

Proactivity in the Work Place: Looking Back and Looking Forward

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Abstract and Keywords

Being proactive involves self-initiated efforts to bring about a change in the work environment and/or oneself in order to achieve a different future. Proactivity is future-focused, self-starting, and change-oriented in its emphasis. There is clear evidence that proactivity makes a difference –studies show its value for outcomes like job performance, innovation, and career success. It is thus important to understand the drivers of proactivity, which is our focus here. We review how the concept of proactivity has evolved, most recently being considered as a goal-driven process. Next we summarize motivational mechanisms that underpin proactivity. We then identify distal antecedents, reviewing individual differences and contextual influences on proactivity. Finally, we identify promising areas for future research. In particular, we advocate the need to explore the dynamic spirals of primary and secondary control processes inherent in proactive goal pursuit. For example, after an initial period of adapting to an environment, individuals might proactively introduce change to that environment, and then face a new environment, created in part by them, that requires further adaptivity.

Keywords: proactivity; work behavior; proactive behavior; future-orientation; change; personal initiative; self-starting; proactive feedback seeking; taking charge

Introduction

Work behaviors that increase the flexibility and effectiveness with which individuals meet unpredictable task demands are more important than ever in today's dynamic work environments (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). Being proactive is one such type of behavior. Being proactive involves self-initiated efforts to bring about change in the work environment and/or oneself to achieve a different future (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006; Parker, Bindl, Strauss, 2010). This future-focused, change-oriented way of behaving can prevent potential problems and enable the exploitation of opportunities for future development, thereby resulting in greater individual or organizational effectiveness.

The benefits of proactive behavior have been widely demonstrated. Fuller and Marler (2009) reported a meta analysis which showed individuals with a proactive personality reported higher career success and job performance. Other reviews (e.g., Bindl & Parker, in press) have similarly identified positive consequences of proactivity for multiple outcomes, albeit with some evidence that these positive outcomes depend on attributes such as situational judgment (Chan, 2006) or negative affect and prosocial motivation (Grant, Parker, & Collins, 2009). It is therefore clear that proactive action can make a positive difference, both for individuals and organizations (see Fuller & Marler, 2009; Bindl & Parker, in press, for fuller discussions of outcomes of proactivity).

What is less clear is how to motivate proactive action at work. Given its positive value, it is important to consider the drivers of proactivity in the work place. This is our focus here. In the first part of the chapter, we review concepts of proactivity, and make clear our focus on proactivity as a malleable goal process rather than a stable trait. In the second part of the chapter, we review motivational mechanisms underpinning proactivity. Drawing on this motivational perspective, in the third part of the chapter, we identify key

antecedents of proactivity in the work place. In the fourth and final part of the chapter, we identify issues for future research and make a general conclusion based on the current review. In order to facilitate understanding, Figure 1 presents a summary model of the variables and relationships we review in this chapter.

Insert Figure 1 Here

Conceptualizations of proactivity

Although the concept of proactivity has been widely discussed in several domains (Crant, 2000), early research on proactive personality (Bateman & Crant, 1993) and personal initiative highlights its main characteristics (Frees & Fay 2001). In regard to the former, Bateman and Crant (1993) indicated that individuals with a proactive personality do not merely react to their environments but rather seek to actively master their environments through selecting situations, reconstructing their perceptions and appraisals, and intentionally manipulating the situation. Proactive people thus “scan for opportunities, show initiative, take action, and persevere until they reach closure by bringing about change” (p.105). Proactive personality was shown to be distinct from the Big Five personality characteristics, both structurally and in terms of outcomes.

Rather than proactive personality’s focus on the general tendency to effect change, the concept of personal initiative (Frese, Kring, Soose, & Zempel, 1996, p. 38) is defined as “a behavior syndrome” defined by three key elements (1) self-starting, (2) future-focused (referred to as ‘proactive’) and (3) persistent. Self-starting means that people do things with their own will, without requiring an external force such as the assigning of a task. A future focus refers to having a long-term focus in which people anticipate future opportunities or challenges rather than only focusing on problems or demands at hand. Because enacting change potentially entails difficulties, such as lack of resources or

resistance from others, persistence is needed to overcome barriers to bring about change. The three features are proposed to reinforce each other in a sequence of actions to bring about change (Frese & Fay, 2001).

As well as these influential developments, the notion of proactivity was identified in a range of different topic domains, such as careers (e.g., career initiative), work design (e.g., role breadth self-efficacy), and occupational socialization (e.g., proactive feedback seeking. Crant (2000) identified commonalities across these concepts, labeling them as examples of a more generic concept, ‘proactive behavior’. Parker, Williams, and Turner (2006) similarly argued that “despite different labels and theoretical underpinnings, concepts that relate to individual-level proactive behavior typically focus on self-initiated and future-oriented action that aims to change and improve the situation or oneself” (p. 636). Grant and Ashford (2008) reiterated this perspective, making it clear that proactivity is not ‘extra-role’ as some have claimed, but rather is best thought of as an active way of behaving that involves anticipating and creating a new future. These developments recognize there is no need to confine proactivity to being a stable personality trait; instead, proactivity can be considered as a way of behaving, with proactive personality as an individual different influence on this behavior.¹

