J Bus Ethics (2016) 139:95–109
DOI 10.1007/s10551-015-2604-6

Team Conflict Mediates the Effects of Organizational Politics on Employee Performance: A Cross-Level Analysis in China

Yuntao Bai[1] · Guohong Helen Han[2] · P. D. Harms[3]

Received: 3 June 2014 / Accepted: 9 March 2015 / Published online: 18 March 2015

Abstract The present study expands on the growing literature concerning organizational politics (OP) by assessing the impact of team-level OP on employee performance outcomes as well as investigating the degree to which these effects are mediated by team conflict. The results, based on multilevel structural equation modeling with a sample of 349 employees from 78 firms in China, lent support for a cross-level mediating role for team conflict between political climate and employee performance. Further, moderator analyses demonstrated that political climate acted as a condition for task conflict to trigger relationship conflict. Thus, the results of this study contribute to both the political climate literature and the conflict literature by clarifying the processes by which climate can influence employee performance.

Keywords Political climate · Relationship conflict · Task conflict · Creativity · Performance

✉ Yuntao Bai
ytbai@xmu.edu.cn

Guohong Helen Han
ghan@ysu.edu

P. D. Harms
pharms2@unl.edu

[1] School of Management, Xiamen University, Room 620, Jiageng Building 1, Siming South Road # 422, Xiamen 361005, China

[2] Williamson College of Business Administration, Youngstown State University, One University Plaza, Youngstown, OH 44555, USA

[3] College of Business Administration, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, CBA 263, 1240 R Street, Lincoln, NE 68588-0405, USA

Introduction

Organizational politics (OP), which refers to "actions by individuals which are directed toward the goal of furthering their own self-interests without regard for the well-being of others or their organization" (Kacmar and Baron 1999, p. 4), is notable for both their pervasiveness and their capacity to disrupt organizational processes (Kacmar and Baron 1999) and adversely impact the performance and well-being of workers (Chang et al. 2009; Miller et al. 2008). OP has typically been studied at the individual-level, and previous research has focused on identifying the antecedents and consequences of individual perceptions of OP as well as on whether it was a negative or a positive phenomenon (e.g., Ferris et al. 1989; Kacmar et al. 1999; Mintzberg 1985). It has been recognized that OP can be both an individual-level perception and a team-level reality (Darr and Johns 2004; Dipboye and Foster 2002; Treadway et al. 2005). Teams are groups of individuals working interdependently to achieve a common goal (Ilgen et al. 1993), but when OP exists as a shared perception of the team members, the shared understanding of working toward a common team goal can be lost and team processes can suffer as a result. To date, however, the vast majority of OP research has ignored the multilevel nature and effects of OP in organizational settings (Dipboye and Foster 2002; Ferris et al. 1989; Kacmar et al. 1999; see Darr and Johns 2004 and Treadway et al. 2005 for the rare exceptions). One possible reason for this oversight is the lack of an established mechanism mediating the relationship between team-level OP and individual-level employee outcomes.

To address this gap, the current study will assess OP as a team-level phenomena (i.e., political climate) and propose that team conflict as a potential mechanism for explaining the cross-level effects of OP on employee performance.

Conflict is not only an important element of an employee's perception of politics, but also as a pivotal team process to understand how members will interact with each other in a high political climate and the impact on employee performance as a consequence (Darr and Johns 2004; Drory and Romm 1988; Jehn et al. 1999). Although it has been taken for granted that the conflict process will take place with the development of workplace politics (Welsh and Slusher 1986), conflict and politics have traditionally been treated as two separate literatures, and the link to connect both is understudied (Darr and Johns 2004).

In addition, the conflict literature often distinguishes between two types of conflict, task and relationship conflicts, and argues that the two have distinct and often opposite effects on performance (e.g., Jehn 1995, 1997; Simons and Peterson 2000). Task conflict, which refers to incompatible views, ideas, and opinions among team members, is usually associated with effective decisions and positive outcomes while relationship conflict, which refers to tension, annoyance, or even personal animosity between team members, is associated with poor performance (De Dreu and Weingart 2003; de Wit et al. 2012). The two conflict types are often highly correlated in non-temporary teams, which make it difficult to tease apart their effects. We propose that political climate (team-level OP) will not only account for the co-occurrence of the two conflict types (i.e., leads to both types of conflict), but also moderate the relationship between task and relationship conflict. Thus, another contribution of the present research is to document the complexities of team conflict that emerges as a result of political climate.

In sum, we propose and test the cross-level model that is shown in Fig. 1. In this model, task and relationship conflict act as mediators between the team-level political climate and individual performance, including in-role performance, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and creativity. Further, political climate moderates the relationship between task and relationship conflict. This study adds to the existing literature in four important ways. First, we extend politics research by exploring the multi-level effects of OP on three domains of employee performance (Dipboye and Foster 2002; Ferris et al. 2002). Second, we expand on existing research on OP by introducing a new mediator, i.e., conflict, and specifying its cross-level mediating role between team-level political climate and individual performance. Third, we introduce the potential moderating effect of political climate between task and relationship conflict as a way of explaining under what circumstances task conflict leads to relationship conflict (Simons and Peterson 2000). Finally, we test this model in a non-Western context, specifically China.

We believe that this study will not only provide a much needed check of the universality of the principles underpinning OP research, but also add to our limited understanding of the political and conflict processes in Eastern cultures (Chen and Fang 2008). These contributions represent our response to calls for additional focus on research incorporating cross-level designs (Hitt et al. 2007; Kacmar and Baron 1999; Treadway et al. 2005), potential mediators of OP (Hochwarter et al. 2003; Rosen et al. 2009), and the contextualization of organizational behavior and human resource management research in Eastern culture (Barkema et al. 2012; Chen and Miller 2010).

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

Conceptualizing Organizational Politics as Collective Construct

Driven by self-interests, many employees are likely to engage in OP, which are not supported or approved by

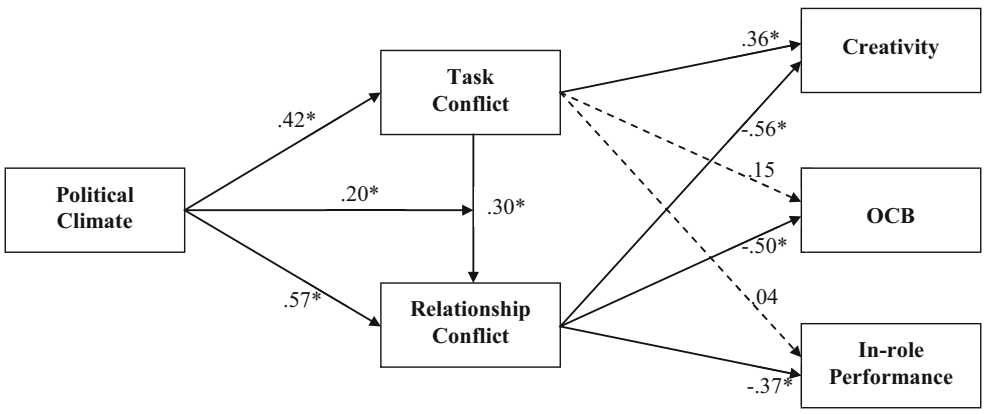

Fig. 1 A cross-level model of political climate to employee performance. $N_{level1} = 349$; $N_{level2} = 78$. Political climate, task and relationship conflict were at team level; creativity behavior, OCB and in-role performance were at individual level. The *dashed line* indicated the effect was not significant at 0.05 level. $^{*}p < 0.05$

organizations. As a result, various interests lead to conflict-ridden and disharmonious work environment (Ferris et al. 1996, p. 234). Politics researchers have argued that politics is best conceptualized as an individual's subjective perception and not reality *per se* (Ferris et al. 1996; Ferris and Kacmar 1992). The effects of OP on important organizational outcomes such as employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions have typically been studied at individual-level, instead of at cross-level or team-level (see Chang et al. 2009; Miller et al. 2008 for reviews). Recent calls for applying multilevel designs to existing models (Hitt et al. 2007; Klein and Kozlowski 2000; Kuenzi and Schminke 2009) have aroused researchers' interests in examining OP at the team level as political climate (e.g., Darr and Johns 2004; Treadway et al. 2005). Organizational climate research is concerned with "the internal social psychological environment of organizations and the relationship of that environment to individual meaning" (Denison 1996, p. 625). Rather than focusing on the differences in people's perceptions to the workplace, organizational climate is more concerned with the shared perceptions of organization members as well as its influences as a collective construct on employees' behaviors (Denison 1996).

