

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERCEPTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS AND EMPLOYEE ATTITUDES, STRAIN, AND BEHAVIOR: A META-ANALYTIC EXAMINATION

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**The current study tested a model that links perceptions of organizational politics to job performance and “turnover intentions” (intentions to quit). Meta-analytic evidence supported significant, bivariate relationships between perceived politics and strain (.48), turnover intentions (.43), job satisfaction (–.57), affective commitment (–.54), task performance (–.20), and organizational citizenship behaviors toward individuals (–.16) and organizations (–.20). Additionally, results demonstrated that work attitudes mediated the effects of perceived politics on employee turnover intentions and that both attitudes and strain mediated the effects of perceived politics on performance. Finally, exploratory analyses provided evidence that perceived politics represent a unique “hindrance stressor.”**

Organizational politics are ubiquitous and have widespread effects on critical processes (e.g., performance evaluation, resource allocation, and managerial decision making) that influence organizational effectiveness and efficiency (Kacmar & Baron, 1999). Employees may engage in some legitimate, organizationally sanctioned political activities that are beneficial to work groups and organizations (see Fedor, Maslyn, Farmer, & Bettenhausen, 2008). For example, managers who are “good politicians” may develop large bases of social capital and strong networks that allow them to increase the resources that are available to their subordinates (Treadway et al., 2004). On the other hand, employees also demonstrate a number of illegitimate political activities (e.g., coalition building, favoritism-based pay and promotion decisions, and backstabbing) that are strategically designed to benefit, protect, or enhance self-interests, often without regard for the welfare of their organization

or coworkers (Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989). Therefore, organizational politics are often viewed as a dysfunctional, divisive aspect of work environments (Mintzberg, 1983). The current article focuses on understanding how employees’ *perceptions* of illegitimate, self-serving political activities (viz., perceptions of organizational politics) influence individual-level work attitudes and behaviors.

Accumulating empirical research has provided considerable evidence for linkages between perceptions of organizational politics and a variety of employee outcomes, including job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, and job anxiety (see Ferris, Adams, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, & Ammeter, 2002). However, despite the intuitive appeal of the idea that perceived politics will have an impact on key individual-level outcomes associated with organizational effectiveness, research has failed to consistently demonstrate such an impact. For example, Ferris et al. (2002) observed that four of nine studies (e.g., Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, & Toth, 1997; Hochwarter, Witt, & Kacmar, 2000; Parker, Dipboye, & Jackson, 1995; Randall, Cropanzano, Bormann, & Birjulin, 1999) relating perceptions of organizational politics to task performance and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) did not support the expected negative linkages. Similarly, four of nine studies (e.g., Cropanzano et al.,

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1997; Harrell-Cook, Ferris, & Dulebohn, 1999; Hochwarter, Perrewé, Ferris, & Guercio, 1999; Randall et al., 1999) examining linkages between political perceptions and turnover intentions failed to reach statistical significance (Ferris et al., 2002). Thus, evidence linking perceptions of organizational politics to these outcomes is equivocal.

Moreover, it is not clear whether these inconsistent findings exist because of statistical artifacts (e.g., low power) or because the politics-outcome relationships are not negative. Regarding the latter point, Ferris et al. (1989) noted that employees may respond to perceptions of organizational politics by *increasing* involvement in their jobs. Ferris et al. (1989) suggested that perceived politics may lead to positive outcomes when they are experienced as opportunity stress (Schuler, 1980), which occurs when a stressor presents an opportunity for employees to gain something from the situation at hand. Employees respond to opportunity stress by putting more time and effort into their jobs in an attempt to capitalize on the situation (LePine, Podsakoff, & LePine, 2005; Schuler, 1980). Supporting this perspective, there is evidence that perceptions of organizational politics are associated with desirable outcomes, including lower strain (Ferris et al., 1993), and increased job involvement (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992) and performance (Maslyn & Fedor, 1998; Rosen, Levy, & Hall, 2006). Thus, it is not clear whether inconsistent findings in the literature are a function of study artifacts or exist because perceptions of organizational politics are either not relevant to or positively associated with certain outcomes.

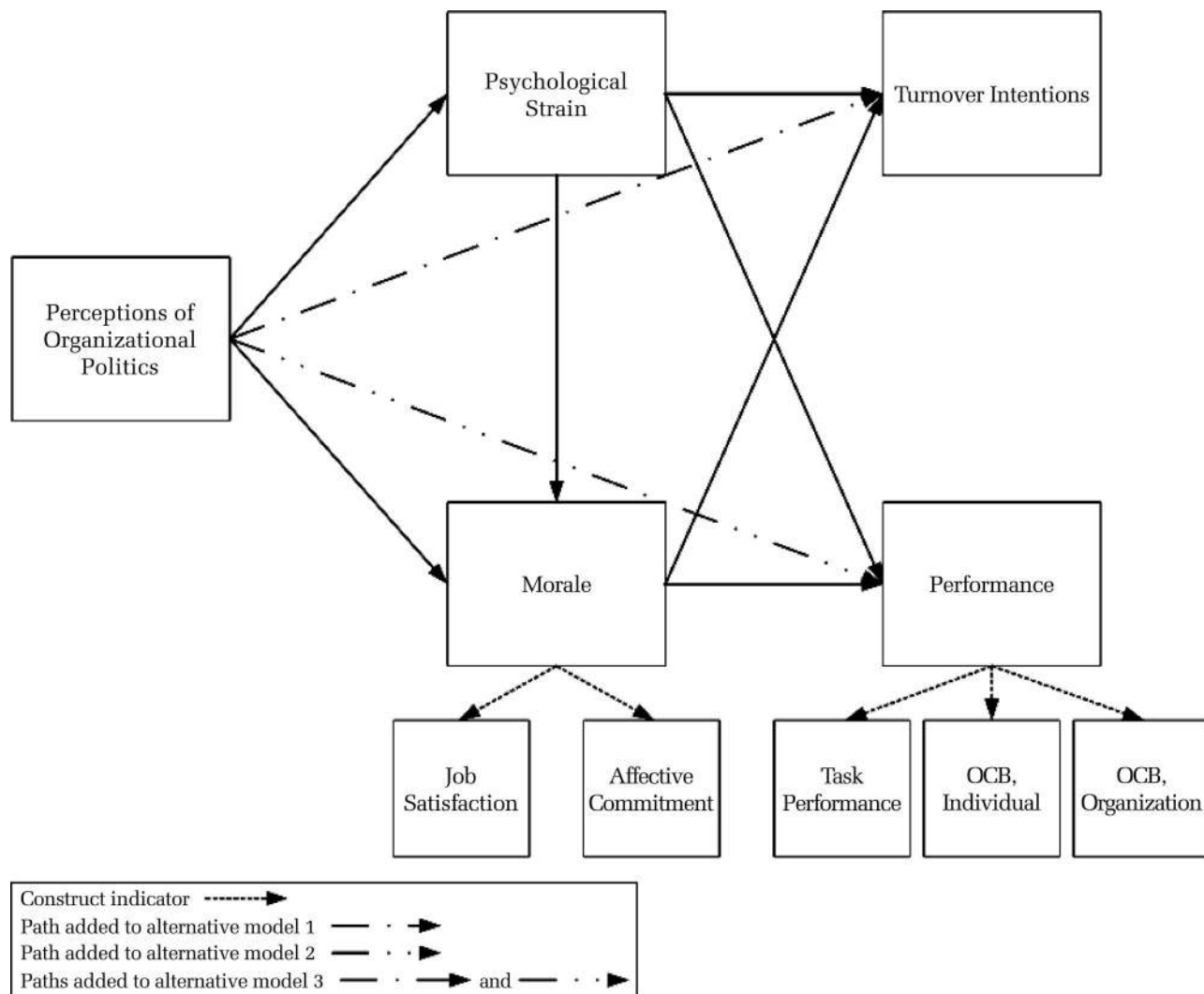
In addition, the theoretical underpinnings of the linkages between perceptions of organizational politics and job performance and turnover intentions are not well understood, as existing frameworks do not explain *how* these perceptions are associated with critical employee outcomes. Rather, conceptual models (e.g., Aryee, Chen, & Budhwar, 2004; Ferris et al., 2002) specify that perceptions of organizational politics are related *directly* to employee attitudes and behaviors. Hence, knowledge of the psychological mechanisms that relate political perceptions to employee outcomes is limited, and there is little guidance for systematically examining these mechanisms. In addition, research has failed to examine mediators that link perceptions of organizational politics to outcomes. For example, theorists have noted that job stress and social exchange theories may explain reactions to these perceptions (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Ferris et al., 2002). However, the dearth of empirical research examining the linkages implied by these theories has limited researchers' ability to deter-

mine if one, both, or neither of these explanations accounts for the effects of perceptions of organizational politics.

A recent meta-analysis of the outcomes of perceptions of organizational politics (see Miller, Rutherford, & Kolodinsky, 2008) underscores some of these empirical and theoretical weaknesses in the politics literature. Empirically, Miller et al.'s (2008) results failed to clearly support a linkage between perceptions of organizational politics and performance. Moreover, their study (1) did not present an overarching theoretical framework that explains *why* perceived organizational politics is linked to employee attitudes and behaviors and (2) focused only on bivariate linkages between the construct and its outcomes, without considering how outcomes of perceptions of organizational politics relate to one another. The current research addresses these shortcomings of the literature on perceptions of organizational politics in three ways. First, this study provides a comprehensive, quantitative review of the relationships between perceived organizational politics and its outcomes. Meta-analysis allowed estimation of the true population effect size (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004) and examination of whether study characteristics explain variability in effect sizes. Thus, a meta-analytic examination of the perceptions of organizational politics–outcome relationships is important because it helps determine whether the past inconsistent findings were the result of statistical artifacts or, rather, were associated with a broader issue, such as the misspecification of relationships between perceptions of organizational politics and its outcomes.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the current study focuses on developing and testing a theoretically derived model that identifies the key psychological mechanisms that link perceived organizational politics to its distal outcomes. Figure 1 outlines the proposed model, which integrates the organizational politics literature with theoretical frameworks that specify the causal ordering of stress-related outcomes (Podsakoff, LePine, & LePine, 2007; Schaubroeck, Cotton, & Jennings, 1989). This approach is consistent with previous studies (LePine et al., 2005; Podsakoff et al., 2007) that have cast organizational politics as a hindrance stressor that prevents employees from meeting personal and professional goals. We tested the validity of the proposed model using meta-analytically derived correlations. Thus, the contribution of our meta-analysis is enhanced by its ability to not only provide information on the *strength* of the bivariate relationships between constructs,

**FIGURE 1**  
**Proposed and Alternative Models of Effects of Perceptions of Organizational Politics on Employee Outcomes**



but also explain *how* the focal constructs are related (Viswesvaran & Ones, 1995).

