



IUL School of Social Sciences

Department of Social and Organizational Psychology

Revised Political Skill Inventory: bridging Western and Eastern perspectives

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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by

Carolina Alferes da Ponte

Supervisor:

Dr. Nelson Ramalho, Assistant Professor
ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon

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Resumo

Dez anos passaram desde a publicação do Political Skill Inventory de Ferris e colegas (2005). Nos últimos anos, a competência política tornou-se um tópico relevante na investigação, tendo vindo a provar que é capaz de melhorar a vida organizacional de quem a possui de várias maneiras. Desde então, uma quantidade considerável de pesquisas conduzidas no leste da Ásia trouxeram novos desenvolvimentos sobre conceitos políticos específicos utilizados em culturas contrastantes, como é o caso da China. Até agora, nenhum modelo foi operacionalizado nesse sentido. No presente estudo, pretendemos conceber uma matriz integrada que reúne conceptualizações do Ocidente e do Oriente, através do desenvolvimento de uma versão alargada do Political Skill Inventory. Os resultados sugerem a existência de uma conceptualização contextual específica de competência política, nomeadamente na China, e que contribui para uma maior validade de conteúdo. As limitações do estudo, bem como direções para futura investigação, são discutidas.

Palavras-chave: Competência política, Psicologia intercultural, Validade de Conteúdo, Oriente, Ocidente

Códigos PsycINFO: 3600 Psicologia Industrial e Organizacional; 3660 Comportamento Organizacional

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Abstract

Ten years have elapsed since the publication of the Ferris and colleagues' (2005) Political Skill Inventory. In recent years, political skill has become a hot topic since it was found to enhance the work lives of those who have it in several ways. Since then a considerable amount of research conducted in East Asia brought new insights on specific political related concepts in use in contrasting cultures such as China. Until now, no model has been operationalized in this sense. In the present study, we aim to develop an integrated matrix that brings together West and East conceptualizations, by developing an extended version of Political Skill Inventory. Findings encouraged the existence of a context-specific conceptualization of political skill, namely in China, which contributes for a greater content validity. Limitations, as well as possible future directions, are discussed.

Keywords: Political skill, Cross-cultural Psychology, Content Validity, East, West

PsycINFO Classification Categories: 3600 Industrial & Organizational Psychology; 3660 Organizational Behaviour

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List of Abbreviations

AS	Apparent Sincerity
AM	Amoral Manipulation
CPS	Chinese Political Skill
F	Flexibility
HR	Human Resources
II	Interpersonal Influence
NA	Networking Ability
PSI	Political Skill Inventory
PSI-Re	Political Skill Inventory Revised
SA	Social Astuteness
SF	Save Face

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Introduction

Mintzberg (1985) considered organizations political arenas, where it is important for individuals to have certain skills to be effective in accomplishing their organizational goals and even to survive as organizational actors. The existence of ambiguity, limited resources and opposing interests, as well as the need to make decisions and to influence others, are inherent aspects of modern business organizations (Kimura, 2014). The word “politics” in the workplace doesn’t usually have a good reputation, being associated with manipulation and self-interest. However, the power to influence and effectively create relationships with others is essential in an environment where conflicts and change occur frequently and where others are needed to develop and succeed in an organizational context.

Jean Leslie published an article in Forbes magazine named “Why you have to be a politician at your job” (2010) that states:

“Here’s an important paradox: If you have political skill, you appear not to have it. That’s because skillful political behavior usually comes across as genuine, authentic, straightforward and effective. Leaders who aren’t politically skilled, on the other hand, end up looking manipulative or self-serving. We all know both kinds of people.”

This intuitive sense of how to use power effectively was named by Mintzberg (1983) as political skill. High politically skilled individuals not only know what to do in each context but also how to do it in order to avoid looking like self-centered or manipulative. They have the ability to adjust their behavior to different situations in a way that appears to be sincere, dissembling any ulterior motives and in an influential manner (Ferris et al., 2005). Regardless of the unquestionable role of competencies or hard work for the career success and performance, political skill has showed to be a much-needed requisite to be truly successful within organizations. This skill has revealed to be useful not only for individuals in leading roles (e.g., Treadway et al., 2004; Ahearn, Ferris, Hochwarter, Douglas & Ammeter, 2004; Whitaker & Dahling, 2013) but also for subordinates (e.g., Harris, Kacmar, Zivnuska & Shaw, 2007; Blickle et al., 2011) and Human Resources professionals (Sheehan, DeCieri, Cooper & Brooks, 2015).

The systematic study of Political Skill is relatively recent. Only ten years have elapsed since the publication of Ferris and colleagues’ (2005) Political Skill Inventory (PSI), which have been a largely cited paper and used scale. Several efforts were made in order to test the cross-cultural validation of this construct in non-American constructs, with most of the research being based on the applicability of translated versions of PSI (e.g., Lvina et al., 2012;

Shi & Chen, 2012). In what concerns the psychometric properties of the Chinese translation of PSI, studies showed acceptable construct, convergent and discriminant validities. Yet both Lvina et al. (2012) and Shi & Chen (2012) studies reported low internal consistencies in some PSI subscales, which can be explained by cultural differences. These findings shed lights to the necessity of further investigation on whether Chinese political skill construct contains some additional dimensions not evident in the existent Western operationalization. Although construct validation of political skill has been showed, revision of content validation is needed to explore if the real meaning of this construct is being assessed (e.g., DeVellis, 1991).

Therefore, we set to ask ourselves: how universal is the extant construct and measures of political skill? Political skill's studies have been mostly westernized in nature, which means the constructs and respective measures might be inappropriate to fully study and understand east cultures, such as the Chinese. For that reason, in the present research we intend to develop an integrated construct that brings together West and East conceptualizations of political skill by means of integrating into the same matrix all dimensions found for both types of samples. Inspired by research about Chinese political skills (Han, Zeng, Zhu & Huang, 2011), an extended version of PSI (Ferris et al., 2005) will be created, so that the measures can be more appropriate to fully study and understand this construct in East cultures, such as the Chinese.

We believe that this study will help validate the content validity of PSI, while endorsing its applicability across the globe. Besides, a broader comprehensibility of the political skill construct is required to fully understand its meaning and impact throughout organizations around the world.

In the following chapters, we will first review the existent literature on political skill and its several work outcomes. Then, considering it is a culture-bounded construct, we will focus on the case of China, where ancient traditional values have been shaping societies and business ethics until today. Here, we review the current state of art concerning studies attempting to expand PSI to other cultures, namely China. In the third chapter, we clarify our aims with the present study, as well as our research model and the rational behind it. Finally, we report the results of our research, discuss its implications, as well as report limitations and suggest directions for future research.

I. Theoretical framework

Characterization of Political skill

Political skill is perhaps the first social skill construct to be aimed specifically to the context of organizational settings. Ferris and colleagues (2005, p.127) defined political skill as “the ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one’s personal and/or organizational objectives”. Therefore, politically skilled individuals own a great understanding of social situations – social astuteness – combined with the capacity to adapt their behavior to different situations in order to be more effective. The PSI (Ferris et al., 2005) comprises four dimensions of political skill: social astuteness, interpersonal influence, networking ability, and apparent sincerity. Each dimension describes a different aspect of an individual’s political skills, respectively the ability to read and understand people, the ability to act on that knowledge in influential ways, the ability to interconnect and cooperate with others, and the ability to do all these in a seemingly genuine and sincere manner. Thus, politically skilled individuals are more able to read and adequately interpret social cues and altering their social image and behavior accordingly. These individuals usually have high levels of self-awareness, displaying a sense of confidence and security that attract others since they feel comfortable around them. Hence they are more able to persuade, influence and control others (Todd, Harris & Wheeler, 2009; Liu et al., 2007; Treadway, Hochwarter, Kacmar & Ferris, 2005). Since their efforts to influence are not perceived as such, they transmit an image of integrity and authenticity that appeals to others and enables the growth of networking and the gain of positive reputation (Blickle, Diekmann, Schneider, Kalthöfer & Summers, 2012). For that reason the effective use of political skill seems especially advantageous in occupations that require interpersonal skills, networking abilities, and social influence tactics (Ferris, Perrewé, and Davidson, 2006).

Although political skill varies according to situations – which means it can be trained and developed – it also has dispositional antecedents. According to Ferris and colleagues (2005), the construct of political skill is significantly and positively correlated with self-monitoring ($r = .39, p < .001$), conscientiousness ($r = .31, p < .001$), emotional intelligence ($r = .53, p < .01$), and political savvy ($r = .47, p < .001$), while negatively correlated with trait anxiety ($r = -.27, p < .01$). The relationship between political skill and these personal and social antecedents indicates convergent validity of the construct, while showing that there are not construct redundancy.