In an extension of the idea that proactivity is a way of behaving that can apply across multiple domains, scholars have recently conceptualized proactivity as a goal process (Bindl & Parker, 2009; Frese & Fay, 2001; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010). In other words, when an individual tries to bring about a different future via change, they engage in conscious goal-directed processes, including both goal generation and goal striving (e.g., Chen & Kanfer, 2006). Goal generation involves, for example, envisioning a different future and planning to bring about a change,

¹ From here on, we describe references to the stable, dispositional concept of proactivity as ‘proactive personality’ to distinguish it from the more malleable concept of proactive behaviour.

whereas goal striving involves concrete steps to bring about the change, as well as reflections on these actions and their consequences. Considering proactivity as involving a goal process recognizes that both goal generation and striving are necessary for bringing about change, and also acknowledges that these processes are likely to be influenced by different antecedents (Bindl & Parker, 2009). From this perspective, proactivity is more than observable behavior but a broader process that also involves unobservable elements like envisioning, planning and reflecting.

In sum, from an initial emphasis on proactive personality as a stable dispositional tendency, proactivity is now often considered as a future-focused, change-oriented way of behaving. To understand this behavior, scholars suggest that effective proactivity likely involves both the generation of a proactive goal to bring about a different future through changing one's self or the situation, and then striving to achieve this goal. There are many different futures an individual might aspire to bring about. Parker and Collins (2010) identified three: achieving a better fit between the person and the environment ('proactive person-environment fit behavior'), improving the internal organizational environment ('proactive work behavior'), and improving the fit of the organization with its wider environment ('proactive strategic behavior'). We turn now to consider what motivates the setting of, and striving for, these various proactive goals.

Motivational mechanisms underpinning proactivity

Drawing on various existing motivational theories, Parker, Bindl, Strauss (2010) proposed that proactive goal generation and striving will depend on whether individuals feel capable of being proactive (a 'can do' pathway), whether they have some sense that they want to bring about a different future (a 'reason to' pathway), and whether they have

positive affect to foster their proactive actions (an ‘energized to’ pathway). We describe each mechanism in turn.

Within the “can-do” pathway, self-efficacy is a key construct. Self-efficacy refers to “people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1994, p.71). Drawing on expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), Morrison and Phelps (1999) suggested that behaving proactively can be risky - it can damage one’s reputation if the action fails or incurs disapproval from others. Individuals with high self-efficacy will be more likely to positively weigh the costs of such risky action against the benefits, to believe they can cope with any potential setbacks, and will perceive a higher likelihood of success. Therefore, self-efficacy has been proposed as a key cognitive-motivational process that drives proactive action (Parker et al., 2006). Empirically, studies have shown that self-efficacy predicts personal initiative (e.g., Bledow & Frese, 2009; Frese, Garst, & Fay, 2007; Speier & Frese, 1997), job search behavior (Brown, Cober, Kane, & Shalhoop, 2006; Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1999), and other proactive behaviors (e.g., Axtell, Holman, Unsworth, Wall, & Waterson, 2000; Gruman, Saks, & Zweig, 2006; Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Ohly & Fritz, 2007). Other can-do elements for proactive goals proposed by Parker et al. (2010) include beliefs that action is feasible (e.g., control appraisals) and low perceived costs of action.

As stated by Eccles and Wigfield (2002) that “even if people are certain they can do a task, they may have no compelling reason to do it” (p.112). Thus it is important to also consider individuals’ reasons for behaving proactively. Drawing on self-determination theory, Parker et al., (2010) argued for the importance of internalized or autonomous, rather than controlled, forms of motivation for prompting proactivity. Thus, generating and striving for proactive goals can be a means for fulfilling motives, aspirations, or

desires. For example, proactive socialization tactics (e.g., information seeking, networking, job change negotiation) are partly led by a desire for control (Ashford & Black, 1996); personal initiative is associated with aspiration for control (Fay & Frese, 2001); feedback seeking is led by the desire for useful information (Tuckey, Brewer & Williamson, 2002), and initiative at work and voice are influenced by prosocial motives (Grant & Mayer, 2009). One's commitment towards career, teams, and organizations also provide reasons to enact proactive behavior. For example, Den Hartog and Belschak (2007; Belschak & Den Hartog, in press) reported that different foci of commitment (career, supervisor, team, and organization) were positively related to personal initiative and proactive behavior at personal, interpersonal and organizational level. Similar findings have been obtained in other studies focusing on organizational commitment (e.g., Burris, Detert, & Chiaburu, 2008; Chiaburu, Marinova, & Lim, 2007; Griffin et al., 2007; Rank, Carsten, Unger, & Spector, 2007).

