

Affect and Employee Proactivity: A Goal-regulatory Perspective

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Abstract

Proactivity is a type of goal-directed work behavior in which individuals actively take charge of situations to bring about future change in themselves or their organization. In this chapter, we draw on goal-regulation research to review conceptual and empirical evidence that elucidates some of the complex links of affective experience and employee proactivity. We identify the different ways in which affective experience influences different stages of proactivity, including employees' efforts in setting a proactive goal (*envisioning*), preparing to implement their proactive goal (*planning*), implementing their proactive goal (*enacting*) and engaging in learning from their proactive goal process (*reflecting*). Overall, our review suggests an important, positive role of high-activated positive trait affectivity and moods in motivating proactivity across multiple goal stages, as compared to low-activated positive affectivity and moods. The role of negative affect is mixed, and likely depends on both its valence and the stage of proactivity that is being considered. We identify a lack of research on the role of discrete emotions for employee proactivity. We discuss future avenues for research, particularly the roles of intra- and inter-personal emotion regulation for proactivity and of affective embeddedness of proactive processes in the social environment of organizations.

Keywords: affect, proactivity, goal regulation, work performance.

Affect and Employee Proactivity: A Goal-regulatory Perspective

There can be no knowledge without emotion. We may be aware of a truth, yet until we have felt its force, it is not ours. (Arnold Bennett, 1867 - 1931)

Feelings are an integral part of human behavior at work (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Brief & Weiss, 2002). In this vein, motivation researchers have identified the role of affect for behavior as a ‘hot’ motivational pathway that has an important influence on work performance over and above ‘cold’, or cognitive, motivational processes (Mitchell & Daniels, 2003). However, in examining motivation for behavior, researchers have mainly focused on rather passive conceptualizations of work actions, such as how employees adjust to work characteristics in order to perform their job (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), how employees carry out goals that are provided by the organization (Locke, Shaw, Saari, & Latham, 1981), and how employees adapt to existing social structures and cultures at work (Van Maanen, 1976). Theories on work motivation correspondingly have assumed pre-set goals by the organization that specify the degree of individual performance (Locke & Latham, 1990) and that set the frame within which employees can choose their actions (Vroom, 1964). Traditional work motivation theories have thus focused on specific, organization-set goals that are achieved by clearly defined, proficient work behaviors (Steel & König, 2006).

In this chapter, we set out to examine the motivation of proactive and self-initiated behaviors, focusing particularly on role of affect. The relevance of considering proactive behaviors at work is heightened given recent developments in the world economy that have escalated organizational levels of operating uncertainty (Campbell, 2000; Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). Together with external changes, the demands of work and the types of behaviors required of employees to succeed in their jobs have shifted (Bridges, 1995; Ilgen &

Pulakos, 1999). Employees more than ever are required to not only comply with broader goals that are set by their organization, but also to be self-starting in shaping their own careers and initiating improvements in work practices and procedures (Frese, 2008).

These active behaviors have increasingly come to be referred to as examples of *proactivity* (Crant, 2000), defined as self-starting and anticipatory ways of behaving that are aimed at bringing about positive change in a situation or in ones' self (Bindl & Parker, 2010b; Grant & Ashford, 2008). For instance, employees sometimes redefine the goals they are provided with by the organization to come up with more challenging goals (Hacker, 1985), and actively influence the socialization processes in order to improve the quality of their experiences at work (Ashford & Black, 1996). Similarly, employees can decide to change the characteristics of their job and situation by using their personal initiative (Frese, Garst, & Fay, 2007) or via job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), and to persuade managers of important new directions for the organization (Dutton, Ashford, Lawrence, & Miner-Rubino, 2002). Given the importance of proactive behavior at work, scholars have increasingly sought to understand what motivational factors are relevant for employees to actively take charge of situations to bring about change in a future-focused way (Frese & Fay, 2001; Grant & Ashford, 2008). Parker, Bindl, and Strauss (2010) summarized these types of proactive motivation as representing 'can do', 'reason to', and 'energized to' pathways. Research has mainly concentrated on the two cognitive-motivational processes that underpin proactivity: First, one's perceived capability of being proactive (*can do* pathway; e.g., 'self-efficacy beliefs', Bandura, 1997), and second, one's wish to, or interest in, performing proactive behaviors (*reason to* pathway; e.g., 'perceived ownership of work issues', Dorenbosch, van Engen, & Verhagen, 2005). The distinct role of feelings as a motivational force for proactivity (*energized to* pathway; Parker et al., 2010) has been relatively neglected.

It is important to understand how affective experience gives rise to and influences self-initiated, proactive behaviors at work (Bindl & Parker, 2010b) because it cannot be assumed that the underpinning processes are the same as for other types of behaviors, and because the self-initiated and change-oriented nature of proactivity should give rise to a particular importance of affect-related motivation. Turning to the former point, whilst there have been general arguments that positive affective experience should promote work performance (Forgas & George, 2001; Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994; Tsai, Chen, & Liu, 2007), these arguments lack theoretical precision because distinctions have not been made between different types of work performance. Assuming all behaviors are goal-directed (Hacker, 1985), a distinction can be made as to the extent to which employees enact on behaviors that are based on self-set goals, or rather represent the implementation of pre-set goals by the organization (De Charms, 1968; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Proactivity is per definition self-initiated, consisting of goals that are actively generated by employees themselves (Frese & Fay, 2001; Parker, et al., 2010). We contend that the unique nature of proactive behaviors, comprising self-set rather than organization-set goals, as well as its anticipatory and change-oriented nature, means that affective experience will have distinct implications for proactivity at work relative to other, more passive behaviors. We elaborate this argument in our chapter, reviewing theory and research that elucidate how, when, and why affect will influence employee proactivity.