Finally, we explore whether perceptions of organizational politics can be distinguished from other hindrance stressors. Although some researchers have argued that it is best to treat various stressors as distinct yet related constructs (Schaubroeck et al., 1989), the hindrance stressor literature implies that perceptions of organizational politics, role ambiguity, and role conflict are all indicators of a higher-order hindrance stressor factor (LePine et al., 2005; Podsakoff et al., 2007). Thus, we conducted exploratory analyses to compare relationships among perceptions of organizational politics, role stressors, and outcomes and to evaluate models based on different conceptualizations of the hindrance stressor construct.

## BACKGROUND AND THEORY

Theorists have provided two explanations that link perceptions of organizational politics to negative work outcomes. First, Ferris et al. (1989) suggested that politics are a source of stress that elicits strain responses from employees. Other theorists have suggested that perceptions of organizational politics are detrimental to the maintenance of healthy employee-organization exchange relationships (Aryee et al., 2004; Hall, Hochwarter, Ferris, & Bowen, 2004). Below, we review these explanations of the effects of perceived organizational politics and apply Schaubroeck et al.'s (1989) framework of work stress to tie these perspectives together. Finally, we develop a model based on the hindrance stressor literature to link perceptions of

organizational politics to proximal (strain and attitudes) and distal (performance and turnover intentions) outcomes.

### **Stress-Based Effects of Perceptions of Organizational Politics**

Drawing on research conceptualizing job stress as a subjective experience associated with uncertainty and ambiguity (e.g., Schuler, 1980), Ferris et al. (1989) proposed that perceptions of organizational politics represent a stressor that is directly related to attitudinal and behavioral reactions. Ferris et al. speculated that perceptions of organizational politics trigger a primary appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) that a work context is threatening and put pressure on employees to engage in politicking to meet their goals. Highly political organizations tend to reward employees who (1) engage in strong influence tactics, (2) take credit for the work of others, (3) are members of powerful coalitions, and (4) have connections to high-ranking allies. As organizations reward these activities, demands are placed on workers to engage in political behaviors to compete for resources. According to the job demands–resource model of work stress (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), employees who perceive that job demands exceed their coping resources feel overwhelmed. This emotional strain requires additional coping efforts, which are taken away from resources that could otherwise be devoted to job performance. Excessive strain also impacts employee health (Dragano, Verde, & Siegrist, 2005) and eventually drives employees to search for less stressful work environments.

### **A Social Exchange Perspective on the Effects of Perceptions of Organizational Politics**

In highly political organizations, rewards are tied to relationships, power, and other less objective factors. As a result, “the immediate environment becomes unpredictable because the unwritten rules for success change as the power of those playing the political game varies” (Hall et al., 2004: 244). Therefore, it is difficult for employees to predict if their behaviors will lead to rewards in political work contexts, and they are likely to perceive weaker relationships between performance and the attainment of desired outcomes (Aryee et al., 2004; Cropanzano et al., 1997). Supporting this perspective, Rosen et al. (2006) demonstrated that perceptions of organizational politics are associated with performance through employee morale. In their study, as in the present study, employee morale and job performance were conceptualized as aggre-

gate latent constructs. The morale construct represented general employee attitudes and was comprised of job satisfaction and affective commitment (see Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006), and the performance construct consisted of task performance and OCB (see Rotundo & Sackett, 2002), which captured behaviors related to both the technical cores of organizations and behaviors that contribute to the psychosocial contexts of workplaces (Organ, 1997). Rosen et al. (2006) suggested that lower morale reflects judgments that reward allocation processes are arbitrary and unfair. Employees holding less favorable attitudes also feel less obligated to reciprocate with behaviors that enhance the well-being of their organization. Thus, Rosen et al. provided evidence, albeit indirectly, that morale is part of the social exchange mechanism that links perceptions of organizational politics to performance.

### **Current Study: Model and Hypotheses**

The stress and social exchange perspectives are useful to understanding reactions to perceptions of organizational politics. Nonetheless, research falls short in describing the mechanisms that link such perceptions to outcomes. For example, Ferris et al.’s (2002) model specifies that job anxiety, job satisfaction, affective commitment, performance, and turnover intentions are *direct* outcomes of perceptions of organizational politics, with each reaction occurring at the same time. However, there are reasons to believe that some reactions to political perceptions precede others. In particular, work stress research (Schaubroeck et al., 1989) suggests that job anxiety, job satisfaction, and affective commitment are antecedents to turnover intentions and performance. Therefore, we suggest that perceptions of organizational politics have *indirect* effects on turnover intentions and performance through more immediate outcomes (viz., strain and morale). As such, previous studies examining only the direct effects of perceptions of organizational politics on performance and turnover intentions may have misspecified these linkages, thus biasing the study results (Duncan, 1975).

The stress and social exchange perspectives employ a similar logic useful for understanding employees’ reactions to perceptions of organizational politics. Particularly, both perspectives suggest that these perceptions are associated with ambiguity and uncertainty in a work environment that results in psychological strain and lower morale. However, neither perspective describes how these outcomes of perceptions of organizational politics relate to each other and whether these outcomes have a

meaningful impact on more distal reactions. Fortunately, the work stress literature provides insight regarding the causal ordering of these reactions to stressors. Following Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth's (1978) model of turnover, Schaubroeck et al. (1989) specified that role stressors lead to increased job strain, which is associated with lower job satisfaction and affective commitment and, subsequently, increased turnover intentions. Podsakoff et al. (2007) and LePine et al. (2005) employed similar mediational chains to explain the effects of hindrance stressors on turnover and task performance. Moreover, Cropanzano, Rupp, and Byrne (2003) demonstrated that the effects of strain work through morale and impact OCBs, in addition to task performance. Together, these studies provide complementary approaches to understanding the effects of stressors.

We incorporate these perspectives into a model that conceptualizes perceptions of organizational politics as a hindrance stressor reflecting job demands that interfere with employees' ability to achieve career goals. *Hindrance stressors* are broadly defined as constraints that impede individuals' work achievements and are not usually associated with potential net gains for them (LePine et al., 2005). In addition to perceptions of organizational politics, researchers include role stressors, bureaucracy, and daily hassles under the umbrella of hindrance stressors. Collectively, research has shown that these stressors elicit strain, reduce morale, motivation, and performance, and increase employee withdrawal (Boswell, Olson-Buchanan, & LePine, 2004; Cavanaugh, Boswell, Roehling, & Boudreau, 2000; Podsakoff et al., 2007). In keeping with previous research examining the effects of perceptions of organizational politics and hindrance stressors, we argue that politics hamper employees' ability to attain personal and professional goals, which results in a primary appraisal of the work context that evokes strain and reduces morale. In accordance with the causal ordering supported by previous studies, we also propose that strain is a more proximal outcome than morale. This proposition derives from both the stress and social exchange perspectives. Work stress researchers (Schaubroeck et al., 1989) have suggested that psychological strain influences employees' overall attitudes toward their jobs, as employees consider their jobs to be the root of the problem. Strain is also purported to reflect a negative evaluation of the employee-organization exchange relationship (Cropanzano et al., 1997). Thus, as strain increases, employees' morale and sense of obligation toward their organization decline (Cropanzano et al., 2003).

We propose that perceptions of organizational politics have both direct and indirect effects on morale. In turn, psychological strain and morale link perceptions of organizational politics to more distal outcomes. In other words, employees' performance suffers because they must focus time and effort on coping with the strain associated with perceptions of organizational politics. In addition, employees are likely to reduce the time and effort that they put into their jobs in response to perceived disequilibrium in the exchange relationship, which is reflected by lower morale. Finally, employees will attempt to remove themselves from situations appraised as unfavorable or threatening. In summary, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 1. Perceptions of organizational politics has a positive relationship with psychological strain.*

*Hypothesis 2. Perceptions of organizational politics has a (a) direct negative relationship with morale (b) partially mediated by psychological strain.*

*Hypothesis 3. Perceptions of organizational politics has a positive relationship with turnover intentions.*

*Hypothesis 4. Perceptions of organizational politics has a negative relationship with job performance.*

*Hypothesis 5. The relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and turnover intentions is mediated by (a) psychological strain and (b) morale.*

*Hypothesis 6. The relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and job performance is mediated by (a) psychological strain and (b) morale.*

### **Exploratory Analyses: Comparing Politics to Other Hindrance Stressors**

In Schaubroeck et al.'s (1989) model, role ambiguity and role conflict represent distinct, yet related, stressors. More recently, researchers (e.g., LePine et al., 2005; Podsakoff et al., 2007) have suggested that a unified hindrance stressor construct encompasses perceptions of organizational politics and role stressors. Perceived politics and role stressors certainly share the similarity of interfering with employees' ability to achieve personal and professional goals. However, conceptualizing these three constructs as indicators of a unified hindrance stressor construct entails an assumption that perceptions of organizational politics and role

stressors are analogous and demonstrate similar relationships with each other and with outcomes. Unfortunately, this assumption has not been empirically tested. Therefore, we provide supplemental analyses that, first, compare relationships among perceptions of organizational politics, role stressors, and outcomes, and second, explore whether political perceptions and role stressors are best conceptualized as a unified construct or as a set of diversified yet related stressors. Figure 2 graphically depicts these two contrasting patterns. Third, our additional analyses also explore whether perceptions of organizational politics and role stressors demonstrate similar patterns of relationships with distal outcomes. Similar relationships with each other and with outcomes and a better-fitting model based on a unified hindrance stressor construct would provide further evidence for the unified approach (Podsakoff et al., 2007). On the other hand, differing relationship patterns and a better fit for the diversified model would imply that perceptions of organizational politics may have meaningful differences with other role-based hindrance stressors.