Felt responsibility is another reason for enacting proactive behavior. An individual's belief that he or she is personally obligated to bring about environmental change has been repeatedly positively linked with personal initiative (Bledow & Frese, 2009) and proactive behaviors, such as taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Parker & Collins, 2010), voice (Fuller, Marler, & Hester, 2006; Grant & Mayer, 2009; Parker & Collins, 2010; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008), individual innovation and problem prevention (Parker & Collins, 2010), continuous improvement (Fuller et al., 2006), change-oriented behavior (Choi, 2007) and initiative (Grant & Mayer, 2009). A related construct is flexible role orientation, which emphasizes employees' perceived breadth of experienced responsibility within the work environment (Parker, Wall, & Jackson, 1997). Several studies have found that flexible role orientation predicts proactive behaviors, including

idea suggestion (Axtell et al., 2000; Dorenbosch, Van Engen, & Verhagen, 2005) and idea implementation and problem solving (Dorenbosch et al., 2005; Parker et al., 2006).

Finally, prosocial motivation at work can also be a strong reason to engage in proactive behavior (see Grant & Berg's chapter in this handbook) by providing the drive and reward of proactive behavior. It is because the desire to protect and promote the well-being of others can drive employees to take initiative or take charge (De Dreu & Nauta, 2009; Moon, Kamdar, Mayer, & Takeuchi, 2008) and enable employees to receive more credit for proactive behaviors from their supervisors (Grant, Parker, & Collins, 2009).

Over and above the mechanisms denoted by “can do” and “reason to” pathways, proactive behavior is also potentially fostered through an affective pathway. Drawing on Fredrickson's (1998) broaden-and-build theory of positive emotion, Parker (2007) proposed that positive affect is likely to influence the selection of proactive goals because it expands thinking and result in more flexible cognitive processes (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001; Isen, 1999), which in turn help individuals to think ahead and rise to the challenge in pursuing proactive goals. Consistent with these ideas, positive affect has been linked with the setting of more challenging goals (Ilies & Judge, 2005). Studies support the idea that positive affect can influence proactive behavior (e.g., Parker, Collins and Grant, 2008). For example, Ashforth, Sluss and Saks (2007) reported a positive correlation between positive affectivity and proactive socialization behaviors, and Bindl and Parker (2009) showed that positive affect had its strongest relationship with envisioning (an aspect of proactive goal generation) rather than three other phases of proactive goal pursuit (planning, enacting, reflecting). Within-person studies also suggest the benefits of positive affect for proactive behavior. For example, Fritz and Sonnentag (2009) found positive affect related to taking charge behaviors both on the same and the following day, and Sonnentag (2003) found that the feeling of being recovered from work in the

morning predicted personal initiative and pursuit of learning on the same day (see also Binnewies, Sonnentag, and Mojza, 2009a, in press).

Individual differences and work context antecedents of proactive behavior

In this section, we review how individual differences and work context factors can influence individuals' proactive action, in part at least through influencing their can do, reason to, and energized to motivational states. Drawing on contingent perspectives, we also review research on the interaction between individual differences and contextual factors in shaping individuals' proactivity at work.

Individual differences

The importance of knowledge and abilities for being proactive was suggested by Fay and Frese (2001): "To be able to take initiative, one needs a good and thorough understanding of what one's work is, that is, one needs job-relevant knowledge, skills, and cognitive ability" (p.104). Research supports this argument showing, for example, a link between job qualifications and personal initiative (Fay & Frese, 2001), cognitive ability and personal initiative (Fay & Frese, 2001), educational background and job search behavior (Kanfer et al., 2001), educational background and voice (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998), knowledge (relational, normative, and strategic) and issue selling (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 1997), and contextual knowledge and packaging ideas for promotion (Howell & Boies, 2004). The mechanisms by which knowledge and ability affect proactivity have not been examined, but it is plausible to expect at least a partial pathway via motivation. For example, individuals with expertise will likely have experience confidence in the quality of their ideas for change ('can do' pathway).

Personality attributes have also been shown to predict proactive behavior. As discussed above, the most relevant construct is proactive personality (Bateman & Crant, 1993). Rather unsurprisingly, proactive personality predicts multiple proactive behaviors, such as network building (Lambert, Eby, & Reeves, 2006; Thompson, 2005), proactive socialization (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003), career initiative (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001), and proactive work behaviors such as taking charge, individual innovation, problem prevention, and voice (Parker & Collins, 2010).

Big-five personality factors also play a potential role. Conscientiousness and extroversion were positively related to proactive personality (e.g., Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant & Bateman, 2000; Major, Turner, & Fletcher, 2006), and have been found to predict proactive behavior (e.g., Fay & Frese, 2001; Lepine & VanDyne, 2001; Tidwell & Sias, 2005). Openness to experiences might be expected to contribute to proactive behavior because it implies exploration of the unfamiliar, a feature embedded in proactive behavior. Supporting this view, facets of actions, ideas, and values in openness personality were positively predicted proactive personality (Major et al., 2006) or voice (Lepine & VanDyne, 2001). Agreeableness, however, is generally unrelated to proactivity (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant & Bateman, 2000; Fay & Frese, 2001), although some studies found it is positively related to information seeking (Tidwell & Sias, 2005) and negatively related to voice (Lepine & VanDyne, 2001). Neuroticism generally has a negative (e.g., Crant & Bateman, 2000; Lepine & VanDyne, 2001; Major et al., 2006; Tidwell & Sias, 2005) or non-significant (e.g., Bateman & Crant, 1993; Fay & Frese, 2001; Griffin et al., 2007) relationship with proactive personality or proactive behavior. The negative impact of neuroticism mainly reflects the facet of vulnerability, which is represented by an inability to cope with stress, and being hopeless or panicked in

difficult situations (Lepine & VanDyne, 2001; Major et al., 2006); aspects that are likely to impair proactive goal striving.

