ORIGINAL EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Toward a theory of spirals: the dynamic relationship between organizational pride and customer-oriented behavior

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Abstract

While previous studies have demonstrated that organizational pride (OP) enhances frontline employees' customer-oriented behavior (COB), they have neglected to address the dynamics of the relationship. This research helps close this gap by elaborating on a theory of spirals positing that the extent of COB depends not only on current levels of OP but also on the direction and rate of OP change. In addition, the authors challenge the prevalent view that OP affects COB unidirectionally, instead predicting reciprocal loops. Hence, they propose that increases in OP repeatedly amplify COB and trigger an upward spiral, whereas decreases trigger a downward spiral. The results of a six-wave panel study support these predictions. Furthermore, the authors identify lower and upper boundaries of the spiral: while a certain threshold of OP is required to create momentum, the effects of further increases in the same variables diminish at high levels of OP and COB.

Keywords Organizational pride · Customer-oriented behavior · Theory of spirals · Frontline employees · Change effects · Service marketing

In many service industries, frontline employees play an essential role in building profitable relationships with customers (Singh et al. 2017). It is therefore of utmost importance for organizations

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to create an environment in which the frontline staff is inclined to display customer-oriented behavior (COB): behavior directly aimed at helping customers (Stock and Hoyer 2005). To encourage employees to engage in COB, several esteemed companies have emphasized the notion of organizational pride (OP), a positive feeling arising from belonging to a successful organization (Kraemer and Gouthier 2014). For example, The Ritz-Carlton hotel chain highlights OP as a central driver for its outstanding customer service ("I am proud to be Ritz-Carlton"). The power of OP in motivating employees was also emphasized in a recent study conducted at Facebook, which identified OP as the most important determinant of employee engagement—an essential component of COB (Goler et al. 2017; Kumar and Pansari 2016).

Research has reflected this increasing interest in OP and supported the idea that OP fosters COB (e.g., Gouthier and Rhein 2011). OP is a unique psychological resource that derives its exceptional power to influence employees from its close ties to important human needs. In general, pride is a positive emotion that signals success and nurtures an individual's self-perception, a central human need (Kraemer et al. 2017). As OP is based on membership in a successful organization, it serves another basic need: that of belonging to a valued collective (Ashforth and Mael 1989). This in turn is linked to COB because frontline employees' COB is the central contribution to their organization's success (Stock and Hoyer 2005).

Although prior research has linked OP to COB, it takes a static perspective resulting in two critical shortcomings. First, it relates absolute levels of OP to absolute levels of COB, disregarding the effect of the change component of OP on COB over time and thus underestimating longer-term effects of OP. We posit that the extent of COB depends not only on current levels of OP but also on the direction and rate of OP change relative to a previous point in time. Accordingly, among employees with the same current level of OP, one who reached this level as a result of increased (decreased) OP will exhibit substantially more (less) COB than an employee whose level of OP was stable over the same time period. This effect occurs because the trajectory of OP functions as a mental cue for the organization's relevance to an individual's self-concept and signals an ongoing trend. For instance, a positive trajectory highlights an organization's current relevance for the individual and signals increasing relevance in the future. In such a case, the employee aims to contribute to an organization's success (e.g., by serving customers in the best way possible) to protect the increasingly valued psychological resource of OP (Hobfoll 2002). In contrast, a negative trajectory signals a depreciated value of OP for the self-concept, potentially leading to a decrease in COB. We predict that beyond having a direct effect on COB, OP change also has an indirect effect through its positive influence on two individual capacities: self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. Specifically, we suggest that with increasing (decreasing) OP, individuals exhibit more (less) self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation, both of which determine how effectively employees address customer needs.

A second shortcoming of prior research involves the directionality of the OP–COB relationship. While studies have largely agreed that OP shapes behavior (e.g., Gouthier and Rhein 2011), they have neglected the possibility that behavior may in turn affect OP in building a feedback loop. Studies typically assume that OP is mainly formed by factors outside the individual's sphere of influence, such as external reputation (Helm 2013). However, research has indicated that pride is also influenced by an individual's own behavior (Pekrun et al. 2017). Similarly, we expect that the level and trajectory of COB also determine the extent to which employees merge their goals with the organization's goals and thus influence their sense of pride in the organization. Furthermore, we suggest that changes in COB indirectly influence OP by affecting an employee's organization-related evaluations. In particular, we posit that changes in COB influence an employee's evaluation of organizational success and satisfaction as a member of the organization, which in turn affect OP.

We draw upon previous research regarding the importance of OP as a psychological resource and elaborate on a theory of spirals to develop a conceptual model that tackles the aforementioned research gaps. Our theoretical model posits a dynamic relationship between OP and COB, such that increases (decreases) in OP trigger repeated, cyclic increases (decreases) in COB and OP, causing a spiral. To empirically test the spiral model we use panel data from 319 frontline employees across several industries.

By exploring the proposed OP–COB spiral, we provide two essential contributions. First, as an empirical contribution, we consider that OP and COB are reciprocally (bidirectionally) related, whereas previous studies have assumed that OP affects COB unidirectionally. We are the first to spotlight that changes in OP initiate a spiral toward COB, and we identify mediating processes that fuel this spiral through individual capacities (for the effect of OP on COB) and organization-related evaluations (for the effect of COB on OP). These findings enhance the understanding of the relationship between OP and COB and indicate that changes in OP can create momentum for periodic changes in COB and OP. This emphasizes that increasing OP can be even more advantageous than suggested in prior work. At the same time, however, a drop in OP can lead to a severe, longer-lasting deterioration of COB. Therefore, firms should note the ample benefits of fostering OP but also consider the risks associated with failing to instill OP.

Second, we advance the theoretical understanding of within-person spirals. While previous research has mainly focused on upward (i.e., gain) spirals (e.g., Stock et al. 2017), we take into account the possibility of downward spirals and also theorize on the limits of upward and downward spirals. In doing so, we outline the theoretical underpinning of spirals that can develop in both directions. We formulate three essential tenets of a general theory of spirals: (1) reciprocal relationships between variables, (2) change effects that exceed effects of absolute levels, and (3) the existence of lower and upper boundaries of spiral effects. The identified OP–COB relationship fulfills all characteristics. OP and COB are reciprocally related, and change effects originating from those variables exceed effects of the variables' absolute levels. With respect to boundaries of the spiral, our results reveal that the spiral requires a certain threshold of OP to create momentum, representing the lower boundary. At the same time, at high levels of OP and COB, the effects of further increases in the same variables diminish due to the existence of an upper boundary.

The concept of organizational pride

The nature of organizational pride

Pride is a positive, self-conscious emotion that is based on success (Tracy et al. 2009). In this context, "positive" refers to a level of pleasantness that individuals experience when feeling pride (Fredrickson 2001). "Self-conscious" refers to the complex process of self-evaluation through which pride

develops (Lewis 2012). People compare their performance with certain reference points, such as one's own expectations or the performance of others. When self-evaluation yields a positive outcome and performance is attributed to internal causes, people feel pride (Kraemer et al. 2017). Importantly, people may experience pride with respect to not only their own successes but also the successes of groups with which they identify (Celsi and Gilly 2010; Decrop and Derbaix 2009).

When people identify with an organization, they incorporate this organization into their social identity, perceive the organization as part of their selves, and feel self-conscious emotions toward it (Ashforth and Mael 1989, Riketta 2005). Hence, when people believe that the organization they identify with has performed beyond expectations or better than comparable organizations and they attribute that performance to internal causes (i.e., the organization's abilities and efforts), they experience OP (Kraemer and Gouthier 2014).

Although emotions are short-felt reactions to certain events, they can have long-lasting consequences. Individuals who repeatedly experience positive organization-related emotions develop a sustained attitude that captures their overall pride in the organization (detached from a certain event) (Gouthier and Rhein 2011). Because we are interested in relationships over time, our analysis focuses on attitudinal OP. The OP construct has conceptual similarities to the constructs of organizational identification, organizational commitment, and organization-based self-esteem, which are commonly used in marketing research. Table 1 highlights the unique characteristics of OP.

Organizational pride as a psychological resource

Pride is accompanied by pleasant feelings and, unlike other positive emotions, also promotes positive self-perceptions. Thus, pride "not only makes individuals feel good, but makes them feel good about themselves" (Martens et al. 2012, p. 393). By facilitating positive self-related perceptions and signaling belongingness to an esteemed collective, OP serves two essential psychological needs (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Rosenberg et al. 1995). As OP is linked to these inherent needs and promotes psychological well-being, it constitutes a critical psychological resource (Kraemer and Gouthier 2014). Conservation of resources theory suggests that individuals attempt to gain and maintain critical resources (Hobfoll 2002). Accordingly, individuals seek to promote and protect the valued resource of OP by supporting the organization. An effective way for employees to achieve this is by ensuring superior COB, as outstanding customer service lies at the heart of successful organizations. Therefore, we expect OP to be positively related to COB. To advance the understanding of the nature of this relationship, we elaborate on a theory of (within-person) spirals.

Theory of spirals

In general, spirals reflect systematic and sustained changes in a given phenomenon over time and can be considered patterns of consecutive increases or decreases (Chen et al. 2011). A central characteristic of spirals is that two or more variables build a feedback loop, meaning that variables are linked by reciprocal causation over time (Fredrickson and Joiner 2002). "Reciprocal causation" entails normal and reverse causation between variables (e.g., A → B and B → A) (Salanova et al. 2011). "Over time" refers to cyclic effects between the variables involved (e.g., A affects B and B affects A at a later point in time). Thus, the first tenet of a theory of spirals is the existence of feedback loops between variables. For the within-person context, which is the focus of this paper, such feedback loops have been observed between achievement emotions and corresponding performance outcomes. For example, positive academic performance promotes pride in said achievements, which then increases academic performance at a later point in time (Pekrun et al. 2017). We expect a similar feedback loop between OP and COB.

