
The future starts today, not tomorrow: How future focus promotes organizational citizenship behaviors

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Abstract

Future-oriented cognition has been shown to be an important driver of several functional behaviors. In the present article, we build and test theory empirically on the influence of dispositional future focus on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). We integrate future focus research with regulatory focus theory to examine the two regulatory foci (i.e. promotion and prevention focus) as mediating mechanisms through which future focus influences five distinct organizational citizenship behaviors (i.e. altruism, civic virtue, conscientiousness, courtesy, and sportsmanship). In line with our hypotheses, results from a study of 845 employees show that future focus has a positive influence on altruism, civic virtue, and courtesy over and above important predictors of OCB identified in previous research.

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Mediation analyses support our theoretical model, indicating that different OCBs are influenced by future focus through either promotion or prevention focus at work.

Keywords

future focus, future orientation, organizational citizenship behavior, regulatory focus, temporal focus

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; Organ and Ryan, 1995) has been deemed important to organizations' as well their workforces' performance (Podsakoff et al., 2000; Podsakoff et al., 2009; Sun et al., 2007). Like other extra-role behaviors, OCB reflects employees' desire to make the workplace a better place and to create a positive future for themselves and the organization. Thus, as OCB involves thinking about future improvements and anticipating or preventing problems, it appears plausible to assume that individuals with a future-oriented mindset will be more likely to engage in OCBs. Accordingly, organizational climates that value future-oriented cognition and behavior have been found to promote OCB (Jelinek and Ahearne, 2006). Similarly, transformational leadership, which entails future-oriented cognition (see Hinkin and Tracey, 1999), has been demonstrated to have a positive influence on OCB (Podsakoff et al., 1990). However, future-oriented cognition is not solely dependent on contextual conditions (such as organizational climate or leadership style). Individuals also display relatively stable differences in the extent to which they are inclined to attend to the future (Bluedorn, 2002; Shipp et al., 2009; Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999).¹ Currently, there is neither theory nor empirical research on whether and how such stable differences in individuals' future focus may influence OCB.

We argue that investigating dispositional future focus as an antecedent of OCB is important for a number of reasons. First, with increasing workplace dynamics, future-oriented cognition is gaining importance as a desirable yet underinvestigated employee characteristic (e.g. Strauss et al., 2012). For instance, future-oriented cognition has been associated with long-term planning (Das, 1987), which is beneficial for both employees (e.g. career planning) and organizations (e.g. strategic planning). Similarly, future focus may also be beneficial for other employee behaviors that benefit organizational functioning (e.g. extra-role behaviors). Second, future-oriented cognition is increasingly recognized as an important antecedent of self-initiated behavior (e.g. De Bilde et al., 2011; Strobel et al., 2011). Despite an increasing recognition that OCBs may have a future-related component (e.g. Dewett and Denisi, 2007), research has not considered individuals' stable future focus as a driver of OCB. Third, while there is theory and research on organizational future orientation (e.g. Bluedorn, 2000; Jelinek and Ahearne, 2006), our knowledge on the role of individuals' dispositional future-oriented cognition for employee behavior on the individual level is very limited (Shipp et al., 2009). Addressing this issue is important because future-oriented cognition has been demonstrated to be a beneficial antecedent of many general functional behaviors that are also important in organizations (e.g. planning and efficiency: Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999). Investigating dispositional future focus may thus provide a basis for understanding how the beneficial effects of individuals' future-oriented cognition can be leveraged and fostered in organizations.

The present study adopts an individual difference perspective on future focus' influence on different OCBs. We argue that individual future focus, the extent to which an individual devotes attention to the future (Shipp et al., 2009), influences engagement in OCBs, such that individuals high in future focus exhibit higher levels of engagement in OCBs. Moreover, we investigate the mediating mechanisms through which this dispositional characteristic affects OCB and differentiate between distinct types of OCB. Building on earlier theorizing (Dewett and Denisi, 2007; Moon et al., 2004), we draw on regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 1998) to propose promotion focus and prevention focus at work as two mechanisms that translate future focus into different OCBs.

Our research contributes to the literature in two ways. First, we extend the literature on dispositional antecedents of OCB (e.g. Chiaburu et al., 2011; Organ and Ryan, 1995; Raja and Johns, 2010) by building and testing theory on the influence of dispositional future focus on different types of OCB. In contrast to previous research that investigates relatively broad personality dispositions as antecedents of OCB (e.g. the big five personality dimensions: Chiaburu et al., 2011), we investigate a narrower personality trait. This is important because previous research indicates that narrow personality traits may have additional or even higher predictive validity for job performance over and above broad personality traits (e.g. Ashton, 1998; Tett et al., 2003). Concurrently, we also extend the comparatively scarce literature on future focus in the context of organizational behavior (see Shipp et al., 2009).

Second, we contribute to the OCB literature by responding to Spitzmuller et al.'s (2008) call to investigate the underlying mediators linking individual differences and OCB. In particular, Spitzmuller et al. (2008) have argued that personality affects OCB 'only to the extent that it influences thoughts and feelings about a job' (Spitzmuller et al., 2008: 110) and that it thus is important to investigate the mediators through which personality characteristics translate into the display of citizenship behaviors. Whereas most existing research has remained confined to the direct effects of individual differences on OCB (Ilies et al., 2006), our study integrates research on future-oriented cognition (Bluedorn, 2002; Shipp et al., 2009) with regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) to build and test theory on the indirect effects through which future focus exerts its influence on OCB. We combine and investigate empirically earlier theorizing (Dewett and Denisi, 2007; Moon et al., 2004) to inform the scholarly debate on the relationship between the two types of regulatory focus – promotion focus and prevention focus – and OCB.

Theory

The concept of future focus

The ability to envision future events and states and to fashion one's behavior accordingly has been called 'one of the most adaptive capacities of the human mind' (Szpunar et al., 2007: 642). Yet people differ in the extent to which they devote attention to the future (Bluedorn, 2002; Nuttin, 1985; Shipp et al., 2009). This individual difference characteristic has been termed future orientation (Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999) or future focus

(Shipp et al., 2009). Future-oriented cognition has been widely recognized as an important driver of human motivation and achievement (e.g. Aspinwall and Leaf, 2002; Fried and Slowik, 2004; Karniol and Ross, 1996; Nuttin, 1985; Raynor, 1969) and has been shown to be related to a number of functional behaviors (e.g. industriousness, conscientiousness, planning, and efficiency: Zimbardo and Boyd, 1999). In the present article, we investigate future focus as an antecedent of OCB, building on the notion that OCBs are extra-role behaviors that have a future-oriented component as they ultimately aim at future organizational improvements (Dewett and Denisi, 2007). Future-oriented thinking has also been deemed a core characteristic of proactive work behaviors (which are a related type of extra-role behaviors; Parker and Collins, 2010). Thus, whereas the extant literature on extra-role behaviors indicates that dispositional future focus may have an influence on OCBs, we have no indication to expect present and past orientation (Bluedorn, 2002; Shipp et al., 2009) to be OCB antecedents and therefore concentrate on future focus in the present study.

