Also, Mintzberg's (1979a) research on the use of power in the organizational goal-setting process has shown that political activity is weakest in formalized organizations.

The relationship between hierarchical level and organizational politics is such that more political behavior is exhibited at higher levels in the organization (Ferris et al., 1989; Madison, Allen, Porter, Renwick, & Mayes, 1980). However, other research has demonstrated that it is employees at lower levels in the organization that actually perceive more politics (Gandz & Murray, 1980), perhaps due to their lack of control over such processes.

Centralization, which refers to the distribution of power in organizations, also

is expected to influence politics perceptions. Specifically, a high degree of centralization would suggest that power and control are concentrated at the top of the organization, implying less direct control at lower levels and a greater potential for organizational politics perceptions. Furthermore, both Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) and Welsh and Slusher (1986) found that as centralization increases, there is evidence of increased political behavior in organizations. Thus, a direct, positive relationship between centralization and politics perceptions is predicted. As with most any prediction, exceptions may be identified. With this particular prediction, organizations that have been referred to as "professional bureaucracies" may not follow the predicted relationship. In fact, Mintzberg (1979b) has suggested that professional organizations are more political than other types.

Finally, span of control also is predicted to positively relate to perceptions of politics. As the span of control, or number of employees reporting to a supervisor, increases, the amount of attention a supervisor is able to devote to each individual employee decreases. This may create more ambiguity and uncertainty in the environment, thus promoting an environment in which perceptions of politics should be higher.

Four of the five factors listed in the second category, Job/Work Environment Influences, are expected to be negatively related to perceptions of politics for reasons similar to formalization. Job autonomy, job variety, and feedback were suggested as ways to reduce uncertainty in the work environment. Furthermore, Daft (1989) has suggested that positions in organizations acquire more power as a function of various task characteristics and autonomy. Specifically, he argued that low task variety and autonomy contribute to powerlessness, which might be associated with increased perceptions of politics. Although not as easy to see as the other three, advancement opportunity also should have a negative relationship with perceptions of politics. Specifically, if one perceives the advancement opportunities for promotion to be limited, it may not necessarily indicate that positions are not available for movement. Rather, it could be that opportunities are viewed as limited because the political nature of such decisions serves as a barrier to movement. Prior research has found opportunity for promotion or advancement to be associated with organizational politics (Ferris & Buckley, 1990; Gandz & Murray, 1980; Madison et al., 1980; Markham, Harlan, & Hackett, 1987). However, the fifth factor listed, interactions with others, is believed to be positively related to politics perceptions. Supervisors or coworkers (or both) behaving opportunistically toward employees should increase those individuals' perceptions of politics.

The final category listed as an influence on organizational politics perceptions is Personal Influences. Included in this category are both demographic (i.e., sex and age) and personality characteristics (i.e., Machiavellianism and self-monitoring) of the perceiver. According to Ferris et al. (1989), women (who often have had to operate from positions of inferiority in organizations, resulting in increased experience with politics) and older employees (who have been exposed to more political maneuvering) will view their work environments as more political than their counterparts. With respect to the personality characteristics, both high

Machs and high self-monitors should view the work environment as more political than their respective counterparts.

Several potential outcomes may occur when employees perceive the organization to be political in nature. These include organization withdrawal, job involvement, job anxiety, and job satisfaction. Ferris et al. (1989) suggested that at least three potential responses to politics perceptions would be to withdraw from the organization, remain a member of the organization but do not become involved in the politics, and to remain a member of the organization and become involved in the politics. These responses appear similar in nature to Hirschman's (1970) exit, loyalty, and voice, respectively.

One potential response of an employee who views the work environment as political is to withdraw from the organization. Frost (1987) also has made this suggestion, arguing that employees may leave to avoid engaging in an organization's political games. Withdrawal can take one of two forms, absenteeism or turnover. This type of behavior is expected when perceivers do not wish to become involved in the political games of the organization. Although some employees will have the luxury of external mobility, others will not be able to leave due to constraints or other organizational features they find appealing. Of those who elect to stay, there may be an increase in their absenteeism rate. With the decision to stay comes several alternative outcomes.

First, if organizational politics is perceived negatively, employees might immerse themselves in their work in an effort to ignore the surrounding political behavior. With this in mind, the positive relationship between job involvement and organizational politics perceptions becomes obvious. A second alternative is to become involved in the political process. If this option is selected, both job anxiety and job satisfaction can be influenced. Ferris et al. (1989) suggested that an inverse relationship between perceptions of politics and job satisfaction has been established by prior research. Further, when employees engage in political activities, the perceptions of others concerning the political nature of the organization may increase. Such perceptions in turn may increase job anxiety due to a more uncertain or ambiguous environment fueled by the increased political behavior.

Present Research

The present research explores the variables associated with perceptions of organizational politics in two different studies, which serve as tests of portions of the politics perceptions conceptualization presented by Ferris et al. (1989). In Study 1, a short measure of organizational politics perceptions was developed in order to conduct initial tests of the model. Our aim was to develop a concise, global measure of organizational politics perceptions in an effort to examine some of the relationships predicted by the Ferris et al (1989) model. Although the construct of organizational politics perceptions may be viewed as multidimensional, our goal was to verify that predicted relationships existed before proceeding to more extensive scale development efforts. Furthermore, a sample was selected involving employees from three different organizations reflecting different occupational categories, different hierarchical levels, and a broad range of age, education, and tenure. This diversity was considered important because previous

research (albeit sparse) focused almost exclusively on managerial perceptions of political behavior (Gandz & Murray, 1980; Madison et al., 1980).

