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ATTITUDES AND SOCIAL COGNITION

Why Connect? Moral Consequences of Networking With a Promotion or Prevention Focus

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Networks are a key source of social capital for achieving goals in professional and personal settings. Yet, despite the clear benefits of having an extensive network, individuals often shy away from the opportunity to create new connections because engaging in instrumental networking can make them feel morally impure. In this article, we explore how the motives people have when engaging in networking impact these feelings and, as result, change how frequently they engage in networking and their job performance. Across a correlational survey study, a laboratory experiment (with samples from the United States and Italy), two online studies, an organizational network survey study, and a field experiment with professionals (total $N = 2,551$), we examine how self-regulatory focus, whether promotion or prevention, affects people's experience of and outcomes from networking. We find that a promotion focus, as compared to a prevention focus or a control condition, is beneficial to professional networking, as it lowers feelings of moral impurity from instrumental networking. As such, networking with a promotion focus increases the frequency of instrumental networking as compared to a control condition, whereas networking with a prevention focus decreases frequency of instrumental networking as compared to a control condition.

Keywords: networking, impurity, morality, motivation, regulatory focus

The importance of professional networks for work performance and career advancement has been well-established in hundreds of empirical studies (for reviews, see Borgatti & Foster, 2003; Brass, Galaskiewicz, Greve, & Tsai, 2004; Borgatti, Mehra, Brass, & Labianca, 2009; Fang et al., 2015). More recently, a growing literature has documented that networking behaviors—commonly defined as individuals' efforts to develop and maintain relationships with others who can potentially provide assistance to them in their career or work (Forret & Dougherty, 2004)—are critical to developing such professional networks (Adler & Kwon, 2002).

Despite the benefits people derive from having an extensive and diverse network, they often shy away from playing an active role in cultivating professional connections (Belmi & Laurin, 2016; Bensaou, Galunic, & Jonczyk-Sédès, 2013; Wanberg, Kanfer, & Banas, 2000). In exploring this phenomenon, Casciaro, Gino, and Kouchaki (2014) showed that when networking is the result of individuals' intentional (instrumental) effort to form connections that will help them attain a professional goal (as opposed to social and spontaneous forms of networking), they tend to feel inauthentic and dirty because they have difficulty justifying the selfish intent behind instrumental professional networking morally. This research also showed that people deem instrumental professional networking to be more morally acceptable when they have power and therefore have more to give, because they can more readily self-justify networking as potentially beneficial to others (Casciaro et al., 2014). Yet power is largely an objective experience based on the asymmetric distribution of valued resources in social relations (Magee & Galinsky, 2008); because power is driven by structural and contextual forces, people with lower power may therefore have limited psychological agency to make instrumental professional networking morally palatable to them.

In this article, we wish to identify more universal ways in which people can transform their moral experience of intentional networking as they engage in it to pursue professional goals. We propose that

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All three authors contributed equally and are listed in alphabetical order by first name. All studies' materials can be found on OSF at https://osf.io/kf2ut/?view_only=26073af04f9046cd9e0a62159a5755d4, together with the data from Studies 1, 3A, and 3B.

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people's motives when engaging in instrumental professional networking predict the extent to which they feel inauthentic and morally impure in the process. Specifically, we argue that self-regulatory focus, in the form of prevention and promotion, provides an essential motivational basis for networking behavior which shapes the emotional and psychological experience of networking. Building on earlier self-regulation models (Bowlby, 1969; Higgins, 1987), regulatory focus theory (RFT; Higgins, 1997) identifies two motivational systems that regulate two different basic needs. The promotion-focus system serves nurturance needs. People in a promotion focus care about growth, advancement, and accomplishment, and strive toward ideals, wishes, and aspirations. The prevention-focus system, instead, regulates security needs. People in a prevention focus care about safety, maintaining the status quo, and meeting their responsibilities and duties (Friedman & Förster, 2001; Sacramento, Fay, & West, 2013).

With this research, we aim to advance scholarly understanding of the moral psychology of networking in four ways. First, we theorize that people's motivational approach—promotion versus prevention—predicts how morally impure they feel from instrumental networking for professional goals. Casciaro et al. (2014) demonstrated how moral impurity is heightened by certain types of networking behaviors and not others, and found evidence that impurity reduces the frequency of networking, and thus performance. Though insightful, their research is silent on what people could do to change their perspective toward instrumental networking to avoid the costs of withdrawing from it, nor do Casciaro and her colleagues shed light on the role that motives play in developing and nurturing professional ties. Here, we extend this work by arguing and showing that promotion and prevention focus are independent predictors of how people experience instrumental networking and how much, as a result, they engage in it.

Second, we further develop the theoretical link between regulatory foci and morality advanced by Cornwell and Higgins (2015) and establish it empirically. Third, we elaborate on the theoretical path between people's motives to engage in instrumental professional networking, their experience of moral impurity, and how frequently they network. Fourth, we aim to establish that this path persists across three forms of regulatory focus: (a) the chronic disposition (Higgins, 1997, 1998), (b) the temporarily activated psychological state (Liberman, Idson, Camacho, & Higgins, 1999), and (c) a domain-specific form of promotion and prevention focus (Browman, Destin, & Molden, 2017), which we introduce to allow for the possibility that general trait and state regulatory foci may differ systematically from how a promotion and a prevention focus regulate a specific behavior, such as networking.

How Motives Influence Moral Purity and Networking

Self-Regulatory Foci and Moral Impurity

RFT states that promotion and prevention are mutually inhibitory modes of self-regulation: When one mode is unavailable or blocked, the other mode kicks in to compensate (Higgins, 1998). So, while a person may approach the same goal with both promotion and prevention, only one of the two systems is actively engaged in achieving the goal at any point in time. When pursuing goals, people commonly use either a promotion or a prevention mode, and they can switch modes (Shah, Higgins, & Friedman, 1998). Which system is engaged at any given time depends on the characteristics of the situation and the person's regulatory orientation (Higgins, 1997; Strauman, 1996).

Regulatory focus is studied as either a chronic disposition people have (Higgins, 1997, 1998) or a psychological state that is temporarily activated, such that a person's emphasis on one over the other is primed by cues in the external environment (Friedman & Förster, 2001; Liberman et al., 1999). In addition to chronic and state forms of regulatory foci, we echo developments in regulatory-focus theory (Browman et al., 2017) by exploring a domain-specific form of regulatory foci, networking-specific promotion and prevention focus, to introduce the possibility that generalized trait and state regulatory foci may differ systematically from how a promotion and a prevention focus regulate a specific behavior.

Regulating behavior via promotion and prevention foci influences goal attainment in various performance domains. This is because a person's regulatory focus affects the strategies the person uses to get to their goals (e.g., surpassing a high score) and to overcome challenges that impede attainment of those goals (e.g., getting over an error limit; Higgins, 1998). Because regulatory focus influences people's performance, its role has been studied in organizations too (Brockner & Higgins, 2001; Johnson, Chang, & Yang, 2010; Wallace, Johnson, & Frazier, 2009). This research shows that whether people approach work with a promotion or prevention focus is related to distinct behaviors that are organizationally relevant, including productivity, innovation, and safety compliance (e.g., De Cremer, Mayer, van Dijke, Bardes, & Schouten, 2009; Wallace et al., 2009). For instance, Wallace and Chen (2006) found that prevention focus is positively and strongly related to safety behavior, while promotion focus is negatively and weakly related to it.

Similarly, regulatory focus can influence how people experience their social networks and how intensely they engage in professional networking. A promotion focus leads people to notice and remember information and emotions that result from positive outcomes, thus further directing their behavior toward achieving them (Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes, 1994; Higgins, Shah, & Friedman, 1997; Higgins & Tykocinski, 1992). Promotion-focused people invest their energy in activities that allow them to grow or fulfill their aspirations, and away from those that translate into sticking to the status quo (Neubert, Kacmar, Carlson, Chonko, & Roberts, 2008). By contrast, a prevention focus leads people to pay attention to and remember information and emotions they experienced at some point in their past as a result of losses, failures, or punishments (Higgins & Tykocinski, 1992). As a result, prevention-focused individuals are vigilant and concerned with accuracy when approaching tasks (Förster, Higgins, & Bianco, 2003), as they seek to meet their obligations and others' expectations (Higgins, 1997, 1998). Therefore, a prevention focus leads people to engage in actions that will likely avoid negative outcomes and comply with expectations or policies set by others (Higgins et al., 1994). These motivational orientations lead individuals with a high prevention focus to derive greater life satisfaction when they are part of a highly dense network that allows them to meet obligations and responsibilities. People with a high promotion focus, instead, derive greater life satisfaction from a low-density network that supports creative inspiration and personal development (Zou, Ingram, & Higgins, 2015). Likewise, a promotion focus increases the frequency of professional network-

ing, whereas a prevention focus decreases it (Pollack, Forster, Johnson, Coy, & Molden, 2015).

We inform and deepen these insights by theorizing that the relationship between self-regulatory focus and networking behavior hinges on morality. We posit, in particular, that promotion and prevention regulatory foci have distinct consequences for an individual's sense of moral purity and authenticity when engaging in instrumental professional networking. Our arguments hinge on a moral psychology of motivation that reflects advances in contemporary moral philosophy. A building block for such theorizing stems from Cornwell and Higgins (2015), who underscored the existence of two ethical systems that motivate human behavior, mirroring the dual-process approach to motivation of RFT (Higgins, 1998). Specifically, Cornwell and Higgins (2015) posited that both promotion and prevention regulatory foci have ethical implications: prevention focus refers to "a system of ethical *oughts* that is concerned with maintaining obligations," while promotion focus refers to "a system of ethical *ideals* that is concerned with attaining virtues" (Cornwell & Higgins, 2015, p. 312). When motivated by the pursuit of ethical oughts, the individual responds to duties and obligations imposed externally. By contrast, ethical ideals are internally held aspirations that the individual pursues freely.