Chan's (1998) research on composition models provides a theoretical base for the existence of OP as a collective construct. Among its five types of composition models, the direct consensus model uses within-team consensus of the lower level units to specify how the construct conceptualized and operationalized at the lower level is functionally isomorphic to another form of the construct at the higher level (Chan 1998, p. 237). Examples in climate research adopting the direct consensus model could be seen in justice perception-justice climate (e.g., Colquitt et al. 2002; Liao and Rupp 2005), safety perception-safety climate (e.g., Hofmann et al. 2003), and service perception-service climate (e.g., Schneider et al. 1998) research. Although the above perceptions have their origins at the individual level of analysis, the cumulative theoretical and empirical evidence has supported the existences of functionally isomorphic team-level climate constructs.

Given the pervasive nature of OP and the likelihood that its consequences will be witnessed or experienced by many organization members, it seems likely that employees will form a shared, collective political cognition or climate at the team level (Darr and Johns 2004; Wiltshire et al. 2014). There is growing empirical support for the notion of team-level OP as well. For example, Drory (1993) compared the between-group and within-group variances of individual OP perception and found that most of the variance was from the difference among groups (i.e., between-group-variance). Thus, he concluded that the political scale measured "an organizational rather than a personal attribute" (Drory 1993, p. 66). Treadway et al. (2005) also found evidence for shared political climate and significant differences were found among different departments. Darr and Johns (2004) examined the multi-level antecedents of political climate and found very high within-group agreement on perceptions of OP among employees in the same department. Finally, Vashdi et al. (2012) found strong evidence of shared perceptions of political climate in a sample of Israeli teachers. Taken together, these studies reflect the emergence of a growing consensus that political climate exists at the team-level.

The link between Political Climate and Conflict

Conflict has been defined as the experience between or among parties where their goals or interests are incompatible or in opposition (Jehn 1995; Korsgaard et al. 2008). Research has indicated two primary types of team conflict: relationship conflict and task conflict (Jehn 1995). According to Jehn (1995), relationship conflict refers to interpersonal disagreements manifested in tension, annoyance, and animosity among team members. Task conflict refers to incompatible views, ideas, and opinions among team members about the content of their decisions.

Early models of conflict provide two primary theoretical explanations on why conflict emerges: the structural models and the process models of conflict. Structural models of conflict emphasize the contextual factors that can cause and shape conflict (Pelled et al. 1999). These factors center on the nature of goal incompatibility among parties (Korsgaard et al. 2008) and conflict is more likely to emerge as the level of goal compatibility decreases. Process models examine the dynamic processes that link structural sources of conflict to manifestations of conflict (Korsgaard et al. 2008; Thomas 1992). Process models adopt a more dynamic view in that the structural factors can evoke unfavorable team interactions and then trigger a sense-making process attributing others' behaviors to offense. As a result, this cognitive appraisal process leads to the affective, cognitive, and behavioral manifestations of conflict (Korsgaard et al. 2008). The two models of conflict together imply a process whereby contextual factors that define heterogeneity of goals and interests shape negative social interactions among team members and eventually lead to team conflict (Korsgaard et al. 2008).

We argue that political climate is one of the key contextual factors that shape organizational conflict. The definition of OP often includes the elements of self-serving behaviors and neglecting other's interests (Kacmar and Baron 1999; Ferris and Kacmar 1992). As an isomorphic construct, political climate describes the team context in which members shared the perception that individuals in their organization have opposing interests and tend to

engage in self-serving behaviors against each other (Rosen et al. 2014). Teams of this sort usually have low goal compatibility as everyone in the team pursues different interests. According to the structural perspective, competition and conflict arises when goals are seen as negatively interdependent (Deutsch 1949; Korsgaard et al. 2008). Owing to goal incompatibility, team members are likely to disagree with each other regarding resources distribution, policies, procedures as well as the way to interpret and evaluate those information (De Dreu 2008). Consequently, higher levels of task conflict are likely to occur in a highly political climate.

Process models of conflict suggest that when team climate is highly political, team members may potentially engage in counterproductive sense-making to interpret others' behaviors. For example, members may interpret others building close relationships with the team leader as being intended to maximize their own self-interests, such as obtaining more scarce resources and gaining more support from the leader. Thus, when interpreted through a self-serving lens, the sense-making process will consider others' behaviors as a potential violation and offense to their own interests, which in turn leads to feelings and actions of relationship conflict (Thomas 1992).

Moreover, researchers have argued that in a higher political climate, individuals tend to not only perceive that there is a need to prove themselves, but also that their interests are necessarily in conflict with others because they see themselves as competing for scarce resources. Consequently, they may engage in negative behaviors ranging from blaming or even attacking others to show their perspective or agenda is superior (Tjosvold et al. 2006). Eventually, a highly political conflict may foment relationship conflict to such an extent that Mintzberg (1985) proposed the metaphor of the organization as a "political arena". Therefore, we hypothesize as follows:

H1 Political climate is positively related with team conflict, i.e., (a) with task conflict; (b) with relationship conflict.

The Link between Conflict and Employee Performance

In this paper, we choose employees' in-role performance, extra-role performance (i.e., organizational citizenship behavior, OCB), and creativity behavior as the dependent variables. In-role performance consists of activities by the employee that are specified and required by an employee's job description (Williams and Anderson 1991). OCB refers to individual behaviors that are discretionary in nature and are not explicitly recognized in the formal appraisal or reward system (Organ 1988; Williams and Anderson 1991). Both of these performance outcomes significantly contribute to the overall effectiveness and performance of the organization. They are also used extensively as outcomes in the politics and conflict literature (De Dreu and Weingart 2003; Ferris et al. 1989, 2002; Rosen et al. 2009). Creativity refers to the "production of new and useful ideas" (Amabile 1988, p. 126). The reason for us to include creativity in this study is twofold. First, this variable is significant in both practice and theory because it is essential to organizational survival and growth (Amabile et al. 2004). Second, creativity is being required in almost all employees at all levels/positions of the organizations.

Substantial literature has reached consensus that that relationship conflict is harmful to employee performance (De Dreu and Weingart 2003; de Wit et al. 2012; Korsgaard et al. 2008). Peterson and Behfar (2003) have argued that relationship conflict negatively affects team performance because it leads to diverted attention away from the shared team problem, increased stress, and conflict escalation from interpersonal hostility. In addition, two major meta-analyses from De Dreu and Weingart (2003) and de Wit et al. (2012) confirmed the negative association of relationship conflict with employee performance. Therefore, we hypothesize as follows:

H2 Relationship conflict is negatively related with employee performance, i.e., (a) with in-role performance; (b) with OCB; (c) with creativity.

Unlike the consistent negative effects found for relationship conflict, the picture for how task conflict affects one's performance remains unclear. For example, although it has been found that task conflict can lead to increased satisfaction with the team decision, innovativeness, and team effectiveness (Korsgaard et al. 2008), other evidence suggests that both task conflict and relationship conflict have a negative impact on performance (De Dreu and Weingart 2003). Self-verification theory (Swann et al. 2004) provides a potential reason for why task conflict could possibly lead to negative consequences. This theory suggests that when an employee feels that his/her viewpoints were challenged by his/her team members, he/she may assume that his/her abilities were being negatively assessed, which ultimately leads to his/her discontent, experiencing stress, and relationship conflict (cf. Dijkstra et al. 2005; Simons and Peterson 2000). Empirical evidence further suggests that the two types of conflict are dynamic and interactive in the sense that one type can be transferred to the other and vice versa (Jehn and Mannix 2001; Simons and Peterson 2000). Indeed, as noted above, there is evidence that both task conflict and relationship conflict have been found to have negative impact on performance (De Dreu and Weingart 2003). Hence, we hypothesized as follows:

H3 Task conflict is negatively related with employee performance, i.e., (a) with in-role performance; (b) with OCB; and (c) with creativity.