A second essential characteristic of spirals is that the effects in reciprocal relationships arise not only from absolute levels of variables but also from changes in variables (Chen et al. 2011). That is, the direction and rate of change in a variable relative to a previous point in time has an influence on downstream variables that goes beyond the effect of the variable's absolute level. For within-person spirals, these unique change effects can be attributed to two main causes. First, variable change functions as a mental cue that draws the individual's attention to the respective state and thus increases its subjective relevance. Second, individuals tend to view change as an indicator for an ongoing trend and adapt their behavior to this anticipated development, which strengthens the initial trend (Chen et al. 2011; Lindsley et al. 1995). Accordingly, in the case of change effects, two individuals exhibiting an identical state can assign it a different value, depending on the preceding state. Likewise, different states can be assigned the same value if they represent the same change relative to the reference level (Chen et al. 2011; Johnson et al. 2005). Thus, a second theoretical tenet is that change effects exceed effects of absolute levels.

While the first two characteristics build the basis for spiral effects (i.e., patterns of consecutive increases or decreases in at least two variables), we propose that a third characteristic of within-person spirals is that boundaries to the spiral effects should be expected; otherwise, a change in one of the spiral's variables would (ceteris paribus) result in an infinite number of reciprocal loops and thus an infinite increase or decrease in the variables' levels (Halbesleben et al. 2014; Roe and Inceoglu 2016). As a third tenet of a theory of spirals we therefore propose that spirals exhibit a lower and upper boundary. A lower boundary exists at the point at which a psychological construct that is central to the spiral has too little

Table 1 Organizational pride and related constructs

	Organizational pride (OP)	Organizational identification (OI)	Organizational commitment (OC)	Organization-based self-esteem (OBSE)
Definition	An emotion-based attitude that is characterized by the inclusion of an organization into the individual's self-concept and by pleasurable feelings that are based on the organization's success.	"The perception of oneness with or belongingness to an organization, where the individual defines him- or herself in terms of the organization(s) in which he or she is a member" (Mael and Ashforth 1992, p. 104).	"The relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Mowday, Steers, and Porter 1979, p. 226).	"The degree to which organizational members believe that they can satisfy their needs by participating in roles within the context of an organization" (Pierce et al. 1989, p. 625).
Measurement (exemplary items)	- I am proud to work for my company. - I am proud to contribute to my company's success. (Gouthier and Rhein 2011)	- I am very interested in what others think about my company. - When I talk about my company, I usually say "we" rather than "they." (Mael and Ashforth 1992)	- I find that my values and the organization's values are very similar. - This organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance. (Mowday et al. 1979)	- I am taken seriously around here. - I am an important part of this place. (Pierce et al. 1989)
Antecedents (examples)	Perceived external reputation, job autonomy, team support, supervisor consideration (Helm 2013; Kraemer and Gouthier 2014)	Organizational prestige, communication climate, status within organization (Fuller et al. 2006; Riketta 2005; Smidts et al. 2001)	Task autonomy, group cohesiveness, leader-initiated structure, role ambiguity, role conflict (Mathieu and Zajac 1990)	Global self-esteem, job complexity, work control, perceived managerial respect, distributive justice, procedural justice (Pierce and Gardner 2004)
Consequences (examples)	Emotional exhaustion, turnover intentions, COB (Gouthier and Rhein 2011; Kraemer and Gouthier 2014)	Turnover intentions, voice behavior, in-role behavior, extra-role behavior (Fuller et al. 2006; Riketta 2005)	Internal motivation, job involvement, job satisfaction, stress, turnover (Mathieu and Zajac 1990)	Intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, identification, citizenship behavior (Pierce and Gardner 2004)
How it differs from OP		OI is a prerequisite of OP. Only employees who identify with the organization perceive the organization as a part of their selves and are thus able to feel self-conscious emotions for outcomes related to the organization. OP is essentially more success-oriented than OI. While employees could identify with an unsuccessful organization, OP necessarily requires success as an additional condition. Moreover, in contrast to OI, pride is characterized by strong positive emotions.	OC is not necessarily organization-specific, as goals, beliefs, and values may be shared with other organizations. People could be highly committed to an organization, not because they perceive the organization as special, but because it is a good career vehicle (Ashforth and Mael 1989). Such individuals could defect to another organization that represents similar values and proves to be more convenient without sacrificing their goals. OP is organization-specific and necessarily implies the loss of psychological resources when the individual defects.	OBSE can stem from many aspects other than OP (Pierce et al. 1989). For instance, individuals can develop OBSE based on their status in the organization without taking pride in the organization. In contrast, with OP the organization and its favorable characteristics are part of the individual's self-concept. Therefore, OP is one antecedent of OBSE (Riketta 2005).

salience to the individual to be noticeable or perceived as critical (Marks 1974). That is, if the absolute level of a psychological variable lies below a certain threshold, variable change does not create change effects. Accordingly, variable change does not trigger an upward spiral if the (initial) absolute level of the variable is below this threshold, and downward spirals are limited by this lower boundary (as reinforcing loops stop). For instance, if an individual displays negligible OP, it is not a meaningful resource to the person and he or she is likely to perceive (upward or downward) changes in OP as unimportant. Correspondingly, we propose that an upper boundary lies at the point at which additional increases in the spiral's variables are no longer sufficiently salient, as the relative increase

becomes too small in comparison to the already high absolute level (Mittal et al. 1998). For example, if originating from high levels of OP or COB, employees will display diminishing sensitivity to further increases and thus the incremental value of further enhancements shrinks. This diminishing impact of changes constitutes a self-limiting force and slows down the spiral.

Next, we develop hypotheses regarding the direct and indirect reciprocal relationships between OP change and COB change, which reflect our basic expectation that these relationships can be characterized as a spiral. Figure 1 presents an overview of our conceptual model.

Hypotheses development

The effect of organizational pride on customer-oriented behavior

Direct effect As noted, OP is characterized by pleasant feelings that signal to an individual that he or she is part of an esteemed organization (Kraemer and Gouthier 2014). Therefore, people perceive OP as a valuable psychological resource, which they attempt to protect and augment (Hobfoll 1989, 2002). The higher one's level of OP, the greater the effort one will invest in safeguarding it. Because an employee's OP is based on the organization's success (Kraemer and Gouthier 2014) and COB often represents the central contribution of frontline employees to success (Stock and Hoyer

2005), we infer that the greater an employee's OP, the stronger his or her tendency to engage in COB.

While the described effect can be attributed to absolute levels of OP, we expect that changes in OP influence COB over and above the effect of its absolute levels. We anticipate that changes in OP function as mental cues indicating the importance of OP for an individual's self-concept. That is, with greater OP, an individual becomes more aware of how his or her pride in the organization contributes to self-esteem, bringing the organization's relevance to the forefront. Conversely, decreases devalue the organization's meaning. In addition, individuals tend to view changes as indicators of ongoing trends (Chen et al. 2011). A positive trajectory (i.e., increasing OP levels over time) indicates that improvements in the future are likely, whereas a negative trajectory signals a future decline. This directional information has more diagnostic value for assessing future developments than absolute levels of OP do (Purohit and Srivastava 2001; Veling and van Knippenberg 2004). Hence, changes in OP are more critical drivers of future individual behavior (including COB) than states are.

Therefore, in the case of increasing (decreasing) OP, individuals assign a higher (lower) value to this psychological resource and exhibit a greater (lower) tendency to conserve it, which cannot be explained with absolute levels.

H1: OP change positively affects COB change (holding constant the average level of OP during a given period).

Fig. 1 Conceptual model of the dynamic relationship between organizational pride and customer-oriented behavior

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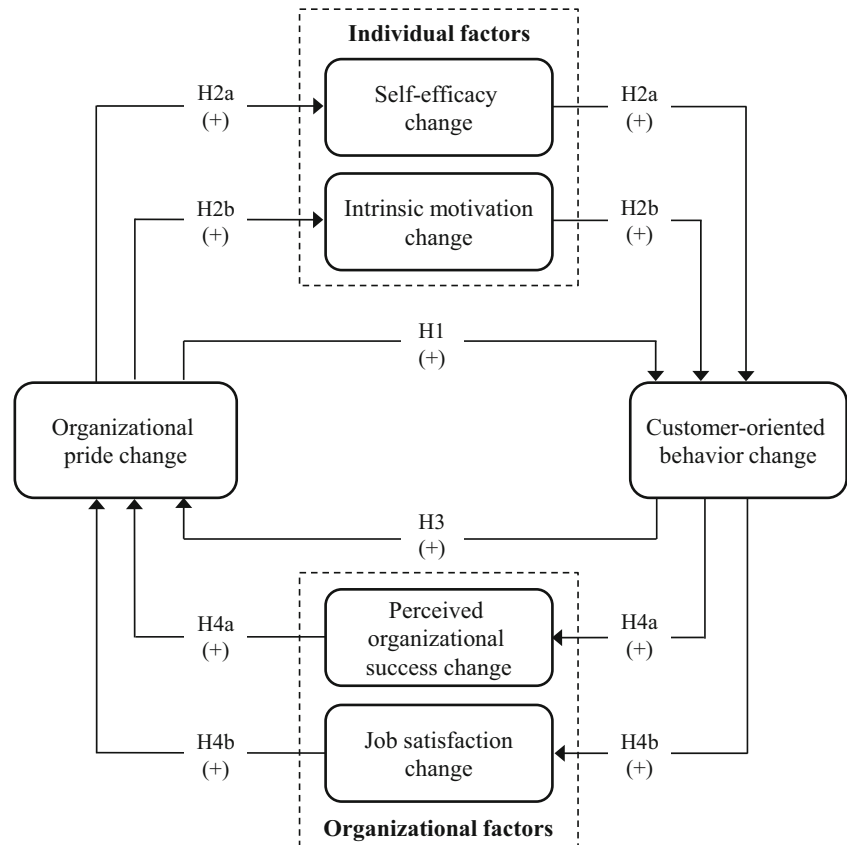
Mediating effects of self-efficacy change and intrinsic motivation change The previous discussion describes a direct effect of OP change on COB change. We propose that changes in OP also unfold indirect effects by altering two individual capacities: self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. OP is an attitude based on repeated experiences of positive emotions. Therefore, an increase in OP indicates that an individual repeatedly encountered such positive emotions in a certain period, while a decrease suggests a lack of such emotions. Positive emotions, although transient, broaden an individual's repertoire of durable capabilities and motivations (Fredrickson 2001). Emotions influence cognitive abilities, helping individuals to achieve more by solving complex problems ("I can"). At the same time, emotions determine the motivational willpower to strive for greater achievement by utilizing these capabilities ("I will"). Both the ability and willingness to perform are employee capacities necessary to master customer interactions (Fiske et al. 2006; Habel et al. 2017). We capture the "can" component by self-efficacy, which is one's perceived ability to mobilize cognitive resources to meet situational demands (Wood and Bandura 1989). The "will" component is represented by intrinsic motivation, defined as the extent to which employees enjoy finding solutions to customer problems through analytical and creative thinking (Amabile 1988; Román and Iacobucci 2010).