*Research Question. Are perceptions of organizational politics and role stressors (role ambiguity and role conflict) distinct forms of hindrance stressors?*

## METHODS

### Literature Search and Inclusion Criteria

To identify studies that could be used in this meta-analysis, we first conducted a computerized search of three databases (PSYCINFO, ABI-INFORM, and Business Source Premier) for the years between 1989 (the year that Ferris and colleagues proposed the perceptions of organizational politics construct) and 2007. We combined keywords associated with politics (i.e., “organizational politics,” “politics perceptions,” and “perceived politics”) with keywords related to outcomes (*general outcomes*: “outcome,” “consequence,” and “result”; *strain*<sup>1</sup>: “strain,” “stress,” “stressor,” “anger,” “anxiety,” “depress[ion],” “frustration,” “tension,” and “burnout”; *morale*: “job/work satisfaction,” “organizational/work commitment,” “affective commitment”; *turnover intentions*: “turnover,” “intent to turnover,” “withdrawal cognitions”; *supervisor-*

*rated performance*: “performance,” “productivity,” “task/job performance,” “organizational citizenship behavior,” “OCB,” “OCBI” [OCB toward individuals], “OCBO” [OCB toward organizations], and “contextual performance”). Second, we manually searched the 1989–2007 issues of eight high-quality journals that have published articles related to organizational politics: the *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *Organization Science*, and *Personnel Psychology*. Third, we compared the reference list derived from the sources described so far with the lists of two qualitative reviews of research on perceptions of organizational politics (Ferris et al., 2002; Kacmar & Baron, 1999). Finally, we contacted researchers in the field for “file-drawer studies” and posted a call for unpublished papers on discussion lists for the Society for Industrial/Organizational Psychology and the Academy of Management. In total, we identified 57 relevant papers dealing with 70 separate samples that we could include in the meta-analyses.

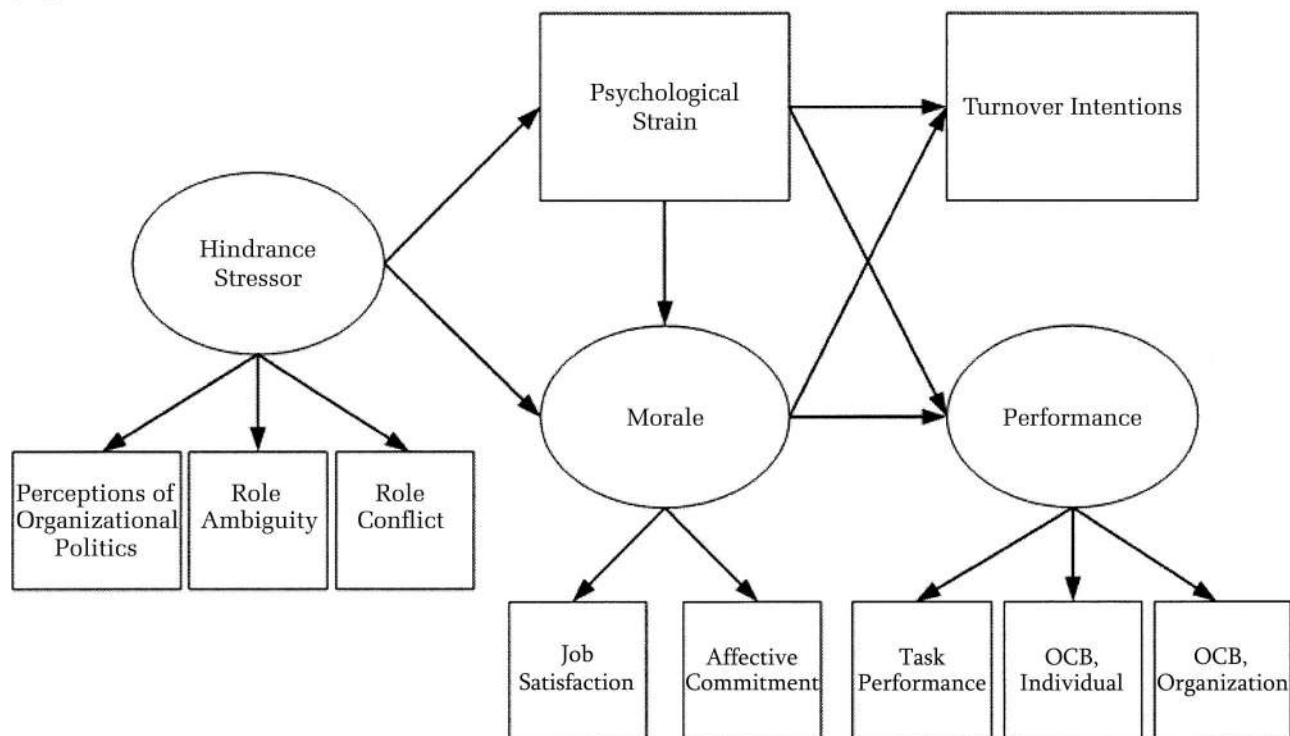
Three inclusion criteria were used. First, we included studies in the meta-analysis if they investigated relationships between perceptions of organizational politics and at least one of the dependent variables. Second, we included studies that measured politics perceptions and excluded studies that measured other operationalizations of organizational politics. The majority of studies used variations of the perceptions of organizational politics measure (Kacmar & Ferris, 1991); three exceptions were Anderson (1994), Christiansen, Villanova, and Mikulay (1997), and Drory (1993). Kacmar and Baron’s (1999) qualitative review suggested that the three scales in those studies assess perceptions of organizational political climate. In addition, our own content analysis revealed that items from these scales have counterparts in the perceptions of organizational politics measure. Thus, we included these in the current meta-analysis.<sup>2</sup> Finally, we included studies reporting relationships between perceptions of organizational politics and depen-

<sup>1</sup> Two-thirds of the samples we found (14 out of 21) used the Work Tension Scale by House and Rizzo (1972) to assess psychological strain associated with tension experienced at work.

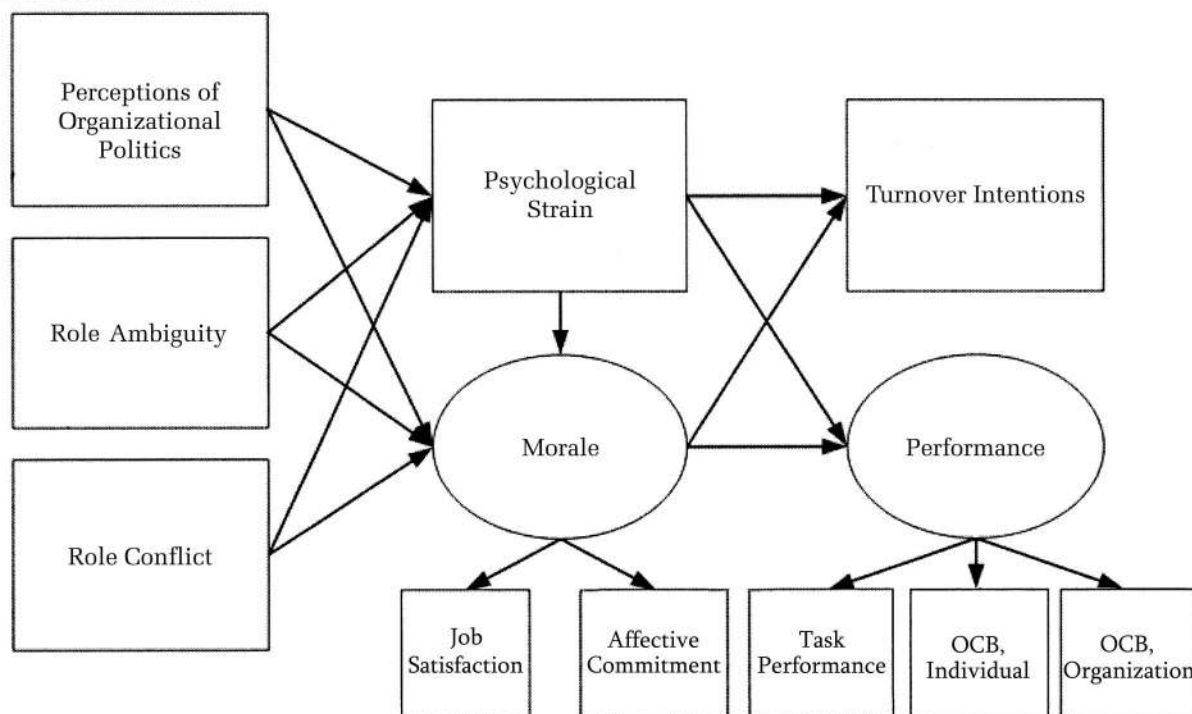
<sup>2</sup> We also conducted meta-analyses without these studies for the applicable analyses and found the results showed minor, nonsignificant fluctuations. After removing these studies, we observed these changes in relationships: (a) perceptions of organizational politics and strain, from .48 to .47; (b) politics and job satisfaction, from  $-.57$  to  $-.58$ ; (c) politics and affective commitment, from  $-.54$  to  $-.55$ ; and (d) politics and withdrawal intentions, from .43 to .44.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Conceptualizations of Hindrance Stressor**

**(2A) Unified Model**



**(2B) Diversified Model**



dent variables that were calculated from an original sample. When the same sample was used in multiple studies, sample characteristics and effect sizes

were cross-referenced, and only one effect size was included. Correlations were considered as separate entries when they represented relationships be-

tween perceptions of organizational politics and (1) distinctive outcome variables and (2) one dependent variable, but from different samples (Arthur, Bennett, & Huffcutt, 2001). We aggregated correlations representing relationships between perceptions of organizational politics and different measures of the same outcome variable. These criteria resulted in 21 effect sizes for strain, 45 for job satisfaction, 33 for affective commitment, 27 for turnover intentions, 14 for task performance, 9 for OCBI, and 9 for OCBO.