Contemporary philosophy in turn sheds lights on the diametrically different implications that ethical oughts and ethical ideals have for authenticity. A fundamental premise of moral philosophy, from Hegel's phenomenology to Nietzsche and Sartre's existentialist analyses, is that conducting one's life by conforming to prevailing morality—that is, in pursuit of the "ought" self—compromises authenticity as an ethical ideal (Varga, 2012). Hegel contrasts the "authentic self" that is incessantly committed to self-creation from the "honest individual" who submits to prevailing duties and thus nullifies the urge of the human spirit to live in complete freedom. In doing so, the "honest individual" in Hegel's analysis is a hypocrite who lacks real freedom and suffers from self-alienation (Golomb, 1995). Hegel's premise paved the way for the existentialist revolution in modern moral philosophy, in which "the concept of authenticity is a protest against the blind, mechanical acceptance of an externally imposed code of values" (Golomb, 1995, p. 11). Rejecting premodern views of morality as justified by recourse to some higher authority, an ethic of authenticity is guided instead by motives and reasons that express a subject's core individuality (Taylor, 1991), the ideal self (Cornwell & Higgins, 2015). An ethic of authenticity does not object to the normative content of motives but focuses instead on how a motive "fits with the wholeness of a person's life, and whether and how it expresses who the person is" (Varga, 2012, p. 12).

Consistent with these arguments, Kim and colleagues (Kim, Chen, Davis, Hicks, & Schlegel, 2019) theorized a link between prevention and promotion self-regulatory focus—defined as the pursuit of externally imposed oughts versus personally held ideals, respectively (Cornwell & Higgins, 2015)—and subjective authenticity. According to their argument, "certain behaviors feel more natural and less constrained by external influences. When individuals engage in these actions, their subsequent psychological mindsets contribute to the expression of core values and thus enhance subjective authenticity"; it follows that "promotion focus, relative to prevention focus, functions similarly in fostering authentic experiences" (Kim et al., 2019, p. 166). Evidence from both correlational studies and controlled experiments consistently supported a link between promotion focus and subjective authenticity, in the context of both goal pursuit and interpersonal interaction (Kim et al., 2019).

The moral psychological foundations of this association between regulatory focus and subjective authenticity are further corroborated by theory and evidence that people experience feelings of authenticity as moral and pure; conversely, feelings of inauthenticity are experienced as immoral and impure (Gino, Kouchaki, & Galinsky, 2015). These different streams of work in moral philosophy and moral psychology, then, consistently provide arguments suggesting that prevention self-regulatory focus increases feelings of moral impurity because fulfilling the ought-self compromises authenticity; by contrast, promotion self-regulatory focus is negatively linked to moral impurity because fulfilling the ideal-self does not compromise authenticity.

These arguments can be readily applied to the context of instrumental networking. Namely, making professional connections with a prevention focus stems from an ethic consisting of a sense of professional duty and adherence to behavioral norms in one's field of activity. Prevention-focused instrumental networking is therefore likely to induce feelings of inauthenticity and moral impurity because the motivation to network instrumentally stems from oughts that a professional context imposes on the individual. By contrast, people who engage in instrumental networking with a promotion focus do so to achieve the aspirations of their ideal self. They are motivated by the pursuit of advances and virtues that express their core individuality (Taylor, 1991), instead of mechanically accepting an externally imposed code of values (Golomb, 1995). They are thus likely to experience instrumental networking as more authentic and morally pure than prevention-focused networkers are.

According to moral psychology research, morality can be thought in terms of purity and cleanliness (Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). When people experience moral threats by acting in ways that are not consistent with their moral values (e.g., by cheating when caring about honesty), they feel a greater need to cleanse physically, and cleansing-related concepts become more accessible in their minds (Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). Thus, moral threats lead people to engage in cleansing so that they can reaffirm their values and clean their tainted consciences (Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000). Regulatory focus may therefore predict how inauthentic and dirty people feel in engaging in instrumental networking. Specifically, a promotion focus may yield networking concerned with authentic virtues and meeting one's ethical ideal, and a prevention focus may yield networking motivated by the "shoulds" prevailing in one's professional environment and thus triggers feelings of inauthenticity and impurity (Gino et al., 2015). Thus, we hypothesize, engaging in instrumental networking with a prevention focus increases feelings of inauthenticity and dirtiness, whereas a promotion focus decreases them. As a result, people who engage in instrumental networking with a prevention focus will experience higher levels of moral impurity as compared to those with a promotion focus.

Moral Impurity and the Frequency of Instrumental Networking

People vary in terms of both how likely they are to network and how frequently they engage in networking behavior (Forret & Dougherty, 2001; Wanberg et al., 2000), in part because they

have different attitudes toward networking (Azrin & Besalel, 1982). Those with low "networking comfort" (i.e., embarrassment and discomfort when asking others for job leads or advice; Wanberg et al., 2000) or even stronger feelings of moral impurity (which underlies networking discomfort; Casciaro et al., 2014) tend to engage in networking less often than others (Casciaro et al., 2014; Wanberg et al., 2000). Given that a promotion focus versus a prevention focus results in lower levels of feelings of impurity and authenticity when engaging in instrumental networking, we expect people in a promotion focus to engage in instrumental networking more frequently than those in a prevention focus because the former approach lowers feelings of moral impurity.

Instrumental Networking Frequency and Job Performance

Finally, we wish to further corroborate existing theory and evidence on the consequences of disengaging from instrumental networking on a professional's job performance (Casciaro et al., 2014; Forret & Dougherty, 2001, 2004; Pollack et al., 2015; Wolff & Moser, 2009). Consistent with that prior work, we expect that more frequent instrumental networking will give people greater access to valuable information, opportunities and resources, and thus will lead them to perform better in their jobs.

Given that a promotion focus results in greater frequency of instrumental networking, we expect people with a promotion focus to also experience higher levels of performance. We also expect prevention focus to result in lower frequency of networking and thus lower levels of performance. Figure 1 summarizes the predicted associations between regulatory focus, moral impurity, frequency of instrumental professional networking, and job performance.

Overview of the Studies

We tested our main hypotheses in six complementary studies of the consequences of regulatory focus for the moral experience of professional instrumental networking, relying on both correlational and causal evidence and using measures capturing either trait regulatory focus (general and domain-specific) or state regulatory focus (see Figure 2 for an overview).

In Study 1, we tested our predictions using a correlational design in which we measured individuals' chronic regulatory focus and assessed their feelings of moral impurity. In Study 2, a laboratory experiment conducted both in the United States (Sample A) and in Italy (Sample B), we manipulated regulatory focus and provided causal evidence for a relationship between people's state regulatory focus and their feelings of moral impurity from instrumental networking for professional goals. In Studies 3A and 3B, we use online samples to provide further evidence for these relationships using designs that also include a control condition in addition to a prevention-focus and a promotion-focus condition. In Study 4, we conducted a cross-sectional survey of lawyers in a law firm to test our predictions in a field context, where we measured trait promotion and prevention foci both as a general orientation and one specific to networking. We tested for a serial mediation from a lawyer's trait promotion and prevention focus, to feelings of moral impurity they experience when they network instrumentally, to the frequency with which they network, and to their job performance. Finally, in Study 5, we used a field experiment with working professionals to test the causal link between state networking-specific regulatory focus, moral purity, and frequency of instrumental professional networking.

We report all participants recruited, all experimental conditions, and all measures in each of our studies. The sample size for each study was determined before data collection began. We calculated our sample size based on an estimate of medium effect size ($f = 0.25$), requiring a sample size of approximately 50 participants per condition for a study powered at 80%. These numbers are also consistent with the recommendations of Simmons, Nelson, and Simonsohn (2013). For the laboratory and field studies, the final number was dictated by the availability of participants, we targeted more participants hoping to recruit at least about 50 of them for each condition. For our correlational studies, an a priori power analysis with 80% power and assuming modest correlations among variables ($r = .25$) requires about 99 participants, however, we targeted larger samples at the outset, which would provide higher power to detect a small to medium effect size.

All studies' materials can be found on OSF at https://osf.io/kf2ut/?view_only=26073af04f9046cd9e0a62159a5755d4, together with the data from Studies 1, 3A and 3B. The consent form used in Studies 2 and 5 stated that we would not be sharing any data outside of the research team, even if the data were deidentified. We collected data for these studies before the institutional review board changed the recommended language on consent forms, to allow for data sharing and posting. For Study 4, we are prohibited from sharing the data by a nondisclosure agreement with the law firm where the data was collected.

Study 1

Study 1 used a correlational design to examine how chronic promotion and prevention regulatory focus affect people's feelings of moral impurity from instrumental networking.

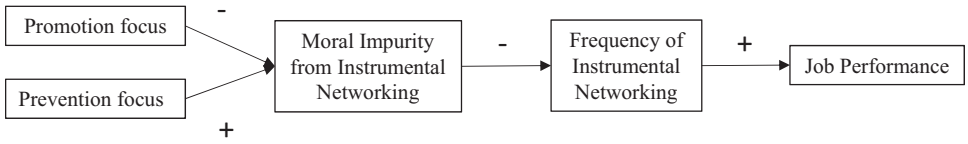

Figure 1. Summary of predicted associations.