The importance of investigating temporal issues in organizational contexts has been recognized by a number of scholars (e.g. Ancona et al., 2001; Bluedorn and Denhardt, 1988; Bluedorn and Jaussi, 2008; Fried and Slowik, 2004; Seijts, 1998; Waller et al., 2001; Youssef and Luthans, 2007). Surprisingly, even though temporal research in organizational settings has been concerned with issues as diverse as time management (Macan, 1994), temporal congruency of team members (Gibson et al., 2007; Harrison et al., 2002; Mohammed and Nadkarni, 2011), and the experience of timelessness (Mainemelis, 2001), only a few studies have investigated the consequences of future-oriented cognition for work behavior and attitudes empirically (e.g. Das, 1987; Foo et al., 2009; Shipp et al., 2009). Interestingly, while there are a few studies showing that future-oriented cognition is associated with functional attitudes and behaviors in the workplace (e.g. longer strategic planning horizons, engagement in tasks that go beyond immediate requirements: Das, 1987; Foo et al., 2009), its influence on OCB has not been investigated so far. However, there are some studies that have investigated associations between variables that are related conceptually to future focus and OCB, respectively (Jelinek and Ahearne, 2006; Joireman et al., 2006; Lee et al., 2006; Podsakoff et al., 1990), which we will review in the following section.

The influence of future focus on different OCBs

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) has been defined by Organ (1988: 4) as 'individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization'. Since Organ's (1988) definition, organizational citizenship behaviors have been the subject of numerous investigations (Podsakoff et al., 2009). Our research links two important streams of OCB research, namely research on individual predictors of OCB (e.g. Organ and Ryan, 1995) and research that recognizes the future-oriented component that is inherent in OCB (e.g. Dewett and Denisi, 2007).

The first stream of research builds on the notion that OCB is discretionary and will therefore be strongly influenced by individual inclinations to perform it (Chiaburu et al., 2011; Spitzmuller et al., 2008). Accordingly, research has identified a number of personality

predictors of OCB such as conscientiousness and agreeableness (Chiaburu et al., 2011; Organ and Ryan, 1995; Podsakoff et al., 2000) as well as trait positive and negative affectivity (Organ and Ryan, 1995; Podsakoff et al., 2000). Moreover, some more narrowly defined personality traits have been identified as antecedents of OCB, such as proactive personality (Li et al., 2010). Proactive personality captures ‘differences among people in the extent to which they take action to influence their environments’ (Bateman and Crant, 1993: 103) and may thus be seen as conceptually linked to but distinct from future focus (see Parker and Collins, 2010).

The second major stream our research relates to is based on the notion that OCBs are inherently future-oriented behaviors. Several OCB dimensions have been linked theoretically to future-oriented cognition because they entail behaviors that aim at changing the workplace to a better future state (Dewett and Denisi, 2007; Moorman and Blakely, 1995; Van Dyne and LePine, 1998). Additionally, researchers have argued that work contexts that emphasize future goals and outcomes will increase employee engagement in OCB (e.g. Lee et al., 2006) because many citizenship behaviors entail an effort to change something for the better in the future. In this vein, empirical findings indicate that a future-oriented context at work may indeed foster employee engagement in discretionary behaviors. Podsakoff et al. (1990) detected a positive relationship between transformational leadership, which in itself is future-oriented (see Hinkin and Tracey, 1999), and employee OCB. Whereas Lee et al. (2006) hypothesized (but did not find) a significant positive relationship between future planning of the firm and extra-role performance, a study of salespeople by Jelinek and Ahearne (2006) found a positive relationship between long-term planning of an organization and OCB of its members. Similarly, Joireman et al. (2006) examined the effects of employees’ anticipated length of employment with their organization (short vs long-term future time horizon) on OCB. Their study demonstrates that employees who anticipate a long-term time horizon of being employed with their organization are more likely to engage in OCB than employees anticipating a shorter-term employment with their current organization.

Our study links these two streams of research by investigating future focus as a dispositional predictor of OCB. As OCB is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, our research relies on Organ’s (1988) established model, which differentiates between altruism, civic virtue, conscientiousness, courtesy, and sportsmanship as distinct OCBs (for reviews, see Podsakoff et al., 2000; Spitzmuller et al., 2008). Overall, we expect a positive relationship between future focus and these five different dimensions of OCB. In the following paragraphs, we derive the hypothesized relationships between future focus and the five OCB dimensions.

Altruism. According to Organ (1990: 96), altruism ‘consists of those voluntary actions that help another person with a work (related) problem’. We argue that future focus will have a positive influence on altruism behaviors, for the following reasons. First, a future-oriented mindset may remind individuals of future potential interactions with their co-workers, which may lead them to be more attentive and helpful toward colleagues because they realize that they are likely to see each other again in the future. Second, helping others at the workplace may go along with a future expectation of reciprocal help

which may not be returned immediately (Aryee et al., 2002; Mossholder et al., 2011; Schnake, 1991). Thus, as future focus may prompt individuals to hold a long-term perspective on their social relationships at work, it may make them more likely to engage in helping behaviors. We therefore propose:

Hypothesis 1a: Future focus will be positively related to altruism.

Civic virtue. Civic virtue has been defined as ‘behavior indicating that employees take an active interest in the life of their organization’ (Podsakoff et al., 2009: 123). We posit that civic virtue will also be positively influenced by future focus. First, future-oriented employees are more likely to think about developments and changes that may affect the organization in the future (Das, 1987). Civic virtue behaviors entail monitoring the environment for changes that may affect the organization in the future (see Podsakoff et al., 2000) and attending organizational meetings to keep abreast of changes inside and outside the organization (Podsakoff et al., 1990). Therefore, future focus may prompt individuals to exhibit civic virtue behaviors. Second, individuals high in future focus may also be more likely to be concerned about how the organization’s image or reputation may develop in the future. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that such individuals will exhibit high levels of interest in functions that foster the corporate image, which is part of civic virtue behaviors (Podsakoff et al., 1990). We therefore propose:

Hypothesis 1b: Future focus will be positively related to civic virtue.

Conscientiousness. Conscientiousness has been defined as ‘behavior indicating that employees accept and adhere to the rules, regulations, and procedures of the organization’ (Podsakoff et al., 2009: 123). We expect that conscientiousness will be positively influenced by future focus. First, future-focused thinking leads individuals to think more about their future career development (Marko and Savickas, 1998; Savickas, 1997), which may lead to enhanced levels of conscientiousness as such behavior is generally positively rewarded and may contribute to career advancement. Second, future-oriented individuals are more prone to consider the negative future consequences of present behavior (Kees, 2011). Thus, we argue that highly future-oriented employees may also be more likely than less future-oriented employees to realize the potential negative consequences of failing to show conscientious citizenship behaviors, which may make them more likely to behave in a conscientious manner. Therefore, we derive:

Hypothesis 1c: Future focus will be positively related to conscientiousness.

Courtesy. Courtesy has been conceptualized as ‘subsum[ing] all of those foresightful gestures that help someone else prevent a problem’ (Organ, 1990: 96). We hypothesize that future focus will be related positively to courtesy for the following reasons. First, future-oriented individuals are prone to consider the future implications of their own behavior (Gjesme, 1983). Because courtesy citizenship behaviors consist of preventing

problems for co-workers (Podsakoff et al., 2000), we expect that future-oriented individuals are also likely to show high levels of behavior targeted toward preventing problems for their colleagues. Second, as individuals high in future focus are more likely to picture how their behaviors will affect others in the future, they will be more mindful to how their behavior may affect others in the future and will therefore be likely to try to avoid creating problems for their co-workers. Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 1d: Future focus will be positively related to courtesy.