Self-monitoring reflects the extent to which people are able to read circumstances and are able to create and control the image they project in social situations (Snyder, 1987; Gangestad & Snyder, 2000).

Conscientiousness suggests the tendency to be organized, self-disciplined, dependable, and aimed for achievement (McCrae and Costa, 1987). Along with self-monitoring, conscientiousness is related with calibrating one's own behavior, as needed to be politically skilled.

Emotional intelligence is described by Meisler (2013) as the ability of combining “intellectual intelligence and emotion in a way that enhances intellectual understanding of emotion and the manner it guides thought and action” (p. 281). In other words, it matches emotion perception, emotion understanding, and emotion regulation (Joseph & Newman, 2010). Hence, emotional intelligence showed to be moderately correlated with political skill, since it facilitates interpersonal behavior. However, the constructs are only partially overlapped because political skill goes beyond emotions, incorporating skill and knowledge, thus acting as a mediator between emotional intelligence and job satisfaction (Meisler, 2013).

Political savvy, like political skill, is a social effectiveness construct but differs from it in the sense that focus on learning and adaptation to “how things really work” in the organization, comprising a politics dimension of organizational socialization (Chao, O’Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein & Gardner, 1994).

Political skill showed to be negatively correlated with trait anxiety since feelings of control and personal security associated with high politically skilled individuals are related with better coping strategies and less strain (Ferris et al., 2007). Low levels of political skill can represent less success in buffering the negative effects of stressors, resulting in feelings of low control and low security and in higher job tension (Munyon, Summers, Thompson & Ferris, 2015).

Liu et al. (2007) found that extraversion can also be a predictor of political skill ($\beta = .58$, $p < .01$) because extroverts are social, energetic and active, experiencing and learning from more social situations. Perrewé and Spector (2002) aimed to study personality in the organizations and concluded that extroverts were perceived by other group members as having great influence in the group's outcomes when compared to introverts, in addition to better perform and cope in jobs that require more social interactions.

Just like other social competency constructs, political skill includes cognitive aspects that are usually related to general mental ability, but are not necessarily driven by it. In other words, individuals could be “socially smart” independently from their IQ levels (Thorndike,

1920). Ferris et al. (2005) demonstrated that political skill, as well as its four subdimensions, was not significantly correlated with general mental ability.

Political skill and work outcomes

“Organizational politics may irritate us, but it also serves us.”

(Mintzberg, 1985, p.152)

The study of political skill has become a hot topic in recent years, mostly because of its impact on overall success of individuals in organizations. Formerly, the focus had been devoted to the dysfunctional role of politics within organizations, considered manipulative and disrupted. According to Mintzberg (1985, p.134), when compared to the system of authority, “the system of politics, in contrast, may be described as reflecting power that is technically illegitimate (or, perhaps more accurately, 'alegitimate') in its means (and sometimes in its ends as well). In other words, behavior termed political is neither formally authorized, widely accepted, nor officially certified”. As a system of influence within organizations, politics can be used as a mean to rule power relations and to benefit own interests. Dahling, Whitaker and Levy (2008) results showed Machiavellianism was predictive of both networking ability ($\beta = .11, p < .05$) and social astuteness ($\beta = .19, p < .01$), implying that Mach and political skill share a common basis of being socially shrewd and well connected. Still, a relationship between Mach and overall political skill was not found. The same authors define Machiavellianism as “one’s propensity to distrust others, engage in amoral manipulation, seek control over others, and seek status for oneself” (Dahling, Whitaker & Levy, 2008, p.219). In 2010, Kessler and colleagues committed to develop an Organizational Machiavellianism Scale and found that PSI dimensions were all positively related to the subscale Maintaining Power (e.g., “An effective individual builds a powerbase of strong people”) and only three out of the four PSI dimensions (excluding networking ability) were related with the subscale Management Practices (e.g., “It is not important for an individual to learn about the mistakes of unsuccessful people” – Reversed item), although no significant relationship was found between PSI and Manipulativeness. They describe organizational Machiavellians as individuals who believe in the use of manipulation as necessary to achieve one’s desired ends in the workplace (Kessler et al., 2010).

Nevertheless, political skill has been demonstrated to improve the work lives of those who have it in several ways. It has shown to be a relevant predictor of several aspects of work

performance and attitudes, particularly when increased social interactions are part of one's job requirements (Banister & Meriac, 2015). Its effects within organizations can range from the individual-level to interpersonal and group-levels and also from intrapsychic to behavioural processes (Appendix A).

In the realm of work attitudes, the same authors compared political skill to other social effectiveness constructs (i.e., conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional intelligence and social intelligence) and concluded that political skill shows incremental validity over these social effectiveness variables in explaining job satisfaction and intention to exit (Banister & Meriac, 2015). In addition, these constructs share some conceptual similarity, but the distinctiveness of political skill from those variables lies in specifically apprehending the organizational dynamics and facilitating social relationships in the workplace (Ferris, Davidson & Perrewé, 2005), which leads politically skilled individuals to appreciate work as a platform of personal development and achievement (Ferris et al., 2007). The reduced turnover intentions on politically skilled individuals can be explained with the influence of this construct on job embeddedness, since the better the social fit mechanisms within the organization the more likely to be entrenched with the job (Banister & Meriac, 2015; Munyon, Summer, Thompson & Ferris, 2015).

Moreover, political skilled also found to be positively associated with organizational commitment – another attitudinal variable that refers to the level of attachment towards one's employer (Munyon, Summer, Thompson & Ferris, 2015).

As mentioned above, political skill is negatively correlated to trait anxiety, in part due to be related with better coping strategies. It is important to remember that politically skilled people see relationships and social environments – including organizations – as opportunities and not as threats (Ferris et al., 2005). Job stress is considered the epidemic of 21st century and carries enormous costs for companies every year since it increases employee's absenteeism and the lost of productivity among other consequences. Although it is a recent theme, organizational politics were identified as a relevant source of that type of stress (Cooper & Marshal, 1976). Hence there is easy to understand why political skill was found to be an antidote to the dysfunctional consequences of stress. Namely, Perrewé and her colleagues (2004) found that as perceptions of role conflict got bigger, individuals with low political skill reported higher increases in psychological anxiety and somatic complaints when compared to individuals with high political skill. When it comes to role overload – the degree to which the environmental demands surpass an individual's capabilities for meeting them (Karasek, 1979) –, political skill attenuates the relationship between perceived role overload

and psychological strain (i.e. increased job tension, job dissatisfaction and general anxiety) For those in in leading positions who act in highly political contexts, social effectiveness competencies proves to be particularly critical. Besides creating a sense of control, self-confidence and self-efficacy, political skill contributes to the development of networking since it “allows executives to leverage social capital” that is truly beneficial in both dealing with stakeholders and subordinates (Perrewé et al., 2005). According to Cullen, Gerbasi and Chrobot-Mason (2015), also employees that occupy a central position in the communication network of an organization may get access to more beneficts but, on the other hand, they experience more ambiguity because others depend heavily on them to get information. Political skill proved to work as a buffer between communication centrality and role ambiguity, because individuals high in this competence are more able to prioritize demands and requests, enhancing the occurrence of workplace thriving.

Jawahar, Meurs, Ferris, & Hochwarter (2008) compared self-efficacy and political skill as predictors of job performance, specifically task and contextual performance. Task performance refers to the accomplishment of core, technical job duties that differentiate a job from another, while contextual performance is defined as “the generation of prosocial interpersonal and organizational behaviors that facilitate task accomplishment and organizational functioning” (Bing, Davidson, Minor, Novicevic, & Frink, 2011). Jawahar and his colleagues (2007) found that political skill was more related to contextual performance and self-efficacy (i.e., a personal judgment about one’s capability to execute certain actions in order to reach certain outcomes) than to task performance. Few years later, Bing and colleagues (2011) found that the positive relationship between political skill and task performance varied significantly across occupations and that the strength of this relationship increased when the social demands of those occupations were higher.

From a collective perspective, Lvina, Johns, & Vandenberghe (2015) results supported that political skill is positively associated with subjective team performance, although the same was not supported with objective team performance. Actually, team social cohesion was found to mediate the relation between both variables but to be negatively correlated with objective performance, which means that when group interactions is positive, that may lead to an erroneous evaluation of the teamwork outcomes.