Study 2 sought to expand upon Study 1 by developing a broader and more comprehensive multidimensional measure of organizational politics perceptions that was more reflective of the proposed multidimensional nature of this construct. Furthermore, this second investigation examined some antecedents of politics perceptions not measured in Study 1, and it provided for more precise articulation of the variables associated with specific dimensions of the politics perceptions construct.

The variables selected for examination in both of these studies were chosen for several reasons. First, previous research efforts empirically investigated certain variables with respect to perceptions of organizational politics (e.g., Gandz & Murray, 1980). These variables were included in both studies in an effort to replicate previous findings. Other variables not previously tested were also examined in one or both studies. These variables were included because they were thought to be related to perceptions of politics. This assumption came directly from the theoretical framework proposed by Ferris et al. (1989). Not all of the variables introduced in the Ferris et al. model could be examined due to the comprehensive nature of the conceptualization. Therefore, the variables tested were selected as a means of both replicating past research and testing specific portions of the theoretical model. Different variables were examined in each study because the purposes of the two studies were not identical. That is, Study 1 laid the groundwork for this investigation, and Study 2 sought to investigate the dimensionality of an expanded politics perceptions scale and to relate the predictor and outcome variables to each dimension of this construct.

Finally, whereas the theoretical model presented in Figure 1 suggests causality among the variables extending from one linkage to another, causality is not a determination that can be made in the present research. This research is cross-sectional and nonexperimental in nature, and though it can demonstrate whether predicted relationships in the model are supported, it cannot establish that one variable causes another.

Study 1: Method

Sample

An organizational survey was administered to a total of 264 employees in three different organizations. The sample consisted of 89 middle- and lower-level line and staff managers from a large, heavy equipment manufacturer; 81 registered nurses from a large hospital (800-bed); and 94 nursing service employees from a skilled nursing care facility operated by a county government. Employees present at work on that day completed questionnaires in meeting rooms on the organizations' time and in the presence of a member of the research team. Participants were asked to respond as accurately as possible, and they were assured complete anonymity and confidentiality of responses. Survey feedback sessions, reporting aggregate data, were conducted at each of the organizations approximately 6 weeks after data collection.

The mean age of the 264 respondents was 39.26 ($SD = 13.35$, range = 18-67).

There were 143 male respondents and 120 female. There were 248 white respondents, 13 black, and 3 other. Of the total respondents, 200 were married and 62 were not. The organizational tenure distribution was as follows: (a) less than 1 year ($n=71$); (b) 1-2 years ($n=37$); (c) 3-5 years ($n=28$); (d) 6-9 years ($n=20$); (e) 10 or more years ($n=107$). Level of education reflected the following: (a) less than high school ($n=17$); (b) high school diploma ($n=64$); (c) some schooling after high school, but no degree of certification ($n=75$); (d) associate degree ($n=3$); (e) 3 years of college or post secondary schooling ($n=13$); (f) Bachelor's degree ($n=58$); (g) Master's degree ($n=24$); (h) Doctoral degree ($n=1$); (i) Other ($n=7$).

Measures

The questionnaire assessed perceptions of work content and context as well as some background or personal characteristics of respondents.

Organizational politics. Because a measure of organizational politics perceptions did not exist, an additional feature of the first stage of this research was to develop such an instrument. Although we believe that organizational politics perceptions likely represent a multidimensional construct, our interest at this stage of the research was to develop a concise, construct valid measure of general politics perceptions with acceptable psychometric properties that could be used to conduct initial explorations in this area.

The extensive review and analysis of theory and research mentioned in an earlier section of this paper was used as the basis for generating the following five items: (a) Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead; (b) There is no place for yes-men around here; good ideas are desired even when it means disagreeing with supervisors (reverse scored); (c) You can get along around here by being a good guy, regardless of the quality of your work; (d) Employees are encouraged to speak out frankly even when they are critical of well established ideas (reverse scored); (e) There are "cliques" or "in-groups" that hinder the effectiveness around here. Each of these five items is measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree) and summed to create an index ranging from 5-25, with higher total scores reflecting a greater degree of perceived organizational politics.

To assess the structure of the five-item measure of organizational politics perceptions, the five items were subjected to principal axis factor analysis with orthogonal rotation according to a Varimax criterion. The Kaiser-Guttman criterion of eigenvalues greater than 1.00 was used for factor retention. One factor emerged accounting for 44% of the total variance, and a simple summation of scale scores yielded an index with an acceptable coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability estimate of .74. The belief was that this index reflected a construct valid, unidimensional measure of politics perceptions.

Job satisfaction. Global job satisfaction was measured with the GM Faces Scale (Kunin, 1955). This scale consists of a number of faces (i.e., 6 used here) with expressions ranging from a broad smile to a deep scowl, which were designed to assess global satisfaction level. In studies involving other satisfaction measures, the Faces Scale has demonstrated more than adequate psychometric

properties and has tended to represent a sound measure of overall or general job satisfaction (Dunham & Smith, 1979).

Job involvement. A one-item measure, reported by Patchen (1965), was used to assess the extent to which respondents were involved in their job. Employees responded to the following item: "Some people are completely involved in their job — they are absorbed in it night and day. For other people, their job is simply one of several interests. How involved do you feel in your job?" (1) Very little involved; my other interests are more absorbing; (2) Slightly involved; (3) Moderately involved; my job and my other interests are equally involving for me; (4) Strongly involved; (5) Very strongly involved; my work is the most absorbing interest in my life.

