

PROACTIVITY AT WORK: MAKING THINGS HAPPEN IN ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction

Chapter 1

Proactivity At Work:

A Big Picture Perspective on A Construct That Matters

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Abstract

Proactive behaviour involves aiming and striving to bring about change in the environment and/or oneself to achieve a different future: it is anticipatory, self-initiated, and change-oriented behaviour. Academic literature on the topic of proactivity has blossomed in recent times, so it is an appropriate time to take stock of the field. We trace the evolution of the topic from diffuse concepts in separate literatures, to a trait-oriented approach, to more recent integrative behavioural and goal process approaches. We then outline the organisation of the book, from different forms (Part 1), individual dynamics (Part 2) and work/organizational antecedents/ outcomes (Part 3).

*There are three types of people: Those who make things happen,
those who watch what happens, and those who wonder 'what happened?'*

- Mary Kay Ash

How many times have we heard managers complain that their staff shows “no initiative” or “don't step up”? We can all readily identify colleagues or employees who seem content to sit back and watch others lead the charge. Even exceptionally busy managers, themselves, can be quite passive: when we probe beneath the surface of the flurry of activities, their time is often dominated by fire-fighting the pressing demands of the moment. Quite rightly then, media commentators lament the extreme reactivity of our CEOs and politicians, and their seeming inability to think and act for the longer-term. And, being honest with ourselves, we all too often experience domains in our lives where passivity dominates. Why is it that we so frequently seem to put off important tasks, like preparing our tax returns, so that we, just like in Mary Kay Ash's famous quote, end up wondering ‘what happened?’

Our focus in this book is on proactivity, or on ‘making things happen’. Although there are many definitions (as we describe shortly), we define proactivity as “*taking control to make things happen rather than watching things happen. It involves aspiring and striving to bring about change in the environment and/or oneself to achieve a different future*” (Parker, Bindl & Strauss, 2010, p. 828). This definition identifies three key attributes that collectively define behavior as proactive. First, proactive behavior is *future-focused*. Whilst that is, of course, to some extent true of all goal-directed behavior, proactivity is especially strongly based on anticipating and thinking about the longer-term future. Simply reacting in a knee-jerk fashion to a problem, regardless of how effective that reaction is, does not constitute proactivity. Second, proactive behavior is *change-oriented*. It does not constitute proactivity to merely anticipate future problems or opportunities; one must also act to address these

future challenges through achieving change. This change might be targeted towards improving or altering the environment one is in, such as improving one's work procedures, or it might be targeted towards changing one's self, such as by developing new skills or broadening one's networks. But in each case, proactivity means a change from status quo or the current trend. As Bateman (in Chapter 11) describes it, proactivity involves discontinuity from an existing status quo. Third, proactive behavior is *self-starting*. It is action that is initiated by an individual him/herself, usually as a result of their interest in or commitment to the issue at hand. If a supervisor asks or tells a worker to do something, this action does not constitute proactivity. Nor is it proactive if the worker is simply following the tasks laid out and pre-specified in the job description.

Think about a situation in which a customer service representative initiates the creation of a second queue for particular enquiries in order to speed up service and alleviate the frustration of customers. The employee has taken it on herself (self-starting) to improve the work flow (change-oriented) so as to enhance effectiveness for customers (future-focused). This is an example of proactivity from a customer service representative, which would usually be a position held by an employee at lower levels of an organizational hierarchy. We can also see examples of proactivity at the very highest levels of the hierarchy. De Luga (1998), in a study of US presidents, observed that some presidents were significantly more proactive than others, resulting in greater overall presidential effectiveness. Examples of presidential proactivity include Roosevelt's implementation of the New Deal program and Lyndon Johnson's introduction of Civil Rights legislation. Thus, individuals (and as Harris and Kirkman, in Chapter 19, argue, entire teams) can be proactive in many different ways, and across multiple levels of an organization or even society. And as we elaborate next, such proactivity can make an important difference to the success of contemporary organizations.