Most of the prominence of political skill stems from its association with dealing successfully with the political realities of the organization since it leads to favorable public image. Research has showed that political skill positively moderates the relationship between impression management behaviors and supervisor evaluations of job performance (Harris,

Kacmar, Zivnuska & Shaw, 2007) and the relationship between individual's job performance and co-worker rated personal reputation measured for those high in political skill (Laird, Zboja, Martinez & Ferris, 2013). Also Ferris et al. (2007) findings showed that reputation totally mediated the relationship between political skill and job performance. According to the same authors, "it appears that the ability to build a favorable reputation at work explains to a great degree the positive influence of political skill on job performance, confirming prior notions that job performance can be at least partially a function of social construction" (p.162). These findings suggest that politically skilled employees are able to effectively leverage their job performance information, which can ultimately contribute to their career success. Interestingly, Todd, Harris, Harris and Wheeler (2009) found that employees higher in political skill were more able to improve employment outcomes (e.g., promotions) and reported higher levels of subjective career success aspects (e.g., life satisfaction and career satisfaction) as well as higher perceptions of external marketability.

A study conducted in Chinese firms focused on a particular mechanism through which subordinate political skill helped their career development: the establishment of supervisor-subordinate *guanxi* (Wei, Liu, Chen & Wu, 2010). *Guanxi* is an indigenous Chinese construct remarkably important in China's business culture that describes a special and informal relationship between two independent persons (Yang, 2011). This concept will be further developed in the next chapter.

It is easy to understand why this skill can be particularly useful for leaders, attending its influential role and the need for employees to respect and accept their power, with more or less awareness of it. Treadway and his colleagues (2004) examined the role of leader political skill in creating conditions that enhance the organizational experience of their employees. They concluded that leader political skill cultivates employees' perceptions of organizational support, which is associated with subordinate trust and job satisfaction and inversely related with organizational cynicism. Besides, subordinate job satisfaction and organizational cynicism were also found to be respectively positively and negatively correlated with job commitment (Treadway et al., 2004). The concerned skill can also contribute to organizational justice through fair supervising styles. Whitaker and Dahling (2013) studied peer intimidation from Machiavellian employees in the workplace as a form of impression management and found that it can contribute to higher supervisor ratings of promotability. However, when the supervisors are high in political skill, they easily detect and interpret those acts, not rewarding those employees when evaluating their potential.

Yet, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter and Ferris (2004) studies suggested that, when it comes to political skill, more is not always better. When it comes to intrapersonal effects, employees with higher and lower levels in political skill seemed to feel higher levels of job tension, maybe because they put an extra effort on the job, accepting extra-role tasks and practicing organizational citizenship behavior (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986; Jawahar, Meurs, Ferris & Hochwarter, 2008; Konovsky & Organ, 1996).

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II. Political Skill as a culture-bounded construct

In the last decades of the twentieth century, China's rapid economic growth earned it the title of "dragon" or "tiger", together with few more East Asian countries (Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). The country has turned into a huge potential market, gathering attention worldwide. A large number of business people and companies from the West are seeking to establish or already conducting business with China since its opening up (Yang, 2011). Since 2011, Portugal, in particular, has become the fourth European country in which China invests the most. Currently, Chinese businessman control around 20,000 jobs and the emission of Golden Visa for Chinese citizens has increased significantly in Portugal (Rodrigues & Santos, 2015).

The growing presence of the Chinese business power in almost every sector of Portuguese economic activity made them familiar to its citizens and has contributed to straightening relationships up between both countries. Therefore, a broader understanding of Chinese culture and business ethics for multinational corporations – namely Political Skill – can be the key to successfully get along with Chinese business people and to fit China.

Chinese culture and business ethics

Once a centrally planned economy, China's way into a market economy, since the reform initiated in 1978, had serious impact in the Chinese society (Whitcomb, Erdener & Li, 1998). However, there are certain core values that remain embedded within Chinese social system which have displayed remarkable persistence and robustness over centuries (Westood & Lok, 1998).

In recent years, psychological cross-cultural studies has been focused on finding a primary framework that can guide research in different countries, as well as help interpreting its findings under an unifying perspective. Several authors advocate the comparison between countries based on cultural value dimensions, as culture is assessed as shared meaning systems in which values play a relevant role (Schwartz, 2014). Despite modernization, there are cultural values and traditions which endure as part of a society's practices and are perpetuated by institutions (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Thus, "the empirical utility of aggregated country-level value scores as proxies for capturing cultural influences on people is undeniable" (Morris, 2014, p.20). Concerning the present study, the target for data collection was upfront defined as Portuguese citizens and Chinese citizens due to access reasons as well as for representing contrasting national cultures mostly linked to two civilizational blocks:

western and eastern. As so, throughout the study, we will use Portuguese and Chinese samples as proxies of West and East cultures respectively.

Chinese philosophical foundations highly differ from western foundations, as you can see in the table below.

Table 2.1.

Comparative perspective of basic principles behind western and Chinese cultures

West	China
Utilitarianism	Confucianism
Universalism	Collectivism
Individualism	Power distance
Higher acceptance of error and risk	Avoid confrontation
More emphasis on job tasks	More emphasis on interpersonal relationships

Source: Whitcomb, Erdener, & Li (1998)

The basis of most core features of Chinese are provided by the Confucianism principles, which maintained that, for a prosperous and politically stable society, this needs to be organized under a benevolent moral code (Graham & Lam, 2004). Hofstede and Bond (1968) summed up the four principles of Confucian teaching: 1) the stability of society is based on unequal relationships between people – ruler/subject, father/son, older brother/younger brother, husband/wife, and older friend/younger friend; 2) the family is the prototype of all social organizations; 3) virtuous behavior toward others lies in reciprocity; 4) virtuous behavior consists in trying to acquire skills and education, working hard, not spending more than necessary, being patient and persevering.

The first principle validates the high power distance value prevalent in East Asia, which means that members of Chinese society believe that significant inequalities amongst people are natural and acceptable (Irwin, 2012). In an organizational context, it lead subordinates to deeply accept formal authority, being less likely to challenge status quo and highly concerned in saving superior's face (Iwrin, 2012; Graham and Lam, 2004). The concept of “face”, or *mianzi*, is related to the preservation of the self-respect of others or someone's reputation or prestige. To protect their face, Chinese usually avoid direct confrontation and have a less aggressive negotiation style in comparison to Western one, where rejecting something or unintentionally offending someone it is generally easy to overcome. One example of it is the use of indirect communication: Chinese people don't usually say 'no', instead they prefer to

make questions or just remain silence (Trigo, 2006). Also, Chinese individuals tend to avoid risk, usually they prefer to not reporting unethical conducts or “blow the whistle” on fellow employees (Han, Zeng, Zhu & Huang, 2011; Irwin, 2012). This propensity to preserve harmonious interactions is associated with an elemental relational orientation, entrenched in the Chinese collectivistic society. Unlike Western individualistic societies, Chinese sees the self as an element that belongs to “in-groups” – being family the most important – whom must act with regards to its interests above their own individual desires, reflecting the Confucian values of loyalty to one’s group (Irwin, 2012; Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). In this regard, work is seen as “a prime mechanism through which individuals can meet their relational obligations, so reaffirming their social legitimacy and sustaining a sense of identity” (Westwood & Lok, 2003, p.143).

The main evidence of this great Chinese focus on long-term interpersonal relationships is very clear displayed in the specific concept they have to describe it: *guanxi*. Literally, it can be translated as “relationship” or “connection”. However, these words aren’t enough to translate the full meaning of *guanxi* in Chinese culture. *Guanxi* is a complex social construct that is part of the social structure of Chinese society and has its own particular logic (Zhai, Lindorff & Cooper, 2013, p.541). It implies a reciprocal relationship between two individuals who are totally committed to each other and which requires continued exchange of personalized favors (Yang, 2011). *Guanxi* is more long-term focused than Western networks, being formed overtime and based on trust. According to Irwin (2012, p.5), “it is common in China for an employee to take contacts with them when switching jobs as the *guanxi* is with the individual, not the company. Trading competitive information among one’s *guanxi* network may, in some cases, also be considered an acceptable practice”.

In Chinese organizations, the most critical interpersonal relationship is Supervisor-Subordinate *guanxi* (S-S *guanxi*), which can work through both formal (in-work) and informal (e.g. after-work activities) channels (Wei, Liu, Chen & Wu, 2010). A positive *guanxi* with the Supervisor was found to represent greater subordinates benefits and is positively related with organizational outcomes as job satisfaction, commitment and job performance, as well as negatively correlated with turnover intentions (Zhai, Lindorff & Cooper, 2013). Thus is not surprising that political skill was found to be one predictor of *guanxi*’s quality within organizations (Wei, Liu, Chen & Wu, 2010).