Organizational influences. Hierarchical level was operationalized as supervisory status, and it was assessed by asking respondents to indicate either true or false as to whether they supervise regular paid employees. Span of control was measured by asking respondents the number of employees reporting directly to their immediate supervisor.

Job/work environment influences. The job characteristics of skill variety, job autonomy, and feedback were measured with the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). The feedback measure assesses the degree to which the employee receives clear information about his or her performance effectiveness from supervisors or coworkers. The JDS has known psychometric properties and based on research with approximately 7000 people on nearly 900 jobs in 56 organizations, internal consistency reliability estimates for the different scales have averaged around .70 (Oldham, Hackman, & Stepina, 1979).

Opportunity for promotion or advancement was measured using the Promotion scale of the Job Descriptive Index (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1969). This scale consists of nine items (e.g., "Good opportunities for promotion," "Dead-end job," etc.) and respondents are asked to indicate (i.e., Yes, No, or ?) how well each of the statements describes promotion opportunities in their organization. The coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability estimate for this scale was .83.

Personal influences. Information also was gathered on two potential personal influences. Respondents were asked to indicate their age and sex.

Study 1: Results

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all variables are presented in Table 1. These zero-order correlations demonstrate that 9 of the 11 variables are related significantly to organizational politics, although some rather weakly. The negative sign of most of the relationships is largely consistent with prior research, particularly with respect to job satisfaction, skill variety, job autonomy, feedback, organization tenure, and opportunity for promotion. Unlike prior work, which found age to be positively but not significantly correlated with organizational politics, the present relationship is significant and inverse.

Also, though job involvement has not been measured in previous research in this area, the present positive relationship with politics seems interesting and consistent with theoretical notions advanced by Ferris et al. (1989). This might suggest some support for the notion that people can escape the "world of politics,"

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of All Variables (Study 1)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Organizational Politics	12.92	3.77	-											
2. Job Satisfaction	4.50	1.22	-.36**	-										
3. Job Involvement	3.68	.71	.12*	.02	-									
4. Skill Variety	4.93	1.47	-.23**	.35**	.19**	-								
5. Job Autonomy	5.32	1.54	-.32**	.38**	-.21**	.36**	-							
6. Feedback	4.39	1.78	-.43**	.26**	-.07	.20**	.14**	-						
7. Age	39.26	13.35	-.20**	.28**	.09	.33**	.27**	.15**	-					
8. Organization Tenure	3.21	1.70	-.12*	.30**	.13*	.52**	.29**	.00	.54**	-				
9. Supervisory Status	1.38	.49	.15*	-.21**	-.24**	-.57**	-.32**	-.16**	-.30**	.52**	-			
10. Opportunity for Promotion	36.39	19.92	-.26**	.09	-.10	-.06	.14	.10	-.15**	-.25**	.09	-		
11. Sex	1.48	.68	.10	-.15**	-.18**	-.37**	-.24**	-.01	-.04	-.44**	.41**	.06	-	
12. Span of Control	2.76	1.51	.02	-.03	-.08	-.13*	-.03	.09	.02	-.18**	.05	.10	.20**	-

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

even if surrounded by it, by immersing themselves in their work. In addition, the positive correlation between supervisory status and organizational politics indicates that nonsupervisory personnel perceived a higher level of politics than did supervisory employees. This finding supports earlier research that argued that people who see organizations as highly political tend to be those at lower levels in the organization (Gandz & Murray, 1980). A note of caution, however, needs to be made concerning interpretation of the job involvement results, in light of the measurement properties of the job involvement measure. One-item scales have unknown psychometric properties. Thus, it cannot be conclusively determined whether obtained results are reflections of substantive relationships or measurement error.

Predictors of Organizational Politics Perceptions

In order to test the proposed model, multiple regression analysis was conducted, regressing organizational politics on eight variables listed in Table 1 that were proposed as potential predictors of organizational politics perceptions. These variables are: skill variety, job autonomy, feedback, sex, opportunity for promotion, age, span of control, and supervisory status (i.e., hierarchical level). Because the interest here was in examining the variation in organizational politics explained by cross-demographic and job perception variation, and not by differences between organizations, the variance in politics perceptions due to the specific organization was controlled. Heavy equipment organizations might use political processes in a quite different manner than hospitals, and each of these might be quite different in political processes than nursing homes, which could serve to confound the results. The results of the regression analysis appear in Table 2.

As can be seen, after controlling for organization (dummy coded), variables

Table 2
Regression Results Examining Predictors of Organizational Politics Perceptions,
Controlling for Organization (Study 1)

Variables	Beta	t	p<
Control Variable			
Organization	.42	7.42	.001
Predictor Variables			
Feedback	-.29	5.44	.001
Job Autonomy	-.18	3.28	.001
Opportunity for Promotion	-.14	2.69	.01
Skill Variety	-.16	2.56	.01
Age	-.06	1.17	n.s.
Sex	-.03	< 1	n.s.
Span of Control	.02	< 1	n.s.

* $R^2 = .21$, $F(7,249) = 35.27$, $p < .001$.

*This R^2 value reflects the proportion of variance in organizational politics perceptions explained by the seven predictors, after controlling the variance accounted for by organization. Furthermore, this R^2 value was derived using the Drasgow, Dorans, and Tucker (1979) formula for estimating the population squared cross validity of a sample least squared regression equation, based on the distribution theory for least squares regression weights.

with statistically significant regression coefficients (and in the predicted direction) were feedback, job autonomy, skill variety, and opportunity for promotion. The proportion of variance explained in organizational politics perceptions by this equation, adjusted using the Drasgow, Dorans, and Tucker (1979) formula, was .21.