First, we expect an indirect effect of OP change on COB change through changes in self-efficacy. As OP is directly connected with an individual's self-perception, shifts in OP affect the global evaluation of the self (Gist and Mitchell 1992; Tracy et al. 2009). Individuals who experience increasing (decreasing) OP are likely to perceive themselves as being more (less) capable with regard to their job tasks—a perception that manifests in higher (lower) job-related self-efficacy. Next, we expect that self-efficacy change affects COB change. COB often requires employees to master unconventional practices to enhance customer well-being (Schepers et al. 2012), and employees are more capable of adapting their service routines if they expect to be able to handle unforeseeable demands (Anderson and Huang 2006). As a result, we expect that employees with increased (decreased) self-efficacy will display a higher (lower) level of COB. Thus, we predict that OP change has an additional indirect effect on COB change through self-efficacy change.

Second, we expect a further indirect effect of OP change through changes in intrinsic motivation. We argue that the positive emotions underlying OP unlock additional energy for working harder and at the same time increase the enjoyment of work activities, as employees perceive them to be valuable for themselves (Gouthier and Rhein 2011; Tierney et al. 1999). Next, we predict that shifts in intrinsic motivation positively affect employees' willingness to take ownership of customer problems and actually use their capabilities to achieve more for the customer. Customer needs are heterogeneous, and in many situations employees must be willing to go beyond service guidelines to solve a customer's specific needs (Schepers et al. 2012).

Consequently, we propose that with increasing (decreasing) intrinsic motivation, frontline employees are more (less) willing to carry out COB. Thus, we posit that OP change has an indirect effect on COB change through intrinsic motivation change.

H2: (a) Self-efficacy change and (b) intrinsic motivation change partially mediate the positive effect of OP change on COB change.

The effect of customer-oriented behavior on organizational pride

Direct effect One of our central assumptions is that while OP positively affects COB, COB also positively affects OP. In particular, we suggest that employees generally aim to work for and take more pride in organizations that enable their frontline staff to help customers through quality service (Zablah et al. 2012). Thus, their level of COB signals to them the extent to which the employer provides an environment in which they can live up to their potential in providing good customer service. With greater (lower) COB, employees perceive their goals to be in increasing (decreasing) alignment with those of the organization and are therefore likely to exhibit greater (lower) OP (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Kraemer and Gouthier 2014).

We expect that COB change entails additional effects beyond absolute levels. By deviating behavior from a given baseline (i.e., COB at an earlier point in time), changes in COB alert individuals to how well their environment enables them to provide high-quality customer service and thus influence OP beyond the effect of the current COB level. This effect is strengthened by the tendency of individuals to believe that trends will continue over time. For instance, employees who reduce COB are likely to be particularly aware of the negative (and subjectively deteriorated) environment for providing high-quality customer service and anticipate that this negative trend will continue. Hence, these individuals will experience lower levels of OP than those with the same current but constant level of COB. Thus, we posit that COB change has a positive effect on OP change that exceeds the effects of absolute levels of COB.

H3: COB change positively affects OP change (holding constant the average level of COB during a given period).

Mediating effects of perceived organizational success change and job satisfaction change We predict that, in addition to COB change's direct effect on OP change, shifts in COB yield indirect effects by altering organization-related evaluations of organizational success and job satisfaction. As COB is concerned with an employee's efforts to improve the organization as a whole, we propose that COB change affects evaluations at the organizational level and does not influence perceptions regarding individual or "intrinsic" capacities (i.e., abilities or motivation). Perceived

organizational success—an employee's overall evaluation of the organization's standing—captures the employee's esteem for the firm to which he or she contributes through customer-oriented efforts. Job satisfaction—an employee's overall appraisal of his or her job experiences—represents the employee's own situation in this organization. As both constructs have been frequently identified as being the most relevant factors in an employee's assessment of the organization and the decision to stay (Menguc et al. 2016; Zablah et al. 2012), both are likely to influence pride in the organization.

First, we propose an indirect effect of COB change on OP change through altered perceptions of organizational success. We posit that increases (decreases) in COB improve (impair) an individual's perception of organizational performance. For example, employees who exhibit increasing COB receive more positive customer feedback on the organization's performance. Therefore, we suggest that with increasing COB, employees perceive the organization to be more successful, and belonging to a successful organization is a fundamental source of OP (Kraemer and Gouthier 2014). Conversely, reduced COB efforts go hand in hand with customer responses that are less positive and hence with diminished evaluations of organizational success, which likely result in deteriorating OP. Hence, we propose that COB change has a positive effect on OP change through changes in perceived organizational success.

Second, we posit that COB change indirectly affects OP change by influencing job satisfaction. Increasing COB reduces role conflicts by bringing customer–employee and manager–employee role expectations into greater alignment, thus improving job satisfaction (Zablah et al. 2012). Conversely, reduced engagement in COB is liable to create more workplace-related tension (e.g., conflicts with supervisors), leading to diminished job satisfaction. In addition, and in line with prior work, we propose that the more conducive organizations are to enabling job satisfaction, the more pride employees take in the organization (Arnett et al. 2002). Accordingly, we posit that job satisfaction change also partially mediates the positive effect of COB change on OP change.

H4: (a) Perceived organizational success change and (b) job satisfaction change partially mediate the positive effect of COB change on OP change.

Data

Research setting and sample

To empirically test the OP–COB spiral, we rely on longitudinal data collected via a six-wave panel study (T = 6) of frontline employees in Germany. We commissioned a panel provider for data collection, who contacted potential participants via e-mail, inviting them to take part in the online survey. To enhance response rates and the effort invested in completing questionnaires, small monetary incentives were offered in each wave. The data were collected with uniform time lags of two months between waves, meaning that 10 months elapsed between the first and last questionnaires (Zapf et al. 1996). As the study necessitates a certain position (frontline employee) but not industry, we ensured that the panel provider recruited participants from a wide variety of industries, allowing us to achieve generalizability. Furthermore, as COB is a central variable in our model, we focused on typical frontline employees who engage frequently in customer interactions and have no leadership responsibilities.

Of the 15,006 individuals contacted, 3310 agreed to partake in the study (response rate: 22.06%). However, only 1017 of those who responded met the preconditions (i.e., having a high frequency of customer contact and no leadership responsibilities) and completed the first-wave online questionnaire (net response rate: 6.78%). From this initial sample, we omitted those without a full-time job (88 cases in t_1, leaving 929), as the majority of these participants were student employees, temporary staff, or interns, who owing to their temporary status were likely to have a less meaningful relationship to the organization than full-time employees and may have been simultaneously employed by more than one organization. In addition, some participants opted out of answering further questionnaires and others were removed because they changed jobs during the study, rendering their OP values meaningless for a longitudinal analysis.

Our final sample consists of 319 participants (44% female, $M_{age} = 41.29$) who fulfilled all conditions and completed the questionnaires in all six waves. In terms of organizational tenure, 9% had been with their company for less than one year, 34% between one and five years, 20% between six and ten years, and 37% for more than ten years. Appendix 1 provides additional information on the sample characteristics, while Web Appendix A outlines details regarding the frequency, times, and reasons for dropouts during the study.

Measures

We measured all variables with validated scales or adaptations of such scales. For OP we used the three items from Gouthier and Rhein's (2011) scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$), while for COB we used the scale developed by Peccei and Rosenthal (1997) ($\alpha = .88$).[1] We measured self-efficacy with five items adapted from Schwarzer et al. (1997) ($\alpha = .91$). To measure intrinsic motivation, we used Tierney et al.'s (1999) scale ($\alpha = .81$). We developed a perceived organizational success scale based on Walsh et al.'s (2009) comprehensive scale by identifying three items that measure perceived organizational success on a generic level and are comparable across industries and business

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[1] All reliability statistics refer to the measurements made in t_1.

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types; the scale shows a high reliability ($\alpha = .83$). We measured job satisfaction with two items from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (Bowling and Hammond 2008) ($\alpha = .80$). For all items, we used five-point Likert scales. Further evidence for measurement reliability is offered by the composite reliability statistics, which are greater than the recommended cutoff of .70 for all constructs. All items and reliability statistics appear in Appendix 2.

Measurement model We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis with all six latent variables (all in t_1) to assess measurement model quality. After removing four indicators with low loadings, all relevant construct-level quality criteria were fulfilled and the model showed an adequate fit: $\chi^2(155) = 283.28$, comparative fit index (CFI) = .97, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = .96, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .05 (90% lower-level confidence interval [LLCI] = .04; upper-level confidence interval [ULCI] = .06), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .04. Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics and the correlation matrix, while Web Appendix B provides tests concerning measurement invariance.

