Political knowledge at work: Conceptualization, measurement, and applications to follower proactivity

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In this paper, we conceptualize and integrate a measure of *political knowledge* into the broader literatures on political behaviour, proactivity, and followership. Political knowledge refers to an individual's perceived understanding of the relationships, demands, resources, and preferences of an influential target, such as their leader. We examine political knowledge in the follower–leader context with two studies of employees (Ns = 301 & 492) and two studies of follower–leader pairs (Ns = 187 & 130 dyads). Findings generally support the convergent and discriminant validity of our political knowledge measure. In addition, we find consistent evidence for the mediating role of political knowledge of one's leader in the relationship between follower political skill and political will with self-reported follower proactive behaviours. Taken together, the results contribute to the political influence framework and offer insight into the importance of 'knowing your leader' in enabling followers to engage in politically risky proactivity.

Practitioner points

- Political knowledge describes an individual's understanding of specific influential others' relationships, demands, resources, and preferences.
- Followers with political knowledge are more likely to take charge and enact change, which we think is because this knowledge makes enacting change seem less risky.
- Leaders seeking to improve their followers' political knowledge should focus on building high-quality relationships with followers; these relationships are positively associated with political knowledge.

Knowledge about others is a defining characteristic of interpersonal relationships (Starzyk, Holden, Fabrigar, & MacDonald, 2006). Individuals collect, retain, and revise knowledge about others to anticipate their behaviour, to behave appropriately with and around them, and to develop stronger social ties (Adolphs, 2009). In the workplace, this knowledge has widespread political implications. Understanding others at work, especially others in positions of power and authority like leaders, is a pathway to gaining power and influence (Pfeffer, 1992). We refer to this as *political knowledge*: an understanding of the relationships, demands, resources, and preferences of specific

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influential others at work. In this paper, we aim to define, measure, and apply political knowledge in the context of the follower–leader (i.e., employee/manager; subordinate/supervisor) relationship, with a particular focus on how political knowledge shapes the willingness of followers to engage in proactive behaviour at work.

We are motivated to focus on political knowledge, especially with reference to the follower–leader relationship, for two main reasons. First, we begin from the assumption that leadership roles are complex and often unevenly understood by followers. Consider the research on executive stress and executive job demands as an illustration. There are substantial challenges inherent in managerial work (Cooper & Hensman, 1985; Hambrick, Finkelstein, & Mooney, 2005), yet followers often fail to consider these challenges or recognize their implications. In fact, followers lacking necessary knowledge and skills are a near-universal contributor to the challenges faced by executives (Cooper, 1984). Second, we highlight the political nature of proactivity: Speaking up, taking charge, and enacting change are each form of proactivity that leaders can receive either positively or negatively (Burris, 2012; Detert & Edmondson, 2011). Proactive behaviours are inherently political acts: The quality of a proactive idea alone does not determine how well it will be received (Benson, Hardy, & Eys, 2016; Bolino, Turnley, & Anderson, 2016). In this paper, we explore how feeling knowledgeable about the relationships, demands, resources, and preferences of a leader can shape a follower's willingness to engage in these pro-organizational – but deeply political – acts. In addressing these goals, our paper makes three primary theoretical contributions.

First, it enriches the political influence literature by more clearly articulating the role of knowledge in developing and exerting influence in the workplace. We begin from Mintzberg's (1983) notion of 'nontechnical privileged knowledge' as a base of political power and influence but depart from previous conceptualizations which define knowledge as a diffuse 'savvy' about an organization's politics in general. Instead, we focus on political knowledge about particular influential others and classify the characteristics and content of this target-focused political knowledge. Second, we argue that political knowledge is a vital (but untested) component in understanding why some followers are more willing than others to take important action at work that might seem politically risky. Indeed, the change-oriented behaviour of proactivity is fundamentally political; it is characterized by social risks, uncertainty about its consequences (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker, Wang, & Liao, 2019), and uncertainty about the reactions of influential others (Burris, 2012; Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Lebel & Patil, 2018). Finally, our paper contributes to the emerging literature on effective, proactive, and engaged followership (Benson *et al.*, 2016; Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014). We think of political knowledge as a resource that followers can use to act autonomously but effectively at their levels of ability and motivation (Yung & Tsai, 2013).

In developing and integrating our conceptualization and measure of political knowledge into the literatures on political influence, proactivity, and followership, we draw on the political influence perspective (Ferris & Judge, 1991). We argue that knowledge about influential others, like leaders, is inherently political as it allows those who hold it to 'soothe frictions and integrate the interests of key power holders in pursuit of personal or collective goals' (Kapoutsis, 2016, p. 41). From the political influence perspective, political knowledge of an influential other (such as one's leader) reflects the degree to which shared meanings have been developed (Ferris & Judge, 1991). Consequently, having (or lacking) this shared meaning has implications for how knowledge holders develop and leverage what they know to obtain their preferred outcomes (Ellen, Ferris, & Buckley, 2013; Pfeffer, 1981). In other words, political

knowledge can make the difference between a well-received idea or proposal and a poorly received one, as individuals can tailor and time the execution of their suggestions to the needs, preferences, and priorities of influential others. We explore these dynamics in a series of four studies, including two cross-sectional studies of employees recruited online (*N*s = 301 and 492, respectively) and two studies of follower–leader dyads recruited in-person (*N*s = 187 and 130, respectively).

Conceptualizing political knowledge

The importance of knowledge about others has long been theorized in the organizational politics literature (Ferris & Judge, 1991), but it has yet to be directly measured or empirically tested. Ferris *et al*. (2005) define political skill as fundamentally driven by knowledge: They see the ability to understand others at work in terms of knowledge, and political skill as the ability to use that knowledge to influence others. That perspective owes its origins to earlier work on politics in organizations, which also emphasized the centrality of knowledge. French and Raven's (1959) work on power in organizations emphasized the role of expertise and technical knowledge. This was followed by Mintzberg (1983), who identified how power can be gained through privileged access to *nontechnical* knowledge. Many of the political 'games' Mintzberg describes hinge on knowledge about others in the organization, including their relationships with others, demands, resources, and preferences.

However, the conceptual centrality of knowledge is not mirrored by its measurement in the current organizational politics literature. For instance, political skill is most commonly measured with a scale whose closest item to the measurement of actual knowledge involves '*sensing* [emphasis added] the motivations and hidden agendas of others' (Ferris *et al*., 2005, p. 150). Political skill seems to reflect a capacity to elicit information through networking and social graces but does not measure knowledge itself. Political skill researchers have pointed to political savvy as capturing this informational element of politics, but the conventional measure of political savvy (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994) captures only a broad sense of knowing 'how things work' across an organization (i.e., who is influential, how politics work in the firm, etc.) and not specific knowledge about an individual target. Related research on transactive memory (Brandon & Hollingshead, 2004; Lewis, 2003), knowledge management (Alavi & Leidner, 2001; Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001), and a knowledge-based view of the firm (Grant, 1996) similarly do not capture an individual's knowledge of a particular target, but rather diffuse, common, or shared knowledge. In short, there is a substantial gap between the centrality of knowledge in theory and the degree to which knowledge is directly measured and tested in the organizational politics literature.

This gap between theory and operationalization is troubling, since the broader knowledge-based view (Grant, 1996) places the acquisition, transfer, and application of knowledge at the centre of how firms are organized and how they create value. There is arguably a corresponding dynamic at the level of individuals and organizational politics such that individual political actors integrate their knowledge of influential others into the ability to pursue and achieve their own ends. Indeed, Pfeffer (1992) describes this process of goal pursuit as primarily about gathering and integrating knowledge. In the same way that the transfer and aggregation of knowledge shapes how firms pursue value creation, the transfer and aggregation of political knowledge may shape how individuals pursue their own goals. In pursuing this question, we also help to better align the central role that knowledge plays in the theory of organizational politics with its near absence in measurement (Venkatraman & Grant, 1986).

What is political knowledge?

Political knowledge refers to work-related information that an individual directly or indirectly accumulates about an influential person ('target') in the workplace. We think of political knowledge as strategic, in that it offers insights into the target's relationships, demands, resources, and preferences that can be leveraged by the knowledge holder to shape their own behaviour and interactions with this target. We also consider political knowledge as potentially sensitive or hidden. For instance, it may be risky for a leader to share details with his or her follower about whom he or she dislikes working with or reveal how he or she genuinely feels about particular work tasks. In such cases, the leader may equate disclosure with vulnerability (Gibson, Harari, & Marr, 2018) and hide knowledge except from a small set of confidantes (Connelly, Zweig, Webster, & Trougakos, 2012; Zand, 1972). Finally, political knowledge may be uncommon or, at a minimum, unevenly distributed among individuals. More generally, the literature on social cognition (perceptions, information-seeking, and memory, among others; see Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000) amply shows the ways in which individuals can fail to attend to, encode, or recall social information about others.

The content of political knowledge also varies widely. Certain pieces of knowledge about influential others will be specific to industries, organizations, or even particular offices. However, there are some universal categories of knowledge about influential others that are political. The first is an understanding of an influential target's relationships with others. This includes the formal structure of the relationships (such as who an influential target is responsible for, and to whom the influential target is responsible) and the quality of those relationships. This kind of insight is particularly political as knowledge about social networks is a source of power in organizations (Krackhardt, 1990), which could explain why those with less power are often motivated to seek out an understanding of high-power actors' social networks (Simpson & Borch, 2005; Simpson, Markovsky, & Steketee, 2011).

A second critical type of political knowledge consists of an understanding of both the demands made of an influential target and the resources available to him or her. These can include formal and informal job requirements (Janssen, 2000, 2001; Karasek, 1979), as well as self-imposed demands (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993) insofar as they shape the influential target's decision-making. Meeting these demands is critical to the target's own performance, career trajectory, and job security (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Mauno, Kinnunen, & Ruokolainen, 2007). Similarly, understanding an influential target's resources (whether material or social) will help the knowledge bearer anticipate sources of strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2007). Individuals who understand the resources and demands of their influential targets will have a political advantage: They are better equipped to anticipate their target's needs and shift their efforts towards tasks that help meet their target's priorities – not only helping but helping in the right way at the right time (Kelley, 1988).

Finally, understanding the personal preferences of an influential target is a key element of political knowledge. What parts of his or her job does he or she find motivating and meaningful? What is his or her routine and working style? This kind of insight can be helpful because people generally prefer to be perceived accurately by others (Swann, 2012; Swann & Read, 1981): Influential targets are more likely to build strong relationships with others who see them as they see themselves. These insights can also be powerful in practical terms. Knowing that a leader likes working undisturbed in the morning, for instance, can make the difference between scheduling a meeting perceived as valuable versus one perceived as a nuisance.

