Affective Consequences of Proactivity

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Proactive behaviour in the work context involves self-initiated and future-oriented actions or goal-directed behaviours that employees show with the aim to create positive change in the self (for example, learning a new skill) or the work environment (for example, implementing a more efficient process; Grant and Ashford, 2008; Parker and Collins, 2010). Employees with a more proactive personality have a relatively stable tendency to engage in such proactive behaviours (Bateman and Crant, 1993; Crant, 1995). Meta-analyses show that individuals differences in proactive personality and behaviour are generally positively related to performance outcomes, even when controlling for the Big Five personality traits (Fuller and Marler, 2009; Thomas, Whitman, and Viswesvaran, 2010; Tornau and Frese, 2013). Moreover, proactivity is positively related to career success (Seibert, Crant, and Kraimer, 1999; Seibert, Kraimer, and Crant, 2001), favourable outcomes of the job search process (Brown et al, 2006), and business growth (Campos et al, 2017). Accordingly, numerous studies have attempted to uncover the individual and contextual predictors of proactive behaviour, including personality, beliefs, and affect, as well as job design and leader behaviour (for reviews, see Bindl and Parker, 2011; Parker and Bindl, 2017).

With regard to affect, it is now well-established that high-activated positive affect predicts proactive behaviour, including employees’ proactive goal-setting, planning, goal implementation, and feedback-seeking (Bindl and Parker, 2012), as well as voice behaviour (that is, speaking up in teams; Wang et al, 2019). In terms of the motivational
antecedents of proactivity, positive affect belongs to the ‘energized to’ category, whereas self-beliefs and self-determination belong to the ‘can do’ and ‘reason to’ categories, respectively (Parker, Bindl, and Strauss, 2010). A number of daily diary studies have shown that positive affective states are positively related to proactive behaviour on the same workday, as well as the following workday, even when job stressors are taken into account (Fay and Sonnentag, 2012; Fritz and Sonnentag, 2009). Another set of studies found that high-activated positive mood positively predicted proactive goal regulation (Bindl et al, 2012).

Moreover, some research suggests that both positive and negative affect can contribute to proactive behaviour (Den Hartog and Belschak, 2007; Sonnentag and Starzyk, 2015). Theoretical work has argued that intense negative emotions, such as anger and fear, can motivate proactive behaviour by signalling a need for change of current circumstances (Lebel, 2017). Empirical research has shown that supervisors react more positively to employee proactive behaviours in performance evaluations when employees express low levels of negative affect (Grant, Parker, and Collins, 2009). In addition, empirical findings suggest that emotional regulation is important to voice constructively and effectively (Grant, 2013). Researchers have further argued and shown that the link between positive affect and proactive behaviour may be characterized by a curvilinear pattern, such that proactive behaviour is highest when employees experience moderate levels of positive affect, as compared to low and high positive affect (Lam, Spreitzer, and Fritz, 2014).

In contrast, much less theoretical and empirical research has focused on the psychological consequences of proactivity at work, including positive and negative affective states that employees may experience after engaging in proactive behaviour. Accordingly, the goal of this chapter is to address the potential affective consequences of proactive personality and behaviour. In the following sections, I first briefly introduce the notion of employee affect, including emotions, moods, and trait affectivity. Second, I describe a conceptual model on the proximal consequences of (change in) proactive personality and behaviour (that is, positive changes in the self and/or work environment), more distal psychological consequences (that is, changes in resources, need satisfaction, goal progress), and, eventually, different affective consequences. I also outline the role of potential boundary conditions of the effects of proactivity on affective consequences, including individual and contextual demands, resources, and barriers, as well as individual differences in trait affectivity. Third, I describe differences between a within-person perspective (that is, change in proactive
behaviour and affective experiences over time) and a between-person perspective (that is, individual differences in proactive behaviour and affective experiences). Fourth, I review existing empirical studies that have examined affective consequences of different forms of proactivity. Finally, I conclude the chapter with several suggestions for future research.

**Affective experiences at work**

Affective experiences or states can be broadly differentiated in rather short-lived and intense emotions (for example, momentary feelings of joy or anger) and longer-lasting and less differentiated moods (Barsade and Gibson, 2007; Brief and Weiss, 2002). Emotions and moods can be pleasant or unpleasant, high- or low-activated states (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988). The resulting ‘affect circumplex’ (that is, emotions and moods presented along two orthogonal valence and activation dimensions) includes high-activated positive experiences such as enthusiasm and excitement, low-activated positive experiences such as feeling calm and relaxed, high-activated negative experiences such as anger and fear, as well as low-activated negative experiences such as sadness and feeling hopeless (Warr et al, 2014).