Convergent and discriminant validity We applied different methods to examine construct validity. First, we obtained evidence of convergent and discriminant validity using the Fornell and Larcker (1981) approach. The average variance extracted (AVE) for each multiple-item construct exceeds .50, suggesting adequate convergent validity. Furthermore, the AVE for each multi-item construct is greater than the shared variance with any possible pairings of the remaining constructs, providing evidence for discriminant validity (AVE and shared variance are presented in Web Appendix C). However, because recent research has questioned the reliability of the Fornell–Larcker criterion, we also used the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) method to further assess discriminant validity (Henseler et al. 2015; Voorhees et al. 2016). We estimated the HTMT ratio for all multi-item constructs using SmartPLS, obtaining values that range from .26 to .76 and thus pass the conservative threshold of .85. The largest upper limit of the 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals for all constructs is .82, further pointing to the existence of discriminant validity. Based on these tests, we conclude that the focal constructs exhibit adequate convergent and discriminant validity.

Data analysis

Empirical strategy

Our data analysis entailed two stages. In the first stage we used mixed-effects growth-curve modeling to estimate individual slopes for all focal variables across the six waves, which function as indicators of variable change over time.

In the second stage we employed seemingly unrelated regression to estimate reciprocal direct effects between OP change and COB change as well as the reciprocal indirect effects through changes of the focal mediators. The second stage applies Heckman correction and uses an extended sample to alleviate concerns regarding attrition bias. We also conducted several additional analyses to gather a more thorough understanding of our results from the second stage. Specifically, we conducted additional mediation analyses to empirically underscore the theoretically guided positions of our focal mediators within the reciprocal OP–COB relationship and to test these mediators against alternative and potentially competing variables.

Besides testing our hypotheses, both analysis stages aim at empirically identifying the first and second characteristics of spirals discussed above: (1) the existence of reciprocal effects and (2) the existence of unique effects of changes in focal variables beyond effects of absolute levels of these variables. We also tested whether the effects of variable decreases differ substantially from those of increases.

Finally, to empirically substantiate the third characteristic of spirals (boundaries), we conducted two floodlight analyses examining the lower and upper boundaries of the spiral effects. Together, these analyses help us gain a thorough understanding of the dynamic relationship between OP change and COB change.

Common-method variance

To deal with potential common-method bias resulting from the empirical design, we applied a priori (i.e., procedural techniques) and post hoc methods (i.e., statistical techniques). First, we employed procedural remedies during questionnaire design to minimize common-method variance arising from social desirability, consistency motifs, and implicit theories. We explained to respondents that their answers are highly important for research, that only their personal opinion matters, and that no experience or knowledge is required. In addition, we rewarded participation to increase motivation to consciously and accurately answer questions. Furthermore, we placed items of independent and dependent variables on separate pages of the online questionnaire to preclude participants editing their responses to fit an implicit theory (Podsakoff et al. 2003). In addition, the longitudinal (i.e., temporally separated) nature of our research design intrinsically limits the potential for common-method variance (Hulland et al. 2018).

Second, as a priori methods may be insufficient to minimize common-method variance (Hulland et al. 2018), we actively control for it using a marker variable (i.e., a variable that is theoretically unrelated to the focal variables in the model) as a covariate in our mixed-effects growth model described

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and correlations of Stage 2 variables

Variable	M/% (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1. OP change	.02 (.04)	1.00																				
2. COB change	.01 (.03)	.50	1.00																			
3. Self-efficacy change	.02 (.01)	.35	.47	1.00																		
4. Intrinsic motivation change	.01 (.03)	.26	.37	.34	1.00																	
5. Perc. organizational success change	.02 (.04)	.44	.30	.25	.25	1.00																
6. Job satisfaction change	.01 (.07)	.47	.33	.32	.22	.29	1.00															
7. OP$_{t1}$	3.72 (.88)	.02	.11	.17	.00	.03	.06	1.00														
8. COB$_{t1}$	4.09 (.67)	.07	.02	.18	.09	.02	.05	.52	1.00													
9. OP average	3.75 (.80)	.40	.27	.30	.11	.18	.25	.85	.51	1.00												
10. COB average	4.10 (.60)	.21	.39	.36	.21	.11	.15	.53	.86	.60	1.00											
11. Self-efficacy average	3.74 (.62)	.24	.34	.50	.30	.10	.15	.34	.50	.46	.60	1.00										
12. Intrinsic motivation average	3.70 (.72)	.17	.20	.29	.50	.11	.15	.22	.38	.33	.43	.59	1.00									
13. Perc. organizational success average	3.57 (.72)	.27	.19	.24	.18	.23	.18	.62	.44	.69	.49	.44	.33	1.00								
14. Job satisfaction average	4.03 (.64)	.31	.27	.28	.15	.23	.31	.63	.49	.75	.62	.46	.34	.58	1.00							
15. Age	41.29 (12.26)	-.10	-.04	-.01	-.09	-.03	.01	.03	.07	-.02	.06	.08	-.06	-.03	.15	1.00						
16. Gender (female)	43.89% –	.04	.09	.01	.04	.01	.00	.09	.13	.13	.18	-.08	-.01	.03	.09	-.22	1.00					
17. Tenure	2.85 (1.02)	.00	-.04	.04	-.16	-.02	.05	.02	.00	.03	.00	.04	-.13	-.06	.01	.48	-.06	1.00				
18. Retail	15.36% –	-.01	.04	.03	-.01	.02	.00	.07	.14	.05	.15	-.03	-.04	.11	.09	.03	.01	-.17	1.00			
19. Public service	10.03% –	.03	.01	.00	-.06	.05	-.03	-.02	-.08	.02	-.08	.00	-.01	-.21	.06	-.03	.00	.14	-.14	1.00		
20. Healthcare	8.46% –	.00	.00	-.07	-.03	-.08	.01	-.04	.03	-.05	.03	.00	.05	-.10	-.03	-.03	.12	.00	-.13	-.10	1.00	
21. Employees	2.61 (1.24)	.01	-.05	-.04	-.01	-.05	-.03	-.04	-.14	-.05	-.15	-.04	-.08	-.01	-.11	.02	-.06	.27	-.11	.22	.09	1.00

Correlations greater than or equal to |.11| are statistically significant ($p < .05$, two-tailed). OP = organizational pride; COB = customer-oriented behavior

below (e.g., Albrecht et al. 2019; Wathne et al. 2018). We used the item "I can greatly influence the decisions of my immediate superior regarding things in my job over which I am concerned" (taken from Mukherjee and Malhotra's 2006 participation scale) as a marker variable (MAR), which is measured on the same scale as the variables in our model (Lindell and Whitney 2001). This variable shows only weak correlations with the variables in our model (all $r \leq .23$). Integrating this variable as a covariate in the Stage 1 growth model allows us to partial out the remaining common-method variance and to minimize its impact on the change variables (i.e., the slopes extracted from the growth model). Estimation of the change slopes is unaffected by including the marker variable in terms of the significance and sign of the coefficients. Based on the a priori and post hoc methods employed, we conclude that our results are unlikely to be affected by common-method bias.

Stage 1: Estimating changes of variables

Mixed-effects growth-curve modeling We followed prior literature by estimating the temporal changes in our focal variables as slopes instead of difference scores (i.e., subtracting the time 1 score from the time 6 score) (e.g., Chen et al. 2011). To estimate these slopes, we employed mixed-effects growth-curve modeling, which is a multi-level approach to longitudinal data. This procedure is particularly suitable for our study as it allows to estimate variable changes for individual subjects over time and to detect inter-individual differences in these changes (e.g., Bliese and Ployhart 2002; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012). In particular, we specified a two-level model to estimate the temporal changes while considering population-level fixed effects and individual-level random effects. The fixed effect of time captures average changes observed across the sample while the random coefficient of time varies among subjects. To obtain individual slopes for the focal variables, we drew the empirical Bayes slope estimates for each participant based on the predictions of the population-level time coefficient (fixed effect) and the individual-level time coefficient (random effect). We chose this approach because it simultaneously takes into account the information from the observed sample and from each individual and is thus less biased and more precise (i.e., has less variance) than the individual-specific slopes one would gather from estimating separate ordinary least squares regressions per individual (Cohen et al. 2014; Pinheiro and Bates 2000; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2012).

Estimating individual slopes To obtain individual slopes, which we subsequently used as indicators for variable change, we estimated two-level mixed-effects growth-curve models by regressing all six focal variables (i.e., factor scores based on the items of COB, OP, self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, perceived organizational success, and job satisfaction) on the time trend variable (TIME). For instance, to estimate the change in COB over time we estimated the following model:

$$COB_{it} = [\pi_{00} + \pi_{10}TIME_{it} + \pi_{20}MAR_{it}]$$
$$+ [u_{0i} + u_{1i}TIME_{it} + r_{it}], \tag{1}$$

where $TIME_{it}$ refers to the time trend variable, MAR_{it} is the marker variable, i = individual, t = survey wave, π_{00} = fixed intercept, π_{10} = fixed effect for time, π_{20} = fixed effect for the marker variable, u_{0i} = random intercept, u_{1i} = random effect for time, and r_{it} = within-individual residual. From this model, we could draw the individual COB slopes across all six waves (COB CHANGE$_{i,t1-t6}$) using empirical Bayes estimation as follows:

$$COB\ CHANGE_{i;t1-t6} = \pi_{10} + u_{1i} \tag{2}$$

The COB slope represents each individual's change in the COB variable across the six survey waves. Importantly, a positive (negative) COB change represents increases (decreases) in COB across time, while a COB change of zero represents no change in COB over time. We proceeded in the same way to obtain the remaining five slopes for OP, self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation, perceived organizational success, and job satisfaction. All estimations were conducted with Stata 16.