A topic for our times: Proactivity matters

In recent times, academic literature on proactivity in organizations has blossomed. As shown in Figure 1, over 360 articles in the psychology and management literature have been published since 1990 that either have “proactive” in their abstract or that address topics that we consider examples of proactivity (e.g., taking charge, proactive feedback seeking, individual innovation, personal initiative). As this figure shows, the number of articles each year is accelerating. In the years 2010 to 2014, more than 180 articles on proactivity were published—compared to just four articles in 1990 to 1994. Similarly, in 2015 alone, almost as many articles ($N = 56$) were published on proactivity in organizations as in the five year period of 2005 to 2009 together ($N = 66$). Several integrative meta-analyses have also been recently published, which is a good indicator of the maturing of a body of literature.

Insert Figure 1 about here

But is this interest in the topic just a temporary burst: is proactivity a trendy concept that has captured the interest of doctoral scholars, and that will soon give way to the next vogue topic? Or is this scholarly growth in interest reflecting something more substantial happening in the real world? Without doubt, we assert that it is the latter. The interest in the concept initially emerged due to overarching frustration of researchers with existing paradigms that assumed less agentic, and more static, approaches to understanding phenomenon in organizations. For example, in the field of work performance, scholars increasingly recognized that traditional notions of task performance focus excessively on employees’ efforts to fulfil expectations and to master elements in their existing job descriptions, whilst behaviors such as being innovative or leading improvements in the workplace were neglected. In the field of socialization, it was recognized that newcomers in

organizations do not just passively wait to be socialized: instead, they may actively seek information, develop connections, and self-initiatedly learn about their organization. And in the field of careers in the workplace, researchers using a proactivity paradigm proposed that individuals are not just receptacles of career advice and mentoring: they may sculpt and mould their careers to achieve meaningful future career goals, under their own initiative.

The forces that spurred the growth of such proactive concepts look set to continue. Indeed proactivity will likely become more important in the light of projected changes in work and careers. Today's growth in precarious forms of employment, changing employment conditions, and greater mobility across organizations (the 'boundaryless' career, Arthur, 1994) all indicate it is more than ever important that individuals proactively take charge of their careers. The notion of a self-driven and highly mobile 'protean' career (Hall, 1976) reflects these trends, and highlights the importance of proactive career behaviors in today's environment (Sonnetag, in Chapter 3 of this book). Another important trend of our times, globalization in the workplace, implies rising pressure for competitiveness in most industries, which in turn frequently places a premium on innovation. There is a movement (at least in some sectors) away from highly centralized organizational forms, with more flexible entities and more virtual work; all of which increasingly require individuals at work who can 'think for themselves' and be proactive. In these cases, emergent bottom-up change resulting from the self-initiated innovative efforts of employees is needed to ensure the organization remain agile within its environment.

At the same time, digitalization of workplaces increasingly implies that computers will take over employees' routine work – a phenomenon we are already witnessing in examples such as a shoppers checking out supermarket goods or employees booking their travels, themselves. As a consequence, the remaining jobs in organizations will necessarily become more dynamic, uncertain, and ambiguous, requiring employees to proactively

manage their own performance and professional development, seeking out help or feedback when and from whom they need it, or crafting the job to better fit their abilities and values at work. Further, complexity in the form of diverse and multi-disciplinary teams in organization means it is more important than ever that individuals are willing to engage in proactive voice, to speak up with their concerns and ideas to improve work outcomes. And so on! There are numerous forces arising from technological, social, and demographic changes, which imply that proactivity will be on the organizational radar for the foreseeable future.

The rapid growth in the literature—combined with the likely continued importance of the topic into the future—make this an apt time to take stock of the field, and to identify key directions of proactivity for the future. To help set the scene for the remaining chapters in this book, we first briefly trace the evolution of the topic. We then describe the approach we have taken to proactivity in this book and we provide a brief outline of its structure and content.

Tracing the Evolution of Research on Proactivity in Organizations

How did the research topic of proactivity in organizations emerge? Figure 2 shows an overview of highly cited articles on proactive behavior and related concepts since 1990¹. This overview also includes recent meta-analyses, which are included in the figure to depict the evolving maturity of the field.

 Insert Figure 2 here

Domain-specific proactive behaviors

As Figure 2 shows, early developments in proactivity research tended to be domain-specific, stimulated by the recognition that individuals may engage in active and agentic

¹ Key articles are those from the above search (Figure 2) that were cited at least 100 times, Web of Science, as per 15 December, 2015, as well as including meta-analyses in the field.

behaviors to a greater degree than traditional concepts in that domain assumed. Within the work performance sphere, early concepts included *work role innovation* (Farr & Ford, 1990), that is, innovations that individuals introduce to accomplish their roles in different ways; *task revision*, that is, correcting poor procedures or job specifications (Staw & Boettger, 1990); and *individual innovative behavior*, that is, producing, adopting, and implementing useful ideas (Scott & Bruce, 1994; see also West & Altink, 1996). All of these concepts, although distinct in important ways, recognized the importance of investigating individuals' proactivity in changing one's work or introducing new ideas within organizations.