Sportsmanship. Sportsmanship ‘is defined as a willingness on the part of employees to tolerate less than ideal circumstances without complaining and making problems seem bigger than they actually are’ (Podsakoff et al., 2009: 123). We propose that higher levels of future focus will be related positively to sportsmanship behaviors. First, individuals with higher levels of future focus are likely to focus on future improvements (Youssef and Luthans, 2007) and should, therefore, be less likely to complain about present trivial matters. Second, highly future-focused individuals are more likely than less future-focused individuals to see the big picture, which, in turn, should also make them less likely to overreact to negative trifles (Youssef and Luthans, 2007). We therefore propose:

Hypothesis 1e: Future focus will be related positively to sportsmanship.

Regulatory focus as a mediator linking future focus and OCB

We now turn to the mechanisms linking future focus with different OCBs. Spitzmuller et al. (2008) have noted that, although numerous personality dispositions have been proposed and found to be predictive of OCBs, only a few studies have examined the ways through which personality dispositions translate into OCBs. We argue that future focus exerts its influence on the five OCB dimensions through different channels. We build our argument on the existing literature that has suggested self-regulatory processes to mediate the influence of distal personality antecedents on different work outcomes (e.g. Kanfer, 1990; Wallace et al., 2005), which has been supported recently by a comprehensive meta-analysis (Lanaj et al., 2012). Building on this notion (see also Strobel et al. 2011), we integrate future focus and regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) to argue that future focus influences OCBs through its effect on self-regulatory processes at work. We use regulatory focus theory because prior research has demonstrated its usefulness for explaining the psychological mechanisms of the personality–job performance relationship (Wallace and Chen, 2006).

Regulatory focus (Higgins, 1997, 1998) has been deemed an important construct in organizational behavior research for investigating motivation at work (Chatman and Flynn, 2005), and recent research has shown the usefulness of the regulatory focus concept in explaining work behaviors (e.g. Neubert et al., 2008; Wallace and Chen, 2006; Wallace et al., 2009). Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) posits promotion and prevention focus as two basic self-regulatory orientations. Individuals with a promotion focus strive for approaching future gains and focus on their advancement and

accomplishment needs. In contrast, individuals with a prevention focus try to avoid future losses and focus on their safety and security concerns. However, the two regulatory foci are not to be considered as opposites, but rather as independent from each other, such that individuals can be high or low on either focus or on both foci at the same time. Accordingly, research has found weak to moderate associations between the two regulatory foci (Wallace and Chen, 2006; Wallace et al., 2009; see also Forster et al., 2003). Only few empirical studies have linked regulatory focus and OCB explicitly, producing inconsistent results. For instance, Wallace et al. (2009) hypothesized that prevention focus would be negatively related to OCB, but the predicted negative relationship was supported only for OCBs targeted at individuals, but not for OCBs targeted at the organization. In contrast, promotion focus was, as expected, positively associated with both types of OCB. Moreover, De Cremer et al. (2009) also found inconsistent results regarding the relationship between regulatory focus and OCB across different studies.

Aiming at clarifying these discrepancies, we build on existing theoretical typologies of OCB (Dewett and Denisi, 2007; Moon et al., 2004) to distinguish between two general types of OCB that are influenced differentially by promotion and prevention regulatory focus, respectively. The first conceptualization by Dewett and Denisi (2007) distinguishes between 'change-related' and 'maintenance' citizenship behaviors, whereas the second conceptualization by Moon et al. (2004) distinguishes between 'promotive' and 'protective' citizenship behaviors. We integrate these two largely overlapping conceptualizations to propose that future focus differentially affects two general types of OCB through enhancing promotion and prevention regulatory focus, respectively. Developing our proposed mediation model, we first explicate how future focus affects promotion and prevention regulatory focus. Subsequently, we will explain how the two regulatory foci – as mediators of the influence of future focus – in turn prompt OCBs that correspond to the respective regulatory focus.

We propose future focus to increase the strength of both regulatory orientations (i.e. promotion focus and prevention focus) at work. Consistent with research that demonstrates effects of personality dispositions on self-regulation (for review, see McCrae and Löckenhoff, 2010), we argue that individuals higher in future focus will also show higher levels of both promotion and prevention-oriented self-regulatory efforts. This is because future-focused individuals attend to the future to a greater extent than less future-focused individuals and hence are more likely to engage in self-regulatory efforts to influence their future at work. In line with this argument, Karniol and Ross (1996) have pointed out that future-oriented individuals can bridge the gap between their current actions and their possible future more effectively through creating images of possible future selves (see Markus and Nurius, 1986), which in turn strengthens their self-regulatory efforts to set and pursue goals for the future. Thus, we argue that high levels of future focus will strengthen both promotion and prevention regulatory focus at work. We propose that it is through these two regulatory mechanisms that future focus affects two distinct types of OCBs each of which corresponds to one of the two regulatory mechanisms.

We have argued above that individuals with high levels of future focus will adopt high levels of promotion focus at work. This means that growth and advancement needs are highlighted and self-regulatory efforts are activated that aim at creating and approaching

desirable situations and outcomes at work (see Wallace et al., 2009). As a consequence, individuals adopting a promotion focus at work will be prone to exhibit citizenship behaviors that fulfill promotion-oriented needs and help to achieve promotion-oriented goals (see Dewett and Denisi, 2007). This reasoning is in line with the view that different types of OCBs can be distinguished by having different antecedents (see Moon et al., 2004) and that specific OCBs are predicted best by individual dispositions that correspond thematically to them (Chiaburu et al., 2011; Ilies et al., 2009). Thus, we propose that promotion focus mediates the effect of future focus on OCBs that serve promotion-oriented goals.

There are two theoretical frameworks that provide a basis for characterizing OCBs that are in line with a promotion orientation. Dewett and Denisi (2007) have termed such citizenship behaviors that aim at organizational advancement as ‘change-related’ citizenship behaviors. These behaviors include personal initiative, taking charge, civic virtue, and voice behaviors (see also Van Dyne et al., 1995). While Dewett and Denisi (2007) propose an association between promotion regulatory focus and such change-related citizenship behaviors, this proposition has not yet been tested empirically. A related theoretical typology defines such discretionary behaviors that enable organizational adaptation as ‘promotive’ citizenship behaviors (Marinova et al., 2010; Moon et al., 2004; see also Van Dyne et al., 1995). Slightly differing from Dewett and Denisi’s (2007) conceptualization of change-related OCBs, the concept of promotive OCBs also includes altruism and helping behaviors as positive interpersonal behaviors that contribute to organizational advancement and efficiency (Moon et al., 2004). As this view of altruism as promotive behavior is more widespread (see, for example, Marinova et al., 2010; Moon et al., 2004; Van Dyne et al., 1995; Van Dyne and LePine, 1998) than Dewett and Denisi’s (2007) conceptualization of altruism as maintenance behavior, and as research supports a positive association between leadership-style-induced promotion focus and helping behavior (Neubert et al., 2008), we build our prediction on the notion that altruism bears promotion-oriented characteristics. Within Organ’s (1988) five-factor model of OCB, two citizenship behaviors can be characterized as citizenship behaviors that promote positive organizational development, adaptation, and change, namely altruism and civic virtue. These types of citizenship behaviors are therefore in line with the motivational tendencies entailed by a promotion focus. We thus propose that future focus positively affects these behaviors through enhancing promotion regulatory focus at work:

Hypothesis 2a: The influence of future focus on altruism will be mediated by promotion focus at work (but not by prevention focus at work).