In this paper, we narrow our focus on follower–leader relationships, since these kinds of relationships are ubiquitous in organizational life and are present across almost all organizational structures and forms. In work on political influence, variants of this relationship, like the subordinate-supervisor relationship, are the most commonly studied form of organizational relationship (Kolodinsky, Treadway, & Ferris, 2007). Focusing on followers and leaders is also particularly appropriate for a study about the choice to engage in politically risky proactivity, since the most common concern about engaging in such activities is how those in leadership roles will react (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). However, our theorizing is not exclusive to follower–leader relationships, and many of our propositions extend to relationships with influential peers within and stakeholders outside the organization. We revisit this relational context below and the implications of expanding beyond it in future research in the discussion.

Integrating political knowledge into the political influence framework

Political influence theory (Ferris & Judge, 1991) begins from the assumption that people in organizations deliberately work to manage shared meanings. They actively shape how others interpret situations and behaviours to elicit favourable judgements and secure desired outcomes. The political influence perspective is a useful framework to not only integrate political knowledge, but also distinguish it from related political constructs of political skill, political will, and political savvy. In particular, we argue that political knowledge is central to the management of shared meaning, since it offers individuals confidence about their ability to anticipate and manage reactions of influential others in the workplace.

In this paper, we use the context of the follower–leader relationship to represent the knowledge bearer and influential target, respectively. While employees might have political knowledge about a host of targets, the follower–leader relationship is one of the most politically important and ubiquitous in organizational life (Ammeter, Douglas, Gardner, Hochwarter, & Ferris, 2002). This ubiquity allows us to develop and test our scale of political knowledge using a broad range of employees from a diversity of industries and occupations, freeing us from non-random selection issues that might result from employees choosing their target (e.g., restricted range resulting from employees selecting the person they know the best or work with most often). This decision was made with the aim of developing a widely usable scale and a model that is generalizable across contexts.

This decision about our study design does not suggest that political knowledge *must always* be about a leader. The hypotheses we develop could apply to a wide range of power relationships, both hierarchical (e.g., follower–leader) and lateral (e.g., among directors on a board or among peers in different divisions of an organization). They could even be with those outside the organization (e.g., clients, suppliers, and important stakeholders). However, for the purposes of this research, we focus on a relationship that is present for almost every employee in an organization: the relationship between a follower (i.e., an employee or subordinate) and their leader (i.e., a supervisor or manger). Below, we expand on how this context-specific and relationship-based framing of political knowledge is situated in the political influence framework. We then emphasize how political knowledge converges with and diverges from its political precursors.

Political skill

Political skill is defined as an individual's 'ability to actively understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/

or organizational objective' (Ferris *et al.*, 2007, p. 291). Those with greater political skill have a heightened capacity for persuasion, social awareness, effective communication, and relationship building (Perrewé, Ferris, Frink, & Anthony, 2000). From the political influence perspective, political skill represents the way by which individuals transmit and present their performance (Treadway *et al.*, 2013). The political skill literature stresses the centrality of understanding others at work (Ferris *et al.*, 2005). However, the way in which the construct is measured emphasizes the skills, networks, and characteristics needed to understand others, but is generally silent on the actual knowledge on which political skill is built.

We describe political knowledge as the natural outcome of political skill. It represents the specific insights that politically skilful individuals work hard to develop and are able to leverage. Munyon, Summers, Thompson, and Ferris (2015, p. 29) note this gap: 'a central assumption of political skill theory is the ability to understand others, yet virtually no research has empirically examined the effects of political skill on knowledge of others'. Our paper serves to build this important link in the political influence framework. Although our theoretical view is that political skill will precede and promote political knowledge, we limit ourselves here (and in the following sections) to a correlational hypothesis given the cross-sectional nature of our data.

Hypothesis 1:   Political skill will be positively associated with political knowledge.

While political skill is crucial to the development of political knowledge, they are not synonymous. Political skill is a set of interpersonal characteristics that make it easier to understand others (e.g., emotion recognition; Momm, Blickle, & Liu, 2010), while political knowledge is a store of information about an influential target that develops over time. Political skill also transfers across contexts (Perrewé *et al.*, 2000); an employee who has political skill does not lose those skills when he or she begins a new job nor should those skills vary notably across those with whom the employee interacts. By contrast, political knowledge is context-specific; what a follower knew about a previous leader does not carry over to a new leader, especially if those leaders are in no way connected. The two constructs should therefore be empirically distinct when considering how long an individual and their influential target have known each other. This aligns with reasoning behind socially situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), which suggests that proximity and time shape the flow of knowledge from within the context of the social relationship. We thus propose that political knowledge will accumulate through cumulative exposure to one's leader. By contrast, political skill, as a stable trait, will be less strongly associated with exposure.

Hypothesis 2:   Political knowledge will have a stronger positive association with relationship duration between an individual and an influential target than political skill.

Political will

Political will is defined as 'the motivation to engage in strategic, goal directed behaviour that advances the personal agenda and objectives of the actor that inherently involves the risk of relational or reputational capital' (Treadway, 2012, p. 533). From the political influence perspective, political will is the motivation to expend costly energy to shape and manage shared meanings in the workplace (Treadway, Hochwarter, Kacmar, & Ferris, 2005). Political will is thus about the strategic inclination to engage with others in the workplace, particularly influential others.

We expect those high in political will to be motivated to acquire political knowledge as a result of their inclination to engage with influential others. The politically wilful are determined to acquire resources that maintain or increase their power and political standing whether their motives are self-interested or prosocial (Kapoutsis, Papalexandris, Treadway, & Bentley, 2017). Knowledge is one such resource. As a result, we expect the politically wilful to seek out an understanding of their political environment, particularly of those who leverage power such as leaders, gaining greater political knowledge than their less politically motivated counterparts do.

> *Hypothesis 3:* Political will will be positively associated with political knowledge.

Political savvy

A final related political construct is political savvy,[1] described by Ferris *et al.* (2005) as an 'adeptness at the nuances of politics in organizations', and measured by Chao *et al.* (1994) with items that capture insight into the broad workings of politics (e.g., knowing how things 'really work', knowing who has political influence, understanding motives of other people in general). Consequently, political savvy is situated in the political influence framework in much the same way as political knowledge: They are both theoretical knowledge structures about the shared meaning that an individual has acquired. As such, we expect that those who have accumulated this global sense of political savvy to have also accumulated more target-specific political knowledge.

> *Hypothesis 4:* Political savvy will be positively associated with political knowledge.

Nonetheless, political knowledge and political savvy are distinct insofar as political savvy captures a global understanding of power and influence in the organization, whereas political knowledge is about a specific influential target's relationships, demands, resources, and preferences. Political savvy, as it has been previously operationalized, is diffuse and about the organization as a whole and not about a particular individual. Political knowledge, as we conceptualize and measure it, is about insight into specific influential targets, otherwise known as influence opportunity targets (McAllister, Ellen, & Ferris, 2018). Political knowledge about particular influential targets is built up over time and is most easily developed in the case of a strong, warm, and reciprocal relationship with the leader (i.e., leader–member exchange; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). As such, we expect that political knowledge will have a stronger association with relationship length and relationship quality between followers and leaders compared to political savvy, especially because political knowledge is about a specific target and political savvy is not.

> *Hypotheses 5a and 5b:* Political knowledge will have a stronger positive association with relationship duration (H5a) and relationship quality (H5b) between an individual and his/her influential target than political savvy.

Political influence and proactivity

Political influence theory (Ferris & Judge, 1991) begins from the assumption that people in organizations must deliberately work to manage shared meanings. According to this framework, various individual, situational, and target characteristics (like those captured

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[1] *We would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing us towards political savvy.*

in political skill, political will, and political knowledge) shape individual influence attempts and indirectly shape how others interpret these behaviours. Political skill has been integrated into this framework as a way by which people signal and manage the presentation and salience of their job performance (Treadway *et al.*, 2013), while political will has been integrated as a way of anticipating the degree to which individuals engage in influence behaviours to achieve desirable outcomes (Treadway, 2012). In this section, we build theory linking political influence and proactivity, including existing constructs of political skill and political will, and our newly conceptualized construct of political knowledge.

The political influence model has established clear links between political skill and will with job performance. We focus on one particular element of performance: politically risky proactivity. Proactivity is an important potential outcome of political influence because of its political and relational context (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010). Proactive behaviour is defined as 'self-initiated, anticipatory action that aims to change and improve the situation or oneself' (Parker & Collins, 2010, p. 635); it is forward-thinking behaviour that involves taking control and transgressing the status quo, having an impact on oneself and others that is intentional as well as unintentional (Grant & Ashford, 2008).

While proactivity is considered pro-organizational, some forms of proactivity are politically risky because they involve defying norms, existing structures, or expectations. This kind of defiance can come at a cost, particularly if proactive individuals have not effectively anticipated and managed the tensions their behaviour might create (Parker *et al.*, 2019; Stobbeleir, Ashford, & Luque, 2010). Voice, for instance, is widely seen by followers as inherently risky because of the tensions it may incite (e.g., embarrassing oneself or one's leader; Detert & Edmondson, 2011), and is prone to being seen unfavourably by leaders (Burris, 2012). The negative consequences of 'taking charge behaviour' (Morrison & Phelps, 1999) depend on how management is expected to respond. Whether followers are willing to challenge the status quo through constructive changes hinges on the costs to image or credibility (Choi, 2007). These forms of proactivity (voice, taking charge, change-oriented organizational citizenship behaviour, etc.) are risky because of the uncertainty about how they will be received. Proactivity is fundamentally a political act that likely hinges on the proactive individual's political skill, political will, and political knowledge.

The politically skilful may use their social astuteness in ways that enhance acceptance and mitigate resistance by managing others' interpretations of their behaviours. This prediction is consistent with the role that being seen as having a capacity to perform plays in models of performance (Blumberg & Pringle, 1982) and aligns with previous findings. For instance, Wihler, Blickle, Ellen, Hochwarter, and Ferris (2017) found that political skill is related to higher personal initiative, and political skill predicts both traditional forms of citizenship behaviour (organizationally and individually focused; Jawahar, Meurs, Ferris, & Hochwarter, 2008) and securing recognition from others (Munyon *et al.*, 2015). A potential mechanism that explains these relationships is that the politically skilled are able to easily understand what others want. We therefore expect that the likability, persuasiveness, and connectedness of the politically skilled will allow them to undertake proactivity by mitigating resistance from and persuading others about the desirability of the changes they attempt to make.