The Mediating Role of Conflict between Political Climate and Performance

Within the OP literature, there has recently been a surge of interest in uncovering potential mediators and moderators of the relationship between OP and organizational outcomes (e.g., Chang et al. 2009; Gotsis and Kortezi 2009; Kacmar et al. 2013; Karatepe 2013; Rosen and Levy 2013). As noted above, we were interested in assessing the impact of OP on three primary domains of performance outcomes: task, contextual, and creative performance. The relationship between OP and task or in-role performance has been well established in prior literature (e.g., Chang et al. 2009), but relationship between OP and creative performance remains almost completely unexplored (for an exception see Sasser and Koslow 2012). This is a major oversight for two reasons. First, fostering creativity has been identified in recent survey of CEOs as a critical component in gaining a competitive strategic advantage at the organizational level (IBM Report 2010). Second, it is well established that interpersonal processes and organizational climate play a key role as a determinant of creative performance (see Anderson et al. 2014; Jehn et al. 2010; Hülsheger et al. 2009; Zhou and Shalley 2011). For example, Mumford et al. (2002) suggested that the support of leaders and coworkers was essential for fostering a creative climate. In order for workers to engage in risk-taking activities, they must first be assured that their behaviors will not simply be tolerated, but encouraged. Individuals in an organization with a highly political climate could not be assured of this. Moreover, in such an organization, it would be unlikely that others would sacrifice resources and time in order to foster the success of others. Consequently, it is expected that highly political climates will tend to suppress creative activity (Sasser and Koslow 2012).

This prior work has been suggestive of potential mediators by which political climate may impact performance, but to date no research has investigated the role of team conflict as a potential mechanism by which political climate influences performance. This is surprising considering that conflict is almost a feature of political climate by definition. Consequently, we propose that it may serve as an important mediator between team-level political climate and individual-level employee outcomes.

It has been argued that conflict is a pivotal variable for interpreting how members interact with each other in team social process (Jehn et al. 1999; Pelled et al. 1999). More specifically, these conflict processes can be explained by both the similarity-attraction paradigm and the information processing theory. Each of these two theories offers various insights in how conflict affects one's performance.

First of all, the similarity-attraction perspective concerns the relational and affective aspects of conflict as mediating variables in explaining team interaction (Tsui and O'Reilly 1989). It suggests that individuals are likely to gravitate to those who are similar to themselves in attitudes, beliefs, or personality (Jehn et al. 1999; Tsui and O'Reilly 1989), and these similarities can result in frequent communication, high social integration, and a desire to maintain team affiliation, and that this, in turn, may lead to higher levels of job performance (Jehn et al. 1999; Pelled et al. 1999). With regards to political climate, we have argued that in an organizational climate characterized by high level of OP goal compatibility is likely to be very low due to the discrepancy of interests among team members. Thus, it can be expected that team members will tend to have less positive attitudes and even hostility toward those holding opposite sides (Zanzi and O'Neill 2001). As a result, we would expect high political climate organizations to be associated with higher levels of relationship conflict and with the resulting lower levels of performance. Together with H1 and H2, we hypothesize as follows:

H4 Relationship conflict mediates the relationship between political climate and employee performance, i.e., (a) in-role performance; (b) OCB; and (c) creativity.

Information processing theory applies a cognitive and task-related perspective to associate team processes with task conflict as an intervening variable (Harrison and Klein 2007). It argues that individuals with diverse backgrounds will provide a great deal of various views to the team decision making, in which task conflict is likely to occur. This task conflict process may produce unfavorable consequences.

De Wit et al. (2012) argued that task conflict was a distraction and required resources that could not be directly invested into individual performance. Carnevale and Probst (1998) argued that as task conflict increased cognitive load, it also interfered with effective cognitive processes and may promote narrow, black-and-white thinking. This, in turn, could obstruct positive employee outcomes such as creativity and performance. In addition, De Dreu (2008) highlighted three costs of task conflict: that it may be unnecessarily time consuming, that it can lead to parasitic integration (reaching consensus at the expense of others involved), and that it can be detrimental to health and well-being (psychosomatic complaints and feelings of burnout). Based on the information process perspective, in a high political climate, we might expect that incompatible goals will act as a filter of the information that individuals provide to the discussion (Kilduff et al. 2000; Zanzi and O'Neill 2001). For example, Zanzi and O'Neill (2001) argued that people make selective use of rational

argumentation (i.e., persuasion) or provide particular skills, unique knowledge, or solutions (i.e., use of expertise) to win over another party or enhance their own positions. These are two common political tactics people apply in political climate. Therefore, given the theoretical links between political climate and task conflict and between task conflict and performance outcomes, we hypothesize as follows:

H5 Task conflict mediates the relationship between political climate and employee performance, i.e., (a) in-role performance; (b) OCB; and (c) creativity.

The Moderating Role of Political Climate Between Two Conflict Types

Thus far we have hypothesized that political climate could lead to both types of conflict. As mentioned above, self-verification theory (Swann et al. 2004) holds that individuals misattribute different opinions from others as being indicative that others may have low regard for their competencies; thus, task conflict triggers or transforms into relationship conflict. Little research has directly examined factors that may account for the high correlation between the two kinds of conflict. One exception is the work by Simons and Peterson (2000) which considered the role of trust as an interpersonal factor moderating the link. They theorized that individuals with high levels of trust would be less likely to make negative attributions concerning the intent of other members engaging in task conflict. Tidd et al. (2004) provided another moderator, role ambiguity, on the transformation of task conflict into relationship conflict. They argued that under high role ambiguity, individuals were more likely to attribute an external motive (the needs of the work itself) rather than an internal intent (fight for self-interest) to those engaging in task conflict.

With regards to political climate, members in a high political climate team share the perception that the purposes of members' behaviors are to protect or promote their own self-interests at the expense of others (Ferris and Kacmar 1992). When encountering different views and opinions in team discussion, team members will tend to interpret the conflict behaviors as sinister in intent and fight to protect their own interests (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois 1988; Simons and Peterson 2000; Tidd et al. 2004). As a result, a higher level of relationship conflict emerges. Therefore, we hypothesize as follows:

H6 Political climate moderates the relationship between task and relationship conflict such that the relationship will become stronger when political climate is high versus low.

Method

Research Design and Data Collection

Survey methods have been widely used in quantitative social science research to measure individual's feelings, attitudes and perceptions on organizational climate, team process, and performance (Fowler 2013). In this study, we collected data via surveys to measure political climate, team conflict, and employee performance. Following a common sampling practices in similar studies (e.g., Chen and Fang 2008; Wang et al. 2005; Wang et al. 2011), we collected data from 196 part-time EMBA students enrolled in a business school in China as well as their six direct subordinates randomly selected by each EMBA. Participation was voluntary. Two separate sets of Chinese questionnaires were prepared for the two data sources (i.e., the EMBA students and their subordinates) after a translation-and-back-translation procedure. The two sets of questionnaires were distributed to the EMBA students and their subordinates at the beginning of an EMBA course. The supervisor questionnaire asked the EMBA students to evaluate the in-role performance, OCBs, and creativity behaviors of their subordinates. The subordinate questionnaire asked them to report the OP and conflict they encountered in their teams. All respondents were assured of confidentiality. The two data-source design was to avoid the common method problem (Podsakoff et al. 2003). After deleting the incomplete and unpaired questionnaires, we ended up with a usable sample of 349 subordinates and 78 supervisors paired data. Thus, the usable sample reflected a response rate of 39.8 %. The average number of direct reports for each manager was 4.47. The average age of the subordinates was 33.42 (SD = 7.03); the average tenure was 8.81 (SD = 6.73); about 65 % were males. For the supervisors, the average age was 40.15 (SD = 5.49); the average tenure was 12.74 (SD = 7.63), and 84.6 % were males.

The current sample represented a variety of industries including 18 from manufacturing (23.1 %), 16 from high-tech (20.5 %), 7 from the service sector (23.0 %), 10 from real estate (12.8 %), 11 from transportation (14.1 %), and 16 from others types of industries (20.5 %). The majority of these companies were entirely or partially state-owned (53.8 %) while the rest were privately held firms (46.2 %). Consequently, the diversity of the modern Chinese economy is well-reflected in the current sample and the results of the current study should be broadly representative of expected effects across a variety of industries.

Measurement

Political Climate

Kacmar and Carlson's (1997) 15-item Perceptions of Organizational Politics Scale was used to measure the extent to which employees viewed their work environment as political. Individual political perceptions were then averaged to get at the political climate of each team. It is common to use the averaged value as the team-level climate measure. For example, Colquitt et al. (2002) and Liao and Rupp (2005) used similar methods to operationalize their procedural justice climate construct. Answers were given on seven-point scales ranging from "strongly disagree" (as 1) to "strongly agree" (as 7), and the Cronbach's alpha was 0.91.

Team Conflict

Task and relationship conflict were assessed with the eight-item scale developed by Jehn (1995) (four items each). A sample item for task conflict is: "To what extent are there differences of opinions regarding the task in your work team". A sample item for relationship conflict is: "How much friction is present in your work team". Similar to the operationalization of political climate, the individual ratings of conflict were averaged across team to form team-level conflict constructs. Answers were given on seven-point scales ranging from "not at all" (as 1) to "a lot" (as 7). The Cronbach's alphas were 0.88 and 0.95, respectively.