Hypothesis 2b: The influence of future focus on civic virtue will be mediated by promotion focus at work (but not by prevention focus at work).

As discussed above, we argue that high levels of future focus may also enhance a prevention focus. Adopting a prevention focus means that an individual’s need for safety and security that aims to avoid undesirable developments at work will be highlighted. As a consequence, individuals adopting a prevention focus will be likely to engage in OCBs that match this prevention-oriented motivation aimed at safety and security. As in the case of promotion focus discussed above, this view is in accordance with the notion that

distinct OCBs are fueled by corresponding individual dispositions (Chiaburu et al., 2011; Ilies et al., 2009). We therefore propose that prevention focus mediates the influence of future focus on OCBs that serve prevention-oriented goals.

Such OCBs that serve the goal of achieving and maintaining a secure and stable work environment have been termed ‘maintenance’ citizenship behaviors in the framework by Dewett and Denisi (2007) and ‘protective’ citizenship behaviors in the framework discussed by Moon et al. (2004). Such behaviors include conscientiousness, courtesy, and sportsmanship (Dewett and Denisi, 2007; Moon et al., 2004). Dewett and Denisi (2007) posit a positive relationship between prevention focus and maintenance-related citizenship behaviors theoretically, but this has yet to be investigated empirically.

In Organ’s (1988) five-factor model, conscientiousness involves obeying company rules (Podsakoff et al., 1990) and thus ensures the stability of organizational norms and organizational performance (Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1997), while courtesy and sportsmanship prevent interpersonal problems at work and contribute to avoiding undesirable negative affective events at the workplace (Moon et al., 2004; Podsakoff et al., 1990). Thus, this group of OCBs serves goals that are in accordance with a prevention focus. Furthermore, such behaviors are not very risky to perform, as they are unlikely to have negative consequences or be negatively evaluated by others, and therefore match a prevention focus (Crowe and Higgins, 1997). In summary, we argue that future-oriented individuals will be more likely to adopt a prevention focus and thus engage in protective (Moon et al., 2004) or maintenance (Dewett and Denisi, 2007) citizenship behaviors. We thus propose:

Hypothesis 2c: The influence of future focus on conscientiousness will be mediated by prevention focus at work (but not by promotion focus at work).

Hypothesis 2d: The influence of future focus on courtesy will be mediated by prevention focus at work (but not by promotion focus at work).

Hypothesis 2e: The influence of future focus on sportsmanship will be mediated by prevention focus at work (but not by promotion focus at work).

Methods

Participants and procedure

The participants of our study were part of a larger representative sample of adults in a German federated state. They were recruited by a professional research service company which invited the participants to the online survey. Each participant received a unique identification number such that the identity of the participants remained anonymous to the researchers. Participants were assured anonymity and confidentiality of the results. The data collection was part of a larger project on work arrangements and work–life balance, which was also communicated to participants as the study objective in the instructions. Participation was voluntary, and participants received a monetary reward upon completion. To alleviate potential common method problems, we used a multiple administration design with two points of measurement. The questionnaire at Time 1 contained our measures of future focus, promotion focus and prevention focus. The questionnaire at Time 2 (four weeks after Time 1) contained the measures of the five OCB dimensions as our

dependent variables as well as measures of (dispositional) conscientiousness, proactive personality, job satisfaction, and social desirability as control variables. Sociodemographic information was collected at both times of measurement.

Responses at Times 1 and 2 were matched using participants' unique identification numbers. For the initial wave of the study, a total of 5527 participants clicked on the study link, 2741 of which completed the survey at Time 1, resulting in a response rate of 50 per cent (complete responses). For study 2, the goal was to obtain responses from half of the Time 1 sample. From initially 1691 individuals who had completed the Time 1 survey and were invited to participate in the Time 2 survey as well, 1357 completed the Time 2 survey, resulting in a response rate of 80 per cent (complete responses).² In the final data set, there were no missing values because we excluded all incomplete responses. Individuals who were not employed at one or both of the two points of time were excluded from the present study, resulting in $N = 845$ employee participants in total.

On average, participants were $M = 39.62$ years old ($SD = 10.46$, range: 16–66 years), of which 55 per cent were female. As their highest degree, about half of the participants reported middle school with a degree after 10th grade (53%). The other half had at least a high school degree (19%), college or university degree (25%), doctoral degree (2%), or other degrees (1%). Our study sample comprised a broad variety of industries such as production/manufacturing (15%), services excluding technical/scientific/business/financial services (12%), human health and social work (12%), public administration (10%), business and financial services (10%), and information/communication (7%), which were the most frequently occurring industries. Participants reported an average work experience of 17.58 years ($SD = 11.28$) and had been working with their current employer for an average of 9.02 years ($SD = 9.01$).

Measures

Future focus. Future focus was operationalized by the three highest loading items of the future subdimension of Shipp et al.'s (2009) temporal focus scale (sample item: 'I focus on my future.'). The scale assesses the extent to which individuals think about the future. Participants provided their frequency estimates on 5-point scales from 1 ('never') to 5 ('constantly').

Regulatory focus. Regulatory focus at work was assessed with the regulatory focus at work scale (Wallace et al., 2009). Promotion focus ('I focus on getting a lot of work finished in a short amount of time.') and prevention focus ('I focus on fulfilling my work obligations.') were assessed with the three highest loading items from each of the two dimensions, respectively. Items were to be rated on 7-point scales ranging from 1 ('not at all') to 7 ('very much').

OCB. OCB was assessed with a measure developed by Podsakoff et al. (1990) in a German adaptation by Staufienbiel and Hartz (2000). The adapted version comprises the OCB dimensions of altruism ('I am always ready to lend a helping hand to those around me.'), civic virtue ('I read and keep up with organization announcements, memos, and so on.'), conscientiousness ('I obey company rules and regulations even when no one is watching.'), and sportsmanship ('I tend to make 'mountains out of molehills.', reverse coded). As

courtesy did not clearly emerge as a fifth factor in Staufenbiel and Hartz' (2000) version, we used the original items of the courtesy dimension by Podsakoff et al. (1990). We used the three highest loading items from each OCB subscale (Podsakoff et al., 1990; Staufenbiel and Hartz, 2000). Respondents rated the extent to which each of the OCB items characterized their own behavior on a scale ranging from 1 ('not at all') to 7 ('very much').

To control for key predictors of OCB, we included the personality factor of conscientiousness (e.g. Chiaburu et al., 2011), proactive personality (e.g. Li et al., 2010), and job satisfaction (e.g. Ilies et al., 2009) in addition to the sociodemographic variables sex and age as control variables. Following Schnake's (1991) recommendation, we also controlled for social desirability.

