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Applying the approach/avoidance framework to understand the relationships between social courage, workplace outcomes, and well-being outcomes

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ABSTRACT

The current article heeds three prior calls to advance the study of courage. First, we replicate prior findings regarding the relationship of social courage and work outcomes, but we also investigate, for the first time, the relationship between social courage and well-being outcomes. Second, we apply the approach/avoidance framework to understand *how* social courage influences these outcomes. Third, approach and avoidance motivations are tested as mediators of the relationships of social courage with outcomes while controlling for established aspects of personality, conscientiousness and neuroticism. Two longitudinal studies show that approach motivation is a robust mediator between courage and both workplace and well-being outcomes, suggesting that courageous individuals achieve positive outcomes because they particularly value the benefits in such actions. Avoidance motivation was a less consistent mediator. Implications are discussed, but it should be emphasized that broader relationships of social courage can now be identified by applying the approach/avoidance framework.

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Courage; social courage; approach/avoidance framework; I-O Psychology

Many important strides have been made in recent courage research. Rate et al., (2007; Rate, 2010) developed a definition that has now become widespread (Howard & Alipour, 2014; Koerner, 2014; Schilpzand, Hekman, & Mitchell, 2014; Sekerka, Bagozzi, & Charnigo, 2009). This definition specifies that courage is a '(a) willful, intentional act, (b) executed after mindful deliberation, (c) involving objective substantial risk to the actor, (d) primarily motivated to bring about a noble good or worthy end' (Rate et al., 2007, p. 95). From this perspective, several authors have developed theoretical models to identify possible outcomes of courage (Hannah, Sweeney, & Lester, 2007; Schilpzand et al., 2014; Sekerka et al., 2009), and some authors have begun to empirically test these relationships (Howard, Farr, Grandey, & Gutworth, 2017; Koerner, 2014). Particular dimensions of courage with notable importance have even been identified (Hannah, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2011; Howard et al., 2017). These include physical courage, moral courage, and social courage – the latter of these being the focus of the current article. Across all these streams of research, three calls have been made (Hannah et al., 2011; Howard et al., 2017; Koerner, 2014; Schilpzand et al., 2014; Sekerka et al., 2009).

First, authors have called for future research to replicate the limited extant findings and test a wider range of novel outcomes. Replication could ensure the validity of prior

findings, but discovering new outcomes also stresses the importance of courage to modern society. Second, authors have called for researchers to identify mediators of the relationships between courage and outcomes in order to determine *how* courage may influence outcomes. Third, authors have also called for future research to integrate prior theory into the study of courage. Integrating prior theory can allow courage to be linked to a broader theoretical network, and the results of prior research in associated domains could be used to better understand courage itself.

In response to these calls, the current article analyzes the relationship of social courage with workplace outcomes, which has been tested in a prior study (Howard et al., 2017), but it also investigates the relationship of social courage with well-being outcomes for the first time. These workplace outcomes include organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), employee voice behaviors, and counter-productive work behaviors (CWBs), whereas the well-being outcomes include stress, depression, anxiety, and life satisfaction. In testing these relationships, a novel framework is applied to link social courage with prior theory: the approach/avoidance framework (Dickson, Moberly, O'Dea, & Field, 2016; Elliot & Covington, 2001; Elliot & Thrash, 2002; Ferris, Yan, Lim, Chen, & Fatimah, 2016; Hangen, Elliot, & Jamieson, 2018; Mascaret, Elliot, & Cury, 2015). The current article tests whether approach and avoidance motivations mediate the relationships between social courage and its

outcomes, which could identify *how* social courage relates to outcomes. Lastly, the current article tests whether these observed relationships still hold when controlling for conscientiousness and neuroticism, thereby identifying whether social courage relates to mediators and outcomes beyond established aspects of personality. Together, the current article satisfies many prior calls for future research, and provides a better understanding of courage and social courage.

Background

Courage and social courage

Courage has been conceptualized as both a trait and a behavior. People can perform courageous acts, but they can also be considered courageous. Pury and Starkey (2010) label this the difference between courage as a process and as an accolade. Historically, greater attention has been paid to courage as an accolade, which is reflected in the numerous awards given to courageous people (i.e. The Carnegie Medal, Ed Block Award) rather than awards given for solitary courageous acts (Pury & Starkey, 2010). In research, however, treating courage as an accolade has resulted in certain concerns; notably, created definitions are often vague and cannot clearly differentiate courageous people from non-courageous people. For this reason, a number of authors have developed definitions that treat courage as a process, and those that habitually perform courageous acts are considered to possess the trait of courage. Perhaps the most theoretically supported of these definitions is that of Rate et al., (2007, Rate, 2010), which includes four primary aspects: intention, deliberation, risk, and prosocial intentions. In the current article, we apply this definition as our conceptualization of courage.

Further, courage is believed to be a multidimensional construct (Howard et al., 2017; May, 1994; Schilpzand, 2008; Woodard & Pury, 2007). Authors have differed on their methods to theorize the dimensions of courage, but it is perhaps most common to identify the dimensions by the associated risks involved with a behavior (i.e. physical courage, social courage; Howard et al., 2017; May, 1994; Schilpzand, 2008; Woodard & Pury, 2007). From this conceptualization, people may habitually perform courageous behaviors with certain types of associated risk, such as the risk of bodily harm, but the same people may habitually retreat from courageous behaviors with other types of associated risk, such as the risk of damaging social relationships.

While many of these courage dimensions are assumed to be important, the current article investigates the dimension of social courage. Social courage has repeatedly

appeared in authors' proposed dimensions of courage (May, 1994; Schilpzand, 2008; Woodard & Pury, 2007), and it is defined as a courageous behavior 'in which the risks involved are to the actor's esteem in the eyes of others' (Howard et al., 2017, p. 3). Typically, these risks relate to damaging one's relationships and/or social image, but other social risks may also be included. Further, many authors have stressed the importance of social courage, particularly its influence on the modern workplace (Geller & Veazie, 2009; Koerner, 2014; Worline, 2012). Employees are often expected to perform actions that may risk their relationships or social image for the benefit of their organization, coworkers, or even self (examples provided below). We argue, however, that social courage may also be important to well-being outcomes. Therefore, given the conceptual support for the existence and importance of social courage, we provide hypotheses regarding its organizational outcomes, well-being outcomes, and mediators of these relationships.