### Meta-analytic and Model-Testing Procedures

We first used meta-analysis to summarize relationships between perceptions of organizational politics and each of the outcome variables. When available, we also examined whether the publication status of a study, the employment status of the sampled population (full-time employees vs. employed students), and the country from which the data were collected, accounted for differences in effect sizes among studies. Following Arthur et al.'s (2001) strategy, we calculated a sample-weighted mean correlation. We then computed the percentage of variance accounted for by sampling error (Hunter & Schmidt, 2004) and performed the chi-square test for the homogeneity of observed correlation coefficients across studies (Rosenthal, 1991). The 95% confidence interval around the sample-weighted mean correlation was then computed using different formulas depending on chi-square test results (Whitener, 1990). We then corrected for unreliability of measures to derive the population correlation coefficient. We used interrater reliability estimates from Viswesvaran, Ones, and Schmidt (1996) to correct for measurement error in the relationships between perceptions of organizational politics and supervisor-rated performance. The variance and standard deviation of the population estimate were then calculated to determine the 95% credibility interval. We also calculated the *Q*-statistic to examine variance in the corrected population estimate. When the credibility interval included zero or *Q* was significant, we performed subgroup analyses to examine the moderating effects of study characteristics (Cortina, 2003). The moderator analyses included an examination of both publication status and sample employment status, as well as a cross-cultural comparison between U.S. and Israeli samples, none of which were examined in Miller et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis of the outcomes of perceptions of organizational politics.

Next, we built a correlation matrix containing the corrected population correlation coefficients be-

tween all the variables using the current and previous meta-analytic results. Selected meta-analyses published since 1995 provided estimates for relationships among nonpolitics variables. Table 1 presents this correlation matrix. We performed structural equation modeling (SEM) based on this correlation matrix to evaluate the fit of the proposed model. We adopted Shadish (1996) and Viswesvaran and Ones's (1995) procedures for model testing. Unless otherwise noted, the structural model used manifest indicators without correction for measurement error, as these corrections were done through meta-analysis. Finally, because no published meta-analysis estimates the relationships between turnover intentions and OCBI and OCBO, we used primary studies found for the current meta-analysis to estimate these relationships (see Harrison et al., 2006). Specifically, seven of the nine samples that we found in our meta-analysis for the relationships between perceptions of organizational politics and OCBI and OCBO included turnover intentions as an outcome variable. Relationships between turnover intentions and OCBI and OCBO were extracted from these seven studies and meta-analyzed to provide estimates for the meta-analytic correlation matrix.

For the exploratory analyses, we performed an additional literature search for meta-analytic correlations involving role stressors (i.e., role ambiguity and role conflict) and the outcome variables included in the current study (e.g., Örtqvist & Wincent, 2006; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996). We then incorporated these correlations into the meta-analytic correlation matrix (Table 1) and tested the proposed model using the two different conceptualizations of the hindrance stressor construct (i.e., as a unified vs. diversified construct). Because no published meta-analysis estimated the relationships between perceptions of organizational politics and the two role stressors, we used available primary studies to estimate these relationships (six effect sizes for the perceptions of organizational politics–role ambiguity relationship [ $\rho = .52$ ]; four effect sizes for the perceptions of organizational politics–role conflict relationship [ $\rho = .58$ ]).

## RESULTS

### Bivariate Relationships

Table 2 shows the results of the meta-analysis for the relationships between politics and strain, job satisfaction, affective commitment, turnover intentions, task performance, OCBI, and OCBO. All of the 95% confidence intervals excluded zero, indicating that each correlation was statistically signif-

**TABLE 1**  
**Meta-analytic Correlations between Perceptions of Organizational Politics, Strain, Morale, and Performance<sup>a, b</sup>**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Perceptions of organizational politics							
2. Strain	.48 <sup>b</sup>						
<i>k</i>	21						
<i>N</i>	7,140						
3. Job satisfaction	-.57 <sup>c</sup>	-.45 <sup>i</sup>					
<i>k</i>	45	72					
<i>N</i>	16,640	22,106					
4. Affective commitment	-.54 <sup>d</sup>	-.31 <sup>j</sup>	.68 <sup>o</sup>				
<i>k</i>	33	32	36				
<i>N</i>	11,633	10,808	12,269				
5. Task performance	-.20 <sup>e</sup>	-.21 <sup>k</sup>	.30 <sup>p</sup>	.18 <sup>t</sup>			
<i>k</i>	14	30	242	87			
<i>N</i>	3,397	6,769	44,518	20,973			
6. OCB, individual	-.16 <sup>f</sup>	-.23 <sup>l</sup>	.26 <sup>q</sup>	.25 <sup>u</sup>	.66 <sup>x</sup>		
<i>k</i>	9	15	22	42	14		
<i>N</i>	1,913	5,194	5,549	10,747	4,831		
7. OCB, organization	-.20 <sup>g</sup>	-.25 <sup>m</sup>	.24 <sup>r</sup>	.25 <sup>v</sup>	.72 <sup>y</sup>	.72 <sup>aa</sup>	
<i>k</i>	9	16	20	42	13	44	
<i>N</i>	1,913	3,893	5,189	10,747	4,958	10,647	
8. Turnover intentions	.43 <sup>h</sup>	.31 <sup>n</sup>	-.58 <sup>s</sup>	-.58 <sup>w</sup>	-.16 <sup>z</sup>	-.21 <sup>ab</sup>	-.22 <sup>ac</sup>
<i>k</i>	27	63	70	97	38	7	7
<i>N</i>	8,439	21,056	23,603	41,002	7,643	1,344	1,344

<sup>a</sup> All correlations were corrected for attenuation due to unreliability. If more than one study reported on the same relationship, we used the estimate reflecting the greatest amount of data (in most cases, it was the most recent data). "k" is the number of effect sizes; *N* is total observations.

<sup>b</sup> The letter superscripts in the body of the table indicate the source of the meta-analytic correlations as follows: "i," "j," "n," "o," "s," Podsakoff, LePine, and LePine (2007); "k," LePine, Podsakoff, and LePine (2005); "l," "m," Matias, Chang, and Johnson (2007); "p" Judge, Thoresen, Bono, and Patton (2001); "q," "r," Organ and Ryan (1995); "t," "u," "v," Harrison, Newman, and Roth (2006); "w," Cooper-Hakin and Viswasvaran (2005); "x," "y," "aa," Hoffman, Blair, Meriac, and Woehr (2007); "z," Zimmerman and Darnold (2009).

Original analyses in the current paper include "b," "c," "d," "e," "f," "g," "h," "ab," and "ac." Detailed information for relationships "b" through "h" can be found in Table 2. For more detailed results for relationships "ab" and "ac," please contact the first author.

icant ( $p < .05$ ). In addition, all of the 95% credibility intervals excluded zero, suggesting that all bivariate relationships were in the anticipated directions. Although the significant *Q*-statistics indicated that there were between-study moderators for relationships between politics and nonperformance outcomes, these moderators were likely to affect only the magnitude, rather than the direction, of the relationships, as the credibility interval excluded zero.

**Proximal outcomes.** The sample-weighted mean correlation between perceptions of organizational politics and strain was .39. Sampling and measurement error accounted for 16 percent of the variance in correlations. After correcting for sampling and measurement error, the population correlation was .48. The *Q* was significant. However, the three between-study moderators that were tested did not account for differences between effect sizes, as the subgroup analysis yielded nonsignificant results. The sample-weighted mean correlation between perceptions of organizational politics and job satisfaction was -.47. After correction for sampling er-

ror and measurement unreliability, which accounted for 21 percent of the variance in correlations, the population correlation estimate was -.57. Unpublished studies yielded larger effect sizes ( $\rho = -.61$ ) than published studies ( $\rho = -.57$ ;  $Z = -2.87$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and U.S. samples responded more negatively to perceptions of organizational politics ( $\rho = -.58$ ) than Israeli samples ( $\rho = -.46$ ;  $Z = 5.93$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Similarly, affective commitment had a sample-weighted mean correlation coefficient of -.43 with perceptions of organizational politics. Sampling error and measurement unreliability accounted for 14 percent of the variance in the correlations between perceptions of organizational politics and commitment, and the corrected population correlation was -.54. The unpublished studies also had larger effect sizes ( $\rho = -.62$ ) than the published studies ( $\rho = -.52$ ;  $Z = -6.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and perceptions of organizational politics were more strongly related to commitment in U.S. samples ( $\rho = -.56$ ) than in Israeli samples ( $\rho = -.34$ ;  $Z = 9.81$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**TABLE 2**  
**Meta-analytic Results for Bivariate Relationships between Perceptions of Organizational Politics and Outcome Variables<sup>a</sup>**

