Emotion and Proactivity at Work

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In today’s global economy, organizations face complex environments that require rapid responses to changing external environments (Campbell, 2000). To succeed within these increasingly uncertain operating environments, in addition to adapting to changes, employees can proactively respond to challenges (Griffin, Neal, and Parker, 2007) to improve the work environment, such as generating new ideas and finding alternatives to improve work effectiveness, or themselves, such as seeking feedback or career advice to facilitate one’s career prospect. Nevertheless, not all employees behave proactively at work. This is the case because being proactive can be demanding and effortful. To be proactive or to make things happen, an individual needs to spend extra time and effort to monitor the environment, identify threats or opportunities, come up with ideas or solutions to make changes and overcome obstacles or resistances. To achieve this, employees need to have enough energy or be energized during the course to support proactive actions.

Positive emotions have been identified as an energizer to boost employees’ proactivity (Parker, Bindl, and Strauss, 2010). Firstly, positive emotions broaden one’s attention and awareness, leading an individual to see a wide range of behavioural repertoires and promoting curiosity and exploration. As such, positive emotions are likely to influence the selection of proactive goals because it evokes flexible cognitive processes (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001; Isen, 1999) and helps individuals to think ahead and rise to the challenge of pursuing proactive goals. Secondly, positive emotions provide feelings of energy
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(Shraga and Shirom, 2009), which helps employees to maintain their engagement and persistence in performing challenging activities (Tsai, Chen, and Liu, 2007). However, there are different positive emotions, such as happy, excited, relaxed, and grateful, among others. Do all positive emotions elevate the levels of proactivity? Proactivity research so far has relied on the affective circumplex model (Russell, 1980) to differentiate emotions into four quadrants – the combinations of high versus low activation and positive versus negative valence. Findings to date in general reveal that high-activated positive emotions play key role energizing employees’ proactive activities (for example, Bindl et al, 2012; Warr et al, 2014).

While the affective circumplex model provides a way to differentiate positive emotions into broad categories, the classification is not specific enough to help us understand the function of specific positive emotion in driving an individual’s proactive forces (for example, Izard, 2009). Firstly, not all positive emotions have been included in the affective circumplex model. Secondly, the focus on the levels of activation ignores the idiosyncratic meaning of each positive emotion, which should be key to unpack the role of emotions in shaping individual behaviour. As different emotions may be elicited in different contexts, taking the contextual background of a specific emotion into account should be able to help us understand their impact on individual behaviour. As indicated by Bindl (2019), scholars need to investigate how and why affect is critical in the process of engaging in proactivity so as to develop a more differentiated theory on the role of affect for proactivity. In the meantime, proactive behaviour has been mainly studied from a self- or goal-regulatory perspective (Bindl et al, 2012; Parker, Bindl, and Strauss, 2010; Wu et al, 2018), which emphasizes the idea of agency that an individual can bring about change by envisioning goals s/he wants to achieve and striving for such achievement. Nevertheless, employees do not live in a social vacuum. People observe what others do, learning ideas and actions from observing (Bandura, 1971). How vicarious learning, such as observing exemplary others, can inspire employees’ proactive behaviour at work via an emotional mechanism, however, has been rarely investigated.

To address the research gap, the aim of this chapter is to discuss how exemplary others can elicit different specific, positive emotions, which, in turn, inspires employees’ different proactive behaviour. In this chapter, we focus on four other-praising emotions – gratitude, elevation, admiration, and awe – and suggest that these four emotions can shape different proactive behaviours in the workplace (see Table 7.1 for a summary). We focused on these four other-praising emotions for
Table 7.1: Other-praising emotions and their functions on motivation and proactive behaviour