In domains beyond work performance, agentic concepts also came to the fore, such as in the notion of *proactive socialization of newcomers* (e.g., Ashford & Black, 1996; Wanberg et al., 2000), proactive career behaviors, such as establishing *i-deals* (e.g., Rousseau, 2005; Rousseau, Ho, & Greenberg, 2006), proactive forms of *feedback seeking* (e.g., Ashford & Cummings, 1985; see also De Stobbeleir, De Boeck & Dries, Chapter 2 of this book); and proactive forms of organizational change, such as *issue selling* (e.g., Dutton & Ashford, 1993, Ong & Ashford, Chapter 6 of this book), *taking charge* (Morrison & Phelps, 1999) and *proactive voice* (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998; Davidson & Van Dyne, Chapter 17 of this book). Within the work design literature, scholars recognized that good work design can result in more proactive psychological states, such as *role breadth self-efficacy* (Parker, 1998) and *flexible role orientations* (Parker et al., 1997), which in turn have been shown to predict proactive behavior and higher overall job performance. In a similar vein, and related to the earlier concepts of task revision and role innovation, Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) noted that individuals may actively shape or redesign their own roles via *job crafting*; a topic that has received burgeoning attention, more recently (Wang, Demerouti, & Bakker, Chapter 4 of this book).

Proactive Personality

At the same time as domain-specific proactive concepts were emerging in separate literatures, an important development was the recognition that there are potential commonalities across these different proactive concepts. An initial approach to integration was to identify ‘proactive personality’ as a determinant of proactive behavior across many different domains. Bateman & Crant (1993, p. 105) defined a proactive person as someone with a “relatively stable behavioral tendency” to initiate change in the environment. This personality-based approach assumes proactive individuals are proactive across multiple contexts and over time, regardless of the contingencies of a situation at work or in one’s career. Much research has shown how proactive personality is associated with positive outcomes across many domains, such as job performance (Crant, 1995; Thompson, 2005) and career success (Seibert et al., 1999; Seibert, Kraimer & Crant, 2001). The popularity of this concept is shown by recent meta-analyses and reviews on the topic (e.g., Fuller & Marler, 2009; see also Crant, Hu & Jiang, Chapter 8 of this book).

Personal initiative

Around the same time as proactive personality was investigated by researchers in North America, the concept of *personal initiative* was introduced by Frese and colleagues in Germany. Frese et al. (1997, p.38) defined personal initiative as a constellation of behaviors in individuals with the following attributes: to be consistent with the organization’s mission, to have a long term focus, to be goal-directed and action-oriented, to persist in the face of barriers and setbacks, and to be self-starting and proactive. A seminal study showed that West Germans displayed greater personal initiative than East Germans, which Frese et al. (1996) showed was partly a result of higher levels of work control and job complexity in West Germany, at the time. A stream of research has focused on this concept (Frese and Fay, 2001, for a review), showing, for example, that personal initiative enhances entrepreneurship

(Rauch & Frese, 2007); is affected by individuals' recovery from work (Sonnentag, 2003), their engagement at work (Hanaken et al., 2008) and the organizational climate (Baer & Frese, 2003); that personal initiative and work design reciprocally influence each other (Frese, Garst et al., 2007); and that personal initiative can be enhanced through training (Mensmann & Frese, Chapter 16 of this book). Importantly, in a meta-analysis of 163 studies, Tornau and Frese (2013, p. 44) showed a strong positive correspondence between proactive personality and trait-oriented versions of personal initiative, to the extent that the authors argued these two distinct concepts should be considered to be "functionally equivalent".