To set the scene for our chapter, we first recap on how affect has been conceptualized and highlight our approach in this chapter. We then review how affect relates to work performance more generally. Conceptualizing proactivity as a goal-regulatory process (Bindl, Parker, Totterdell, & Hagger-Johnson, 2011; Parker et al., 2010), we review theory and evidence regarding how positive and negative affect might shape and sustain proactivity at work. We conclude with suggested research directions.

Affective Experience

Affect consists of “consciously accessible feelings” (Fredrickson, 2001, p.218) that are “an integral blend of hedonic (pleasure–displeasure) and arousal (sleepy–activated) values” (Russell, 2003, p. 147). These feelings can be distinguished along three hierarchical levels, ranging from trait affectivity on the highest level to state affective experiences, which can comprise mood and emotions (Rosenberg, 1998). The work environment likely influences these different levels of affect to varying degrees. State affective experiences such as mood and emotions appear influenced by various features of work, such as the quality of work design, teams or leaders (Brief & Weiss, 2002; George & Brief, 1992). In contrast, trait affectivity represents a tendency to feel in a consistent way across time and situations, and is likely only influenced by targeted interventions such as psychotherapy or usage of medication (Parkinson, Totterdell, Briner, & Reynolds, 1996). Trait affectivity can, however, provide a threshold for more fluctuant state experiences (Rosenberg, 1998). For instance, negative affectivity has been associated with employees’ higher levels of negative state affective experiences at work (Fortunato, Jex, & Heinisch, 1999; Heinisch & Jex, 1997; Schaubroeck, Ganster, & Fox, 1992). Other studies suggest why this relationship prevails (e.g., Parkes, 1990; Brief, Butcher, & Roberson, 1995): Individuals who, as a stable disposition, experience high levels of negative affect appear to be more sensitive to negative stimuli, and more likely to experiencing negative emotions at work, than individuals who are high in positive affectivity (Parkes, 1990). They also tend to experience positive mood inductions due to positive events in the work place for a shorter time, as compared to their counterparts who are high in positive affectivity (Brief et al., 1995).

Moods and emotions particularly differ with regards to three main features: First, in their *duration* (emotions tend to last shorter than moods; Frijda, Mesquita, Sonnemans, & van Goozen, 1991); second in their *intensity* (emotions tend to be experienced by individuals as

more intense than moods; Nowlis & Nowlis, 1956); and third in their *specificity* (emotions tend to be more directly related with a specific situation or person than moods; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). As research suggests, emotions that lose their focus on specific events and lose their intensity (Isen, 1984) may subsequently turn into moods (Frijda, 1993). In turn, individuals' awareness of the cause of their moods may transform moods into specific emotions (Clore, 1992).

Apart from the distinction between trait affectivity, moods and emotions, a further emphasis in the literature has been on the structure of these concepts. Trait affectivity and mood have been typically represented in the literature as comprising two independent dimensions of valence and activation in a bipolar space, as described in the circumplex model of affect (e.g., Green, Goldman, & Salovey, 1993; Sevastos, Smith, & Cordery, 1992; Yik, Russell, & Feldman Barrett, 1999). In the circumplex model, *valence* represents the extent to which individuals experience pleasant versus unpleasant feelings. The distinction between positive and negative experience of affect, with the concept of 'feeling good' versus 'feeling bad', has been argued to apply across cultures and languages (Wierzbicka, 1999). A second dimension in the affective circumplex model is *activation*, which refers to a person's "state of readiness for action or energy expenditure" (Russell, 2003, p.156). Accordingly, the upper two quadrants of high-activated positive and negative affect are viewed as 'tense arousal' and 'energetic arousal' (Thayer, 1989), and represent 'motivational intensity' – "the impetus to act" (Gable & Harmon-Jones, 2010, p.1). Combining the two dimensions of activation and valence results in four distinct quadrants (Russell, 1980; 2003): High-activated positive affect (encompassing feelings like enthusiasm), low-activated positive affect (encompassing feelings like calmness), low-activated negative affect (encompassing feelings like depression), and high-activated negative affect (encompassing feelings like anxiety).

Unfortunately, measures of trait affectivity and mood do not always cover the full range of affect quadrants (for a detailed overview, see Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, 2005). For instance, the widely used *Positive and Negative Affect Schedule* (PANAS) by Watson, Clark and Tellegen (1988) used items such as feeling *enthused*, *interested* and *determined* to assess positive affect and items such as feeling *scared*, *afraid* and *upset* to assess negative affect. The authors later acknowledged that this choice of items, rather than covering the entire circumplex, represents the two high-activated positive and negative quadrants only (Tellegen, Watson, & Clark, 1999). A more detailed way of measuring the affective circumplex is to assess all four conceptual quadrants separately (e.g., Burke, Brief, George, Roberson, & Webster, 1989; Bindl, Warr, Parker, & Inceoglu, 2010), although such an approach has been used relatively infrequently in the literature linking affect to work behavior.