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other-praising emotions</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Elicited motivations</th>
<th>Elicited proactive behaviour</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude</td>
<td>A moral emotion reflecting a state of being grateful when individuals recognize they have benefited from another’s actions (McCullough et al, 2001).</td>
<td>(1) Functions as a ‘moral barometer’ sensitive to events in which another person provides benefits to the self. (2) Functions as a ‘moral motive’ and ‘moral reinforcer’ and makes people act more prosocially (McCullough et al, 2001).</td>
<td>Proactive prosocial behaviour (for example, interpersonal helping and altruism).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elevation</td>
<td>The emotional response to witnessing acts of virtue or moral beauty, or others’ behaviour that exceeds standards of virtue (for example, Algoe and Haidt, 2009; Haidt, 2003).</td>
<td>(1) Emulate the moral role model, become a better person (self moral development). (2) Put personal moral values into action and do something good for others (Pohling and Diessner, 2016).</td>
<td>Proactive moral behaviour (for example, moral voice, whistle-blowing behaviour, participation in CSR activities, volunteering).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admiration</td>
<td>An emotional response to witnessing of extraordinary displays of non-moral excellence such as skill, talent, or achievement by others (Algoe and Haidt, 2009; Haidt, 2003).</td>
<td>(1) Emulate the role model, induce the motivational state of inspiration. (2) Promote individual learning and change, help individuals to develop, grow, and achieve excellence (Schindler et al, 2013).</td>
<td>Proactive learning behaviour (for example, feedback-seeking, mentor-seeking, learning and personal development behaviours and activities).</td>
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(continued)
several reasons. First, other-praising emotions are ‘positive emotional responses elicited by exemplary others’ (Algoe and Haidt, 2009, p 105). They are different from the well-studied, high-activated positive emotions, such as happiness, that are mainly driven by goal regulations or self-related accomplishment (Algoe and Haidt, 2009). Studying other-praising emotions will help us expand the scope of positive emotions in proactivity literature.

Second, as its name suggests, other-praising emotions are emotions elicited in a relational context. Unpacking how other-praising emotions can shape employees’ proactivity will advance the understanding of social influence process in driving employees’ proactivity. Studying other-praising emotions and their impact on proactive behaviour will help enrich such understanding because we will be able to identify how others can inspire an individual’s proactive behaviour by eliciting specific other-praising emotions.

### Table 7.1: Other-praising emotions and their functions on motivation and proactive behaviour (continued)

<table>
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<td>Awe</td>
<td>An emotional response to witnessing of the stimulus (for example, threat, beauty, ability, virtue, supernatural causality) that is vast and requires accommodation (Haidt, 2003; Keltner and Haidt, 2003)</td>
<td>(1) Experience things that are much larger than the self or the self’s ordinary level of experience or frame of reference (Keltner and Haidt, 2003).&lt;br&gt;(2) Adjust mental structures that cannot assimilate a new experience (Keltner and Haidt, 2003).&lt;br&gt;(3) Relate to excellence that is beyond accomplishment and understanding (Schindler et al, 2013).&lt;br&gt;(4) The feeling of being diminished in the presence of something greater than the self, and the motivation to be good to others (Piff et al, 2015; Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman, 2007) – social collective orientation.</td>
<td>Proactive self-transcendent behavior (for example, building social/group cohesion, proactive socialization into organization).</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Third, as different other-praising emotions, such as gratitude, elevation, admiration, and awe, are elicited by different actions from others and induced different motivations (we will elaborate on this shortly), we thus expect that proactive behaviour driven by these emotions can also be different. Proactive behaviour has been largely studied under a 'generalized approach that emphasizes commonalities across different types of proactive behaviour ... to identify core processes and antecedents that facilitate proactivity across multiple domains' (Wu et al, 2018, p 294). However, scholars have started to recognize the differences between proactive behaviours by proposing different classification frameworks (for example, Belschak and Den Hartog, 2010; Griffin, Neal, and Parker, 2007; Parker and Collins, 2010) and unpacking different antecedents and boundary conditions for different forms of proactive behaviour, such as work-unit-oriented proactive behaviour and career-oriented proactive behaviour (Wu et al, 2018). We believe that by studying how different other-praising emotions can drive different forms of proactive behaviour, we are able to differentiate different forms of proactive behaviour.

In brief, we believe that our focus on other-praising emotions will contribute to the discussion of emotion and proactivity in many aspects as we just elaborated. In the following sections, we will firstly introduce four specific other-praising emotions (that is, gratitude, elevation, admiration, and awe) and then specifically elaborate on how each emotion can shape different forms of proactive behaviour in the workplace. We will conclude this chapter by highlighting the value of studying other-praising emotions and providing suggestions for future research.