Conscientiousness. We used the conscientiousness subscale of the Ten Item Personality Inventory (Gosling et al., 2003), which consists of two items to be rated on a scale ('I see myself as dependable, self-disciplined.') ranging from 1 'strongly disagree' to 7 'strongly agree'.

Proactive personality. In line with Parker (1998), we used six items of the proactive personality scale by Bateman and Crant (1993), which assesses a dispositional inclination toward proactive behavior ('If I see something I don't like, I fix it.'). Items were to be rated on a 7-point scale (1 'strongly disagree' to 7 'strongly agree').

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was assessed with the three-item job satisfaction subscale of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Cammann et al., 1983: 'All in all I am satisfied with my job.') to be rated on a 7-point scale (1 'strongly disagree' to 7 'strongly agree').

Social desirability. We chose three items from Crowne and Marlowe's (1960) social desirability scale that plausibly represent the extent to which individuals tend to overstate their societally approved behavior ('When I don't know something I don't at all mind admitting it.') on a 7-point scale (1 'not at all true for me' to 7 'very true for me').

Data analysis

To test our main effect hypotheses (H1a-e), we applied multiple ordinary least square regression analyses. To test our mediation hypotheses (H2a-e), we employed the regression-based analytical procedures for testing multiple mediator models using the SPSS macro INDIRECT provided by Preacher and Hayes (2008).

Results

Descriptive statistics, reliabilities, and correlations are displayed in Table 1.

Confirmatory factor analysis

To examine the dimensionality of our study measures, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis on the main study variables. First, we tested a five-factor model of the OCB

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations of the study variables.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Sex (0 = female)	.45	.50	–													
2. Age	39.62	10.46	.04	–												
3. Conscientiousness (T2)	5.70	.97	-.06	.04	(.59)											
4. Proactive personality (T2)	4.89	.97	.06	.00	.23	(.84)										
5. Job satisfaction (T2)	5.31	1.46	-.06	.12	.15	.25	(.92)									
6. Social desirability (T2)	3.18	.67	.07	.10	.11	.13	.11	(.42)								
7. Future focus (T1)	3.72	.72	.07	-.17	.05	.25	-.06	-.01	(.86)							
8. Prevention focus (T1)	6.28	.87	-.14	.08	.16	.16	.19	.10	.09	(.89)						
9. Promotion focus (T1)	5.04	1.29	-.03	-.01	.11	.25	.10	.07	.24	.36	(.76)					
10. OCB – altruism (T2)	5.39	.99	-.10	.14	.21	.38	.33	.23	.12	.22	.21	(.76)				
11. OCB – civic virtue (T2)	5.39	1.14	-.01	.03	.17	.42	.36	.13	.12	.17	.26	.47	(.83)			
12. OCB – conscientiousness (T2)	6.32	.82	-.13	.09	.27	.10	.21	.08	.03	.26	.17	.23	.26	(.66)		
13. OCB – courtesy (T2)	5.56	.93	-.15	.06	.27	.35	.29	.23	.18	.27	.23	.60	.43	.30	(.82)	
14. OCB – sportsmanship (T2)	2.30	1.11	.07	-.23	-.19	-.15	-.27	-.21	.06	-.08	.02	-.28	-.20	-.16	-.31	(.77)

Note. N = 845; T1 = variable was assessed at Time 1; T2 = variable was assessed at Time 2; OCB = organizational citizenship behavior. For all correlations $|r| > .06, p < .05$; internal consistencies (Cronbach's α) are shown in brackets.

dimensions that showed adequate fit to our data, $\chi^2(80) = 243.96$, $p < .01$, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .05, TLI = .95, CFI = .96, and also fit better than all possible four-, three-, two- and one-factor models, $\chi^2(84-90) > 460.43$, $ps < .01$, RMSEAs $> .07$, SRMRs $> .04$, TLIs $< .92$, CFIs $< .94$. Second, we tested a two-factor model of the regulatory focus measures which also fit well, $\chi^2(8) = 33.24$, $p < .01$, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .04, TLI = .98, CFI = .99, and better than a one-factor model, $\chi^2(9) = 601.55$, $p < .01$, RMSEA = .28, SRMR = .15, TLI = .59, CFI = .76. Finally, we tested a model that included all our main study variables (i.e. future focus, promotion focus, prevention focus, altruism, civic virtue, conscientiousness, courtesy, and sportsmanship). The expected eight-factor model provided adequate fit to the data, $\chi^2(224) = 554.15$, $p < .01$, RMSEA = .04, SRMR = .04, TLI = .95, CFI = .96. The expected model also fit the data better than all other plausible models, $\chi^2(231-252) > 1187.34$, $ps < .01$, RMSEAs $> .07$, SRMRs $> .07$, TLIs $< .87$, CFIs $< .89$. The results thus support the discriminant validity of the main study measures.

Hypothesis testing

Our five main effect hypotheses suggested a positive relationship between future focus and altruism (H1a), civic virtue (H1b), conscientiousness (H1c), courtesy (H1d), and sportsmanship (H1e). To test these hypotheses, we regressed all five OCBs on future focus, while controlling for sex, age, conscientiousness (i.e. the big five personality factor), proactive personality, job satisfaction, and social desirability (see Table 2).

Future focus had a positive and significant influence on altruism ($\beta = .09$, $p < .01$), supporting H1a, and on civic virtue ($\beta = .06$, $p = .05$), supporting H1b. Contrary to H1c, future focus did not predict conscientiousness significantly ($\beta = .05$, ns). Supporting H1d, future focus had a positive and significant influence on courtesy ($\beta = .16$, $p < .01$). Finally, counter to H1e, future focus did not predict sportsmanship significantly ($\beta = .04$, ns).

Table 2. Regression results for future focus predicting the five organizational citizenship behaviors.

	OCB – altruism	OCB – civic virtue	OCB – conscientiousness	OCB – courtesy	OCB – sportsmanship
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Sex (0 = female)	-.12**	-.02	-.12**	-.17**	.07*
Age	.11**	.00	.07*	.05	-.18**
Conscientiousness	.09**	.05	.23**	.16**	-.12**
Proactive personality	.28**	.32**	.00	.22**	-.07*
Job satisfaction	.21**	.27**	.16**	.18**	-.19**
Social desirability	.15**	.05	.04	.17**	-.15**
Future focus	.09**	.06*	.05	.16**	.04
R^2_{adj}	.26	.25	.12	.26	.16
F	44.21	40.57	17.05	43.62	23.47

Note. $N = 845$; OCB = organizational citizenship behavior; table shows standardized coefficients.

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$.

To test our mediation hypotheses, we computed a multiple mediator model using the regression-based procedures developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008). We estimated multiple mediator models with promotion and prevention focus as simultaneous mediators of the relationship between future focus and the respective OCB. The procedures recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008) consist of computing a bootstrapped confidence interval around the indirect effects (i.e. the paths through the mediators). If this interval does not include zero, a significant mediation effect through the proposed mediator can be inferred (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). The results of these multiple mediation tests are displayed in Table 3.

H2a stated that the influence of future focus on altruism will be mediated by promotion focus at work. In line with H2a, we found a significant indirect effect of future focus on altruism through promotion focus (standardized indirect effect: $ab = .0147$; bias corrected and accelerated 95% confidence interval [95%CI_{BCA}]: $.0004 \leq ab \leq .0344$), but not through prevention focus (bootstrapped confidence interval includes zero; see Table 3). Thus, our results supported H2a.