Affect and Work Performance

Scholars have tended to theorize about the relationship between affective experience and human behavior in two broad ways. First, historically, research has mainly conceived affect as directly causing behaviors. For instance, Cannon (1929) conceived of emotions as representing *fight versus flight* stimuli that express themselves in corresponding behaviors. Similarly, Frijda (1986) argued that feelings of contentment versus joy result in behavioral tendencies of *inactivation* versus *activation*.

Second and more recently, researchers have proposed indirect influences of affect on behavior via cognitive processes (Baumeister, Vohs, DeWall, & Zhang, 2007; Fredrickson, 1998; Isen & Baron, 1991). Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory proposes that affect, rather than prompting specific behaviors, facilitates *thought-action tendencies* (Fredrickson, 1998). In other words, this theory emphasizes how positive affective experience impacts on behaviors indirectly by broadening the cognitive flexibility of individuals which, in turn,

enhances the array of behavioral options an individual can choose from in any given situation (Fredrickson, 2001). Similarly, Baumeister and colleagues (2007) argued that “conscious emotion operates mainly and best by means of its influence on cognitive processes, which in turn are input into decision and behavior regulation processes” (p. 168). This assumption that affect influences behavior via cognitions, rather than directly, has found support in social psychology (e.g., DeSteno, Petty, Rucker, Wegener, & Braverman, 2004; Scherer, Schorr, & Johnstone, 2001; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985) as well as in organizational research (e.g., Beal, Weiss, Barros, & MacDermid, 2005; Foo, Uy, & Baron, 2009; Forgas & George, 2001; Seo, Goldfarb, & Feldman Barrett, 2010; Tsai, et al., 2007).

The extent to which affective experience influences behaviors directly or indirectly likely depends on the type of behavior in question. For instance, affective events theory suggests that some behaviors are either directly caused by affect (so-called *affect-driven behaviors*) such as spontaneous acts of helping colleagues (George & Brief, 1992; Isen, 1984), whilst others involve more deliberate decision making processes and are rather indirectly influenced by affect via cognitive judgments (so-called *judgment-driven behaviors*; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). These differences are associated with the functions of affective experience for cognitive processes. For instance, affective experience has a greater role in influencing judgments that involve heuristic and systematic thinking, as opposed to simple requirements for cognitive processing (Forgas, 1995).

Applying these ideas to proactivity, it is important to recognize the somewhat unique nature of this way of behaving relative to other, more passive actions. Proactivity involves individuals’ setting and pursuing goals that are anticipatory and change-oriented (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker et al., 2010). For instance, an individual might try to bring about improved work procedures to enhance long-term efficiency. Such actions are risky as they may not always be welcomed by the organization (Frese & Fay, 2001) and might have costs

for one's reputation and self-image (De Stobbeleir, Ashford, & De Luque, 2010). We therefore expect proactive behaviors to comprise conscious self-regulatory efforts (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000) that resemble a *judgment-driven* way of behaving (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), and we anticipate that this behavior will be both directly and indirectly (through cognition) influenced by affect.

Affect and Proactive Goal Regulation

Thus far we have focused on proactivity primarily as a behavior or way of behaving. In order to understand the multiple ways that affective experience might influence proactivity, it is important to recognize that proactivity entails a goal regulation process that goes beyond action alone. Self-regulation theory (Frese & Zapf, 1994; Gollwitzer, 1990) and previous conceptual work (Frese & Fay, 2001; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker et al., 2010) as well as preliminary empirical evidence (Brandstätter, Heimbeck, Malzacher, & Frese, 2003; De Vos, De Clippeleer, & Dewilde, 2009; Raabe, Frese, & Beehr, 2007) has adopted a process perspective of proactivity. For instance, action theory purposes that individuals are active in "shaping their environment" (Frese & Zapf, 1994, p.275) through processes in which individuals set goals in anticipation of achieving later results. Thus, individuals develop goals and decide amongst competing goals; they orient themselves by considering future outcomes of their goals; they generate, and decide on, a particular plan; and they execute their plans, and process feedback on their progression towards the original goal (Frese & Zapf, 1994). Other self-regulatory models of motivation identify similar processes. For instance, Dieffendorff and Lord (2008), in their summary of existing phase theories of self-regulation, pointed out that a common feature to most of these theories (e.g., Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Vancouver & Day, 2005) is a distinction between the four phases of goal establishment, planning, goal striving, and goal revision.

Recent empirical evidence supports a goal-regulatory view of employee proactivity. Employees distinguish in their proactivity between four goal-regulatory elements (Bindl et al., 2011): First, employees typically imagine a better future to be brought about by proactive behavior (*envisioning*). An example of envisioning is an employee realising that the way a task is completed is inefficient and, therefore, identifying ways to improve the process of completing this task. Second, employees tend to prepare for engaging in proactive behavior by seeking information and/or evaluating different avenues of action (*planning*). For instance, employees might go through different scenarios in their mind of how to bring about the desired change. Third, coinciding with the main focus of proactivity research thus far, the overt implementation of plans manifest themselves in proactive behaviors (*enacting*), such as improving a work task, one's fit with the organization, or the fit of the organization with the broader external environment (Parker & Collins, 2010). Fourth, individuals exercise efforts to consciously understand the success, failure, consequences or implications of their proactive behavior (*reflecting*). These efforts ultimately serve as information that can lead an individual to sustain or modify the elements of envisioning, planning and enacting. For instance, individuals might reflect on what went well in their proactive pursuits and then envision further ways to improve their tasks. Whilst the enacting element is outward-focused and observable, the other three elements of envisioning, planning and reflecting are likely to be mostly, even though not necessarily fully, internalized. As we discuss shortly, affect likely has different consequences for these different elements of the proactive goal regulation process. Next, we review the accumulating theory and evidence that positive affect influences proactivity, followed by the more limited theory and evidence regarding negative affect.