Consistent with the importance of perceived capability for engaging in proactive behaviors (“can do” pathways), dispositional constructs related to individuals’ perception of control and self-worth have also been positively linked to proactive behavior (e.g., self esteem, Kanfer et al., 2001; see e.g. Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, for a theoretical elaboration on the relationship between control-related needs and job crafting). Parker and Sprigg (1999) also reported that proactive employees have a higher sense of mastery, showing they believe they can control or act on job demands that occur. Fay and Frese (2001) found that constructs related to actively managing undesirable situations, such as problem-focused coping and error handling, were positively related to personal initiative. Behaviorally, Johnson, Kristof-Brown, Van Vianen, De Pater, and Klein (2003) reported that people with positive core self-evaluations tend to involve more social network-building activities, a form of proactive behaviors in social domains.

Work context antecedents

Situational factors are also crucial for proactive behavior because they represent conditions which allow or encourage (or constrain/ inhibit) an individual to enact proactive behavior. Here we summarize findings concerning job design, leadership, and organizational climate; factors for which there is the clearest evidence. We identify antecedents of proactive behaviors, rather than other aspects of a proactive goal process (e.g., envisioning a proactive goal), because this has been the focus of research to date.

Job characteristics play an important role in motivation, behavior and well-being more generally (e.g. Latham & Pinder, 2005; Morgeson & Campion, 2003; Parker & Ohly, 2008), and also are important for proactivity. Because being proactive is rooted in

the sense of mastery (Batemant & Crant, 1993) or 'can do' motivation, job characteristics that can foster this perception have been found to be positively linked to proactive behavior. For example, job autonomy, complexity and control, positively relate to proactive behaviors (e.g., Axtell et al., 2000; Axtell, Holman, & Wall, 2006; Fay & Frese, 2001; Fay & Sonnentag, 2002; Frese et al., 1996, 2007; Hornung & Rousseau, 2007; Morrison, 2006; Ohly & Fritz, in press; Ohly, Sonnentag, & Pluntke, 2006; Parker et al., 2006; Rank et al., 2007; Speier & Frese, 1997). Interestingly, negative job characteristics might also play a positive role in activating proactivity. Drawing on control theory (Carver & Scheier, 1982), Fay and Sonnentag (2002) proposed that job stressors denote a deviation between a desired and an actual situation, thereby motivating employees to take an active approach in order to decrease the difference between the desired and actual states. In support of this view, Ashford and Cummins (1985) reported that employees having jobs with higher role ambiguity and uncertainty tend to seek feedback in order to reduce this uncertainty, especially among employees low in tolerance for ambiguity. Similarly, job stressors, such as time pressure or situational constraints, have been positively related to various proactive behaviors (Binnewies et al.; 2009a; Fay and Sonnentag, 2002; Fritz and Sonnentag, 2009; Ohly & Frtiz, in press). Suggesting a more contingent relationship, Ohly et al. (2006) found an inverted-U shape that suggests that moderate time pressure is best for creativity and innovation, with low or very high levels of time pressure being problematic.

Leadership is a further important antecedent, likely influencing proactivity through each of the can do, reason to, and energized to paths. First, participative leadership, which emphasizes the value of subordinates' contributions and involvement in decision making, predicted higher levels of proactive service performance (Rank et al., 2007). Contingent reward leadership, which emphasizes the recognition and approval for subordinate effort

or performance, and transformational leadership, which emphasizes motivating employees to go beyond standard expectations, were also found to have positive relationships with change-oriented citizenship behaviors via leader-member exchange quality (Bettencourt, 2004). Transformational leadership also positively predicts proactive behavior (Belschak & Den Hartog, in press; Rank, Nelson, Allen, & Xu, 2009), albeit potentially in a level-consistent way (Strauss et al., 2009). Thus Strauss et al., found that team leaders' transformational leadership predicted role breadth self-efficacy (can do motivation) and in turn team member proactivity, whereas organizational leaders' transformational leadership predicted enhanced affective commitment (reason to motivation) which in turn predicted organization member proactivity. Not only leadership style, but the quality of exchange relationship between leader and employee can also affect proactive behavior. For example, higher leader-member exchange (LMX) has been positively related to individual innovation (Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004; Scott & Bruce, 1994), voice (Burriss et al., 2008) and change-oriented organizational citizenship behaviors (Bettencourt, 2004). Leader consideration also enhanced an employee's feedback seeking behavior (VandeWalle, Ganesan, Challagalla, & Brown, 2000).