Proactive Behavior

A further key development in the field was the move from a focus on the more trait-like proactive concept of proactive personality to the concept of *proactive behavior*. In other words, scholars recognized that – whilst proactive personality is clearly an identifiable and important personality dimension – it sometimes makes more sense to think about proactivity as a way of behaving, rather than as a trait (Crant, 2000; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker et al., 2006; Parker et al., 2010). From this perspective, what integrates the many different concepts across distinct domains (e.g., taking charge, issue selling, voice, or proactive feedback seeking) are common defining behavioral features, as well as shared motivational processes. Parker et al., (2006, p. 636) argued that: “[d]espite 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”.

From this point of view, proactivity is not restricted to being the execution of a particular group of activities such as those that are ‘extra-role’ but, in contrast, all job activities can be carried out in a more or less proactive way. As noted by Grant and Ashford (2008), “the key criterion for identifying proactive behavior is not whether it is in-role or

extra-role, but rather whether the employee anticipates, plans for, and attempts to create a future outcome that has an impact on the self or environment? (Grant & Ashford, 2008, p. 9).

This observation by Grant & Ashford (2008) – that proactive behavior is a way of behaving that can be applied to any form of behavior – has been helpful in negotiating how the construct fits within the broader domain of workplace performance. Organizational citizenship behaviors, for example, can themselves be carried out more or less proactively (Griffin, Neal & Parker, 2007).

In a study that empirically brought together many different concepts under the umbrella of proactive behavior, Parker and Collins (2010) analyzed the relationships between several work behaviors that all fit the above definitions of proactivity. The authors concluded that individual proactive behavior at work might usefully be thought of as comprising three higher-order categories (namely, proactive person-environment fit behavior, proactive work behavior, and proactive strategic behavior). Each category varies in the type of future the individual aims to bring about, i.e., the target of proactive goals (see also Belchak & Den Hartog, Chapter 7 of this book, for a related categorization).

First, *proactive person-environment (PE) fit behavior* encompasses proactive goals to achieve a better fit between one's own attributes and that of the internal work environment. For instance, proactive feedback seeking can be a way to achieve *demand-abilities fit*, which occurs when individuals have the knowledge, skills, and other resources demanded by the environment (De Stobbeleir, De Boeck, & Dries, in Chapter 2). Job-role negotiation (Ashford & Black, 1996) and, similarly, job crafting (Wang, Demerouti & Bakker, Chapter 4 of this book) may constitute effective ways to achieve a *supplies-values fit* at work, which occurs when the environment supplies the attributes desired by an individual.

The second higher-order category is *proactive work behavior*, or proactive goals to improve the internal organizational environment (Parker & Collins, 2010). Examples of

behaviors that composed this category include: taking charge to improve work methods (Morrison & Phelps, 1999), voice (e.g., Davidson & Van Dyne, Chapter 17 of this book), and proactive problem solving (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). Consistent with Parker and Collins' argument that these variables form a higher-order category, Tornau and Frese (2013) provided meta-analytic results, showing strong relationships amongst voice, taking charge, and behavioral measures of personal initiative.

Finally, *proactive strategic behavior* is the third higher order category, and it focuses on change in order to improve the organization's strategy, that is, it's fit with the external environment. Example behaviors include issue selling, in which managers proactively aim to influence the formation of strategy in organizations (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Ong & Ashford, Chapter 6 of this book), and strategic scanning (Parker & Collins, 2010), in which employees proactively anticipate important issues that might affect the fit between the organization and its environment. In a related paper the same year, Parker et al. (2010) argued that each of these different goals of proactive behavior (person-environment fit, work behavior, and strategic behavior) can be achieved via distinct change strategies. For example, proactive PE fit behavior could occur through the individual changing him or herself (e.g., developing new skills to meet new demands) or through changing others or the situation (e.g., negotiating an i-deal for more flexible work hours) or, indeed, via both processes.

A further contemporary development in the field has been to recognize that proactivity is not necessarily best conceptualised as a one-off action, but rather as a goal-driven process (Bindl et al., 2012; Frese & Fay, 2001; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker et al., 2010; Bateman, Chapter 11 of this book). This perspective draws on theories suggesting that individuals' goals are hierarchically-organized into two broad systems (Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989): Individuals anticipate desired future states or outcomes and develop strategies to reach those goals (goal generation), and then mobilize and monitor their day to day behaviors in