Outcomes of Organizational Politics Perceptions

As discussed earlier in this article, perceptions of organizational politics have implications for several outcomes including job involvement, job satisfaction, and job- or work-related stress. In the present study, two of these outcome variables were measured.

Job involvement. The conceptualization presented suggested that one potential outcome of perceiving the work environment as political is to actually become more (not less) involved in one's job. Such involvement was explained as a reaction based upon an unwillingness to play the political game, but an interest in or need to stay in the job and organization. Thus, one might immerse oneself in his or her work and effectively ignore the political behavior that is perceived to characterize the work environment.

Furthermore, in his conceptualization of stress, Schuler (1980) suggested that opportunity stress should be positively related to affective psychological outcomes like job involvement and job satisfaction. Thus, one might argue that when politics is construed as an opportunity (rather than a threat), the relationship with outcomes should be strong and positive.

In order to investigate whether organizational politics perceptions contribute significantly to variance explained in job involvement, when considered in conjunction with other variables, step-wise multiple regression analysis was conducted with the other variables in Table 1 as potential predictors and job involvement as the criterion, after controlling for organization. These results demonstrated that perceptions of organizational politics entered the equation ($B = .19$, $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $F(1,250) = 7.11$, $p < .01$).

Job satisfaction. The conceptualization in Figure 1 also indicates that job satisfaction (i.e., actually job dissatisfaction) is a consequence of organizational politics perceptions. To examine whether politics perceptions contribute to variance explained in job satisfaction, step-wise regression analysis was conducted with the other variables in Table 1 as predictors, and job satisfaction as the criterion, after controlling for organization. The results indicate that perceptions of politics enter the equation and demonstrate a significant inverse relationship ($B = -.29$, $\Delta R^2 = .08$, $F(1,251) = 24.17$, $p < .001$) with job satisfaction.

Study 2: Method

Sample

A total of 95 staff nurses and their supervisors voluntarily participated in the study, and the sample representatively reflects all three work shifts and most of the major departments in the hospital.

The demographic composition of the sample demonstrates that 91 of the participants were female and only four were male, and 74% were married ($n=70$) with

26% ($n=25$) not married. The average age of the participants was 33.02 years, with a range of 21 to 55 years.

Relative to tenure, three measures were assessed. Participating employees reflected an average tenure in the organization of 4.87 years, with a range of 2 months to 23 years. Tenure in present job or position ranged from 2 months to 13.42 years, with an average of 2.85 years. Participants ranged between 1 month and 6.92 years in the amount of time they had been working for their current supervisor.

Finally, participants in the study came from all three work shifts, but more were from the day shift than from afternoons or nights. Of the total number of employees, 54 worked the day shift, 20 worked the afternoon shift, and 15 worked nights.

Questionnaires

Data on a number of measures were collected from different questionnaires distributed separately to supervisors and staff nurses. The major variables used in the data analyses are presented below, along with their psychometric properties.

Organizational politics. Perceptions of organizational politics were assessed using a 31-item measure that examined various aspects of political behavior in organizations derived from both the research literature and anecdotal evidence (See Appendix). Employees responded on a 1-5 Likert-type scale the extent to which they agreed with each statement as it reflected their present work environment. The coefficient alpha reliability for the aggregate measure of politics perceptions was .91.

Job satisfaction. Overall job satisfaction was measured with the Job Descriptive Index, Job in General Scale (Smith, Kendall, & Hulin, 1964). The coefficient alpha reliability estimate for the Job in General satisfaction scale was .86.

Organizational influences. Formalization refers to the extent to which rules, procedures, instruction, and communications in the organization are written, and thus the extent to which well-defined procedures for operation, decisions, and so forth exist. The nine-item (measured on a 1-5, Likert-type Scale) formalization scale discussed by Kerr and Jermier (1978) was used. This scale had a coefficient alpha of .88.

Span of control was measured as the number of employees reporting directly to the respondents' supervisor. Supervisors reported an average span of control of 17.39 employees with a range of 3-69 employees.

Job/work environment influences. The nature of the working relationship between supervisor and subordinate was measured by the Negotiating Latitude Scale developed by Graen, Novak, and Sommerkamp (1982), consisting of seven items measured on a 5-point scale. The coefficient alpha reliability estimate for the Relationship with Supervisor Scale was .85.

Opportunity for promotion or advancement was measured using the Promotion scale of the Job Descriptive Index (Smith et al., 1964). The coefficient alpha reliability estimate for this scale was .84.

Work group cohesion is the degree of closeness or interpersonal interest people in a work group take in each other. The five-item measure (assessed using a 1-5

Likert-type Scale) of work group cohesion developed by Price and Mueller (1986a, 1986b) was used, which had a coefficient alpha reliability estimate of .91.

Personal influences. A 25-item scale developed by Snyder (1987) was used to measure self-monitoring, a construct that assesses the extent to which someone is aware of and monitors the social climate around them. The self-monitoring scale consists of a set of 25 true-false, self-descriptive statements, and measures of self-monitoring were gathered for both supervisors and subordinates. The coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability estimate was .73.

Additional data were collected from respondents on background characteristics, including employee age.

Study 2: Results

Predictors of Organizational Politics Perceptions

In the present study, variables from all three categories of predictors (i.e., Organization Influences, Job/Work Environment Influences, Personal Influences) were included in the analyses, some of which were not included in Study 1. Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all variables are presented in Table 3.