Importantly, likelihood-ratio tests (all $p < .001$) revealed that the mixed models that allow time slopes to vary randomly across individuals fit the data better than fixed-effects models, which assume change to be constant across individuals (Bliese and Ployhart 2002). Hence, the direction and rate of changes in the six focal variables differed significantly between individuals.

Stage 2: Testing the reciprocal direct and indirect relationships

In Stage 2 we tested the hypothesized reciprocal direct relationships between OP change and COB change. In addition, we tested for the existence of the postulated indirect effects of OP change on COB change through self-efficacy change and intrinsic motivation change and COB change on OP change through perceived organizational success change and job satisfaction change. To do so simultaneously, we conducted seemingly unrelated regressions (Chen et al. 2011). We drew on the slopes estimated in Stage 1 as indicators for variable change to estimate an equation system that comprises six equations for estimating the direct and indirect effects.

Non-response bias / attrition bias The multi-wave design of the online survey raises concerns of potential non-response bias because not all participants who filled in the first questionnaire also completed all subsequent questionnaires. Dropouts

over time are not a problem per se, but attrition biases may arise when dropouts are related to study-specific characteristics (Winer 1983). We conducted multiple steps to remedy any attrition bias resulting from these unit non-responses for the duration of our panel study (Hulland et al. 2018).

To test whether panel attrition affected the model estimation in Stage 2, we estimated all equations in our analysis with a data set comprising all participants who completed at least two questionnaires (estimating slopes requires at least two subsequent observations) and used two dummy variables to control for the dropout reason (i.e., non-response or job change). The analysis reveals that the results for the hypothesized paths remain the same in terms of direction and significance for a sample comprising participants who completed all six questionnaires (i.e., our final sample used for hypotheses testing) and for one including all participants who completed at least two questionnaires (reference sample, $n = 651$). This result indicates that panel attrition did not significantly bias our results.

As the approach discussed above requires at least two completed questionnaires per subject, it tests only for attrition occurring between the second and sixth waves. Therefore, we used the Heckman procedure to control for any potential bias resulting from non-response across all survey waves of the study (and thus account for dropouts between the first and second waves). We first estimated a probit selection model using the full sample of 929 participants to estimate a participant's decision to complete all six questionnaires (coded as 1, $n = 319$) or at least one but not all six questionnaires (coded as 0, $n = 610$). As determinants of the selection decision, we accounted for gender, the perceived level of the firm's social and environmental responsibility, social workplace acknowledgement, and the marker variable discussed above to partial out common-method variance. These variables were at least marginally significant predictors of the decision to complete all six questionnaires (all $p < .05$, except social and environmental responsibility where $p = .06$). Then, drawing on the estimates from the probit model, we calculated the inverse Mills ratio (i.e., Heckman correction factor) and used it as a control variable in all Stage 2 equations.

Seemingly unrelated regressions model We applied seemingly unrelated regressions (SUR) to test the proposed spiral depicted in Fig. 1 and to simultaneously estimate direct and indirect effects (Preacher and Hayes 2008). SUR accounts for correlated error terms across the recursive set of theoretically linked equations needed for testing the spiral (Wallace and Silver 1988). We estimated six equations representing two direct effect models for the two dependent variables (COB change, OP change) and two mediation models for the two path directions of the OP–COB spiral with two mediators for each path. For instance, Eq. 3 represents the COB change model accounting for the direct effects of OP change, self-efficacy change, and intrinsic motivation change; Eq. 4

represents the mediator model for self-efficacy change needed for estimating the indirect effect of OP change on COB change through self-efficacy change (the complete equation system is described in Web Appendix D).

In each equation, we control for the scores of the respective dependent variables COB change and OP change in t_1 to consider the starting point of the COB or OP slope (e.g., the COB score in t_1 for Eqs. 3 and 4), the average values of all focal model variables across all waves to control for their absolute levels, individual-specific characteristics (age, gender, and tenure), and firm-specific characteristics (industry dummies for retail, public service, and healthcare and number of employees). For example, to estimate the direct effects on COB change and the indirect effect of OP change on COB change through self-efficacy (SE) change, we included the following equations in the SUR model:

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{COB CHANGE}_{i,t1-t6} = {} & \beta_{10} + \beta_{11}\text{OP CHANGE}_{i,t1-t6} + \beta_{12}\text{SE CHANGE}_{i,t1-t6} \\
& + \beta_{13}\text{IM CHANGE}_{i,t1-t6} + \beta_{14}\text{COB}_{i,t1} \\
& + \beta_{15}\text{OP AVERAGE}_{i,t1-t6} + \beta_{16}\text{SE AVERAGE}_{i,t1-t6} \\
& + \beta_{17}\text{IM AVERAGE}_{i,t1-t6} + \beta_{18}\text{AGE}_i + \beta_{19}\text{GEN}_i \\
& + \beta_{110}\text{TEN}_i + \beta_{111}\text{RET}_i + \beta_{112}\text{PS}_i + \beta_{113}\text{HEA}_i \\
& + \beta_{114}\text{EMP}_i + \beta_{115}\text{IMR}_i + \varepsilon_{1i},
\end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{SE CHANGE}_{i,t1-t6} = {} & \beta_{20} + \beta_{21}\text{OP CHANGE}_{i,t1-t6} + \beta_{22}\text{COB}_{i,t1} \\
& + \beta_{23}\text{OP AVERAGE}_{i,t1-t6} + \beta_{24}\text{AGE}_i \\
& + \beta_{25}\text{GEN}_i + \beta_{26}\text{TEN}_i + \beta_{27}\text{RET}_i + \beta_{28}\text{PS}_i \\
& + \beta_{29}\text{HEA}_i + \beta_{210}\text{EMP}_i + \beta_{211}\text{IMR}_i + \varepsilon_{2i},
\end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

where $\text{COB CHANGE}_{i,t1-t6}$, $\text{SE CHANGE}_{i,t1-t6}$, IM (intrinsic motivation) $\text{CHANGE}_{i,t1-t6}$, and $\text{OP CHANGE}_{i,t1-t6}$ refer to the empirical Bayes estimates of the changes of the focal variables obtained from Stage 1; $\text{COB}_{i,t1}$ refers to the initial scores of COB in t_1; $\text{OP AVERAGE}_{i,t1-t6}$, $\text{COB AVERAGE}_{i,t1-t6}$, SE $\text{AVERAGE}_{i,t1-6}$, and IM $\text{AVERAGE}_{i,t1-t6}$ refer to the average scores of the focal variables from t_1 to t_6; AGE_i refers to a subject's age; GEN_i indicates whether a subject is female; TEN_i refers to a subject's tenure; RET_i, PS_i, and HEA_i represent industry dummies indicating whether the subject's firm is in the retail, public service, or healthcare sector (other industries are in the reference category); EMP_i refers to the number of people employed by the subject's firm; and IMR_i represents the inverse Mills ratio. Finally, ε_{1i} and ε_{2i} refer to the respective disturbance terms of subject i.

Results of direct effects testing Table 3 displays the results of the SUR model, which indicate a positive and significant effect of OP change on COB change ($\beta = .438$, $p < .001$), in support of H1. Self-efficacy change ($\beta = .658$, $p < .001$) and intrinsic motivation change ($\beta = .176$, $p < .001$) have positive and significant effects on COB change, while OP change has a

Table 3   Results of seemingly unrelated regressions for testing the proposed spiral in Stage 2

Variable	DV: COB change		DV: Self-efficacy change		DV: Intrinsic motivation change	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Constant	$-.016^{n.s.}$	.022	$.009^{n.s.}$	.008	$-.014^{n.s.}$	.026
OP change	$.438^{***}$	.037	$.110^{***}$	.015	$.321^{***}$	.048
Self-efficacy change	$.658^{***}$	.145				
Intrinsic motivation change	$.176^{***}$	.046				
COB_{t1}	$-.008^{**}$	.002	$.002^{n.s.}$	.001	$.006^{n.s.}$	.003
OP average	$.003^{n.s.}$	.002	$.001^{n.s.}$	.001	$-.002^{n.s.}$	.003
Self-efficacy average	$.007^{*}$	.003				
Intrinsic motivation average	$-.003^{n.s.}$	.002				
Age	$.000^{n.s.}$	.000	$.000^{n.s.}$	.000	$.000^{n.s.}$	.000
Gender (female)	$.005^{n.s.}$	.004	$.000^{n.s.}$	.002	$-.001^{n.s.}$	.005
Tenure	$-.002^{n.s.}$	.002	$.000^{n.s.}$	.001	$-.006^{**}$	.002
Retail	$.004^{n.s.}$	.004	$.000^{n.s.}$	.002	$-.006^{n.s.}$	.005
Public service	$.002^{n.s.}$	.005	$.000^{n.s.}$	.002	$-.006^{n.s.}$	.006
Healthcare	$.004^{n.s.}$	.005	$-.002^{n.s.}$	.002	$-.006^{*}$	.006
Employees	$-.001^{n.s.}$	.001	$.000^{n.s.}$	.000	$.002^{n.s}$	.002
Inverse Mills ratio	$.001^{n.s.}$	.015	$-.002^{n.s.}$	.006	$.016^{n.s.}$	.019
R^2	.372		.150		.102	