order to attain their goals (goal striving). Proactive goal generation thus involves “envisioning and planning, under one’s own volition, the goal to bring about a new and different future by changing the self and/or the environment” (Parker et al., 2010). *Envisioning* involves perceiving a current or future problem or opportunity, and imagining a different future that can be achieved by actively addressing this problem or opportunity, whereas *planning* involves the individual deciding on which actions to take in order to achieve their imagined future (Bindl & Parker, 2009). Proactive goal striving includes the behavioral and psychological mechanisms by which individuals purposively seek to accomplish their proactive goals (Parker et al., 2010). In other words, generating a proactive goal without striving is not per se proactive, as it does not produce an intended impact on oneself or the environment. Bindl et al., (2012) identified two key elements of proactive goal striving: *enacting*, the overt action individuals engage in to achieve their proactive goal, and *reflecting*, the individual’s efforts to understand the success, failure, or consequences of one’s proactive behavior. From this perspective, distinct proactive behaviors can be meaningfully described by phases of proactive goal regulation that are shared across these behaviors.

Once we conceptualize proactivity as a generic way of behaving, rather than as a discrete behavior within a particular domain, or as proactive personality, this also paves the way for recognizing more explicitly the motivational processes that underlie proactive behaviour at work. In their model of proactive motivation, Parker et al., (2010) proposed how contextual and individual difference variables affect individuals’ proactive motivational states (“can do”, “reason to”, and “energized to” motivation) which, in turn, affect proactive goal generation and striving. *Can do motivation* includes perceptions of self-efficacy beliefs, control appraisals, and the perceived costs of proactive action. *Reason to motivation* relates to why someone is proactive, such as an individual’s feeling of intrinsic, integrated, and identified motivation at work; an individual’s flexible role orientation; or an individual’s

future work self. *Energized to motivation* concerns the ‘hot’ affect-related motivational states that influence proactive behavior, such as activated positive feelings of enthusiasm and inspiration at work (see Chapter 13). The authors proposed, and reviewed evidence, showing how more distal antecedents, including individual differences (e.g., personality, values, knowledge and abilities, and demographics) and contextual variations (e.g., leadership, work design, and interpersonal climate/ processes) influence these proactive motivational states and, hence, proactive behaviour in organizations. A version of this model – amended slightly to depict each of the chapters in this book - is shown in Figure 3.

 Insert Figure 3 about here

In sum, we have seen the gradual recognition in the proactivity literature that, even though proactive behaviors were traditionally studied separately (and many scholars—reasonably, of course—continue to do so), one may draw important motivational and behavioral synergies across concepts such as individual innovation, issue selling, and proactive socialization, all of which can be referred to as proactive. In building these bridges across what were once separate domains, we are now in a better place to understand important processes, dynamics, and overall implications of proactivity in organizations.

Book Structure and Content

This book is about proactive *behavior* at work. Thus, even when proactive traits are the focus, as in some of the chapters in this book, it is recognized that these traits influence important work outcomes via changes in proactive behavior. Focusing on proactive behavior allows us to recognize the joint influences of both individual differences (such as personality) and contextual or situational variables in the organization (such as work design and leadership) in understanding when and why employees are proactive at work. We also

recognize in this book various psychological processes, such as motivation and identity, through which individuals and situational contexts interact to drive proactivity at work.

Our book is organised into three parts: In Part 1, contributors discuss and review different forms of proactive behavior. In Part 2, each of the chapters emphasizes important individual dynamics of proactivity. Finally, in Part 3, the chapters discuss the work and organizational antecedents and outcomes of proactive behavior.

Part 1: Forms of Proactive Behavior

Part 1 of the book focuses on different forms of proactive behavior. We have sought to organize the chapters according, loosely, to Parker and Collins (2010) higher order categorizations, as depicted in Figure 4.

Insert Figure 4 about here

The initial set of chapters focus on forms of proactivity that most closely fit into the higher order category of proactive person-environment fit behavior (or what Belchak & Den Hartog, in Chapter 7 of this book, refer to as *pro-self proactive behaviors*). Thus in Chapter 2, De Stobbeleir, DeBoeck and Dries explore novel theoretical perspectives regarding the proactive concept of *feedback seeking behavior*. These colleagues define feedback seeking as a form of proactive person-environment fit behavior, particularly in terms of the role that feedback seeking can play in fostering a better demand-abilities fit. For instance, a newcomer might experience more demands than their current ability can meet, prompting them to engage in behaviors like clarifying demands or seeking feedback on one's abilities. An interesting counter-example is when one's abilities exceed the demands of the situation, such as occurs when a person is overqualified for the job. De Stobbeleir et al. speculate that such individuals might try to demonstrate their abilities to the feedback source to craft a more

challenging role. Thus the motive, and the strategies involved, in feedback seeking may vary according to what type of misfit occurs.