Positive Affect and Proactivity

Positive affective experience has been associated with a wide array of positive ways of behaving at work, such as offering colleagues help with difficult tasks (George, 1991),

fulfilling job-related responsibilities well (Tsai, et al., 2007) and defending the reputation of the organization (Dalal, Lam, Weiss, Welch, & Hulin, 2009). Conceptually, these associations should prevail because positive affect facilitates individuals' focus on positive outcomes of their behaviors (Mayer, Gaschke, Braverman, & Evans, 1992; Mayer, Gayle, Meehan, & Haarman, 1990). Positive affect generates higher expectancy judgments for outcomes (Wegener & Petty, 1996), than do negative affective states (Johnson & Tversky, 1983). In essence, positive affect fosters an optimistic outlook (Kluemper, Little, & Degroot, 2009; Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007; Schwarz & Bless, 1991) and strengthens effort and persistence in behaviors (George & Brief, 1996). Consistent with this theory, positive feelings at work have been linked with higher levels of proficient behaviors, such as task performance (Tsai et al., 2007) and performance in competitive games (Totterdell, 1999; 2000). Likewise, evidence shows that organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g., Carlson, Charlin, & Miller, 1988) can be facilitated by the experience of positive affect (Belschak & Den Hartog, 2009; Dalal, et al., 2009; George, 1991).

In regard to proactivity, we propose that positive affect is particularly relevant in shaping employees' work performance that comprises self-set, *proactive* goals relative to organization-set, *proficient* goals. First, proactivity is characterized by high levels of self-initiative. In other words, individuals seek out and initiate proactive behaviors under their own discretion. Positive affect can influence individuals' tendency to choose generative vs. defensive behaviors (Seo, Feldman Barrett, & Bartunek, 2004). In this vein, individuals who experience positive affect are likely to orient themselves towards "exploring and achieving anticipated positive outcomes, by taking risks and being willing to incur loss in the process" (p.425). In contrast, individuals who do not experience positive affect likely orient themselves towards avoiding negative outcomes (Seo et al., 2004). Positive affect has been shown to promote individuals' setting of higher and more challenging goals (Ilies & Judge,

2005), to foster approach behaviors (Cacioppo, Gardner, & Berntson, 1999; Watson, Wiese, Vaidya, & Tellegen, 1999) and to promote confidence to achieve positive outcomes (Baron, 1990; Kramer, Newton, & Pommerenke, 1993). This mechanism should be particularly relevant for proactive behaviors, which are challenging because these behaviors are not always appreciated by the organization (Frese & Fay, 2001) and yield possible image costs for the individual (De Stobbeleir, et al., 2010).

Additionally, because proactive behaviors are change-oriented and self-initiated, they likely require more effortful and complex self-regulation processes than do routine or proficient work behaviors (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). Research indicates that affect may have a greater role in influencing judgments that involve heuristic and systematic, as opposed to simple, requirements for cognitive processing (Forgas, 1995). Positive affect in particular has been found to facilitate decision-making processes and cognitive flexibility (Fredrickson, 2001; Isen, 2000). Positive affect has also been shown to promote persistency with goals (Erez & Isen, 2002; Seo et al., 2004) and to yield motivational potential for behaviors (George & Brief, 1996). Thus, positive affect likely facilitates an upward spiral of self-regulatory advantage that should help individuals sustain their self-initiated action against resistance from using their self-initiative in changing the work environment (Martin, Ward, Achee, & Wyer, 1993).

Finally, positive affect improves the efficiency by which employees process information, especially mood-congruent information (Matthews, 1992) and should also enhance individuals' capacity to respond effectively to dynamic situations, and to reach effective decisions under situational ambiguity (Baron, 2008). Individuals who experience high levels of positive affect are more likely to find it easier to decide on strategies to implement proactive goals. In sum, because proactivity consists of self-set goals by the employees that are aimed at changing the environment or oneself (Frese & Fay, 2001; Parker

et al., 2010), and likely require greater effort and cognitive resources (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000), positive moods should play a particularly large role for proactive behaviors at work.

The activation element within positive moods additionally matters: Low-activated positive moods should not be particularly relevant for proactivity at work, as these feelings of calmness and relaxation are likely to prompt individuals to savor current circumstances (Izard, 1977) and are linked with inactivity (Frijda, 1986). In contrast, high-activated positive moods should provide energy, and facilitate the engagement and persistence in activities (Fredrickson, 1998; Tsai et al., 2007), which are core themes in proactivity. In this vein, Seo, Bartunek, and Feldman Barrett (2010) indicate that high activation levels in affect were directly positively associated with individuals' amounts of effort in activities. In contrast, the researchers found that positive affect with neutral activation levels was only indirectly positively associated with effort in activities via promoting expectancy judgments towards efforts. Similarly, Foo and colleagues (2009) showed that high-activated positive affect facilitated effort over and above what was immediately required. In sum, high-activated positive moods should be positively associated with overall proactivity at work.