Employee Outcomes

For employee outcomes, we used a four-item in-role performance scale from Jansson and Yperen (2004). A sample item was "This employee always completes the duties specified in his/her job description". The Cronbach's alpha was 0.93. The Chinese version of a 23-item OCB scale was adopted from Wang et al. (2005). A sample item was "This employee makes constructive suggestions that can improve the operation of the company". The Cronbach's alpha was 0.94. A four-item scale was adopted from Farmer et al. (2003) to measure individual creativity. A sample item was "This employee tries new ideas or methods first". The Cronbach's alpha was 0.97. Answers were given on seven-point scales ranging from "strongly disagree" (as 1) to "strongly agree" (as 7).

Data Analytic Strategy

The cross-level model of political climate was hierarchical by nature, with the dependent variables (in-role performance, OCB, and creativity) as individual-level constructs and the predictor (political climate) and mediators (task conflict and relationship conflict) as team-level constructs. The data structure was also hierarchical in nature with employees nested within teams. In addition, all of the variables contained multiple items. Thus, we conducted multilevel structural equation modeling with EQS 6.1 (Bentler and Wu 2005) which explicitly takes into account this cross-level data structure as well as the information richness of the multiple-item constructs (Preacher et al. 2011; Preacher et al. 2010). To reduce the model complexity, for political climate and OCB, we treated their dimensions as indicators (Wang et al. 2005). The interaction product of political climate and task conflict was created using the mean-centered unconstrained approach suggested by Marsh et al. (2004, 2007). We tested mediation by inspecting the statistical significance of structural coefficients making up a meditational pathway (Kenny et al. 1998; MacKinnon et al. 2002). It differs from Baron and Kenny (1986)'s approach in that it does not require the overall relation between the predictor and the outcome to be significant.

Results

Analyses of Measurement Model

Table 1 presents the results of the multilevel CFA with all variables. The fit statistics indicated that the baseline model with the six factors (political climate, task conflict and relationship conflict at team level and in-role performance, OCB and creativity at individual level) had a good model fit ($x^2 = 516.88$, $df = 299$; RMSEA = 0.046; CFI = 0.99; IFI = 0.99). In addition, all of the items loaded significantly on their respective factors. Furthermore, several competing CFA models were tested for discriminant validity. As shown in Table 1, all alternative rival models had worse fits than our baseline model, indicating that the six factors were distinct constructs. We also computed the average variance explained of the six factors, and the estimates for political climate, task conflict, relationship conflict, in-role performance, OCB, and creativity behavior were 0.51, 0.64, 0.83, 0.78, 0.65, and 0.88, respectively. All of these were greater than the benchmark of 0.50 and larger than the squares of the correlations among them, providing further evidence of discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). A summary of the descriptive statistics and correlations among all the level-1 and level-2 variables is presented in Table 2. The correlations between political climate, task conflict, and relationship conflict were in the expected directions.

Table 1 Results of the multilevel confirmatory factor analyses

Model	Factors	x^2	*df*	Δx^2	RMSEA	CFI	IFI
Baseline model (6-factor model)	Political climate, task and relationship conflict at team level	516.88	299		.046	.99	.99
	In-role performance, OCB, and creativity at individual level						
RM1	Combine political climate and task conflict	629.20	304	112.32(5)*	.055	.97	.97
RM2	Combine political climate and relationship conflict	560.97	304	44.09(5)*	.049	.98	.98
RM3	Combine task and relationship conflict	662.16	304	145.28(5)*	.058	.96	.96
RM4	Combine in-role performance, OCB and creativity	1251.68	311	734.80(12)*	.093	.87	.87
RM5	Combine political climate, task and relationship conflict	1410.32	316	893.44(17)*	.100	.84	.84
	Combine in-role performance, OCB, and Creativity						

$N_{level1} = 349$, $N_{level2} = 78$

* $p < 0.05$

Table 2 Means, standard deviations and correlations of the variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Individual level								
1. Employee age	33.42	7.03						
2. Employee gender	0.35	0.48	–0.24*					
3. Employee tenure	8.81	6.73	0.68*	–0.13*				
4. In-role performance	5.66	1.13	0.00	0.06	0.03	(0.93)		
5. OCB	5.47	0.94	−0.06	0.04	–0.02	0.68*	(0.94)	
6. Creativity	4.99	1.37	−0.07	−0.06	–0.03	0.51*	0.69*	(0.97)
Team level								
1. Supervisor age	40.15	5.49						
2. Supervisor gender	0.15	0.36	–0.25*					
3. Supervisor tenure	12.74	7.63	0.48*	−0.09				
4. Political climate	2.61	0.74	−0.17	0.03	0.03	(0.91)		
5. Task conflict	2.89	0.79	−0.01	−0.02	0.06	0.26*	(0.88)	
6. Relationship conflict	2.09	0.82	−0.15	−0.02	0.06	0.62*	0.56*	(0.95)

$N_{level1} = 349$, $N_{level2} = 78$. Numbers in parentheses on the diagonal are Crobach's alphas of the scales

* $p < 0.05$

Aggregation of Team-Level Variables

The next step was to check the viability of the team-level variables, including political climate, task conflict and relationship conflict. We computed r_{wg} values using uniform null distribution for these variables and obtained median values of 0.82 for political climate, 0.89 for task conflict, and 0.90 for relationship conflict. These r_{wg} values were above the conventionally acceptable r_{wg} value of 0.70 (James et al. 1993). Additional evidence was collected following the suggestions of Bliese (2000). We first conducted one-way analysis of variance and found between-groups variance for all three variables significant at 0.001 level. We then obtained the following values of the inter-rater reliability index (ICC1) and the reliability of group mean index (ICC2): for political climate, ICC1 = 0.50 and ICC2 = 0.76; for task conflict, ICC1 = 0.41 and ICC2 = 0.76; for relationship conflict, ICC1 = 0.49 and ICC2 = 0.81. All of these values were comparable to the median or recommended ICC values of team-level constructs reported in the literature (Schneider et al. 1998). On the basis of these results, we concluded that aggregation was justified and shared perceptions of political climate and conflict existed at the team level.

Hypotheses Testing

Before examining parameter estimates to test hypotheses, we sought the best-fitting structural model among our hypothesized model (as baseline model in Table 3) and a set of rival structural models. The three outcome variables were allowed to be correlated with each other for the

Table 3 Comparison of structural models

Models	x^2	*df*	$\Delta x^2(df)$	RMSEA	CFI	IFI
Baseline model (hypothesized model in Fig. 1)	693.75	399		.046	.99	.99
RM1: baseline model without correlated residuals among outcomes	1173.91	405	480.16*(6)	.074	.91	.91
RM2: baseline model with political climate→outcomes	687.08	396	−6.67 (3)	.046	.99	.99
RM3: baseline model with relationship conflict→task conflict	694.63	398	0.88 (1)	.046	.99	.99
RM4: task and relationship conflict→political climate→outcomes	717.73	403	23.98*(4)	.047	.98	.98
RM5: outcomes → political climate → task and relationship conflict	734.30	403	40.55* (4)	.049	.98	.98

$N_{level1} = 349$, $N_{level2} = 78$

* $p < 0.05$

possible neglected effects of variables beyond political climate and conflict (Mayer and Gavin 2005). The baseline model in Table 3 yielded a good model fit ($x^2 = 693.75$, $df = 399$; RMSEA = 0.046; CFI = 0.99; IFI = 0.99). Rival model 1 eliminated the correlations between the residuals of the three outcome variables from the baseline model and demonstrated a worse fit (RM1: Δx^2 (6) = 480.16, $p < 0.05$). The results strongly suggested the retentions of these correlations.

Rival model 2 included the direct link from political climate to the three outcomes. The model fit of RM2 didn't have a significant reduction on the Chi square (RM2: Δx^2 (3) = −6.67, *ns*) but increased model complexity. Under the principle of model parsimony, we also rejected RM2. Rival models 3, 4, and 5 added the effect of relationship conflict to task conflict or changed the effect orders of the variables. None of these rival models had a better model fit than our baseline model. Thus, we chose our baseline model as the final model to test our hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 argued that political climate was positively related to team conflict. As the results show in Fig. 1, the effects of political climate on task conflict and relationship conflict were 0.42 and 0.57, respectively ($p_s < 0.05$), supporting Hypothesis 1. Hypotheses 2 and 3 predicted that relationship conflict and task conflict were negatively related to employee performance. Figure 1 shows that relationship conflict was negatively associated with in-role performance ($\beta = -0.37$, $p < 0.05$), OCB ($\beta = -0.50$, $p < 0.05$), and creativity behavior ($\beta = -0.56$, $p < 0.05$), fully supporting Hypothesis 2. However, the effects of task conflict on employee performance were against our Hypothesis 3 in that task conflict had significant and positive relationship with creativity behavior ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.05$) and insignificant relationships with in-role performance and OCB ($\beta_s = 0.04$ and 0.15, respectively, *ns*).