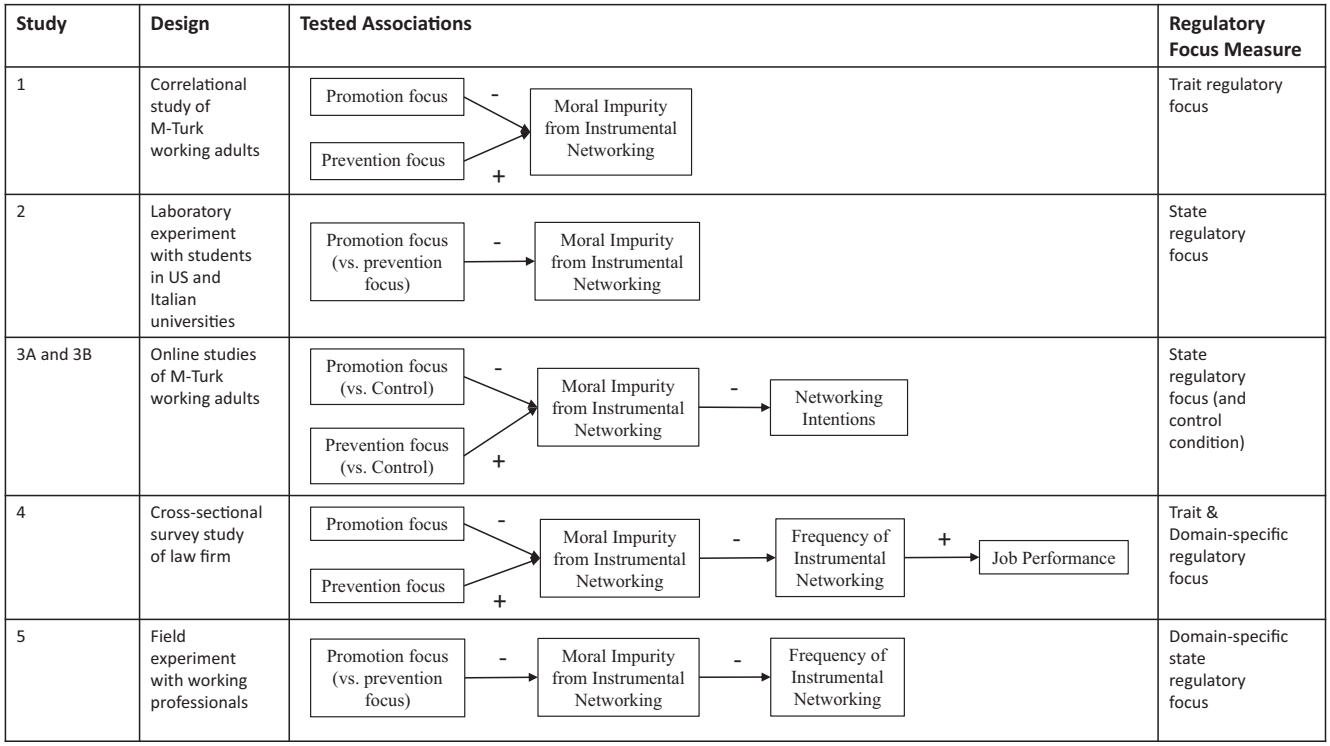

Figure 2. Overview of studies.

Method

Participants. A total of 412 people (M_{age} = 36.28, *SD* = 9.05, 56% male) from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk; all located in the United States) participated in a two-part study for $2. They received $0.50 for completing Part 1 and $1.50 for completing Part 2. We initially recruited 500 people, but only 412 completed both Parts 1 and 2; thus, we used this smaller sample in our analyses.

Procedure. The initial instructions that welcomed participants to the study included three attention checks. Those who failed one or more received a message letting them know that they did not qualify for the study given their answer. Their data was not recorded.

In Part 1, participants first indicated their age and gender. Next, they completed the Composite Regulatory Focus Scale (Haws, Dholakia, & Bearden, 2010), which measures a person's trait promotion and prevention regulatory focus on a 7-point scale (ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). A sample item for promotion focus is "I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to reach my 'ideal self'—to fulfill my hopes, wishes, and aspirations." A sample item for prevention focus is "I see myself as someone who is primarily striving to become the self I 'ought' to be—to fulfill my duties, responsibilities, and obligations."

We contacted participants four days later for the second part of the study. In Part 2, participants received the following instructions:

> You will now be asked to recall a certain event and then write about it for about five minutes. We are interested in how people remember and reflect on events from their past. You will then be asked to answer a few questions.

We asked all participants to recall a situation in which they engaged in professional instrumental networking. The instructions (adapted from Casciaro et al., 2014) read,

> Please recall a time in your professional life where you did something with the intention of strategically making a professional connection. We are interested in a situation where you tried to create or maintain relationships that would aid the execution of work tasks and your professional success.
>
> Other people engaging in this type of introspective task frequently write about instances where they attended receptions or networking events because they wanted to meet potential clients or higher status colleagues.
>
> Please describe the details about this situation. What was it like to be in this situation? What thoughts and feelings did you experience?
>
> Please provide as many details as possible so that a person reading your entry would understand the situation and how you felt.

Next, to test the relationship between participants' self-regulatory focus and the feeling of moral impurity they experience when engaging in instrumental networking, we measured participants' feelings of impurity.

Moral impurity. Using a 7-point scale (ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*), participants indicated the extent to which the situation they described made them feel dirty, tainted, inauthentic, and ashamed (α = .90; adapted from Casciaro et al., 2014). Though drawing on prior research, these items may evoke prevention rather than promotion focus. Thus, we also

included items that are more regulatory-focus neutral: wrong, unnatural and impure ($\alpha = .84$; from the moral foundation questionnaire, Graham et al., 2011). When conducting a factor analysis, we found that the seven items loaded onto the same factor, so we also created a composite measure by averaging all items ($\alpha = .94$).

Comprehension check. We asked participants to indicate whether they wrote about a professional or personal situation in the initial writing task they had completed.

Results

All answers to the comprehension check question were correct. Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among the main variables we measured in this study. As expected, on all three ways we constructed a measure of moral impurity (the four-item measure, the three-item measure with regulatory-focus neutral words, and the composite seven-item measure), we found a negative and significant correlation between the promotion orientation index and feelings of impurity, and a positive and significant correlation between the prevention orientation index and feelings of impurity.

We also conducted partial correlations analyses to test for the independent effects of a promotion focus and a prevention focus on felt moral impurity. When controlling for prevention, the promotion orientation index was negatively correlated with feelings of impurity ($r = -.10$, $p = .04$ for the four-item measure, $r = -.10$, $p = .055$ for the three-item measure with regulatory-focus neutral words, and $r = -.10$, $p = .04$ for the seven-item measure). When controlling for promotion, the prevention orientation index was positively correlated with feelings of impurity ($r = .18$, $p < .001$ for the four-item measure, and $r = .19$, $p < .001$ for the three-item measure with regulatory-focus neutral words, and $r = .19$, $p < .001$ for the seven-item measure).

Discussion

The results of Study 1 provide initial evidence for the relationship between regulatory focus and feelings of moral impurity that people commonly experience when engaging in instrumental professional networking.

Study 2

In Study 2, we moved to the controlled environment of the laboratory to examine how promotion and prevention regulatory focus influence how people feel when engaging in instrumental professional networking. In this study, we included two manipulations: one for regulatory focus (promotion vs. prevention) and another for the type of professional networking (instrumental vs. spontaneous). Previous work by Casciaro and colleagues (2014) distinguished between instrumental networking, where a person initiates a social relationship proactively and with the goal of obtaining benefits (e.g., advancement or an advantage), and spontaneous networking, where the social tie emerges naturally, with no premeditated purpose, and is initiated by someone else. The authors found that the former leads to greater feelings of dirtiness and inauthenticity than the latter. We build on this work by examining the effect of regulatory focus for each type of professional networking. We also extend our findings from Study 1 by examining regulatory focus triggered in the moment rather than measured as an individual difference. To examine the contextual robustness of our findings, we collected data on two culturally different samples of students, one from the United States and one from Italy. This allowed us to test our main proposition in two different cultures.

Across our main dependent measures of interest (i.e., feelings of moral impurity and desire to physically cleanse), we expect to find a significant interaction between the two manipulations, such that a promotion focus leads to lower feelings of moral impurity and a lower desire to cleanse oneself than a prevention focus in the case of instrumental networking, but regulatory focus leads to no differences on these measures in the case of spontaneous networking.

Method

Participants and design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (Type of Networking: instrumental vs. spontaneous) × 2 (Motive: promotion vs. prevention focus) between-subjects design.

Sample A. A total of 367 students ($M_{age} = 21.93$, $SD = 2.91$; 43% male) recruited through a U.S. university-affiliated research pool participated in the study. Participants received $20 for completing the experiment.

Sample B. A total of 254 students ($M_{age} = 20.80$, $SD = 1.76$; 54% male) recruited through an Italian university-affiliated research pool participated in the study. Participants received €15 for completing the experiment. All the materials (including the word completion task) were translated into Italian.

Procedure. We used the same procedure in each sample but used materials translated into Italian for the Italian sample.[1] Participants read initial instructions that welcomed them to the study. Next, we asked them to complete a writing task, which was intended to manipulate regulatory focus (as in Freitas & Higgins, 2002). The instructions specified that we were "interested in detailed writing skills, and in the way people naturally express themselves." In the promotion condition, the instructions (as in Zhang, Higgins, & Chen, 2011) read, "Please think about something you ideally would like to do. In other words, think about a hope or aspiration that you currently have. Please list the hope or aspiration below." In the prevention condition, the instructions read, "Please think about something you think you ought to do. In other words, think about a duty or obligation that you currently have. Please list the duty or obligation below."

Next, participants engaged in a task designed to manipulate the type of professional networking. Using the manipulation of instrumental versus spontaneous professional networking in Casciaro et al. (2014), we asked participants to put themselves in the shoes of the protagonist in the story they were about to read. Each story asked participants to imagine being invited to attend an event during which they socialized with other people. In the story used in the instrumental condition, the main character was described as "actively and intentionally pursuing professional connections with

[1] To ensure we had a proper translation of the materials, we first translated them from English to Italian (with the help of two Italian native speakers who are fluent in English) and then translated them back into English to resolve any inconsistency.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among the Variables Collected in Study 1

Variable	*M* (*SD*)	Bivariate correlations				
		1	2	3	4	5
1. Moral impurity (MI; 4 items)	1.73 (1.27)					
2. MI, regulatory-focus neutral (3 items)	1.68 (1.26)	.89***				
3. MI (7 items)	1.71 (1.23)	.98***	.96***			
4. Promotion orientation index	5.18 (1.08)	−.13**	−.12*	−.13**		
5. Prevention orientation index	4.57 (1.05)	.20***	.21***	.21***	−.16**	

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

the belief that connections are important for future professional success" (from Casciaro et al., 2014). In the story used in the spontaneous condition, instead, the main character found herself or himself making connections rather than pursuing them intentionally.