Other-praising emotions

We now introduce the four other-praising emotions: gratitude, elevation, admiration and awe. These four emotions have been considered as one of families of moral emotions (Haidt, 2003) as they all involve interests or welfare of individuals or the whole society and involve positive evaluations of the perceived target. Specifically, gratitude, elevation and admiration are typical other-praising emotions arising from others’ exemplary actions (Algoe and Haidt, 2009; Haidt, 2003) and awe is an emotion arising from perceiving vastness (Keltner and Haidt, 2003), which can be in a social context such as being in the presence of someone with a greater social status. These emotions have not been included in the affective circumplex model and the commonly-used emotion measurements such as the PANAS
Gratitude is a moral emotion reflecting a state of being grateful when individuals recognize they have benefited from others’ costly, intentional, and voluntary action (McCullough et al., 2001; McCullough, Kimeldorf, and Cohen, 2008). Gratitude thus is an emotional experience elicited by an event (that is, receiving a benefit) and the attributions (that is, others’ costly, intentional, and voluntary action) assigned to the event.

Elevation is an emotional response to witnessing acts of virtue or moral beauty, or others’ behaviour that exceed standards of virtue (Algoe and Haidt, 2009; Haidt, 2003). It is an emotion that will bring a desire to ‘become a better person oneself and to follow the example of the moral exemplar’ (Haidt, 2003, p 864), ‘put personal moral values into action’ and ‘do something good for others’ (Pohling and Diessner, 2016, p 418). Morally elevated individuals share warm, open feelings in the chest, feel optimistic about humanity, and strive to become more virtuously themselves (Algoe and Haidt, 2009; Haidt, 2003).

Admiration is an emotional response to the witnessing of extraordinary displays of skill, talent, or achievement by others (Algoe and Haidt, 2009; Haidt, 2003). It is ‘surprise associated with some pleasure and a sense of approval’ (Darwin and Ekman, 1872/1998, p 269) and is an emotion that ‘motivates the internalisation and emulation of ideals embodied by an outstanding role model’ (Schindler et al., 2013, p 85). To differentiate its difference from elevation, Haidt and his colleagues (Algoe and Haidt, 2009; Haidt, 2003; Haidt and Morris, 2009) define admiration as a response to non-moral excellence. We follow this approach to differentiate elevation and admiration as it helps to differentiate the context how one would respond to the perceived exemplar. However, we are aware of debates on the differentiation between elevation and admiration (Kristjánsson, 2017; Szutta, 2019; Zagzebski, 2017).

Finally, awe is a moral emotional state that ‘results when we encounter something vast (usually physically vast, but sometimes small things reveal vast power, genius, or complexity) that cannot be comprehended using existing mental structures’ (Haidt and Seder, 2009, p 5). Keltner and Haidt (2003) proposed that the experience of awe has two central
elements: perceived vastness – the stimulus surpasses the individuals’ boundaries of ordinary experiences; and the need for accommodation – the individuals need to adjust and expand their accustomed mental structures to understand the stimulus.

In the next section, we start elaborating on how these four emotions can elicit different motivations and thus promote different, specific proactive behaviour in the workplace.

**Gratitude and proactive prosocial behaviour**

As being grateful is evoked by receiving benefits from others (Algoe, Kurtz, and Hilaire, 2016), it usually motivates recipients to contribute to the welfare of the benefactor in turn or other persons. Moral affect theory of gratitude (McCullough et al, 2001) posits that gratitude acts first as a moral barometer, increasing the recipients’ sensitivity to the perception that they have been the beneficiaries of another person’s actions. Gratitude then serves as a moral motive, motivating the recipients to behave prosocially towards the benefactor and finally as a moral reinforcer, encouraging the benefactor to continue to behave prosocially back to the grateful recipients (and to others) in the future. This theory suggests that gratitude functions to facilitate social exchange between grateful recipients and benefactors through repayment or reciprocation of the benefits. In a meta-analytical study, Ma, Tunney, and Ferguson (2017) found a moderate positive association between gratitude and prosociality. They also indicated that the association is stronger when the prosocial actions were aimed to benefit the benefactors (that is, direct reciprocity) than other parties (that is, indirect reciprocity).

