

Fall 2013

Future Work Selves and Work-Related Outcomes: The Role of Perceived Supervisor Support

Shama Arakeri
San Jose State University

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses

Recommended Citation

Arakeri, Shama, "Future Work Selves and Work-Related Outcomes: The Role of Perceived Supervisor Support" (2013). *Master's Theses*. 4375.
http://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/etd_theses/4375

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses and Graduate Research at SJSU ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of SJSU ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@sjsu.edu.

FUTURE WORK SELVES AND WORK-RELATED OUTCOMES: THE ROLE OF
PERCEIVED SUPERVISOR SUPPORT

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology
San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

by

Shama A. Arakeri

December 2013

© 2013

Shama A. Arakeri

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

FUTURE WORK SELVES AND WORK-RELATED OUTCOMES: THE ROLE OF PERCEIVED SUPERVISOR SUPPORT

by Shama A. Arakeri

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between future work selves and work-related outcomes such as proactive career behaviors, self-development organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), and work engagement. Future work self salience was used to capture employee work selves that could be easily and clearly recalled into memory. An additional purpose of the current study was to examine whether perceived supervisor support would moderate each of the three relationships. A total of 123 employees participated. Future work self salience was positively related to proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs, and work engagement. Furthermore, perceived supervisor support was found to moderate the relationship between future work self salience and work engagement such that there was a stronger relationship when employees perceived higher levels of supervisor support. Findings from the current study suggest that employees take the initiative to develop their careers and skills in order to achieve their ideal work selves and, in doing so, they experience higher levels of work engagement. Supervisor support in helping employees attain their future work selves is an important resource for them to engage in these proactive behaviors. Additionally, perceived supervisor support is responsible for increasing the extent to which employees with salient future work selves have higher levels of work engagement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis chair, Dr. Megumi Hosoda, for her patience and guidance throughout this process. Your insight and knowledge helped me write a thesis that I can say I am proud of. I would also like to thank Dr. Howard Tokunaga for pushing me to be the best researcher and writer I could be. A special thanks to Kelly Wright for your time, expertise, and support. Thank you to my cohort and friends who have helped me accomplish my goal and supported me every step of the way.

To my family, this one's for you...

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
Future Work Selves	5
Future Work Selves and Proactive Career Behaviors	7
Future Work Selves and Self-Development OCBs	9
Future Work Selves and Work Engagement	11
Perceived Supervisor Support as a Potential Moderator	13
METHOD	18
Participants	18
Procedure	20
Measures	20
Future work selves	20
Proactive career behaviors	21
Self-development OCBs	21
Work engagement	22
Perceived supervisor support	22
Demographic variables	22
RESULTS	24
Descriptive Statistics	24

Pearson Correlations	25
Test of Hypotheses	25
Research Questions	26
DISCUSSION	32
Theoretical Implications	36
Practical Implications	38
Strengths, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research	40
Conclusion	42
REFERENCES	44
APPENDIX.....	48
Survey Items	48

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables	19
Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, Pearson Correlations, and Alphas	24
Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Proactive Career Behaviors.....	28
Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Self-Development OCBs	29
Table 5. Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Work Engagement	30

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Interaction Between Perceived Supervisor Support and Future Work Self Saliency in Predicting Work Engagement	31
---	----

Introduction

Organizations are constantly being faced with the challenges of accomplishing more ambitious goals to stay competitive in the market. Many times, this must be accomplished with a declining workforce due to stringent budgets and an emphasis on the organization's bottom line. Maintaining a competitive advantage is crucial for both employers and employees and may be derived from a motivated and engaged workforce from an employer's view and from constant opportunities for professional development to stay marketable from the employee's perspective (Jawahar, 2012).

Traditionally, organizations have relied on external factors to motivate employees such as providing money, incentives, or rewards. However, another source of motivation could stem from employees' internal desire to constantly develop themselves and achieve who they aspire to be at work, such as one day becoming leaders in their organizations. Recently, employees have begun to reevaluate their careers and the organizations in which they work (Scroggins, 2008). Now, more than ever, employees have to manage their careers on their own and cannot rely on their organizations to provide them with all the opportunities they need to grow and develop (Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012).

To better understand how and why employees take an active role in shaping their own careers, Strauss et al. (2012) introduced the concept of future work selves. They define the term *future work self* as "an individual's representation of himself or herself in the future that reflects his or her hopes and aspirations in relation to work" (p. 580). Additionally, the authors believe saliency, or the extent to which a future work self is clear and easy to imagine, is a vital characteristic for individuals to be able to define and

achieve their ideal selves. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to provide evidence that employees who have salient future work selves, or a clear vision of who they aspire to be at work, will have increased work-related outcomes (proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs and work engagement), and that these outcomes will intensify when employees perceive supervisor support in meeting their ideal work selves.

The concept of future work selves stems from Markus and Nurius' (1986) construct called possible selves. According to Markus and Nurius, possible selves are made up of three selves: hoped-for selves, expected selves, and feared selves. They define these possible selves as “the ideal selves that we would very much like to become, the selves we could become, and the selves we are afraid of becoming” (p. 954). According to Markus and Nurius, possible selves provide meaning, organization, and direction to people's behaviors. They introduced the concept to explore how the ideas individuals have about themselves in the future can have a great impact on the way they organize their behaviors in the present to achieve the people they want to be, or avoid the people they fear of becoming. For example, a salient representation of the self in the future as a “divorcee” might motivate one to make career choices that do not take time away from one's spouse, or an individual who is trying to lose weight might often think about his or her “fit self” and evaluate exercise and eating behaviors based on that self (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006).

The concept of future work selves (Strauss et al., 2012) focuses on the hoped-for, or ideal, possible self and provides a motivational tool to inspire behaviors to achieve the ideal self. An ideal self can relate to an employee's personal ambition, such as one day

being promoted to a managerial position; however, it can also pertain to learning new skills or abilities that are not required in one's current job. These images individuals hold of their future selves can motivate them to achieve the ideal selves they visualize, like one day becoming managers, and can initiate behaviors to propel them to attain such images.

The construct of possible selves has been given much attention in the fields of sociology and education because of its motivational power on individuals who wish to achieve their goals. Most notably, Oyserman, Bybee, and Terry (2006) examined the link between low income and minority students' academic possible selves and their self-regulatory behaviors to reach their goals. They found that linking the students' academic possible selves to plausible strategies increased success in meeting their goals of academic initiative, standardized test scores, and improved grades, and these results were sustained over a two year period.

Although much research has focused on the larger concept of possible selves, little attention has concentrated on the notion of possible selves in the work environment. In their study, Strauss et al. (2012) demonstrated that employees who have a clear image of their future work selves were more willing to engage in proactive career behaviors, or voluntary behaviors related to advancing their careers. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to expand on the concept of future work self salience by examining whether it is related to other work related outcomes in addition to proactive career behaviors. One example might be self-development organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) which involve the extra-role behaviors intended to improve one's knowledge,

skills, and abilities in order to perform his or her work more effectively (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Furthermore, future work self salience may also be positively related to work engagement. Work engagement refers to the attachment of individuals to their work roles (Kahn, 1990). Engaged employees perform their work duties with high levels of energy and persistence (vigor), pride and eagerness (dedication), and with complete focus and captivation (absorption) (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). It may be that employees who are able to envision their ideal future work selves may have a deeper emotional attachment to their work because it has become something more meaningful and personal to them.