Next, participants saw a list of behaviors and had to indicate the extent to which they found each of them to be desirable (1 = *completely undesirable* to 7 = *completely desirable*). We listed both cleansing behaviors (i.e., taking a shower, washing hands, and brushing teeth) and neutral behaviors (e.g., talking a walk, having something to eat, going to the movies, listening to music, reading a book, and watching TV), as in Zhong and Liljenquist (2006).

We then asked participants to report how they felt at that moment, by indicating the extent to which they felt various positive and negative emotions from the Positive and Negative Affectivity Schedule (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), using a 5-point scale (1 = *very slightly or not at all*, 5 = *extremely*). Using the same scale, they also indicated how much they felt dirty, inauthentic, and impure (as in Gino et al., 2015) to assess feelings of moral impurity ($\alpha_{U.S._sample} = .64$; $\alpha_{Italy\_sample} = .70$). The order in which the Positive and Negative Affectivity Schedule items (negative affect, $\alpha_{U.S._sample} = .88$, $\alpha_{Italy\_sample} = .85$; positive affect, $\alpha_{U.S._sample} = .92$, $\alpha_{Italy\_sample} = .87$) and those used to measure feelings of impurity were presented to participants was random. Though we did not have predictions about positive and negative affect, we included these measures to show that our hypotheses are specific to moral emotions rather than general affect more broadly.

Next, we reminded participants of the writing task they had completed earlier. The instructions for the promotion (prevention) condition (adapted from Lalot, Quiamzade, & Falomir-Pichastor, 2018) read,

> Now please take a minute and think about what you wrote earlier about something *you ideally would like to do [you ought to do]*; in other words, think about *a hope or aspiration [a duty or obligation]* that you currently have. Please reflect on your experience for 1–2 min and then proceed to the next task.

We also reminded participants of the story they read and asked them to reflect on it for a minute or two and write a few words that came to mind regarding the story before proceeding to the next task.

Next, participants moved onto a word-completion task we used to measure how accessible cleansing was in their mind at that moment (adapted from Zhong & Liljenquist, 2006). In this task, participants need to turn word fragments into meaningful words by relying on the first word they could think of. The task consisted of six word fragments. Three of them (W _ _ H, S H _ _ E R, and S _ _ P) could be turned into cleansing-related words (wash, shower, and soap) or into unrelated, neutral words (e.g., wish, shaker, and step), and the other three word fragments (F _ O _, B _ _ K, and P A _ _ R) could be turned only into unrelated, neutral words (e.g., food, book, and paper). Finally, participants indicated their age and gender.

Results

We report the results of our analyses separately for each sample. Importantly, the nature and significance of the results did not vary based on the location where the data was collected.

Sample A: Data collected in the United States.

Moral impurity. A 2 (Regulatory Focus) × 2 (Type of Networking) between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) using feelings of moral impurity as the dependent measure revealed a significant main effect of regulatory focus, $F(1, 363) = 4.41$, $p = .036$, $\eta_p^2 = .012$, such that participants who approached networking with a promotion focus reported feeling less impure ($M = 1.58$, $SD = 0.69$) than those who approached networking with a prevention focus ($M = 1.74$, $SD = 0.77$). The main effect of type of networking was also significant, $F(1, 363) = 5.63$, $p = .018$, $\eta_p^2 = .015$: Participants who imagined engaging in instrumental networking felt more impure ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 0.81$) than did those who imagined engaging in spontaneous networking ($M = 1.57$, $SD = 0.64$). Importantly, consistent with our predictions, the interaction of regulatory focus and type of networking was also significant, $F(1, 363) = 12.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .034$. When participants imagined engaging in instrumental networking, they reported feeling less dirty when they had a promotion focus ($M = 1.53$, $SD = 0.66$) than when they had a prevention focus ($M = 1.96$, $SD = 0.88$), $F(1, 363) = 16.03$, $p < .001$. However, when they imagined engaging in spontaneous networking, they felt about equally impure, independent of their regulatory focus ($M_{promotion} = 1.62$, $SD = 0.71$ vs. $M_{prevention} = 1.51$, $SD = 0.56$), $F(1, 363) = 1.07$, $p = .30$.

Negative and positive affect. A similar 2 × 2 ANOVA using negative affect as the main dependent measure revealed no significant effects (all $ps > .18$). As for positive affect, we only found a marginally significant effect of type of networking, $F(1, 363) = 3.60$, $p = .059$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$: Participants who imagined engaging in instrumental networking reported lower positive affect ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 0.92$) than did those who imagined engaging in spontaneous

networking ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.89$). No other effects were significant ($ps > .24$).

Cleansing behaviors. As predicted, a 2 (regulatory Focus) × 2 (Type of Networking) between-subjects ANOVA using desirability of cleansing behaviors as the dependent variable revealed a significant interaction, $F(1, 363) = 4.15$, $p = .042$, $\eta_p^2 = .011$. When participants imagined engaging in instrumental networking, they reported a lower desire for cleansing behaviors when they had a promotion focus ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.16$) than when they had a prevention focus ($M = 5.02$, $SD = 1.13$), $F(1, 363) = 15.48$, $p < .001$. However, when they imagined engaging in spontaneous networking, they reported about the same degree of desire, independent of their regulatory focus ($M_{promotion} = 4.46$, $SD = 1.06$ vs. $M_{prevention} = 4.64$, $SD = 1.12$), $F(1, 363) = 1.11$, $p = .29$. When considering neutral behaviors, however, we did not find any significant effects (all $ps > .34$).

Accessibility of cleansing-related words. A similar 2 × 2 between-subjects ANOVA revealed a significant interaction between regulatory focus and type of networking, $F(1, 363) = 6.28$, $p = .013$, $\eta_p^2 = .017$, as predicted. When participants imagined engaging in instrumental networking, they generated fewer cleansing-related words when they had a promotion focus ($M = 1.08$, $SD = 0.97$) than when they had a prevention focus ($M = 1.40$, $SD = 0.88$), $F(1, 363) = 5.88$, $p = .016$. However, when they imagined engaging in spontaneous networking, they generated about the same number of cleansing-related words independent of their regulatory focus ($M_{promotion} = 0.99$, $SD = 0.87$ vs. $M_{prevention} = 0.84$, $SD = 0.93$), $F(1, 363) = 1.28$, $p = .26$.

Sample B: Data collected in Italy.

Moral impurity. A 2 (Regulatory Focus) × 2 (Type of Networking) between-subjects ANOVA using feelings of moral impurity as the dependent measure revealed the predicted significant interaction of regulatory focus and type of networking, $F(1, 250) = 9.57$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .037$. When participants imagined engaging in instrumental networking, they reported feeling less impure when they had a promotion focus ($M = 1.70$, $SD = 0.62$) than when they had a prevention focus ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 0.82$), $F(1, 250) = 19.78$, $p < .001$. However, when they imagined engaging in spontaneous networking, they felt about equally impure, independent of their regulatory focus ($M_{promotion} = 1.66$, $SD = 0.62$ vs. $M_{prevention} = 1.67$, $SD = 0.74$), $F(1, 250) < 1$, $p = .89$.

Negative and positive affect. A similar 2 × 2 ANOVA using negative affect as the main dependent measure revealed no significant effects (all $ps > .44$). As for positive affect, we found a significant effect of regulatory focus, $F(1, 250) = 6.28$, $p = .013$, $\eta_p^2 = .024$: Participants in the prevention-focus condition reported lower positive affect ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.63$) than those in the promotion-focus condition ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 0.64$). No other effects were significant ($ps > .20$).

Cleansing behaviors. As predicted, a 2 (Regulatory Focus) × 2 (Type of Networking) between-subjects ANOVA using desirability of cleansing behaviors as the dependent measure revealed a significant interaction, $F(1, 250) = 11.18$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .043$. When participants imagined engaging in instrumental networking, they reported a lower desire for cleansing behaviors when they had a promotion focus ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.21$) than when they had a prevention focus ($M = 5.09$, $SD = 1.22$), $F(1, 250) = 11.64$, $p = .001$. However, when they imagined engaging in spontaneous networking, they reported about the same degree of desire, independent of their regulatory focus ($M_{promotion} = 4.46$, $SD = 1.31$ vs. $M_{prevention} = 4.15$, $SD = 1.58$), $F(1, 250) = 1.66$, $p = .20$. When considering neutral behaviors, however, we did not find any significant effects (all $ps > .14$).

Accessibility of cleansing-related words. A similar 2 × 2 between-subjects ANOVA revealed the predicted interaction between regulatory focus and type of networking, $F(1, 250) = 14.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .056$. When participants imagined engaging in instrumental networking, they generated fewer cleansing-related words when they had a promotion focus ($M = 1.05$, $SD = 0.78$) than when they had a prevention focus ($M = 1.77$, $SD = 1.08$), $F(1, 250) = 20.45$, $p < .001$. However, when they imagined engaging in spontaneous networking, they generated about the same number of cleansing-related words independent of their regulatory focus ($M_{promotion} = 1.02$, $SD = 0.89$ vs. $M_{prevention} = 0.88$, $SD = 0.80$), $F(1, 250) < 1$, $p = .39$.

Discussion

The results of our second study are consistent with our expectations and provide evidence that the motives people have when they approach networking influence how morally impure they feel after engaging in instrumental networking as well as their resulting desire to physically cleanse themselves. Specifically, a focus on promotion rather than prevention in approaching instrumental networking reduces both feelings of moral impurity and the desire to physically cleanse oneself. We found support for these relationships in two different samples, in the United States and in Italy, suggesting that our observed effects may hold across cultures.

Study 3

In Studies 3A and B, both conducted online, we further examine the independent effects of promotion and prevention regulatory focus on feelings of impurity and intentions to engage in networking by also including a control condition in the experimental design.

Study 3A

Method.

Participants and design. A total of 599 working adults recruited through MTurk ($M_{age} = 36.94$, $SD = 9.15$; 46% male), all located in the United States, participated in a 15-min online study, and received $2 for their participation. We recruited 600 participants but only 599 completed the study in the time allotted. We randomly assigned participants to one of three conditions: control versus promotion focus versus prevention focus.