Variable	DV: OP change		DV: Perc. organizational success change		DV: Job satisfaction change	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Constant	$-.013^{n.s.}$	.025	$.013^{n.s.}$	.035	$-.059^{n.s.}$	.054
COB change	$.684^{***}$	.057	$.561^{***}$	.080	$.954^{***}$	.123
Perc. organizational success change	$.178^{***}$	.038				
Job satisfaction change	$.125^{***}$	.025				
OP_{t1}	$-.010^{***}$	.003	$.000^{n.s.}$	.003	$.003^{n.s.}$	.005
COB average	$.001^{n.s.}$	.004	$.000^{n.s.}$	.005	$.003^{n.s.}$	.008
Perc. organizational success average	$.008^{*}$	.003				
Job satisfaction average	$.009^{*}$	.004				
Age	$.004^{a***}$	$.002^{a}$	$.000^{n.s.}$	.000	$.000^{n.s.}$	.000
Gender (female)	$-.002^{n.s.}$	.005	$-.003^{n.s.}$	.007	$-.015^{n.s.}$	.010
Tenure	$.003^{n.s.}$	.002	$.000^{n.s.}$	.003	$.006^{n.s.}$	.004
Retail	$-.002^{n.s.}$	.005	$-.001^{n.s.}$	.007	$-.003^{n.s.}$	.010
Public service	$.002^{n.s.}$	.006	$.007^{n.s.}$	.008	$-.008^{n.s.}$	.012
Healthcare	$.003^{n.s.}$	.006	$-.011^{n.s.}$	.008	$.004^{n.s.}$	.013
Employees	$.001^{n.s.}$	.001	$-.001^{n.s.}$	.002	$-.002^{n.s.}$	.003
Inverse Mills ratio	$.000^{n.s.}$	.018	$.007^{n.s.}$	.025	$.047^{n.s.}$	.039
R^2	.421		.087		.107	
System R^2	.482					

$N = 319$. All coefficients are unstandardized. The highest variance inflation factor is 2.71, which is within the acceptable range (O'Brien 2007). OP = organizational pride; COB = customer-oriented behavior. [a] Multiplied by 10 for better interpretability

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

positive and significant effect on self-efficacy change (β = .110, $p < .001$) and intrinsic motivation change (β = .321, $p < .001$). We therefore include the indirect effects of OP change through self-efficacy change and intrinsic motivation change in the mediation analysis to test H2a and H2b. In support of H3, the results yield a positive and significant effect of COB change on OP change (β = .684, $p < .001$). Perceived organizational success change (β = .178, $p < .001$) and job satisfaction change (β = .125, $p < .001$) have positive and significant effects on OP change, while COB change has positive and significant effects on perceived organizational success change (β = .561, $p < .001$) and job satisfaction change (β = .954, $p < .001$). We therefore also include the indirect effects of COB change through perceived organizational success change and job satisfaction change in the mediation analysis to test H4a and H4b.

It is worth noting that both dependent variables are significantly affected by their initial values: COB_{t1} has a negative effect on COB change ($\beta = -.008$, $p < .01$) and OP_{t1} has a negative effect on OP change ($\beta = -.010$, $p < .001$). These effects indicate that at higher levels of COB and OP, changes in COB and OP tend to become smaller. These findings point to a saturation effect at high levels of the spiral's focal variables and thus to a finite character of the upward OP–COB spiral. To better understand these boundaries of the OP–COB spiral, we conducted additional analyses that are discussed later. The effects of all other control variables are in the expected direction or insignificant.

Results of indirect effects testing Hypotheses 2 and 4 suggest that the relationship between OP change and COB change is partially mediated by self-efficacy change and intrinsic motivation change, while the relationship between COB change and OP change is partially mediated by perceived organizational success change and job satisfaction change. We therefore conduct a mediation analysis using the products of coefficient method to determine the indirect effects and estimating bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals for hypotheses testing (Pieters 2017; Preacher and Hayes 2008). The indirect effects and 99% confidence intervals are reported in Table 4. In support of H2a and H2b, results demonstrate that the indirect effects of OP change on COB change

through self-efficacy change (OP change → self-efficacy change → COB change = .072, LLCI = .019; ULCI = .162) and through intrinsic motivation change (OP change → intrinsic motivation change → COB change = .056, LLCI = .019; ULCI = .115) are positive and significant. In support of H4a and H4b, the results also indicate that the indirect effects of COB change on OP change through perceived organizational success change (COB change → perceived organizational success change → OP change = .100, LLCI = .040; ULCI = .193) and job satisfaction change (COB change → job satisfaction change → OP change = .119, LLCI = .052; ULCI = .229) are positive and significant. As the direct effects of OP change on COB change and vice versa are significant, we conclude that the indirect effects represent a partial mediation, as postulated in the mediation hypotheses H2 and H4.

Lower and upper boundaries of the spiral

The lower boundary of the spiral: Interaction between initial level and change To explore the lower boundary of the spiral, we tested how the initial level of OP at t_1 influences the effect of OP change on COB change. We included OP_{t1} and an interaction term of OP_{t1} and OP change in the Stage 2 model predicting COB change. In addition, we conducted floodlight analysis and plotted the simple effect at different values of OP_{t1} together with the 95% confidence band (Fig. 2) (Spiller et al. 2013). The analysis yields a positive interaction effect between OP_{t1} and OP change on COB change (β = .067, $p < .05$). A spotlight test yields a p value $\leq .05$ for the effect of OP change on COB change for absolute values of $OP_{t1} \geq 1.55$ (i.e., the Johnson–Neyman point). This point can be interpreted as the lower boundary of the spiral, meaning that below this initial value of OP, changes in OP do not trigger a spiral. Moreover, this threshold limits downward spirals, as reciprocal effects will not continue. The positive interaction effect suggests that the higher the initial level of OP, the greater the impact of OP change on COB change and thus the steeper the spiral. For instance, the simple effect of OP change at OP_{t1} = 4.50 (β = .324, $p < .001$) is 157% higher than at a baseline level of OP_{t1} = 1.55 (β = .126, $p < .05$).

Table 4 Bootstrapped indirect effects for testing the proposed spiral in Stage 2

Mediation path	Effect	SE	LLCI	ULCI
OP change → Self-efficacy change → COB change	.072	.027	.019	.162
OP change → Intrinsic motivation change → COB change	.056	.018	.019	.115
COB change → Perc. organizational success change → OP change	.100	.029	.040	.193
COB change → Job satisfaction change → OP change	.119	.033	.052	.229

$N = 319$; number of bootstrap resamples = 5000; LLCI = 99% lower-level confidence interval; ULCI = 99% upper-level confidence interval

Fig. 2 Marginal effect of OP change on COB change for different absolute values of OP in t_1 indicating the lower boundary of the OP–COB spiral

Note. The horizontal shaded belt around the line for the beta estimates represents the confidence band, indicating the 95% confidence intervals of the marginal effect at given absolute values of OP in t_1. The shaded vertical area represents the range of absolute values of OP in t_1 below the Johnson-Neyman point where the marginal effect of OP change on COB change turns insignificant. OP = Organizational pride; COB = Customer-oriented behavior
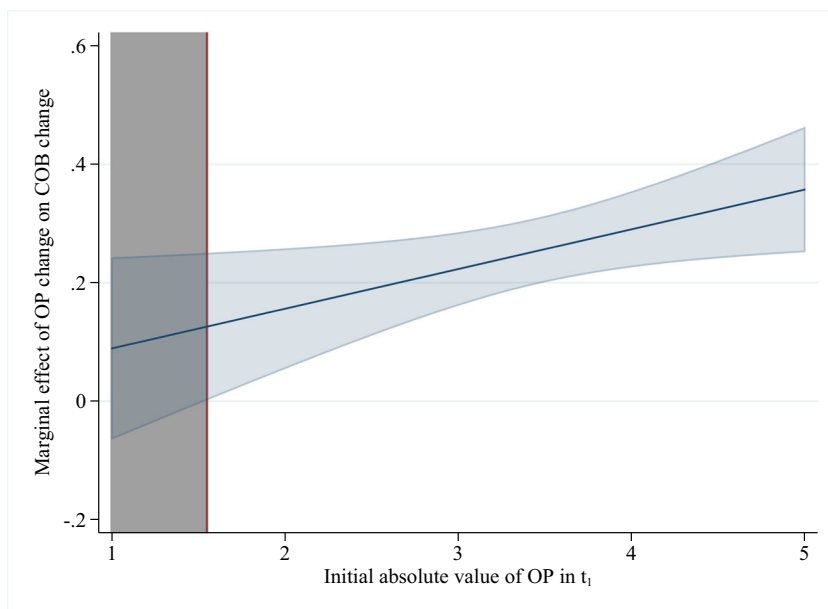
Using the same method, we also tested whether the initial level of COB_{t1} influences the effect of COB change on OP change. However, the interaction term between COB_{t1} and COB change had no significant effect on OP change ($\beta = -.014$, $p = .878$), indicating that igniting the spiral does not depend on initial values of COB.

The upper boundary of the spiral: Diminishing change effects
To examine the upper boundary of the spiral (i.e., a threshold that limits upwards spirals), we analyzed whether the effects of changes in COB (OP) become smaller with higher absolute values of the variables.[2] Results from the Stage 2 model already hint at this possibility by highlighting the association between higher initial values of OP and COB (i.e., OP_{t1} and COB_{t1}, which were control variables in the model) and smaller changes in the same variable (OP change and COB change): COB_{t1} has a negative and significant effect on COB change ($\beta = -.008$, $p < .01$) and OP_{t1} has a negative and significant effect on OP change ($\beta = -.010$, $p < .001$) (see Table 3). Thus, although the effect of a one-unit increase in OP on COB change might be positive ($\beta = .438$, $p < .001$), indicating an upward spiral, the base for producing this upward spiral (i.e., the absolute amount of COB change) becomes smaller across different loops of the spiral. These results hint at the existence of diminishing returns of OP and COB change as one moves up the spiral.

To gain further insights into an upper boundary of the spiral, we examined whether the level of COB at the beginning of the observation period influences the power of OP change to alter COB. Using semi-continuous variables to differentiate upward and downward OP changes (Van Heerde et al. 2013), we

examined the interactions of COB_{t1} with upward OP changes in the Stage 2 model predicting COB change. The analysis yields a negative and significant interaction effect between COB_{t1} and upward OP change on COB change ($\beta = -.128$, $p < .05$), indicating that the higher the initial level of COB, the less effective upward OP change is in increasing COB. We plotted the simple effect of upward OP change at different values of COB_{t1} and the 95% confidence band (see Fig. 3). This floodlight analysis yields interesting findings supporting the notion that the effect of upward OP change on COB change decreases with higher initial values of COB. Interestingly, the effect of OP change on COB change turns insignificant for $COB_{t1} > 4.8$ (which is the case for 18.5% of the subjects in the sample). These results demonstrate that while the effect of upward OP change on COB change is positive and significant, it becomes less positive the more the initial value of COB approaches the limit of 4.8, where the marginal effect becomes zero. Thus, with increasing COB "start levels," the upward spiral slows down. These findings point to a self-limiting force within the OP–COB spiral and thus an upper boundary.