Next, Sonnentag in Chapter 3 focuses on *proactive career behavior*, which – when implemented within an organization - can be a way to achieve better fit of the person to their environment (note that it also encompasses behaviors that can enhance career success by moving into a different organization, so some forms of career proactivity might not be best conceptualized as PE fit behavior). Sonnentag identifies two elements of proactive career behaviors: planning behaviors such as career exploration and goal setting (in essence, *proactive goal generation*) and overt actions such as networking and seeking a mentor (*proactive goal striving*). Importantly, Sonnentag recognizes that versions of these behaviors can be passive, for example, skill development could be mandated via a training program or it could be pursued proactively, and it is of course the latter focused on in this chapter.

In Chapter 4, Wang, Demerouti, and Bakker discuss the rapidly expanding research on *job crafting*, which can also be seen as a form of proactive PE-fit behavior. Wang et al., define crafting as “a bottom-up job redesign process in which employees themselves make changes pertaining to the characteristics of their jobs” (p. XX, in this book). Job crafting is different from i-deals, for example, in that the latter are authorized by the employers’ agent (usually the supervisor) whereas crafting is not. Job crafting is also aimed towards fulfilling personal needs, whereas task i-deals intend to achieve mutual benefit for employees and job incumbents. In their chapter, Wang et al. discuss outcomes and antecedents of job crafting and, in particular, highlight the important role of transformational and empowering leadership in promoting effective job crafting engagements in staff.

A more recent domain-specific form of proactive work behavior is *safety proactivity*, which Curcuruto and Griffin, in Chapter 5, define as anticipatory, self-initiated and change-oriented behavior intended to enhance safety in the workplace. Examples of safety proactivity

include redesigning work methods to increase safety and taking pre-emptive steps to enhance safety in light of anticipated future risks. These authors argue that such future-focused proactive behavior is especially important for addressing the more unpredictable risks in complex and highly interdependent workplaces.

Turning to research on proactivity aimed at the broader organization, in Chapter 6, Ong and Ashford provide a review and integration of the *issue selling* literature. The authors define issue selling as employees taking the “initiative to sell issues in anticipation of some future challenges or opportunities facing their organization or society” (p.X). Examples of issue selling include raising issues of gender-equity in the workplace, persuading senior management to address environmental issues across various industries, or highlighting issues of employee-management relations, diversity, or one’s wider community. Importantly, the authors argue that organizational context matters greatly in shaping employees’ willingness (‘reason to’) and self-efficacy perceptions (‘can-do’) for issue selling. An employee’s identity is strongly implicated in the reason to process. The authors also review evidence for success factors in the issue selling process, spanning both tactics or moves that are aimed at ‘packaging an issue’, as well as those aimed at ‘selling the issue’ to management. Issue selling can benefit both the issue seller and the organization.

In Chapter 7, the final chapter in Part 1, Belschak and Den Hartog respond to calls to more systematically consider differences amongst *forms of proactive behavior*. The authors explicitly distinguish between different forms of proactive behavior according to their target (see Figure 4 above for the link between this categorization structure and that of Parker & Collins, 2010). *Pro-self proactive behaviors* are those directed at one’s self and the achievement of personal or career goals, such as many forms of career proactivity and proactive person environment-fit behavior, or even some forms of job crafting. *Pro-social behaviors* are directed towards the work group or colleagues, such as proactive knowledge

sharing or using one's initiative to help others (what Griffin et al., 2007, refer to as team-member proactivity fits in here). And *pro-organizational proactivity* is proactive behavior that has the organization as its target, such as some forms of voice, taking charge, and, of course, issue selling.

Part 2: Individual Dynamics of Proactivity

Part 2 of the book is concerned with understanding more about the processes and dynamics that underpin individual-level proactivity. Thus, this part of the book is not so much concerned with one specific type or form of proactive behavior, but with understanding the overarching antecedents and mechanisms that generate multiple forms of proactivity; including, individual differences (proactive personality, individual differences), defining elements (proactive goals), common processes (identity, affect), and unanswered questions (ageing).