H2b stated that the influence of future focus on civic virtue will be mediated by promotion focus. Consistent with H2b, there was a significant indirect effect of future focus on civic virtue through promotion focus (standardized indirect effect: $ab = .0293$; 95%CI_{BCA}: $.0137 \leq ab \leq .0498$), but not through prevention focus (bootstrapped confidence interval includes zero; see Table 3). Thus, H2b was also supported by the data.

H2c predicted an indirect effect of future focus on conscientiousness through prevention focus. As there was no significant direct influence of future focus on conscientiousness, we did not conduct mediation analyses for conscientiousness, and conclude that H2c was not supported.

Table 3. Indirect effects of future focus on altruism, civic virtue and courtesy through the two regulatory foci prevention and promotion focus.

	Standardized indirect effect ^a	LB 95% CI ^b	UB 95% CI ^b	Bootstrap SE
<i>Altruism</i>				
Total indirect effect	.0201	.0056	.0397	.0087
Indirect effect through prevention focus	.0055	-.0004	.0164	.0041
Indirect effect through promotion focus	.0147	.0004	.0344	.0085
<i>Civic virtue</i>				
Total indirect effect	.0306	.0149	.0512	.0092
Indirect effect through prevention focus	.0012	-.0058	.0110	.0041
Indirect effect through promotion focus	.0293	.0137	.0498	.0091
<i>Courtesy</i>				
Total indirect effect	.0237	.0086	.0426	.0087
Indirect effect through prevention focus	.0108	.0030	.0225	.0049
Indirect effect through promotion focus	.0129	-.0003	.0300	.0077

Note. CI = confidence interval.

^aBootstrapped standardized indirect effect.

^bBias corrected and accelerated 95% confidence interval (LB = lower bound, UB = upper bound).

H2d stated that the influence of future focus on courtesy will be mediated by prevention focus. In line with H2d, we detected a significant indirect effect of future focus on conscientiousness through prevention focus (standardized indirect effect: $ab = .0108$; $95\%CI_{BCA}: .0030 \leq ab \leq .0225$), but not through promotion focus (bootstrapped confidence interval includes zero; see Table 3). Hence, H2d was supported.

H2e predicted an indirect effect of future focus on sportsmanship through prevention focus. As future focus did not significantly impact sportsmanship, we did not conduct mediation analyses for sportsmanship, and conclude that H2e was not supported.

The resulting three multiple mediator models and their standardized path estimates are displayed in Figure 1 (altruism), Figure 2 (civic virtue), and Figure 3 (courtesy), respectively.

Discussion

General discussion

The main objective of this study was to investigate the influence of future focus on different OCBs. In line with our hypotheses, our results consistently indicate that individuals' future focus is associated positively with OCBs that contribute to organizational adaptation and change (i.e. altruism and civic virtue), and that this influence is mediated by promotion focus at work. Moreover, investigating how future focus affects OCBs that contribute to continuity and interpersonal security and stability at work (i.e. conscientiousness, courtesy, and sportsmanship), we predicted and found a positive association of future focus, with courtesy being mediated through prevention focus at work. However, contrary to our hypotheses, we found no association between future focus and the OCB dimensions of conscientiousness and sportsmanship (and, consequently, no mediation effects for these relationships).

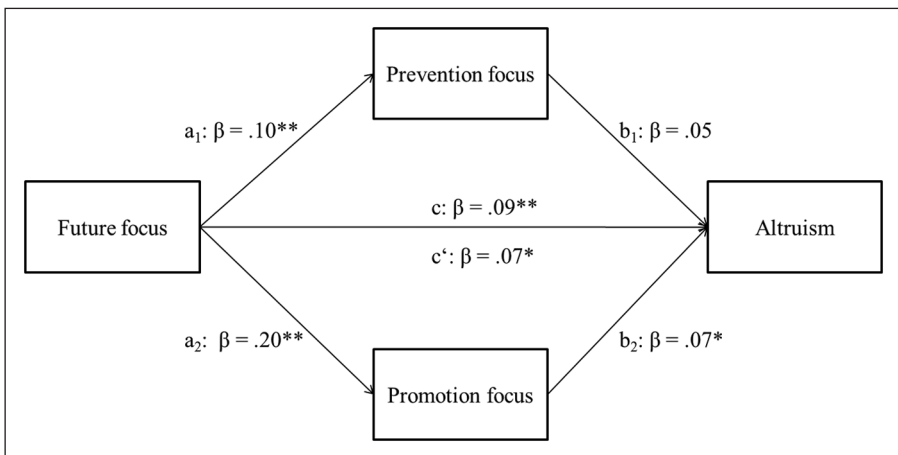


Figure 1. Multiple mediator model showing the influence of future focus on altruism through prevention and promotion focus at work.

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

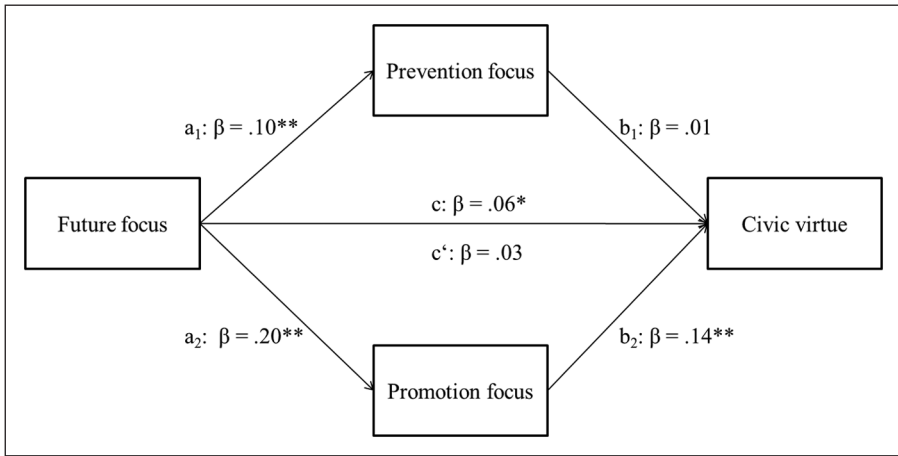


Figure 2. Multiple mediator model showing the influence of future focus on civic virtue through prevention and promotion focus at work.
 * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

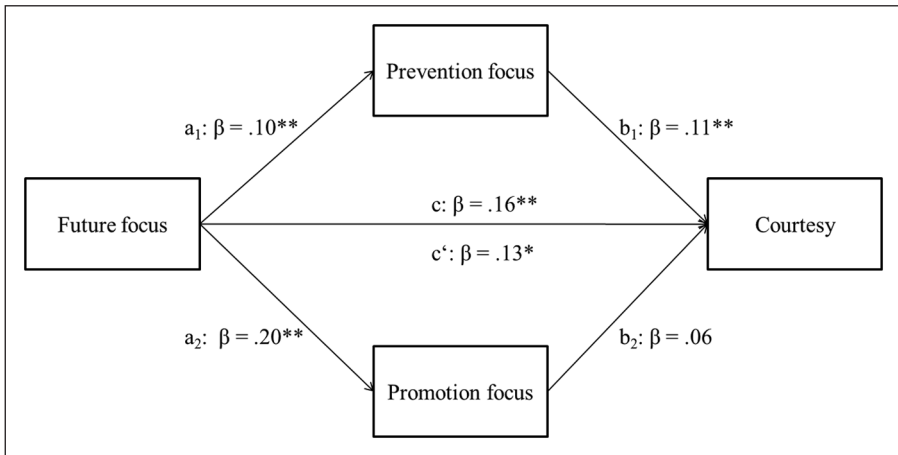


Figure 3. Multiple mediator model showing the influence of future focus on courtesy through prevention and promotion focus at work.
 * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