> *Hypothesis 6:*   Political skill will be positively associated with proactivity.

We also expect that followers' proactivity will be enhanced by political will. Prior research has shown that the politically wilful engage in deliberate politicking at work to advance their careers (Kapoutsis *et al.*, 2017; Treadway *et al.*, 2005). Kapoutsis and colleagues argue that the politically wilful tend to have a strong resistance to the status quo. Political will, they argue, involves 'the challenging of the status quo of organizations and societies, and, thus, the need to operate beyond established bounds' (Kapoutsis *et al.*, 2017, p. 2275). Forms of proactivity like voice and change-oriented citizenship behaviour are status quo threatening. They are ways of altering the environment for the purposes of aligning it with one's own interests – whether they are selfish or prosocial. Considering that those who are politically willed make a concerted effort to push forth their agenda, they should be more likely to engage in proactivity.

> *Hypothesis 7:*   Political will will be positively associated with proactivity.

What is still missing from these accounts is the capacity to anticipate the reaction of an influential target. Political knowledge helps to fill this gap. It increases an individual's confidence in anticipating the repercussions and reactions towards his or her own proactivity. If an individual chooses to change a procedure that does not work well, or tries doing his or her job in a different way, will this make his or her leader's job easier or harder? Will it put his or her leader into more or less contact and conflict with difficult people in the organization? Will the change fit or clash with his or her leader's preferences? If an individual has gaps in his or her sense of political knowledge, it increases his or her uncertainty about the likely response to his or her proactivity. Without political knowledge, people may not be able to anticipate the direct or indirect consequences of their behaviour on influential others such as leaders. Indeed, a lack of political knowledge essentially makes a politically risky form of proactive behaviour even riskier. The willingness to enact change, we argue, should be influenced by an individual's sense of certainty about how the change is likely to affect his or her influential target, and how his or her target is most likely to respond. In short, an individual's political knowledge is an important determinant of proactive behaviour.

Further, political knowledge is a potential mechanism linking political skill and political will to proactivity. First, we have argued above that a better understanding of influential others (i.e., political knowledge) is likely higher among those who are more politically skilled and politically willed (as predicted in H1 & H3). In other words, political knowledge is a natural result of an individual's able and motivated sociopolitical behaviour in the workplace. Individuals who are politically skilled have all the right tools (i.e., relationship building, effective communication, social awareness, and persuasion) for building political knowledge, while individuals who are politically willed recognize political knowledge as a resource and have the force and urgency to seek it out. In turn, political knowledge, as we have argued, is an important feature of anticipating the consequences of one's behaviour, particularly the reaction of influential others. This uncertainty reduction therefore serves as a mechanism that lowers inhibition towards engaging in politically risky behaviour. As such, we anticipate that political knowledge mediates the relationship between each of political skill and political will with proactivity.

> *Hypotheses 8a and 8b*: Political knowledge will mediate the relationship between political skill and proactivity (H8a), as well as political will and proactivity (H8b), such that the politically skilled and politically willed will seek and acquire political knowledge, which in turn will be related to a greater likelihood of proactivity

Present studies

The goal of this research is to conceptualize political knowledge by integrating it into the political influence framework, as well as to examine the consequences of political influence behaviours on proactivity within follower–leader relationships. We did this in a set of four interlocking studies. The first step was to develop a scale to capture political knowledge. The scale development process began by generating a list of items based on ideas drawn from theory and from the results of a two-part qualitative study. We then vetted the items and conducted a large split-half exploratory factor analysis. This further reduced the number of items and allowed us to test the factor structure. This structure was then subjected to two additional confirmatory factor analyses.[2] The result of this process was a 23-item scale exhibiting acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .95$) and a four-factor structure with acceptable fit, $\chi^2(224) = 681.29$, $p < .001$, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .05 and superior to alternative models (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The studies reported here each use this measure to capture political knowledge[3] (see Appendix A).

With the structure of the political knowledge scale in place, we next examined our hypotheses to not only test the validity of political knowledge but also integrate it into the political influence framework. In four studies, we tested our predicted convergent validity associations between political knowledge and political skill (H1), political will (H3), and political savvy (H4). We also tested our discriminant validity hypotheses anticipating the different relationship that political knowledge would have on relational factors in comparison with political skill (H2) and political savvy (H5a & H5b). Finally, we tested the role of political influence on proactivity. In particular, we examined the direct effects of political skill and political will (H6 & H7), as well as the indirect effects of political skill and political will via political knowledge in explaining variance in self- and other-reported proactivity (H8a & H8b).

STUDIES 1 AND 2 METHODS

Participants and procedure

Sample characteristics for Studies 1 and 2 can be found in Table 1. Study 1 involved online participants ($N = 301$) from the crowdsourcing website CrowdFlower (De Winter, Kyriakidis, Dodou, & Happee, 2015), and Study 2 involved participants ($N = 492$) from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Participants were required to be fluent in English and be 18 years of age or above with current or previous work experience (93% and 94% had a current leader in Studies 1 and 2, respectively).

Measures

Basic demographics were gathered for descriptive purposes, including age, gender, employment status, and tenure. Participants reported their political knowledge with reference to their current or most recent leader (using the Political Knowledge Scale described above and displayed in Appendix A), political skill (Political Skill Inventory;

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[2] *Data used for these confirmatory factor analyses are Studies 1 and 2 in the current paper and Studies 3 and 4 in Appendix S1.*

[3] *A more complete description of the scale development process can be found in the Supporting Information.*

Table 1. Demographics of participants across studies

	N	Age in years (SD)	% Female	Tenure in years (SD)	% Full-time (% part-time)[a]
Study 1	301	35.96 (10.42)	46	5.91 (5.41)	77 (16)
Study 2	492	33.06 (9.17)	38	5.28 (4.77)	80 (14)
Study 3 (leaders)	187	33.35 (11.40)	64	5.81 (6.69)	79 (21)
Study 3 (followers)	187	35.29 (12.19)	63	6.30 (7.60)	78 (22)
Study 4 (leaders)	130	33.46 (11.26)	76	4.77 (5.15)	88 (12)
Study 4 (followers)	130	27.59 (10.48)	70	2.84 (2.66)	45 (55)

Notes. [a]Remaining percentage of participants either currently unemployed/retired in Studies 1 and 2.

Ferris *et al.*, 2005), political will (Political Will Scale; Kapoutsis *et al.*, 2017), relationship quality with their current or most recent leader (LMX-7 Scale;[4] Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), and proactivity (Change-Oriented Citizenship Behavior subscale; Choi, 2007).

Participants in Study 2 also rated their working relationship duration, frequency of interactions, and task interdependence (measure adapted from Rogelberg, Leach, Warr, & Burnfield, 2006) with their current or most recent leader. All items were randomized within scales, and all scales were randomly presented to participants with the exception of demographics, which were placed at the end of every survey. In addition, an attention check was integrated into both studies and only those who passed the attention check were included in our reporting and analyses (2 and 14 participants failed to pass the attention check in Studies 1 and 2, respectively). Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations among variables in Studies 1 and 2 can be found in Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

Results

Convergent and discriminant validity of political knowledge

Consistent with Hypotheses 1 and 3, political knowledge was positively associated with political skill and political will. Specifically, political knowledge exhibited a medium-to-strong positive association with political skill ($r_{S1} = .50$; $r_{S2} = .48$; both *p*-values < .001) and a small-to-medium positive association with political will ($r_{S1} = .29$; $r_{S2} = .23$; both *p*-values < .001) in both studies.

We also predicted in Hypothesis 2 that political knowledge, compared with political skill, would show a larger positive association with relationship duration with the influential target (H2). To test this hypothesis, we compared the magnitude of the associations using the 'cocor' package for R (Diedenhofen & Musch, 2015). The 'cocor' package provides a range of tests to compare dependent overlapping correlation coefficients. For our purposes, we relied on Hittner, May, and Silver's (2003) modification of Dunn and Clark's z (1969), as well as Zou's (2007) confidence interval for the difference between the correlations. A significant z-score and 95% confidence intervals that do not overlap with zero indicate that the two correlations are not equal (Diedenhofen & Musch, 2015).

Supporting Hypothesis 2, political knowledge and political skill were differentially related to how long the participant had known their leader ($z = 3.39$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = 0.06, 0.25). We further tested discriminant validity by exploring theoretical

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[4] One item in the LMX-7 scale, 'How well does your supervisor/subordinate understand your job problems and needs?', had considerable overlap in similarity with items in the Political Knowledge Scale. As such, analyses were conducted with and without this item. No substantial changes in the results occurred by removing this item, so we opted to retain the full scale for all analyses.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, coefficient alphas, and intercorrelations among Study 1 variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Political knowledge	3.46	0.75	(.95)						
2. Political skill	4.97	1.03	.50*	(.95)					
3. Political will	3.83	1.38	.29**	.39**	(.94)				
4. Change-oriented OCB	3.52	0.88	.36**	.43**	.30**	(.89)			
5. Leader–member exchange	3.63	0.79	.52**	.49**	.20**	.24**	(.92)		
6. Tenure	5.90	5.41	.26**	.10	−.05	.09	.19**	—	
7. Sex[a]	0.54		.01	−.01	.00	−.03	−.04	−.08	—
8. Age	35.95	10.42	.10†	−.01	−.17**	.05	.05	.42**	−.19**

Notes. $N = 297$–301. Higher means is equivalent to more of each variable. Values in parentheses and on the diagonal represent coefficient alphas.
OCB = organizational citizenship behaviours.
[a]0 = female; 1 = male.
$^{\dagger}p < .10$; $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$.

differences between political knowledge and political will. In particular, we found that political knowledge exhibited stronger associations than political will with both the duration of the working relationship ($z = 3.31$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = 0.08, 0.29) and relationship quality (Study 1: $z = 4.91$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = 0.18, 0.42; Study 2: $z = 6.86$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = 0.25, 0.45).

Political influence on proactivity

Structural equation modelling with bootstrapping estimation was conducted using Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2012) to test the direct and indirect effects of political skill and political will via political knowledge on proactivity (H6–H8b; see Tables 4 and 5). More specifically, we tested our measurement and mediational models with second-order latent constructs, such that items representing the dimensions of political skill, political will, and political knowledge were loaded onto first-order factors, which were then loaded onto second-order factors (Edwards, 2001).