Hypothesis development

Prior empirical work and theoretical discussions on social courage have largely associated the construct with two categories of outcomes. The first is workplace outcomes. Many workplace interactions involve social conflict. Employees are often expected to give group presentations, although they may fear public speaking. Coworkers are expected to correct one another, even if it could damage friendships. Supervisors are even expected to discipline subordinates, which could create tension in any relationship. Identifying employees that may be more willing to perform these behaviors despite risks could provide large organizational benefits.

The goal of identifying socially courageous employees was achieved by Howard et al. (2017). These authors developed the Workplace Social Courage Scale (WSCS) and provided evidence of satisfactory psychometric properties and validity. Using this scale, it is indeed possible to measure social courage in an accurate manner. Howard et al. (2017) also provided initial evidence that social courage significantly relates to workplace outcomes, but the authors stressed the importance of replicating these results. For this reason, we retest the relationship of social courage with workplace outcomes. We expect social courage to have a positive relationship with organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and voice, while we expect it to have a negative relationship with counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs).

Hypothesis 1: Workplace social courage has a significant relationship with (a) OCBs, (b) voice, and (c) CWBs.

The second category is well-being outcomes. We conceptualize well-being as the presence (absence) of emotional and cognitive states that reflect a positive and healthy (negative and unhealthy) state of being (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kasser et al., 2014). While it is recognized that well-being is composed of several dimensions (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995), we study a general conceptualization of well-being in the current article, which is common in prior research (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kasser et al., 2014). Specifically, we operationalize well-being as higher life satisfaction and lower stress, depression, and anxiety.

Those who are more courageous are often believed to have better personal well-being (Hannah et al., 2007; Howard et al., 2017; Schilpzand et al., 2014). This may be because courageous people are fulfilled by their prosocial actions, thereby resulting in more positive mental states. It may also be because courageous people tend to be more resilient to the 'little things in life,' because they often pit themselves against larger adversity. Even yet, it may be because the outcomes of social courage behaviors often result in positive personal outcomes. For instance, an employee that gives group presentations and corrects coworkers may be identified as a high performer, and they may be more likely to be promoted and/or commended for their actions. These beneficial personal outcomes may in-turn improve the psychological states of those who habitually perform social courage behaviors.

To date, very little empirical work has linked social courage with well-being outcomes. Koerner (2014) qualitatively studied the effect of courageous acts on identity formation. The results suggested that these acts shifted the manner in which employees viewed themselves, often causing employees to attribute positive characteristics to themselves (i.e. powerful, noble, etc.). In turn, these employees with positive views of themselves may have better personal well-being outcomes. Therefore, we expect social courage to have a negative relationship with stress, depression, and anxiety, while having a positive relationship with life satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: Workplace social courage has a significant relationship with (a) stress, (b) depression, (c) anxiety, and (d) life satisfaction.

While it is important to demonstrate that social courage influences workplace and well-being outcomes, it is perhaps more important to show *how* it is related to these outcomes. Doing so could provide a theoretical lens to further study social courage, which could then be used to integrate the construct into prior research and practice from this perspective.

Some frameworks have been developed to understand the trait of courage and its surrounding relationships – both antecedents and outcomes (Hannah et al., 2007; Koerner, 2014; Schilpzand et al., 2014; Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007). These frameworks often differ in regard to the associated theories used to explain these relationships, but most all speculate that courageous people have the systematic tendency to strive through risk whereas others would retreat. Given this particular consistency, we integrate a relevant theoretical perspective to study the mediator(s) between courage and its antecedents: the approach/avoidance framework.

The approach/avoidance framework suggests that humans and most animals have two separate regulatory processes: to strive towards desirable stimuli (approach) and to avoid undesirable stimuli (avoidance; Elliot & Covington, 2001; Elliot & Thrash, 2002; Roth & Cohen, 1986). In certain contexts, a particular regulatory process may become more salient. For instance, in a toxic work environment, employees may be more focused on avoiding the excessive undesirable stimuli rather than striving towards organizational goals. Also, certain types of people also express a tendency towards a particular regulatory process. That is, some people habitually strive towards desirable stimuli, whereas others habitually strive away from undesirable stimuli. This would be considered having an approach or avoidance orientation.

Even yet, approach and avoidance motivations represent short-term and/or goal-directed efforts that relate to these underlying tendencies (Elliot & Thrash, 2002; Pintrich, 2000; Roth & Cohen, 1986). People that have an underlying approach orientation tend to have an approach motivation, and people with an underlying avoidance orientation tend to have an avoidance motivation; however, such people may still express the opposing motivation in certain situations. Prior studies have shown that certain aspects of personality, such as conscientiousness and neuroticism, may cause people to be more likely to express these motivations (Elliot & Thrash, 2002, 2010; Foster & Trimm, 2008; Heimpel, Elliot, & Wood, 2006). We propose that the same is true for social courage, even when controlling for conscientiousness and neuroticism.

The relationship between social courage and approach motivation is clear. Courageous people are believed to be more driven towards the benefits of their actions, and would thereby be more attracted to the possible prosocial outcomes. Aspects of personality, however, may relate to both types of motivations (Elliot & Thrash, 2002, 2010; Ferris et al., 2011; Foster & Trimm, 2008; Heimpel et al., 2006), which we suggest is the case with social courage. In addition to promoting an

approach motivation, we suggest that social courage may also reduce avoidance motivation. That is, courageous people are less sensitive to undesirable stimuli, and thereby would be less likely to fret the risks associated with an act (Cox, Hallam, O'Connor, & Rachman, 1983; McMillan & Rachman, 1987). Based on this notion, we thereby hypothesize that, even when controlling for conscientiousness and neuroticism, social courage is positively related to approach motivation and negatively related to avoidance motivation.