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the predictors of organizational politics perceptions by regressing politics perceptions on seven variables listed in Table 3 that were proposed as potential antecedents in the Ferris et al. (1989) model. These variables are: Relationship with Supervisor, Work Group Cohesion (a measure of co-worker interactions), Opportunity for Promotion, Formalization, Span of Control, Self Monitoring, and Age. The results of the regression analysis appear in Table 4.

As can be seen, the variables with statistically significant regression coefficients (and in the predicted direction) were Relationship with Supervisor, Work Group Cohesion, and Opportunity for Promotion. The proportion of variance explained in organizational politics perceptions by this equation, adjusted using the Drasgow et al. (1979) formula, was .33. Interestingly, this seems to reflect the notion suggested by Ferris et al. (1989) that organizational politics can come (or be perceived so) from different sources (e.g., supervisor behavior, coworker behavior, or organizational policies and practices), and operate at different levels; that is, individual (e.g., supervisor behavior), group (e.g., work group cohesion), and organization (e.g., opportunity for promotion as reflective of organizational policies or practices).

Outcomes of Organizational Politics Perceptions

The model proposes that organizational politics perceptions have implications for job satisfaction. In order to investigate whether politics perceptions contribute significantly to variance explained in job satisfaction, step-wise regression analysis was conducted with the other variables in Table 4 as potential predictors and job satisfaction as the criterion. These results demonstrated that perceptions of organizational politics entered the equation ($B=-.30$, $\Delta R^2=.08$, $F(1,80)=8.38$, $p<.01$).

Table 3
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of All Variables (Study 2)

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Organizational Politics	86.28	14.71	-								
2. Formalization	33.37	5.48	-.30**	-							
3. Span of Control	17.39	14.88	.14	.04	-						
4. Relationship with Supervisor	25.31	5.97	-.58**	.21*	-.15	-					
5. Work Group Cohesion	19.73	3.10	-.33**	.31**	-.03	.20*	-				
6. Opportunity for Promotion	14.36	12.42	-.38**	.25**	-.13	.30**	.02	-			
7. Age	33.02	8.53	.24**	-.07	.20*	-.36**	.10	-.26**	-		
8. Self-Monitoring	9.86	3.73	.02	.05	-.18	.12	.02	.10	-.18*	-	
9. Job Satisfaction	61.64	9.73	-.45**	.26**	-.08	.34	.44**	.25**	-.13	-.03	-

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 4
Multiple Regression Results Examining Predictors of Organizational Politics Perceptions (Study 2)

Variables	Beta	t	p<
Organizational Politics Perceptions			
Relationship with Supervisor	-.31	3.04	.01
Work Group Cohesion	-.30	3.04	.01
Opportunity for Promotion	-.22	2.22	.03
Self Monitoring	.15	1.61	n.s.
Span of Control	.08	<1	n.s.
Formalization	-.06	<1	n.s.
Age	.04	<1	n.s.

Adjusted $R^2 = .33$, $F(7,76) = 6.90$, $p < .001$

Dimensionality of Organizational Politics Perceptions

An additional objective of Study 2 was to assess the dimensionality of the expanded organizational politics perceptions measure in order to determine more precisely the antecedents and consequences of specific aspects or dimensions of politics. The responses to the 31-item Perceptions of Politics scale were subjected to principal components analysis with Varimax rotation. A three-factor solution was found to be most interpretable, with loadings of .50 and above used as an item retention criterion, resulting in a total of 22 items being retained across the three factors. The scale items, loadings, and factor descriptions are presented in Table 5.

Factor I item loadings suggest this is a supervisor political behavior factor, or ways supervisors can contribute to the political environment. The highest loadings on Factor II suggest this is a coworker and clique behavior factor, but one that seems to operate at the individual (items 30, 19, 20) and group (items 27, 5) levels. Factor III seems to indicate an organization policies and practices factor, mainly focusing on pay and promotion practices. For purposes of further analyses, individual scores on each of the three politics perceptions factors were calculated using a simple sum of scale scores. The coefficient alpha internal consistency reliability estimates for the three politics factors are: Supervisor Behavior = .80; Coworker and Clique Behavior = .84; Organization Policies and Practices = .81. These results are consistent with the Ferris et al. (1989) conceptualization, which suggested that there are essentially three sources of political behavior or perceptions of politics: Supervisor, Coworkers, and Organization policies and practices.

Predictors and Outcomes of Politics Perceptions Dimensions

In order to investigate more precisely the predictors of organizational politics perceptions, separate multiple regression analyses were conducted, regressing each of the three politics dimensions on the predictor variables in Table 3. The results of these three regression analyses are presented in Table 6. The results reported in Table 6 demonstrate that Relationship with Supervisor is the strongest predictor of the Supervisor (Political) Behavior factor as might be expected.

There were three significant predictors of the Coworker and Clique (Political)

Table 5
Dimensions of Organizational Politics Perception (Study 2)