Model fit for each model across both studies provided adequate model fit, particularly when compared to the alternative unidimensional models (i.e., all observed items loaded onto their respective construct). More specifically, unidimensional models for political skill via political knowledge to proactivity ($\chi^2[942] > 3,644.08$, $p < .001$, CFI < .77, RMSEA > .09, SRMR > .07) and political will via political knowledge to proactivity ($\chi^2[557] > 1,918.36$, $p < .001$, CFI < .82, RMSEA > .08, SRMR > .06) had poor model fit. Meanwhile, the second-order measurement models for political skill via political knowledge to proactivity ($\chi^2[934] < 2,139.40$, $p < .001$, CFI > .92, RMSEA < .05, SRMR < .06) and political will[5] via political knowledge to proactivity

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[5] *Political will had to be modelled as a single-order factor in the higher-order model in Study 1 because the higher-order factor structure of political will resulted in a non-positive definite matrix as a result of a first-order latent factor correlating greater than 1 with the higher-order latent factor of political will.*

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, coefficient alphas, and intercorrelations among Study 2 variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Political knowledge	3.46	0.74	(.95)									
2. Political skill	5.10	1.02	.48**	(.95)								
3. Political will	4.13	1.28	.23**	.27**	(.92)							
4. Change-oriented OCB	3.64	0.77	.42**	.49**	.24**	(.86)						
5. Leader–member exchange	4.08	0.73	.51**	.44**	.16**	.32**	(.81)					
6. Tenure	5.28	4.77	.10*	.01	.01	.07	.16**	(.89)				
7. Sex^a	0.60		.03	−.06	.10*	.01	.00	−.00	–			
8. Age	33.06	9.17	.05	.00	−.08†	.10*	.07	.49**	−.12**	–		
9. Known	4.61	4.81	.13**	−.02	−.06	.09*	.24**	.64**	−.08†	.40**	–	
10. Frequency of interactions	3.88	0.87	.30**	.17**	.01	.07	.22**	−.02	−.01	−.09*	.03	–
11. Task interdependence	2.53	1.00	.09*	−.01	.10*	−.04	−.08†	−.08†	.02	−.19**	−.02	.33**

Notes. $N = 487$–492. Higher means is equivalent to more of each variable. Values in parentheses and on the diagonal represent coefficient alphas.
OCB = organizational citizenship behaviours.
^{a}0 = female; 1 = male.
†$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

Table 4. Structural equation modelling analyses testing the direct and indirect effect of political skill and political will on change-oriented organizational citizenship behaviours via political knowledge, Study 1

Variables	β	SE	p-Value	95% CI LL	UL
Political skill direct and indirect effects[a]					
Political skill → Political knowledge (*path a*)	.53	.07	.000	0.39	0.66
Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path b*)	.25	.09	.004	0.08	0.41
Political skill → Change-oriented OCBs (*path c*)	.31	.08	.000	0.15	0.48
Political skill → Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path a*b*)	.13	.05	.008	0.03	0.23
Political will direct and indirect effects[b,c]					
Political will → Political knowledge (*path a*)	.31	.07	.000	0.19	0.44
Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path b*)	.34	.07	.000	0.20	0.48
Political will → Change-oriented OCBs (*path c*)	.22	.07	.002	0.08	0.36
Political will → Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path a*b*)	.11	.03	.001	0.04	0.17

Notes. $N = 301$; bootstrap sample size = 5,000.
CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; OCBs = organizational citizenship behaviours; SE = standard error; UL = upper limit.
[a]Model fit: $\chi^2(934) = 1{,}742.79$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .054, 90% CI: 0.050, 0.058, CFI = .921, SRMR = .068.; [b]Model fit: $\chi^2(553) = 1{,}030.91$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .054, 90% CI: 0.048, 0.059, CFI = .935, SRMR = .055.; [c]Political will items loaded onto a single first-order factor because a two-factor solution results in a not positive definite covariance matrix (i.e., the correlation between a first-order factor and the second-order factor was >1).

$(\chi^2[557] < 1{,}249.50$, $p < .001$, CFI > .93, RMSEA < .05, SRMR < .05) had relatively improved and adequate model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Overall, we found evidence for Hypotheses 6 and 7 across both studies for the direct effect of political skill ($\beta_{S1} = .34$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = 0.21, 0.47; $\beta_{S2} = .38$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = 0.27, 0.48) and political will ($\beta_{S1} = .22$, $p = .001$, 95% CI = 0.09, 0.34; $\beta_{S2} = .15$, $p = .002$, 95% CI = 0.06, 0.24) on proactivity. In addition, we also found support for the mediational role of political knowledge in explaining the indirect effects of political skill ($\beta_{S1} = .10$, $p = .006$, 95% CI = 0.03, 0.17; $\beta_{S2} = .12$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = 0.07, 0.16) and political will ($\beta_{S1} = .08$, $p = .001$, 95% CI = 0.02, 0.09; $\beta_{S2} = .09$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = 0.05, 0.13) on proactivity across both studies. These findings lend support for Hypotheses 8a and 8b.

Discussion

Support for our hypotheses was found in Studies 1 and 2. In particular, political knowledge exhibited convergent validity with its positive associations with political skill and political will, as well as discriminant validity with its differential association with the duration and quality of the working relationship with the influential target. In addition, the political influence constructs, including our new measure of political knowledge, each contributed to explaining the extent to which individuals engaged in proactivity. Followers who were politically skilled and politically willed reported

Table 5. Structural equation modelling testing the direct and indirect effect of political skill and political will on change-oriented organizational citizenship behaviours via political knowledge, Study 2

Variables	β	SE	*p*-Value	95% CI LL	95% CI UL
Political skill direct and indirect effects[a]					
Political skill → Political knowledge (*path a*)	.51	.04	.000	0.43	0.60
Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path b*)	.31	.06	.000	0.19	0.43
Political skill → Change-oriented OCBs (*path c*)	.37	.07	.000	0.24	0.51
Political skill → Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path a*b*)	.16	.03	.000	0.09	0.22
Political will direct and indirect effects[b]					
Political will → Political knowledge (*path a*)	.28	.05	.000	0.17	0.38
Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path b*)	.46	.05	.000	0.36	0.56
Political will → Change-oriented OCBs (*path c*)	.16	.06	.010	0.04	0.27
Political will → Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path a*b*)	.13	.03	.000	0.07	0.18

Notes. $N = 492$; bootstrap sample size = 5,000.
CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; OCBs = organizational citizenship behaviours; SE = standard error; UL = upper limit.
[a]Model fit: $\chi^2(934) = 2,139.40, p < .001$, RMSEA = .051, 90% CI: 0.048, 0.054, CFI = .920, SRMR = .051.; [b]Model fit: $\chi^2(551) = 1,249.50, p < .001$, RMSEA = .051, 90% CI: 0.047, 0.054, CFI = .931, SRMR = .049.

engaging in more proactivity, and these effects were partially explained by the extent to which the politically skilled and politically willed were also politically knowledge-able.

While the latter finding above has important theoretical and practical implications, our studies were limited to a single type of proactivity (change-oriented OCBs), and our results were based on self-report data. An important remaining question is whether the willingness to engage in proactivity is due to *objective* political knowledge (i.e., mutually agreed knowledge about their leader) or *subjective* political knowledge (i.e., the sense or perception that they have knowledge about their leader). Are followers accurately reporting their knowledge of the influential target or is it a matter of overconfidence? We therefore took several approaches to explore the agreement versus perception of political knowledge problem in our next two studies, in addition to broadening our range of operationalizations of proactivity.

STUDIES 3 AND 4 METHODS

Participants and procedure

Sample characteristics for participants in Studies 3 and 4 can be found in Table 1. Follower–leader pairs were recruited for Studies 3 (N = 187 dyads) and 4 (N = 130 dyads) through student nominations and in-person solicitations. More specifically, close to half of the pairs in Studies 3 and 4 were recruited through students who nominated working adults that they knew, who were then invited to participate in our research with someone they report to or someone who reports to them. The remaining participants in Studies 3 and 4 were recruited in-person by the first author from randomly selecting and contacting local businesses. Once follower–leader pairs were recruited, both followers and leaders were sent their own survey link through email to complete independently. Only pairs in which both members of the dyad agreed to participate were ultimately provided with the survey; as such, only complete dyads are included in our data.

Measures

Shared measures

All participants reported demographic information for descriptive purposes, including age, gender, employment status, and tenure. In addition, followers and leaders each reported their working relationship tenure, relationship quality, frequency of interactions, and task interdependence in both studies using the same measures as Study 2. Further, followers and leaders each reported political knowledge with the leader as the referent and follower as the knowledge holder. This was measured using the Political Knowledge Scale.

Follower measures

Followers rated their political skill and political will using the same scales as the first two studies and in Study 4, followers rated their political savvy (Chao *et al*., 1994). Followers also rated other forms of politically risky proactivity, including voice (using the Voice Scale; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998) and taking charge (using the Taking-Charge Scale; Morrison & Phelps, 1999).

Leader measures

Leaders rated their followers' politically risky proactivity (using the Change-Oriented Citizenship Behavior subscale; Choi, 2007). Again, all items were randomized within scales and all scales were randomly presented to participants with the exception of demographics, which were placed at the end of every survey. Means, standard deviations, internal reliabilities, and correlations among measures in Studies 3 and 4 can be found in Tables 6 and 7, respectively.

Results

Convergent and discriminant validity of political knowledge

Consistent with Studies 1 and 2 and Hypothesis 1, self-reported political knowledge was positively associated with political skill in Studies 3 and 4 ($r_{S3} = .47, p < .001; r_{S4} = .28, p = .001$). Self-reported political knowledge was only positively associated with political will in Study 4 ($r = .29, p < .001$), but not in Study 3 ($r = .11, p = .15$), providing mixed support for Hypothesis 3. In Study 4, we also found support for Hypothesis 4 in that self-reported political knowledge was positively associated with political savvy ($r = .28, p = .001$).

We tested the same relationships using other-reported political knowledge. Other-reported political knowledge was significantly related to self-reported political skill in Study 3 ($r = .22, p = .003$) but not in Study 4 ($r = -.06, p = .54$). We found no association between other-reported political knowledge and self-reported political will in either Study 3 ($r = .00, p = .97$) or Study 4 ($r = .13, p = .15$), and found no association between other-reported political knowledge and self-reported political savvy in Study 4 ($r = .15, p = .10$).