Hypothesis 3: Workplace social courage is significantly related to (a) approach motivation and (b) avoidance motivation.

Furthermore, approach and avoidance motivations have been shown to influence both workplace and well-being outcomes (Elliot & Thrash, 2002, 2010; Ferris et al., 2013, 2011; Pintrich, 2000; Roth & Cohen, 1986). Because social courage is believed to systematically promote approach motivation and reduce avoidance motivation, it is predicted that these motivations serve as mediators between social courage and outcomes. It is recognized, however, that one or both of these motivations may serve as mediator(s), and therefore no firm hypothesis is made regarding whether approach, avoid, or both motivations are mediator(s).

Hypothesis 4: Approach and/or avoidance motivation(s) mediate the relationship between workplace social courage and (a) OCBs, (b) voice, (c) CWBs, (d) stress, (e) depression, (f) anxiety, and (g) life satisfaction.

Overview of studies

Two studies are performed to test these hypotheses. Both are time-separated studies, which allows for more appropriate tests of mediation and helps address common-method bias. Study 2, however, also controls for conscientiousness and neuroticism in testing all relationships. Prior authors have stressed the importance of showing that courage predicts outcomes beyond established aspects of personality, such as the Big Five personality facets (Hannah et al., 2007; Koerner, 2014; Schilpzand et al., 2014; Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007). Observing the effects of courage beyond these established aspects of personality can emphasize the importance of the construct as a novel and independent aspect of the self. Our choice to control for conscientiousness and neuroticism, specifically, is also guided by prior research on courage.

In regard to the workplace outcomes of social courage, Howard et al. (2017) suggested that social courage

should predict outcomes stronger than conscientiousness, as this is an aspect of personality with ample prior support for its relationship with workplace outcomes. Conscientiousness describes the tendency to be hard-working, goal-oriented, and organized (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Goldberg, 1992). In Study 2, we control for conscientiousness to support that social courage predicts outcomes beyond this established aspect of personality.

Additionally, neuroticism is strongly associated with well-being outcomes (Costa & McCrae, 1980; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Neuroticism describes the tendency to be moody, emotional, and negative (Goldberg, 1990, 1992). We also control for neuroticism in Study 2 to support that social courage predicts outcomes beyond this established aspect of personality.

Study 1

Participants

Participants ($N = 244$, $M_{age} = 37.44$, $SD_{age} = 11.60$, 48% female, 91% American) were recruited from MTurk and provided a small amount of monetary compensation. MTurk is a website that connects individuals willing to perform tasks on a computer, such as taking a survey, with those needing the tasks completed. Several prior studies have shown that results obtained from MTurk samples are reliable and valid, even when studying special populations (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011; Casler, Bickel, & Hackett, 2013; Paolacci & Chandler, 2014; Shapiro, Chandler, & Mueller, 2013). All participants were currently working (100%; $M_{Tenure} = 6.15$ years, $SD_{Tenure} = 5.92$ years; 77% full-time status).¹ Because Study 1 included many attention checks (5; e.g. 'Please mark agree to show that you are paying attention'), those that failed more than one-fifth of the attention checks were removed (13 participants). All statistics, including the sample size, reflect the sample after removing these participants.

Procedure

Participants signed up for the study via MTurk. They provided their digital informed consent, and enrolled into the study. Each week for the following three weeks, the participants completed Time 1 (244 participants), Time 2 (196 participants), and Time 3 (177 participants) surveys. Demographic information and workplace social courage were measured at Time 1. Approach and avoidance motivations were measured at Time 2. All outcomes were measured at Time 3. Participants were debriefed about the project at the conclusion.

Measures

Unless otherwise noted, all measures included a 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree) scale, and scale scores were created by averaging participant responses for each item.

Workplace social courage

Workplace social courage was measured with the scale of Howard et al. (2017). The scale includes 11 items, and an example item is, 'If I thought a question was dumb, I would still ask it if I didn't understand something at work.'

Approach and avoidance motivation

Approach and avoidance motivations were measured with the scale of Ferris et al. (2013). The scale includes six items for each motivation, and example items are: 'My goal at work is to fulfill my potential to the fullest in my job' (approach motivation) and 'I think about the negative outcomes associated with losing my job (avoidance motivation).

Stress, depression, and anxiety

Stress, depression, and anxiety were measured with the DASS-21 (Antony, Bieling, Cox, Enns, & Swinson, 1998). The scale includes seven items for each construct and example items are: 'I found it hard to wind down' (stress), 'I couldn't seem to experience any positive feeling at all' (depression), and 'I felt scared without any good reason' (anxiety).

Life satisfaction

Life satisfaction was measured with the scale of Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985). The scale includes five items, and an example item is: 'The conditions of my life are excellent.'

OCBs

OCBs were measured with the scale of Williams and Anderson (1991). The scale includes 13 items, and an example item is, 'Helps others who have been absent.'

Voice

Voice was measured with the scale of Van Dyne and LePine (1998). The scale includes six items, and an example item is, 'I develop and make recommendations concerning issues that affect this workgroup.'

CWBs

CWBs were measured with the scale of Bennett and Robinson (2000), which was created to gauge interpersonal and organizational deviance at work. The scale includes 19 items, and an example item is, 'Made fun of someone at work.'

Results

Correlations and Cronbach's alphas are presented in Table 1. Social courage's relationships with outcomes ranged from small (stress, $r = -.19$, $p < .01$; anxiety, $r = -.20$, $p < .01$; life satisfaction, $r = .15$, $p < .05$), to moderate (depression, $r = -.26$, $p < .01$; OCBs, $r = .40$, $p < .01$; CWBs, $r = -.24$, $p < .01$), to large (voice, $r = .54$, $p < .01$). Each of these relationships were statistically significant, supporting Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 1c, 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d.

Social courage also had a large, positive relationship with approach motivation ($r = .46$, $p < .01$) as well as a moderate, negative relationship with avoidance motivation ($r = -.24$, $p < .01$). These results support Hypothesis 3a and 3b.