In addition to facilitate reciprocity for social exchange, gratitude helps strengthen a relationship with a responsive interaction partner. As indicated in the find-remind-and-bind theory of gratitude and its related studies (Algoe, 2012; Algoe, Haidt, and Gable, 2008; Algoe and Zhaoyang, 2016), gratitude emotions set the stage for subsequent quality interactions between the grateful recipients and their benefactor, and through repeated interactions, a communal relationship can be established over the long term, contributing to relationship formation and maintenance. Both theories of gratitude suggest that gratitude has a natural dyad of grateful recipients and their benefactor and could be uniquely suited to promote high-quality interpersonal relationships (Algoe et al, 2019).

With this being said, we argue that gratitude emotions draw an individual’s attention to interpersonal dynamics and the emotional
response, in turn, could motivate the individual to engage in proactive prosocial behaviours such as interpersonal helping and altruistic behaviours in the workplace. Altruism or offering interpersonal help in the workplace (Rioux and Penner, 2001; Smith, Organ, and Near, 1983), which has been studied under the concept of organizational citizenship behaviours, can be regarded as proactive prosocial behaviour (Grant and Ashford, 2008; Grant, Parker, and Collins, 2009). Individuals consciously choose to engage in these behaviours with the aim of benefitting either specific individuals within an organizational context or an organization itself. Since the experience of gratitude emotions shifts individuals’ attention to the well-being of another entity (that is, the benefactor or third party) and a desire to be helpful and cooperative, we expect that grateful persons are more likely to engage in proactive altruistic and helping behaviours in the workplace. Findings from a few studies have lend support for the idea that gratitude can boost an individual’s proactivity to benefit others, or proactive prosocial behaviour. For example, grateful employees are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behaviours (Ford et al, 2018; Spence et al, 2014). Grateful leaders have also been found to demonstrate prosocial leader behaviour toward team members and foster positive, supportive relationships with all those around them (Grant and Gino, 2010; Michie, 2009).

Beyond the individual level, the function of gratitude on prosocial proactivity can also be extended to the group level. Algoe et al (2019) found that grateful emotional expressions can not only impact the behaviour of the grateful recipients and benefactors, but also influence multiple group members simultaneously. Specifically, they found a third party witnessing effect, in which the third party witnessed to the recipient expressing gratitude toward a benefactor became more helpful and affiliative toward the grateful recipient as well as towards the benefactor in the group. This finding suggests that, in addition to promoting one’s proactive prosocial behaviour, gratitude can spark others’ proactive prosocial behaviour via a social observation and contagion mechanisms.

**Elevation and proactive moral behaviour**

Like gratitude, elevation can motivate an individual to engage in prosocial behaviour to demonstrate their virtue or morality (Schnall, Roper, and Fessler, 2010; Thomson et al, 2014; Van de Vyver and Abrams, 2017). Nevertheless, the main trigger as well as the behavioural outcomes of elevation and gratitude emotions can be quite different.
While gratitude is evoked by moral actions that usually benefitted the self, elevation is elicited by moral beauty that was not directed at one’s self (Pohling and Diessner, 2016). So unlike gratitude focused more on facilitating interpersonal relationships through reciprocity, elevation is more about the empowerment of exemplar’s ‘imitably attractive’ moral excellence (Zagzebski, 2017) and how an individual can develop similar moral virtues as the moral exemplar. Pohling, Diessner, and Strobel (2018), for example, found that trait moral elevation longitudinally promoted increases of moral identity internalization or overall moral self-concept. Aquino, McFerran, and Laven (2011) found that individuals with high levels of moral identity internalization were more likely than others to experience heightened states of moral elevation emotions. These studies suggest that elevation can play a role in moral identity development, or the development of internal states of goodness or virtues, enhancing one’s moral standard and acting moral behaviour proactively. As indicated by Schnall and Roper (2012, p 373) elevation will mainly serve to ‘provide a motivational impetus to act on one’s moral values’ and promote one’s moral behaviour, though the elicited moral actions also have prosocial implications. This point is also supported by Thomson and Siegel (2013).