Procedure. Participants read initial instructions that welcomed them to the study. Next, we asked them to complete a writing task, which was intended to manipulate regulatory focus (as in Freitas & Higgins, 2002). The instructions specified that we were "interested in detailed writing skills, and in the way people naturally express themselves." In the promotion condition, the instructions (as in Zhang et al., 2011) read, "Please think about something you ideally would like to do. In other words, think about a hope or aspiration that you currently have. Please list the hope or aspiration below." In the prevention condition, the instruc-

tions read, "Please think about something you think you ought to do. In other words, think about a duty or obligation that you currently have. Please list the duty or obligation below." In the control condition, the instructions read, "Please think about something you usually do in the evening. Please list the activities you engage in during the evening on a typical day below."

Next, participants engaged in a task simulating instrumental networking. Similar to Casciaro et al. (2014), we asked participants to put themselves in the shoes of the protagonist in the story they were about to read. The story asked participants to imagine being invited to attend an event during which they socialized with other people. In the story, the main character was described as "actively and intentionally making professional connections with the belief that connections are important for future professional effectiveness" (from Casciaro et al., 2014).

Next, we asked participants to report how they felt at that moment, by indicating the extent to which they felt using the comprehensive list of 7 items from Study 1: dirty, inauthentic, and impure, ashamed, wrong, unnatural, and tainted ($\alpha = .95$). We then reminded participants of the writing task they had completed earlier. The instructions for the promotion (prevention) condition read,

> Now please take a minute and think about what you wrote earlier about something *you ideally would like to do [you ought to do]*; in other words, think about *a hope or aspiration [a duty or obligation]* that you currently have. Please reflect on your experience for 1–2 min and then proceed to the next task.

We also reminded participants of the story they read and asked them to reflect on it for a minute or two and write a few words that came to mind regarding the story before proceeding to the next task.

Next, all participants were asked to answer questions about their networking intentions, our main dependent measure. We relied on a measure used in prior work (Raj, Fast, & Fisher, 2017): a self-reported measure of the extent to which participants intended to engage in professional networking in the near future. Participants indicated the extent to which they believed they would seek to expand their professional network in the next month. We used the following four items: "To what degree will you try to strategically work on your professional network in the next month?"; "In the next month, how likely are you to voluntarily engage in behaviors that expand your professional network?"; "To what degree do you plan to establish new professional connections in the next month?"; and "In the next month, to what degree is having a strong professional network a goal that you plan to pursue?" Participants indicated their intention to network in the next month using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). These items were averaged to create a composite measure of networking intentions ($\alpha = .96$). Finally, participants indicated their age and gender.

Results.

Moral impurity. Given that all items loaded onto one factor, we averaged them all into a composite measure of moral impurity ($\alpha = .95$).[2] We found that this seven-item measure varied by condition, $F(2, 596) = 17.69$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .056$. Participants felt more morally impure in the prevention-focus condition ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.36$) as compared to the promotion-focus condition ($M = 1.64$, $SD = 1.07$; $p < .001$) or the control condition ($M = 1.93$, $SD = 1.34$; $p < .001$). Moral impurity was also lower in the promotion-focus condition than in the control condition ($p = .024$).

Networking intentions. Networking intentions also varied by condition, $F(2, 596) = 19.84$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .062$. Participants indicated they would network less frequently in the future in the prevention-focus condition ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 1.70$) as compared to the promotion-focus condition ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.68$; $p < .001$) or the control condition ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.71$; $p < .001$). Network intentions were higher in the promotion-focus condition than they were in the control condition ($p = .024$).

Mediation. We tested for moral impurity as the mediator of the relationship between our regulatory focus manipulation and networking intentions. We first conducted analyses using the dummy for the prevention-focus condition as the independent variable, and the dummy for the control condition as covariate. Using bootstrapping with 10,000 iterations, we estimated the direct and indirect effects of prevention focus through moral impurity on our dependent variable, networking intentions. The 95% bias-corrected confidence interval (CI) for the size of the indirect effect (-0.36, $SE = .06$) excluded zero (95% CI [-0.496, -0.243]), suggesting that feelings of moral impurity mediated the link between prevention focus and lower networking intentions.

Next, we conducted analyses using the dummy for the promotion-focus condition as the independent variable, and the dummy for the control condition as covariate. Using bootstrapping with 10,000 iterations, we found that the 95% bias-corrected CI for the size of the indirect effect (0.36, $SE = .06$) excluded zero (95% CI [0.242, 0.496]), suggesting that feelings of moral impurity mediated the link between promotion focus and higher networking intentions.

Study 3B

Method.

Participants and design. A total of 572 working adults ($M_{age} = 35.37$, $SD = 8.81$; 52% male), all located in the United States and recruited through MTurk, participated in a 15-min online study. They received $2 for their participation. Only participants who had a LinkedIn account could participate. We recruited 600 participants, but only 572 completed the study in the time allotted. We randomly assigned participants to one of three conditions: control versus promotion focus versus prevention focus.

Procedure. In Study 3B, we used the same procedure and design as in Study 3A with one difference: Instead of reading the story as explained above, we asked participants to actually engage in instrumental networking. We did so to add richness to the paradigm as we wanted participants to experience what it feels like to engage in instrumental networking. Specifically, as in Casciaro et al. (2014, Study 4), we asked participants to select a person in their network (someone they were already connected with or someone they would like to connect with), draft a message, and send the message to that individual through their personal

[2] Similar to Study 1, feeling of impurity varied by condition, independent of whether moral impurity was measured with four items: dirty, tainted, inauthentic, and ashamed, $\alpha = .91$, $F(2, 596) = 18.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .057$, or the three regulatory-focus neutral items: wrong, unnatural and impure, $\alpha = .89$, $F(2, 596) = 16.15$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .051$.

LinkedIn account. Participants were told, "Your intention in sending the message should be to strategically make a professional connection. With this message, you are trying to create a connection that would aid the execution of work tasks and your professional effectiveness." We did not have a way of tracking whether participants actually sent the message they wrote through LinkedIn.

Afterward, all participants answered questions about their networking intentions, as in Study 3A. Specifically, they completed the four-item self-reported measure of the extent to which they believed they would seek to expand their professional network in the next month ($\alpha = .95$, adapted from Raj et al., 2017). Finally, participants indicated their age and gender.

Results.

Moral impurity. Given that all seven items loaded onto one factor, we averaged them all into a composite measure of moral impurity ($\alpha = .93$).[3] We found that this seven-item measure varied by condition, $F(2, 570) = 20.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .068$. Participants felt more morally impure in the prevention-focus condition ($M = 2.30$, $SD = 1.33$) as compared to the promotion-focus condition ($M = 1.53$, $SD = 0.96$; $p < .001$) or the control condition ($M = 2.01$, $SD = 1.17$; $p = .016$). However, moral impurity was lower in the promotion-focus condition than it was in the control condition ($p < .001$).

Networking intentions. Networking intentions also varied by condition, $F(2, 570) = 19.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .064$. Participants indicated they would network less frequently in the future in the prevention-focus condition ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.53$) as compared to the promotion-focus condition ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.51$; $p < .001$) or the control condition ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 1.73$; $p = .025$). Network intentions were higher in the promotion-focus condition than they were in the control condition ($p < .001$).

Mediation. As in Study 3A, we tested for the mediating role of moral impurity in the relationship between our regulatory focus manipulation and networking intentions. We first conducted analyses using the dummy for prevention-focus condition as the independent variable, and the dummy for the control condition as covariate. Using bootstrapping with 10,000 iterations, we estimated the direct and indirect effects of prevention focus through moral impurity on our dependent variable, networking intentions. The 95% bias-corrected CI for the size of the indirect effect (-0.29, $SE = .06$) excluded zero (95% CI [-0.422, -0.193]), suggesting that feelings of moral impurity mediated the link between prevention focus and lower networking intentions.

Next, we conducted analyses using the dummy for the promotion-focus condition as the independent variable, and the dummy for the control condition as covariate. Using bootstrapping with 10,000 iterations, we found that the 95% bias-corrected CI for the size of the indirect effect (0.29, $SE = .06$) excluded zero (95% CI [0.193, 0.426]), suggesting that feelings of moral impurity mediated the link between promotion focus and higher networking intentions.

Coding. We asked a research assistant blind to our hypotheses and study conditions to code the messages participants wrote. We coded the messages on three dimensions. First, we coded whether the message was a new connection attempt: We used 0 if participants wrote the message to someone they already had a connection with (existing connection) and 1 if they wrote the message to someone who would be a new connection (new connection). Second, we coded whether the message was aimed at forming a connection to meet a professional goal (value of 1), as we had defined instrumental networking in the instructions, or whether they were using the assigned task to just make a social connection (e.g., saying hello to a friend; value of 0 in our coding). Given the instructions we used we expected no differences across conditions on this dimension. Finally, we coded for language indicating promotion or prevention focus. We used a value of 1 when messages related to growth, advancement, and accomplishment, and striving toward wishes and aspirations (for promotion). We used a value of 0 when the messages related to missing opportunities and meeting their responsibilities and duties (for prevention). When messages did not include either, we left the cell in the data blank.

We found no differences across conditions on the first and second dimension ($p = .20$ and $p = .51$, respectively). As for the third dimension, we found differences across conditions, $\chi^2(461) = 6.38$, $p = .041$: A higher percentage of participants used promotion language in the promotion condition (73% of them) as compared to the prevention condition or the control condition (67.7% and 59.5%, respectively).

Discussion

The results of Studies 3A and 3B provide further support for the independent effects of promotion and prevention focus on feelings of impurity and instrumental networking, by showing differences as compared to a control condition.

Study 4

In Study 4, a field setting, we explored the implications of networking-related promotion and prevention regulatory focus for the frequency of instrumental professional networking by professionals and the feelings of impurity they associate with it. To that end, we surveyed lawyers employed at a large North American law firm. Business lawyers work either as counsel when hired by client or as experts on a client's file when asked by a colleague. In either case, acquiring the work requires having relationships with colleagues and clients. Thus, law professionals at both junior and senior levels can benefit from and care deeply about instrumental networking, making this a particularly appropriate empirical context.