Table 2 includes the results of seven separate regressions. Social courage is included in Step 1 of each regression, followed by the inclusion of approach and avoidance motivations in Step 2. Mediation could be tested by comparing Step 1 and Step 2 of Table 2 (Baron & Kenny, 1986); however, many authors have criticized this method for its inaccuracy (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002; Preacher & Hayes, 2004). For this reason, we used Hayes's PROCESS macro to calculate bootstrapped estimates of indirect effects and confidence intervals, which are considered

Table 1. Correlations and Cronbach's alphas of study 1.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.) Workplace Social Courage	.85									
2.) Approach Motivation	.46**	.87								
3.) Avoidance Motivation	-.24**	-.24**	.86							
4.) Stress	-.19**	-.29**	.57**	.90						
5.) Depression	-.26**	-.45**	.54**	.78**	.94					
6.) Anxiety	-.20**	-.20**	.50**	.77**	.75**	.89				
7.) Life Satisfaction	.15*	.34**	.20**	-.26**	-.43**	.16*	.91			
8.) Organizational Citizenship Behaviors	.40**	.54**	-.36**	-.38**	-.45**	-.36**	.20**	.82		
9.) Voice	.54**	.59**	-.22**	-.29**	-.33**	-.20**	.34**	.58**	.90	
10.) Counterproductive Work Behaviors	-.21**	-.17*	.41**	.45**	.43**	.56**	.01	-.43**	.17*	.94

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 2. Regression results of study 1.

	Stress						Depression						Anxiety						Life Satisfaction					
	Step 1			Step 2			Step 1			Step 2			Step 1			Step 2			Step 1			Step 2		
	β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t	
Constant		7.141**		2.825**			7.413**			4.677**			7.033**			2.475*			4.772**			3.160**		
1.) Workplace Social Courage	-.194	-2.617*		.025	.348		-3.510**			.035	.523		-2.731**			-.053	-.700		.149	1.989*		-.044	-.536	
2.) Approach Motivation				-.174	-2.460*		-.256			-.358	-5.316**		-.202			-.062	-.826					.326	3.997**	
3.) Avoidance Motivation				.531	8.279**		.07			.468	7.677**					.469	6.860**					-.138	-1.886	
R ²	.04			.35						.41			.04			.26			.02			.13		
Counterproductive Work Behaviors																								
Organizational Citizenship Behaviors												Voice												
Step 1						Step 2						Step 1						Step 2						
β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		
Constant	10.701**		8.548**			3.660**			.902		8.046**				3.668**									
1.) Workplace Social Courage	.400	5.774**	.141	2.011*		.536	8.403**		.320	4.830**		-.209			-.098							-.1234		
2.) Approach Motivation			.417	5.964**					.426	6.455**					-.032						-.403			
3.) Avoidance Motivation			-.226	-3.564**					-.04	-.646					.378						5.265**			
R ²	.16		.36			.29			.43		.04				.18									

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

more accurate tests of mediation (Hayes, 2009, 2012, 2016). In the following paragraph, we present the results of the cumulative indirect effect of social courage through both approach and avoidance motivations in predicting outcomes.

The overall indirect effect of social courage through both approach and avoidance motivations was significant for the outcomes of OCBs ($B = .230$, $S.E. = .050$, 95% C.I. [.142, .340], voice ($B = .272$, $S.E. = .063$, 95% C.I. [.165, .412], CWBs ($B = -.112$, $S.E. = .052$, 95% C.I. [-.218, -.013], stress ($B = -.349$, $S.E. = .091$, 95% C.I. [-.537, -.183], depression ($B = -.462$, $S.E. = .090$, 95% C.I. [-.649, -.297], anxiety ($B = -.208$, $S.E. = .074$, 95% C.I. [-.358, -.067], and life satisfaction ($B = .330$, $S.E. = .084$, 95% C.I. [.179, .508]. The direct effect was still significant for the outcomes of OCBs ($B = .125$, $S.E. = .062$, 95% C.I. [.002, .248] and voice ($B = .404$, $S.E. = .084$, 95% C.I. [.239, .569], but it was no longer significant for the tests of stress ($B = .040$, $S.E. = .114$, 95% C.I. [-.185, .264], depression ($B = .056$, $S.E. = .107$, 95% C.I. [-.156, .268], anxiety ($B = -.074$, $S.E. = .106$, 95% C.I. [-.284, .135], life satisfaction ($B = -.075$, $S.E. = .141$, 95% C.I. [-.353, .202], and CWBs ($B = -.099$, $S.E. = .081$, 95% C.I. [-.258, -.060]. These results support Hypotheses 4a through 4g.

Lastly, it should be noted that the indirect effect through approach motivation was stronger than the indirect effect through avoidance motivation for the following outcomes: OCBs, voice, depression, and life satisfaction. Also, the indirect effect through approach motivation alone was significant for each outcome except CWBs and anxiety. The indirect effect through avoidance motivation alone was significant for each outcome except voice and life satisfaction. Thus, in Study 1, both approach and avoidance motivations were mediators between social courage and outcomes, with approach motivation as a slightly more consistent mediator.

Study 2

Participants

Participants ($N = 502$, $M_{age} = 32.88$, $SD_{age} = 9.34$, 44% female, 84% American) were recruited from MTurk and provided a small amount of monetary compensation. All participants were currently working (100%; $M_{Tenure} = 5.18$ years, $SD_{Tenure} = 5.70$ years; 84% full-time status), and no participant participated both Study 1 and Study 2. Because Study 2 included many attention checks (8; e.g. 'Please mark agree to show that you are paying attention'), those that failed more than one-fourth of the attention checks were removed (15 participants). All statistics, including the sample size, reflect the sample after removing these participants.

Procedure

Participants signed up for the study via MTurk. They provided their digital informed consent, and completed the first survey online (Time 1, 515 participants). Demographic characteristics alone were measured at this time-point. Each week for the following three weeks, the participants completed Time 2 (297 participants), Time 3 (248 participants), and Time 4 (222 participants) surveys. Workplace social courage, conscientiousness, and neuroticism were measured at Time 2. Approach and avoidance motivations were measured at Time 3. All outcomes were measured at Time 4. Participants were debriefed about the project at the end.