The current study also seeks to introduce perceived supervisor support as a potential moderator in the above relationships. Perceived supervisor support is the extent to which employees feel their supervisors value their contributions and care about their well-being (Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, & Rhoades, 2002). Employees with salient future work selves who also perceive supervisor support may increase the extent to which they perform positive work behaviors and may become more engaged in their work because they feel their supervisors are supporting them in achieving their ideal work selves. The sections below examine the concept of future work self salience in more detail. The literature on proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs, and work engagement is also evaluated. Additionally, literature on perceived supervisor support is reviewed and its potential moderation effect is explored.

Future Work Selves

The images individuals have about who they desire to be in the future are explored through Strauss et al.'s (2012) concept of future work self salience. As mentioned earlier, the term future work self salience refers to the future representations individuals hold of themselves that reflect their hopes and aspirations in their work that can be easily and clearly recalled. Unlike the broader construct of possible selves by Markus and Nurius (1986), Strauss et al. focused solely on the hoped-for, or ideal, self rather than the feared self because they argued employees have the desire to generate and pursue positive work identities instead of negative ones.

Construction of ideal possible selves is accomplished by linking one's self-concept and the motivation to regulate behaviors in order to achieve the ideal self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Self-concept refers to the mental image we have about ourselves based on who we perceive ourselves to be (McLeod, 2008). It is an important aspect of future work selves because employees' self-concepts affect the selves they choose in an effort to be consistent with who they perceive themselves to be. For example, if an employee perceives him or herself to have strong interpersonal skills, he or she may be more likely to have a future ideal self to exercise those skills such as becoming a human resources manager. Linking one's self-concept to whom one desires to be in the future stimulates behaviors to achieve an ideal future self (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

According to Strauss et al. (2012), employees can regulate their behaviors to achieve their future work selves through three motivational resources: future-oriented

cognitive processes, identity construction, and self-regulation. They believe these three motivational resources are vital because they enable individuals to constantly evaluate their future work selves in relation to their present selves, which motivates behavior to lessen the inconsistencies between the two selves.

First, a salient future work self invokes a mental vision of the future to stimulate future-oriented cognitive processes. Future-oriented cognitive processes require having mental representations of ideal future work selves that are vivid and easily recalled, which cause employees to generate plans in order to reach the envisioned future. For example, Pham and Taylor (1999) found that students who envisioned their plan of goal achievement of doing better on an exam were more successful on the exam because they studied the same amount of time as they had initially planned. However, students who did not envision their goal of performing better on the exam overestimated how much time they would spend on studying and were not as successful in achieving their goal.

Identity construction is another important motivational source of future work selves. Stets and Burke (2000) state that identities are composed of the self-views individuals have that develop from memberships to particular groups or roles. Strauss et al. (2012) believe that future work selves tie an individual's self to the desired future and allow for exploration in his or her self-definition. Identities are constructed when individuals alter the content of their identities in order to achieve a better fit with internal and external standards (Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010). For the individual aspiring to be a human resources manager, the belief that he or she has strong interpersonal skills influences the future work self that was constructed. Salient future work selves allow

employees to choose ideal future selves that align with their values rather than constructing future work selves based on what is expected of them; however, these future selves are flexible and adaptable and can be redefined as an individual's experiences change (Strauss et al., 2012). For example, an employee who has recently changed careers may reevaluate his or her future work self to support the new career path.

The last motivational source is self-regulation. Karoly (1993) defines self-regulation as "processes, internal and/or transactional, that enable an individual to guide his/her goal-directed activities over time and across changing circumstances" (p. 25). Strauss et al. (2012) believe that self-regulation is a key component to future work self saliency because it provides a mechanism for individuals to compare their present self and ideal self and identify gaps that can motivate behavior to convert the possibility of the ideal future into current goals through the acquisition of necessary skills or knowledge. For the hopeful manager mentioned above, evaluating the ideal self versus the current self stimulates self-directed behavior in the direction to achieve the desired future, such as becoming more involved in managerial duties or learning effective management theories.

Future Work Selves and Proactive Career Behaviors

Strauss et al. (2012) used the concept of future work selves to better understand the motivation behind how and why employees engage in proactive career behaviors. Proactive career behaviors involve anticipation, taking control, and self-initiation (Parker & Collins, 2010). Examples of proactive career behaviors include career planning, proactive skill development, career consultation, and network building (Strauss et al.,

2012). Additionally, Grant and Ashford (2008) state that proactivity is more than seeking feedback or leadership roles; it is a process that includes anticipating, planning, and striving to have an impact. Because employees can no longer rely solely on their organizations to satisfy their personal growth and developmental needs, they are taking the initiative to manage their own careers rather than passively accepting the tasks, roles, and goals assigned by management (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Strauss et al. (2012) argued that because employees have begun to take it upon themselves to guide and develop their own careers, it is increasingly becoming important to learn how and why they choose to engage in proactive career behaviors.

Strauss et al. (2012) found that one way employees actively manage their careers is through the construction of desired work selves. They examined the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviors using 400 participants of various occupations and 103 doctoral students. Future work self salience was found to be significantly and positively related to proactive career behaviors even after controlling for age, job tenure, future orientation, career identity, career commitment, and career aspirations. They concluded that employees compared their current work selves with their ideal future selves and developed strategic plans to achieve their ideal future work selves and the goals that complemented them.

Strauss et al. (2012) also conducted a longitudinal study to show the effects of salient future work selves on future proactive career behaviors. They found that the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviors was significant at both the time of the study (Time 1) and six months later (Time 2).

Furthermore, future work self salience at Time 1 significantly and positively predicted proactive career behaviors at Time 2. These results are important because they indicated that salient future work selves formed the basis for long-term proactive career behaviors. Taken together, these findings demonstrated that having salient future work selves not only means that individuals are more likely to engage in proactive career behaviors, but they are also more likely to engage in them over a period of time.

Given that Strauss et al. (2012) is the only empirical study that has investigated and demonstrated the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviors, the present study seeks to provide additional evidence for the relationship. Thus, the following hypothesis is presented:

Hypothesis 1: Future work self saliency will be positively related to proactive career behaviors.

Future Work Selves and Self-Development Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

In addition to proactive career behaviors, there are other extra-role work behaviors that employees can engage in to help them achieve their ideal work selves. One such group of behaviors is a dimension of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) called self-development OCBs. OCBs are behaviors that are “discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and in the aggregate, promote the efficient and effective functioning of the organization” (Organ, Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 2006 p. 3). Because these behaviors are not necessarily part of an employee’s formal job description, employees who exhibit OCBs are going above and

beyond what is expected of them to help their organization (OCB-O) or other employees (OCB-I).

Self-development OCBs are discretionary, extra-role behaviors described as “the self-training of members for doing their own jobs better and self-education for assuming more responsible positions in the organization” (Katz, 1964 p. 133). Examples of self-development behaviors include subscribing to a scholarly magazine in the employee’s field or taking work-related classes on the employee’s own time (George & Brief, 1992). The concept originated from Katz (1964), who believed that self-training was a key behavior employees must display for organizational effectiveness because employees use the knowledge and skills they have learned for the organization’s benefit (George & Brief, 1992). More recently, Podsakoff et al. (2000) described self-development OCBs as behaviors designed to improve one’s knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) in order to perform the job more successfully or to prepare for higher level positions within the organization.