Method

Sample and procedure. When we conducted our study, 425 lawyers were employed at the law firm where we collected survey data. Hierarchically, the law firm was structured according to levels of legal experience, as is common for the industry: junior associate, midlevel associate, senior associate, junior partner (i.e., nonequity partner), and senior partner (i.e., equity partner). The firm had five offices across North America and 13 law practices.

[3] Similar to Studies 1 and 3A, feeling of impurity varied by condition, independent of whether moral impurity was measured with four items: dirty, tainted, inauthentic, and ashamed, $\alpha = .87$; $F(2, 570) = 19.54$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .064$, or the three regulatory-focus neutral items: wrong, unnatural and impure, $\alpha = .85$; $F(2, 570) = 19.34$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .064$.

The lawyers employed at the firm served business clients working across practices and locations, as the needs of the clients required. We sent to all the lawyers employed at the firm an invitation to complete a survey about their approach to professional networking. In the invitation, we made clear that participation in the survey was voluntary, and withdrawal from the study was available at any time with no penalty. We also reassured participants that all their responses would be entirely confidential, such that the firm's management would never get access to any individual responses, and would only receive aggregated findings with the goal of aiding the firm in supporting its lawyers' development and effectiveness as legal professionals. For their efforts, we offered to participants a confidential and personalized report on how their own professional networking compared to that of their peers at the firm.

In total, 164 lawyers completed the survey in its entirety, for a 39% response rate. We compared participants to nonparticipant s, and we found no statistically significant differences between the two groups regarding office location, legal specialty, sex, or formal rank.

Dependent and independent variables.

Job performance. We assess performance by using yearly revenue generated by a lawyer, which is the standard metric for evaluating performance in law firms. Firm management shared with us the revenue data they had collected and on record for each of the lawyers working there. We corrected for skewness in revenue distribution using the *lnskew0* function in STATA (STATA 13).

Frequency of instrumental professional networking. In the survey, we defined professional networking as "the purposeful building and nurturing of relationships to create a system of information and support for professional and career success" (as in Casciaro et al., 2014). We then asked respondents, "How often do you engage in professional networking?" The respondents indicated their answers using one of the following options on a 5-point scale: *not at all*, *rarely*, *sometimes*, *frequently*, and *a great deal*.

Feelings of moral impurity from networking. We measured the experience of impurity from instrumental professional networking by using the average and logged (to correct for skewness) response to three survey items on the 5-point scale (adapted from Casciaro et al., 2014), each starting with the sentence, "When I engage in professional networking, I usually feel. . ." followed by the following adjectives: dirty, inauthentic, and ashamed (α = .78). To reduce demand effects, the list interspersed these adjectives with markers of various emotions (Feldman Barrett & Russell, 1998), such as happy, excited, stressed, and satisfied.

Trait promotion and prevention regulatory focus. As in Study 1, we measured chronic regulatory focus with the Composite Regulatory Focus Scale (Haws et al., 2010).

Networking-specific trait promotion and prevention focus. To measure the extent to which instrumental networking resulted from a promotion or a prevention focus, we developed eight survey items intended to capture a concern with growth, advancement, and aspirations of promotion focus on the one hand, and a concern with meeting one's duties and the threat of lost opportunity of prevention focus on the other hand. These items were adapted from the Composite Regulatory Focus Scale (Haws et al., 2010) to fit the domain of instrumental networking. We thus measured promotion focus with the average response to four survey items (each assessed on a 5-point scale): "I am excited about the opportunities that networking can open up for me," "Networking allows me to achieve my professional aspirations," "I engage in professional networking because I want to be successful," and "I engage in professional networking because connections help me do well" (α = .81). The four items measuring prevention focus were "Networking is a necessary part of my job that I just have to do," "It is my professional duty and responsibility to network," "I engage in professional networking because I am concerned that I'll miss opportunities if I don't," and "I engage in professional networking because I don't want to fall behind in my profession" (α = .69).

Control variables.

Law practice and office location. To control for the law practice a lawyer belonged to, we used indicator variables for each of the 13 departments of the firm (insolvency and restructuring, corporate law, intellectual property, etc.). Likewise, we used indicator variables to control for each of the firm's five offices in which each lawyer was located. None of these dummy variables affected the study's findings, and therefore we excluded them from the analyses reported below because their inclusion reduced the models' goodness of fit.

Extraversion. In light of research documenting a positive association between extraversion and networking frequency (Casciaro et al., 2014; Wanberg et al., 2000), as well as a negative association between extraversion and feelings of dirtiness experienced from engaging in instrumental networking (Casciaro et al., 2014), we controlled for a lawyer's extraversion, measured with the two extraversion items of the Big Five Inventory (Rammstedt & John, 2007).

Power. Previous research has also documented the effects of power on feelings of dirtiness that result from instrumental networking (Casciaro et al., 2014). To account for these effects, we operationalized power in terms of a lawyer's formal rank (seniority), which defines power differentials clearly in law firms (Nelson, 2004). This variable ranged from senior partner at the top of the hierarchy (denoted with a numerical value equal to 5), followed by junior partner (4), senior associate (3), midlevel associate (2), and junior associate at the bottom of the hierarchy (1).

Modeling approach. To test simultaneously the paths that our predictions entail, and also control for all relevant covariates, we estimated direct and indirect effects using the corresponding structural equation model (Kline, 2011) of a path analysis (Wright, 1934). This approach allows us to simultaneously account for effects of promotion focus and prevention focus, so that we can examine the unique effects of each orientation.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients for all variables are in Table 2, while the results of the path analysis are in Table 3. The estimated models use two measures of promotion and prevention focus: general trait regulatory foci (right-hand side of Table 3) and networking-specific trait regulatory foci (left-hand side of Table 3). The path analysis provides estimate for both direct effects and indirect effects. Directs effects occur when a predictor affects a dependent variable directly. Indirect effects occur when the effect of a predictor on dependent variable is mediated by another variable. Our theory predicted four direct effects in the path analysis: (a) a positive effect of prevention focus on moral impurity from instrumental networking, (b) a negative

Table 2
Study 4 Mean, Standard Deviations, and Correlation of Variables

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Job performance	1,603,193	3,063,196										
2. Job performance (log)	10.568	3.886	.667									
3. Networking frequency	3.579	0.904	.362	.458								
4. Moral impurity	1.562	0.633	−.176	−.208	−.431							
5. Moral impurity (log)	−0.664	0.847	−.173	−.231	−.494	.893						
6. Extraversion	3.102	1.491	.541	.860	.401	−.147	−.188					
7. Seniority	3.549	0.923	−.032	−.036	.342	−.418	−.463	−.089				
8. Chronic prevention focus	3.322	0.825	−.217	−.218	−.236	.330	.308	−.171	−.263			
9. Chronic promotion focus	3.533	0.741	−.081	−.039	.199	−.164	−.170	−.065	.231	.396		
10. Networking prevention focus	3.624	0.810	−.109	−.023	.266	.028	−.013	.046	−.051	.158	.173	
11. Networking promotion focus	3.935	0.723	.007	.037	.545	−.302	−.333	.035	.459	−.058	.310	.496

Note. Correlation coefficients >.14 are significant at $p < .05$.

effect of promotion focus on moral impurity from instrumental networking, (c) a negative effect of moral impurity on the frequency of instrumental networking, and (d) a positive effect of networking frequency on job performance.

When measuring regulatory focus as generalized trait promotion and prevention focus (right-hand side of Table 3), all predictions were supported. Namely, networking frequency had a positive and statistically significant direct effect on job performance ($\beta = .550$; $p < .01$). In turn, moral impurity had a negative direct effect on networking frequency ($\beta = -.364$; $p < .001$). Generalized promotion focus had the predicted negative effect on moral impurity ($\beta = -.282$; $p < .01$), and generalized prevention focus had the predicted positive effect on moral impurity ($\beta = .294$; $p < .001$).

When measuring regulatory focus as networking-specific trait promotion and prevention focus (left-hand side of Table 3), all predictions were supported, except the positive effect of prevention focus on moral impurity. Namely, in addition to the predicted direct effects of networking frequency on job performance and of moral impurity on networking frequency, promotion focus had the predicted negative effect on moral impurity ($\beta = -.250$; $p < .05$), while the negative effect of prevention focus on moral impurity was not statistically significant, contrary to our prediction.

Thus, our predictions were strongly supported when regulatory foci were measured as a general trait, indicating that people with a promotion focus experience lessened feelings of impurity from instrumental professional networking, while those with a prevention focus tend to feel more morally impure when networking instrumentally. When regulatory foci were measured as networking-specific promotion and prevention focus, however, these predictions were supported only for promotion focus, which was negatively associated with moral impurity. Figure 3 summarizes how the findings from Study 4 supported our theoretical model.

In addition to the direct effects we predicted, the path analysis revealed effects of interest, both direct and indirect. Seniority (our operationalization of power in the context of law firms) had positive direct and indirect effects on networking frequency, and negative effects on moral impurity, replicating the findings of Casciaro et al. (2014). Likewise, positive direct and indirect effects of extraversion on networking frequency, and its indirect effect on job performance mediated by networking frequency is consistent with previous work (Casciaro et al., 2014). More relevant to our theory, promotion focus and prevention focus also had significant indirect effects on network frequency, mediated by moral impurity, consistent with the theoretical model we advanced (see Table 3).

Discussion

Taken together, the findings of Study 4 show that the effects of trait promotion and prevention focus on moral impurity and instrumental professional networking generalize to professionals in field settings. People who are motivated to pursue ideals, growth, and aspirations feel more authentic and morally pure when networking than do people who are motivated by the fulfilment of duties and obligations. These feelings of moral impurity in turn relate to how frequently professionals engage in networking, with consequences for their job performance. The results of Study 4 also indicate that domain-specific regulatory foci are not as strongly predictive of either moral purity from instrumental networking or of the frequency with which people network professionally. While we did find evidence that networking-specific promotion focus reduces moral impurity and networking frequency, we did not find such evidence for a networking-specific prevention focus.