The mediation hypotheses included both relationship and task conflict (H4 and H5). MacKinnon et al. 2002 suggested that if both the effect of independent variable on mediator and the effect of mediator on dependent variable were significant, a joint significance would indicate the existence of a mediating effect. For the path of relationship conflict, political climate was significantly related to relationship conflict, and relationship conflict was negatively related to three outcomes. Thus, relationship conflict mediated the influence of political climate on performance according to the joint significance test method (MacKinnon et al. 2002). In addition, since additional direct links from political climate to outcomes were not supported by rejecting the Rival model 2, relationship conflict acted as a full mediator of this path, supporting Hypothesis 4. For task conflict, although political climate was positively related to task conflict, task conflict was only positively related to creativity, not to in-role performance and OCB. Thus, task conflict could act as a two-path mediator between political climate and creativity (political climate→task conflict→creativity; MacKinnon et al. 2002). Additionally, task conflict could also have a three-path mediating effect (political climate→task conflict→relationship conflict→outcomes; Hayes et al. 2011; Taylor et al. 2008).

As shown in Fig. 1, all of the three path coefficients were significant; thus, task conflict could also act as full mediator of the three-path from political climate to outcomes (MacKinnon et al. 2002; Taylor et al. 2008), supporting Hypothesis 5. To further assess the significance of mediation, Sobel tests (1982) were conducted to measure the indirect effects of relationship conflict and task conflict. Results showed that the intervening effect of relationship conflict between political climate and three outcomes were significant ($Z_s = -2.57$, −3.64, and −3.26 for in-role performance, OCB, and creativity, respectively, $p_s < 0.05$), confirming the mediating role of relationship conflict. For the indirect effects of task conflict, it includes a two-path mediation from political climate→task conflict→outcomes as well as a three-path mediation between political climate→task conflict→relationship conflict→outcomes. Z

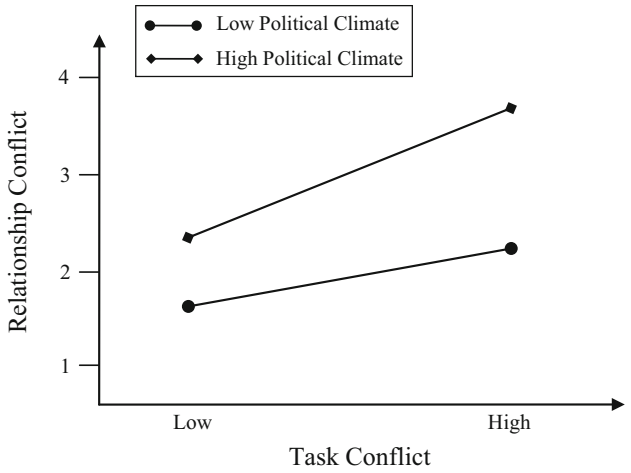

Fig. 2 Task conflict and relationship conflict: moderating effects of political climate

values were computed for the combined indirect effects[1] on outcomes ($Z_s = -2.05$ and -2.25 for in-role performance and OCB, $p_s < 0.05$; $Z = 1.09$ for creativity, *ns;* Cohen et al. 2003). Thus, the total indirect effects of task conflict between political climate and in-role performance and OCB were significant, but not significant between political climate and creativity.

For the moderating hypothesis, the interaction product was positively associated with relationship conflict ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < 0.05$), which indicated that the moderating effect of political climate on the relationship between task conflict and relationship conflict was significant, supporting Hypothesis 6. To clarify the interaction, we plotted political climate and task conflict at values one standard deviation above and below their means (Aiken et al. 1991). The plot of the interaction is shown in Fig. 2.

Discussion

This study explored how OP as team-level climate might influence employee performance through team conflict process. One notable result of this effort was to establish that team-level political climate is associated with both task and relationship conflict. Although there has been widespread consensus that conflict is an important element of OP (Rosen et al. 2014), the relationship between political climate and conflict, especially the order of influence (from politics to conflict or from conflict to politics), has been understudied. For example, although Darr and Johns' (2004) study proposed a model linking conflict to OP, the assumed causal order ran from conflict to politics. Their findings of positive associations of politics with two conflict types were similar to ours. Evidence supporting our hypothesized sequence was obtained from Drory and Romm (1988) and Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988). Drory and Romm conducted a critical incident survey with full-time employees to find the organizational circumstances evoking their politics perception, and they found that conflict did not have an impact on the perception of a given behavior as being political. Thus, they concluded that "in real life, conflict is perceived as a situational characteristic which can be handled either politically or non-politically" (Drory and Romm 1988, p.177). In addition, Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988) applied case study methodology to reveal the strategic decision-making process of top executives. They found that in almost half of their studied cases conflict did not necessarily lead to politics. Thus, they concluded that conflict was not a sufficient condition for the emergence of politics. Although these studies did not divide conflict into task and relationship conflict, they both suggested that politics drove perceptions of conflict and not vice versa. This is not entirely unexpected. That deeply held perceptions or schemas of others have important interpersonal consequences is well established (Wood et al. 2010). Once a team political climate has formed, members are likely to attribute ambiguous behaviors of others as potentially threatening and react accordingly. This begins a vicious, self-reinforcing circle where individuals are unable to engage one another in an open and trusting manner. Consequently, they evoke hostility and suspicion from others and the resulting conflict justifies their beliefs about their work context. Thus, although it could be argued that both political climate and conflict reinforce one another to some degree, the origins of process are rooted firmly in the organizational climate. As further evidence of this, the results of rival model 4 in Table 3 which tested the path from conflict to political climate to outcomes yielded a worse model fit than our baseline model.

The second notable finding relates to the mediating role of conflict. The relationship conflict was found to be a full mediator between political climate and employee performance. For task conflict, based on the Sobel test, the indirect effect from political climate to creativity was not significant. Since creativity is seldom included in the politics research (see Abbas and Raja 2014; Aryee et al. 2009; Rosen et al. 2014 for exceptions), more studies should be conducted to further investigate this relationship. Consistent with our hypotheses, the indirect effects from political climate to in-role performance and OCB were both significantly negative, supporting the argument that task

[1] The combined indirect effect was a sum of indirect effect calculated by $\text{Coefficient}_{\text{political climate}\rightarrow\text{task conflict}} \times \text{Coefficient}_{\text{task conflict}\rightarrow\text{outcome}} + \text{Coefficient}_{\text{political climate}\rightarrow\text{task conflict}} \times \text{Coefficient}_{\text{task conflict}\rightarrow\text{relationship conflict}} \times \text{Coefficient}_{\text{relationship conflict}\rightarrow\text{outcome}}$.

conflict usually triggers relationship conflict (Simons and Peterson 2000; de Wit et al. 2012).

The notable third finding was that political climate not only leads to both task and relationship conflict, it can also positively moderate the relationship between task conflict and relationship conflict. This finding provides important insights not only into the complex relationship between the two types of conflict, but their joint effects on employee and organizational outcomes as well. Clearly, additional research exploring other potential moderators is warranted.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations. First, this study has a cross-sectional design, which is unable to precisely address the dynamic processes between politics and team conflict or the interaction between the two types of conflict. Future research should adopt a multi-wave longitudinal design or even experimental approaches to resolve this issue. Second, as we didn't collect information about the non-respondent of our sample, we are unable to conduct analyses concerning the nonrespondents. Third, this study is conducted in a single country, which does not allow us to make strong conclusions as to the generalizability of the present findings in terms of whether similar processes hold true in other countries. Zhou and Su (2010) argued that the culture played an important role as a moderator of the relationship between organizational factors and creativity. Specifically, they raised concerns that prior research had applied a decontextualized approach to understanding creativity and ignored the interpersonal and contextual factors that contribute to the creative process. Consequently, they suggested that future research should focus on the relational aspects of organizational and national culture in order to better understand organizational creativity. Zhou and Su (2010) specifically pointed to the Chinese context as one that was ripe for this type of research. Because China is characterized by collectivistic cultural norms where team harmony is highly valued, relational elements of organizational climate should be particularly salient and impactful. Consequently, although we expect that the results of the present study will generalize to other settings, the results of the present study may have been enhanced because of their cultural setting. Future research using multi-country samples would provide greater support for the model being proposed and new research models.