We begin with one of the most important integrative antecedents to proactive behavior that have been introduced into the literature: *proactive personality*, or an individual's relatively stable tendency to bring about environmental change. In Chapter 8, Crant, Hu and Jiang provide a 20 year review of research on this important concept. Proactive personality has been measured in over 100 empirical published articles and is the focus of at least four meta-analyses. The concept can be seen, as summarized by these scholars, "as the 'trait' component of proactivity, and the specific proactive behaviors (are) the 'state' component" (p. XX, in this book). As the authors show, there is overwhelming evidence that proactive personality matters, predicting a whole host of proactive behaviors (e.g., voice, taking charge) and associated outcomes (e.g., job performance, career success, work engagement).

In Chapter 9, we continue with the trait perspective of proactivity. Wu and Li review a broader set of *individual differences* and their role in shaping proactive behavior. Beyond

proactive personality, these authors find evidence suggesting the importance of ‘big five’ factors (notably extraversion), cognitive traits (e.g., future orientation), affective traits (e.g., positive affectivity) and instrumental traits (e.g., attachment style). These authors also recognize that these personality traits can develop over time. Thus, consistent with a later chapter recognizing the power of work design in shaping proactivity (Ohly & Schmitt, Chapter 14), these scholars discuss how work design can have a long-term impact on personality, which will in turn affect individual work proactivity.

Zacher and Kooj, in Chapter 10, identify multiple paths by which the age of an individual might shape proactive processes, behaviors and outcomes. *Ageing* is a crucial topic in light of the rapidly growing proportion of older workers in many industrialized and developing countries and yet, as these scholars observe, “employee age is largely neglected variable in established theoretical frameworks of proactivity at work” (p. XX). Zacher and Kooj’s review suggests that – contrary to stereotypes – there is no evidence that older employees display lower proactive work behavior, and are possibly even more proactive in their work. Older individuals do, however, tend to engage in lower levels of proactive career behavior. To help understand these findings, and to stimulate more research, the authors draw on theoretical perspectives of lifespan development to propose a theoretical framework of ageing and proactivity at work.

Chapters 11-13 move away from the focus on more stable trait-like, or demographic, influences on proactivity to consider the goal regulation processes that are inherent to proactivity per se (proactive goals) as well as more proximal influencing processes (identity, affect). First, in Chapter 11, Bateman focuses on the goal process involved in proactivity that has been surprisingly quite neglected in the literature. Bateman defines *proactive goals* in a way that mirrors definitions of proactive behavior in so far as these goals are self-starting, change-oriented, and future-focused, but this scholar adds interesting additional observations,

including that “the distinguishing feature of proactive goals compared with other goals is that their intended result is some type of personally-chosen change” (p. XX). That is, proactive behavior is highly idiogenic: it stems from self-chosen aspirations, plans, and personally-important projects. Bateman elaborates several further interesting perspectives, such as the idea of a proactive goal ladder, and provides insights into how proactive goals may be sustained over time.

This idea that proactivity is personally distinctive, and hence very often likely to be self-concordant, is developed further by Strauss and Kelly in their chapter of *identity* and proactivity (Chapter 12). These scholars assert that proactive behavior is very often identity-congruent and serves the purpose of expressing one’s self. The concept of one’s Future Work Self is discussed as a future-oriented and positive identity, or possible self, that creates a discrepancy between the current state and a desired future that, in turn, motivates proactive action. This idea that proactivity is often strongly rooted in one’s identity, such as when an individual sells gender issues or environmental issues to senior managers, represents an important elaboration of the ‘reason to’ motivational process described in Parker et al. (2010).

In the final chapter of this section, in Chapter 13, Cangiano, Parker and Bindl consider the role of *affective experience* at work in relation to proactivity. This chapter reviews evidence for the ‘energized to’ pathway of proactivity, including the moods and emotions employees may have in a work setting, that influence the engagement in proactive behavior (Parker et al., 2010). This discussion includes the idea that negative affect can also promote and sustain proactivity in some cases. Importantly, however, the article also discusses the short-term and long-term affective consequences of proactivity, i.e., considers the positive and negative implications of proactive behavior for employee well-being, which is a topic that has had significantly less attention in the literature.