Items	Factors		
	I Supervisor Behavior	II Coworker and Clique Behavior	III Organization Policies and Practices
4. Employees are encouraged to speak out frankly even when they are critical of well-established ideas. (RS)	.755		
28. Whereas a lot of what my supervisor does around here (e.g., communicates and gives feedback, etc.) appears to be directed at helping employees, it is actually intended to protect himself/herself.	.746		
2. There is no place for yes-men around here; good ideas are desired even when it means disagreeing with superiors. (RS)	.733		
14. When my supervisor communicates with me, it is to make himself/herself look better, not to help me.	.724		
29. The performance appraisals/ratings people receive from their supervisors reflect more of the supervisor's "own agenda" (e.g., likes and dislikes, giving high or low ratings to make themselves look good, etc.) than the actual performance of the employee.	.714		
21. Managers in this organization often use the selection system to hire only people that can help them in their future or who see things the way they do.	.687		
12. It seems that the individuals who are able to come through in the times of crisis or uncertainty are the ones who get ahead.	-.597		
25. The rules and policies concerning promotion and pay are fair; it is how supervisors carry out the policies that is unfair and self-serving.	.587		
16. Rewards come only to those who work hard in this organization. (RS)	.577		
18. Promotions in this department generally go to top performers. (RS)	.543		
11. People here usually don't speak up for fear of retaliation by others.	.539		
17. People who are willing to voice their opinion seem to do "better" here than those who don't.	-.526		
30. If a co-worker offers to lend some assistance, it is because they expect to get something out of it (e.g., makes them look good, you owe them a favor now, etc.), not because they really care.		.766	
19. My co-workers help themselves, not others.		.726	
27. Connections with other departments are very helpful when it comes time to call in a favor.		.681	
20. I have seen people deliberately distort information requested by others for purposes of personal gain, either by withholding it or by selectively reporting it.		.677	
5. There are "cliques" or "in-groups" which hinder the effectiveness around here.		.507	
22. People in this organization often use the selection system to hire only people that can help them in their future or who see things the way they do.		.499	
31. Pay and promotion policies are generally communicated in this company. (RS)			.801
24. Overall, the rules and policies around here concerning promotion and pay are specific and well defined. (RS)			.730
7. You can usually get what you want around here if you know the right person to ask.			
1. Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here.			
Eigenvalue:	9.22	2.66	2.11
Percent of Total Variance:	29.7	8.6	6.8

Table 6
Antecedents of Organizational Politics Perceptions Dimensions^a

Antecedents	Politics Perceptions Factors		
	I Supervisor Behavior	II Coworker & Clique Behavior	III Organization Policies and Practices
Relationship with Supervisor	-.45**	.00	-.07
Formalization	-.00	-.21**	.04
Work Group Cohesion	-.09	-.55**	.12
Span of Control	.02	.18*	.01
Opportunity for Promotion	-.17	.00	-.40**
Self Monitoring	.15	.06	.10
Age	.13	.03	-.04
Adjusted R ²	.32	.41	.12

^aValues in the table are standardized regression coefficients, and the asterisks indicate the statistical significance level of the t-values for the betas.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Behavior factor: Work Group Cohesion, Span of Control, and Formalization. Less Work Group Cohesion, a greater Span of Control of supervisors, and less Formalization seems to provide sufficient uncertainty and ambiguity, and thus fertile ground, for coworkers to behave politically (or be perceived to do so).

Finally, Opportunity for Promotion was the sole significant predictor of the Organization Policies and Practices politics perceptions factor. This seems quite reasonable given that the highest loadings on this factor dealt with policies and practices concerning pay and promotions, which typically are identified as the most political decisions in organizations (Ferris & Buckley, 1990; Madison et al., 1980).

In order to investigate the potential outcomes of the different dimensions of organizational politics perceptions for job satisfaction, step-wise regression analysis was conducted with the politics perceptions factors and the other variables in Table 3 as potential predictors and job satisfaction as the criterion. The results demonstrated that the Coworker and Cliques (Political) Behavior factor entered the equation first, explaining a significant proportion of job satisfaction variance ($B = -.60$, $\Delta R^2 = .36$, $F(1,78) = 43.99$, $p < .01$). No other politics dimensions entered the equation.

General Discussion

The present research involved two field studies designed to test portions of the Ferris et al. (1989) model of organizational politics perceptions. Although there were some differences across the two studies relative to the predictors of politics perceptions that were examined, the combined results are interesting because they both replicate and extend the little previous research conducted on politics perceptions (Gandz & Murray, 1980; Madison et al., 1980), and validate some of the linkages investigated in the Ferris et al. model. Additionally, the results of Study 2 build on prior work by developing a more comprehensive measure of politics perceptions, and assessing the dimensionality of this construct.

In Study 1, a number of Organizational, Job/Work Environment, and Personal

influences were examined as possible predictors of organizational politics perceptions, using a sample consisting of three different organizations. The results of Study 1 indicate that feedback, job autonomy, skill variety, and opportunity for promotion each explained a significant amount of variance in perceptions of organizational politics, thus validating portions of the conceptual model tested, and replicating and extending previous work concerning the perceptions of organizational politics (Gandz & Murray, 1980; Madison, et al., 1980).

In previous research, Gandz and Murray (1980) found that job satisfaction, job autonomy, and opportunity for promotion entered the equation concerning perceived politicization. In comparison with the present results, both job autonomy and opportunity for promotion were common to both studies. Additionally, Madison et al. (1980) and Ferris and Buckley (1990) found promotion decisions to be one of the most political in organizations. Similarly, Study 1 found that opportunity for promotion explained a significant portion of the variance in perceptions of organizational politics.

Although the entire model was not tested, the portions that were examined were found to adequately support the predictors and outcomes of perceptions of organizational politics. The four predictors of organizational politics perceptions that were found (i.e., job autonomy, skill variety, feedback, and advancement opportunity), all fell under the category of Job/Work environment influences. None of the other proposed predictors (i.e., age, sex, or supervisory status) were found to explain a significant proportion of variance in organizational politics perceptions. This finding may be due to the limited number of respondents at either end of the age ranges or it could be that supervisory status may not be an approximate measure of hierarchical level. Furthermore, both of the outcomes examined, job involvement and job satisfaction, were found to be influenced significantly by organizational politics perceptions.