To test our predictions about relationship duration (H2 and H5a), we created a mean score for how long leaders and followers had known each other (there was high agreement in both studies; $rs > .84, ps < .001$). We first compared how relationship duration was associated with self-reported political knowledge and political skill, and then with political savvy. We found in both studies that self-rated political knowledge, political skill, and political savvy were unrelated to relationship tenure. We tested the same comparisons using other-rated political knowledge and found mixed results: Political knowledge did not differ significantly from political skill in its association with relationship duration in Study 3 ($z = -.10, p = .54, 95\%\ CI = -0.19, 0.17$), but it did in Study 4 ($z = 2.14, p = .02, 95\%\ CI = 0.02, 0.51$). In addition, political knowledge was not significantly different from political savvy in Study 4 ($z = 1.29, p = .09, 95\%\ CI = -0.08, 0.36$) with regard to relationship duration. Together, these findings are inconsistent with our prediction that relationship duration would enhance political knowledge.

To test our prediction about relationship quality (H5b), we tested the association of political knowledge with relationship quality and compared it with the association between political savvy and relationship quality. Consistent with our predictions, we found that self-reported political knowledge had a significantly stronger association with self-reported relationship quality than political savvy ($z = 4.06, p < .001, 95\%\ CI = 0.21, 0.59$). However, we did not find this difference between self-reported political knowledge and political savvy for other-reported relationship quality.

Turning to other-reported political knowledge to examine Hypothesis 5b, we found that it did not have a significantly stronger association with self-reported relationship quality than with political savvy in Study 4 ($z = .50, p = .31, 95\%\ CI = -0.17, 0.28$).

Table 6. Means, standard deviations, coefficient alphas, and intercorrelations among Study 3 variables

| Variables | M | SD | Follower-rated | | | | | | | | | |
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Follower-rated												
1. Political knowledge	3.59	0.79	(.95)									
2. Political skill	5.50	0.75	.47**	(.91)								
3. Political will	3.91	1.11	.11	.03	(.89)							
4. Leader–member exchange	4.12	0.67	.47**	.30**	−.12†	(.88)						
5. Known	4.32	5.40	.06	.09	.03	.17*	—					
6. Frequency of interactions	4.09	0.90	.23**	.08	−.13†	.06	.01	—				
7. Task interdependence	2.34	1.08	.10	−.05	.15*	.04	−.12	.16*	—			
8. Tenure	6.52	7.82	.00	.02	−.08	−.04	.44**	.02	−.11	—		
9. Age	35.57	12.39	−.03	.07	−.08	.04	.37**	.02	−.20**	.62**	—	
10. Sex[a]	0.37		−.10	−.02	−.05	−.07	.10	−.07	−.01	.26**	.21**	—
Leader-rated												
11. Political knowledge	3.31	0.72	.27**	.22**	.00	.17**	.09	.13†	.15*	−.11	−.00	−.07
12. Leader–member exchange	3.87	0.57	.19**	.22**	.09	.24**	.10	.06	.04	−.07	.09	−.03
13. Change-oriented OCB	3.77	0.68	.14†	.16*	.08	.10	.03	.02	.08	−.05	.06	−.07
14. Known	4.76	5.94	.02	.11	−.01	.12	.92**	.04	−.09	.39**	.34**	.09
15. Frequency of interactions	3.98	0.93	.24**	.14†	−.04	.10	.02	.47**	.20**	−.03	.08	−.04
16. Task interdependence	2.60	0.85	.12†	.03	.01	−.01	−.08	.23**	.06	−.01	.07	.10
17. Tenure	6.11	7.21	.01	.07	−.15*	.10	.35**	−.01	−.04	.18*	.17*	−.07
18. Age	33.68	11.48	.02	.13†	−.12†	.07	.21**	−.01	−.15*	.04	.22**	−.12
19. Sex[a]	0.35		−.06	−.05	.10	−.10	.07	−.14	−.05	.05	.10	.12

| | Leader-rated | | | | | | | | |
	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
Leader-rated									
11. Political knowledge	(.94)								

Continued

Table 6. (*Continued*)

	11	12	13	14	Leader-rated 15	16	17	18	19
12. Leader–member exchange	.54**	(.81)							
13. Change-oriented OCB	.39**	.47**	(.78)						
14. Known	.14†	.20*	.03	–					
15. Frequency of interactions	.36**	.28**	.16*	.04	–				
16. Task interdependence	.22**	.08	.03	–.03	.41**	–			
17. Tenure	–.03	.02	.00	.36**	–.01	–.13†	–		
18. Age	–.06	.04	.06	.19*	.06	–.13†	.62**	–	
19. Sex[a]	.07	–.06	.03	.01	–.02	.14†	.00	–.04	–

Notes. $N = 176$–187 dyads. Higher means = more of each variable. Values in parentheses and on the diagonal represent coefficient alphas.
OCB = organizational citizenship behaviours.
[a]0 = female; 1 = male.
†$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

Table 7. Means, standard deviations, coefficient alphas, and intercorrelations among Study 4 variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Follower-rated															
1. Political knowledge	3.56	0.85	(.96)												
2. Political skill	5.54	0.76	.28**	(.92)											
3. Political will	4.00	1.26	.29**	.25**	(.92)										
4. Political savvy	5.04	0.72	.28**	.11	.12	(.60)									
5. Leader–member exchange	4.05	0.65	.48**	.27**	−.01	.05	(.87)								
6. Voice	3.48	0.83	.37**	.25**	.19*	.22*	.16†	(.87)							
7. Taking charge	3.30	0.87	.35**	.31**	.14	.22*	.13	.65**	(.93)						
8. Known	3.77	5.29	.18*	−.02	.01	.10	.10	.15†	.15†	—					
9. Frequency of interactions	3.93	0.96	.32**	−.03	−.08	.06	.29**	.10	−.00	−.04	—				
10. Task interdependence	2.74	1.10	.13	−.06	−.03	−.08	.06	−.10	−.13	−.12	.24**	—			
11. Tenure	2.84	2.66	.17*	−.06	.01	.01	.11	.12	.08	.36**	.12	−.06	—		
12. Age	27.59	10.48	−.12	−.02	−.14	−.09	.02	.12	.03	.16†	.01	−.24*	.22*	—	
13. Sex[a]	0.22		.07	.09	−.10	−.02	.08	.06	.08	.03	.06	−.07	−.13	.08	—
Leader-rated															
14. Political knowledge	3.38	0.78	.43**	−.06	.13	.15†	.14	.09	.06	.25**	.26**	.28**	.14	.05	−.06
15. Leader–member exchange	3.95	0.59	.19*	−.01	.04	.08	.21*	.08	−.02	.21*	.09	.08	.05	.02	−.19*
16. Change-oriented OCB	3.80	0.59	.14	.07	−.00	−.06	.09	.18*	.20*	.17†	−.06	−.15	.07	.05	−.06

Continued

Table 7. (*Continued*)

Follower-rated

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
17. Known	3.75	5.05	.13	−.03	.04	.07	−.02	.13	.13	.84**	−.05	−.11	.31**	.16†	−.03
18. Frequency of interactions	3.95	0.85	.12	−.12	−.07	.11	.06	−.06	−.02	.03	.40**	.11	.13	.13	−.01
19. Task interdependence	2.99	1.20	.22*	−.01	−.04	.01	.16	.05	−.06	.04	.28**	.31**	.04	−.03	.03
20. Tenure	4.77	5.15	−.04	−.07	−.09	.16†	.06	.08	.07	.14	−.05	−.01	.29**	.13	−.01
21. Age	33.46	11.26	−.04	.09	−.19*	−.01	.15	.17†	.11	.21*	−.08	−.19*	.25***	.54***	.06
22. Sex[a]	0.31		.30**	−.03	−.00	−.03	.13	.11	.08	−.02	.03	−.04	.04	.05	.23*

Leader-rated

	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
14. Political knowledge	(.94)								
15. Leader–member exchange	.58**	(.83)							
16. Change-oriented OCB	.30**	.39**	(.67)						
17. Known	.21*	.18*	.14	—					
18. Frequency of interactions	.35**	.20*	−.01	.06	—				
19. Task interdependence	.28**	.17†	−.06	−.01	.25**	—			
20. Tenure	.03	.00	−.03	.16†	−.01	−.02	—		
21. Age	−.10	−.03	.08	.15†	.02	−.09	.40**	—	
22. Sex[a]	.22*	.07	−.05	.02	.18*	.20*	−.10	−.04	—

Notes. $N = 130$ dyads. Higher means = more of each variable. Values in parentheses and on the diagonal represent coefficient alphas.
OCB = organizational citizenship behaviours.
[a]0 = female; 1 = male.
†$p < .10$; *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$.

However, we did find that other-reported political knowledge showed a stronger association with other-reported relationship quality than political savvy ($z = 4.33$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = 0.25, 0.65).

Together, these findings generally replicate the associations among political skill (H1), political will (H3), and political knowledge described in Studies 1 and 2 and add the additional association with political savvy (H4). We also find that political knowledge, like political skill and political savvy, seems to be unchanged with relationship tenure – a finding contrary to our predictions (H2 and H5a) – and that political knowledge, unlike political savvy, is especially associated with relationship quality (H5b). Overall, our findings are clearer and more consistent when looking at follower-rated political knowledge rather than leader-reported political knowledge, raising questions about consensus and rater-source issues that we discuss later.

Political influence on proactivity

Similar to Studies 1 and 2, we tested the direct (H6–7) and indirect effects (H8a–8b) of political skill and political will via political knowledge on self- and other-reported proactivity through structural equation modelling with bootstrap estimation. However, it was critical for us to use parcels to reduce the number of estimated parameters due to the smaller sample sizes (Coffman & MacCallum, 2005; Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002). We created domain representative composite indicators for each latent construct as this results in more stable and acceptable latent estimates (Kishton & Widaman, 1994; Williams & O'Boyle, 2008). Results and model fit indices for all analyses can be found in Tables 8–11.