Part 3: Work and organizational antecedents and outcomes of proactive behavior

This section of the book goes beyond individual processes in proactivity. Chapters in this part focus on work and organizational antecedents and consequences of proactive behavior, as well as discuss proactivity at the team, rather than the individual, level in organizations. Beginning with antecedents, two of the most frequently identified drivers of proactivity in the literature are work design and leadership. In Chapter 14, Ohly and Schmitt, examine the role of *work design*, including its interaction with personality and other individual differences, in shaping proactive behavior. For example, their review shows compelling evidence for the positive influence of job autonomy, especially for promoting proactive work behavior, but it is also likely important for other forms of proactivity. These authors also consider other work design variables, including some that have had little examination so far such as accountability and interdependence, and include in their discussion both the processes by which work design shapes proactivity and potential moderators of these relationships.

In Chapter 15, Den Hartog and Belschak examine the role of *leadership*. That leadership affects proactivity is quite obvious, but exactly what leader behaviors are important for what forms of proactivity is much less intuitive. These authors review of the effect of leader behaviors on motivation and hence proactivity. It appears that supportive, participative, ethical, and transformational leadership styles are especially important for proactivity, although as these scholars indicate, “there are also theoretical reasons to suggest that employees might specifically choose not to speak up to their transformational leaders or to withhold some messages only provide others to these leaders” (p. XX). These scholars proceed to develop new theory regarding when and why transformational leadership may be positive or, instead, negative for employee proactivity.

In Chapter 16, Mensmann and Frese investigate the role of *training* in fostering greater employee proactivity, and more specifically, greater personal initiative. The authors describe a training program designed around three defining elements of personal initiative (to be self-starting, future-oriented, and persistent) and five elements of action according to action regulation theory (goal setting, information collection and prognosis, monitoring and feedback). The authors also elaborate on the success of training for personal initiative, as well as offer important recommendations to further strengthen the training and its evaluation.

The next two chapters focus on the outcomes of proactivity, including whether, when, and why negative consequences might arise. In Chapter 17, Davidson and Van Dyne begin by first making clear that, relative to reactive voice, *proactive voice* is self-initiated rather than being a response, and more focused on changing the environment rather than supporting the status quo. As such, proactive voice is likely to be responded to differently by supervisors. Drawing on construal-level theory, these authors put forward a series of intriguing propositions about the construal fit (a match between the employees' proactive voice framing and the supervisor's construal of the issue) will shape whether supervisors' judge voice to be useful, legitimate, and compelling.

In Chapter 18, Bolino, Turnley and Anderson examine '*the dark side*' of proactivity, or when proactivity might hurt oneself, others, or the organization. Despite the clear evidence for many individual and organizational outcomes of proactive behavior, there can indeed also be downsides to this way of behaving. These authors systematically tackle each of the three higher order categories of proactive behavior identified by Parker and Collins (2010), discussing theory and empirical evidence suggesting when and why downsides might occur. For example, proactive strategic behavior might result in negative psychological consequences if others make negative attributions about their behaviors, and note the

“conflict, misplaced priorities, and reputational damage that can be a by-product of these types of actions” (p. XX).

Finally, although most of the concepts and processes we have discussed in this book have focused on individuals, it is possible for overall teams in organizations to be proactive. In Chapter 19, Harris and Kirkman define *team proactivity* in a way that has parallels with individual proactivity. However these authors also rightly argue that team proactive states and behaviors “are based on more than just the simple aggregation of team member characteristics; rather, they reflect collective properties” (p. XX). Consequently the authors have developed a novel IMIO model of Team Proactivity that identifies compositional and contextual inputs that shape team proactive states and behaviors (which reciprocally affect each other) that then influence individual, team, and organizational outcomes, which, in turn, affect the compositional and contextual inputs.

In the very last chapter of this book (Bindl & Parker, Chapter 20 on *New Perspectives and Directions for Understanding Proactivity in Organizations*, we synthesize key themes in the book. In particular, our goal is to set out an agenda for research in the future. Thus we summarize key research needs, and highlight some of those directions we see as especially important for moving the field forward. As we note, to keep moving this exciting topic forward, we need to strike a balance between encouraging diverse and novel perspectives with integrating and bridge-building across topics. Both of these divergent and convergent future directions are important to stimulate theoretical development at the same time prevent unmanageable proliferation of overlapping constructs.

We hope you enjoy this book, and find it thought provoking and useful. We have certainly enjoyed making this book happen!

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