Considering the typical high power-distance typical existent in China’s hierarchical culture, S-S *guanxi* plays a crucial role when it comes to promoting subordinates career

development, acquiring valuable resources or gaining competitive advantages (Wei, Liu, Chen & Wu, 2010).

For multinational companies in China, their *guanxi* network can make the difference between succeeding or failing. The stronger it is, the more access they have to important information and resources, resulting in more business opportunities. Also, it helps building up corporate reputation, enlarging market share and even motivating employees (Yang, 2011). Gao (2006) found that good *guanxi* with Chinese government in particular is a necessary condition for international enterprises to do business successfully in China. But there is also a darker side of *guanxi*, since it is highly associated with bribery and corruption. Some businesspeople tend to misuse the power of *guanxi*'s reciprocal obligation to obtain personal gains (e.g., monetary commissions) in exchange of "special favours" (Kriz, Gummeson & Quazi, 2013).

Some efforts have been done towards comparative management across cultures. In 1998, a research about business ethical values comparing China and the U.S. conducted by Whitcomb, Erdener and Li found that when faced with the same case scenarios, the cultural differences between both appear to be reflected in the rationales behind their ethical decisions. Influenced not only by Confucian principles but also by the emergence of market ethics, Chinese participants justified their options by placing more emphasis on interpersonal relationships and profit-related rationales, choosing courses of action that would be considered unacceptable in the United States.

Psychometric properties of PSI across China

The construct of "political skill" was developed by Ferris and colleagues (2005) in North America and tested in the United States samples before being broadly expanded to other cultures. As mentioned above, political skill involves interpreting contextually specific knowledge and acting accordingly. Moreover, as a culture-bounded construct, it seems crucial to test the global validity of its measure. With this aim, and considering the particularities of Chinese organizational culture, some research has been conducted in order to analyze the strength of the PSI across China.

The only empirical study on Chinese political skill was conducted by Wei et al. (2010) and showed that the four factors of PSI are as relevant in the Chinese context as they were in the West. Chinese subordinates employed those to enhance *guanxi* with their supervisors to promote their career development.

Lvina et al. (2012) examined the psychometric properties of PSI across five different cultures and found systematic evidence that political skill can be treated as a stable construct among different cultural groups. However, closer analysis revealed consistent lower endorsement levels of the items in the Chinese sample, leading the researchers to wonder whether the Chinese political skill construct's dimensions differ from the western operationalization.

Also Shi and Chen (2012) aimed to examine the validity of the Chinese translation of the Political Skill Inventory. Although it provided initial validation for its translation, the internal consistencies of the four subscales, especially the Apparent Sincerity and Social Astuteness subscales, were lower than those of the original version, which may have resulted from cultural differences among the samples in different studies.

One year earlier, Han, Zeng, Zhu, and Huang (2011) carried out one of the few empirical studies on Chinese political skill. Driven by the lack of research in the South Provinces of the People's Republic of China, Han and colleagues (2011) conducted an inductive study to explore the perceptions of political skill both from superior and subordinates perspectives from 100 companies located in South China. The analysis of the data collected from 133 employees resulted in eight clusters of behaviors characteristic of political skill:

- 1) Developing *guanxi* with significant others
- 2) Sensitivity to others
- 3) Flexibility and adaptability
- 4) Gaining access to important information
- 5) Condemning and suppressing others when necessary
- 6) Defensiveness
- 7) Seeking more control over one's job
- 8) False pretense of apparent sincerity

Overall, some of the clusters overlap the existent four dimensions of the PSI in terms of meaning (i.e., Social Astuteness, Networking Ability, Interpersonal Influence and Apparent Sincerity). Nevertheless, when comparing the responses gave by the participants to describe clusters in Hang and colleagues (2011) research, there are particularities associated with the Chinese culture which are not clearly conceptualized in the PSI, like the focus on reciprocity, *guanxi* and the importance of saving face.

Thereby, with this study we intend to explore content validity of the current scale used to measure political skill and to proposed a revised version of the PSI.

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III. Present Research

Research has leading us to believe that culture can shape the outcomes and the construct and measure of political skill across the world. As Lvina and colleagues (2012, p. 175) affirmed:

Not only was the concept of political skill developed by American scholars, but much political skill research has been conducted in North America. The very conceptualization of political skill and its dimensions is grounded in western culture and reflects western values (e.g. achievement and performance orientation).

In this sense, it is important to differentiate construct validity from content validity, both important when building a scale. The construct validity relates with the statistical validity of a measure, i.e., the extent to which a certain scale adequately assesses the theoretical concept or construct that is being measured. On the other hand, content validity concerns item sampling adequacy, i.e., refers to the extent to how well that measure reflects a content domain, namely the real meaning and dimensions of the construct that is being assessed (DeVellis, 1991). A broader view of content validity takes it as a measure of the comprehensiveness of a scale regarding all the construct's dimensions as foreseeable by theory.

Focusing on content validity, we looked for an extended version on PSI from Ferris et al. (2005) derived from the eight clusters found in Chinese Political Skills (CPS) research from Han, Zeng, Zhu, and Huang (2011) that could offer a broader comprehensibility of political skill and a better adaptability of its current measure (PSI) especially to east cultures. The four existent factor of PSI – Networking Ability (NA), Apparent Sincerity (AS), Social Astuteness (SA) and Interpersonal Influence (II) – naturally overlap some of the semantically content and descriptions of CPS clusters, respectively “Developing *guanxi* with significant others”, “False pretense of apparent sincerity” and “Sensitivity to others”. We considered II subscale to also match the affective investment of *guanxi*. However, PSI focus mostly on the affective dimension of political skill, i.e., to use political skill as a way to foster social capital and to enhance relationships with others. But political skill can also be a mean to an end, used to create a network of useful contacts for exchanging favors and privileged access to get information and resources. Considering the already mentioned instrumental aspect of *guanxi*, reciprocity and exchange of favors are the basis of a strong relationship, which can easily lead people to take advantage of their relationship with someone to get benefits somehow (e.g., bribery). Also the Chinese Values Survey developed by the Chinese Culture Connection

(1987), an international network of organizational researchers, include a subscale of Confucian work dynamism items which referred reciprocation of gifts and favors, protection of the status-quo (i.e., saving face) and preservation of the social hierarchy as values related to work in China. Therefore, there is an instrumental dimension of political skill that we expect to show higher loadings across the Chinese participants, which was operationalized in three different scales comprising CPS scale. In this regard, three scales were added to the revised version of PSI used in this study, as follows:

Amoral Manipulation (subscale of Machiavellianism Personality Scale developed by Dahling, Whitaker, and Levy, 2009). The authors described this scale as “a willingness to disregard standards of morality and see value in behaviors that benefit the self at the expense of others” (Dahling et al., 2009, p. 228). It doesn’t mean that Machs want to whimsically manipulate and betray others all the time, instead they are willing to deviate from moral standards and replace cooperation for manipulation as opportunities for gain emerge. This scale appears to comprehend three of the eight dimensions from CPS: “Defensiveness” (e.g., avoid taking decisions and make mistakes), “Condemning and Suppressing others” when necessary (e.g., find a scapegoat to avoid losing face) and “Gaining access to important information” (e.g., develop formal and informal channels of communication as a way of control and organizational power). The Amoral Manipulation subscale was used as follows:

1. I am willing to be unethical if I believe it will help me succeed.
2. I am willing to sabotage the efforts of other people if they threaten my own goals.
3. I would cheat if there was a low chance of getting caught.
4. I believe that lying is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage of others.
5. The only good reason to talk to others is to get information that I can use to my benefits (considering that this item reported a low consistency loading, $\alpha=0.48$, it was reformulate to “It is important to get information from others that I can use to my benefit”).

A sixth *ad hoc* item was created for this scale on the basis of the example given for the CPS cluster “Seeking more control over one’s job”, associated with being instrumental at work doing something apparently inoffensive to get a certain outcome:

6. The most effective action is the one whose real purpose remains unknown to others.

Flexibility. Three items were created ad hoc based on Flexibility and Adaptability cluster of CPS. This dimension concerns perceiving rules as flexible and the existence of room for exceptions, mainly when someone is considered really effective or critical in his or her role. Concerned

1. Rules are made to be broken because there are always exceptions.

2. One should not apply the rule blindly without considering the circumstances.
3. It is important to learn the rules like a pro, so you can break them like an artist.