We found evidence for the direct effects of political skill, but not political will, in explaining variance in the association with different forms of self-reported proactivity in Study 4 (see Tables 8 and 9). In particular, political skill was directly related to the proactive behaviours of voice ($\beta = .19$, $p = .037$, 95% CI = 0.01, 0.36) and taking charge

Table 8. Structural equation modelling testing the direct and indirect effect of political skill and political will on self-rated voice behaviours via political knowledge, Study 4

Variables	β	SE	p-Value	95% CI LL	95% CI UL
Political skill direct and indirect effects[a]					
Political skill → Political knowledge (*path a*)	.28	.11	.010	0.07	0.49
Political knowledge → Voice (*path b*)	.41	.10	.000	0.22	0.60
Political skill → Voice (*path c*)	.19	.09	.037	0.01	0.36
Political skill → Political knowledge → Voice (*path a*b*)	.11	.05	.017	0.02	0.21
Political will direct and indirect effects[b]					
Political will → Political knowledge (*path a*)	.29	.10	.002	0.10	0.48
Political knowledge → Voice (*path b*)	.43	.09	.000	0.25	0.62
Political will → Voice (*path c*)	.08	.09	.353	−0.09	0.26
Political will → Political knowledge → Voice (*path a*b*)	.13	.05	.017	0.02	0.23

Notes. $N = 130$ dyads; bootstrap sample size = 5,000.
CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; SE = standard error; UL = upper limit.
[a]Model fit: $\chi^2(24) = 37.43$, $p = .040$, RMSEA = .066, 90% CI: 0.015, 0.105, CFI = .988, SRMR = .044.;
[b]Model fit: $\chi^2(24) = 51.64$, $p = .001$, RMSEA = .094, 90% CI: 0.059, 0.130, CFI = .973, SRMR = .048.

Table 9. Structural equation modelling testing the direct and indirect effect of political skill and political will on self-rated taking charge behaviour via political knowledge, Study 4

				95% CI	
Variables	β	SE	p-Value	LL	UL
Political skill direct and indirect effects[a]					
Political skill → Political knowledge (path a)	.28	.11	.009	0.07	0.49
Political knowledge → Taking charge behaviours (path b)	.30	.11	.004	0.09	0.51
Political skill → Taking charge behaviours (path c)	.24	.09	.011	0.05	0.42
Political skill → Political knowledge → Taking charge behaviours (path a*b)	.09	.04	.049	0.00	0.17
Political will direct and indirect effects[b]					
Political will → Political knowledge (path a)	.29	.10	.002	0.12	0.46
Political knowledge → Taking charge behaviours (path b)	.36	.11	.001	0.19	0.52
Political will → Taking charge behaviours (path c)	.04	.10	.667	−0.14	0.23
Political will → Political knowledge → Taking charge behaviours (path a*b)	.10	.05	.032	0.03	0.18

Notes. N = 130 dyads; bootstrap sample size = 5,000.
CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; SE = standard error; UL = upper limit.
[a]Model fit: $\chi^2(24)$ = 31.91, p = .129, RMSEA = .050, 90% CI: 0.000, 0.093, CFI = .993, SRMR = .027.;
[b]Model fit: $\chi^2(24)$ = 19.67, p = .715, RMSEA = .000, 90% CI: 0.000, 0.055, CFI = 1.00, SRMR = .018.

(β = .24, p = .011, 95% CI = 0.05, 0.42), supporting Hypothesis 6. We also found evidence for the indirect effects of political skill through political knowledge on both voice (β = .11, p = .017, 95% CI = 0.02, 0.21) and taking charge (β = .09, p = .049, 95% CI = 0.00, 0.17), supporting Hypothesis 8a. We did not find support for the direct effects of political will on voice and taking charge, but we did find significant indirect effects of political will through political knowledge on both voice (β = .13, p = .017, 95% CI = 0.02, 0.23) and taking charge (β = .10, p = .032, 95% CI = 0.03, 0.18).

Finally, we were unable to find support for any of the political influence constructs (i.e., political skill, political will, or political knowledge) in explaining variance with *other*-reported proactivity (see Tables 10 and 11). Overall, we found no evidence for Hypotheses 6–8b with regard to other-reported proactivity, but consistent support for Hypotheses 6, 8a, and 8b in explaining variance in two different forms of self-reported proactivity.

Perceived or actual political knowledge

Given the questions of self- and other-rating discrepancies in our findings, we conducted a set of exploratory analyses to examine whether self-reported political knowledge captured mutually agreed or perceived (subjective and not shared) political knowledge. We first examined the agreement between self-reported political knowledge and other-reported political knowledge in Studies 3 and 4 using correlation coefficients (Rogers, Wood, & Furr, 2018). We found a small (r = .27, p < .001) to moderate association (r = .43, p < .001) in Studies 3 and 4, respectively: associations that were similar or higher than the association between self- and other-reported LMX (Study 3: r = .24, p < .001; Study 4: r = .21, p = .017). While this level of self-other agreement of political knowledge is what one would expect from self-other agreement in general with correlation

Table 10. Structural equation modelling results testing the direct and indirect effect of political skill and political will on leader-rated change-oriented citizenship behaviours via political knowledge, Study 3

				95% CI	
Variables	β	SE	*p*-Value	LL	UL
Political skill direct and indirect effects[a]					
Political skill → Political knowledge (*path a*)	.49	.07	.000	0.35	0.62
Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path b*)	.08	.11	.483	−0.14	0.29
Political skill → Change-oriented OCBs (*path c*)	.14	.11	.215	−0.08	0.35
Political skill → Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path a*b*)	.04	.05	.491	−0.07	0.14
Political will direct and indirect effects[b]					
Political will → Political knowledge (*path a*)	.12	.08	.142	−0.04	0.28
Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path b*)	.13	.09	.162	−0.05	0.31
Political will → Change-oriented OCBs (*path c*)	.10	.08	.236	−0.06	0.26
Political will → Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path a*b*)	.02	.02	.348	−0.02	0.05

Notes. N = 187 dyads; bootstrap sample size = 5,000.
CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; OCBs = organizational citizenship behaviours; SE = standard error; UL = upper limit.
[a]Model fit: $\chi^2(32)$ = 38.83, p = .189, RMSEA = .034, 90% CI: 0.000, 0.067, CFI = .995, SRMR = .038.;
[b]Model fit: $\chi^2(32)$ = 39.27, p = .176, RMSEA = .035, 90% CI: 0.000, 0.068, CFI = .994, SRMR = .042.

coefficients (Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988), especially considering the low visibility and informational asymmetry of political knowledge (i.e., few behavioural cues from the knowledge holder and generally covert nature of political knowledge; Kenny & West, 2010; Vazire, 2010), we further explored mutual agreement through a bi-factor model approach.

Bi-factor modelling is a structural equation approach used to parse variance explained by a general factor (e.g., an overall latent factor of self- and other-ratings) from factors that explain variance by how they are clustered (e.g., latent factors for each rater-source; Reise, 2012). This approach is most commonly used to examine the model fit of multidimensional constructs (Rodriguez, Reise, & Haviland, 2016), but it can also be used to examine the covariance explained by a common factor representing self-agreement and other agreement (i.e., the mutually agreed arena/trait factor; Luft & Ingham, 1955) while accounting for rater-source factors beyond agreement (i.e., factors of other-report beyond mutual agreement known as blind spot/reputation and self-report beyond mutual agreement known as facade/identity; Blickle, Schütte, & Wihler, 2018; Luft & Ingham, 1955; McAbee & Connelly, 2016). If a bi-factor model shows the best model fit when compared to a general factor model (i.e., self- and other-reported items on a single factor) and a correlated factors model (i.e., correlated self- and other-reported latent factors), this would suggest that there is mutual agreement being captured beyond variance explained by rater-source (Blickle *et al.*, 2018; McAbee & Connelly, 2016).

We therefore tested and compared three models: (1) a model with follower- and leader-reported political knowledge items loading onto a single general latent factor, (2) a model with follower- and leader-reported political knowledge items loading onto their own respective but correlated latent factors, and (3) the bi-factor model with all items loading onto a common latent factor and uncorrelated rater-source latent factors. We conducted

Table 11. Structural equation modelling testing the direct and indirect effect of political skill and political will on leader-rated change-oriented citizenship behaviour via political knowledge, Study 4

Variables	β	SE	p-Value	95% CI LL	95% CI UL
Political skill direct and indirect effects[a]					
Political skill → Political knowledge (*path a*)	.28	.11	.010	0.07	0.49
Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path b*)	.17	.11	.112	−0.04	0.37
Political skill → Change-oriented OCBs (*path c*)	.04	.12	.722	−0.19	0.27
Political skill → Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path a*b*)	.05	.04	.207	−0.03	0.12
Political will direct and indirect effects[b]					
Political will → Political knowledge (*path a*)	.29	.10	.002	0.10	0.48
Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path b*)	.20	.11	.063	−0.01	0.42
Political will → Change-oriented OCBs (*path c*)	−.09	.13	.502	−0.34	0.17
Political will → Political knowledge → Change-oriented OCBs (*path a*b*)	.06	.04	.164	−0.02	0.14

Notes. N = 130 dyads; bootstrap sample size = 5,000.
CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; OCBs = organizational citizenship behaviours; SE = standard error; UL = upper limit.
[a]Model fit: $\chi^2(32)$ = 36.41, p = .271, RMSEA = .033, 90% CI: 0.000, 0.075, CFI = .995, SRMR = .044.;
[b]Model fit: $\chi^2(32)$ = 33.56, p = .392, RMSEA = .019, 90% CI: 0.000, 0.069, CFI = .998, SRMR = .029.

these three models on each of the subdimensions of political knowledge given the ratio of sample size to parameters required for such analyses (Kline, 2016). Comparison of these three models for each subdimension and the factor loadings for the bi-factor models are displayed in Appendix B. For all subdimensions, the bi-factor models resulted in the best model fit. The subdimensions of demands, resources, and preferences consistently provided good model fit indices across both studies (RMSEA < .05, CFI > .98), whereas the subdimension of relations had poor model fit in Study 3 (RMSEA = .10, CFI = .88) and adequate fit in Study 4 (RMSEA = .07, CFI = .95; Hu & Bentler, 1999). These findings generally suggest that there is mutual agreement being captured beyond rater-source biases.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

We made three theoretical contributions in this paper: (1) We enhanced the conceptualization and measurement of political knowledge as an element of the political influence framework; (2) we examined how political influence variables relate to politically risky forms of proactivity such as change-oriented OCB, voice, and taking charge; and (3) we advanced the role of political knowledge as a distinguishing characteristic of effective followership. We consider each of these contributions in light of our empirical results.

Integrating political knowledge into the political influence framework
Research on political influence, including that focused on political skill, has traditionally talked *around* knowledge. Knowledge has been an assumed element of political influence such that those who are politically skilful know how to understand others and

leverage that knowledge (Ferris *et al.*, 2005; Treadway *et al.*, 2005), while those who are politically wilful are motivated to expend social capital to acquire an understanding of influential others (Kapoutsis *et al.*, 2017; Treadway, 2012). However, the actual content of this knowledge – what the politically skilled and politically wilful understand about others exactly – has remained underspecified. Measures, where available, have focused on 'political savvy' or a diffuse sense about how organizational politics work (Chao *et al.*, 1994).