More specifically, high-activated positive mood should be beneficial for each element of proactive goal regulation: envisioning, planning, enacting, and reflecting (Bindl et al., 2011). First, positive moods can influence individuals' expectancies with regards to behavioral outcomes (Mayer et al., 1990) as well as signal that sufficient resources are available to engage self-regulatory efforts (Aspinwall, 1998; Trope & Pomerantz, 1998) and generate positive expectancy judgments for these outcomes (Wegener & Petty, 1996). This expectancy effect should be particularly beneficial for self-initiated, rather than compliant, actions at work because they are likely to require high levels of confidence in pursued

outcomes (Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, & Tag, 1997). Positive moods should thus promote individuals' setting of proactive goals through increasing envisioning.

Mood has been argued to infuse judgments, especially when alternative models of action need to be evaluated (Forgas, 1995). Due to its self-initiated and change-oriented nature, proactive behaviors likely require such evaluations as part of their planning processes. Because affective experiences shape thoughts and actions that have a similar evaluative tone (Forgas & George, 2001), positive moods should be particularly beneficial in forming positive cognitive evaluations, that facilitate the planning and implementation of proactive goals.

Additionally, positive moods should facilitate an approach motivation (Higgins, 1997) and increase one's persistence for achieving challenging goals (Clore, 1994; George & Brief, 1996), thus promote the enacting element of proactivity. Positive moods facilitate intrinsic motivation and promote individuals to engage in responsible behaviors (Isen & Reeve, 2005). As such, individuals who experience positive moods should be more motivated to follow through and reflect on the outcomes of past proactive efforts, out of an intrinsic interest in the proactive goal, as well as due to feelings of responsibility towards assuring a successful completion of the proactive goal. Likewise, positive moods can influence goal revision during proactive goal regulation by increasing openness to feedback (Gervy, Igou, & Trope, 2005).

In sum, there are strong theoretical reasons to expect that positive affect will be important for proactivity, and more specifically, for all elements of the proactive goal regulation process and empirical research on employee proactivity supports these expectations (see Table 1 for an overview on empirical studies on affect and proactivity, identifying the type of affect investigated [trait affectivity, moods, and emotions], the

location of affect in the four quadrants of the circumplex model, as well as the element proactive goal regulation investigated).

Insert Table 1 About Here

First, in a cross-sectional study across health-care employees, positive high-activated work-related affect was positively associated with self-reported personal initiative at work (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2007; see Table 1). Interestingly, high-activated positive affect was not associated with supervisor-rated personal initiative. This finding could indicate that self-reported proactive behavior largely reflects a view to see things more positively when in a positive mood. Stronger evidence for an association of affect with proactivity stems from a diary study by Fritz and Sonnentag (2009), which provided evidence of within-person associations of high-activated positive affect with increased proactivity. Over four consecutive work days, high-activated positive affect was positively related to taking charge behaviors both on the same day, as well as on the following day.

An investigation on proactivity in MBA students further indicates that the association of high-activated positive affect and proactivity might in some cases be shaped by cognitive-motivational contingencies (Parker, Collins, & Grant, 2008). While the researchers found a direct association of high-activated positive affect and other-ratings of taking charge and strategic scanning, the association of affect with issue selling and individual innovation proactivity was only maintained when respondents indicated low levels of performance-goal orientation (performance-goal orientation represents the *reason to*, cognitive-motivational pathway to proactivity, see Parker et al., 2010).

Several studies investigated the influence of concepts on proactivity at work which is rather similar to positive affect, such as job engagement, and feelings of recovery (e.g.,

Binnewies, Sonnentag and Mojza, 2009, 2010; Hakanen, Perhoniemi, & Toppinen-Tanner, 2008; Salanova & Schaufeli, 2008; Schaufeli, Taris, & Bakker, 2006; Sonnentag, 2003). For instance, Salanova and Schaufeli (2008) investigated the association of engagement and personal initiative across countries (Spain and Denmark), finding cross-cultural evidence of the hypothesized positive link of engagement and proactivity. Similarly, in an online study across professions in the Netherlands, work engagement was found to be positively related to individual innovation (Schaufeli, Taris, & Bakker, 2006). Regarding the possible influence of work engagement onto proactivity, further support stems from longitudinal investigations. Sonnentag (2003) found positive relationships between day-level work-engagement and day-level proactivity over the course of one working week. Similarly, Binnewies, Sonnentag and Mojza (2009) showed that the feeling of being recovered in the morning predicted higher levels of personal initiative during the same work day and Binnewies, Sonnentag and Mojza (2010) found that recover from work over the weekend is positively associated with proactivity during the following working week. Additional evidence for longer-term effects of engagement on proactivity stem from an investigation in a sample of dentists, where initial levels of work engagement were positively associated with levels of proactivity three years later on (Hakanen, Perhoniemi, & Toppinen-Tanner, 2008).

Most recently, Bindl and colleagues (2011) investigated the role of moods for proactive goal regulation across two independent samples and including foci on both on work-related as well as on self-, career-related forms of proactivity. Findings indicated that high-activated positive moods are positively associated with the enactment of proactive behavior, as well as – more comprehensively – have positive associations with all elements of proactive goal regulation including envisioning, planning, and reflecting.