Measures

Unless otherwise noted, all measures included a 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree) scale, and scale scores were created by averaging participant responses for each item. Each of the following constructs were gauged using the same measures as Study 1 for Study 2: workplace social courage, approach motivation, avoidance motivation, stress, depression, anxiety, life satisfaction, OCBs, voice, CWBs.

Conscientiousness and neuroticism

Conscientiousness and neuroticism were measured with the scale of Goldberg (1992). The scale includes four items for each facet of the Big Five, and example items are: 'Get chores done right away' (conscientiousness) and 'Have frequent mood swings' (neuroticism).

Results

Correlations and Cronbach's alphas are presented in Table 3. Table 4 includes the results of seven separate stepwise regressions. Conscientiousness and neuroticism are included as control variables alongside social courage in Step 1 of each regression, followed by the inclusion of approach motivation in Step 2 of each

regression. In Step 1, social courage was a significant predictor of OCBs ($\beta = .309$, $t = 4.919$, $p < .01$), CWBs ($\beta = -.171$, $t = -2.677$, $p < .01$), voice ($\beta = .430$, $t = 7.231$, $p < .01$), depression ($\beta = -.157$, $t = -2.828$, $p < .01$), and life satisfaction ($\beta = .128$, $t = 2.050$, $p < .05$). It was not a significant predictor of stress ($\beta = -.035$, $t = -.674$, $p > .05$) and anxiety ($\beta = -.077$, $t = -1.301$, $p > .05$). These results support Hypotheses 1a through 2d, except Hypothesis 2a and 2c.

Table 5 includes the results of two separate regressions. Conscientiousness and neuroticism are included as control variables alongside social courage as predictors of approach and avoidance motivations. The results showed that social courage was a significant and positive predictor of approach motivation ($\beta = .300$, $t = 4.964$, $p < .01$), but it was a non-significant predictor of avoidance motivation ($\beta = -.076$, $t = -1.301$, $p > .05$). For this reason, only approach motivation is tested as a mediator between social courage and outcomes. These results support Hypothesis 3a but not 3b.

We used Hayes's PROCESS macro to calculate bootstrapped estimates of indirect effects and confidence intervals (Hayes, 2009, 2012, 2016). While controlling for conscientiousness and neuroticism, the overall indirect effect of social courage through approach motivation was significant for the outcomes of OCBs ($B = .082$, $S.E. = .030$, 95% C.I. [.035, .155], voice ($B = .155$, $S.E. = .051$, 95% C.I. [.070, .275], CWBs ($B = -.068$, $S.E. = .025$, 95% C.I. [-.128, -.029], depression ($B = -.116$, $S.E. = .045$, 95% C.I. [-.227, -.045], and life satisfaction ($B = .123$, $S.E. = .050$, 95% C.I. [.048, .249]. The direct effect was still significant for the tests of OCBs ($B = .199$, $S.E. = .057$, 95% C.I. [.086, .311] and voice ($B = .407$, $S.E. = .074$, 95% C.I. [.261, .552], but it was no longer significant for the tests of depression ($B = -.151$, $S.E. = .096$, 95% C.I. [-.340, .038], life satisfaction ($B = .107$, $S.E. = .115$, 95% C.I. [-.120, .334], and CWBs ($B = -.102$, $S.E. = .065$, 95% C.I. [-.229, .026]. These results support Hypotheses 4a through 4g, except Hypothesis 4d and 4f.

Table 3. Correlations and Cronbach's alphas of study 2.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1.) Workplace Social Courage	.88											
2.) Conscientiousness	.20**	.76										
3.) Neuroticism	-.12*	-.31**	.79									
4.) Approach Motivation	.34**	.23**	-.21**	.92								
5.) Avoidance Motivation	-.14*	-.18**	.45**	-.26**	.86							
6.) Stress	-.16*	-.37**	.63**	-.27**	.53**	.92						
7.) Depression	-.27**	-.35**	.55**	-.39**	.48**	.78**	.95					
8.) Anxiety	-.17**	-.29**	.50**	-.17*	.45**	.74**	.66**	.87				
9.) Life Satisfaction	.22**	.31**	-.37**	.34**	-.38**	-.42**	-.60**	-.26**	.95			
10.) Organizational Citizenship Behaviors	.36**	.24**	-.23**	.42**	-.20**	-.21**	-.27**	-.24**	.10	.87		
11.) Voice	.48**	.26**	-.21**	.53**	-.23**	-.22**	-.29**	-.14*	.28**	.60**	.93	
12.) Counterproductive Work Behaviors	-.24**	-.34**	.16*	-.32**	.22**	.34**	.25**	.44**	-.03	-.44**	.24**	.93

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 4. Regression results of study 2.

	Stress						Depression						Anxiety						Life Satisfaction															
	Step 1			Step 2			Step 1			Step 2			Step 1			Step 2			Step 1			Step 2												
	β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t											
Constant		3.825**		4.223**			4.649**			5.982**			3.899**			3.627			4.042**			2.495*												
1.) Conscientiousness	-.172	-3.137**		-.163	-2.974**		-.156	-2.676**		-.134	-2.379*		-.120	-1.938		-.120	-1.914		.178	2.713**		.157	2.448*											
2.) Neuroticism	.566	10.444**		.550	10.042**		.476	9.301**		.437	7.773**		.445	7.268**		.443	7.126		-.292	-4.532**		-.255	-3.998**											
3.) Workplace Social Courage	-.035	-.674		-.006	-.116		-.157	-2.828**		-.089	-1.580		-.077	-1.301		-.075	-1.201		.128	2.050*		.059	.929											
4.) Approach Motivation				-.097	-1.755					-.227	-3.992**					-.008	-.120					.224	3.464**											
R ²		.43		.43			.36			.40			.27			.27			.19			.19		.23										
Organizational Citizenship Behaviors												Counterproductive Work Behaviors																						
Step 1												Step 1													Step 2									
β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t		β	t									
Constant		9.325**		7.125**			3.330**			.654			8.670			9.531																		
1.) Conscientiousness	.128	1.936		.100	1.575		.132	2.106*		.095	1.661		-.288	-4.291		-.267	-4.053																	
2.) Neuroticism	-.137	-2.113*		-.086	-1.371		-.098	-1.587		-.031	-.542		.033	.492		-.006	-.092																	
3.) Workplace Social Courage	.309	4.919**		.219	3.474**		.430	7.231**		.311	5.493**		-.171	-2.677**		-.103	-1.568																	
4.) Approach Motivation				.304	4.766**					.399	6.950**					-.230	-3.466**																	
R ²		.17		.25			.26			.39			.14			.19																		