Finally, it should be noted that this study utilized a unidimensional measure of creativity which had been used in prior creativity research in East Asia (Farmer et al. 2003). Although this measure may reflect lay perceptions of what creativity is (see Zhou and Shalley 2011), some organizational scholars have criticized the use of such measures as not appropriately reflecting the two-dimensional conceptualization of creativity typically found in the organizational behavior literature (Sullivan and Ford 2010). This model of creativity posits that both novelty and usefulness are necessary for a solution or idea to be considered creative (Zhou and Shalley 2011). Since novelty and usefulness can be associated with different organizational processes (Ford and Gioia 2000) and can vary in terms of their relative importance across stages of the creative process, it has been argued that research not taking into each of these elements may obscure distinctive paths in the creative process (Ford and Sullivan 2004). It is possible that addressing this limitation would help to deepen our understanding of the processes under investigation in the current study. For example, a climate characterized by OP may make it more likely that members will put aside their needs for consensus and harmony and break ranks in order to further their own agenda. Although this may lead to potentially novel ideas, it may not necessarily drive useful solutions. In fact, it is possible that useful solutions are more likely to emerge out of teams working together (Laughlin et al. 1991). In other words, political climate may enhance one aspect of creativity while detracting from the other. Similar effects have been found for teams characterized by individualism as opposed to collectivism with individualistic teams generating a greater number of novel, but not necessarily more effective solutions (Goncalo and Staw 2006). For these reasons, future research is warranted that examines the mixed-blessing of political climate in terms of the process by which it impacts both aspects of creativity. Such a study may also help to shed light on the expected finding that there was a positive indirect effect of political climate on creative performance via task conflict. It may be that such an effect is a product of the focus on generating novel ideas in the current measure. In addition, future research could also test whether a one or two dimensional model of creativity is more appropriate for the East Asian context.[2]

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The present study provides new insights for both theory and practice. First, we adopted a multi-level lens to the existing OP construct. Organizational phenomena do not occur in a single-level vacuum and are often a product of dynamic multi-level processes (Chan 1998). OP scholars have expressed the need for multi-level research in this area (Dipboye and Foster 2002; Ferris et al. 2002), i.e., it

[2] We thank for the insightful comments from reviewers on the cross-cultural and measure issues of creativity and its related future directions.

does not only have individual level effects as an individual perception. Multilevel designs would help us to develop a full understanding of OP occurring within different levels of organizational systems (Dipboye and Foster 2002; Ferris et al. 2002; Kuenzi and Schminke 2009).

Second, we used conflict as a new mediator to explain the cross-level effects of political climate on individual-level outcomes. Concealed motive, conflict, power, and alliance formation were frequently described as the elements of OP (e.g., Drory and Romm 1988; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois 1988). Unfortunately, empirical research has not integrated OP with the literature that examines these elements in the workplace. Future research should put more efforts to reveal the OP process with other elements beyond conflict. For managers, one key take-away from these findings is to be mindful of the type of conflict manifesting itself in their organizations. There is some evidence in this and other work that task conflict can be beneficial. However, this study demonstrates that in highly political contexts, task conflict can quickly turn to destructive relationship conflict. Consequently, managers operating in highly political climates may be wise to avoid any sort of conflict lest it spin out of control.

Third, the current study provided a new situational variable that explained under which condition task conflict can trigger serious relationship conflict. Political climate represents a unique contextual factor driving conflict in that it simultaneously breeds task and relationship conflict while at the same time creating a context where task conflict is perceived in such a way as to result in greater relationship conflict. This finding gives us a clearer and more complete picture of how conflict processes operate and self-reinforce in a political climate. This finding has significant practical implications as well. As argued throughout the paper, political climate is a shared perception, rather than reality *per se*. Managers need to be fully aware of the importance of collective political climate and make an effort to not only foster a positive environment characterized by fair and transparent communication and processes, but also to communicate a sense of shared purpose. In other words, it reminds us that leadership matters and one of the key functions of a leader is to create a bond between team members so that they come to a shared understanding that the needs of the team transcend that of the individuals (Hogan and Kaiser 2005). Other efforts, like fostering team trust, team identification and rewards on teamwork, may also weaken the negative impact of political climate on team process which should be tested in future studies.

Finally, we conducted this study in Chinese context, a society characterized by relationalism (Ahlstrom et al. 2004). The core idea of relationalism is that interaction patterns depend on the closeness of the relationship (Hwang 2000). Guanxi, as a main feature of relationalism, is an important way for people to get scarce resources (Chen and Chen 2009) through social influence tactics, the exchange of favors, networking, ingratiation, and providing resources (Chang 2012; Zanzi and O'Neill 2001). Being well connected with others (i.e., managers in particular) can help one get ahead of others (Chang 2012; Kacmar and Carlson 1997). As a result, it is likely that politics may be even more prevalent in relationship-based societies (Chang 2012; Charlton 1997; Steidlmeier 1997). Under these circumstances, it is of critical importance for managers to understand the political climate in his/her team and organizations. Consequently, China provides an excellent context for studying the effects of politics in organizations. Moreover, given the rising economic importance of China in the world economy, understanding the nature of politics and conflict in the Chinese context may also provide key insights to corporations interested in strategic alliances with Chinese firms or Western managers overseeing joint ventures in China.

The present research also provides a number of interesting paths for future research and practice. Organizations may be interested in determining the degree to which job design can be used to inhibit the formation of political climates. Similarly, given the multi-level nature of OP, it would make sense to investigate the degree to which leaders play a role in fostering or suppressing the formation of political climates and conflict in organizations. One additional future direction that was unaddressed in the present study was the degree to which individual differences were responsible not only for individual perceptions of politics, but also reactions to political climates. Specifically, are there individuals who can resist the situational pressure to perceive others as self-serving and hostile? This information could be valuable to managers looking to end the self-reinforcing nature of toxic, politically charged work environments.

Conclusion

This study explores the theoretical explanation regarding how employees would perform in a political climate. In particular, this study applies a multilevel approach to OP and examines how task and relationship conflict might act as potential mediators between political climate and employee outcomes. The present study also addressed the moderating effect of political climate on the relationship between task conflict and relationship conflict. On the whole, the present results not only support the proposed model of political climate, but are suggestive of a number of new and interesting avenues for future research and practice.

Acknowledgments This study is funded by Grants from National Natural Science Foundation of China (No. 71302073), Ministry of Education (No. 20110121120027) and Fundamental Research Funds for the Central Universities of China (No. 2011221017).

References

Abbas, M., & Raja, U. (2014). Impact of perceived organizational politics on supervisory-rated innovative performance and job stress: Evidence from Pakistan. *Journal of Advanced Management Science, 2*, 158–162.

Ahlstrom, D., Yong, M. N., Chan, E. S., & Bruton, G. D. (2004). Facing constraints to growth? Overseas Chinese entrepreneurs and traditional business practices in East Asia. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management, 21*, 263–285.

Aiken, L., West, S., & Reno, R. R. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Amabile, T. M. (1988). A model of creativity and innovation in organizations. In B. Staw & L. L. Cummings (Eds.), *Research in organizational behavior* (Vol. 10, pp. 123–167). Greenwich, CT: JAI.

Amabile, T. M., Schatzel, E. A., Moneta, G. B., & Kramer, S. J. (2004). Leader behaviors and the work environment for creativity: Perceived leader support. *Leadership Quarterly, 15*, 5–32.

Anderson, N., Potocnik, K., & Zhou, J. (2014). Innovation and creativity in organizations: A state-of-the-science review, prospective commentary, and guiding framework. *Journal of Management, 40*, 1297–1333.

Aryee, S., Zhou, Q., Sun, L. Y., & Lo, S. (2009). Perceptions of politics, intrinsic motivation and creative performance: Evidence from the service sector. *Academy of Management Proceedings, 2009*, 1–6.

Barkema, H., Chen, X.-P., George, G., Luo, Y., & Tsui, A. (2012). West meets east: New concepts and theories. *Academy of Management Journal, 54*, 642–644.

Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*, 1173–1182.

Benlter, P., & Wu, E. (2005). *EQS 6.1*. Encino, CA: Multivariate Software.

Bliese, P. D. (2000). Within-group agreement, non-independence, and reliability: Implications for data aggregation and analysis. In K. J. Klein & S. W. J. Kozlowski (Eds.), *Multilevel theory, research, and methods in organizations* (pp. 349–381). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Carnevale, P. J., & Probst, T. M. (1998). Social values and social conflict in creative problem solving and categorization. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 74*, 1300–1309.