Similar to proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs require employees to take control and initiate these extra-role behaviors. Ang, Ng, and Goh (2004) argue that employees are becoming increasingly required to possess multiple skill sets in order to be adaptive to the ever changing work environment where new technology is constantly embraced. As such, employees may not be able to solely rely on their organizations and work roles to provide them with the opportunities to stay current and continuously develop. Employees who envision themselves in higher positions within the organization may need more advanced KSAs to effectively perform their job duties

and manage their subordinates. An organization with employees willing to spend their own time gaining KSAs has an added resource because employees are taking the initiative to learn knowledge and skills that can be applied throughout the organization for more effective functioning (Katz, 1964).

Previous research on the broader concept of possible selves has found that the presence of ideal possible selves stimulates individuals' desires to engage in behaviors to reach those ideal selves they envision (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006). Because the concept of future work selves is based on the concept of ideal possible selves, employees who have salient future work selves may be more willing to engage in behaviors related to achieving their ideal work selves, such as self-development OCBs. They may not rely on their organizations to provide developmental opportunities, and therefore, they may engage in discretionary and extra-role behaviors to gain KSAs necessary to achieve their desired future work selves. However, this relationship has never been empirically tested. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Future work self saliency will be positively related to self-development OCBs.

Future Work Selves and Work Engagement

When employees construct a vision of their desired selves and regulate their behaviors in order to meet these selves, they may become more personally invested in their work. Employees will work hard to attain their future work selves because they have linked their self-concept to their work which, in turn, provides personal meaning in

their job. Scroggins (2008) states that when job tasks allow employees to engage in behaviors aligned with who they are and who they want to be, they experience their work as meaningful and motivational. Employees put forth more effort and approach their work with more enthusiasm and pride when they see the connection between their work and the achievement of their ideal future work selves.

An employee's investment in his or her work is described by Schaufeli et al. (2002) through a concept called work engagement. They state that work engagement is a work-related state of mind, rather than a momentary or specific state, that is made up of three elements: vigor, dedication, and absorption. Vigor refers to high levels of energy, the willingness to invest resources in work, and persistence during difficult periods. Dedication is characterized by a sense of significance, inspiration, pride, and eagerness. Lastly, absorption is about being fully engrossed in one's work.

Engaged employees have an energy and connection to their work tasks that allow them to deal with the demands of their jobs (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Engagement involves the physical involvement, cognitive vigilance, and emotional connection during role performances (Kahn, 1990). Engaged employees feel energized, passionate, and dedicated to their work and organizations.

Work engagement has garnered much attention in recent years because of its motivational power on employees and its positive effects on their attitudes and behaviors such as increased job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and OCBs, and a negative relationship with intention to quit (Saks, 2006). Furthermore, a meta-analysis by Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002), using over 7,000 business units in 36 different companies,

showed that business-unit-level engagement was positively correlated with business-unit outcomes such as customer satisfaction, productivity, profit, employee retention, and employee safety, and that these findings were generalizable across organizations.

Employees with salient future work selves may experience higher levels of work engagement because they have linked their desired selves with their work and have devised strategies in which to achieve their ideal selves. They may be more eager to persist during difficult periods because they have made a commitment to achieving their future work selves. Employees may also have an increase in inspiration and pride in their work because their jobs are now personally connected to who they perceive themselves to be and the employees they wish to be in the future. Finally, employees may feel more emotionally attached and dedicated to their work because the experiences, knowledge, and skills they are gaining from their jobs are going to help them achieve their ideal future work selves. However, such a relationship has not been tested. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posited:

Hypothesis 3: Future work self saliency will be positively related to work engagement.

Perceived Supervisor Support as a Potential Moderator

For the current study, perceived supervisor support is proposed as a potential moderator to the relationships between future work self salience and the three work-related outcomes detailed in the above sections (proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs and work engagement). It is believed that employees with salient future work selves are more likely to demonstrate positive work behaviors and become

more engaged in their work if they also feel they are being supported by their supervisors in fulfilling their future work selves than when they feel low support from their supervisors.

The concept of perceived supervisor support stems from the larger theory of organizational support theory, which posits that employees assign their organizations with humanlike characteristics and interpret actions by their organizations as indications of favorable or unfavorable views toward them (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). This theory also stipulates that a healthy relationship between an employer and employee fulfills important socio-emotional needs (e.g., affiliation and emotional support) for employees, and, therefore, enhances employee well-being (Baran, Shanock, & Miller, 2012). Employees pay attention to the treatment offered by their organizations and determine the degree to which their contributions are valued (Zagenczyk, Gibney, Few, & Scott, 2011). Organizations can signal to their employees that they value them by providing resources to fulfill their needs, such as mentoring, promotions, or training and development opportunities (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). However, low support signals to employees that they are not valued and may cause them to disengage from their organizations (Zagenczyk et al., 2011).

Similar to the ways employees form perceptions about the degree to which their organizations value them, they can also form opinions about the ways in which their supervisors care about their well-being through perceived supervisor support. According to Shanock and Eisenberger (2006), supervisors, compared to organizations, play a much larger role in the more individualized aspects of an employee's job, such as feedback

about performance, career guidance, mentoring, and social support. Similar to perceived organizational support, research has found that perceived supervisor support is positively related to employee outcomes such as in-role performance, extra-role performance, affective commitment, work effort, OCBs and unit performance, and negatively related to turnover intention (e.g., Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2012; Eisenberger et al., 2002; Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010; Maurer & Lippstreu, 2006; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006).

Interestingly, research has shown that perceived supervisor support may have a stronger influence on employee outcomes compared to perceived organizational support. For example, Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010) examined the effects of perceived supervisor support on employees' assessment of their organization's long term commitment to helping them learn new skills and competencies, which they called perceived investment in employee development (PIED). They found that high levels of perceived supervisor support moderated the relationship between PIED and work effort, work quality and OCBs. These results indicated that employees' beliefs that their organizations value their contributions and care about their employability are not likely to result in favorable work outcomes (i.e., work effort, work quality, OCBs), unless it is accompanied by high levels of perceived supervisor support (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010). Thus, perceived supervisor support was more of an essential influence on employee outcomes compared to perceived organizational support. Additionally, Dysvik and Kuvaas (2012) found that not only was perceived supervisor climate, defined as employees' shared views about supervisor support, directly related to unit performance and PIED, but that it was a more important influence on unit performance than PIED climate. Therefore, if employees perceive a

lack of supervisor support, developmental efforts may not increase favorable employee outcomes because they do not have the support they need in engaging in developmental opportunities (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010).

Perceived supervisor support has been shown to be an important influence on employee outcomes and attitudes, and research has also shown it to have a greater influence on employee outcomes than perceived organizational support (e.g., Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2012; Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010). Therefore, the current study seeks to use perceived supervisor support as a potential moderator for the relationships between future work self salience and work related outcomes (proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs and work engagement). Employees with salient future work selves who also perceive supervisor support may increase the degree to which they engage in positive work behaviors because they may feel their supervisors are supporting them in reaching their ideal work selves. Supervisors can play a supportive role by helping employees improve their work skills and develop career plans, and they can also provide ongoing feedback, facilitate learning, and offer the overall support necessary for employees to believe they are capable of achieving their goals (Maurer & Lippstreu, 2006). The supportive environment provided by supervisors is important for employees to believe that their future work selves are attainable, and may be an added benefit for employees to perform these developmental behaviors and become more engaged in their work. However, low supervisor support may signal to employees that their aspirations to achieve their ideal future work selves are not important and may deter employees from seeking developmental opportunities to advance their careers and develop themselves.

Although the above arguments suggest that perceived supervisor support might moderate the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs, and work engagement, to the author's knowledge, no previous research has examined these moderating relationships. Therefore, the present study posits the following research questions:

RQ 1: Does perceived supervisor support moderate the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviors?