In the work context, we expect that moral elevation can facilitate proactive moral behaviour in different forms. For example, ethical or moral voice, ‘the act of speaking out against unethical issues’ (Lee et al, 2017, p 48), can be an example of proactive moral behaviour as employees who take a higher moral standard will be more sensitive to unethical issues and raise concerns and suggestions to protect morality at work. Specifically, ethical voice challenges and aims to change existing procedurals, behaviours and policies that are not normatively appropriate (Huang and Paterson, 2017; Lee et al, 2017). It uses moral expressions and provides suggestions that seek to improve ethical decision-making and behaviours before serious unethical problems occur. Moral elevation could play a key role in promoting more ethical voice because it uplifts individuals morally and thus suppresses the effect of immoral desires that might otherwise discourage social responsiveness towards others. Research has shown that individuals with heightened levels of moral identity and courage may be more likely to engage in ethical voice because their moral self-conceptions urge them to behave in a morally consistent way (Chen and Chen, 2018). In this sense, we believe that moral elevation emotions could foster ethical voice among employees.

In contrast to ethical voice that often involves open moral communication directed towards other inside organizational members
(Afsar and Shahjehan, 2018; Huang and Paterson, 2017), whistle-blowing behaviour is considered a type of proactive moral behaviour towards both inside and outside members and involves a whistleblower’s rejection of violation in moral dilemmas (Near and Miceli, 1985). Dozier and Miceli (1985) posited that whistle-blowing is a prosocial behaviour intended to benefit others by reporting wrongdoings to parties who can take corrective actions. However, employees who engage in whistle-blowing behaviours may put their positions in danger as whistle-blowing creates discomfort, tension, and opposition from peers or managers who want to sustain established unethical practices shared in the organization. Thus, blowing whistles could involve a complex moral cognitive or emotional process (Miceli et al, 2012). As morally elevated persons are prosocially oriented and always put moral values in check (Algoe and Haidt, 2009), they are more likely to feel the urge to behave ethically in various situations and constantly serve as moral constructive dissenters when they see their managers or peers fail to do so.

From an organizational perspective, we also believe that senior level leaders’ moral elevation may prompt companies to engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. Moral elevation helps leaders become aware of corporate ethical actions, such as holding high ethical operating standards and supporting a local development programme. Engaging in CSR actions is seen as an exemplary display of virtue supporting leaders’ own moral goals. Although there is no direct empirical evidence supporting the moral elevation–CSR link, we argue that leaders’ moral elevation provides fertile soil for the growth of CSR actions because of its awakening moral standards and virtues. Dedeke (2015) suggested that people could react to moral behaviours done by others in an emotional way. Company CSR activities could be regarded as displays of moral beauty and genuine concern for the welfare of the community, which could evoke feelings of elevation in third-party employees and consumers. Xie, Bagozzi, and Gronhaug (2019), for example, found that company CSR actions trigger feelings of moral elevation among consumers, which leads to consumers’ brand advocacy behaviour.

In addition to CSR activities that mainly aim to make contributions outside the organizations, Vianello, Galliani, and Haidt (2010) explored the effects of moral elevation in the workplace and found that an employer’s ability to emotionally elevate employees with virtuous behaviour can enhance employee attitudes and help cultivate a healthy organizational culture. This finding suggests that elevation can promote moral-related behaviour and participation within and outside the organization.
Admiration and proactive learning behaviour

Akin to the role-modelling effect (Morgenroth, Ryan, and Peters, 2015), admiration generates a desire for proximity towards the perceived target who demonstrated extraordinary performance. In other words, admiration of an exemplar with great skills, talent, and achievement leads to a conception of oneself as lacking the admired qualities but desiring to possess them, which in turn produces inspiration and emulation. Scholars posited that admiration designates a motivational state that individuals feel that they can potentially be like the exemplar whom they admire and therefore are driven to reach their ideal state as the exemplar (for example, Archer, 2019; Schindler et al, 2013). Individuals who experience admiration emotion are likely to have ‘a desire to personally grow’ (van de Ven, 2017, p 194). Such desire will then promote one’s behaviour to obtain skills, resources, and experiences to achieve the same level of achievement as the exemplar.

Since admiration leads to emulation of excellence presented by exemplars, it motivates individuals to engage in proactive goal-directed learning and development activities in order to reach their self-growth goal. We therefore argue that experiences of admiration can motivate employees to seek more feedback, pursue learning and development in the workplace. Those behaviours can be conceptualized as proactive learning behaviour. In the work context, behaviour such as feedback-seeking (Ashford, Stobbeleir, and Nujella, 2016), proactive career behaviour (that is, career consultation, learning, and skill development) (Claes and Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1998), belong to this category. Feedback-seeking, for example, involves proactive and voluntary actions that employees undertake to obtain evaluations and information (Ashford and Cummings, 1983, 1985; Ashford, Stobbeleir, and Nujella, 2016). Feedback is a valuable resource for individuals because it facilitates their adaption, learning, and performance (Ashford and Cummings, 1983). In addition, employees can actively seek out learning and development opportunities and engage in a series of behaviours to expand their knowledge and skills (for example, Colquitt and Simmering, 1998; Major, Turner, and Fletcher, 2006). These are specific forms of proactive learning behaviour that can be promoted by admiration.