These items are all original to the exception of the last one which is based on a quote of Picasso, that by definition is a sentence with which people relate to.

Save face. Two items that are related with the need to save superior's face comprise this scale. This is a particular important aspect in the Chinese culture that needed to be addressed, considering the importance of not losing face or reputation when dealing with others. In China, the high levels of respect and acceptance of power distance, as well as the need for harmony maintenance, can explain why this attitude is considered relevant in eastern organizations.

1. One should do whatever it takes so that the supervisor never loses face.
2. It is important to do one's best to meet superior's needs.

For methodological reasons, we will consider these last 3 scales – Amoral Manipulation, Flexibility and Save Face - as part of a CPS scale, since they derived from the political skill clusters identified by Chinese employees that are not covered by PSI items.

Research model and hypothesis

The main goal of this study lies in testing a possible revised and extended version of PSI with the specific intent of including Chinese idiosyncratic dimensions of political behavior as depicted by CPS. Together with the original PSI, these two composite subscales intend to comprise the PSI-Revised (PSI-Re) scale. The focus of the current study is thus the added value that the proposed version has when compared with the original one judged both by means of its content and construct validity.

To test if the proposed version adds value when compared with the original one (PSI), the set of steps required is as follows:

1st: To test the original 4-factor solution as designed by Ferris et al (2005) with each sample separately and with both samples together.

2nd: To test the operational measure of CPS as derived from Han et al (2011) with each sample separately and with both samples together.

3rd: To test the extended 7-factor solution (PSI-Re) with each sample separately and with both samples together.

That being said, if the rationale behind CPS is sound, we should expect the following to occur:

Hypothesis 1: The 4-factor solution (PSI) as designed by Ferris et al. (2005) will hold valid fit indices under a confirmatory factor analysis for both samples, although higher fit indices are expected in the western group.

Hypothesis 2: The 3-factor solution (CPS) will hold valid fit indices under a confirmatory factor analysis for both samples, although higher fit indices are expected in the eastern group.

Hypothesis 3: A joined PSI-CPS factor structure will hold valid fit indices under a confirmatory factor analysis.

H3a: A joined PSI-CPS factor structure will hold valid fit indices under a confirmatory factor analysis for the western sample.

H3b: A joined PSI-CPS factor structure will hold valid fit indices under a confirmatory factor analysis for the eastern sample.

H3c: A joined PSI-CPS factor structure will hold valid fit indices under a confirmatory factor analysis for both samples.

Hypothesis 4: Political skill means will significantly differ between samples.

H4a: Western respondents will have higher mean responses in PSI as compared with eastern respondents.

H4b: Eastern respondents will have higher mean responses in PSI as compared with western respondents.

IV. Method

Participants

The sample comprised 461 usable answers (168 males, 234 females – the remaining 59 didn't identified their sex). The origin of the responses splits between China ($N = 242$) and Portugal ($N = 219$). Both nationalities were upfront defined as the main target of this study, not only for pragmatically reasons (i.e., easier access) but also for representing two contrasting culture blocks – western and eastern – as we intended to, according to cultural state of art (e.g., Inglehart & Baker, 2000; Scarborough, 1998). The data collection applied a non-probability sampling method, namely a convenience sampling, collected both in university and organizational environments. To be part of our sample individuals had to meet one specific criterion: to have some work experience. The majority of the participants reported being currently employed (75.1%) when answered the survey, and 50.4% of the respondents said to have a degree. Work experience ranged from less than two years up to 15 or more years in 51.3% of the sample, and participants reported having five or less years of work experience. In terms of age, 82.8% of the sample reported to be up to 39 years old.

Procedure

Data were collected through an online survey using Qualtrics software. The survey took approximately 6 to 10 min to complete. Participants could cease participation at any point without penalty. Data collection in China was conducted in a university-based network of professionals. This data was subjected to three main confirmatory factor analyses.

Missing data was screened out and whenever the percentage didn't go over 10%, we replaced missing values with series means as recommended by Hair et al. (2010). Otherwise, we applied the method of listwise deletion of missing data (Lvina et al., 2012).

Measures

In this study, we used translated versions of the items in three different languages: Portuguese, English and Chinese. For the English version, the original scales were used. Additionally, considering that no Portuguese translation was found, all items were translated to Portuguese and back translated to English following Brislin (1970) recommendations. Translation with back translation has been conventionally used in cross-cultural research for decades. First the instruments were translated from the original English into Portuguese and subsequently back translated into English by the authors. The back-translated text was then

compared with the original text. Where discrepancies existed, the Portuguese version and the original English version were examined, and if necessary the final translation was amended.

Regarding Chinese language, since it presents unique idiosyncrasies that may be addressed carefully, and due to semantic doubts concerning the translation to Chinese used by Shi and Chen (2012), we used a translated version made by an expert in Chinese language that rephrased some items to improve its intelligibility, as well as translated the remaining scales and control variables.

Political Skill Inventory (PSI, Ferris et al., 2005). The PSI is an 18-item measure that was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree), with higher scores indicating higher levels of political skill. Sample items include “It is easy for me to develop good rapport with most people,” and “I spend a lot of time and effort at work networking with others.” The four factors include Social Astuteness (SA; 5 items), Interpersonal Influence (II; 4 items), Networking Ability (NA; 6 items), and Apparent Sincerity (AS; 3 items).

Amoral Manipulation (AM, a subscale of Machiavellianism Personality Scale from Dahling, Whitaker, & Levy, 2008). The Amoral Manipulation (AM) scale comprises five original items (e.g., “I am willing to be unethical if I believe it will help me succeed”) and one created *ad hoc* (e.g., “The most effective action is the one whose real purpose remains unknown to others”) that were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree), with higher scores indicating higher tendency to amoral manipulateness. Dahling, Whitaker and Levy (2008).

Flexibility (FL). This scale is comprised by three items that are based on Flexibility and Adaptability cluster from CPS (Han, Zeng, Zhu & Huang, 2011). Sample items include “Rules are made to be broken because there are always exceptions” and “One should not apply the rule blindly without considering the circumstances”. The items were equally rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree), with higher scores indicating higher flexibility.

Save face (SF). This scale contains two items (e.g., “It is important to do one’s best to meet superiors’ needs”) created *ad hoc* from CPS descriptions (Han, Zeng, Zhu & Huang, 2011) and represents the relations with formal power. The items were equally rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree), with higher scores indicating higher preoccupation with saving superiors’ face.

Control variables. In order to better characterize our sample, we measured some demographic and control variables. Namely, we ask participants about their sex, age range,

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total of completed years of school, current employment status and years of work experience. We were careful making all questions suitable for both cultures, particularly the one related to the academic qualification levels.

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V. Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Several Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) using IBM SPSS AMOS were run to confirm the theoretical factor structure of the three scales. Factors were allowed to correlate with each other. Although the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is the most credited index, we also examined other indices, such as the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Parsimony Comparative Fit Index (PCFI). Additionally, we used Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) to complete the analysis. To judge on the fit of the model we adopted the criteria recommended by Hu and Bentler (1995), and Byrne (2001) namely SRMR below 0.08 and PCFI closest to 1, complemented by those advocated by Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010) as Table 5.1 displays. Whenever fit indices fall short from acceptance thresholds we have deployed Brown's (2006) procedure by means of a subsequent exploratory factor analysis followed by a CFA for robustness sake.

Table 5.1.