RQ 2: Does perceived supervisor support moderate the relationship between future work self salience and self-development OCBs?

RQ 3: Does perceived supervisor support moderate the relationship between future work self salience and work engagement?

Method

Participants

A total of 134 individuals participated in the study. Participants who indicated that they were not working or did not have a supervisor/manager at the time of data collection were excluded from the study; therefore, the final sample consisted of 123 participants. Table 1 presents the demographic information of the sample. The sample consisted of 39% ($n = 48$) male and 60.2% female ($n = 74$). The majority of participants identified themselves as White (55.3%) or Asian/Pacific Islander (22.8%). Participants' ages ranged from 20 years to 65 years with an average age of 38.4 years ($SD = 12.29$). The sample was fairly well educated with a large majority of the participants (87.8%) having a Bachelor's degree or higher.

In terms of their employment, the majority of participants (75.6%, $n = 93$) worked full-time; the participants worked in a variety of industries, including 22.0% ($n = 27$) in the professional/business sector, 21.1% ($n = 26$) in educational services, 9.8% ($n = 12$) in government, 8.1% ($n = 10$) in retail, 8.1% ($n = 10$) in manufacturing, 6.5% ($n = 8$) in health care, and 23.6% ($n = 29$) in other industries (e.g., banking, nonprofit, technology). Approximately, 30% of the participants ($n = 36$) were managers. When asked if they see themselves working for their current organization in the future, 68.3% ($n = 84$) answered "yes" and 31.7% ($n = 39$) answered "no". On average, participants indicated they had been working 5 years and 9 months ($SD = 74.65$) with their organization, 4 years and 9 months for their job ($SD = 75.20$), and 2 years and 10 months under their current manager or supervisor ($SD = 44.96$).

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for demographic variables (N = 123)

Demographics	<i>n</i>	%
Age	<i>M</i> = 38.43	<i>SD</i> = 12.29
Gender		
Male	48	39.0%
Female	74	60.2%
Ethnicity		
White	68	55.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	28	22.8%
Multiracial	9	7.3%
Hispanic	8	6.5%
African American/Black	4	3.3%
Other	6	4.9%
Education Level		
High School Diploma	7	5.7%
Associate's Degree	8	6.5%
Bachelor's Degree	45	36.6%
Master's Degree	52	42.3%
Doctorate Degree	11	8.9%
Employment Status		
Full-Time	93	75.6%
Part-Time	22	17.9%
Contract/Temp worker	7	5.7%
Industry		
Professional/Business Services	27	22.0%
Educational Services	26	21.1%
Government	12	9.8%
Manufacturing	10	8.1%
Retail	10	8.1%
Health care	8	6.5%
Other	29	23.6%
Supervisory Position		
No	87	70.7%
Yes	36	29.3%
Future with Organization		
Yes	84	68.3%
No	39	31.7%
Organization Tenure	<i>M</i> = 68.95	<i>SD</i> = 74.65
Job Tenure	<i>M</i> = 57.23	<i>SD</i> = 75.20
Supervisor Tenure	<i>M</i> = 35.87	<i>SD</i> = 44.96

Procedure

Data were collected using an online survey. The survey link, along with a message explaining the study, was sent via email to the researcher's contacts and was also posted on the LinkedIn professional networking website in 14 psychology and business-related groups (e.g., SIOP, BAAP, Psychology in Human Resources).

Participants who selected the link were shown a brief description of the study and an informed consent form, after which they were asked to indicate whether they consented to taking the survey. Participants were then asked to mentally travel into the future and imagine the future work selves they hoped to become in order to answer the items regarding their future work self salience. Participants were also asked to indicate their opinion on their proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs, work engagement, perceived supervisor support, and demographic information. After completing the survey, participants submitted their responses and were thanked for their participation.

Measures

For the scales listed below, respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they disagreed or agreed with each statement on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Items for all measures were averaged to create composite scores for each scale.

Future work selves. Future work self salience was measured with five items developed by Strauss et al. (2012) to measure the salient future work selves of the participants. Sample items include "The future is very easy for me to imagine," "I can

easily imagine my future work self,” and “I am very clear about who and what I want to become in the future work.” Higher scores indicate participants thought that their future work self was clear and easy to imagine. Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was .92.

Proactive career behaviors. Proactive career behaviors were assessed using 13 items used by Strauss et al. (2012). Sample items include “I am planning what I want to do in the next few years of my career,” “I develop skills which may not be needed so much now, but in future positions,” “I initiate talks with my supervisor about training or work assignments I need to develop skills that will help my future work chances,” and “I am building a network of contacts of friendships with colleagues to obtain information about how to do my work or to determine what is expected of me.” Higher scores indicate that participants engage in more proactive career behaviors. Cronbach’s coefficient alpha was .88.

Self-development OCBs. Based on George and Brief’s (1992) definition of self-development OCBs, seven items were developed to measure whether participants engaged in self-developing behaviors. According to the definition, self-development OCBs are behaviors that involve employees voluntarily seeking to enhance their knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to do their current jobs better or to prepare themselves for more responsible positions in the future. Examples of the items include “I seek out assignments that enhance my value to this employer,” “I voluntarily seek to enhance the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to perform my current job better,” and “I keep up with the latest developments in my field.” Higher scores indicate that

participants voluntarily engage in behaviors that develop themselves. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .84.

Work engagement. A 17 item scale developed by Schaufeli et al. (2002) was used to assess participant levels of work engagement. Sample items include, "When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work," "My job inspires me," and "When I am working, I forget everything else around me." Higher scores indicate higher levels of work engagement. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .94.

Perceived supervisor support. Items measuring perceived supervisor support were adapted from the short version of the original perceived organizational support scale (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). The short version contained 16 items and an additional 4 items were taken from the original scale. All items containing the word "organization" were replaced with the word "supervisor." The four additional items that were used were "The supervisor is willing to extend himself/herself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability," "My supervisor provides me little opportunity to move up in the ranks," "My supervisor cares more about making a profit than about me," and "My supervisor wishes to give me the best possible job for which I am qualified." Higher scores indicate higher levels of perceived supervisor support. Cronbach's coefficient alpha was .96.

Demographic variables. Participants were asked to answer 12 demographic questions, including age, gender, ethnicity, education level, employment status, tenure for their organization, job, and supervisor, whether they held a supervisory position (e.g.,

supervisor, manager, director, executive), whether they had a manager they worked with, and the industry in which they worked.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, Pearson correlations, and Cronbach alphas among the measured variables. For the predictor variable, high levels of future work self salience ($M = 5.18, SD = 1.27$) were reported. Overall, participants held clear representations of themselves that reflected their future hopes and aspirations in the workplace that could be easily recalled. Regarding the criterion variables, participants reported high levels of proactive career behaviors ($M = 5.60, SD = .84$), self-development OCBs ($M = 5.79, SD = .83$), and work engagement ($M = 5.20, SD = 1.09$). These results show that the average participant demonstrated high levels of behaviors related to developing their careers and KSAs and that they were also engaged in their jobs. Concerning the moderator variable, participants believed that they were supported by their supervisors ($M = 5.17, SD = 1.17$).