The current paper offers a conceptualization of political knowledge that is focused on an understanding of a specific influential other. Our scale development and validation studies asked participants about their leader, but political knowledge can, in theory, be held about any number of other powerful or influential actors at work. We describe (and measure) political knowledge in terms of having insight into someone's relationships with others, their resources and skills, the formal and informal demands they face, and their preferences and working style. If political skill is about the behaviours and aptitudes involved in acquiring and leveraging knowledge and political will is the motivation to do so, our measure of political knowledge captures the knowledge that the politically skilled and politically wilful develop and draw upon. Across our studies, we find evidence for the antecedent role of political skill and political will with political knowledge.

Applications to politically risky proactivity

Most research on political influence and proactivity to date has focused on OCBs as a measure of contextual performance (Munyon *et al.*, 2015). In our paper, we have extended our view to focus on politically risky proactive behaviours. These include change-oriented citizenship in our first three studies, as well as voice and taking charge behaviours in our fourth study. Across these studies, a followers' sense of their own political knowledge of their leader partially or fully mediates the enhancing relationship that political skill and political will have with politically risky proactivity.

We think of political knowledge as central to the confidence needed to engage in risky but pro-organizational behaviours. Leaders and organizations need followers who will take charge, speak up, and advocate for and enact change, but these change-oriented behaviours involve a series of political risks from a follower perspective. For instance, followers may ask themselves, 'How will my leader react when I seek change, or modify a process? Will it create problems for them? What is the right moment to propose a change?'. Detert and Edmondson (2011) describe these perceived costs and risks in detail with regard to voice; we could imagine the same dynamics at play for other forms of proactivity like change-oriented citizenship and taking charge behaviours.

Our findings would suggest one path to promoting proactivity is to enhance employees' sense of their own political knowledge. Identifying interventions that might increase political knowledge could be one way of enhancing followers' willingness to engage in proactivity. This would especially be the case for those without political skill, as we anticipate political knowledge is more malleable and developed than political skill. We identify particular mechanisms relevant to the follower–leader relationship for these interventions below.

Applications to proactive followership

Although the content of political knowledge could apply to any influential target in the workplace, we have explored it in the context of follower–leader relationships. We argue

that political knowledge is an important construct to understanding effective follower-ship. As Maroosis (2008) argues, effective followership involves 'a mentoring or mimetic situation in which followers learn to think like the leader, who does not think for them but lets their thinking and learning manifest itself in and through the way they respond to situations' (p. 23). The question is *how* followers manifest this kind of anticipation and shared understanding. Here, we reiterate the role of political knowledge: Followers learn to take responsibility and initiative in appropriate and desirable ways by deeply understanding their leaders.

Our findings suggest that political knowledge is related to high-quality follower–leader relationships. The direction of this relationship, of course, is not clear from our data. Future research needs to consider the possibility of a bi-directional or self-reinforcing dynamic in which those with political knowledge are more likely to be seen as worthwhile targets for leaders to invest their time and energy in relationship development. Over the course of the developed relationship, leaders share and reveal information about themselves, which in turn enhances followers' political knowledge. These relational mechanisms will be key to informing potential interventions designed to enhance follower political knowledge.

Perceived or mutually agreed knowledge

Followers are likely to acquire political knowledge about their leaders unbeknownst to those leaders. While the strategic and sensitive nature of this information will drive an asymmetry in self-other agreement (Vazire, 2010), the targets of political knowledge should at least have a sense of whether any particular individual is more or less knowledgeable about them. As such, we attempted to explore whether a follower's reported political knowledge converges with their leader's own perceptions of the follower's knowledge (i.e., mutual agreement). In other words, are those who score high on political knowledge also reported to score high on political knowledge by their leader (and vice versa), or do they just think of themselves as more (or less) knowledgeable? We tested this in two ways. First, we used dyadic follower–leader data to compare leader ratings and self-ratings of a follower's political knowledge. Second, we conducted bi-factor confirmatory factor analyses to gauge whether there is variance explained by mutual agreement beyond the source of reporting (i.e., including true and method effects).

Our first tests are consistent with previous research on self-other agreement, particularly considering the expected asymmetry of political knowledge (Vazire, 2010). Nonetheless, these analyses do not separate out potential biases introduced by method effects. The second approach also generally supported the idea that there is some degree of mutual agreement. Indeed, the bi-factor models were all better fitting than the alternative models, suggesting that modelling a common factor while controlling for source effects results in the best model fit. Despite the better model fit for the bi-factor models, one notable exception was the political knowledge subdimension of relation-ships, which received mixed support across the two samples. Nonetheless, there appears to be a general agreement of political knowledge beyond variance accounted for by source.

We acknowledge, however, that these approaches are not necessarily conclusive. Again, leaders may not know which of their followers have deep knowledge about them. Some followers may not want to display what they know, or some leaders may be unobservant about their followers. With respect to our agreement approaches, these

presume that leaders are the 'true' source of their own preferences. However, leaders may be imperfect guides to their own preferences, and followers may make attributions about displayed preferences.

We encourage future researchers to focus on these mismatches between perceptions. Like any other form of knowledge, political knowledge may be replete with problems of inaccuracies, overconfidence, or misperception. In Studies 3 and 4, we found that self-perceptions and leaders' perceptions of political knowledge were modestly correlated. This may be because some followers subtly accumulate their knowledge, using it to guide their behaviour without necessarily choosing to broadcast how much they know. Alternatively, there may be followers who simply overestimate what they know. Future research may want to consider not only political knowledge, but also the accuracy of that knowledge in predicting key outcomes.

Limitations and future directions

Our work has some important limitations. First, our mediation models imply causality, but our study design does not allow for this inference. While theory would suggest that political skill and political will are antecedents to political knowledge, this direction could not be verified with the current studies. Examining these models over time through longitudinal studies or through training in field experiments could help overcome this particular limitation.

Second, there is the risk of common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Although the risk of common method bias is unavoidable in single-source data, care was taken in survey design to randomize the order of scales and items, reduce demand characteristics, and use a variety of scale anchors (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). However, further steps can be taken to reduce the possibility of common method bias in future research by capturing constructs of interest from separate sources (e.g., with leaders as we did in Studies 3 and 4, or with co-workers), across time, and from archival sources (Barnes, Dang, Leavitt, Guarana, & Uhlmann, 2018).

A third notable limitation in introducing political knowledge is that we focused solely on employee knowledge of leaders. It is reasonable to suggest that political knowledge will be a type of information that can be generalized to different relationships within organizations. However, we focused on the follower–leader relationship for a number of reasons highlighted throughout the paper. First, it was a pragmatic first step in that the follower–leader working relationship is forced and ubiquitous, such that in most organizations, followers must report to a leader. If, on the other hand, we were to look at co-workers, there may be some co-workers with whom followers do not form any working relationship. Second, we wanted to examine some of the consequences of political knowledge and political influence more broadly, and theory would suggest that political knowledge will be more likely to be acquired and used by followers. From political influence perspective, followers must rely on means other than formal power or authority to bring around change in their workplace.

One future direction for research is whether the relationship between political knowledge and proactivity hinges on the mean level of knowledge about others, or rather the consistency of an individual's knowledge across multiple targets. In other words, will an individual engage in taking charge or speaking up if he or she knows a great deal about the preferences and priorities of some of his or her superiors but not others? Future research could explore these questions by looking at political knowledge through a social

network lens, such as thinking about the patterns of political knowledge or its absence across work groups.

A final direction for theory might be to integrate it with perspectives on human capital. Becker (1962), for instance, emphasizes the centrality of knowledge as a productive asset. However, this literature tends to conceive of knowledge in terms of technical know-how and specialized task knowledge. Our work may serve to widen this view and bring organizationally relevant but not narrowly task-related knowledge to the fore. Political knowledge may be a form of firm-specific knowledge (Wang & Barney, 2006) with limited transferability to other firms. As we have discussed, this distinguishes political knowledge from related political constructs which represent transferrable skills.

Implications for practice

Our work has several implications for practice. A long-standing question is how leaders might be able to encourage constructive but status quo challenging forms of proactivity from followers (Choi, 2007). Our work suggests that political knowledge may provide followers with the courage to engage in politically risky proactivity such as voice. If organizations want followers to speak up, take charge, and make changes to their work, they must find ways to make those kinds of proactivity seem less politically fraught. We conclude that followers high in political knowledge appear to believe they have the insight about their leader that is needed to be able to initiate change. We speculate that political knowledge makes this behaviour less risky by reducing the uncertainty and increasing confidence about leaders' responses.

The practical question is how to develop this kind of political knowledge in followers. Our research shows that some individual factors make a difference (i.e., political will and political skill), but these are difficult to cultivate in the workplace. A more promising direction comes from our findings about the context-specific and relationship-based correlates of political knowledge. We find that political knowledge is associated with having a high-quality relationship with one's leader. In short, one of the pay-offs of investments made into a follower-leader relationship is that the follower is better able to anticipate their leader's relationships, demands, resources, and preferences.

This creates a dilemma for leaders. The followers that leaders might naturally choose to work closely with, trust, and build relationships with are those who are already helpfully proactive, rather than those who are passive or timid. However, our findings suggest that leaders need to focus their attention on building these relationships with their least astute, least politically knowledgeable followers. Further complicating this is the potential perceptions of vulnerability that come from the disclosure of personal information, such as needs, preferences, and demands comprising political knowledge (Gibson *et al.*, 2018). Future research might consider ways (e.g., interventions aimed at relationship building or job crafting exercises) of training followers in the process of developing political knowledge.

Implications for research

The political knowledge construct offers an important extension to the political influence literature. Given our findings, we encourage researchers to consider political knowledge as a potentially intervening variable that helps to explain the previously demonstrated

associations between political skill and variables like contextual performance (Jawahar *et al.*, 2008) or impression management (Harris, Kacmar, Zivnuska, & Shaw, 2007). In addition, new lines of inquiry about the potential consequences of political knowledge are possible. Our research suggests that relationship quality with the influential target would be one particular idea to explore further (e.g., LMX; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Researchers might also want to consider looking at the relationship between political knowledge and other forms of proactivity (e.g., personal initiative, issue-selling; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, & Tag, 1997), influence strategies (e.g., upward influence tactics; Deluga & Perry, 1991; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1988), and downstream consequences for career progress (e.g., promotions), job satisfaction, job commitment, and work engagement.