Model fit criteria for factor analysis procedures

Indicator	Criteria
X^2/df	≤ 3.0
CFI	> 0.90
RMSEA	< 0.08

Source: Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson (2010)

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the 4-factor solution as designed by Ferris et al. (2005) will hold valid fit indices under a confirmatory factory analysis for both samples, although higher fit indices are expected in the western group. A Confirmatory Factorial Analysis (CFA) on the original four factor 18-item version of PSI with the western sample showed acceptable fit indices (CMIN/DF=1.908, $p<.001$, CFI=0.922, PCFI=0.765, RMSEA=0.065, SRMR=0.068). The same CFA on the original four factor 18-item version of PSI was run with the eastern sample and also showed acceptable fit indices (CMIN/DF=1.877, $p<.001$, CFI=0.929, PCFI=0.771, RMSEA=0.060, SRMR=0.065). Conducted with the full sample, CFA showed convergent valid indices (CMIN/DF=2.873, $p<.001$, CFI=0.921, PCFI=0.764, RMSEA=0.064, SRMR=0.063). These findings are in line with previous research (e.g., Ferris

et al. 2005; Shi & Chen, 2012), demonstrating construct validity of PSI not only in West but also in East groups.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that the 3-factor solution (CPS) as derived from Han, Zeng, Zhu & Huang (2011) will hold valid fit indices under a confirmatory factor analysis for both samples, although higher fit indices are expected in the eastern group. According to Modification Indices, AM5 and AM6 items showed low covariance scores in both samples. Based on those results, we conducted an exploratory analysis that confirmed low communalities on both items, which were then deleted from the model. Thus, a CFA on the operational scale derived from Han, Zeng, Zhu & Huang (2011) is run with the western sample, which showed acceptable fit indices (CMIN/DF=2.295, $p < .001$, CFI=0.946, PCFI=0.657, RMSEA=0.077, SRMR=0.063), as well as with the eastern sample (CMIN/DF=2.242, $p < .001$, CFI=0.928, PCFI=0.618, RMSEA=0.072, SRMR=0.056) and both samples combined (CMIN/DF=2.601, $p < .001$, CFI=0.962, PCFI=0.668, RMSEA=0.059, SRMR=0.049). The resultant CFA reported acceptable values both for western sample and eastern sample supporting Hypothesis 2 of this study.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that a joined PSI-CPS factor structure (Appendix B) will hold valid fit indices under a confirmatory factor analysis. First, to assess H3a and H3b, a CFA was conducted to test if a joined PSI-CPS would hold valid fit indices both for western (CMIN/DF=1.731, $p < .001$, CFI=0.902, PCFI=0.776, RMSEA=0.058, SRMR=0.072) and eastern (CMIN/DF=1.639, $p < .001$, CFI=0.907, PCFI=0.781, RMSEA=0.051, SRMR=0.06) samples respectively, and both for samples taken simultaneously (CMIN/DF=2.378, $p < .001$, CFI=0.90, PCFI=0.777, RMSEA=0.055, SRMR=0.065). All three hypotheses were supported, which reveals a good fit to the multisample data.

Cross-validation

To test if there are significant score differences between countries, a one-way ANOVA was conducted after testing for the homogeneity of variance, which showed that the variances in each group are equal. As presented in Table 5.2, significant differences between western and eastern samples were found, with one exception for SA factor, $F(1;459) = 2.764$, $p = .097$, and II, $F(1;459) = 7.718$, $p = .008$. Thus, Hypothesis 4 appears to be only partially supported.

Table 5.2.

Results of one-way ANOVA between western and eastern samples

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
NA	Between Groups	5.778	1	5.778	13.074	.000
	Within Groups	202.860	459	.442		
	Total	208.638	460			
AS	Between Groups	5.143	1	5.143	13.030	.000
	Within Groups	181.169	459	.395		
	Total	186.311	460			
SA	Between Groups	1.018	1	1.018	2.764	.097
	Within Groups	169.088	459	.368		
	Total	170.106	460			
II	Between Groups	2.891	1	2.891	7.178	.008
	Within Groups	184.882	459	.403		
	Total	187.773	460			
SF	Between Groups	8.016	1	8.016	13.834	.000
	Within Groups	265.981	459	.579		
	Total	273.998	460			
FL	Between Groups	11.720	1	11.720	22.940	.000
	Within Groups	234.505	459	.511		
	Total	246.226	460			
AM	Between Groups	21.416	1	21.416	41.104	.000
	Within Groups	239.147	459	.521		
	Total	260.562	460			

H4a e H4b expected to find differences between each group means, i.e., higher means in PSI will be found in the Western group in comparison to the Eastern one, and higher means in CPS will be found in the Eastern group when compared to Western one. As displayed in the Table 5.3 and considering only the factors that demonstrated significant differences between groups, these two hypotheses are supported.

In addition to displaying descriptive statistics for the variables used in the current study, Table 5.3 also sums up the correlations of each dimension with each of the other scales *per*

sample. All scales showed acceptable internal consistency reliability estimates in both Western and Eastern samples, considering that Flexibility (respectively, $\alpha = .639$; $\alpha = .658$) and Save Face scale¹ (respectively, $r_{sb} = .725$; $r_{sb} = .659$) are immediately below the threshold recommended by Nunnally's (1978). Those values can be explained by the reduced size of the scale (three and two items respectively). It is interesting to observe that SF ($\alpha = .725$) and AM ($\alpha = .845$) dimensions found higher internal consistencies in the Western group, while SA revealed higher internal consistency in the Eastern group ($\alpha = .760$). Regarding inter-scale correlations, PSI factors (i.e., NA, AS, SA, and II) showed consistent positive significant inter-correlations for both groups. Save Face scale demonstrated positive correlations with each of the other scales in the Chinese group, except for Amoral Manipulation ($r = .124$, $p = .054$). However, concerning the European sample, Save Face scale only found significant correlations with SA ($r = .136$, $p = .044$) and Flexibility ($r = .272$, $p = .000$) factors. Flexibility scale showed significant correlations with every scale within both samples but again with the exception of Amoral Manipulation scale, which didn't show significant correlation in neither Western ($r = .109$, $p = .108$) nor Eastern ($r = .066$, $p = .304$) groups. Interestingly, Amoral Manipulation factor had more inconsistent results: in what concerns Western group, AM showed to have negative significant correlations with NA ($r = -.193$, $p = .004$), AS ($r = -.516$, $p = .000$) and II ($r = -.294$, $p = .000$), while in the Eastern group, it only appeared as negatively and significantly correlated with AS ($r = -.144$, $p = .025$).

¹ Spearman-Brown Coefficient (r_{sb}) was chose over Chronbach's Coefficient due its higher adequacy to measure a 2-item scale internal consistency.

Table 5.3.
Descriptive statistics and correlations of PSI-Re dimensions in western and eastern samples

Dimension	West			East			Networking Ability	Apparent Sincerity	Social Astuteness	Interpersonal Influence	Save Face	Flexibility	Amoral Manipulation
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α							
Networking ability	3.518	.657	.751	3.294	.671	.810	-	.390**	.511**	.522**	.162	.217**	-.108**
Apparent Sincerity	4.501	.595	.751	4.289	.595	.757	.223**	-	.196**	.508**	.116	.141*	-.516**
Social Astuteness	3.497	.627	.699	3.591	.627	.760	.547**	.323**	-	.564**	.136*	.200**	.020
Interpersonal Influence	3.843	.699	.858	3.684	.699	.818	.378**	.257**	.615**	-	.127	.133*	-.294**
Save Face	3.276	.793	.725 ^a	3.539	.793	.659 ^a	.373**	.294**	.223**	.197**	-	.272**	.002
Flexibility	3.379	.819	.639	3.698	.819	.658	.154*	.219**	.243**	.221**	.176**	-	.109
Amoral Manipulation	1.770	.753	.845	2.206	.753	.780	.115*	-.144*	.059	-.049	.124	.066	-

Note: Coefficients below the diagonal reflect the factor correlations for Eastern group ($N=242$), and those above the diagonal reflect the factor correlations for Western group ($N=219$).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

a. Spearman-Brown Coefficient (r_{sb}).

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VI. Discussion

The PSI-Re scale emerges as an attempt to include Chinese idiosyncratic dimensions of political behavior. All fit indices allow us to accept the proposed factor structures of both PSI and revised PSI as good enough. Also, the significant mean differences found between both groups proved the westernized nature of PSI, as well as the particular connection of the three CPS scales with the Chinese sample. Overall, there are higher correlation significance rates for Save Face and Flexibility scales both for the Western and Eastern samples, which indicates that these dimensions should be considered when assessing political skill in any culture. Besides, higher significance values of correlations between scales were found among the Chinese respondents, which are in line with the rationale behind the construction of those scales.

However, looking at the details, there is room for improvement regarding some of the new scales generated, namely Amoral Manipulation, Flexibility, and Save Face. Amoral Manipulation scale was chosen because it was already used in empirical studies relating it with political dimensions (e.g., O'Connor & Morrison, 2001; Dahling, Whitaker, & Levy, 2008). Moreover, it was used to operationalize the instrumental side of political skill identified by Han and colleagues (2011) study about CPS, namely “Defensiveness”, “Condemning and suppressing others” when necessary, and “Gaining access to important information”. However, although China was previously found to score significantly higher in Machiavellianism than the United States (Whitcomb, Erdener & Li, 1998), which support our findings about mean differences between our groups, Chinese interpret Machiavellianism as the need to use social power (*guanxi*) rather than formal authority channels. This is in line with our findings, considering that Amoral Manipulation scale only positively and significantly correlated with Networking Ability in the Chinese sample. Besides, the items of Amoral Manipulation scale were written in a way that express a strong Machiavellian stance, which have been questioned as equivalent constructs in China and the United States (Kuo and Marsella, 1977). That may explain why some of the inter-item correlations appear as negative (namely Networking Ability, Apparent Sincerity and Interpersonal Influence in the western sample, and Apparent Sincerity in the eastern sample), since this type of Machiavellianism may not seem consistent with the overall political skill perceptiveness.