Variables and Moderators	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	$\rho$	s.d. $\rho$	%s.e.	95% CI		95% CV		<i>Q</i>	<i>Z</i>
							Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper		
<i>Strain</i>												
Overall	21	7,140	.39	.48	.15	11.99	.34	.45	.19	.76	130.99***	0.34
Publication status												
Unpublished studies	3	742	.40	.49	.10	27.50	.30	.52	.29	.69	10.41**	
Published studies	18	6,398	.39	.48	.15	10.99	.33	.46	.18	.77	117.48***	0.43
Sample												
Employed student samples	5	1,135	.37	.46	.09	35.59	.29	.46	.28	.63	11.82*	
Employee samples	16	6,005	.40	.48	.15	9.94	.33	.47	.18	.78	117.91***	0.77
Country												
Israel	3	541	.39	.50	.01	91.45	.32	.46	.48	.51	3.01	
United States	15	5,676	.40	.49	.16	9.44	.33	.48	.18	.79	115.59***	
<i>Job satisfaction</i>												
Overall	45	16,640	−.47	−.57	.13	11.23	−.51	−.44	−.83	−.32	218.98***	−2.87**
Publication status												
Unpublished studies	7	2,597	−.50	−.61	.08	19.05	−.57	−.44	−.77	−.46	14.21*	
Published studies	38	14,043	−.46	−.57	.14	10.68	−.50	−.43	−.84	−.30	211.70***	0.52
Sample												
Employed student samples	8	1,861	−.46	−.54	.00	84.68	−.50	−.42	−.54	−.54	7.83	
Employee samples	37	14,779	−.47	−.58	.14	9.44	−.51	−.43	−.86	−.31	198.48***	5.93***
Country												
Israel	7	1,414	−.35	−.46	.06	54.03	−.41	−.28	−.60	−.33	11.30	
United States	35	14,671	−.48	−.58	.13	10.43	−.52	−.44	−.82	−.33	203.04***	
<i>Affective commitment</i>												
Overall	33	11,633	−.43	−.54	.16	13.58	−.47	−.38	−.86	−.22	243.00***	−6.35***
Publication status												
Unpublished studies	5	2,271	−.50	−.62	.11	13.67	−.59	−.42	−.83	−.41	30.47***	
Published studies	28	9,362	−.41	−.52	.17	10.49	−.46	−.36	−.84	−.19	199.59***	1.01
Sample												
Employed student samples	6	1,525	−.42	−.52	.05	57.30	−.46	−.38	−.62	−.41	10.06	
Employee samples	27	10,108	−.43	−.54	.17	8.38	−.48	−.37	−.88	−.20	219.54***	9.81***
Country												
Israel	7	1,414	−.26	−.34	.11	38.13	−.34	−.18	−.55	−.13	17.37*	
US	26	10,219	−.45	−.56	.15	10.14	−.50	−.40	−.85	−.27	176.64***	
<i>Turnover intentions</i>												
Overall	27	8,439	.36	.43	.11	20.28	.32	.40	.21	.66	110.45***	1.78
Publication status												
Unpublished studies	3	895	.40	.48	.03	75.05	.35	.46	.42	.54	3.69	
Published studies	24	7,544	.36	.43	.12	19.07	.31	.40	.19	.66	103.63***	1.54
Sample												
Employed student samples	4	1,080	.38	.47	.04	60.61	.33	.44	.39	.56	5.36	
Employee samples	23	7,359	.36	.43	.12	18.38	.31	.40	.19	.66	100.08***	
<i>Task performance</i>												
Overall	14	3,397	−.13	−.20	.07	63.63	−.16	−.09	−.34	−.05	21.81	
<i>OCB, individual</i>												
Overall	9	1,913	−.14	−.16	.03	95.11	−.18	−.09	−.20	−.13	9.37	
<i>OCB, organization</i>												
Overall	9	1,913	−.16	−.20	.00	100.00	−.20	−.12	−.20	−.20	7.57	

<sup>a</sup> *k* is the number of effect sizes; *N* is the total number of subjects; *r* is the mean sample-weighted correlation;  $\rho$  is the estimate of the fully corrected population correlation; s.d. $\rho$  is the standard deviation of the estimate of the fully corrected population correlation; %s.e. is the percentage of observed variance accounted for by sampling and measurement error; 95% CI is the 95% confidence interval around the mean sample-weighted correlation; 95% CV is the 95% credibility interval around the corrected mean population correlation; *Q* is the chi-square test for the homogeneity of true correlations across studies; and *Z* is the test for the significance of the difference between the sample-weighted correlations.

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

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

**Distal outcomes.** The sample-weighted mean correlation between perceptions of organizational politics and turnover intentions was .36. After correcting for sampling and measurement artifacts, which explained 24 percent of the variance in correlations, the estimated population correlation was .43. Because of the significant  $Q$ , we tested for between-study moderators and found that neither publication status nor sample type moderated the magnitude of this relationship. This result supported Hypothesis 3. The sample-weighted mean correlation between perceptions of organizational politics and task performance was  $-.13$ . Sampling error and measurement unreliability accounted for 64 percent of the variance in observed correlations across studies. The corrected population correlation was  $-.20$ . For the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and OCB toward individuals (OCBI), the sample-weighted mean correlation was  $-.14$ , and the corrected population correlation was  $-.16$ . Sampling error and measurement unreliability accounted for 86 percent of the variance observed in correlations. The sample-weighted mean correlation between perceptions of organizational politics and OCB toward one's organization (OCBO) was  $-.16$ , the corrected population correlation was  $-.20$ , and sampling error and measurement unreliability accounted for 100 percent of the variance observed in these correlations. Thus, perceptions of organizational politics had negative relationships with all three supervisor-rated performance measures, which supported Hypothesis 4. Additionally, none of the 95% credibility intervals included zero, and all three  $Q$ -statistics were nonsignificant, indicating that the magnitudes of these relationships were not affected by between-study moderators.

### Model Testing

To test the proposed model, we first created latent constructs to represent morale and job performance. Job satisfaction and affective commitment served as indicators of morale. The job performance construct included task performance, OCBI, and OCBO as indicators. To evaluate these latent constructs, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using maximum likelihood estimation in Mplus 4.2 (Muthén & Muthén, 2005). The following criteria were used to assess model fit: comparative fit (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis (TLI) index values greater than .90, a root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) of less than .06, and a standardized root-mean-square residual (SRMR) of less

than .08 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The overall measurement model had reasonably good fit to the data (CFI = .98, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .12, SRMR = .02).

We then tested the proposed model in which effects of perceptions of organizational politics on turnover intentions and job performance were fully mediated by strain and morale. As reported in Table 3, the model fit the data (CFI = .97, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .02), and all paths were significant, except for the path linking strain to turnover intentions ( $\beta = -.02$ ). We then tested for partial mediation effects by including direct paths from perceptions of organizational politics to the two distal outcome variables in the next three alternative models (see Figure 1). As reported in Table 3, the three alternative models had essentially the same fit indexes as the theoretical model. Further analyses revealed that adding a path between perceptions of organizational politics and turnover intentions (alternative model 1:  $\Delta\chi^2_1 = 0.59$ , n.s.), or between politics and performance (alternative model 2:  $\Delta\chi^2_1 = 1.24$ , n.s.) did not improve model fit over that of the theoretical model. When both paths were freely estimated (alternative model 3:  $\Delta\chi^2_2 = 2.35$ , n.s.), none of the direct paths were significant, nor did model fit improve significantly. Thus, the theoretical model received support, and the results provided evidence that strain and morale fully mediated the effects of perceptions of organizational politics on performance and turnover intentions.

As shown in Figure 3, perceptions of organizational politics were associated with increased psychological strain ( $\beta = .48$ ,  $p < .05$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1. Supporting Hypothesis 2, perceptions of organizational politics were related to morale both directly ( $\beta = -.57$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and indirectly through strain ( $\beta = -.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In terms of mediation effects, we found support for Hypothesis 5b: effects of morale fully mediated perceptions of organizational politics on turnover intentions ( $\beta = -.70$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Hypothesis 5a was supported by a more extended mediational chain; higher perceptions of organizational politics were associated with increased strain and then reduced morale, which in turn related to increased turnover intentions. Supporting Hypothesis 6, the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and performance was fully mediated by both strain ( $\beta = -.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and morale ( $\beta = .28$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Overall, our results demonstrated that strain and morale fully mediated the effects of perceptions of organizational politics on turnover intentions and performance.

**TABLE 3**  
**Fit Statistics for Alternative Models**

Model	$\chi^2$	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$
<i>Perceptions of organizational politics as the only predictor<sup>a</sup></i>							
Theoretical	587.00	15	.97	.94	.09	.02	
Alternative model 1 <sup>b</sup>	586.41	14	.97	.94	.09	.02	0.59 <sup>e</sup>
Alternative model 2 <sup>c</sup>	585.76	14	.97	.95	.08	.02	1.24 <sup>e</sup>
Alternative model 3 <sup>d</sup>	584.45	13	.97	.95	.08	.02	2.35 <sup>e</sup>
<i>Two conceptualizations of hindrance stressor<sup>f</sup></i>							
Unified hindrance stressor	1,526.87	29	.94	.90	.10	.03	
Diversified hindrance stressors: Perceptions of organizational politics, role ambiguity, and role conflict	1,333.76	25	.93	.89	.10	.03	193.11 <sup>k***</sup>
Alternative model 4 <sup>g</sup>	1,332.60	23	.93	.88	.11	.03	1.16 <sup>l</sup>
Alternative model 5 <sup>h</sup>	1,266.28	23	.94	.89	.11	.02	67.48 <sup>l***</sup>
Alternative model 6 <sup>i</sup>	1,270.00	24	.94	.89	.10	.03	3.72 <sup>m</sup>
Alternative model 7 <sup>j</sup>	1,128.11	22	.94	.89	.10	.03	141.89 <sup>n***</sup>

<sup>a</sup> CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root-mean-square residual. *N* = 5,160.

<sup>b</sup> Estimate of the direct effect from perceptions of organizational politics to turnover intentions with other paths held constant.

<sup>c</sup> Estimate of the direct effect from perceptions of organizational politics to performance with other paths held constant.

<sup>d</sup> Estimate of the direct effects from perceptions of organizational politics to distal outcomes with other paths held constant.

<sup>e</sup> Model fit compared with the theoretical model.

<sup>f</sup> *N* = 4,865.

<sup>g</sup> Estimate of the direct effects from perceptions of organizational politics to distal outcomes with other paths held constant.

<sup>h</sup> Estimate of the direct effects from role ambiguity to distal outcomes with other paths held constant.

<sup>i</sup> Estimate of the direct effects from role ambiguity to turnover intentions with other paths held constant.

<sup>j</sup> Estimate of the direct effects from role ambiguity to turnover intentions and role conflict to distal outcomes with other paths held constant.

<sup>k</sup> Model fit compared with the unified hindrance stressor model.