Table 2
Means, Standard Deviations, Pearson Correlations, and Alphas (N = 123)

Measure	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Future Work Self Salience	5.18	1.27	(.92)				
2. Proactive Career Behaviors	5.60	.84	.58***	(.88)			
3. Self-development OCBs	5.79	.83	.45***	.68***	(.84)		
4. Work Engagement	5.20	1.09	.41***	.51***	.47***	(.94)	
5. Perceived Supervisor Support	5.17	1.17	.23*	.34***	.35***	.44***	(.96)

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

Reliability coefficients (alpha) presented on the diagonal

Pearson Correlations

The three criterion variables all showed moderate to strong correlations among each other. The highest correlation was obtained between proactive career behaviors and self-development OCBs ($r = .68, p < .001$). Proactive career behaviors and work engagement were also strongly related ($r = .51, p < .001$), and self-development OCBs and work engagement were moderately related ($r = .47, p < .001$). These results showed that participants who demonstrated more behaviors to guide and develop their careers also displayed more behaviors that were targeted at developing their KSAs and were more engaged in their work.

Concerning the moderator variable, perceived supervisor support was weakly related to future work self salience ($r = .23, p = .01$). The more salient employees' future work selves were, the more support they perceived from their supervisors. Perceived supervisor support was moderately related to the three criterion variables of proactive career behaviors ($r = .34, p < .001$), self-development OCBs ($r = .35, p < .001$), and work engagement ($r = .44, p < .001$). These results show that the more employees felt their supervisor supports them and cares about their well-being, the more they displayed proactive career and self-development behaviors and the more they were engaged in their work role.

Test of Hypotheses

Pearson correlations were used to test the hypotheses that future work self salience would be related to proactive career behaviors (H1), self-development OCBs (H2), and work engagement (H3). Hypothesis 1 stated that future work self salience

would be positively related to proactive career behaviors. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, results showed that future work self salience was significantly and positively related to proactive career behaviors ($r = .58, p < .001$). The more vivid and clear participants' future work selves were, the more likely they were to display proactive career behaviors.

Hypothesis 2 stated that future work self salience would be positively related to self-development OCBs. The results revealed a significant and positive relationship between future work self salience and self-development OCBs ($r = .45, p < .001$). Consistent with Hypothesis 2, employees who had more salient future work selves also demonstrated more voluntary behaviors related to developing their KSAs.

Finally, Hypothesis 3 posited that future work self salience would be positively related to work engagement. As predicted, the results showed future work self salience to be significantly and positively related to work engagement ($r = .41, p < .001$). This result showed that employees who had more salient future work selves were more likely to be engaged in their work. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was supported.

Research Questions

Additionally, three research questions were posited to examine whether perceived supervisor support would moderate the relationship between future work self salience and each of the three criterion variables: proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs, and work engagement. To uncover the potential moderating relationship, three separate hierarchical regression analyses were performed. In each of the hierarchical regression analyses, future work self salience was entered in Step 1, perceived supervisor support in

Step 2, and finally, the product of future work self salience and perceived supervisor support as the interaction term was entered in Step 3.

The first model evaluated Research Question 1, which asked if perceived supervisor support would moderate the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviors. Table 3 shows the results of the hierarchical regression analysis. The analysis revealed that future work self salience was a significant predictor of proactive career behaviors and accounted for 33% of the variance in proactive career behaviors, $R^2 = .33$, $R^2_{adj} = .33$, $F(1, 121) = 59.86$, $p < .001$. Next, perceived supervisor support accounted for an additional 5% of the variance in proactive career behaviors above and beyond the variance explained by future work self salience, $\Delta R^2 = .05$, $\Delta F(1,120) = 8.93$, $p < .01$. Employees who perceived support from their supervisor were more likely to display proactive career behaviors above and beyond having salient future work selves. Results of Step 3 showed that the interaction term did not account for an additional significant proportion of the variance in proactive career behaviors above and beyond the variance explained by future work self salience and perceived supervisor support, $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $\Delta F(1,119) = 2.37$, $p = .13$. Therefore, to answer the first proposed research question, perceived supervisor support did not moderate the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviors.

Table 3
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Proactive Career Behaviors

Steps and Predictor Variables	R ²	ΔR ²	r	β
Step 1:	.33***	.33***		
Future Work Self Salience (FWS)			.58***	.58***
Step 2:				
Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS)	.38***	.05**	.34***	.22**
Step 3:				
FWS x PSS	.39***	.01		-.66

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Betas reported at time of entry.

The second model assessed Research Question 2, which inquired whether perceived supervisor support would moderate the relationship between future work self salience and self-development OCBs. Table 4 details the results of the hierarchical regression analysis. The analysis showed that future work self salience was a significant predictor of self-development OCBs and accounted for 21% of the variance in self-development OCBs, $R^2 = .21$, $R^2_{adj} = .20$, $F(1, 121) = 31.36$, $p < .001$. Perceived supervisor support was also a significant predictor of self-development OCBs and accounted for an additional 6% of the variance in self-development OCBs above and beyond the variance explained by future work self salience, $\Delta R^2 = .06$, $\Delta F(1, 120) = 9.92$, $p < .01$. These findings show that employees who perceived more supervisory support were more likely to demonstrate voluntary behaviors related to their self-development above and beyond having salient future work selves. Results of Step 3 showed that the interaction term did not account for an additional significant proportion of the variance in self-development OCBs above and beyond the variance explained by future work self salience and perceived supervisor support, $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $\Delta F(1, 119) = 1.75$, $p = .19$. Thus,

the answer to the second research question is that perceived supervisor support did not moderate the relationship between future work self salience and self-development OCBs.

Table 4
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Self-Development OCBs

Steps and Predictor Variables	R ²	ΔR ²	r	β
Step 1:	.21***	.21***		
Future Work Self Salience (FWS)			.45***	.45***
Step 2:				
Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS)	.27***	.06**	.35***	.25**
Step 3:				
FWS x PSS	.28***	.01		.62

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Betas reported at time of entry.

The final model evaluated Research Question 3, which asked whether perceived supervisor support would moderate the relationship between future work self salience and work engagement. Table 5 shows the results of the hierarchical regression analysis. Results of the analysis revealed that future work self salience was a significant predictor of work engagement and accounted for 17% of the variance in work engagement, $R^2 = .17$, $R^2_{adj} = .16$, $F(1, 121) = 24.07$, $p < .001$. Perceived supervisor support was also a significant predictor of work engagement and accounted for an additional 12% of the variance in work engagement above and beyond the variance explained by future work self salience, $\Delta R^2 = .12$, $\Delta F(1, 120) = 20.93$, $p < .001$. These findings suggest that employees who perceived support from their supervisor were more likely to be engaged in their work above and beyond having salient future work selves. Results of Step 3 showed that the interaction term accounted for an additional significant proportion of the variance in work engagement above and beyond the variance explained by future work

self salience and perceived supervisor support $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $\Delta F(1,119) = 5.16$, $p < .05$. To answer the third suggested research question, perceived supervisor support did moderate the relationship between future work self salience and work engagement.

Table 5
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Variables Predicting Work Engagement

Steps and Predictor Variables	R ²	ΔR ²	r	β
Step 1:	.17***	.17***		
Future Work Self Salience (FWS)			.41***	.41***
Step 2:				
Perceived Supervisor Support (PSS)	.29***	.12***	.44***	.36***
Step 3:				
FWS x PSS	.32***	.03*		-1.03*

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Betas reported at time of entry.

The nature of the interaction was analyzed by plotting the regression equations for perceived supervisor support at one standard deviation above and below the mean.

Figure 1 shows that there was a stronger relationship between future work self salience and work engagement when employees had higher levels of perceived supervisor support, than when they perceived lower levels of supervisor support.