Moreover, Schindler et al (2015; 2013) suggested that admiration could motivate individuals to affiliate with the admired others and to improve (that is, close the gap between their current state and ideal state). It is thus possible that when individuals admire an exemplar who is from a similar work area, they are more likely to seek out the exemplar (or others) and ask the exemplar to be their mentor, who
can provide career and job consultation. Mentor-seeking behaviours can also be expanded to general social networks building activities, because employees often build social networks in order to improve work efficiency or their own careers (Ostroff and Kozlowski, 2002). van de Ven (2017) posited that the motivational state aroused by admiration emotion could enable one to focus more on personal long-term goals and to improve in domains valuable to oneself. Therefore, we argue that experiences of admiration at work could motivate general social networks building activities that involve proactively forming interpersonal ties and connections, but with those who can help them to approach the ideal state, for current or future use (for example, Morrison, 2002; Ostroff and Kozlowski, 2002).

**Awe and proactive self-transcendent behaviour**

Unlike other varieties of positive emotions, awe tends to direct attention away from awareness of the self and towards the surroundings, because excellence of the stimulus is beyond accomplishment and understanding (Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman, 2007). Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman (2007) found that the experience of awe was associated with a sense of the diminished self and the presence of something greater than the self, which leads to a conception of oneself as part of the larger entities such as a community, a culture, or nature. Recently, Bai et al. (2017) also found that the small or diminished self served as a central mediator of awe’s impacts on various social cognition and behaviour. Like other emotions we have discussed, awe has been related to individuals’ engagement in prosocial behaviours such as increased ethical decision-making, generosity, and prosocial values (for example, Piff et al., 2015). But such effect on prosocial behaviours is due to the fact that awe is a collective emotion, one that enables individuals to integrate into broader collectives (Bai et al, 2017; Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman, 2007) and engage in actions that can benefit the collectives.

We argue that given its collective nature, awe can facilitate self-transcendence and promote proactive behaviours reflecting such tendencies, here referring to proactive self-transcendent behaviour. As introduced earlier, awe is elicited when an individual perceives vastness that requests one to adjust and expand her/his perspective to understand the stimulus. Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman (2007, p 945) have clarified that: ‘Vastness may be implied by a stimulus, rather than physically inherent in the stimulus … An individual may be vast in the sense of having great impact on others’ lives. What is
critical is that the stimulus dramatically expands the observer’s usual frame of reference in some dimension or domain.’

Following this, we argue that perceived vastness in the work context can come from different sources such as great organizational prestige, supervisors or colleagues who have extraordinary achievement or social status, or organizational activities (for example, products, business, or CSR) that have a significant impact on the beneficiaries or the society. When an employee feels awe by perceiving vastness in her/his organizational setting, s/he is likely to see her/himself as part of the organization and engage in proactive self-transcendent behaviour to support such self-conception. In line with this, Shiota, Keltner, and Mossman (2007) found that people high in dispositional awe are more likely to emphasize their membership in larger categories – a shift that is vital to the collaboration and cooperation required of social groups (Keltner et al., 2014; Piff et al., 2015).

We suggest that the experiences of awe would likely occur when employees enter their organizations because, at that time, employees, as newcomers, are not familiar with their organizations and people in there and thus are likely to encounter stimulus that could dramatically expand their usual frame of reference. In such context, awe may promote newcomers’ proactive self-transcendent behaviour, making them merge into the organization. Following this idea, we expect that awe may facilitate newcomers’ proactivity to strengthen their social identity at work. Behaviours such proactively seeking social or group cohesion, actively adapting to new environments, or proactive socialization into organizations (Ashford and Black, 1996; Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg, 2003; Kim, Cable, and Kim, 2005; Wanberg and Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000) belong to this category. For newcomers, adjusting to a new job or a new environment can be a daunting task. They not only need to seek task-related information for their new job, but also need to figure out acceptable social behaviours to become functioning members of the organization (for example, Ashford and Black, 1996; Ashforth, Sluss, and Saks, 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller, Livingston, and Liao, 2011). Since experiencing awe enables people to feel more comfortable revising their own mental structure, or acknowledging that currently held mental representations of the environment are not adequate to the occasion (Keltner and Haidt, 2003), awe-prone newcomers or newcomers who are experiencing awe in their first few months of employment could be more proactive in adapting themselves into the new environment by demonstrating more proactive socialization behaviours such as attempting to see things
from the bright side, trying to learn more about task/organizational structures, and participating more in social events.