In contrast to the positive effect of particular leadership styles (participative leadership, transformational leadership, vision) and the quality of exchange between a leader and employee, some kinds of leadership have negative effects on proactive behavior, such that active-corrective transactional leadership, represented by monitoring subordinates to detect errors and deviations from standards and to take corrective action (Rank et al., 2009). In addition, findings regarding the relationship between supportive leadership with proactive behaviors are inconsistent. Some research has found that supervisor support predicts proactive behaviors (Axtell et al., 2000; Ohly et al., 2006; Ramus & Steger, 2000), but other research has found non-significant relationships

between supportive leadership and proactivity (Frese, Teng, & Wijnen, 1999; Parker et al., 2006). Parker et al. (2006) suggested that supervisors might experience an ‘initiative paradox’ (Campbell, 2000) in which they feel threatened by their employees’ proactive behavior, which might explain why supportive leadership is not always beneficial.

Finally, organizational or work unit climate that can provide a supportive and safe environment is helpful for fostering proactive behavior. Proactive behavior often implies changing the ways of work of others or broader rules and procedures in organization, which can induce feelings of discomfort in coworkers or managers. Proactivity can therefore be risky. The stronger the feeling of risk, the less likely the behavior. For example, Tidwell and Sias (2005) found that the perceived social cost in information seeking in organizations has a negative impact on overt information seeking behavior among newcomers. A supportive climate can help to reduce the perceived cost of proactivity, or the perceived risks. The importance of a positive climate and supportive relationships in relation to proactivity has been suggested in various studies (Axtell et al. 2000; Griffin et al., 2007; Kanfer et al., 2001; LePine & Van Dyne, 1998).

In a longitudinal analysis, Axtell et al. (2006) further reported that change in management support was positively related to change in suggestions, and change in team support for innovation was positively related to change in implementations. Similarly, Scott and Bruce (1994) also found that employees who perceived higher levels of support for innovation in organizations are more likely to exhibit innovative behavior. Regarding issue selling, Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, and Dutton (1998) found that perceived organizational support, norms favoring issue selling, and higher quality of relationship with the individuals who would be sold the issues, are three favorable contextual factors that foster a willingness to sell issues via “can do” mechanism (perceived higher probability of success and lower image risk). In a qualitative study, Dutton, Ashford,

O'Neill, Hayes, and Wierba (1997) not only found organizational support is favorable in issue selling, but also further indicated that context factors related to fear of negative consequences, uncertainty, downsizing conditions, and conservativeness of the culture can impede the willingness for issue selling. Together, these findings confirm the importance of a supportive climate, either at the work unit or organizational level, in cultivating proactive behavior.

Interaction between individual differences and work context antecedents

Individual and situational forces are not independent; they work together to influence an individual's proactivity. First, favorable conditions for proactivity, such as autonomy, can strengthen the positive effect of dispositional forces on proactive behavior. For example, Binnewies et al. (2009a) showed that the positive relationship between recovery in the morning and personal initiative on the same day was stronger among employees with higher job control. Parker and Sprigg (1999) similarly showed that job control mitigated the stressful effects of high job demands for employees high in proactive personality, whereas control made little difference for more passive individuals. They argued that employees high in proactive personality take advantage of job control to manage their job demands more effectively, compared to employees with low in proactive personality. These findings are in line with the hypothesis that personality has a strong effect in relatively weak situations (e.g., high autonomy contexts) and has less effect in stronger situations (Davis-Blake & Pfeffer, 1989; Mischel, & Shoda, 1995)

Second, situational characteristics can enable an individual to exhibit their dispositional tendency to be proactive. For example, Kim and Wang (2008) showed that individuals who are high in proactive personality tend to seek feedback from their supervisors when organizational fairness is high and their supervisor usually provides

positive feedback. McAllister, Kamdar, Morrison, and Turban (2007) found that employees who perceive their organizations as high in procedural justice and who define their job roles more broadly had higher ratings of taking charge at work by their supervisors. Griffin, Parker, and Mason (2009) found that leader vision enhanced employees' proactivity one year later for employees with high role breadth self-efficacy. The authors suggested that a clear and compelling vision establishes a discrepancy between the present and the future, and thereby provides a 'reason to' be proactive and help achieve the different future.

Third, situations can potentially suppress an individual's tendency to be proactive. Gupta and Bhawe (2007) proposed that a gender-based stereotype threat has a negative impact on women's entrepreneurship intention because entrepreneurship is related to a masculine stereotype. Gupta and Bhawe (2007) also proposed that the impact of stereotype threat on women's entrepreneurship intention is greater among women with higher proactive personality, because the effect of stereotype threat is stronger among those who care most about the stereotyped task (Steele, 1998), and people high in proactivity have a tendency to become entrepreneurs (Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, & Tag, 1997). Their hypotheses were supported in an experiment, in which the negative impact of stereotype threat on entrepreneurship intention was stronger among women with higher proactive personality, showing that an individual's tendency to be proactive can also be constrained in certain situations.