Study 2 investigated some of the same and some different (than Study 1) Organization, Job/Work environment, and Personal influences on organizational politics perceptions, in a single organization using an expanded measure of politics perceptions. For the overall measure of politics perceptions (i.e., summation of the 31 items), three variables emerged as significant predictors, and these three predictors support theoretical notions advanced by Ferris et al. (1989) that politics perceptions can generate from at least three sources: supervisor behavior, coworker behavior, and organization policies and practices. Relationship with Supervisor, Work Group Cohesion, and Opportunity for Promotion all demonstrated statistically significant and negative relationships with organizational politics perceptions, consistent with theory.

Two other purposes of Study 2 were to assess the dimensionality of organizational politics perceptions and to articulate more precisely the predictors and outcomes of specific politics perceptions dimensions. Analysis of the dimensionality of the 31-item Perceptions of Politics Scale yielded three factors that correspond to the theoretical notions proposed by Ferris et al. (1989). Factor I was a Supervisor (Political) Behavior dimension, and Relationship with Supervisor served as a significant predictor of this dimension of politics perceptions. A lower reported

quality of working relationship with supervisor was associated with perceptions of supervisor political behavior.

Factor II suggested a Coworker and Clique Behavior dimension, and it had three significant predictors: Work Group Cohesion, Span of Control, and Formalization. Higher perceptions of Coworker and Clique (Political) Behavior were associated with lower Work Group Cohesion and Formalization and greater Span of Control. It does not seem surprising that increased coworker/cliue political behavior is perceived under conditions of reduced controls associated with greater span of control and reduced formalization (i.e., rules and procedures) and decreased coworker cohesion and attachment.

The third factor of politics perceptions was Organization Policies and Practices, and a sole variable, Opportunity for Promotion, served as a significant predictor. As employees perceived less opportunity for promotion in the organization, they perceived greater evidence of politics in the organization's policies and practices. The highest loadings for this factor dealt with pay and promotion decisions, so it is reasonable that Opportunity for Promotion would be strongly related to it. Furthermore, in addition to being specified by Ferris et al. (1989) as a source of political action in organizations, Organization Policies and Practices with respect to promotion tend to be perceived as the most political decisions made in organizations (Ferris & Buckley, 1990; Madison et al., 1989).

Gandz and Murray (1980) suggested and provided evidence to support the notion that organizational politics perceptions would emerge as a significant negative predictor of job satisfaction, even when considered in conjunction with other proposed satisfaction antecedents. This finding was replicated in both Study 1 and Study 2 of the present research, using an overall measure of politics perceptions. However, it was considered of interest to further investigate which dimension(s) of politics perceptions were accounting for this contribution to the explanation of satisfaction variance. When considered along with several other potential predictors, step-wise regression analysis demonstrated that the Coworker and Clique (Political) Behavior factor of organizational politics perceptions entered the equation first (negatively), uniquely explaining 36% of the variance in job satisfaction. These convergent findings suggest that organizational politics perceptions play a role in employee job dissatisfaction, and more specifically, that it is the Coworker and Clique (Political) Behavior factor of politics perceptions that seems to explain this role. This makes sense in light of the critical role coworkers play in influencing employee definition and interpretation of work environmental stimuli (e.g., Ferris & Mitchell, 1987; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Indeed, perceptions of political behavior would seem to represent an important aspect of such stimuli.

The present research has several limitations. A major weakness concerns the largely self-report measurement of variables across both studies. Particularly in light of some of the constructs measured, common method variance could prove problematic. The present research went beyond the examination of simple bivariate relationships (which characterized most prior work), and applied multivariate analysis, using multiple regression analysis. Clearly, this is an improvement over some past research, but it does not eliminate the possibility that obtained relationships are capitalizing on and at least somewhat reflective of artifactual variance

rather than valid variance. Future research should consider employing multiple methods and measures of attitudinal, perceptual, and behavioral data collection.

Another potential limitation, specifically of Study 1, concerned the organizational politics measure used. Although a concerted effort was made to develop a concise yet construct valid measure of politics that had acceptable reliability, an exclusive reliance on such a limited measure could potentially prove problematic. Thus, in Study 2, a systematic effort was made to consider the multidimensional nature of organizational politics, and to develop an instrument sufficiently broad to capture the different dimensions. However, future research is needed on this scale to more definitively establish its psychometric properties.

Study 1 was able to explain only 21% of the variance in politics perceptions. Although this finding may appear low to some, only a portion of the model was tested. Other relevant predictors of politics perceptions such as personal and organizational influences were not measured. Had these variables been included, the variance explained presumably would have been higher. In fact, when other potential predictors were investigated in Study 2, the proportion of variance explained in organizational politics perceptions nearly doubled (i.e., Adjusted $R^2=.33$).

Another limitation, or rather caution, of the present research concerns inferences about causality. In general, across both studies, there was a working assumption that perceptions of politics cause job involvement and negative outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, anxiety, and withdrawal. First, the correlational nature of the present research does not permit causal statements to be made. But, second, the direction of causality needs to be sorted out and empirically substantiated in future research. That is, it must be at least acknowledged that an argument could be made for a reversal of the causal ordering presented here. A person involved in his or her job may use political means to accomplish job tasks. In this sense, politics is instrumental in job performance and job involvement is not a compensatory mechanism to avoid politics. In addition, uncertainty as a stressor may cause anxiety and dissatisfaction that may be reduced by political action. Indeed, this was the perspective taken by Farrell (1983) and Mayes and Ganster (1988). The argument would be that politics can help individuals cope with stressful environments by reducing uncertainty if they are successful politicians. Thus, the true direction of these causal paths remains an empirical question that is yet to be definitively answered.