Negative Affect and Proactivity

The role of negative moods for proactivity at work is ambivalent. Overall, affect shapes behaviors with a similar evaluative tone (Forgas & George, 2001; Staw et al., 1994; Tsai et al., 2007), and negative affective experience should be associated with lower levels of positive work behaviors (Kaplan, Bradley, Luchman, & Haynes, 2009). However, negative affect could have a positive influence on proactive behaviors as it likely indicates a gap between a present and desired situation (Carver & Scheier, 1982), and potentially stimulates change-oriented, proactive behaviors. In contrast, negative affect can also signal a lack of progress towards a goal and thus inhibit effective goal pursuit (Carver & Scheier, 1990; Easterbrook, 1959). It also likely depletes self-regulatory resources (Hobfoll, 1989) that are needed to engage in discretionary behaviors (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000).

Adopting a more fine-grained perspective, goal-regulation theory suggests that different activation levels in negative valence should likely lead to different outcomes for proactive goal regulation. Gollwitzer (1990) suggested that the more cognitive goal-regulatory element of envisioning a goal is characterized by a mindset in which individuals are receptive to diverse ideas and thoughts. Accordingly, recent research on negative affect indicates that low-activated negative moods broaden cognitions, whereas high-activated negative moods narrow attentional focus (Gable & Harmon-Jones, 2010). Specifically, low-activated negative affective experiences, such as depressive moods, might lead individuals to have ruminative thoughts (Martin & Tesser, 1996) related with contemplating how to change their present situation (Verhaeghen, Joormann, & Khan, 2005). In sum, low-activated negative moods should be overall positively related to employees' imagining a different future to be brought about by proactive efforts.

In contrast, high-activated negative affective experience, such as feeling threatened, should focus individuals' attention narrowly on the situation that is connected with the high-activated negative feelings (Easterbrook, 1959). High-activated negative feelings could

prompt envisioning, planning or reflecting to the extent that proactivity is directly related to a situation that causes these feelings. However, because moods are experienced as unrelated to an object (Parkinson et al., 1996), overall high-activated negative feelings at work should not per se prompt proactive goal regulation.

Additionally, given that affective states normally facilitate behaviors with the same evaluative tone (Forgas & George, 2001); negative moods should not per se facilitate engagement in positive, proactive behaviors. Negative affective experiences are also likely to derail the self-regulatory focus from the goal to be implemented (Beal et al., 2005) and yield an avoid orientation, rather than approach orientation (Carver, 2006; Higgins, 1997; Rodell & Judge, 2009). They signal poor progression towards a goal (Carver & Scheier, 1990) and ultimately lead to goal blockage (Berkowitz, 1989). Further, persistent negative feelings likely result in physical and psychological states of exhaustion (Gross & John, 2003) and are detrimental to the replenishment of self-regulatory resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Self-regulatory resources, in turn, are required for individuals' engagement in behaviors (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). Negative moods should therefore inhibit, or at least not facilitate, the translation of proactive contemplation into overt proactive behaviors.

Some empirical evidence supports the idea that negative affect can however signal a discrepancy between an actual situation and a desired situation, thereby stimulating individuals to engage in self-initiated and change-oriented behaviors in order to reduce the perceived discrepancy (Carver & Scheier, 1982). Across two independent studies, Den Hartog and Belschak (2007) found some evidence that high-activated negative affect positively related to employees' proactivity, although the effect was not consistent across samples and only applied to self-ratings of proactivity (see Table 1). Using similar measures of affect and proactivity in a diary study design, Fritz and Sonnentag (2009) found that high-activated negative affect was not related to proactivity.

A recent study by Bindl and colleagues (2011) suggest the previous equivocal results could be due to not differentiating between different elements of proactive goal regulation and location of moods in the affective circumplex model. The researchers found that low-activated negative moods were positively associated with employees' envisioning a better future to be brought about by proactive efforts. Negative moods (regardless of activation levels), in contrast, were not associated with the actual implementation of proactive behaviors. These results possibly indicate off-setting effects between negative affect spurring the motivation for change (Carver & Scheier, 1998), and a depletion of resources needed to exercise self-regulatory effort to bring about the change (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000).

Summary and Implications

In this chapter, we reviewed theory and empirical findings on the link between affect and employee proactivity. We showed that the association of affect with employee proactivity depends on which affective qualities across the circumplex model of affect are considered (Russell, 1980; 2003) as well as which goal-regulatory stages of proactivity are included (Bindl et al., 2011). Developing theory to understand behavior in organizations will benefit from more comprehensive distinctions of affect, as well as of behaviors at work. This implication leads to a recommendation to use more fine-grained measures of both affect and work behavior in research and practice. To the extent that only highly activated qualities of affect are included in the most commonly used affect instruments (e.g., drawing on the 'PANAS' scale, Watson et al., 1988), the role of low-activated forms of affect for behavior at work is likely to be under-specified. For instance the positive link between low-activated negative feelings of depression and envisioning proactivity that we proposed, for which there is preliminary evidence (Bindl et al., 2011), might go unnoticed if traditional measures of affect continue to be used. From the perspective of goal regulation theory, our review additionally encourages scholars to try to capture momentary within-person affective and

goal-regulatory processes at work (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003) in order to more accurately test the dynamics of human behavior at work.