In contrast to more dynamic emotions and moods, employees’ trait affectivity reflects their relatively stable tendencies to experience positive or negative emotions and moods more or less frequently in their (work) lives. These dispositions are closely related to the personality characteristics extraversion and neuroticism, respectively (Rusting and Larsen, 1997). Research has demonstrated that affective experiences are associated with occupational well-being (for example, work engagement and emotional exhaustion; Zacher et al, 2019) as well as job performance (Beal et al, 2005; Cole, Walter, and Bruch, 2008). Thus, affective experiences may mediate effects of proactivity on important outcomes.

**Conceptual model of affective consequences of proactive behaviour**

The conceptual model to structure the literature review and discussion in this chapter is presented in Figure 12.1. In a nutshell, the model starts with effects of change, or individual differences, in proactive personality and behaviour on positive changes in the self and/or the work context. The strengths of these effects is proposed to be moderated by individual and contextual demands (for example,
time pressure, personal goals), resources (for example, energy, job autonomy), and barriers (for example, health problems, organizational constraints). Positive changes in the self and/or the work context, in turn, are expected to influence different psychological states. In this chapter, I particularly focus on employees’ perceptions of changes in resources, need satisfaction, and goal progress. The extent to which employees experience these psychological states should, subsequently, give rise to positive or negative, high- or low-activated affective experiences. In the following, I will outline the propositions of the model in further detail.

Effects of individual differences and change in proactive personality and behaviour

I first propose that, consistent with a common definition of proactivity (Grant and Ashford, 2008), individual differences and changes in proactive personality and proactive behaviour should generally result in positive changes either in the self or in the work environment (Figure 12.1). Employees with a more proactive personality and those who frequently show proactive behaviour intend to create change through their actions. However, whether or not changes in the self or the environment actually occur likely depends on a number of individual and contextual boundary conditions (see next section). For example, a more proactive personality has been shown to be associated with learning (Bertolino, Truxillo, and Fraccaroli, 2011; Parker and Sprigg, 1999), changes in job characteristics (Li et al, 2014), job search intensity and success (Brown et al, 2006; Zacher, 2013), and career success (Seibert, Krainer, and Crant, 2001).

Consequences of an employee showing high levels of personal initiative, a broad form of proactive work behaviour that is self-starting and aims to overcome barriers (Frese and Fay, 2001), may
be that the employee acquires new knowledge or skills, or that a work procedure is improved before problems occur. Another form of proactive behaviour, employee voice (Morrison, 2014), could lead to changes in employees’ social status (Weiss and Morrison, 2018) or improvements in how team members communicate with each other about work-related issues (LePine and Van Dyne, 1998; Van Dyne and LePine, 1998). Proactive job crafting behaviours (for example, asking one’s supervisor for feedback or more challenging projects) can lead to actual increases in challenging job demands, structural and social job resources (for example, greater autonomy and support), as well as to a decrease in hindering job demands (Rudolph et al, 2017; Tims and Bakker, 2010). Finally, engaging in proactive feedback-seeking behaviour might lead to a reduction in feelings of uncertainty about one’s performance and, subsequently, changes in work performance (Anseel et al, 2015).

Boundary conditions of effects of proactivity

The effectiveness of proactive personality and behaviour in inducing changes to the self and to the work environment likely depends on a number of boundary conditions, including individual and contextual demands, resources, and hindrances (see Hirschi, Shockley, and Zacher, 2019; ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012). In particular, if individuals’ self-set work goals (for example, unrealistic or too difficult goals) or contextually set work demands (for example, time pressure, heavy workload) are too high, it is less likely that proactive employees will successfully create positive changes in the self or work environment. In contrast, lower or moderate goals and demands should increase the likelihood of positive changes. It is also important that proactive employees possess sufficient individual resources (for example, health, energy) and contextual resources (for example, job autonomy, social support) to be able to implement changes in the self or work environment. Finally, if there are hindrances or barriers in the self (for example, lack of abilities, illness) or in the work environment (for example, organizational constraints), it is also less likely that proactive tendencies and concrete behaviours manifest in meaningful changes in the self or work environment. A number of empirical studies have demonstrated interactive effects of proactive personality and behaviour with other individual and contextual factors on more or less distal workplace outcomes (for example, Cunningham and De La Rosa, 2008; Ng and Feldman, 2012; Schmitt, Den Hartog, and Belschak, 2015). However, research has so far neglected examining whether
actual changes in the self and the work environment mediate these associations between proactivity and work outcomes.