Chan, D. (1998). Functional relations among constructs in the same content domain at different levels of analysis: A typology of composition models. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83*, 234–246.

Chang, C. L. (2012). A framework for Chinese power games: Political tactics in information systems development processes. *Computers in Human Behavior, 28*, 2258–2273.

Chang, C. H., Rosen, C. C., & Levy, P. E. (2009). The relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and employee attitudes, strain, and behavior: A meta-analytic examination. *Academy of Management Journal, 52*, 779–801.

Charlton, S. E. M. (1997). *Comparing Asian politics: India, China, and Japan*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Chen, C. C., & Chen, X. P. (2009). Negative externalities of close guanxi within organizations. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management, 26*, 37–53.

Chen, Y.-Y., & Fang, W. (2008). The moderating effect of impression management on the organizational politics-performance relationship. *Journal of Business Ethics, 79*, 263–277.

Chen, M.-J., & Miller, D. (2010). West meets East: Toward an ambicultural approach to management. *Academy of Management Perspective, 24*, 17–24.

Cohen, J., Cohen, P., West, S. G., & Aiken, L. S. (2003). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavioral sciences* (3rd ed.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Colquitt, J. A., Noe, R. A., & Jackson, C. L. (2002). Justice in teams: Antecedents and consequences of procedural justice climate. *Personnel Psychology, 55*, 83–109.

Darr, W., & Johns, G. (2004). Political decision-making climates: Theoretical processes and multi-level antecedents. *Human Relations, 57*, 169–200.

De Dreu, C. K. W. (2008). The virtue and vice of workplace conflict: Food for (pessimistic) thought. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 29*, 5–18.

De Dreu, C. K. W., & Weingart, L. R. (2003). Task versus relationship conflict, team effectiveness, and team member satisfaction: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*, 741–749.

de Wit, F. R. C., Greer, L. L., & Jehn, K. A. (2012). The paradox of intragroup conflict: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 97*, 360–390.

Denison, D. R. (1996). What is the difference between organizational culture and organizational climate? A native's point of view on a decade of paradigm wars. *Academy of Management Review, 21*, 619–654.

Deutsch, M. (1949). A theory of cooperation and competition. *Human Relations, 2*, 129–152.

Dijkstra, M. T. M., Van Dierendonck, D., & Evers, A. (2005). Responding to conflict at work and individual well-being: The mediating role of flight behavior and feelings of helplessness. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 14*, 119–135.

Dipboye, R. L., & Foster, J. B. (2002). Multi-level theorizing about perceptions of organizational politics. In F. J. Yammarino & F. Dansereau (Eds.), *Research in multi-level issues* (Vol. 1, pp. 255–270). Oxford: JAI/Elsevier Science.

Drory, A. (1993). Perceived political climate and job attitudes. *Organization Studies, 14*, 59–71.

Drory, A., & Romm, T. (1988). Politics in organization and its perception within the organization. *Organization Studies, 9*, 165–179.

Eisenhardt, K. M., & Bourgeois, L. J. (1988). Politics of strategic decision making in high-velocity environments: Toward a midrange theory. *Academy of Management Journal, 31*, 737–770.

Farmer, S. M., Tierney, P., & Kung-Mcintyre, K. (2003). Employee creativity in Taiwan: An application of role identity theory. *Academy of Management Journal, 46*, 618–630.

Ferris, G. R., Adams, G., Kolodinsky, R. W., Hochwarter, W. A., & Ammeter, A. P. (2002). Perceptions of organizational politics: Theory and research direction. In F. J. Yammarino & F. Dansereau (Eds.), *Research in multi-level issues* (Vol. 1, pp. 179–254). Oxford: JAI/Elservier Science.

Ferris, G. R., Frink, D. D., Galang, M. C., Zhou, J., Kacmar, K. M., & Howard, J. L. (1996). Perceptions of organizational politics: Predictors, stress-related implications, and outcomes. *Human Relations, 49*, 233–266.

Ferris, G. R., & Kacmar, K. M. (1992). Perceptions of organizational politics. *Journal of Management, 18*, 93–116.

Ferris, G. R., Russ, G. S., & Fandt, P. M. (1989). Politics in organizations. In R. A. Giacalone & P. Rosenfeld (Eds.), *Impression management in organizations* (pp. 143–170). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Ford, C. M., & Gioia, D. A. (2000). Factors influencing creativity in the domain of managerial decision making. *Journal of Management, 26*, 705–732.

Ford, C., & Sullivan, D. M. (2004). A time for everything: How the timing of novel contributions influences project team outcomes. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 25*, 279–292.

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation model with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research, 18*, 39–50.

Fowler, F. J. (2013). *Survey research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Goncalo, J., & Staw, B. M. (2006). Individualism-collectivism and group creativity. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 100*, 96–109.

Gotsis, G., & Kortezi, Z. (2009). Ethical considerations in organizational politics: Expanding the perspective. *Journal of Business Ethics, 93*, 497–517.

Harrison, D. A., & Klein, K. J. (2007). What's the difference? Diversity constructs as separation, variety, or disparity in organizations. *Academy of Management Review, 32*, 1199–1228.

Hayes, A. F., Preacher, K. J., & Myers, T. A. (2011). Mediation and the estimation of indirect effects in political communication research. In E. P. Bucy & R. Lance Holbert (Eds.), *Sourcebook for political communication research: Methods, measures, and analytical techniques* (pp. 434–465). New York: Routledge.

Hitt, M. A., Beamish, P. W., Jackson, S. E., & Mathieu, J. E. (2007). Building theoretical and empirical bridges across levels: Multilevel research in Management. *Academy of Management Journal, 50*, 1385–1399.

Hochwarter, W. A., Kacmar, C., Perrewe, P. L., & Johnson, D. (2003). Perceived organizational support as mediator of the relationship between politics perceptions and work outcomes. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 63*, 438–456.

Hofmann, D. A., Morgeson, F. P., & Gerras, S. J. (2003). Climate as a moderator of the relationship between leader-member exchange and content specific citizenship: Safety climate as an exemplar. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*, 170–178.

Hogan, R., & Kaiser, R. (2005). What we know about leadership. *Review of General Psychology, 9*, 169–180.

Hülsheger, U., Anderson, N., & Salgado, J. (2009). Team-level predictors of innovation at work: A comprehensive meta-analysis spanning three decades of research. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 94*, 1128–1145.

Hwang, K. K. (2000). Chinese relationalism: Theoretical construction and methodological considerations. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior, 30*, 155–178.

IBM Global Business Service. (2010). *The Global CEO Study*. Bangalore: IBM Corp.

Ilgen, D. R., Major, D. A., Hollenbeck, J. R., & Sego, D. J. (1993). Team research in the 1990s. In M. M. Chemers & R. Ayman (Eds.), *Leadership theory and research* (pp. 245–270). New York: Academic Press.

James, L. R., Demaree, R. G., & Wolf, G. (1993). Rwg: An assessment of within-group interrater agreement. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 78*, 306–309.

Jansson, O. V., & Yperen, N. W. (2004). Employees' goal orientations, the quality of leader-member exchange, and the outcomes of job performance and job satisfaction. *Academy of Management Journal, 47*, 368–384.

Jehn, K. A. (1995). A multimethod examination of the benefits and detriments of intragroup conflict. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 40*, 256–282.

Jehn, K. A. (1997). A qualitative analysis of conflict types and dimensions in organization groups. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 42*, 530–557.

Jehn, K. A., & Mannix, E. A. (2001). The dynamic nature of conflict: A longitudinal study of intragroup conflict and group performance. *Academy of Management Journal, 44*, 238–251.

Jehn, K. A., Northcraft, G. B., & Neale, M. A. (1999). Why differences make a difference: A field study of diversity, conflict, and performance in workgroups. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 44*, 741–763.

Jehn, K. A., Rispens, S., & Thatcher, S. (2010). The effects of conflict asymmetry on work group and individual outcomes. *Academy of Management Journal, 53*, 596–616.

Kacmar, K. M., Andrews, M., Harris, K., & Tepper, B. (2013). Ethical leadership and subordinate outcomes: The mediating role of organizational politics and the moderating role of political skill. *Journal of Business Ethics, 115*, 33–44.

Kacmar, K. M., & Baron, R. A. (1999). Organizational politics: The state of the field, links to related processes, and an agenda for future research. In G. R. Ferris (Ed.), *Research in personnel and human resources management* (pp. 1–39). Stanford, CT: JAI Press.

Kacmar, K. M., Bozeman, D. P., Carlson, D. S., & Anthony, W. P. (1999). An examination of the perceptions of organizational politics model: Replication and extension. *Human Relations, 52*, 383–416.