One explanation for the non-significant relationship with conscientiousness may be that for conscientiousness future focus may not be crucial as the consequences of a lack of conscientiousness in many cases will show immediately. As a lack of conscientiousness is often immediately sanctioned in companies (e.g. failing to obey company rules), these short-term consequences may weigh heavier in the decision to display such behaviors than their long-term consequences. In a similar vein, sportsmanship behaviors may also be less characterized by future-oriented considerations than the other OCB dimensions. In particular, sportsmanship refers to not complaining unnecessarily or making a big deal out of small matters (Diefendorff et al., 2002), which may pertain to behaviors

that are more relevant in the here and now than in the more distant future. In contrast, the dimensions of altruism, civic virtue, and courtesy reflect behaviors that might be motivated by the achievement of a certain goal in the future. For instance, when helping colleagues, employees may think about likewise receiving support in reciprocity in the future (Schnake, 1991). Similarly, civic virtue involves keeping up with changes in the organization (Podsakoff et al., 1990), which also requires a high concern about future developments. Thus, although it can be argued that OCBs generally entail thinking forward, it might be that future-oriented considerations play a less important role for conscientiousness and sportsmanship behaviors.

Our results support the value of distinguishing between OCBs motivated by a promotion regulatory focus and OCBs motivated by a prevention regulatory focus, as has been suggested in earlier theorizing by Dewett and Denisi (2007). Integrating this general idea with the theoretical distinction between promotive and protective OCBs (e.g. Moon et al., 2004), we find support for this latter distinction that characterizes altruism and civic virtue as promotive and conscientiousness, courtesy, and sportsmanship as protective behaviors. Our research thus adds evidence to the view that some OCBs are fueled by the desire to promote desirable change, whereas others are motivated by maintaining a positive status quo. This is also in line with earlier research showing systematic differences between these two types of OCBs (Marinova et al., 2010). By integrating the two conceptualizations of OCBs, our study is the first to connect these conceptualizations, which have as yet been considered in two separate streams of research. Whereas our results are unequivocal regarding the promotive type of citizenship behaviors, our findings regarding protective (or maintenance – see Dewett and Denisi, 2007) OCBs are less conclusive.

The present article contributes to different areas of research. First, we contribute to the literature on the personality antecedents of OCB (Chiaburu et al., 2011; Organ and Ryan, 1995; Raja and Johns, 2010) by identifying future focus as a beneficial individual difference positively influencing OCB. We extend extant theory on OCB by building and testing theory on how future focus affects different types of OCB. Whereas the existing work has mostly focused on broad personality characteristics (e.g. the big five personality dimensions), our research adds to this previous work by examining a narrower individual difference. As previous research has demonstrated that narrow personality traits may be even more important than broad personality traits in predicting job performance (e.g. Ashton, 1998; Tett et al., 2003), our study informs this stream of research by demonstrating the beneficial effects of future focus for employee performance. Our research thus adds value to existing OCB research by providing a differentiated account of how an important narrow personality disposition (i.e. future focus) influences OCB. We found future focus (as a narrow personality trait) to predict OCB while concurrently controlling for conscientiousness (i.e. a relatively broad personality trait) and proactive personality (i.e. a trait that is conceptually very close to the predicted behavior). The relatively small effect of future focus should therefore not be considered irrelevant. Even though broad constructs conceptually related with the criterion were included in the model, future focus still predicted a significant share of the outcome. Thus, even though the effects of future focus on OCB are comparatively small, they contribute to the current status of research by establishing a narrow trait as a significant incremental predictor whose effects are unlikely to be explained by measurement confounds (because they were assessed at different

points in time). This promising finding supports the value of including future focus as a predictor of OCBs in future studies that may cover the distinct future-oriented aspects of OCB over and above broad and established personality antecedents (see also Ashton, 1998; Tett et al., 2003).

Moreover, we extend previous research on the general positive effects of future-oriented cognition by showing that it is not only generally functional, but also beneficial for enhancing concrete citizenship behaviors in organizations. The existing research has documented the favorable effects of future orientation on positive (work) attitudes, motivation, and goal setting (Karniol and Ross, 1996; Shipp et al., 2009). We add to this literature by demonstrating that various dimensions of OCB are positively affected by individuals' future focus.

Second, our research directly responds to Spitzmuller et al. (2008), who call for studies investigating the mediating mechanisms through which individual difference characteristics influence OCB. Although dispositional antecedents of OCB have received considerable attention in the previous literature, only very few studies have tested explicitly for the mediators of this relationship (see Ilies et al., 2006). Integrating future focus with regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997), we extend this stream of literature by identifying the differential mediating effects of individuals' future focus through prevention and promotion focus, respectively. Our results indicate an intriguing pattern regarding the ways in which future focus influences individuals' self-regulation which, in turn, leads to different aspects of OCB. As is evident, the two types of self-regulation are differently triggered depending on the type of citizenship behavior.

Implications for practice

Our research also offers a number of practical implications. First, our results have direct implications for personnel recruitment. In particular, organizations may explore whether their employer branding (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Tumasjan, Strobel and Welpe, 2011) bears the potential to present future focus as an important organizational characteristic (e.g. capital investment, research and development). To the extent that employees' future focus is relevant for an organization, enhancing an organization's future focus in employer branding activities may help them to attract future-focused employees, which in turn may enhance their employees' engagement in different citizenship behaviors. According to the person-organization fit literature, individuals compare a company's employer brand image to their personalities and values (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). As a result, a higher match between individual characteristics and firm characteristics will increase the likelihood that an individual will consider the firm as an attractive employer (Cable and Judge, 1996; Judge and Cable, 1997). Thus, firms may integrate a future focus in their employer branding to attract employees who will likely contribute to organizational effectiveness through behaviors such as altruism, civic virtue, and courtesy.

Second, the present findings are consistent with the notion that organizations that create a future-oriented context (e.g. creating a vision with an emphasis on the long-term future, encouraging long-term thinking and planning) may have a positive influence on citizenship behaviors because such a context may activate employees' dispositional future focus. This reasoning is in line with trait activation theory (Tett and Burnett, 2003), which

posits that personality dispositions are activated when the surrounding context facilitates the unfolding of these dispositions. Thus, creating a future-oriented organizational culture or team climate may have the advantage of invoking employees' dispositional future focus as a cognitive resource enhancing employees' work performance.