Study 5

Method

Although in Study 4, networking-specific trait measures of regulatory focus exhibited weaker effects on moral purity and networking frequency than did general trait regulatory focus, we wished to explore the possibility that such domain-specific motives might be amenable to manipulation in the field. In organizations, domain-specific situational cues can be particularly important in evoking either promotion or prevention focus, as employees look for and pay attention to information about what behaviors are expected of them and their consequences (James, James, & Ashe, 1990; Scott & Bruce, 1994). For instance, situational cues that highlight potential gains and attainment of ideals are likely to trigger a promotion mindset. Instead, those that highlight potential losses and fulfillment of obligations are likely trigger a prevention mindset (Higgins, 1997, 1998).

Table 3
Study 4 Results of Path Analysis of Regulatory Focus

	Networking-specific trait regulatory focus[a]				General trait regulatory focus[b]			
	Direct effects		Indirect effects		Direct effects		Indirect effects	
Dependent variable	Standardized coefficient	OIM *SE*	Standardized coefficient	OIM *SE*	Standardized coefficient	OIM *SE*	Standardized coefficient	OIM *SE*
Job performance								
Networking frequency	**.550**	**.172****	.000	(no path)	**.550**	**.172****	.000	(no path)
Moral impurity	.000	(no path)	−.200	.075**	.000	(no path)	−.200	.075**
Seniority	2.263	.110***	.149	.052**	2.263	.110***	.145	.051**
Extraversion	.000	(no path)	.175	.065**	.000	(no path)	.170	.064**
Prevention focus	.000	(no path)	−.015	.018	.000	(no path)	−.059	.027
Promotion focus	.000	(no path)	.050	.028†	.000	(no path)	.056	.027*
Networking frequency								
Moral impurity	**–.364**	**.075*****	.000	(no path)	**–.364**	**.075*****	.000	(no path)
Seniority	.217	.041***	.054	.018**	.217	.041***	.047	.018**
Extraversion	.188	.068**	.130	.038**	.188	.068**	.121	.034***
Prevention focus	.000	(no path)	−.027	.031	.000	(no path)	−.107	.036**
Promotion focus	.000	(no path)	.091	.043*	.000	(no path)	.103	.038**
Moral impurity								
Seniority	−.149	.041***	.000	(no path)	−.129	.040**	.000	(no path)
Extraversion	−.356	.073***	.000	(no path)	−.331	.066***	.000	(no path)
Prevention focus	**.074**	**.084**	.000	(no path)	**.294**	**.080*****	.000	(no path)
Promotion focus	**–.250**	**.106***	.000	(no path)	**–.282**	**.087****	.000	(no path)

Note. OIM = observed information matrix. Coefficients and standard errors in bold are for predicted effects.
[a] $N = 164$; absolute fit: standardized root mean square residual = .063; incremental fit: comparative fit index = .927. [b] $N = 164$; absolute fit: standardized root mean square residual = .018; incremental fit: comparative fit index = .993.
$^{\dagger} p < .10$. $^{*} p < .05$. $^{**} p < .01$. $^{***} p < .001$. Two-tailed tests.

To that end, with the help of SurveySignal (a survey distribution and survey management platform; Hofmann & Patel, 2015), we recruited professionals to complete a 6-week study. After determining eligibility (participants needed to have a smartphone and work for a professional services firm in law, accounting, consulting, sales, insurance, or realty), participants received informed consent and were asked to register and verify their smartphone in the system. A total of 444 participants consented to participate and successfully registered and verified their smartphones. These participants were then randomly assigned to one of the two conditions (either promotion or prevention focus). The system randomly assigned 207 participants to a promotion focus and 237 to a prevention focus right after verification of registration. For the next 6 weeks, each of these professionals received a text message once a week on Mondays at 9 a.m. as part of our manipulation.

In addition, we invited all participants to complete a survey days before the intervention study started. The survey included some demographic questions, a measure of promotion and prevention focus for networking (similar to law survey), and the Big 5 personality traits (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003). The survey included a definition of professional networking (from Casciaro et al., 2014) as "the purposeful building and nurturing of relationships to create a system of information and support for professional and career success" and asked them to indicate how frequently they currently engage in professional networking using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*daily*). At the end, participants indicated their age and gender.

From the original 444 participants in our sample (who would receive the text messages containing the manipulation), 256 completed the initial survey (58% response rate). To assure there were

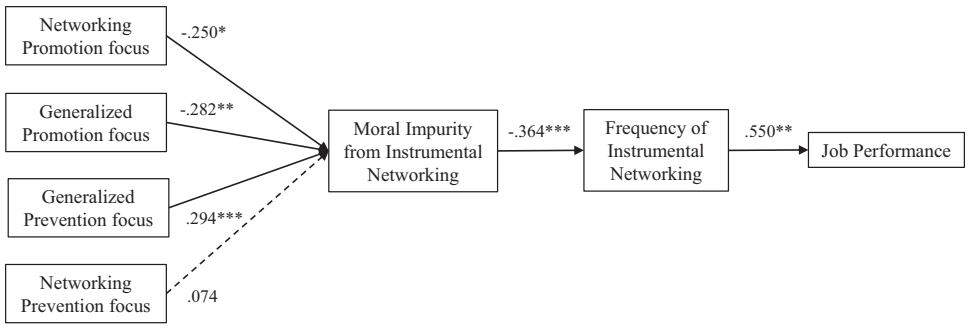

Figure 3. Overview of Study 4 results. All arrows represent predicted effects. The dotted arrow represents a statistically insignificant effect.

no differences between the two conditions, even though participants were randomly assigned to the intervention conditions and had not yet started receiving their text messages, we checked and found there was no condition effect on responses rate ($p > .10$). We also checked the baseline frequency of networking, networking promotion ($\alpha = .90$) and prevention ($\alpha = .79$) focus, and Big 5 personality traits and found no significant differences on any of the measured variables between two conditions ($ps > .10$). Thus, as expected, preintervention, there were no significant differences between the two groups. All participants ($n = 444$) who consented to participate in our study received text messages once a week on Mondays at 9 a.m. for 6 weeks.

In the promotion-focus group, participants received a text that read,

> We are interested in how people create and nurture relationships at work. Many people focus on the opportunities that networking can open up for them. They also consider how networking can help them achieve their professional aspirations. Please set aside a few minutes to identify how you will approach your next opportunity to network with these potential benefits in mind.

In the prevention-focus group, participants read,

> We are interested in how people create and nurture relationships at work. Many people consider networking a necessary part of their job that they just have to do, a professional obligation. They also focus on opportunities they will miss if they do not network. Please set aside a few minutes to identify how you will approach your next opportunity to network with these potential costs in mind.

At the conclusion of the 6 weeks, we asked all 444 participants who received the weekly text messages (whether they completed the initial survey or not) to fill out a final survey, which contained our dependent variables. A total of 183 participants responded to this final survey (41% response rate), and 116 participants completed both surveys. There were no significant differences between conditions (promotion vs. prevention) on whether participants returned to complete the last survey ($p > .10$). This confirms that our manipulation had no effect on participants' likelihood of returning to the final survey. In addition, among those who provided responses to the initial survey, there was no significant difference on baseline networking or Big 5 personality traits between those who responded to the final survey or not ($ps > .10$).

In the final survey, we asked participants to first report their frequency of professional networking over the last month on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*). Next, they were asked to identify how many new people they added to their professional network over the last month (new connections) and how many existing professional relationships they nurtured or rekindled over the last month (nurturing). Afterward, they reported their feelings about the professional networking they engaged in over the last month using 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scales, beginning with the stem, "When I engaged in professional networking over the last month, I usually felt . . . "

Moral impurity. We assessed moral impurity with four items (dirty, tainted, inauthentic, and ashamed; $\alpha = .80$) from Casciaro et al. (2014).

Affect. To minimize demand effects, we also included positive and negative affect adjectives. Positive affect was measured with five items (enthusiastic, satisfied, happy, relaxed, excited; $\alpha = .88$) and negative with three items (stressed, tired, and bored; $\alpha = .81$).

Results

Moral impurity. Consistent with our predictions, participants who received the promotion-focus intervention reported feeling less morally impure ($M = 1.71$, $SD = 0.76$) than those who received the prevention-focus intervention ($M = 2.06$, $SD = 0.91$), $t(181) = 2.84$, $p = .005$.

Positive and negative affect. Participants' positive and negative affect did not differ depending on whether they were in a promotion focus or a prevention focus, $t(181) = -.98$, $p = .33$ and $t(181) = .98$, $p = .33$, respectively.

Networking frequency. Consistent with our hypothesis, participants in a promotion focus reported engaging in networking more frequently over the last month ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.16$) as compared to those in a prevention focus ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.05$), $t(181) = -3.71$, $p < .001$. Given that we have data on some of our participants' baseline networking frequency, we also ran analyses controlling for the frequency of networking before the start of the study and found a significant effect of regulatory focus manipulation on network frequency on this more restricted sample, $F(1, 113) = 9.33$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .076$.

New connections. When asked how many new connections they added to their professional network over the last month, 14 participants did not respond. Examining the responses from the remaining 169 respondents, we found a significant effect of regulatory focus manipulation on creating new connections ($M_{promotion} = 7.80$, $SD = 8.05$ vs. $M_{prevention} = 5.52$, $SD = 5.05$), $t(167) = -2.21$, $p = .030$.

Nurturing existing ties. Eight participants did not respond to this question. Examining the responses from the remaining 175 respondents, we found a significant effect of regulatory focus manipulation on nurturing existing ties ($M_{promotion} = 8.01$, $SD = 7.01$ vs. $M_{prevention} = 4.64$, $SD = 4.21$), $t(173) = -3.90$, $p < .001$.

Mediation. We tested for moral impurity as the mediator of the relationship between our regulatory focus manipulation and networking frequency over the last month. Using bootstrapping with 10,000 iterations, we estimated the direct and indirect effects of regulatory focus condition through moral impurity on our dependent variable, networking frequency. The 95% bias-corrected CI for the size of the indirect effect (0.20, $SE = .07$) excluded zero (95% CI [0.071, 0.368]), suggesting that feelings of moral impurity mediated the link between promotion focus (vs. prevention focus) and higher network frequency.