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

Discussion

The goal of the current article was to analyze the relationship of social courage with workplace (OCBs, voice, and CWBs) and well-being (stress, depression, anxiety, and life satisfaction) outcomes; determine whether these relationships were mediated by approach and/or avoidance motivations; and test the robustness of these relationships by controlling for conscientiousness and neuroticism. Social courage was significantly related to each workplace and well-being outcome when analyzed alone in both studies. When controlling for conscientiousness and neuroticism, social courage was still significantly related to OCBs, voice, CWBs, depression, and life satisfaction. It was no longer significant for the outcomes of stress and anxiety. Nevertheless, these two sets of findings suggest that social courage is indeed related to both workplace and well-being outcomes, and these relationships are robust.

Further, social courage had a significant indirect effect through both approach and avoidance motivations on each outcome in Study 1. In this same study, the indirect effect of social courage through approach motivation alone was also significant for each outcome except CWBs and anxiety. In Study 2, social courage was not significantly related to avoidance motivation when controlling for conscientiousness and neuroticism, which disallowed social courage from having any indirect effects through this possible mediator. Social courage did, however, have a significant indirect effect on each outcome through approach motivation, except for stress and anxiety² when controlling for conscientiousness and neuroticism. These results suggest that the relationship of social courage and its outcomes can be consistently (but only partially) explained through approach motivation. Socially courageous people seem to achieve positive outcomes and have better well-being in part due to their habitual tendency to approach positive goals. On the other hand, a reduction to avoidance motivation seems to play a much smaller role in understanding why social courage influences outcomes, especially when accounting for established aspects of personality (conscientiousness and neuroticism). Together, these findings have several implications for our understanding of social courage, its relationship with outcomes, and its underlying explanatory mechanisms.

Implications

Our results further emphasize the importance of social courage for workplace outcomes. Social courage should be recognized as a powerful influence on workplace

Table 5. Regression results predicting approach and avoidance motivations.

	Approach Motivation				Avoidance Motivation			
	B	S.E.	β	t	B	S.E.	β	t
Constant	3.373	.525		6.421**	3.073	.573		5.364
1.) Conscientiousness	.104	.063	.105	1.645	-.014	.069	-.013	-.204
2.) Neuroticism	-.121	.056	-.134	-2.155*	.448	.061	.438	7.281**
3.) Workplace Social Courage	.367	.074	.300	4.964**	-.105	.081	-.076	-1.301
R ²				.15				.21

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

outcomes that may involve social interactions – which includes most all outcomes in the modern workplace (Howard et al., 2017; Koerner, 2014; Schilpzand et al., 2014). Similarly, our results identify the importance of social courage for personal outcomes. Those with higher levels of social courage were less depressed and had higher life satisfaction, suggesting that the benefits of social courage outweigh the consequences. As mentioned, working through situations that require social courage may result in professional benefits, such as being recognized for exceptional performance, but these instances may also provide a personal sense of fulfillment. For this reason, social courage has the potential to influence many different aspects of personal well-being beyond those studied in the current article (as discussed further below).

These results also show that social courage predicts outcomes beyond conscientiousness and neuroticism. Previously, Howard et al. (2017) showed that the construct had small to moderate relationships with other aspects of personality, including the other three facets of the Big Five. These cumulative results suggest that social courage is more than established aspects of personality, and it provides unique explanatory power when predicting important outcomes. Thus, social courage should be seen as a unique aspect of personality that merits future research.

Perhaps most importantly, social courage was shown to influence outcomes through approach motivation. Those high in social courage appear to be more likely to strive towards positive stimuli, seeing the benefits involved with actions, rather than striving away from negative stimuli, seeing the costs involved with inaction. These people may perform OCBs and voice behaviors, while refraining from CWBs, because they are driven toward the benefits of these actions and inactions. The same may be true with other workplace outcomes of social courage discovered in prior studies, such as performance (Howard et al., 2017). Likewise, these people may have better personal outcomes because they are more focused on the positive aspects of persisting through risky social situations, and they are thereby more likely to achieve positive outcomes

from these situations. This may explain the observed relationship of social courage with well-being outcomes observed in the current studies (depression and life satisfaction), but it may again explain relationships observed in prior studies (e.g. positive self-perceptions; Koerner, 2014). By linking social courage with approach motivation, the current article likewise links the construct with broader theoretical perspectives associated with other relationships and outcomes.

Of these broader linkages, it should be recognized that other aspects of personality likewise relate to an approach motivation. While conscientiousness and neuroticism were investigated in the current studies due to their relevance and popularity, proactive personality and grit likewise relate to approach motivation (Duckworth & Gross, 2014; Seibert, Crant, & Kraimer, 1999). To ensure the uniqueness of courage and social courage from other established aspects of personality, the empirical and theoretical separation of these constructs should be clearly differentiated in future research. Relatedly, certain state outcomes of social courage can be identified via approach motivation, such as goal orientations and self-esteem (Elliot & Covington, 2001; Elliot & Thrash, 2002, 2010; Foster & Trimm, 2008), and behavioral outcomes of social courage can likewise be discovered, such as goal striving (Elliot & Thrash, 2002, 2010).