Additional analyses

In Web Appendices E–G, we provide additional analyses to elaborate empirically on three points that require closer attention. First, we test whether the causality of the mediation hypotheses could be reversed. We find that neither perceived organizational success change nor job satisfaction change mediates the effect of OP change on COB change. Furthermore, self-efficacy change and intrinsic motivation change do not mediate the COB change–OP change relationship (see Web Appendix E). Second, we test for the existence of alternative mediators: (a) pay satisfaction, representing extrinsic rewards, as a

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[2] We would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

Fig. 3 Marginal effect of OP change on COB change for different absolute values of COB in t_1 indicating the upper boundary of the OP–COB spiral

Note. The horizontal shaded belt represents the confidence band, indicating the 95% confidence intervals of the marginal effect at given absolute values of COB in t_1. The shaded vertical area represents the range of absolute values of COB in t_1 above the Johnson-Neyman point where the marginal effect of OP change on COB change turns insignificant. OP = Organizational pride; COB = Customer-oriented behavior
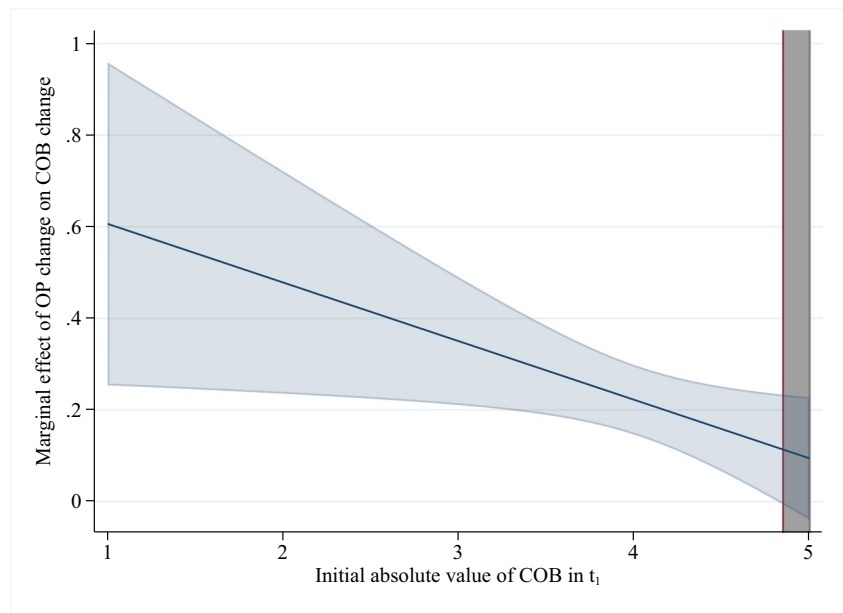
potential mediator for the OP change–COB change path and (b) coworker support, representing the social influence of others, as a potential mediator for the COB change–OP change path. The results indicate that neither of the alternative mediators is significant (see Web Appendix F). These first two additional analyses support our proposition that intrinsic factors constitute the indirect effects of OP on COB, while factors pertaining to the organization as a whole constitute the indirect effects of COB on OP. Third, motivated by insights from prospect theory, we test whether decreases in variables may be weighted more heavily than increases (Kahneman and Tversky 2013). In the analyses discussed in Web Appendix G, we rely on semi-continuous variables to demonstrate that the impact of downward changes in OP and COB is not characterized by a steeper slope than the impact of upward changes (i.e., absolute effects in a downward spiral mirror those of an upward spiral).

General discussion

Our data analysis corroborates our central proposition that OP and COB form a dynamic relationship such that changes in OP trigger a spiral toward COB, which operates through direct and indirect pathways.

The organizational pride–customer-oriented behavior spiral

Considering the OP–COB spiral as a whole offers an insightful perspective on OP and its interrelationship with COB. We demonstrate that OP and COB have reciprocal causal effects, that changes in the variables have effects that exceed effects of the variables'

absolute levels, and thus that changes in OP activate a spiral toward COB. In other words, ceteris paribus, an increase (decrease) in OP results in repeated cyclic increases (decreases) in COB and OP. However, we also identify boundaries of the spiral, suggesting that even if everything else remains unchanged, the spiral does not proceed infinitely. In terms of a lower boundary, we highlight the need for a certain initial level of OP to trigger the spiral effect. For individuals with levels of OP below this threshold, OP has no significant relevance for the self-concept and therefore does not serve as a meaningful psychological resource. Hence, changes in OP do not create psychological momentum for these individuals. This indicates that a spiral cannot be initiated below this threshold and that this threshold also limits downward spirals. In contrast, OP changes are valuable for individuals with high initial levels of OP, and increases or decreases in it create particularly strong effects on COB, causing a steep spiral. However, our results also support the existence of a boundary limiting upward spirals. At very high initial levels of OP, the degree of further change in OP as the base for creating the spiral effects tends to become smaller. This points to the existence of an upper boundary, which limits reinforcing loops for upward spirals.

Our theoretical development suggests that the cyclic reciprocal effects between OP and COB (and thus the spiral) can be triggered by both positive and negative changes in OP. Our empirical analysis supports this prediction and sheds further light on the extent of the changes prompted by increases and decreases in OP. In particular, an additional analysis reveals that absolute effects of increases and decreases in OP (and COB) on downstream variables are equally great: the upward

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spiral is as steep as the downward spiral. Importantly, the OP–COB spiral can be initiated not only by changes in OP but also by changes in COB.

How organizational pride change influences customer-oriented behavior change

While prior research has suggested a positive influence of OP on COB (e.g., Gouthier and Rhein 2011), our longitudinal study unambiguously confirms a causal effect. Moreover, our results highlight the importance of change in OP as compared to absolute levels. Though the level of OP indeed influences COB, the development of OP relative to a previous point in time plays a more considerable role. In addition, our analysis provides detailed insights into how exactly OP change influences COB change. The total effect can be decomposed into a direct effect arising from individuals' inclination to conserve resources, which immediately affects COB, and indirect effects that operate through individual factors, based on the presence or absence of positive emotions of OP. Positive emotions broaden and build psychological capabilities and motivation, which in turn lead to enhanced COB. In alignment with theoretical considerations on OP, we find that OP change positively influences self-efficacy change (Kraemer and Gouthier 2014), which in turn has a positive effect on COB change. Furthermore, changes in OP positively affect intrinsic motivation, which in turn has a positive influence on COB change. Accordingly, the effect of OP change on COB change is partially mediated by self-efficacy change and intrinsic motivation change.

How customer-oriented behavior change influences organizational pride change

Our analysis demonstrates that not only is COB change influenced by OP change but it also has a causal effect on it. Changes in COB have effects on OP that go beyond effects of absolute levels of COB, suggesting that behavior at an earlier point in time serves as an important reference point in evaluating the current situation. Our findings provide detailed insights into how COB change affects OP change, identifying indirect chains of causation alongside the direct effect. In particular, we find a positive effect of COB change on perceived organizational success change, which again crucially shapes OP change. Our results also reveal that COB change positively affects job satisfaction change, which in turn has a positive influence on OP change. Accordingly, perceived organizational success change and job satisfaction change partially mediate the positive effect of COB change on OP change.

Implications, limitations, and avenues for future research

Theoretical implications

The key contribution of this research is shedding new light on the interrelation between OP and COB. Our results give rise to the novel proposition that changes in OP trigger a spiral toward COB, which we corroborate empirically. Demonstrating the existence of the OP–COB spiral and revealing psychological processes that fuel it has far-reaching implications for research on OP and on influencing frontline employees, particularly with regard to their customer orientation. Most importantly, through our conceptual development we establish a general theory of spirals that can explain dynamic relationships and within-person spirals that go beyond the organizational service context.

First, our findings support our theoretically developed notion that OP constitutes a valuable psychological resource fundamentally related to the basic human need for attaining positive feelings about the self (Tracy et al. 2009). Gains in this psychological resource create a positive psychological momentum that leads to substantial improvements in capabilities, motivation, and behavior. Conversely, losses in OP generate a downward momentum. It is therefore clear that research exploring frontline employees' motivation and service performance should pay greater attention to the concept of OP.

Second, our results reveal that in the long term, OP is a crucial driver of exceptional customer orientation of frontline employees. Therefore, it is critical to consider our findings regarding change effects of OP and its interrelationship with COB. Through change effects of OP, which are particularly pronounced when employees present a substantial initial level of OP, increases in OP can lead to sizeable, direct increases in COB. The interrelationship between OP and COB (and respective outcomes) creates longer-lasting momentum that repeatedly stimulates frontline employees' COB. Hence, OP can serve as an impetus for individuals to continuously engage in COB. In this respect, our finding that OP is fostered not only by outside factors but also by employees' own behavior (i.e., COB) is an important insight. This result calls for more research on how individual behavior affects and interrelates with OP.

Third, although the OP–COB spiral can be a virtuous cycle for organizations and employees—by repeatedly facilitating desirable employee behavior (i.e., COB) and employees' well-being by fostering psychological resources—it also can turn into a vicious cycle. Our results reveal that the reciprocal effects between OP change and COB change persist when OP drops,

underscoring the possibility of undesirable outcomes arising from the OP–COB spiral. In the case of a downward spiral, repeated damage to OP deteriorates employee motivation and ability to engage in COB, which can be problematic for organizations, particularly when large portions of the staff are affected. This downward spiral can also have severe consequences for personnel. For many employees, OP encompasses more than an attitude toward the job or the employer; it provides deeper meaning, promotes self-esteem, and shapes the individual's self-concept. Repeated decreases in OP can then deplete an individual's self-efficacy and satisfaction, thereby impairing well-being.