Regarding Save face scale, it showed significant correlations among the Chinese participants with all the dimensions except for Amoral Manipulation. The concept of “face” or *mianzi* is considered a central assumption of Asian culture, being linked with pride and

self-respect (Irwin, 2012; Lvina et al., 2010) and attending criteria for harmony, tolerance, and solidarity (Mead, 1994). In China, as hierarchical order is prominent, the preservation of superior's face appears to play a critical role for being politically skilled in China and having success in the organizational context. As opposite, concerning the Portuguese sample, Save face scale only appeared to be significantly associated with Social Astuteness. Considering that the two items created based on CPS (Han, Zeng, Zhu & Huang, 2011) operationalized saving face as translating the relationship with formal power, that connection may not be produced in western organizational contexts. This can be explained by the current existence of less power distance and higher openness to entrepreneurial attitude within western organizations overall. According to Hofstede and Bond (1968), in an individualistic culture where power distance is small, the ideal leader is usually conceptualized as a "resourceful democrat" (p.14) as opposed to Collectivistic cultures, whereas leadership is seen as autocratic and loyalty supportive. Nevertheless, this scale deserves further attention in order to improve its consistency and demonstrate its generalizability to other countries.

Also, regarding other studies that sought to examine the psychometric properties of PSI in other cultures, which found overall lower internal consistency reliabilities in China (Lvina et al., 2011; Shi & Chen, 2012), our findings showed similar and consistent internal consistencies values for both the Chinese and the Portuguese group which can be explained by having treated Chinese political skill dimensionality as integral part of the political skill construct and not a phenomenon aside. Thus, in terms of theoretical implications, we believe we have further contributed to a better understanding of this construct and to enhance its content validity through revising its meaning across different countries. Also, with this research, we believe that Chinese organizational dynamics were brought to the fore and its understanding is potentiated for cross-cultural research on plenty of areas (e.g., Psychology, Management, HR).

In terms of practical implications, considering the global marketing opening, and the proliferation of multinational companies and expatriates (Sheehan, DeCieri, Cooper & Brooks, 2015; Lvina et al., 2012), a broader understanding of political skill seems critical to increase professionals' cross-cultural competence. Particularly, the growing presence of Chinese investors in the Western market highlights the importance of understanding how to approach, connect and influence others (i.e., to foster *guanxi*), mainly during negotiations, as well as the behaviors and practices to avoid. Also, a correct interpretation of the meaning For HR professionals, the understanding of how business relationships work across borders is indispensable for the adequacy of socialization and training programs to cultural context, as

well as developing leadership programs. Currently, HR role are becoming increasingly complex due to globalization, facing coordination of geographically dispersed workforce and accountability for culture maintenance (Sheehan, De Cieri, Cooper & Brook, 2015; Ulrich, 1997), which requires the appropriate use of political skill.

Taken together, the results of the current study encourage the existence of a context-specific conceptualization of political skill, namely in China. Although findings have supported overall PSI valid fit indices and construct validity for both groups, the results also showed that the three factors derived from CPS have overall valid fit indices and present high internal consistencies in both groups, suggesting that a more broad measure of political skill may be useful to enhance its generalizability worldwide and, thus, its content validity.

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VII. Limitations and future directions

As a preliminary research to examine the validity of a revised version of the Political Skill Inventory, this study holds some limitations. First, although the sample has a good size, doubling the minimum recommended by Hoelter (1983), and including only people with work experience from students to senior workers, no criteria were previously determined to ensure comparativeness between groups of participants (e.g., minimum years of work experience) from different cultures nor representativeness of particular demographic variables in each country (e.g., work experience in only Chinese/Portuguese organizations). As Stening and Zhang (2007) argued, there are discernible inter-generational differences in China and, although broad samples that randomize sub-cultural differences are legitimate, the richness of sub-cultural variations may be lost. Though the Chinese sample of the present study comprises respondents from different regions (e.g., Guansu, Guangdong), it is difficult to guarantee external validity of the data as China is the biggest country of East Asia, and different regions may present variations regarding cultural values and social norms. Thus, there may be some risk of overgeneralizing our findings, due to non-probability random sampling.

We assumed that our respondents shared similar cultural values based on their geographic area, a paradigm that have been criticized by some authors, which argue that values can differ more within countries than between countries (Fischer and Schwartz, 2011; Morris, 2014). Besides, the existence of enormous language diversity in China can mean that the same words may carry different connotations (Stening & Zhang, 2007). In future research, it would be interesting to apply cultural measures and explore the differences between distinctive Chinese regions. Also, and considering that political skill is aimed specifically to the context of organizations, taking in consideration organization's origin and culture where respondents are incorporated may be interesting to understand how different cultural environments impact on political skill perceptions, for example when a Chinese employee works in an American company settled in China.

Concerning internal validity, future investigations should be addressed in order to improve measurement quality, especially regarding to Save Face and Flexibility subscales. The reduced number of items – SF contains two items while FL is comprised by three items – can be the main reason for its modest internal consistency, since it may not be statistically accurate to measure the full construct that is being tested. Besides, on the origin of their construction, a rational-theoretical approach was used, in which items were created based the

particular theoretical understanding of the target construct (Simms, 2008). In the current study, items were created adhocly and supported mainly on the inductive study by Hans and colleagues (2011) on Chinese political skill, which shortly describe each dimension found through quoting an illustrative description from a participant. Since not every cluster showed clear conceptualization boundaries (e.g., “Condemning and suppressing others when necessary” and “Defensiveness” were both associated with the saving face principle), and taking in account that most of the respondents provided examples by proxy, more exploratory investigation is desirable in order to improve accurate coverage of the construct not only in China but also in other eastern countries. Nevertheless, the new scales showed acceptable psychometric properties, with reasonable internal reliability consistency (close to **the .70s**) and inter-scale correlation with the other scales. Although there are no gold rule to establish the validity of measures of psychological constructs (Chronbach and Meal, 1955), there are certain phases that must be met in view of construct validity. According to Loevinger (1957) model, there are three distinctive phases that should be accomplished while developing a scale (see Appendix C). In the current study, a substantive validity phase has taken place; now, alterations to items and discriminant validity (e.g., between workplace *guanxi* and political skill) and criterion-related validities should be studied along the other two. Also the American Psychological Association (1995) endorses that for an appropriate representativeness of a construct, the respective measure should include a demonstration of content validity, criterion-related validity, and internal consistency. When considering criterion variables, it is critical to understand its applicability across borders, as well as type of scales used, since self-reported variables should be avoided since they can be more sensitive to external factors (e.g., values) (Lvina et al., 2012).

We believe that this study will sow the seeds for the development of political skill construct in light of contextual-specific conceptualizations, endorsing the content validity of this culture-bounded construct.