Furthermore, these broader linkages associate courage and social courage with goal engagement and disengagement (Elliot, 1999; Elliot & Thrash, 2002, 2010; Wrosch, Scheier, Miller, Schulz, & Carver, 2003). It is often assumed that courageous individuals are more likely to strive toward and obtain valued goals (Howard et al., 2017; Koerner, 2014), but the cause of this goal-directed motivation was generally unknown. The current results suggest that courageous individuals may be more goal-oriented because they are more approach motivated, and thereby these individuals may be more motivated to achieve their goals in general. At the same time, it is possible that some courageous individuals may be excessively goal driven. In this case, these individuals may be unable to effectively disengage from fruitless goals, and courage may thereby produce some negative

outcomes – a consideration that is further discussed in the future directions for research below.

Approach motivation may also illuminate some prior criticisms of courage. Particularly, some authors have argued that a thin line exists between courage and foolhardiness; the latter being a behavior in which the risks are clearly too large to justifiably attempt (e.g. extremely low chance of success; Lester & Pury, 2011; Rate et al., 2007). It is indeed possible that, due to their increased approach motivation, courageous people simply perform riskier actions in general, and they routinely cross the line and perform behaviors that are foolhardy. Similarly, courageous people may perform other types of dangerous behaviors due to their heightened approach motivation. Prior research has shown that approach motivation relates to more unsafe behaviors and worse safety performance (Wallace & Chen, 2006). Those high in courage may need to be continuously conscientious of their tendency to perform these foolhardy and/or unsafe behaviors.

It should also be emphasized that those high in social courage may be more sensitive to the benefits of their behaviors due to a heightened approach motivation. Thereby, variables that either increase or decrease the benefits of social courage behaviors may be antecedents of such behaviors. For example, empowering leaders may be more likely to encourage and reward subordinates for performing social courage behaviors, and empowering leadership was significantly related to behavioral social courage in a prior study (Howard & Cogswell, 2018). On the other hand, variables that either increase or decrease the risks of social courage behaviors may not be antecedents. For example, it could be asserted that those with ample social support may rely on their network to alleviate the risks involved with social courage behaviors (e.g. loss of friends), but social support was not significantly related to social courage behaviors in a prior study (Howard & Cogswell, 2018). More directly, Howard and Cogswell (2018) even showed that perceived social courage benefits ($r = .43$) had a much larger relationship with social courage behaviors compared to perceived social courage risks ($r = -.18$). Thus, linking social courage with approach motivation may not only identify new relationships of social courage, but also explain prior results regarding social courage behaviors.

Linking social courage to approach motivation further emphasizes the importance of the construct, not only because social courage can be associated with further outcomes, but also because it integrates the construct with basic human tendencies and processes. Approach motivation is considered an inherent human motivation (Elliot & Thrash, 2002, 2010; Ferris

et al., 2013, 2011; Pintrich, 2000; Roth & Cohen, 1986). Many prior authors have speculated that courage is a type of inherent human behavior that people do not need to be taught (Howard et al., 2017; Pury & Lopez, 2010). This belief largely stems from historical observations of courage that date back to the earliest recorded scholarly thought (e.g. Plato and Aristotle; Mintz, 1996; Rate et al., 2007), and the observation of courage emerging in extreme situations that could not be practiced or reinforced beforehand (e.g. war; McMillan & Rachman, 1987; Pury & Lopez, 2010). Linking courage to approach motivation provides a scientific justification for this belief, such that people do not need to be taught to approach positive stimuli – even in situations with extreme risk (Elliot & Thrash, 2002, 2010). Therefore, the current results provide some basis to understand courage as a type of inherent human behavior, although more research is certainly needed to support this assertion.

Lastly, while the current studies investigated a dimension of courage, social courage, it could be assumed that these relationships reflect the broader construct of courage. If so, researchers can perform investigations into general courage under the notion that it relates to an approach tendency. This approach could also be framed in an alternative definition of courage. While Rate's (et al., 2007, 2010) definition is more commonly applied, Rachman's definition describes courage as persistence despite fear (Cox et al., 1983; McMillan & Rachman, 1987). Although Howard and Alipour (2014) argued that Rachman's definition conceptualizes an alternative construct ('Persistence Despite Fear'), Rachman's described construct nevertheless shares conceptual underpinnings with Rate's definition (Howard et al., 2017). An existing measure using Rachman's definition gauges the construct in a general context (e.g. 'I tend to face my fears.'; Norton & Weiss, 2009), and it could be applied to test whether broader measures of courage and constructs associated with courage likewise demonstrate similar associations to approach and avoidance motivations as observed with social courage in the current studies. These considerations along with other future directions are discussed below.

Future directions

Prior authors have repeatedly called for replication studies in courage research, and the current article likewise makes this call. Further research is needed to firmly support that social courage relates to workplace and well-being outcomes, and further research is also needed to firmly support that social courage effects outcomes due to approach motivation. In performing

these studies, future research should also strive to further investigate the nomological net of social courage. Proactive personality, grit, goal orientations, self-esteem, and goal striving were noted above, but many others should likewise be considered (e.g. relationship satisfaction).

Further, the samples used in Studies 1 and 2 were general employee samples that did not distinguish subjects based on their occupation or organizational status (e.g. employee vs. manager). It is possible that social courage functions differently in these organizational roles. For instance, managers may be expected to perform OCBs and voice behaviors, and their personal characteristics may have a lesser influence on these outcomes as they are required in their roles (e.g. strong situations; Judge & Zapata, 2015; Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000). General employees may not have as strong of an expectation to perform these behaviors, and social courage may have a stronger effect on these outcomes because these employees have more autonomy in performing these behaviors (e.g. weak situations). From this perspective, which is largely based on trait activation theory (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000), social courage may have a weaker relationship with outcomes for managers but a stronger relationship on outcomes for general employees. Future research should explore this research question and test whether social courage may function differently in different organizations and organizational levels.