Practically, our review suggests that employee proactivity can be promoted in organizations because the behavior stems from a goal-regulatory process that is influenced by feelings at work. It makes sense, therefore, for organizations to develop interventions that are targeted at facilitating proactivity amongst their employees (e.g., Raabe et al., 2007; Searle, 2008). One of the core propositions of this chapter concerns the important role of high-activated positive affective experience at work such as feeling energetic and enthused, as compared to low-activated positive feelings such as comforted and relaxed, in promoting all elements of proactive goal regulation. As such, organizations wishing to enhance proactivity should aim to cultivate and maintain high levels of activated positive affect amongst their work force. Past research has identified influential facilitators of positive affect at work, such as the quality of work design, positive team climate, and transformational leadership styles (Brief & Weiss, 2002; George & Brief, 1992). Research on the related concept of employee engagement (for a comparison of the two concepts, see e.g., Bindl & Parker, 2010a; Macey & Schneider, 2008) has indicated several avenues for promoting high-activated positive feelings at work. For instance, in a study with service employees, positive daily team climate predicted higher levels of individual employee engagement on the same day (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2009). Organizations should aim to pay attention to the moods of work groups. Interventions that improve teams' overall level of engagement will likely produce more widespread effects than targeting individuals' engagement only. Additionally, physical features of the job, such as pleasant office designs and good technological equipment can promote engagement amongst employees (Salanova, Agut, & Peiró, 2005). Likewise, being responsible for different tasks has been shown to prevent feelings of monotony and to enable employees to feel stimulated in their job (Salanova &

Schaufeli, 2008), and a great deal of work design research highlights the importance of job characteristics like autonomy for promoting positive affect at work (Parker & Wall, 1998).

Research indicates that the broadening effect of positive mood on cognitive processes only occurs if the task is judged to be important (Isen, 1999). In a study of professional fundraisers, Grant and colleagues (2007) found that employees worked substantially more productively if they connected with the end beneficiaries of their fundraising activities. One particular strategy in the context of promoting particularly high-activated types of positive affect could be to engage employees with the outcomes of their potential proactive goals in order to increase perceived task significance. Overall, past research indicates that organizations can choose from a wide range of options for enhancing employees' positive affect and hence proactivity, the feasibility and usefulness of which will depend on the specific circumstances and needs of an organization.

Avenues for Future Research

Research on affect and proactive goal regulation has only just begun. There are important questions that remain unanswered, and in this last section we identify several avenues of future research in this area.

Emotions in the Process of Proactive Goal Regulation

Throughout this chapter we argued for, and reviewed the literature on, the importance of trait affectivity and moods for proactivity. Thus far, we have not considered how emotions, which are shorter in duration, more intense, and more object-focused relative to moods, relate to proactivity. We expect emotions to operate differently to moods or trait affectivity, in particular because proactivity is likely to evoke emotions in the process, whereas trait affectivity is clearly best considered an antecedent of proactivity, and moods too likely take on the role as antecedent. Some previous research and theory in the field of emotions and goal regulation should be applicable to the context of proactivity. For instance, because

proactive goals are self-set, and thus rather internalized (Parker et al., 2010), the type of emotions experienced as a function of the outcome of proactive goal regulation should reflect more internally attributed as opposed to externally attributed types of emotions (Perrewe & Zellars, 1999). Similarly, one would expect that proactive goals, because they may be difficult to achieve (Grant & Ashford, 2008), evoke salient positive emotional experience, such as feelings of *pride* when successfully completed (Lewis et al., 1992).

However, the hallmark of proactive goals is that they require persistence and initiative to overcome barriers (Frese & Fay, 2001) which may restrict the applicability of some of the research on the role of emotions for goal setting and pursuit. According to Carver and Scheier (1990), less than desired progress with goals produces negative feelings, which eventually leads to abandoning the goal. In contrast, proactive employees sustain proactivity upon experiencing negative emotions, for instance when proactivity is not welcomed by the organization (Frese & Fay, 2001). It may be that high-activated positive trait affectivity and moods provide the necessary resources and buffer (Fredrickson, Mancuso, Branigan, & Tugade, 2000) for employees to cope with any negative emotions in the process of proactivity. In contrast, repeated negative emotional experiences in proactivity might fade into more general negative moods at work (Frijda, 1993; Isen, 1984), possibly inhibiting future proactive goal regulation. These hypotheses, as well as specific investigations into the role of emotions for employee proactivity, remain to be tested.

Embeddedness of Affect and Proactive Goal Regulation within the Social Context

In this chapter, we focused on individuals' experience of affect and proactive goal regulation. This focus could now be extended to investigate the relationship of affective experience and proactive goal regulation in the broader social context of the organization. For instance, in cases where proactivity is about changing the context of the work, proactive goal regulation likely includes cooperation with others in the organization (Dutton et al., 2002).

Different areas of proactivity research have acknowledged the role of social processes for proactivity by investigating the role of influencing tactics of employees in raising issues to top management (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). The role of affect-related processes between dyads or groups in the organization in relation to these proactive issues has not been emphasized thus far.

For instance, the notion of group influence relates to the conception of affective tone within a group (George, 1996). Previous research indicates that moods converge within work teams, owing to mood contagion and social influence (Totterdell, Kellett, Teuchmann, & Briner, 1998). Within groups, a more positive group affective tone has been linked with superior performance at work (Totterdell, 2000). In contrast, negative affect expressed by others, particularly anger, has been linked with fear and exhaustion in the target of the anger as well as in uninvolved bystanders (Rupp & Spencer, 2006), thereby potentially stifling the proactivity of the target and bystanders. These thoughts lead to the notion of employees' regulation of affective experience which we discuss in the next section.