Figure 1. Interaction between perceived supervisor support and future work self salience in predicting work engagement.

In sum, results of the hierarchical multiple regression analyses revealed that employees with salient future work selves were more likely to display proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs, and have higher levels of work engagement. Results also indicate that perceived supervisor support was directly related to proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs, and work engagement above and beyond future work self salience. However, perceived supervisor support only moderated the relationship between future work self salience and work engagement. The relationship between future work self salience and work engagement was stronger when employees had high levels of perceived supervisor support compared to when they had low levels of perceived supervisor support.

Discussion

The concept of possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) has garnered much attention in the fields of sociology and education because of its motivational effects on individuals who wish to achieve their goals. More recently, Strauss et al. (2012) introduced the concept of future work selves, defined as employees' desired future selves that reflect their hopes and aspirations regarding work, to better understand how and why employees engage in behaviors to manage their careers. Specifically, salient future work selves are ones that can be easily and clearly recalled. Strauss et al. found that future work self salience was positively related to proactive career behaviors. However, little attention has focused on this construct because of its recent introduction into the literature. Therefore, the current study was conducted to replicate Strauss et al.'s findings as well as examine the relationships between future work self salience and other work behaviors, namely self-development OCBs and work engagement. The current study also introduced perceived supervisor support as a potential moderator because it was argued that employees who had a clear vision of who they aspired to be in the future would display more proactive career behaviors and self-development OCBs and have higher levels of work engagement if they perceived their supervisors were supporting them in reaching their ideal selves than if they perceived low supervisor support.

Hypothesis 1 stated that future work self salience would be positively related to proactive career behaviors. The results of the study were consistent with the hypothesis, and replicated Strauss et al.'s (2012) findings. Employees with more salient future work selves were found to be more likely to display proactive career behaviors. Consistent

with Strauss et al.'s conclusion, employees who had salient future work selves may have developed more plans for guiding their careers and engaging in behaviors to meet those selves such as career planning, network building, and career consultation. For example, if an employee clearly envisions one day becoming a manager, that employee will develop plans and regulate his or her behaviors to achieve the ideal self, such as attending networking events or seeking advice on how to acquire higher level positions.

Hypothesis 2 posited that future work self salience would be positively related to self-development OCBs, which are voluntary behaviors employees engage in to develop their KSAs in order to advance their careers and benefit their organizations. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, results showed that employees with salient future work selves were more likely to engage in behaviors that developed their KSAs. Using the same example as above, an employee who wishes to one day become a manager is more likely to display behaviors that will enable him or her to succeed in higher level positions that require advanced KSAs, such as attending trainings or keeping up-to-date with industry trends. Results of Hypotheses 1 and 2 imply that one of the reasons employees display proactive career behaviors and self-development OCBs may be due to their salient future work selves.

Hypothesis 3 stated that future work self salience would be positively related to work engagement. Findings showed support for Hypothesis 3. Although this relationship was weaker than the relationships between future work self salience and proactive career behaviors and self-development OCBs, results showed that employees with salient future work selves were more likely to have higher levels of work

engagement. Employees with salient future work selves have linked their identities (i.e., their ideal future selves) with their jobs, and therefore, they are more likely to invest more effort and approach their work with more enthusiasm and pride by succeeding in achieving their ideal work selves because doing so fulfills professional and personal milestones. Research on work engagement has shown that personal resources (e.g., self-efficacy, optimism, psychological meaningfulness) act as antecedents of work engagement (e.g., Halbesleben, 2010; Kahn, 1990). Future work self salience might be one of the personal resources that contribute to work engagement because as employees work to attain their future work selves by completing goals that complement those selves, they gain the confidence necessary to believe they can become the employees they desire. Employees may also have higher levels of work engagement from being able to use their newfound knowledge and skills, attained in the process of achieving their future work selves, to contribute to their organization's success. This is similar to what Kahn (1990) found in his study where people who felt worthwhile, useful, and valuable experienced increased levels of work engagement.

Perceived supervisor support was introduced as a potential moderator of the relationships between future work self salience and each of the three work related outcomes (proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs, and work engagement). Employees who have salient future work selves may increase their proactive work behaviors and levels of work engagement if they also feel that their supervisors are willing to support their efforts in attaining their ideal future work selves. Supervisors can provide a supportive environment by helping employees improve their skills or develop

career plans and can signal to employees that their aspirations are achievable (Maurer & Lippstreu, 2006).

Overall, results of this study showed that perceived supervisor support only moderated the relationship between future work self salience and work engagement. That is, the relationship between future work self salience and work engagement was stronger when employees perceived high levels of supervisor support than when they perceived low levels of support. A possible explanation for the lack of significant interaction effects between perceived supervisor support and developmental behaviors (proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs) could be that behaviors related to developing oneself or one's career are more dependent upon the employee taking the initiative to actively engage in these types of behaviors. Although supervisor support is a beneficial resource, because these behaviors are extra-role behaviors, employees may go outside of the work environment in order to gain the necessary KSAs, such as enrolling in classes at a college or subscribing to a work-related periodical, even without the support from their supervisors.

Another possible explanation for the lack of significant interactions effects could be that employees are more aware of their organizations' commitments to helping them learn new skills and competencies rather than just their supervisors. Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010) found that perceptions of organizational investment in employee development fully mediated the relationship between perceived supervisor support and OCBs. Although supervisors act as representatives of their organizations, the policies that enable employees to achieve their ideal future work selves (e.g., being promoted to a manager)

stem from the overall organization. Therefore, it may be that organizations have more influence on employees' willingness to engage in extra-role developmental behaviors compared to their supervisors.

Theoretical Implications

The current study's findings support and expand on the research conducted on the concept of future work self salience by Strauss et al. (2012). Future work self salience was found to be positively related to proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs and work engagement. The current study provides a better understanding of the motivational power of future work self salience on employees' desires to achieve their goals and aspirations at work, specifically proactive career behaviors and self-development OCBs. Although the concept of self-development OCBs stems from the idea of self-training by Katz (1964), it has rarely been utilized in research (e.g., Ang, et al., 2004; George & Brief, 1992). Therefore, results of the current study not only expanded the research on future work self salience, but also found it to be an antecedent of self-development OCBs.

The current study also provides evidence that future work self salience was related to work engagement. Research has focused much attention on this topic because of the positive effects it has on organizations and employees (Harter, Hayes, & Schmidt, 2002; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002). However, few studies have focused on employees' internal motivations behind becoming engaged at work (e.g., Fairlie, 2011; Kahn, 1990). Findings from the current study lend evidence to the notion that employees who hold salient representations of their ideal work selves have increased levels of work

engagement because they have become emotionally and cognitively attached to their work by linking their desired selves to their work.

Much research has examined the effects of perceived supervisor support on employee outcomes (e.g., Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2012; Eisenberger et al., 2002; Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010; Maurer & Lippstreu, 2006; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006). This study sought to introduce perceived supervisor support as a moderator of the relationships between future work self salience and proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs, and work engagement. The findings showed that perceived supervisor support moderated the relationship between future work self salience and work engagement such that the relationship between future work self salience and work engagement was stronger when employees had high levels of perceived supervisor support compared to when they had low levels of perceived supervisor support.

One reason why perceived supervisor support did not moderate the relationships between future work self salience and proactive career behaviors and self-development OCBs could be due to the strong relationships found between future work self salience and these work behaviors. Perhaps the interaction effect could not account for a significant amount of variance in the two constructs above and beyond future work self salience and perceived supervisor support due to the high correlations they already had with each.