This issue of causality potentially could be an issue as well for some of the antecedents. Indeed, the substantive implications of the reverse causation among the antecedent variables and perceptions of politics need to be considered. For example, it is possible that perceived politics could influence perceptions of the job and of relationships to other individuals. More specifically, perceptions of supervisor political behavior could affect one's perceived (and actual) relationship with his or her supervisor.

A final limitation of the present research is the failure to test directly some of the proposed moderating variables as well as their intermediate linkages, and the intermediate linkages operating between the antecedents and politics perceptions. Several of the predictors were proposed to influence politics perceptions through

their effects on uncertainty or ambiguity, according to the model. Yet, uncertainty was not directly measured in this research, so that intermediate linkage was not tested. Future research therefore needs to conduct more complete tests of the variables and the linkages proposed in this conceptual model.

Furthermore, organizational politics perceptions are proposed, in the model, to have both direct and moderated consequences. Only the direct effects were investigated in this research. Future research needs to empirically investigate the moderating influences of control and understanding, as well as the intermediate linkages of threats and opportunities through which they are proposed to operate (Ferris et al., 1989).

A fundamental issue in work on organizational politics concerns its largely negative interpretation. Most people perceive only the dark side of politics, and indeed there is a dark side, characterized by destructive opportunism and dysfunctional game playing. However, politics can be positive as well, for organizations and for individuals. Pfeffer (1981) has argued that politics are essential to the effective functioning of organizations. Individuals who become proficient at playing politics may realize greater job and career-related rewards (e.g., Wayne & Ferris, 1990). In fact, in the present research, organizational politics perceptions were associated with higher (not lower) job involvement. So, it is the opinion of the present authors that theory and research in organizational politics will advance more rapidly and meaningfully as scholars adopt a more neutral perspective on this important construct.

These results are interesting because they support and extend previous research and empirically test a proposed model, thus contributing to the program of research currently under investigation. Specifically, these results help to explain potential behavioral and attitudinal determinants and consequences of an entity perceiving the work environment as political in nature. Even though the present research is useful and informative, much more research is needed in this area to help answer some of the questions raised by these studies and to ask new and different questions. For example, the present research investigated general politics perceptions, with the intention of representatively sampling from a variety of issues and areas of organizational life. Yet, some key themes emerged that suggest more careful and focused efforts in the future. One of these themes or areas seems to be personnel management, and it appears that politics is perceived to affect a number of important personnel decisions. Although some quite recent efforts have been made to address this area (Ferris, Fedor, Chachere, & Pondy, 1989; Ferris & Judge, 1991; Ferris & King, 1991; Ferris, King, Judge, & Kacmar, 1991), they represent just a beginning, and much more work is needed to more fully understand the issues and implications of politics and its role in personnel/human resources management and other critical decision areas.

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Appendix A

1. Favoritism rather than merit determines who gets ahead around here.
2. There is no place for yes-men around here; good ideas are desired even when it means disagreeing with superiors. (RS)
3. You can get along here by being a good guy, regardless of the quality of your work.
4. Employees are encouraged to speak out frankly even when they are critical of well-established ideas. (RS)
5. There are "cliques" or "in-groups" which hinder the effectiveness around here.
6. It normally takes only a couple of months for a new employee to figure out who they should not cross around here.
7. You can usually get what you want around here if you know the right person to ask.
8. When objective standards are not specified, it is common to see many people trying to define standards to meet their needs.
9. There has always been an influential group in this department that no one ever crosses.
10. Generally, people who have left this organization did so because they realized that just working hard was not enough to get ahead.
11. People here usually don't speak up for fear of retaliation by others.
12. It seems that the individuals who are able to come through in the times of crisis or uncertainty are the ones who get ahead.
13. As long as the actions of others don't directly affect me, I don't care what they do.
14. When my supervisor communicates with me, it is to make himself/herself look better, not to help me.
15. The old saying that the "squeaky wheel gets the grease" really works around here when resources are distributed.
16. Rewards come only to those who work hard in this organization. (RS)
17. People who are willing to voice their opinion seem to do "better" here than those who don't.

18. Promotions in this department generally go to top performers. (RS)
19. My co-workers help themselves, not others.
20. I have seen people deliberately distort information requested by others for purposes of personal gain, either by withholding it or by selectively reporting it.
21. Managers in this organization often use the selection system to hire only people that can help them in their future or who see things the way they do.
22. People in this organization often use the selection system to hire only people that can help them in their future or who see things the way they do.
23. I have seen changes made in policies here that only serve the purposes of a few individuals, not the work unit or the organization.
24. Overall, the rules and policies around here concerning promotion and pay are specific and well defined. (RS)
25. The rules and policies concerning promotion and pay are fair; it is how supervisors carry out the policies that is unfair and self-serving.
26. When you need help at work, you can always rely on a co-worker to lend a hand. (RS)
27. Connections with other departments are very helpful when it comes time to call in a favor.
28. Whereas a lot of what my supervisor does around here (e.g., communicates and gives feedback, etc.) appears to be directed at helping employees, it is actually intended to protect himself/herself.
29. The performance appraisals/ratings people receive from their supervisors reflect more of the supervisor's "own agenda" (e.g., likes and dislikes, giving high or low ratings to make themselves look good, etc.) than the actual performance of the employee.
30. If a co-worker offers to lend some assistance, it is because they expect to get something out of it (e.g., makes them look good, you owe them a favor now, etc.), not because they really care.
31. Pay and promotion policies are generally communicated in this company. (RS)