Kacmar, K. M., & Carlson, D. S. (1997). Further validation of the perceptions of politics scale (POPS): A multiple sample investigation. *Journal of Management, 23*, 627–658.

Karaepe, O. (2013). Perceptions of organizational politics and hotel employee outcomes: The mediating role of work engagement. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 25*, 82–104.

Kenny, D. A., Kashy, D. A., & Bolger, N. (1998). Data analysis in social psychology. In E. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 233–265). New York: Oxford University Press.

Kilduff, M., Angelmar, R., & Mehra, A. (2000). Top management-team diversity and firm performance: Examining the role of cognitions. *Organization Science, 11*, 21–34.

Klein, K. J., & Kozlowski, S. W. J. (2000). From micro to meso: Critical steps in conceptualizing and conducting multilevel research. *Organizational Research Methods, 3*, 211–236.

Korsgaard, A. M., Jeong, S. S., Mahony, D. M., & Pitariu, A. H. (2008). A multilevel view of intragroup conflict. *Journal of Management, 34*, 1222–1252.

Kuenzi, M., & Schminke, M. (2009). Assembling fragments into a lens: A review, critique, and proposed research agenda for the organizational climate literature. *Journal of Management, 35*, 634–717.

Laughlin, P. R., Vanderstoep, S., & Hollingshead, A. (1991). Collective versus individual induction: Recognition of truth, rejection of error, and collective information processing. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 61*, 50–67.

Liao, H., & Rupp, D. E. (2005). The impact of justice climate and justice orientation on work outcomes: A cross-level multifoci framework. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*, 242–256.

MacKinnon, D. P., Lockwood, C. M., Hoffman, J. M., West, S. G., & Sheets, V. (2002). A comparison of methods to test mediation and other intervening variable effects. *Psychological Methods, 7*, 83–104.

Marsh, H. W., Wen, Z. L., & Hau, K. T. (2004). Structural equation models of latent interactions: Evaluation of alternative estimation strategies and indicator construction. *Psychological Methods, 9*, 275–300.

Marsh, H. W., Wen, Z. L., Hau, K. T., Little, T. D., Bovaird, J. A., & Widaman, K. F. (2007). Unconstrained structural equation models of latent interactions: Constrasting residual- and mean-centered approaches. *Structural Equation Modeling, 14*, 570–580.

Mayer, R. C., & Gavin, M. B. (2005). Trust in management and performance: Who minds the shop while the employees watch the boss? *Academy of Management Journal, 48*, 874–888.

Miller, B. K., Rutherford, M. A., & Kolodinsky, R. W. (2008). Perceptions of organizational politics: A meta-analysis of outcomes. *Journal of Business Psychology, 22*, 209–222.

Mintzberg, H. (1985). The organization as political arena. *Journal of Management Studies, 22*, 133–154.

Mumford, M. D., Scott, G. M., Gaddis, B., & Strange, J. M. (2002). Leading creative people: Orchestrating expertise and relationships. *Leadership Quarterly, 13*, 705–750.

Organ, D. W. (1988). *Organizational citizenship behavior: The good soldier syndrome*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

Pelled, L. H., Eisenhardt, K. M., & Xin, K. R. (1999). Exploring the black box: An analysis of work group diversity, conflict, and performance. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 44*, 1–28.

Peterson, R. S., & Behfar, K. J. (2003). The dynamic relationship between performance feedback, trust, and conflict in groups: A longitudinal study. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 92*, 102–112.

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 85*, 879–903.

Preacher, K. J., Zhang, Z., & Zyphur, M. J. (2011). Alternative methods for assessing mediation in multilevel data: The advantages of multilevel SEM. *Structural Equation Modeling, 18*, 161–182.

Preacher, K. J., Zyphur, M. J., & Zhang, Z. (2010). A general multilevel SEM framework for assessing multilevel mediation. *Psychological Methods, 15*, 209–233.

Rosen, C. C., Ferris, D. L., Brown, D., Chen, Y., & Yan, M. (2014). Perceptions of organizational politics: A need satisfaction paradigm. *Organization Science, 25*, 1026–1055.

Rosen, C. C., Harris, K. J., & Kacmar, K. M. (2009). The emotional implications of organizational politics: A process model. *Human Relations, 62*, 27–57.

Rosen, C. C., & Levy, P. (2013). Stresses, swaps, and skill: An investigation of the psychological dynamics that relate work politics to employee performance. *Human Performance, 26*, 44–65.

Sasser, S. L., & Koslow, S. (2012). Passion, expertise, politics, and support. *Journal of Advertising, 41*, 5–17.

Schneider, B., White, S. S., & Paul, M. C. (1998). Linking service climate and customer perceptions of service quality: Test of a causal model. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83*, 150–163.

Simons, T. L., & Peterson, R. S. (2000). Task conflict and relationship conflict in top management teams: The pivotal role of intragroup trust. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 85*, 102–111.

Sobel, M. E. (1982). Asymptotic confidence intervals for indirect effects in structural equation models. In S. Leinhardt (Ed.), *Sociological methodology* (pp. 290–312). Washington, DC: American Sociological Association.

Steidlmeier, P. (1997). Business ethics and politics in China. *Business Ethics Quarterly, 7*, 131–143.

Sullivan, D. M., & Ford, C. M. (2010). The alignment of measures and constructs in organizational research: The case of testing measurement models of creativity. *Journal of Business Psychology, 25*, 505–521.

Swann, W. B., Polzer, J. T., Seyle, D. C., & Ko, S. J. (2004). Finding value in diversity: Verification of personal and social self-views in diverse groups. *Academy of Management Journal, 29*, 9–27.

Taylor, A. B., MacKinnon, D. P., & Tein, J. Y. (2008). Tests of the three-path mediated effect. *Organizational Research Methods, 11*, 241–269.

Thomas, K. W. (1992). Conflict and conflict management: Reflections and update. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 13*, 265–274.

Tidd, S. T., McIntyre, H. H., & Friedman, R. A. (2004). The importance of role ambiguity and trust in conflict perception: Unpacking the task conflict to relationship conflict linkage. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 15*, 364–380.

Tjosvold, D., Law, K. S., & Sun, H. F. (2006). Effectiveness of Chinese teams: The role of conflict types and conflict management approaches. *Management and Organization Review, 2*, 231–252.

Treadway, D. C., Adams, G. L., & Goodman, J. M. (2005). The formation of political sub-climates: Predictions from social identity, structuration, and symbolic interaction. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 20*, 201–219.

Tsui, A. S., & O'Reilly, C. A, I. I. I. (1989). Beyond simple demographic effects: The importance of relational demography in superior-subordinate dyads. *Academy of Management Journal, 32*, 402–423.

Vashdi, D., Vigoda-Gadot, E., & Sholmi, D. (2012). Assessing performance: The impact of organizational climates and politics on public schools' performance. *Public Administration, 91*, 1–24.

Wang, H., Law, K. S., Hackett, R. D., Wang, D. X., & Chen, Z. X. (2005). Leader-member exchange as a mediator of the relationship between transformational leadership and followers' performance and organizational citizenship behavior. *Academy of Management Journal, 48*, 420–432.

Wang, H., Tsui, A. S., & Xin, K. R. (2011). CEO leadership behaviors, organizational performance, and employees' attitudes. *Leadership Quarterly, 22*, 92–105.

Welsh, M. A., & Slusher, E. A. (1986). Organizational design as a context for political activity. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 31*, 389–402.

Williams, L., & Anderson, S. (1991). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment as predictors of organizational citizenship and in-role behaviors. *Journal of Management, 17*, 601–617.

Wiltshire, J., Bourdage, J., & Lee, K. (2014). Honesty-humility and perceptions of organizational politics in predicting workplace outcomes. *Journal of Business Psychology, 29*, 235–251.

Wood, D., Harms, P. D., & Vazire, S. (2010). Perceiver effects as projective tests: What your general perceptions of others says about you. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 99*, 174–190.

Zanzi, A., & O'Neill, R. M. (2001). Sanctioned versus non-sanctioned political tactics. *Journal of Managerial Issues, 8*, 245–262.

Zhou, J., & Shalley, C. E. (2011). Deepening our understanding of creativity in the workplace: A review of different approaches to creativity research. In Z. Sheldon (Ed.), *APA handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (Vol. 1, pp. 275–302). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Zhou, J., & Su, Y. (2010). A missing piece of the puzzle: The organizational context in cultural patterns of creativity. *Management and Organization Review, 6*, 391–413.