Practical Implications

In addition to the contributions made to the literature, the results found in this study have practical implications for supervisors and organizations. The results of the current study show that it is possible to increase employees' positive work behaviors and work engagement levels by making the achievement of employees' future work selves a priority. Results indicate that one possible reason employees engage in proactive career behaviors and self-development OCBs might be due to them having a salient representation of who they desire to be in the future. If employees can clearly envision their desired selves, they are more likely to engage in behaviors, such as skill development and career planning, to achieve their ideal selves.

Employees with salient future work selves also have increased work engagement levels because they have linked their identity with their work. They have constructed a vision of their ideal future work selves and, by regulating their behaviors to reach their desired selves, employees become more personally invested in their work. Because their ideal selves are linked to their identities, employees have made a commitment to reaching their future selves and feel more pride when they achieve their goals.

One way organizations can increase positive work behaviors and work engagement levels using employees' future work selves is by having employees produce short or long term developmental plans. Employees can write down their work goals and aspirations and generate plans to meet those goals. This will not only help employees who have salient future work selves create a roadmap to achieve their desired selves, but

it will also aid employees without salient future work selves to think about their ideal selves and the goals that correspond with those selves.

Although perceived supervisor support did not moderate the relationships between future work self salience and proactive career behaviors and self-development OCBs, results show that having supervisor support is still an important influence on employees' performing these behaviors above and beyond employees having salient future work selves. Because supervisors act as representations of their organizations, they can help guide employees through the organization, and can provide opportunities for employees to reach their ideal selves, such as developing career plans, networking, providing ongoing feedback, and supporting training opportunities.

A supportive work environment also signals to employees that their goals and aspirations are important to their supervisors and that employees are valued and cared for beyond just their job roles. Results from the current study showed that the relationship between future work self salience and work engagement was stronger when employees perceived higher levels of supervisor support compared to lower levels. To ensure high levels of work engagement are reached and maintained, supervisor support in continuous development is important for employees to believe they can attain their future work selves.

To facilitate continual development, Fairlie (2011) proposes the promotion of "human development" along with employee development by allowing employees to acquire job-specific KSAs and to also fulfill employee developmental needs. Through employee development plans, supervisors can coach their employees on what is needed

to accomplish their goals and provide ongoing feedback so employees are continuously aware of their progress to achieve their future work selves and the goals that coincide with them. This process signals to employees that their supervisors are supportive of their goals and care about them achieving their ideal future work selves, and it also shows employees that their future work selves are attainable.

Strengths, Limitations, and Directions for Future Research

Although Strauss et al. (2012) examined the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career behaviors, to the author's knowledge, no other studies have expanded on the current research of future work self salience. One strength of this study was the contribution to the literature by expanding on the previous research on this concept and examining other potential outcomes of future work self salience. The current study provides a deeper understanding of employee motivations to engage in behaviors to advance their careers and develop their KSAs in hopes of attaining higher level positions. Employees who have a clear vision of their future selves and an internal desire to accomplish their goals display more behaviors related to career and skill development in order to achieve their ideal selves. Additionally, findings from the current study provide more insight into the literature of work engagement and show that employees with salient future work selves are also more likely to have higher levels of work engagement.

Another strength of this study is that perceived supervisor support was introduced as a moderator and was found to not only have a direct influence on proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs and work engagement, but it also moderated the relationship between future work self salience and work engagement. The results showed

that supervisors can have a direct impact on their employees' work behaviors and attitudes. This is in line with previous research that shows that perceived supervisor support may represent an essential element for increasing positive employee outcomes, such as affective commitment, work effort, OCBs, and performance (Dysvik & Kuvaas, 2012; Eisenberger et al., 2002; Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010; Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006).

As with any research conducted, the current study has limitations that should be addressed. First, because of the nature of the study, causal inferences cannot be made. Thus, it cannot be concluded that salient future work selves cause employees to display proactive career behaviors and self-development OCBs, or cause higher levels of work engagement. Although relationships were found between the variables, it is not clear what the directions of the relationships are. For example, results of the current study found that perceived supervisor support was related to work engagement; however, it could be that employees who have higher levels of work engagement perceive higher levels of supervisor support. Although research has shown that perceived supervisor support is part of the job resources that influence employees' degrees of work engagement, it may be that engaged employees believe that their supervisors support them more if their supervisors see them engaged in their work. Additionally, even though the survey was anonymous, there may have been a bias to appear socially desirable when answering the questions of the survey. Specifically, employees may not want to seem complacent when it comes to their future selves and positive work behaviors and may answer the questions based on what they believe to be acceptable.

Although the present study expanded on the concept of future work selves studied by Strauss et al. (2012), the concept is still new and there is much research needed to be done to fully understand the antecedents and outcomes of this concept. Therefore, future research should further expand on the current research of future work self salience. One suggestion would be to use perceived organizational support, instead of perceived supervisor support, as a potential moderator. Organizations are largely responsible for creating the policies and opportunities that supervisors pass on to their employees, such as promotions, training classes, networking opportunities, and cross-functional work projects; thus, it is possible that organizations have more of an influence on employee outcomes, specifically, proactive career behaviors and self-development OCBs.

Another suggested area for future research would be to examine affective commitment as an outcome to the relationship with future work self salience. Affective commitment is an employee's emotional bond to their organization (Rhoades, Eisenberger, & Armeli, 2001). Following the same logic presented throughout this study, it is conceivable that employees who have salient future work selves may experience increased desires to stay employed with their organization, especially if they envision themselves working for the same organization in the future. Additionally, employees who are supported by their organizations or supervisors in achieving their ideal selves may feel stronger emotional connections to their organizations.

Conclusion

The current research provides support to the new area of study on future work selves and expands on the research originally conducted by Strauss, Griffin, and Parker

(2012). This study found that future work self salience has positive relationships with proactive career behaviors, self-development OCBs, and work engagement. The findings from this study also revealed that perceived supervisor support had a direct influence on each of the three work outcomes, beyond future work self salience; however, perceived supervisor support only moderated the relationship between future work self salience and work engagement. An important benefit of this research is that organizations can implement cost-effective and simple business practices, such as short or long term employee development plans, to cultivate a more motivated and engaged workforce to stay competitive in a constantly changing environment.

References

- Ang, S., Ng, K. Y., & Goh, K. (2004). Motivational traits and self-development OCB: A dimensional and configurational analysis. In Turnipseed, D.L. (Ed.), *Handbook of Organizational Citizenship Behavior* (pp. 265-287). New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc.
- Baran, B. E., Shanock, L. R., Miller, L. R. (2011). Advancing organizational support theory into the twenty-first century world of work. *Journal of Business Psychology, 27*, 123-147.
- Dutton, J. E., Roberts, L. M., & Bednar, J. (2010). Pathways for positive identity construction at work: Four types of positive identity and the building of social resources. *Academy of Management Review, 35*, 265-293.
- Dysvik, A., & Kuvaas, B. (2012). Perceived supervisor support climate, perceived investment in employee development climate, and business-unit performance. *Human Resource Management, 51*, 651-664.
- Eisenberger, R., Stinglhamber, F., Vandenberghe, C., Sucharski, I. L., & Rhoades, L. (2002). Perceived supervisor support: Contributions to perceived organizational support and employee retention. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*, 565-573.
- Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S., & Sowa, D. (1986). Perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 71*, 500-507.
- Fairlie, P. (2011). Meaningful work, employee engagement, and other key employee outcomes: Implications for human resource development. *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 13*, 508-525.
- George, J. M., & Brief, A. P. (1992). Feeling good-doing good: A conceptual analysis of the mood at work-organizational spontaneity relationship. *Psychological Bulletin, 112*, 310-329.
- Grant, A. M., & Ashford, S. J. (2008). The dynamics of proactivity at work. *Research in Organizational Behavior, 28*, 3-34.
- Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., & Hayes, T. L. (2002). Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: a meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*, 268-279.