Finally, our conceptual development advances the theoretical understanding of dynamic relationships and within-person spirals. Unlike the majority of previous research, which focuses primarily on upward (i.e., gain) spirals, we outline a theory for spirals that can develop in both directions. We formulate three essential tenets of such a general theory of within-person spirals: (1) reciprocal relationships between two or more variables, (2) change effects that exceed effects of absolute levels, and (3) finiteness of spiral effects (i.e., the existence of lower and upper boundaries of the spiral). While existing research has begun to discuss the first two characteristics to some extent (e.g., Chen et al. 2011; Halbesleben et al. 2014), we are—to the best of our knowledge—the first to introduce the third characteristic of within-person spirals. Our framework explicitly considers the limiting forces of spirals and by doing so avoids a "positivity bias" that seems to be prevalent in extant theorizing on spirals. Therefore, our proposed theory of spirals is well suited to guide future studies analyzing dynamic relationships in marketing research.

Managerial implications

Our research emphasizes the importance of OP for organizations providing customer service. Increasing OP creates psychological momentum and by fostering it, organizations can improve frontline employees' COB substantially and over an extended period, which will likely enhance the organization's customer service and overall competitiveness. Although our results suggest that fostering OP leads to substantial, relatively direct increases in COB, we conclude that improving customer service by cultivating OP should be a rather long-term strategy for organizations. Our findings indicate that increasing OP has particularly strong effects on COB when OP already has a central meaning for employees (i.e., when initial levels of OP are relatively high). Building high levels of OP requires continuous, longer-lasting efforts to create a service culture and work environment in which employees can take pride (Kraemer and Gouthier 2014). Moreover, full impact of OP on COB unfolds in the long term through reciprocal effects between OP and COB. The interrelationship between OP and COB also indicates that improving

customer service through OP is a sustainable strategy. In this regard, when an organization is able to establish exceptional customer service by fostering OP, individuals are likely to take pride in this service, which protects OP. High levels of OP in turn constitute an essential motivating force that probably prevents frontline employees from reducing efforts to address customer needs.

Our results also suggest that fostering OP has desired effects for organizations beyond enhancing COB. OP not only supports employees by improving their self-efficacy but also motivates them intrinsically. By strengthening these capacities, OP is likely to create further positive outcomes. For example, self-efficacy mitigates emotional exhaustion (Heuven et al. 2006), which is a common problem in frontline jobs, and intrinsic motivation can inspire employees to make useful suggestions for innovations (Rank et al. 2004; Tierney et al. 1999).

It is critical that organizations identify steps to cultivate OP. First, the firm must recognize that OP not only affects COB but is also affected by it. Organizations that position high customer orientation as a central value in their culture and hire employees with a strong motivation toward COB can create a positive environment for building OP. Moreover, training employees in various types of COB can create momentum toward employees' increasing pride in their organization and greater engagement in COB. Second, we find that job satisfaction and perceived organizational success play an important role in developing OP. This finding could suggest that fostering COB through OP is only a viable strategy for a few exceptionally successful organizations. However, (perceived) organizational success is highly relative in terms of (1) temporal development, (2) reference points (i.e., units of comparison), and (3) how it is framed or communicated. For instance, an employee could perceive an organization moving back into the black after years of losses as a success or take pride in a company's regional accomplishments, despite its insignificance from a trans-regional perspective (e.g., the most successful Italian restaurant in town). Organizations could also set milestones (e.g., regarding customer satisfaction ratings or sales numbers) and celebrate their achievement with employees, even if the absolute level of objective success is still low. Clearly, fostering OP to increase COB could be a promising strategy for a wide variety of organizations.

While OP offers significant potential to improve customer service, companies should also be aware that declining OP can trigger a downward spiral that might seriously harm the organization. Major damage to OP (e.g., owing to an organization's misconduct) is likely to result in long-term corrosive effects on COB and service quality. This damage is particularly dangerous for organizations that rely strongly on OP as the key instrument for shaping employee behavior. As noted earlier, another danger is that for low levels of OP the spiral will not evolve. A precondition for cyclic reciprocal effects between OP and COB—and thus the spiral—is that the individual exceeds a threshold level of OP. For those who take little pride in the organization, OP is not a

meaningful psychological resource and hence an increase (or decrease) in OP is an inconsequential event that has no immediate effect on subsequent behavior. However, individuals who take substantial pride in their organization regard OP as a central psychological resource. In these cases, changes in OP fundamentally affect the individual's motivation, capabilities, and behavior, thus triggering strong (positive or negative) psychological momentum and a steeper spiral toward COB. Organizations should therefore make a concerted effort to cultivate a certain level of OP to effectively exploit the OP–COB spiral and then be wary of the possibility of triggering it in the wrong direction.

Limitations and avenues for future research

This research has limitations that should be addressed in future endeavors. First, our study relies exclusively on subjective employee perceptions of COB and perceived organizational success. We chose this subjective perspective to understand the psychological processes triggered by changes in OP. However, to fully understand the behavioral consequences of OP, researchers should analyze the extent to which OP change influences actual performance and the extent to which only the perception of performance is changed.

Second, our measure of perceived organizational success focuses strongly on the economic or market success of organizations. This emphasis makes sense when adopting the perspective that the main purpose of organizations in the private sector is to generate profits, leading employees to evaluate the organization's overall success and thus base OP mainly in terms of economic factors. However, OP could be based on other kinds of perceived organizational success not considered in this study. For example, an employee could take pride in the organization's outstanding social responsibility or its strong service culture. Future research should analyze the effects of various types of organizational success on OP.

Third, we analyzed OP on an individual level, a choice that makes sense given that OP is an individual emotion or attitude and that we were interested in individual psychological processes. However, OP is related to the collective. OP is also influenced by the interaction of members in an organization, and changes in OP often result from developments that affect all organizational members. Accordingly, future studies should consider examining OP and its effects on COB at the team level or even in the context of entire organizations.

Finally, a central limitation of this and previous research is a lack of findings regarding specific measures that foster OP. Identifying effective instruments to enhance OP is essential to make full use of our results. To this end, a promising approach might be to conduct a comprehensive analysis of possible managerial levers of OP that considers internal and external factors as well as individual and collective factors. Furthermore, it could be useful to study organizations with particularly high levels of OP,

as exaggerated OP might lead to organizational hubris, which has the potential to harm organizations (Kim et al. 2018).

Appendix 1

Final sample characteristics used in Stage 2 for testing the proposed spiral

Gender	
Male	179 (56.11%)
Female	140 (43.89%)
Age (in years)	
Average	41.29
Standard deviation	12.26
Organizational tenure (in years)	
<1 year	29 (9.09%)
1–5 years	109 (34.17%)
6–10 years	63 (19.75%)
>10 years	118 (36.99%)
Number of full-time employees in company	
<20 employees	90 (28.21%)
20–99 employees	59 (18.50%)
100–500 employees	55 (17.24%)
>500 employees	115 (36.05%)
Industry sector (classification based on German Federal Statistical Office)	
Agriculture and forestry	1 (.31%)
Manufacturing	6 (1.88%)
Energy and water supply	3 (.94%)
Construction	11 (3.45%)
Retail	49 (15.36%)
Repair and maintenance of vehicles	1 (.31%)
Transport and warehousing	10 (3.13%)
Hospitality	9 (2.82%)
Information and communication	20 (6.27%)
Finance and insurance	32 (10.03%)
Real estate	3 (.94%)
Scientific and technical services	15 (4.70%)
Other business services	15 (4.70%)
Public services and defense	32 (10.03%)
Education	13 (4.08%)
Healthcare and social services	27 (8.46%)
Art and entertainment	8 (2.51%)
Other (not mentioned) services	64 (20.06%)

Appendix 2

Item formulations and indicator loadings

Items	Stand. loadings	α	CR	AVE
Organizational pride (Gouthier and Rhein 2011)		.89	.89	.73
1. I am proud to work for my company.	.91***			
2. I am proud to contribute to my company's success.	.86***			
3. I am proud to tell others for which company I am working.	.79***			
Customer-oriented behavior (Peccei and Rosenthal 1997)		.88	.88	.64
1. I am always working to improve the quality of service I give to customers.	.73***			
2. I put a lot of effort into my job to try to satisfy customers.	.79***			
3. No matter how I feel, I always put myself out for every customer I serve.	.84***			
4. I often go out of my way to help customers.	.82***			
Self-efficacy (adapted from Schwarzer et al. 1997)		.91	.91	.66
1. I can always manage to solve difficult work problems if I try hard enough.	.79***			
2. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events at work.	.82***			
3. I can solve most problems at work, if I invest the necessary effort.	.77***			
4. I can remain calm when facing difficulties at work, because I can rely on my coping abilities.	.84***			
5. When I am confronted with a problem at work, I can usually find several solutions.	.84***			
Intrinsic motivation (adapted from Tierney et al. 1999)		.81	.82	.61
1. I enjoy engaging in analytical thinking.	.68***			
2. I enjoy creating new procedures for work tasks.	.86***			
3. I enjoy improving existing processes, products, and services.	.78***			
Perceived organizational success (based on Walsh et al. 2009)		.83	.84	.63
1. My company tends to outperform competitors.	.74***			
2. My company looks like it has strong prospects for future growth.	.79***			
3. My company is a strong, reliable company.	.85***			
Job satisfaction (adapted from Bowling and Hammond 2008)		.80	.80	.67
1. All in all, I am satisfied with my job.	.82***			
2. In general, I like working here.	.82***			

All items are measured on five-point scales ranging from 1 = "totally disagree" to 5 = "totally agree"; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted

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