Abstract
Networks are a key source of social capital for achieving goals in professional and personal settings. Yet, despite the 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 inauthentic and physically dirty. In this paper, we explore how the motives people have when engaging in networking can reduce these feelings and lead people to network more often. Using three laboratory studies and field data from a survey study of lawyers at a large North American business law firm, we examine how self-regulatory focus, in the form of promotion and prevention, affects people’s experience and outcomes when networking. Our findings show that promotion focus is beneficial to professional networking. People who are motivated to network professionally for the growth, advancement, and accomplishment networking can bring them (i.e., those with a promotion focus) experience decreased levels of moral impurity as the result of their instrumental networking as compared to those who are motivated to network to meet one’s professional duties and responsibilities (i.e., those with a prevention focus). As a result, networking with a promotion focus increases the frequency of instrumental networking as compared to networking with a prevention focus.

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All interested are welcome.