Fourth, studies suggest that situational characteristics can lead an individual to enact proactive behavior if they lack the relevant tendency. For example, LePine and Van Dyne (1998) showed that individuals with low self-esteem were more receptive to situational characteristics promoting voice behaviors in a group with high autonomy than were individuals with high levels of self-esteem. Similarly, Rank et al. (2009) found that

transformational leadership was more strongly positively related to individual innovation for individuals with lower organization-based self-esteem than those with higher self-esteem. In the same vein, Bettencourt (2004) found that contingent reward leadership had a negative relationship with change-oriented citizenship among people high in performance goal orientation. Because contingent reward leadership focuses on in-role task responsibilities, people high in goal performance goal orientation tend to focus on core tasks to achieve their competence at work, rather than change-oriented citizenship. However, when people high in goal performance goal orientation encounter transformational leaders, they are likely to engage in change-oriented citizenship because these individuals tune into the values and goals highlighted by transformational leaders, and enact proactive behavior to achieve their competence. These findings suggest a compensatory effect of situations on individual differences.

It is also possible that dispositional forces can compensate for situational factors. For example, Grant and Sumanth (2009) found that those individuals who were high in dispositional trust and who were prosocially motivated showed high job-related initiative, even if they indicated their managers were not trustworthy. Thus trust propensity compensated for manager trustworthiness. As another example, VandeWalle et al. (2000) reported that individuals' learning goal orientation was more important for perceiving higher value and lower cost in feedback seeking when they worked with inconsiderate supervisors. Taken together, the interaction effects between individual and situational antecedents are complex. We recommend further theoretical development to synthesize the potential interaction effects into a coherent framework.

Conclusion and Future Directions

Although the above review suggests a good understanding of key aspects of proactivity, there are unanswered questions. Some questions relate to our review above – regarding measures, goal processes, mechanisms, and antecedents. In addition, we highlight how proactivity might be considered at the team or organizational level. To extend its theoretical depth, we advocate linking proactivity into a dynamic view on the relationship between self and environment. We elaborate these ways forward next.

Future research on measures, mechanism, and antecedents of proactivity

Well-established measures of proactive dispositions (e.g., Bateman & Crant's 1993 measure of proactive personality) and of domain-specific proactive behaviors (see Parker & Collins, 2010) currently exist. Nevertheless, there is room for further development.

First, proactive personality is currently treated as a unidimensional construct, yet a recent study (Wu, Wang and Mobley, 2010) showed that proactive personality has two dimensions: *initiative*, or the tendency to actively generate ideas and take unrequested action; and *persistence*, the tendency to continuously invest efforts to accomplish goals. Their study provided preliminary evidence that initiative and persistence interact to predict proactive outcomes, suggesting the value of a multidimensional perspective on proactive personality. Second, regarding the measure of specific proactive behaviors, Parker and Collins (2010) summarized and classified eleven specific proactive behaviors into three broad factors: proactive person-environment fit behavior (feedback inquiry, feedback monitoring, job change negotiation, career initiative), proactive work behavior (taking charge, voice, problem prevention, & individual innovation) and proactive strategic behavior (strategic scanning, issue selling). However, not all proactive behaviors in the literature were included in their framework, such as network building and proactive coping. As such, it is possible there are further higher-order factors of proactivity. Finally,

although a process measure of proactivity has been recently developed that assesses not only observable behaviors but also unobservable elements such as envisioning, planning, and reflecting (see Bindl & Parker, 2009), this approach is relatively untested.

Beyond measurement, there are substantive issues to consider. As discussed, scholars have proposed that proactivity should be considered as a goal process. Yet, with one unpublished exception (Bindl & Parker, 2009), studies continue to measure only observable proactive behaviors. We advocate that scholars adopt a process perspective, especially since motivation research suggests different elements of a proactive process are likely to be driven by different antecedents.

In addition, the motivational pathways proposed by Parker et al. (2010) have yet to be tested simultaneously - we know little about how can do, reason to, and energized to mechanisms work together. Moreover, as these authors themselves identified, there are unanswered questions about each pathway. For example, in relation to the 'reason to' process, they "recommend a focus on how external goals are internalized, on the role of identity, and on how multiple motivations might play out" (p. 848). The 'energized to' pathway also has had less attention, such as the role of negative affect. Some studies have found that negative affect is associated with less proactivity (Ashforth et al., 2007; Grant, Parker, & Collins, 2009), or that there is a null association (Binnewies et al., 2009b; Binnewies et al. in press; Fritz & Sonnentag, 2009; Griffin et al., 2007). However, in some situations negative affect might signal a discrepancy between an actual situation and a desired situation, thereby stimulating individuals to engage in change to reduce the perceived discrepancy (Carver & Scheier, 1982). In support of this view, Den Hartog and Belschak (2007) reported one study in which negative affect was positively related to personal initiative. These findings suggest that negative affect is not the opposite construct of positive affect. It might also be that the type of negative affect is relevant.

Most focus has thus far been on anxiety or depression, but activated negative affect in the form of frustration and anger might energize proactivity under some circumstances.