- Halbesleben, J. R. B. (2010). A meta-analysis of work engagement: Relationships with burnout, demands, resources, and consequences. In Leiter, M. P. & Bakker, A. B. (Ed.), *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research* (pp. 102-117). New York: Psychology Press.
- Hoyle, R. H., & Sherrill, M. R. (2006). Future orientation in the self-system: Possible selves, self-regulation, and behavior. *Journal of Personality, 74*, 1673-1678.
- Jawahar, I. M. (2012). Mediating role of satisfaction with growth opportunities on the relationship between employee development opportunities and citizenship behaviors and burnout. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 42*, 2257-2284.
- Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal, 33*, 692-724.
- Karoly, P. (1993). Mechanisms of self-regulation: A systems view. *Annual Review of Psychology, 44*, 23-52.
- Katz, D. (1964). The motivational basis of organizational behavior. *Behavioral Science, 9*, 131-146.
- Kuvaas, B., & Dysvik, A. (2010). Exploring alternative relationships between perceived investment in employee development, perceived supervisor support and employee outcomes. *Human Resource Management Journal, 20*, 138-156.
- Maurer, T. J., & Lippstreu, M. (2006). Who will be committed to an organization that provides support for employee development? *Journal of Management Development, 27*, 328-347.
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible Selves. *American Psychologist, 41*, 954-969.
- McLeod, S. A. (2008). *Self-Concept*. Retrieved from <http://www.simplypsychology.org/self-concept.html>.
- Organ, D. W., Podsakoff, P. M., & MacKenzie, S. B. (2006). *Organizational citizenship behavior: Its nature, antecedents, and consequences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Oyserman D., Bybee, D., & Terry, K. (2006). Possible selves and academic outcomes: How and when possible selves impel action. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 91*, 188-204.
- Parker, S. K., & Collins, C. G. (2010). Taking stock: Integrating and differentiating multiple proactive behaviors. *Journal of Management, 36*, 633-662.

- Pham, L. B., & Taylor, S. E. (1999). From thought to action: Effects of process-versus outcome-based mental simulations on performance. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *25*, 250-260.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Paine, J. B., & Bachrach, D. G. (2000). Organizational citizenship behaviors: A critical review of the theoretical and empirical literature and suggestions for future research. *Journal of Management*, *26*, 513-563.
- Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived organizational support: A review of the literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*, 698-714.
- Rhoades, L., Eisenberger, R., & Armeli, S. (2001). Affective commitment to the organization: The contribution of perceived organizational support. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *86*, 825-836.
- Saks, A. (2006). Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *21*, 600-619.
- Scroggins, W. A. (2008). The relationship between employee fit perceptions, job performance, and retention: Implications of perceived fit. *Employee Responsibilities And Rights Journal*, *20*, 57-71.
- Shanock, L. R., & Eisenberger, R. (2006). When supervisors feel supported: Relationships with subordinates' perceived supervisor support, perceived organizational support, and performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *91*, 689-695.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Salanova, M., Gonzalez-Roma, V., & Bakker, A. B. (2002). The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *3*, 71-92.
- Strauss, K., Griffin, M. A., & Parker, S. K. (2012). Future work selves: How salient hoped-for identities motivate proactive career behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *97*, 580-598.
- Stets, J. E., & Burke, P. J. (2000). Identity theory and social identity theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *63*, 224-237.
- Wayne, S. J., Shore, L. M., & Liden, R. C. (1997). Perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange: a social exchange perspective. *Academy of Management Journal*, *40*, 82-111.

Zagenczyk, T. J., Gibney, R., Few, W. T., & Scott, K. L. (2011). Psychological contracts and organizational identification: The mediating effect of perceived organizational support. *Journal of Labor Research*, 32, 254-281.

Appendix

Survey Items

Future Work Selves (Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012)

1. This future is very easy for me to imagine.
2. The mental picture of this future is very clear.
3. I can easily imagine my Future Work Self.
4. I am very clear about who and what I want to become in my future work.
5. What type of future I want in relation to my work is very clear in my mind.

Proactive Career Behaviors (Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012)

1. I am planning what I want to do in the next few years of my career.
2. I am thinking ahead to the next few years and plan what I need to do for my career.
3. I engage in career path planning.
4. I have recently begun to think more about what I would like to accomplish in my work during the next year or two.
5. I develop skills which may not be needed so much now but in future positions.
6. I gain experience in a variety of areas to increase my knowledge and skills.
7. I develop knowledge and skills in tasks critical to my future work life.
8. I seek advice from my supervisor(s) or colleagues about additional training or experience I need in order to improve my future work projects.
9. I initiate talks with my supervisor about training or work assignments I need to develop skills that will help my future work chances.
10. I make my supervisor aware of my work aspirations and goals.

Self-Development Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs) (developed from George & Brief, 1992)

1. I seek out assignments that enhance my value to my employer.
2. I voluntarily seek to enhance the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to perform my current job better.
3. I voluntarily seek to enhance the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for more responsible positions within my organization.
4. I enhance my knowledge, skills and abilities beyond what is expected of me in my job role.
5. I seek out activities to enhance my knowledge, skills and abilities for the potential benefit to my organization.
6. I seek out advanced training courses to advance my knowledge, skills and abilities.
7. I keep up with the latest developments in my field.

Work Engagement (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002)

1. Time flies when I am working.
2. When I am working, I forget everything else around me.
3. I feel happy when I am working intensely.
4. I am immersed in my work.
5. I get carried away when I am working.
6. It is difficult to detach myself from my job.
7. I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose.
8. I am enthusiastic about my job.
9. My job inspires me.
10. I am proud of the work that I do.
11. To me, my job is challenging.
12. At my work, I feel bursting with energy.
13. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous.
14. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work.
15. I can continue working for very long periods of time.
16. At my job, I am very resilient, mentally.
17. At my work, I always persevere even when things do not go well.

Perceived Supervisor Support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986)

1. My supervisor values my contribution to the organization's well-being.
2. If my supervisor could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary, he/she would do so.
3. My supervisor fails to appreciate any extra effort from me.
4. My supervisor strongly considers my goals and values.
5. My supervisor would ignore any complaint from me.
6. My supervisor disregards my best interests when he/she makes decisions that affect me.
7. Help is available from my supervisor when I have a problem.
8. My supervisor really cares about my well-being.
9. My supervisor is willing to extend himself/herself in order to help me perform my job to the best of my ability.
10. My supervisor provides me little opportunity to move up in the ranks.
11. Even if I did the best job possible, my supervisor would fail to notice.
12. My supervisor is willing to help me when I need a special favor.
13. My supervisor cares about my general satisfaction at work.
14. If given the opportunity, my supervisor would take advantage of me.
15. My supervisor shows very little concern for me.
16. My supervisor cares about my opinion.
17. My supervisor takes pride in my accomplishments at work.
18. My supervisor cares more about making a profit than about me.
19. My supervisor wishes to give me the best possible job for which I am qualified.
20. My supervisor tries to make my job as interesting as possible.