Having a valid and reliable measure of political knowledge opens up a range of new directions for testing the political influence framework. In particular, it allows examination of the mechanisms between political skill (i.e., the ability to obtain political knowledge) and the outcomes of political skill already described in the literature. Ferris *et al.* (2005) define political skill as the ability to 'understand others at work, and to use such knowledge to influence others' (p. 291), but their measurement of political skill does not directly measure this understanding – simply the ability needed to obtain it or act upon it.

Conclusion

In this paper, we conceptualized and operationalized the idea of *political knowledge*: the degree to which an individual understands the relationships, demands, resources, and preferences of an influential target. Our goal was to integrate political knowledge into the political influence framework by applying the political influence perspective in relating it to and distinguishing it from its political precursors of political skill, political will, and political savvy. We highlighted the theoretical contribution of political knowledge towards understanding why some followers were more willing to engage in proactive behaviour. Across four studies, we found that political knowledge was higher among those who were politically skilled, politically willed, and politically savvy. We also generally found support for our hypotheses distinguishing political knowledge from political skill and political savvy with regard to contextual and relational factors. Finally, we found evidence for the mediating role of political knowledge in linking political skill and political will to proactivity. Taken together, these findings offer new insight into predicting which followers are more likely to engage in politically risky proactivity.

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Supporting Information

The following supporting information may be found in the online edition of the article:

Appendix S1. Scale development supplemental studies.

Appendix A

Political Knowledge Scale

Instructions: Most people know some things about their supervisor in great detail but know other things in much less detail. Think about each of the following and ask yourself how much or little you know about each with regard to your supervisor

  1 = *Not at all or in very little detail*
  2 = *In little detail*
  3 = *In some detail*
  4 = *In fair detail*
  5 = *In great detail or entirely*

1. The formal job demands my supervisor has to meet (DM)
2. What is expected of my supervisor by his or her superior (DM)
3. My supervisor's responsibilities (DM)
4. The demands my supervisor is under (DM)

Continued

Appendix A (*Continued*)

5. What it takes for my supervisor to do his or her job on a day-to-day basis (DM)
6. The targets or goals my supervisor has been assigned to accomplish (DM)
7. The pressure my supervisor faces to succeed day-to-day (DM)
8. Who my supervisor likes to work with the most (RN)
9. Who my supervisor gets along with at work (RN)
10. Which of my supervisor's employees are hardest to manage (RN)
11. Which of their employees stresses my supervisor out (RN)
12. Whose words and actions my supervisor pays close attention to (RN)
13. Who my supervisor dislikes working with the most (RN)
14. Whose opinions my supervisor relies on (RN)
15. Who my supervisor spends the most time with (RN)
16. Who my supervisor gossips with (RN)
17. The things that motivate my supervisor (e.g., energy, drive, expertise) to do his or her job (PF)
18. Which parts of my supervisor's job he or she finds the most invigorating (PF)
19. Which parts of my supervisor's job he or she derives the most meaning from (PF)
20. What kinds of tasks or interactions energize my supervisor (PF)
21. What kinds of experience my supervisor brings into his or her job (RS)
22. How qualified my supervisor is to do his or her job (RS)
23. What education or experience my supervisor has that helps him or her deal with his or her expectations (RS)

Notes. DM = demands and pressures; PF = preferences and motivations; RN = relational network; RS = resources and experience.

Appendix B

Bi-factor model comparisons of follower- and leader-reported political knowledge subdimensions, Study 3

Models	χ^2 (*df*)	*p*	RMSEA	CFI
Political knowledge – Demands				
(a) General factor model	669.76 (77)	.000	.20	.61
(b) Correlated factors model	125.28 (76)	.000	.06	.97
(c) Bi-factor model	89.64 (64)	.02	.05	.98
Political knowledge – Resources				
(a) General factor model	168.98 (9)	.000	.31	.60
(b) Correlated factors model	9.60 (8)	.29	.03	.99
(c) Bi-factor model	5.08 (4)	.28	.04	.99
Political knowledge – Preferences				
(a) General factor model	290.61 (20)	.000	.27	.57
(b) Correlated factors model	31.70 (19)	.000	.06	.98
(c) Bi-factor model	19.97 (13)	.10	.05	.99

Appendix B (*Continued*)

Political knowledge – Relations				
(a) General factor model	1,025.11 (135)	.000	.19	.50
(b) Correlated factors model	433.29 (134)	.000	.11	.83
(c) Bi-factor model	327.74 (118)	.000	.10	.88

Standardized factor loadings of bi-factor models, Study 3

Item

Political knowledge – Demands	Common factor	Self-rating factor	Other-rating factor
PK3 (self)	.213*	.690***	
PK8 (self)	.230**	.794***	
PK9 (self)	.327***	.794***	
PK10 (self)	.271**	.716***	
PK16 (self)	.359***	.744***	
PK17 (self)	.395***	.667***	
PK19 (self)	.349***	.707***	
FPK3 (observer)	.206*		.954**
FPK8 (observer)	.752***		.410*
FPK9 (observer)	.671***		.453*
FPK10 (observer)	.732***		.271*
FPK16 (observer)	.726***		.221*
FPK17 (observer)	.700***		.190
FPK19 (observer)	.615***		.388**

Political knowledge – Resources	Common factor	Self-rating factor	Other-rating factor
PK1 (self)	.561***	.460***	
PK2 (self)	.491***	.613***	
PK18 (self)	.485***	.661***	
FPK1 (observer)	.549***		.602***
FPK2 (observer)	.339***		.754***
FPK18 (observer)	.394***		.609***

Political knowledge – Preferences	Common factor	Self-rating factor	Other-rating factor
PK4 (self)	.308***	.606***	
PK11 (self)	.651***	.530***	
PK12 (self)	.592***	.579***	
PK20 (self)	.244	.855***	
FPK4 (observer)	.338***		.538***
FPK11 (observer)	.342***		.722***
FPK12 (observer)	.235*		.783***
FPK20 (observer)	.243*		.725***

Appendix B (*Continued*)

Political knowledge – Relations	Common factor	Self-rating factor	Other-rating factor
PK5 (self)	0.294*	0.788***	
PK6 (self)	0.388*	0.796***	
PK7 (self)	0.141	0.757***	
PK13 (self)	0.283†	0.696***	
PK14 (self)	0.175	0.619***	
PK15 (self)	0.495**	0.711***	
PK21 (self)	0.063	0.697***	
PK22 (self)	0.154	0.752***	
PK23 (self)	0.172	0.759***	
FPK5 (observer)	0.306*		0.661***
FPK6 (observer)	0.225†		0.665***
FPK7 (observer)	0.248*		0.711***
FPK13 (observer)	0.258**		0.577***
FPK14 (observer)	0.187†		0.618***
FPK15 (observer)	0.228*		0.601***
FPK21 (observer)	0.133		0.637***
FPK22 (observer)	0.293*		0.7***
FPK23 (observer)	0.107		0.695***

Bi-factor model comparisons of follower- and leader-reported political knowledge subdimensions, Study 4

Models	χ^2 (*df*)	*p*	RMSEA	CFI
Political knowledge – Demands				
(a) General factor model	473.65 (77)	.000	.20	.59
(b) Correlated factors model	105.14 (76)	.015	.06	.97
(c) Bi-factor model	82.77 (64)	.057	.05	.98
Political knowledge – Resources				
(a) General factor model	173.98 (10)	.000	.36	.51
(b) Correlated factors model	12.37 (8)	.135	.07	.99
(c) Bi-factor model	2.30 (4)	.682	.00	1.00
Political knowledge – Preferences				
(a) General factor model	200.26 (21)	.000	.26	.60
(b) Correlated factors model	23.17 (19)	.230	.04	.99
(c) Bi-factor model	13.51 (13)	.409	.02	1.00
Political knowledge – Relations				
(a) General factor model	679.19 (136)	.000	.18	.62
(b) Correlated factors model	259.52 (134)	.000	.09	.91
(c) Bi-factor model	195.49 (118)	.000	.07	.95

Standardized factor loadings of bi-factor models, Study 4

Item			
Political knowledge – Demands	Common factor	Self-rating factor	Other-rating factor
PK3 (self)	.510***	.627***	
PK8 (self)	.421***	.670***	
PK9 (self)	.381***	.713***	
PK10 (self)	.347***	.668***	
PK16 (self)	.454***	.675***	
PK17 (self)	.404***	.594***	
PK19 (self)	.517***	.519***	
FPK3 (observer)	.493***		.525***
FPK8 (observer)	.268†		.741***
FPK9 (observer)	.415**		.670***
FPK10 (observer)	.377**		.670***
FPK16 (observer)	.654***		.369**
FPK17 (observer)	.620***		.481**
FPK19 (observer)	.687***		.488**
Political knowledge – Resources	Common factor	Self-rating factor	Other-rating factor
PK1 (self)	.358***	.809***	
PK2 (self)	.512***	.602***	
PK18 (self)	.408**	.636***	
FPK1 (observer)	.379***		.829***
FPK2 (observer)	.669***		.495***
FPK18 (observer)	.333*		.738***
Political knowledge – Preferences	Common factor	Self-rating factor	Other-rating factor
PK4 (self)	.436***	.681***	
PK11 (self)	.332**	.869***	
PK12 (self)	.401***	.698***	
PK20 (self)	.378***	.558***	
FPK4 (observer)	.448***		.571***
FPK11 (observer)	.164		.914***
FPK12 (observer)	.580***		.523***
FPK20 (observer)	.614***		.406**
Political knowledge – Relations	Common factor	Self-rating factor	Other-rating factor
PK5 (self)	.665***	.482***	
PK6 (self)	.832***	.303**	
PK7 (self)	.583***	.609***	
PK13 (self)	.276**	.860***	
PK14 (self)	.480***	.516***	
PK15 (self)	.298*	.719***	
PK21 (self)	.68***	.391***	
PK22 (self)	.509***	.555***	
PK23 (self)	.467***	.636***	

Appendix B (*Continued*)

Political knowledge – Relations	Common factor	Self-rating factor	Other-rating factor
FPK5 (observer)	.583***		.723***
FPK6 (observer)	.565***		.620***
FPK7 (observer)	.348***		.673***
FPK13 (observer)	.155		.495***
FPK14 (observer)	.317***		.428***
FPK15 (observer)	.288**		.529***
FPK21 (observer)	.466***		.605***
FPK22 (observer)	.540***		.564***
FPK23 (observer)	.379***		.660***

Notes. $^{\dagger}p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.