<sup>l</sup> Model fit compared with the diversified hindrance stressors model.

<sup>m</sup> Model fit compared with alternative model 5.

<sup>n</sup> Model fit compared with alternative model 6.

\* *p* < .05

\*\* *p* < .01

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

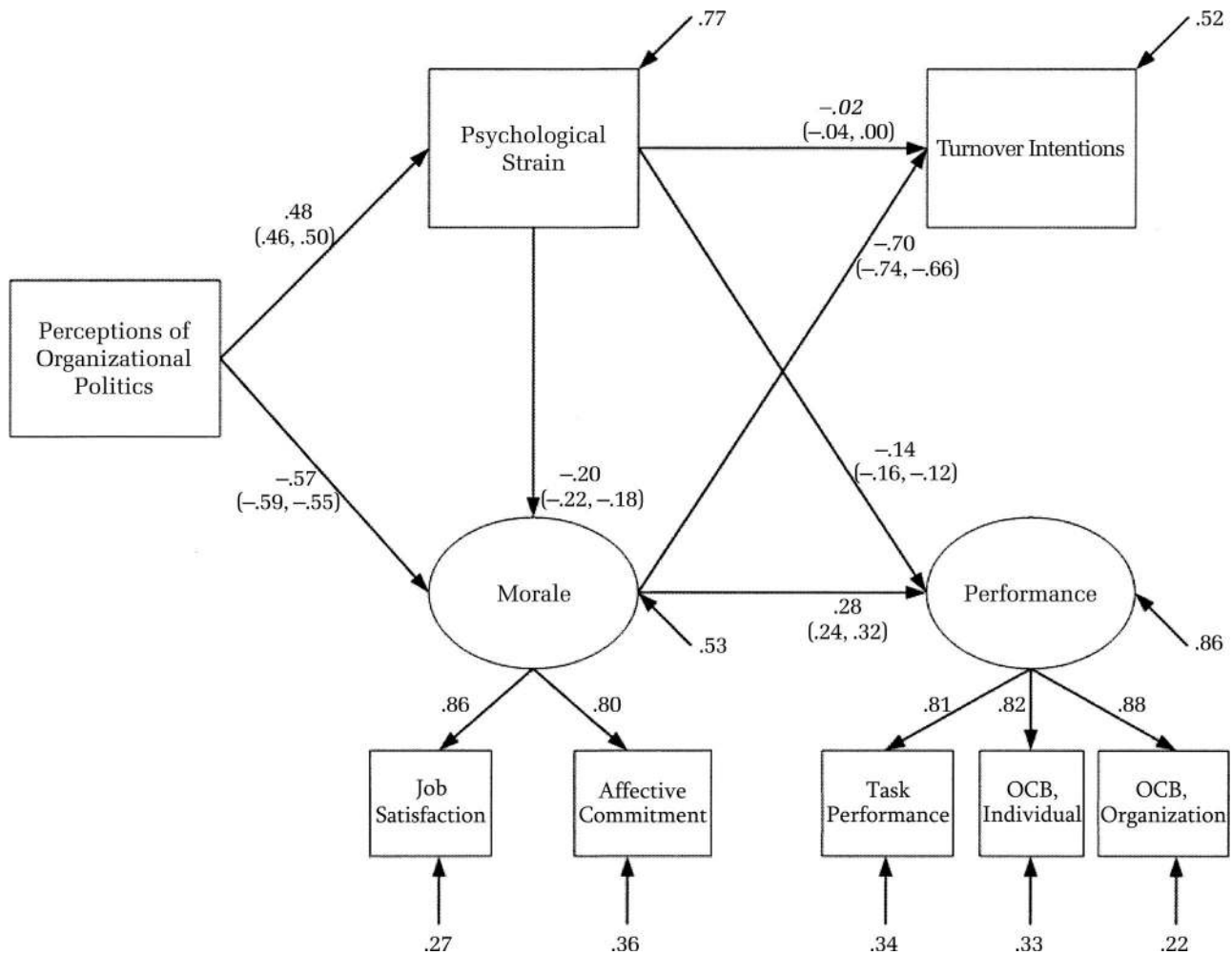
### Perceptions of Organizational Politics, Role Ambiguity, and Role Conflict

To explore the distinctiveness of perceptions of organizational politics from other hindrance stressors, we first compared the bivariate meta-analytic estimates of relationships between politics, role conflict, and role ambiguity, and between these stressors and outcome variables (see Table 4). Perceptions of organizational politics had a stronger relationship with role conflict than with role ambiguity ( $\rho = .58$  vs.  $.52$ ,  $Z = -3.04$ ,  $p < .001$ ). For stressor-outcome relationships, perceptions of organizational politics had significantly stronger associations with strain, job satisfaction, affective commitment, and OCB0, than role ambiguity. Additionally, the perceptions of organizational politics–outcome relationships were significantly stronger than role conflict–outcome relationships

for almost all the variables except for strain, OCB1, and turnover intentions. These results indicate that perceptions of organizational politics had different relationships with role stressors, and that perceptions of organizational politics–outcome relationships were typically stronger, if not comparable, to the role stressor–outcome relationships.

Next, we explored two different conceptualizations of the hindrance stressor construct within the context of the proposed model (Figure 2). Table 3 summarizes the results of these nested model tests. The diversified model had better fit ( $\Delta\chi^2_4 = 196.32$ ,  $p < .001$ ) than the unified model (CFI = .94, TLI = .90, RMSEA = .10, SRMR = .03), suggesting that perceptions of organizational politics and role stressors are best viewed as distinct yet related stressors. We also evaluated possible partial mediation effects (see Table 3). Although the effects of

**FIGURE 3**  
**Final Model of Effects of Perceptions of Organizational Politics on Employee Outcomes<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> All path coefficients and loadings are significant at  $p < .05$  except for the italicized coefficient, for which  $p > .05$ ; numbers in parentheses represent the lower and upper bounds for the 95% confidence interval for path coefficients.

perceptions of organizational politics on the two distal outcomes appeared to be fully mediated (alternative model 4:  $\Delta\chi^2_2 = 1.16$ , n.s.), the effects of role ambiguity were partially mediated (alternative model 5:  $\Delta\chi^2_2 = 67.48$ ,  $p < .001$ ). However, only the direct path from role ambiguity to turnover intentions was significant. Thus, we dropped the other direct path from the model, which did not impact the model fit (alternative model 6:  $\Delta\chi^2_1 = 3.72$ , n.s.). Finally, we added paths from role conflict to both outcomes, and both paths were significant. This final model (Figure 4) showed improvement in fit over alternative model 6 ( $\Delta\chi^2_2 = 141.89$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and included three direct paths from role ambiguity and role conflict to distal outcomes.

Perceptions of organizational politics ( $\beta = .18$ ), role ambiguity ( $\beta = .20$ ), and role conflict ( $\beta = .33$ ) each had significant, positive relationships with

strain. The 95% confidence intervals for the effects of politics and role ambiguity overlapped, but role conflict had the strongest association with strain. Paths from perceptions of organizational politics ( $\beta = -.43$ ), role ambiguity ( $\beta = -.22$ ), and role conflict ( $\beta = -.09$ ) to morale were all significant. None of their confidence intervals overlapped, indicating that the politics-morale link was stronger than the other two links. In addition, though strain and morale fully mediated the effects of perceptions of organizational politics on distal outcomes, role ambiguity had a direct link with turnover intentions ( $\beta = .10$ ), and role conflict had direct associations with turnover intentions ( $\beta = .16$ ) and performance ( $\beta = -.06$ ). Overall, these significant differences in path coefficients and distinct patterns of mediation effects help distinguish perceptions of organizational politics from role stressors.

**TABLE 4**  
**Comparison of Meta-analytic Relationships among**  
**Hindrance Stressors and between Hindrance Stressors**  
**and Employee Attitudes and Behaviors<sup>a</sup>**

Outcome and Hindrance Stressors	$\rho$	$k$	$N$	$Z$
<i>Perceptions of organizational politics</i>				
Role ambiguity <sup>b</sup>	.52	6	3,504	
Role conflict <sup>b</sup>	.58	4	1,941	-3.04***
<i>Strain</i>				
Perceptions of organizational politics	.48	21	7,140	
Role ambiguity <sup>c</sup>	.43	8	1,435	2.05*
Role conflict <sup>c</sup>	.52	7	1,220	-1.84
<i>Job satisfaction</i>				
Perceptions of organizational politics	-.57	45	16,640	
Role ambiguity <sup>c</sup>	-.48	42	10,062	-10.34***
Role conflict <sup>c</sup>	-.49	39	9,780	-9.23***
<i>Affective commitment</i>				
Perceptions of organizational politics	-.54	33	11,633	
Role ambiguity <sup>c</sup>	-.39	12	3,774	-10.07***
Role conflict <sup>c</sup>	-.30	9	3,225	-12.94***
<i>Task performance</i>				
Perceptions of organizational politics	-.20	14	3,397	
Role ambiguity <sup>c</sup>	-.22	18	4,301	1.05
Role conflict <sup>c</sup>	-.14	16	4,057	-2.66**
<i>OCB, individual</i>				
Perceptions of organizational politics	-.16	9	1,913	
Role ambiguity <sup>d</sup>	-.16	10	2,651	0.00
Role conflict <sup>d</sup>	-.15	7	2,351	-0.33
<i>OCB, organization</i>				
Perceptions of organizational politics	-.20	9	1,913	
Role ambiguity <sup>d</sup>	-.12	7	2,456	-2.69***
Role conflict <sup>d</sup>	-.14	6	2,156	-1.97*
<i>Turnover intentions</i>				
Perceptions of organizational politics	.43	27	8,439	
Role ambiguity <sup>c</sup>	.44	8	1,188	-0.29
Role conflict <sup>c</sup>	.45	8	1,188	-0.53

<sup>a</sup> The letter superscripts in the body of the table indicate the source of the meta-analytic correlations as follows: "b," current study; "c," Örtqvist and Wincent (2006); "d," Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Bommer (1996).