Third, our results demonstrate that the two different self-regulatory orientations lead to the implementation of different types of citizenship behavior. As individuals' regulatory focus is to some extent malleable, our findings also imply that organizational practitioners may enhance either of the two regulatory foci in employees depending on the desired outcome (Neubert et al., 2008). For instance, Neubert et al. (2008) have shown that supervisors' leadership styles (e.g. servant leadership) induce a particular regulatory focus at work in employees (e.g. promotion focus), which in turn enhances certain employee behaviors (e.g. helping behavior and creativity). Thus, leaders need to be aware that their leadership style influences employees' regulatory orientation and ultimately their behaviors at work. On the other hand, organizational practitioners may use our results to plan and design leadership trainings. Based on the existing knowledge that different leadership styles induce different regulatory foci (Neubert et al., 2008), practitioners may develop leadership trainings to develop leadership styles that enhance the regulatory orientation leading to certain types of desired citizenship behaviors. Thus, according to our results, they may enhance employees' promotion focus in order to stimulate employees' promotive/change-related extra-role behaviors (e.g. civic virtue), whereas they may enhance prevention focus to stimulate protective/maintenance citizenship behaviors (e.g. courtesy).

Limitations and directions for future research

Our study has also some limitations. First, even though using self-report data is the usual way of collecting individual-level psychological variables, citizenship behaviors have often been assessed by other-ratings (e.g. by supervisors or peers). However, self-reports are the usual way to assess individual future focus and regulatory focus. Furthermore, our research is in line with a range of previous studies using self-assessments of citizenship behaviors (e.g. Baker et al., 2006; Bragger et al., 2005; Brown et al., 2010; Coyle-Shapiro, 2002; Dineen et al., 2006; Dunlop and Lee, 2004; Ilies et al., 2006; Lee, 1995; Saks, 2006; Shao et al., 2011; Yoon and Suh, 2003). Researchers have noted that both self-ratings and other-person ratings each have their unique advantages and difficulties. For example, supervisor ratings may be influenced by halo effects (Dalal, 2005, see also Schnake, 1991). On the other hand, common method variance might be problematic in self-reports. To address this problem, Schnake (1991) recommends controlling for social desirability when assessing OCB using self-reports, which we did in our study. Furthermore, we used a multiple administration design in order to minimize problems of common method variance. Our results are most directly comparable to other OCB studies with similar designs (i.e. self-reports in a multiple administration design, e.g. Bolino et al., 2010; Ilies et al., 2006). The effects we find are smaller than those typically found in cross-sectional studies using self-reports (e.g. Shao et al., 2011; Yoon and Suh, 2003), but probably are also more realistic. Regarding the comparability of our results to results obtained through supervisor ratings, we cannot be definite. We are confident that we

have addressed properly the issues of common method variance and social desirability, which are the most frequently noted disadvantages of OCB self-ratings. However, as Organ and Ryan (1995) have noted, supervisor ratings of OCB might be more stable than self-ratings. Therefore, we encourage further research to cross-validate our results using supervisor ratings of OCB.

A further limitation is that some of the study variables were assessed with abbreviated measures. However, in order to maximize comparability with the established full scales, we selected the highest loading items from each scale, respectively. Moreover, the results of confirmatory factor analyses support the expected factor structure of our measures.

Furthermore, although significant, some of the associations between our main study variables are comparably small in size. For example, although prevention focus was found to mediate the relationship between future focus and courtesy, the correlation between future focus and prevention focus was relatively small. Thus, this association is comparably weak in effect size (Cohen, 1988), and further research is needed to substantiate the present results. Additionally, for most of the OCBs, future focus was a somewhat weaker predictor than proactive personality. Thus, while our finding that future focus predicts OCBs is important and interesting from a theoretical point of view, from a practical point of view broader personality traits (e.g. proactive personality) may be more adequate for predicting OCBs parsimoniously. However, when comparing the associations between proactive personality and OCB on the one hand and between future orientation and OCB on the other hand, one should keep in mind that proactive personality and OCB share the same point of time concerning their assessment. Thus, the covariance between OCB and proactive personality is very likely to be inflated by current psychological states at this point of time (e.g. mood). These current states cannot account for the association between future orientation and OCB as their assessment was four weeks apart.

Finally, even though phrases such as ‘the effect of X on Y is mediated by M’ are commonly used when describing regression and mediation analyses, and although our measures were collected at different points in time, one should keep in mind that our data are non-causal in nature. Therefore, by obtaining empirical support for the hypothesized covariation structure, our research provides first evidence for a complex causal model describing the interplay between future focus, regulatory focus, and OCB. Based on these promising findings, further investigations employing longitudinal and experimental (see Bullock et al., 2010) procedures are necessary to substantiate further the causal structure of the model.

Our findings also suggest several fruitful avenues for future research. First, as we did not find significant relationships between future focus and conscientiousness as well as sportsmanship, future research may investigate systematically whether and how other temporal foci (e.g. present and past temporal focus) may influence these OCB dimensions differentially. Because both of these dimensions have been characterized as protective OCBs in previous research (Moon et al., 2004), further studies may be beneficial to clarify whether and how promotive and protective OCBs in general might be influenced by distinct temporal foci.

Second, as there was no significant direct effect of future focus on both conscientiousness and sportsmanship, we conducted mediation analysis only for one of the three protective OCBs (i.e. courtesy). Thus, our results on the mediational role of prevention

focus for protective OCBs may be considered inconclusive. Therefore, further empirical research is necessary to accumulate evidence on the mediating role of both promotion and prevention focus in fostering promotive and protective OCBs differentially, which would substantiate the extant distinction between these two types of OCB as proposed in prior related work (e.g. Dewett and Denisi, 2007; Marinova et al., 2010; Moon et al., 2004).

Third, based on our findings showing the beneficial effects of future focus for OCBs, future research may investigate whether these effects also extend to related behaviors, such as different types of proactive behaviors in the workplace. For instance, there is first empirical evidence indicating that future focus influences proactive strategic scanning positively (Strobel et al., 2011), which has been characterized recently as a proactive strategic behavior in the comprehensive framework of proactive behaviors proposed by Parker and Collins (2010). As future-oriented cognition is considered an important constituent of proactive behaviors (Parker and Collins, 2010), investigating systematically whether and how a future focus may fuel different kinds of proactive behaviors (i.e. behaviors characterized as proactive work behavior, proactive person-environment behavior, and proactive strategic behavior), may contribute to understanding the role of future-oriented cognition in proactive behavior in the workplace.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to investigate the influence of future focus on a range of OCBs and to shed light on the mediating mechanisms of this relationship. We found that future focus affects citizenship behaviors positively and that this effect is mediated differentially by individuals' promotion and prevention focus, respectively. Taken together the results of this study suggest that future focus is an important and valuable cognitive resource for motivating extra-role behaviors. Properly harnessed, future thinking in organizations can foster employees' citizenship behaviors and thereby contribute to promoting positive behaviors in the workplace.

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Notes

1. In line with Shipp et al. (2009), we use the term 'future focus' to denote this concept, and use the term 'future-oriented cognition' when referring to future-oriented thinking in a more general sense.
2. The survey was planned to include $N = 2700$ respondents at Time 1 and $N = 1350 (= 2700/2)$ respondents at Time 2. Participants who had completed the survey at Time 1 were selected

randomly for participation at Time 2 until the criterion of having at least 1350 complete responses at Time 2 was met. A slight oversampling resulted in the final sample sizes of $N = 2741$ at Time 1 and $N = 1357$ at Time 2.

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