Regarding the individual antecedents of proactivity, as noted above, proactive personality is a powerful dispositional antecedent in predicting proactive behaviors. However, in their seminal work, Bateman and Crant (1993) did not elaborate why there are individual differences in proactive tendency, or how this personal tendency is developed. Wu and Parker (2010) drew on attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) to propose that proactive personality can be regarded as an exploration tendency in mastering environments, and this kind of exploration tendency is related to individuals' attachment styles developed from earlier social interactions with their caregivers. Their study provides preliminary evidence to support this proposition. A further intriguing possibility to explore is that proactive personality might change over time. Current arguments suggest that "personality traits continue to change in adulthood and often into old age, and that these changes may be quite substantial and consequential" (Roberts & Mroczek, 2008, p.31), and several studies link personality change to life experiences (Agronick & Duncan, 1998). Research has focused on how proactive personality influences the environment via proactive actions, but neglects the possibility that proactive personality can be influenced by environment and experiences, albeit likely over the longer term.

Beyond proactive personality, several dispositions have had short thrift thus far in the proactivity literature, especially attributes relating to the 'striving' element of proactive goal regulation (Parker et al., 2010). For example, these authors proposed the importance of dispositions relating to hardiness and resilience in promoting persistence and the overcoming of setbacks.

A further important area for enquiry concerns 'how' situational antecedents influence proactivity, or the underpinning mechanisms. For example, a supportive climate

has usually been assumed to influence proactivity because it enhances the psychological safety to enact proactive behavior. However, support might also contribute to higher perceived efficacy to behave proactively because it ensures more resources to take proactive action. Moreover, the positive affect induced from receiving support can fuel proactivity via the affect (energized to) mechanism. From a social exchange perspective, receiving contextual support could provide a 'reason to' take proactive action because support is interpreted as a favor provided by others, with taking charge been seen as a way to reciprocate the favor. Thus situational antecedents might trigger proactive behavior through multiple pathways, but such processes have had little attention thus far.

We also suggest that antecedents vary in the extent to which they create a strong situation. We propose that situational forces can be considered as "enabling" factors or "expected to" factors. Situational factors such as job autonomy are "enabling" factors because they enable or allow proactivity. As suggested by Meyer, Dalal, and Hermida's (2010), job autonomy results in a weak situation because it is associated with lower constraints in making decision and doing tasks. However, factors such as situational accountability or leader vision are classified as "expected to" factors because they involve stronger situational guidance to enact proactive behavior. From Meyer et al.'s perspective, accountability renders a stronger situation because it is associated with higher clarity as to individuals' work-related responsibilities.

This way of thinking about situational forces provides a hint as to theorizing about their mechanisms. For example, "enabling" factors might be more important for promoting proactivity amongst individuals who already have conducive abilities or personality tendencies, and who already possess strong 'reason to' motivation. For such individuals, allow to factors likely enhance 'can do' motivation. However, "expected to" factors might be more effective for people who lack strong reasons to act proactively -

such factors might promote greater internalization of proactive expectations and external change goals, enhancing the extent to which individuals see it as important and ‘their job’ to be proactive. Parker et al. (2010) proposed that proactive goals need to be internalized if individuals are to sustain their proactive action through setbacks and over time.

Future research on proactivity beyond the individual level

So far, we have discussed proactivity only at the individual level. Proactivity and its benefits have also been observed at higher levels. For example, team proactive behavior positively relates to team outcomes like customer service (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999), team effectiveness (Hyatt & Ruddy, 1997), and team learning (Druskat & Kayes, 2000). Studies also indicate benefits of proactivity at an organizational level (Baer and Frese, 2003; Fay, Lührmann and Kohl, 2004). For example, Aragón-Correa, Hurtado-Torres, Sharma, and García-Morales (2008) found that organizations with higher strategic proactivity adopted more innovative preventive practices and eco-efficient practices in their environmental strategy, which then linked to higher financial performance. Nevertheless, the mechanisms driving proactivity at higher levels are unclear. In one of the few studies considering this issue, Williams, Parker, & Turner (in press) found that, consistent with individual-level studies, a supportive team climate and high levels of self-management were associated with team proactivity. However, composition of the team was also important. The most proactive teams had members with higher than average proactivity personality, but also low heterogeneity in proactive personality. Having team members who vary a great deal in their tendency to be proactive appeared to result in a less positive climate, thereby lowering team proactive performance.

Future research on the role of proactivity in relations between self and environment

According to triadic reciprocal causation (Bandura, 1999), self, environment and behavior influence each other in dynamic ways. Many proactive behaviors, such as taking charge and innovation, describe the self exerting its influence on the environment via proactive goal setting and striving. This relationship from self to environment is in line with the concept of primary control, or “attempts to change the world so that it fits the self’s needs” (Rothbaum, Weisz, & Snyder, 1982, p.8). However, the environment can also exert an influence on the self. The relationship from environment to self is in line with the concept of secondary control, or “attempts to fit in with the world and to flow with the current” (Rothbaum et al., 1982, p.8).