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

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

## DISCUSSION

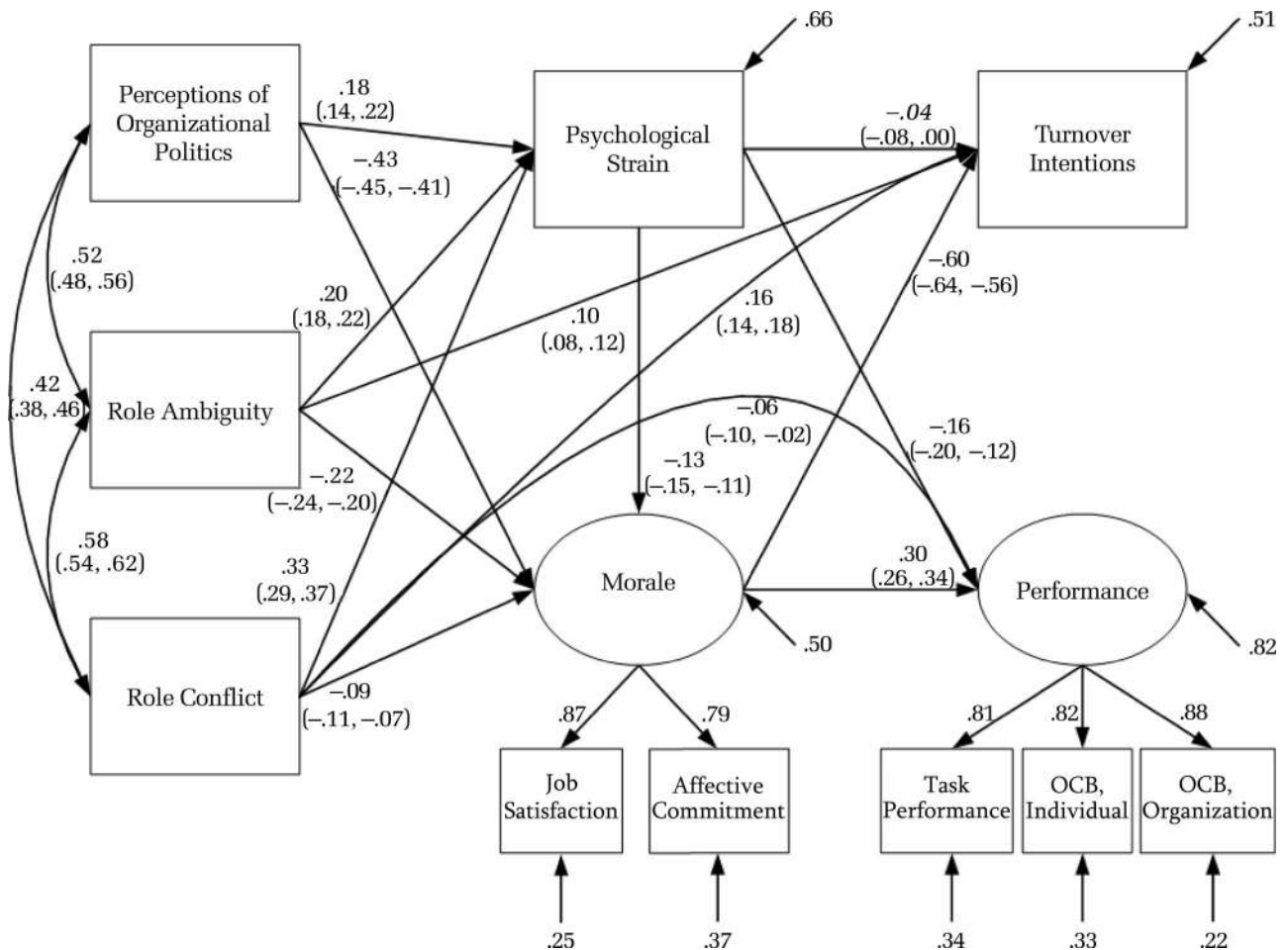
The current research had three goals: (1) to address inconsistencies in the research findings on perceptions of organizational politics, (2) to examine a model that incorporated stress and social exchange explanations of reactions to perceptions of organizational politics, and (3) to explore whether perceptions of organizational politics were

distinguishable from other role-based hindrance stressors. In keeping with Miller et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis of the outcomes of perceptions of organizational politics, the results of the current study demonstrated that such perceptions have strong, positive relationships with strain and turnover intentions and strong, negative relationships with job satisfaction and affective commitment. However, the current study extends previous research by providing unequivocal support for a relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and aspects of job performance that were not clearly supported (viz., task performance) or tested (viz., OCB) in Miller et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis.

Beyond the basic bivariate estimates, our results also provided compelling evidence supporting a theoretically derived model that integrates the stress- and social exchange-based explanations of the effects of perceptions of organizational politics. In particular, perceptions of organizational politics were associated with increased psychological strain, which was associated directly with reduced performance, as well as indirectly with increased turnover intentions through reduced morale. Political perceptions also had a direct, negative link with employee morale, which was related to increased turnover intentions and reduced performance. These findings revealed that strain and morale fully mediate the effects of perceptions of organizational politics on important employee reactions. In addition, they indicated that the stress and social exchange perspectives complement each other. Thus, simultaneously considering the mediating effects of morale and strain provides a more complete picture of the intrapersonal processes that relate perceptions of organizational politics to distal employee outcomes.

Interestingly, results of the exploratory analyses suggested that political perceptions are distinct from at least two other hindrance stressors—role ambiguity and role conflict. Perceptions of organizational politics had different relationships with those role stressors. Also, bivariate relationships between political perceptions and outcomes were almost always stronger than or comparable with the role stressor–outcome relationships. Finally, when considered together, perceived politics had a unique pattern of associations with employee outcomes: the effects of perceptions of organizational politics on distal outcomes were fully mediated by strain and morale, whereas the effects of role stressors on distal outcomes were only partially mediated.

**FIGURE 4**  
**Final Model of Effects of Perceptions of Organizational Politics, Role Ambiguity, and Role Conflict on Employee Outcomes<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> All path coefficients and loadings are significant at  $p < .05$ , except for the italicized coefficient, for which  $p > .05$ ; numbers in parentheses represent the lower and upper bounds for the 95% confidence interval for path coefficients.

### Theoretical Implications

This research offers a number of important theoretical contributions. First, the significant relationships between perceptions of organizational politics and the focal outcomes (i.e., psychological strain, morale, turnover intentions, and performance) provide additional support for the notion that, in response to perceptions of organizational politics, employees are likely to withdraw from an organization in order to avoid political “games.” Moreover, our findings clearly linked perceptions of organizational politics with task performance and OCB, indicating that, overall, perceived politics represent an aversive aspect of the work environment. These findings also counter theoretical arguments (see Ferris et al., 1989; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992) suggesting that employees may respond to perceptions of organizational politics by immersing

themselves in their work or by increasing the extent to which they are involved in their jobs. Similarly, our findings suggest that previous studies showing positive associations between perceptions of organizational politics and desirable outcomes (e.g., Ferris et al., 1993; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992) represent exceptions in the literature and may be due to statistical artifacts. In general, employee perceptions of self-serving, illegitimate political activities at work have consistently negative relationships with employee attitudes and behaviors.

Regarding the moderator analyses, we found little evidence for publication bias (Rosenthal, 1979), as unpublished studies had either stronger effect sizes than published ones, or comparable effect sizes. In addition, effect sizes from studies with employed students were similar to those from studies with full-time employees. This pattern sug-

gested that the employment relationships that develop between employed students and their employers may be as meaningful and important as relationships that develop between full-time employees and their organizations and that perceptions of organizational politics have similar implications for both groups.

However, we did observe cross-cultural differences between U.S. and Israeli samples, in that perceptions of organizational politics had stronger relationships with morale for U.S. employees. This pattern is consistent with Vigoda's (2001) proposition that, because of their experiences with geopolitical conflict, Israeli employees are better conditioned for coping with the interpersonal conflict associated with organizational politics. Similarly, Romm and Drory (1988) suggested that Israelis have greater familiarity with political processes inside work and outside of work, which may be associated with (1) greater tolerance for political activities as a means of getting ahead and (2) a belief that organizational politics are normative and morally legitimate. These ideas are consistent with the notion that national culture influences the mental programs that guide employees' interpretations and reactions to different aspects of their jobs (Hofstede, 1980). As such, these cross-cultural differences may contribute to understanding of the generalizability of theories linking perceptions of organizational politics to employee outcomes. For example, our findings imply that U.S. and Israeli employees may have different expectations that guide the evaluations of their organizational exchange relationships. Thus, to the extent that low levels of politics are central to employees' work expectations, perceptions of organizational politics will be salient and represent a more serious violation of their social exchange relationships. However, additional research is necessary to determine whether differences in exchange expectations account for cross-cultural disparities in relationships between perceptions of organizational politics and morale.

Another contribution of this study is that it substantiated our arguments that multiple pathways link perceptions of organizational politics to employee outcomes. Model-testing results demonstrate that mediators proposed by work stress (i.e., job anxiety) and social exchange (i.e., morale) theories explain relationships between politics and both performance and withdrawal intentions. These findings were supportive of theory and provided evidence that both perspectives contribute to understanding of *how* social context affects attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, our results highlight the importance of considering alternative

ways of arranging the outcomes of perceptions of organizational politics that go beyond treating them all as direct outcomes, as has been implied by previous research (e.g., Ferris et al., 2002; Miller et al., 2008). Interestingly, the effects of perceptions of organizational politics on turnover intentions and performance worked through slightly different pathways. In particular, the psychological strain elicited by perceptions of organizational politics was associated with decreased morale, which was related to higher turnover intent. This pattern implies that the effects of perceptions of organizational politics on turnover intentions may take longer to unfold and may involve a more rational process. Turnover researchers have conceptualized the typical voluntary turnover process as initiated by low morale and involving multiple decision points (Griffeth, Hom, & Gartner, 2000). An alternative viewpoint, the unfolding model of turnover (Lee & Mitchell, 1994), suggests that a new situation or event, in addition to morale, triggers employee turnover. However, according to this model, employees may still follow extensive decision-making paths leading to turnover, and three out of the four proposed paths involve job satisfaction. Thus, our results are consistent with previous work concerning the formulation of turnover intentions. They are also consistent with other studies (e.g., Podsakoff et al., 2007) in demonstrating that the effects of hindrance stressors on turnover intentions work first through strain and then through morale.