We also ran the mediation analysis with number of new connections as a dependent variable. The 95% bias-corrected CI for the size of the indirect effect (0.65, $SE = .33$) excluded zero (95% CI [0.134, 1.410]). The mediation analysis with nurturing existing ties yielded similar findings and the 95% bias-corrected CI for the size of the indirect effect (0.99, $SE = .34$) excluded zero (95% CI [0.404, 1.746]). In sum, the three analyses suggest that feelings of moral impurity mediated the link between promotion focus (vs. prevention focus) and higher networking (frequency as well nurturing existing tiles and creating new ones).

Discussion

Together, the results of Study 5 provide further evidence that regulatory focus influences how people react to instrumental professional networking. As compared to participants encouraged to take a prevention focus, participants encouraged to take a promotion focus felt less inauthentic and morally impure, and engaged in networking more often.

General Discussion

Despite the well-demonstrated and well-known benefits that creating and maintaining professional connections can have on the diversity and size of one's network, people often shy away from engaging in instrumental networking to pursue professional goals. This is because they feel inauthentic, impure, and even dirty (Casciaro et al., 2014) when attempting to create and maintain relationships with other people with the clear purpose of finding or strengthening support for their professional goals and work tasks. Such feelings, unfortunately, are often detrimental to their development and job performance because they do not allow people to access valuable information, resources, and opportunities that are important to their careers. In the current research, we proposed that the motives people have when engaging in networking can impact these feelings by affecting their moral experience of networking, and lead them to network with different frequency.

Using two laboratory studies, two online studies, one field experiment with working professionals, and field data from lawyers from a large North American business law firm, we examined how self-regulatory focus, in the form of promotion and prevention, affects people's experiences and outcomes when networking. Consistent with our propositions, we find that a promotion regulatory focus, as compared to a prevention focus or a control condition, is beneficial to instrumental professional networking. People who are motivated to network professionally for the growth, advancement, and accomplishments they can achieve through their connections network more frequently and experience decreased feelings of moral impurity. In contrast, networking with the prevention focus of meeting one's professional responsibilities reduces the frequency of instrumental networking because it worsens the feelings of impurity people experience from it.

Theoretical Implications

Our research contributes to the literature on networking, regulatory focus, and morality in various ways. First, building on the work of Casciaro et al. (2014), the current article contributes to the network literature by focusing on the primary motives people have when approaching networking. Despite its many insights, existing work on networks has focused primarily on their structural properties and paid less attention to the important role of individual psychology in network dynamics. Although certain basic psychological phenomena—such as affect, cognition, and personality—have been integrated to varying degrees with the network perspective on organizations, psychological theory on motivation is still largely absent from network research (Casciaro et al., 2015). Our work complements this body of research by suggesting and providing evidence that people's psychological experience when networking has powerful effects on their likelihood of engaging in instrumental networking and that interventions that specifically change the motives people have when approaching networking can potently impact their psychological experience and subsequent behaviors. A psychological account of motivation in networking behavior can inform network theories of human agency by examining people's motivational approach to goals and by conceptualizing agency itself as a variable that can be measured or manipulated.

Second, our work contributes to research on regulatory focus by extending it to a new context—professional networking—and introducing a domain-specific form of promotion and prevention focus to complement trait and state forms of regulatory foci typically studied in the literature. By doing so, we echo and strengthen new developments in research on regulatory focus (Browman et al., 2017). RFT (Higgins, 1997) concerns how people pursue goals. In a promotion focus, people's goals are represented as hopes and aspirations; in a prevention focus, they are represented as duties and obligations. Given its wide applicability and the importance of goal pursuit in organizations, several scholars have explored the role of regulatory focus in work settings (e.g., Brockner & Higgins, 2001; Wallace et al., 2009) and found that promotion and prevention foci are uniquely associated with a variety of work behaviors (De Cremer et al., 2009; Neubert et al., 2008; Wallace et al., 2009). Our research advances this body of work by examining how regulatory focus affects the way people experience networking and how often they engage in it, with important consequences for performance. We also demonstrate that manipulations of state promotion and prevention foci specific to the domain of networking are sufficient to change the networking behavior of professionals in the field. Manipulating the generalized regulatory foci typically studied in the literature may therefore not be necessary to affect specific behaviors at work. By showing that people's psychological reactions to networking vary depending on their promotion versus prevention focus, our work opens up new investigations of primary human motives, networking, and the structure of networks.

Finally, our work also contributes to research on morality and behavioral ethics—research that has received increased attention in the last decade from both psychology and management scholars. Prior work has shown that authenticity is experienced as a moral state (Gino et al., 2015) and that instrumental networking leads people to feel dirty and impure (Casciaro et al., 2014). Here, we proposed and found that regulatory focus profoundly affects such feelings, as the motives people have to engage in instrumental networking give them room to justify (or discourage) approaching others to accomplish their professional goals. In so doing, we built on Cornwell and Higgins' (2015) view of both promotion and prevention regulatory foci as ethical systems of ideals concerned with attaining virtues (promotion) and of oughts concerned with maintaining obligations (prevention). By connecting ought and ideal selves to the moral philosophy of authenticity and moral purity, we identified an important motivational factor that can change the perceived morality of instrumental professional networking and be directly triggered or manipulated.

Our research both assessed regulatory focus as an individual difference and manipulated it with simple interventions in lab and, importantly, in the field. Short writing tasks that focused participants' attention on their hopes and aspirations or on their duties and obligations influenced the primary motivations they used when approaching instrumental networking. In addition, short text

messages that reinforced promotion versus prevention foci affected real networking behaviors. The effectiveness of regulatory focus manipulations narrowly directed at networking behavior shows that interventions to change people's motivational orientations need not generalize to all domains of their lives, but rather can effectively target a specific domain of action. Our manipulations and, in particular, our simple intervention study provide insights into how organizations or managers could similarly focus organizational members' attention on specific aspects of networking, thus influencing their willingness to engage in it and frequency of doing so. Simply helping people focus on specific motives before approaching networking could prove to be an effective means of making networking morally palatable and influence their development and job performance for the better.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Our findings, as well as the limitations of our studies, point to several potential areas of future inquiry. First, our research focused heavily on individuals' psychological states and their reported frequency of networking rather than on objective measures of networking. It is important to examine more objective variables, such as frequency of networking—an outcome we considered in two of our studies—and to measure them in more objective ways. More importantly, potential differences in the psychological and behavioral patterns people display while networking deserve further inquiry. It is possible that promotion-focused or prevention-focused individuals use different emotional and nonemotional expressions consciously or unconsciously. For example, during a networking event, promotion-focused individuals might display more positive emotions and approach their targets with a firm handshake. Additionally, while our studies focused on the person networking, it would be fascinating to examine whether others can recognize the motivation behind individuals' instrumental networking.

In our studies, we both measured and manipulated self-regulatory focus. Future research could extend our work by investigating framing effects. An individual's regulatory focus can be shaped by her environment (e.g., the school she attends, the organization she works in), such that certain environments make one regulatory focus predominant over the other. Future work could examine the active role organizations can play in inducing a promotion focus, because companies can shape members' regulatory focus through their cultures, policies, and incentive schemes. Additionally, in our studies we examined the general self-regulatory focus and networking-specific regulatory focus (measured or manipulated) at one time. It is likely that individuals' past experiences with networking influence the extent to which they adopt a promotion or prevention focus toward networking. For example, negative past experiences could lead people to view networking with dread and thus approach networking with a prevention focus.

Future studies could examine the role of felt authenticity and selfishness in various types of networking. Casciaro and colleagues (2014) argued that networking behaviors create negative self-attributions when the actions are difficult to justify to oneself. People perceive instrumental professional networking specifically as less justifiable to themselves and as morally tainted because it has a selfish intent, as the person initiating the relationship is pursuing certain benefits. Regulatory focus can influence how people experience networking, because regulatory focus influences creativity (Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Friedman & Förster, 2001), an important factor when individuals are justifying their actions, particularly those that may be morally problematic (Gino & Ariely, 2012). Future research examining how regulatory focus influences one's ability to justify selfish intentions during instrumental networking (through the greater creativity that regulatory focus triggers) would further our understanding of the impact of people's motives on their psychological state and actions when networking.

We note that these insights on the complex interrelationships between selfishness, authenticity, moral purity and regulatory focus could well apply to behaviors beyond instrumental networking. Any form of instrumental relational behavior—be it advice seeking and giving, leadership, social influence, or intergroup relations—undertaken with selfish or altruistic motives, and invoking either promotion or prevention motivational orientations, may have significant consequences for an individual's morality, which may in turn affect the likelihood of engaging in such behavior. Further work is needed to further understand the interplay motivation, and the moral psychology of instrumental behavior and its outcomes.

Future research could also examine whether promotion and prevention focus lead people to use different strategies when networking, and approach new professional connections with a different mindset. For instance, it is possible that people with a promotion focus create or nurture professional relationships to learn something new, more so than people with a prevention focus, and this attention to the potential for learning may contribute to their lower feelings of moral impurity as the connection feels less instrumental.

Finally, in our studies, we tested our predications with different samples, such as Americans recruited through online platforms (Mturk) and panels, as well as U.S. college students and lawyers in a professional services firm. Additionally, we assessed the cultural generalizability of our main prediction with a sample from Italy. Nonetheless, it is possible that some non-Western cultures differ in their views of instrumental networking and as such our effects might not hold in such cultures. Future research could further examine the cultural generalizability of the current findings.

Conclusion

Why is it that many people do not take on opportunities to network or do so with dread, even when networking would benefit them professionally? How could they be encouraged to do so, and with enthusiasm? Our research addresses both of these questions. Building on recent work showing that engaging in professional instrumental networking makes people feel morally impure and physically dirty, we explored how the motives people have when engaging in networking can reduce these feelings and lead people to network more often, with potentially beneficial effects on their performance. By adopting a promotion focus rather than a prevention one, individuals can orient their motivation to network toward the growth, advancement, and accomplishment they can receive from it and thus network more frequently and experience greater authenticity and moral purity. That is, a promotion focus can help people wash away their dirty feelings and draw their attention to the aspirations they can pursue by creating new professional ties or strengthening existing ones.

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