We also speculate that awe can facilitate self-transcendence by promoting behaviours that help individuals to strengthen an identity with their work groups. As groups and teams are ubiquitous in today’s work context, work groups or teams could also be an important social identity for employees. We suggest that if the elicitors of awe are at the team level, such as perceiving the vastness of the team leader’s or team’s work, awe-prone employees in the team are more likely to seek social/group cohesion because they acknowledge that groups are larger than the self and could have a profound impact on their thoughts, feelings, and actions. That is, experiences of awe produce cognitive and behavioural tendencies that enable employees to fold into collaborative groups and teams and engage in collective actions at work.

**Conclusion and future research**

So far, we have elaborated how the four other-praising emotions could shape employees’ proactive behaviour in the workplace. We argue that existing research has not considered how different positive emotions can drive employees’ proactive behaviour differently. Focusing on other-praising emotions, and the four emotions specifically, we illustrate that these different emotions can drive different forms of proactive behaviour. This illustration suggests that we need to understand how different positive emotions can boost different forms of proactive behaviour via their unique mechanisms.

In addition, other-praising emotions bring us to recognize the importance of exemplary others in inspiring one’s proactivity, which has been rarely discussed in proactivity literature. As we indicated earlier, proactivity has been conventionally viewed from a self-regulation perspective where self-defined goals play a significant role in driving proactivity. Our focus on other-praising emotions bring us to investigate the role of others in facilitating proactivity, highlighting a social learning perspective of proactivity, which should be further examined.

Moreover, we believe that other-praising emotions can expand our perspective to understand the role of positive emotion in shaping proactivity, beyond the energizing perspective that emphasizes the role of high-activated positive emotions, such as excitement and happiness, in triggering and sustaining proactive behaviour in general. For example, as we elaborated on earlier, different other-praising emotions elicit different motives that can trigger different forms of proactive behaviour, suggesting that different positive emotions can
also shape the ways or direction of being proactive, beyond energizing. This understanding helps differentiate forms of proactive behaviours, a trend in proactivity literature studies to have a fine-tuned understanding of proactive behaviours.

For future research, firstly, empirical studies should be conducted to examine our speculations. As we reviewed above, several studies have been conducted to examine the role of gratitude in shaping proactive prosocial behaviour in the workplace. However, studies on elevation, admiration, and awe have not been extended to work contexts and linked to proactive behaviours specifically. There are thus opportunities and needs for proactivity researchers to investigate empirically whether these other-praising emotions can promote different forms of proactive behaviour as we proposed. Secondly, we suggest that the investigation should start at the event level so that we can depict clearly how a specific other-praising emotion is elicited in the workplace and whether such emotional experiences can promote specific proactive behaviour afterwards. Although we also can study other-praising emotions at a trait level, such as trait gratitude and trait moral elevation (McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang, 2002; Pohling, Diessner, and Strobel, 2018), which captures dispositional tendencies in experiencing specific other-praising emotions, we believe it is desirable to understand emotional phenomena at the event, intra-individual level, to understand how an other-praising emotional episode evolves and shapes one’s actions before moving to the individual level to understand inter-individual differences (see Ashkanasy, in this volume, for the multilevel framework of emotion and Ohly and Venz for the event-level analysis of emotions).

To conclude, we believe investigating how different other-praising emotions can drive proactive behaviours in the workplace should help advance proactivity research by expanding the scope of positive emotions in the literature, the role of exemplary others in inspiring an individual’s proactive behaviours at work, and differentiation of proactive behaviours.

References


OTHER-PRAISING EMOTIONS AND EMPLOYEE PROACTIVITY