On the other hand, the effect of perceptions of organizational politics on performance worked through both strain and morale simultaneously. The pathway through strain coincides with theories suggesting that strain and other negative affective experiences have an impact on motivation and performance (Lord & Kanfer, 2002). For example, the resource allocation perspective (Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989) implies that strain drains mental resources that could otherwise be devoted to self-regulatory activities associated with job performance. According to Kanfer and Ackerman, self-regulatory activities, such as goal striving and feedback monitoring, require effortful processing and mental resources. As employees experience strain associated with perceptions of organizational politics, they may devote energy to coping with their negative affect, thereby reducing the resources they can spare for regulating performance. In addition, perceptions of organizational politics were associated with lower morale, which led to reduced job performance. Our results imply that, as a result of perceiving politics, employees may begin to view their organizations as risky investments and

may demonstrate lower levels of morale, and also decrease their contributions to their jobs.

Finally, the results of exploratory analyses showed that perceptions of organizational politics are distinct from both role ambiguity and role conflict. In addition to the stronger bivariate correlations with outcomes demonstrated by political perceptions, the mechanisms underlying the effects of perceptions of organizational politics on turnover intentions and performance were dissimilar to those underlying the effects of role stressors. These findings point to the possibility that perceptions of organizational politics may be *qualitatively* different from role-based hindrance stressors. In particular, perceptions of organizational politics represent evaluations of social aspects of organizational settings (i.e., witnessing members politicking and receiving rewards), rather than the assessments of personal situations (i.e., comparing individuals' job demands to their coping resources) that characterize role stressors (Boswell et al., 2004). In addition, employees experience role ambiguity and conflict because they are concerned with fulfilling their roles as stipulated by their organization, whereas perceptions of organizational politics are associated with observing behaviors that are self-serving and threatening to the well-being of other employees (Kacmar & Baron, 1999). Thus, although perceived politics had seemingly similar effects on outcomes as the broadly defined hindrance stressor construct examined in previous studies (e.g., LePine et al., 2005; Podsakoff et al., 2007), the similar effects may be attributable to perceptions of organizational politics serving as the dominant indicator of the unified hindrance stressor construct, thereby driving the effects of the construct. Thus, future studies should explore whether (and when) it is appropriate to consider perceptions of organizational politics separately from other hindrance stressors. For example, if the goal of research is to predict general work attitudes and behaviors, then it may be prudent to conceptualize perceptions of organizational politics and role stressors as part of the unified, general hindrance stressor construct. This approach is akin to considering different forms of justice (viz., distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational) as indicators of an overall justice evaluation (see Ambrose & Schminke, 2006). However, if the goal of a study is to understand more specifically how the interplay between these stressors (e.g., the effects of perceptions of organizational politics may work through role ambiguity, or role ambiguity may exacerbate effects of such perceptions) relates to employee outcomes, then researchers may want to consider these hindrance stressors separately to capture

their unique effects. Moreover, unlike the effects of perceptions of politics, the effects of role stressors on turnover intentions and performance were not completely accounted for by the stress- and social exchange-based paths, which suggests that additional mediating mechanisms explain the effects of role stressors, but not those of perceptions of organizational politics.

### Managerial Implications

Our results have several practical implications. First, leaders should recognize that, though some political activities may be essential to the functioning of work groups (Fedor et al., 2008), their own political activities may have unanticipated consequences at the individual level. For instance, leaders often make "idiosyncratic deals" with employees as a means of optimizing individual performance and reducing turnover (Rousseau, Ho, & Greenberg, 2006). The current research demonstrates that if these activities are perceived as political (i.e., based on favoritism and self-interest), then they may have extensive negative effects on organization members. Therefore, it is important for top management to make decisions that balance the costs and benefits of engaging in behaviors that may be perceived as political.

Next, we demonstrated that employees respond negatively to work conditions that indicate politics. Thus, it behooves managers to focus on social context when attempting to understand employee attitudes and motivation. For example, managers may reduce perceptions of organizational politics and subsequent deficits in morale and motivation by providing clear feedback regarding which behaviors their organization desires (Rosen et al., 2006), by reducing incentives for employees to engage in political activities, or by aligning individual and organizational goals (see Witt, 1998). In extreme situations, it may benefit an organization to target key political players whose activities are especially salient and damaging. If these individuals are not willing to reduce their political activities, then they should be removed from the organization. Although extreme, such tactics may benefit employee health and performance in the long run.

Asking managers to monitor and reduce their own political activities may not always be a realistic solution, and firing employees for being too political may carry some risk in today's litigious society. Therefore, we recommend that human resource departments actively create competency models (see Shippmann et al., 2000) that incorporate the goals of discouraging political activities

and providing incentives to managers for creating work environments that are not political. To be effective, such programs must (1) show a relationship between organizational politics and individual and organizational effectiveness, (2) identify competencies linked to organizational politics (e.g., teamwork, decision making, conflict management), (3) define behavioral anchors of these competencies that are focused on reducing politics in the work environment (an example of such an anchor for teamwork: "Is inclusive of all group members when doing team projects"; for decision-making: "Follows corporate policies when making employment decisions"), and (4) make employees accountable for these activities. Incorporating politics-based competencies into performance management programs will provide a mechanism for documenting behaviors, providing feedback, setting developmental goals, and substantiating employment decisions. As such, a competency-based approach to managing organizational politics benefits an organization by creating a positive social climate that minimizes incentives for politicking and providing a mechanism for documenting employment decisions, which will protect the organization if it must take action against overly political employees.

Finally, our results suggest that leaders may be able to counter the effects of politics and role stressors by targeting intervening processes. For example, organizations may benefit from stress management interventions, such as training employees in effective conflict resolution and time management skills and adopting flexible work arrangements to alleviate psychological strain. Doing so will free up coping resources, improving the ability of employees to deal with demands placed on them by political aspects of their jobs or allowing them to clarify their role requirements. Alternatively, by communicating that employees are valued, supervisors may be able to improve employee exchange perceptions and subsequent attitudes. This strategy may be helpful in battling against the effects of perceptions of organizational politics, yet it may be less effective in dealing with role stressors, which have weaker associations with exchange-related attitudes. Instead, organizations may benefit from providing employees with regular, high-quality feedback to facilitate role definition processes (Schaubroeck, Ganster, Sime, & Ditman, 1993), thereby reducing the effects of role stressors. Thus, depending on the stressor that is most prevalent, leaders should adopt different strategies for minimizing the effects of perceptions of organizational politics and role stressors.

## Limitations and Future Research

Some researchers have questioned the appropriateness of using correlation matrixes derived from meta-analysis for SEM. For instance, it has been argued that these analyses bias model fit indexes and path estimates (Cheung & Chan, 2005). In addition, the quality of the primary studies, as well as the procedures and corrections adopted in different meta-analyses, may influence model fit and path estimates (e.g., Arthur et al., 2001). However, model testing in the current study was grounded in theory and represented an initial effort to examine a complex, integrated model of psychological processes that relate perceptions of organizational politics to outcomes. Nonetheless, we recommend that others view our findings as a first step toward building a model that explains how perceptions of organizational politics are related to employee outcomes.

One possible way to extend the current findings is to examine explanations of the effects of perceptions of organizational politics based on stress and social exchange using more diverse and, when appropriate, more direct measures of these constructs. For example, other strain responses (e.g., physical symptoms) could be used to evaluate the strain-based pathway through which organizational politics perceptions relate to employee outcomes. Also, the current study used morale as a proxy measure of employee perceptions of the exchange relationship. Measures of psychological contract breach represent more direct assessment of exchange quality. Thus, future studies should employ these alternative measures to replicate and extend the model tested in the current study.

In addition, future research should identify moderators of the effects of perceptions of organizational politics and role stressors. Some moderators may be universal and attenuate the effects of both political perceptions and role stressors. For example, situational factors such as support (Bliese & Castro, 2000) and control (Ferris et al., 1989) and individual differences such as psychological hardiness (Kobasa, 1979) may help alleviate the negative impact of perceptions of organizational politics and role stressors on strain. Other variables may show more selective moderation effects. For example, self-monitoring (Rosen, Chang, & Levy, 2006) may buffer the effects of perceptions of organizational politics, although the moderating influences of role salience (Noor, 2004) may be more specific to role stressor–outcome relationships. Identifying and testing these specific moderators will help further distinguish between perceptions of organizational politics and role stressors.

Finally, a potential threat to the validity of our findings is common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In the current study, relationships between predictors, mediators, and one of the outcome variables (turnover intentions) were based on measures collected from the same source. Thus, we were unable to provide a definitive answer regarding the causal ordering of these variables. Thus, additional empirical studies are needed to examine the pathways through which perceptions of organizational politics influence employee outcomes, and researchers should measure the political perceptions construct and its outcomes at different time points to establish temporal separateness. Alternatively, other types of measures (e.g., physiological strain reactions and actual turnover) could be used to establish the separateness of these constructs.

In conclusion, this study extends knowledge of linkages between perceptions of organizational politics and employee attitudes and behaviors by affirming the bivariate relationships between politics and outcomes and supporting a theoretical framework of the outcomes of perceptions of organizational politics that is based on both stress and social exchange perspectives. Moreover, our research provides initial evidence that perceptions of organizational politics are distinct from other role stressors. Given the relevance of this specific hindrance stressor to critical individual-level outcomes, an important task for management is to design organizational structures that minimize incentives for engaging in self-serving political activities.

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<sup>a</sup> An asterisk (\*) indicates a study included in the meta-analyses.



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