An Agentic View on Individuals' Regulation of Affect

In our chapter, we conceived of affect as the experience of feelings, but we have not considered the ways in which individuals can regulate these affective experiences within the proactivity process. First, individuals' regulation of their *own emotions* might be relevant for effective proactivity. If high-activated positive feelings are important for employee proactivity, successful emotion regulation to the extent that employees quickly recover overall positive affective experience in the face of negative emotions (Gross, 1998) should have several benefits. For instance, it could act as a coping mechanism in preventing the employee from detrimental effects related to the experience of fully aroused negative emotions such as depletion of self-regulatory resources (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000;

Richards & Gross, 1999) and impairment in well-being and interpersonal functioning (Gross & John, 2003).

Similarly, employees who reinstall their positive affective experience more quickly than others might be more successful in their proactivity because their positive moods signal to others their benevolent intentions. In this vein, research has indicated that supervisors are likely to give more credit to proactive behaviors if the employee simultaneously expressed high levels of activated positive affect. Thus, Grant and colleagues (2009) argued that supervisors would react to employees' expression of positive affect by attributing favorable motives to their engagement in proactive behaviors.

However, a display of highly-activated positive emotions may have beneficial effects only to a certain extent. It has been argued that organizations have implicit expectations as to the types of emotions that should be expressed by employees (e.g., Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989). For instance, in an organization that values low extents of expression of affective experience, the display of high-activated positive affect in connection with voicing proactive ideas might be perceived by supervisors as 'too emotional'. An appropriate balance in experiencing versus displaying high-activated positive feelings about a proactive issue might be important to achieve a maximum buy-in from organizational stakeholders. As Frese and Fay (2001) suggested, proactive employees might be the better emotion regulators.

Second, employees, in order to be proactive might engage in monitoring or even regulating *others emotions*, in order to achieve their proactive goals. This also relates to the role of emotional intelligence for work performance (Ashkanasy, Ashton-James, & Jordan, 2003; Côté & Miners, 2006). In this vein, Ang, Cummings, Straub and Earley (1993), in a series of laboratory studies, showed that individuals were more likely to engage in feedback seeking when they perceived that the person they were to seek feedback from was in a good mood. Similarly, Morrison and Bies (1991) in their literature review argued that employees

are more likely to engage in feedback seeking if the person to seek feedback from is in a positive mood, because they feel their act of feedback seeking will be seen more favorably. In order to counter resistance of supervisors or colleagues in accepting proactive changes to the workplace, employees might engage in active tactics to favorably influence others' emotions towards the proactive issue. In deliberately influencing others' emotions (for a classification of strategies, see Niven, Totterdell, & Holman, 2009), employees could lower resistance from the environment towards their proactive stances and solicit other's engagement in the proactive issue. In sum, future research could investigate the role of emotion regulation of oneself and of other individuals in engaging and persisting in proactivity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we set out to review and elucidate knowledge on the burgeoning research area of affect and proactivity at work. Our review indicates that being proactive likely represents an affect-infused process. Our chapter suggests the importance of comprehensively investigating parameters such as activation and valence in affect, as well as different roles of trait affectivity, moods and emotions when studying the relationship between affect and behaviors. Proactive behavior at work is a timely and relevant topic for today's work places. With greater levels of decentralization and fast-paced change, it is increasingly important that employees take charge of their careers and their work environments. Most importantly, our review suggests that the way employees feel when at work matters in their proactive pursuits of *making things happen*.

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Table 1*Overview of Past Research on the Relationship between Affect and Proactivity*

	Study	Type of Affect investigated	Location in Affective Circumplex	Aspect of Proactive Goal Regulation investigated	Association between Affect and Proactivity
1	Bindl, Parker, Totterdell, & Hagger-Johnson (2011)	Moods	High-activated positive, Low-activated positive, High-activated negative, Low-activated negative	Envisioning, Planning, Enacted Behaviour, Reflecting	+ (High-activated positive with all elements) + (Low-activated negative with envisioning)
2	Binnewies, Sonnentag & Mojza (2009)*	Moods	High-activated positive	Enacted Behaviour	+
3	Binnewies, Sonnentag, & Mojza (2010)*	Moods	High-activated positive	Enacted Behaviour	+

4	Den Hartog & Belschak (2007)	Trait affectivity	High-activated positive	Enacted Behaviour	+ (S 1 & 2: self-rated) / <i>ns</i> (S 2: supervisor-rated)
		Trait affectivity	High-activated negative	Enacted Behaviour	+ (S 1) / <i>ns</i> (S 2)
5	Fritz and Sonnentag (2009)	Moods	High-activated positive	Enacted Behaviour	+
		Moods	High-activated negative	Enacted Behaviour	<i>ns</i>
6	Hakanen, Perhoniemi, & Toppinen-Tanner (2008)*	Trait affectivity	High-activated positive	Enacted Behaviour	+
7	Parker, Collins, & Grant (2008)	Trait affectivity	High-activated positive	Enacted Behaviour	+
8	Salanova and Schaufeli (2008)*	Trait affectivity	High-activated positive	Enacted Behaviour	+
9	Schaufeli, Taris, & Bakker (2006)*	Trait affectivity	High-activated positive	Enacted Behaviour	+
10	Sonnentag (2003)*	Moods	High-activated positive	Enacted Behaviour	+

Note. * These are studies that investigated constructs similar to, albeit not identical with, affect; Association between affect and proactivity: + (significantly positive relationship), *ns* (non-significant relationship); in Den Hartog & Belschak (2007): S1-2 (Studies 1 and 2 in DenHartog & Belschak, 2007).