At first glance, the concept of secondary control seems to be inconsistent with the idea of proactivity, instead being relatively more important for adaptivity (Griffin et al., 2007). However, as noted by Parker et al. (2010), proactive goals can involve changing the situation (akin to primary control) or changing the self (potentially involving secondary control). As an example, proactive feedback seeking and career initiative are two kinds of proactivity that mainly focus on changing the self, such as via seeking out feedback to improve one’s own performance. We recommend considering primary and secondary control as two dynamic processes involved in proactivity. For example, newcomers can engage in proactive socialization behaviors such as feedback seeking and relationship building to achieve social integration and role clarity (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000); a type of secondary control process in which people try to fit in the environment. After newcomers are familiar with the work environment, they may try to change their work environment through various proactive behaviors such as innovation, voice, and taking charge. At this stage, people try to master their environment according to their needs, interests, or ideas, with is in line with a primary control process. An example of this type of interplay between primary and secondary control processes in

sustaining proactivity was provided by Berg, Wrzesniewski, and Dutton (2010), who reported that employees tend to use adaptive behaviors to create and seize the opportunities for proactive job crafting.

We recommend longitudinal studies to investigate the chain of dynamics between self and environment via primary and secondary control processes. People might first adapt to the environment in order to create opportunities to master and change that environment. After people bring about changes to the environment via their proactive actions, they face a new environment again, created in part by them. For example, if an individual who works independently implements an innovative procedure at work that requires consultation with colleagues in different divisions, her/his work environment as a whole will be different because of that innovation. S/he now faces a new environment that will potentially require adaptation. Proactivity research will likely be enriched by exploring and testing the dynamic linkages between self and the environment.

Conclusion

Actively trying to take charge of one's self or the environment to bring about a different future – or being proactive - is an increasingly vital way of behaving in today's work places. In this chapter, we reviewed the concept of proactivity in terms of dispositional, behavioral, and goal process perspectives. We summarized evidence that an individual's motivation to behave in a proactive way derives from three states: the belief that one is able to be proactive (can do), that one wants to be proactive (reason to), and the experience of activated positive affect (energized to). These motivational pathways are in turn shaped and influenced by an individual's personality, the work context they are in, and the interaction between person and context. Job design, leadership, and work climate appear to be three especially important aspects of the work context for promoting

proactivity. Nevertheless, whilst there is already a good evidence base to guide practitioners and scholars in this area, we recommended several ways that proactivity research be enriched and extended, including a fuller consideration of the dynamics underpinning the reciprocal link between self and environment.

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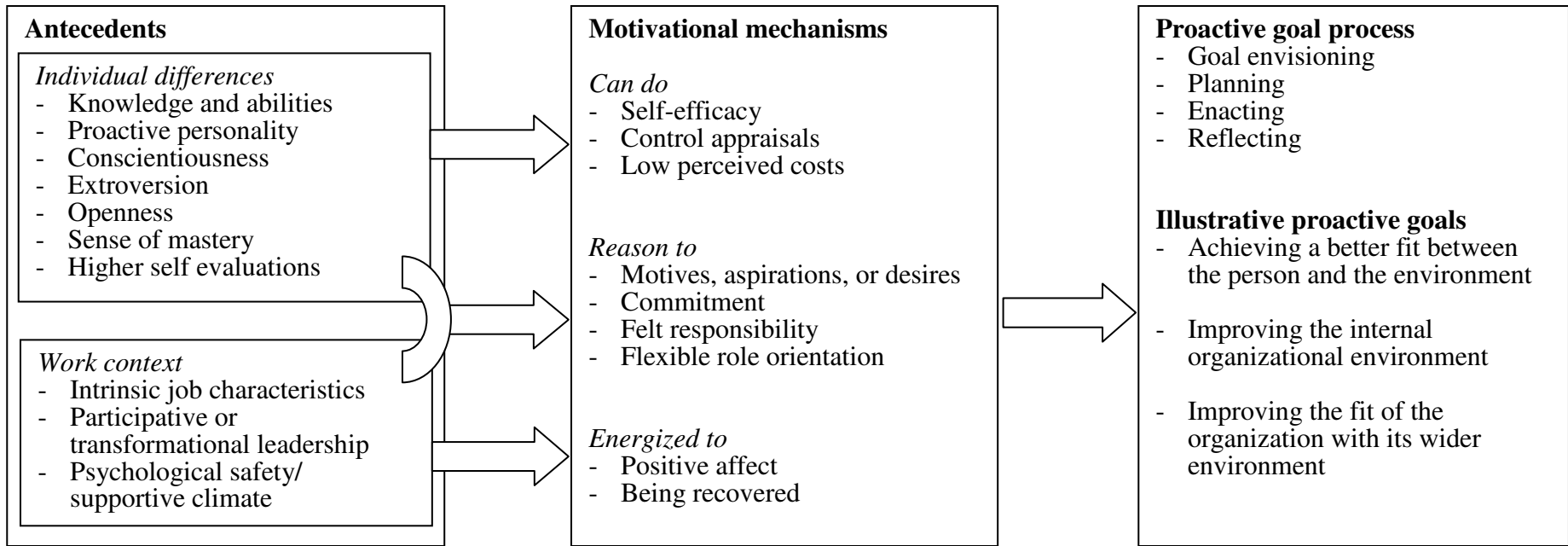


Figure 1. Model of antecedents and motivational determinants of proactivity (based on Parker, Bindl & Strauss, 2010).