VIII. References

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IX. Appendixes

Appendix A

Meta-theoretical framework of the outcomes of political skill in different aspects

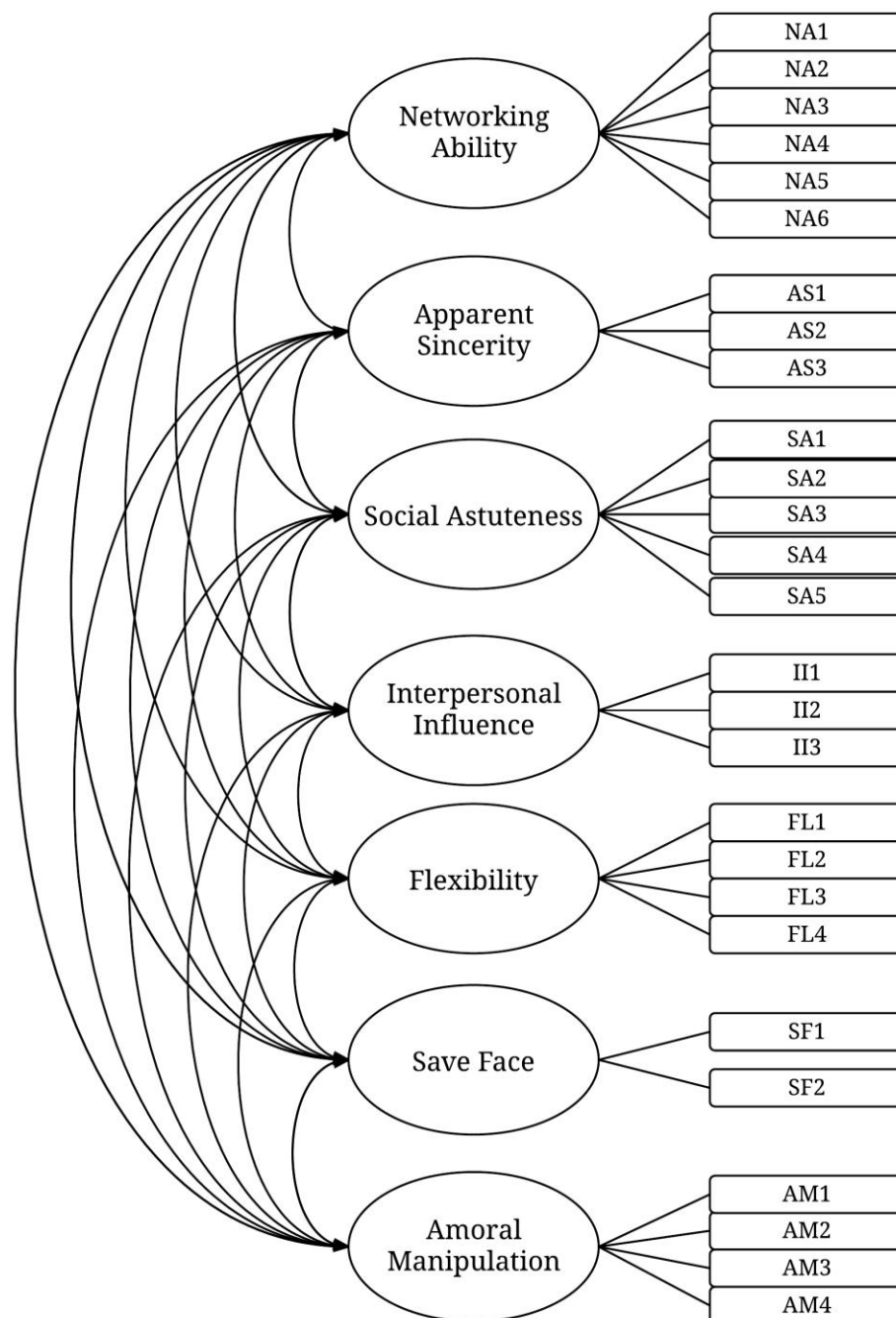
Political Skill Effects on Self-Evaluations	Political Skill Effects on Situational Appraisals	Political Skill Effects on Situational Responses	Political Skill Effects on Evaluations by Others	Political Skill Effects on Group and Organizational Processes
Intrapsychic Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal resource assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessments of self-efficacy¹ and self-esteem² - Assessments of motivation² - Opportunity recognition² • Personal values and goal setting² 	Intrapsychic Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work attitudes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Job satisfaction¹ - Organizational commitment¹ - Job embeddedness and Turnover intentions² - Fit perceptions² - Justice perceptions² • Stress management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physiological¹ - Psychological¹ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * POPS,¹ POS² * Role stressors² • Appraisals of others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge of others² - Perspective taking; empathy² 	Behavioral Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productivity¹ • Influence tactics and strategies² • Networking and positioning² • Coalition building² • Negotiation and conflict resolution² • Citizenship and helping² <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help-seeking² • Counterproductive behavior² • Turnover and absenteeism² • Approach/avoidance behavior² 	Interpersonal Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task performance¹ • Citizenship and helping evaluations¹ • Career success¹ • Personal reputation evaluations¹ • Leadership assessments² • Relationship assessments² • Ethicality assessments² • Stress crossover² • Mentoring² 	Interpersonal Processes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of vision² • Informal leader emergence² • Framing² • Diagnosis of team climate² • Facilitation of team member interaction² • Facilitation of group resource acquisition² • Contagion effects² • Facilitation of safety behavior²

Note. POPS = Perceptions of organizational politics; POS = Perceived organizational support. ¹Tested in this review; ²Less than five studies to date or not able to be tested in this review.

Source: Munyon, Summers, Thompson & Ferris, 2015

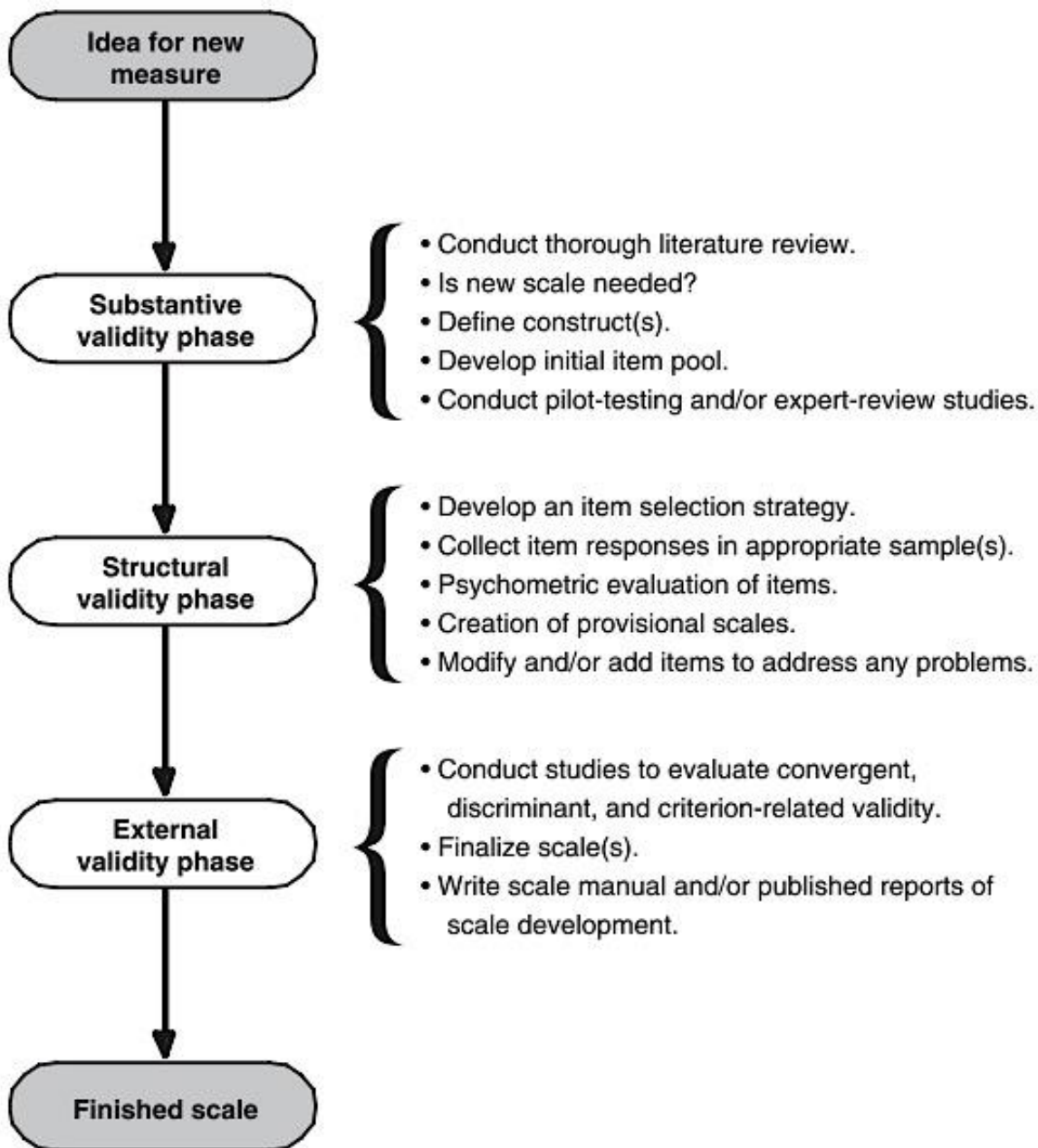
Appendix B

Political Skill Inventory-Revised dimensions and items



Appendix C

Flowchart depicting the phases of scale development.



Source: Simms (2008)