In conducting this research, authors should also investigate the downsides of courage and social courage. Courage is typically considered a beneficial trait, and all empirical work on the construct has solely studied its relationships with positive outcomes (Howard et al., 2017; Koerner, 2014; Pury & Hensel, 2010). As highlighted by its potential relationship with foolhardiness and approaching risky stimuli more broadly, it should *not* be assumed that courage and social courage relate to beneficial outcomes in all circumstances. In other words, researchers should study the 'downsides to bright personality' (Smith, Hill, Wallace, Recendes, & Judge, 2018, p. 191).

More specifically, linking social courage to approach motivation can uncover some of these downsides. A heightened approach motivation has been associated with psychopathology (e.g. mania; Dickson, Johnson, Huntley, Peckham, & Taylor, 2017). Those high in social courage may inappropriately strive towards all possible goals and fail to disengage with fruitless endeavors. While this broad goal-striving may result in positive outcomes, it may also lead to burnout and poor time management. Likewise, certain types of CWBs have

been linked to approach motivations (e.g. aggression), whereas others have been linked to avoidance motivations (e.g. exclusion) (Ferris et al., 2016). While social courage was shown to have an overall negative relationship with CWBs, these certain approach-oriented CWBs may have a smaller negative relationship – or almost no relationship at all. Thus, the approach/avoidance framework may be beneficial in identifying the downsides of a bright aspect of personality (Dickson et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2018).

Lastly, the current article conceptualized social courage as an aspect of personality that emerges alongside conscientiousness and neuroticism, as has been done in prior theoretical and empirical work (Howard & Alipour, 2014; Howard et al., 2017; Koerner, 2014; Schilpzand et al., 2014; Sekerka et al., 2009). It should be considered, however, whether courage is not actually trait or trait-like, but rather a state that emerges 'to the right' of personality. That is, courage may be a state or state-like outcome of personality, which may also be predicted by aspects of the immediate environment. Similarly, social courage was believed to be an antecedent of positive well-being. It is also possible that the two have a reciprocal relationship, such that positive well-being spurs social courage. In other words, when people have better well-being, they may be systematically more likely to persist through social risks; which then causes them to have better well-being, and so on. Some precedence exists for this conceptualization of social courage, as Howard and Cogswell (2018) recently studied the antecedents of social courage behaviors (which included aspects of personality); however, the authors did not include social courage as an individual difference in their studies. Thus, more research is needed to determine whether social courage and courage is best conceptualized as a trait or a state.

Limitations

Certain limitations of the current article should be noted. While the current article applied the approach/avoidance framework to better understand the dynamics of social courage in general, the measure applied to gauge social courage was specific to the context of the workplace. It is possible that the observed results only relate to social courage as it emerges in the workplace, rather than social courage in general, which may have altered certain results. Particularly, the relation of general social courage to workplace-related outcomes may be weaker than the relationships observed in the current studies. On the other hand, the relation of general social courage to well-being outcomes may be stronger than the

relationships observed in the current studies. Because general social courage extends to all life domains, it is reasonable that it would have a broader influence on the self and personal outcomes.

Further, we conceptualized stress, depression, and anxiety as inverse indicators of well-being, but not all researchers would agree with this perspective. For instance, some individuals may enact in detrimental coping styles (e.g. repression) to temporarily reduce their anxiety at the cost of it later reemerging and/or producing other negative indicators of emotion (Asendorpf & Scherer, 1983; Weinberger, 1990). In this case, low anxiety would not necessarily indicate high well-being, as the negative coping approach can produce poor outcomes. Those with low stress, depression, and anxiety may likewise engage in similar tactics, and the effect of social courage on well-being cannot be certain from observing these variables alone. Therefore, the relationship of social courage with life satisfaction may better reflect social courage's effect on well-being.

All variables in the current studies were measured via a self-report design, which is the traditional method to study courage and the other included variables (Ferris et al., 2013; Howard et al., 2017). Concerns with common-method bias were addressed by using a multi-wave research design and controlling for certain alternative explanations, as recommended by prior authors (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). Established measures were used to gauge all variables, which is also a benefit of the two studies.

Although a multi-wave research design was applied and certain alternative explanations were controlled, causality cannot be firmly supported with the current studies. The relationship between social courage and approach motivation likely requires a prohibitive time-span to observe substantive casual effects, such as weeks, months, or years. Likewise, manipulating peoples' social courage would be difficult, which is also a barrier to observing causality. While it should be recognized that the applied methodological designs investigated the effects more reliably than a cross-sectional design, it should also be recognized that more sophisticated methods are required to firmly support casual explanations.

Similarly, Studies 1 and 2, while time-separated, only measured each variable once. A better research design would be a cross-lagged panel design, such that each measured variable would be measured at each time point and each possible time-separated relationship could be observed (Kenny, 2005). This design can more effectively support causality and better identify whether changes in one variable can be attributed to another variable. Future research should strive to replicate these results while applying more sophisticated research designs.

Conclusion

The goal of the current article was to replicate the relationship of social courage with workplace outcomes, identify the relationship of social courage with well-being outcomes, and identify a theoretical framework that could explain these relationships. Each of these goals were achieved, and social courage was shown to influence outcomes via approach motivation. Future research should incorporate the approach/avoidance framework into studies of courage and social courage, which links the constructs with broader theories of human motivation.

Notes

1. Several steps were taken to ensure that all participants were currently employed in both Studies 1 and 2. First, the title of the study on the MTurk platform specified that potential participants must be currently employed to participate in the study. Second, a survey question directly asked if participants were currently employed, and participants were assured that they would still receive compensation if they were not currently employed. This helped ensure that participants would provide truthful answers regarding their employment, and any participants indicating that they were not employed were removed from all analyses (but compensated for their time). Third, participants were provided a list of industries and asked to indicate their industry of current employment, and an 'other' option was provided for participants to provide any unlisted industry. Across both studies, only one participant listed 'MTurk' as their industry of employment, and this person was removed from all analyses.
2. Social courage did not have a significant direct effect on these two outcomes when controlling for conscientiousness and neuroticism in Study 2. Thus, each significant direct effect of social courage when controlling for conscientiousness and neuroticism also produced a significant indirect effect when approach motivation was incorporated in Study 2.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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