*Psychological states resulting from changes in the self and the work environment*

Changes in the self and the work environment, in turn, are conceptualized to result in a number of different psychological states (see Figure 12.1). I will focus on three such states in the following: employees’ perceptions of changes in resources, satisfaction of basic needs, and goal progress. First, researchers have suggested that proactive behaviour can deplete or generate employees’ personal resources (Belschak, Hartog, and Fay, 2010; Bolino, Valcea, and Harvey, 2010; Cangiano and Parker, 2016). Personal resources can be defined as anything that is valued by individuals, including material belongings, personal characteristics, and supportive relationships (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al, 2018). In particular, Bolino et al have argued that proactive behaviours (and other active states and behaviours of employees, such as organizational citizenship behaviour and work engagement) consume employees’ physical, mental, and emotional energy resources due to regulatory demands (Bolino et al, 2015; Bolino and Turnley, 2005; Halbesleben, Harvey, and Bolino, 2009). Moreover, these researchers suggested that proactivity can drain employees’ resources due to negative feedback and resistance from others, including supervisors and colleagues (Bolino, Turnley, and Anderson, 2017; Bolino, Valcea, and Harvey, 2010). Thus, proactive behaviour can be a source of job strain, as it may lead to energy depletion, conflicts, and frustration.

Other scholars have supplemented this rather negative focus on resource depletion with a more positive focus on resource generation. Specifically, Cangiano and Parker (2016) argued that proactive behaviour may also have the potential to generate personal resources, including self-efficacy and positive affect, via a ‘motivation pathway’. Accordingly, in their model on the health and well-being consequences of proactivity, these researchers argued that individual and contextual boundary conditions (for example, feedback, intrinsic motivation) determine whether proactive employees follow the resource-depletion of motivation pathway.

A second relevant psychological state following from proactive behaviour is the satisfaction of important psychological needs, such as the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness postulated by self-determination theory (Gagné and Deci, 2005; Ryan and Deci, 2000). In particular, Strauss et al have argued that employees who engage in
proactivity may be more likely to meet these needs, particularly if they are intrinsically motivated (Strauss and Parker, 2014; Strauss, Parker, and O’Shea, 2017). In terms of the need for autonomy, research has indeed shown that proactive personality and proactive behaviour can increase employees’ control orientations as well as job autonomy (Frese, Garst, and Fay, 2007; Li et al, 2014; Zacher et al, 2019). For instance, based on action regulation theory (Hacker, 2003; Zacher and Frese, 2018), Zacher et al (2019) argued and showed that change in personal initiative across six months is positively associated with a change in job autonomy across a subsequent six-months period. Similarly, theorizing on job crafting suggests that employees’ proactive attempts to better align their job characteristics with their own abilities and needs leads to increased need satisfaction and higher meaning at work (Bakker, 2010; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Moreover, engaging in voice behaviour and feedback-seeking may also fulfill employees’ needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness by suggesting improvements and by influencing others and the work environment in positive ways (Strauss and Parker, 2014).

Finally, positive changes in the self and the work environment could signal to proactive employees that they are making progress toward their valued personal and work-related goals. Perceived goal progress is an important dimension of the self-regulatory goal-striving process (Johnson and Howe, 2013). From a control theory perspective, proactive behaviour involves an active, deliberate action regulation process that can be linked to the experience of intense self-focused emotions, such as pride, contentment, and guilt (Bindl and Parker, 2012; Carver and Scheier, 1990). In particular, Carver and Scheier’s (1990) control-process theory on affect provides a useful framework to explain the affective consequences of proactivity, because it focuses on the self-regulation of behaviour and the emergence of affective experiences. The theory extends control theory, which suggests that people monitor their behaviour and potentially change it to reduce discrepancies between their goals and the current state (Carver and Scheier, 1982). The focus of this primary feedback system is on action control.

To explain the emergence of affective experiences, Carver and Scheier (1990) introduced a second, higher-order feedback system (‘meta-monitoring’) that senses and evaluates discrepancies between expected and actual rates of goal progress in the first feedback system. Specifically, the second system compares the rate of discrepancy reduction in the action control system with an acceptable or desired reference value for progress. The outcome of this comparison leads
to changes in affective experiences (Carver and Scheier, 1990). When employees perceive that they are making adequate progress in goal pursuit, positive affect increases and negative affect decreases. In contrast, when employees perceive that they are not making sufficient progress, negative affect increases and positive affect decreases (Carver and Scheier, 1990). For instance, based on these arguments of the control-process theory on affect, Zacher et al (2019) found that change in personal initiative across six months negatively predicted change in positive mood across the following six months. Moreover, change in personal initiative positively predicted change in negative mood when perceived organizational support was low, but not when such perceived support was high. They argued that perceived support is a psychological resource that can mitigate the resource-depleting effect (that is, increase in negative mood) of proactive behaviour (see also Cangiano and Parker, 2016).

The role of trait affectivity

Finally, the conceptual model (Figure 12.1) suggests that employees’ trait affectivity moderates the effects of psychological states on subsequent affective experiences. Based on trait activation theory (Tett and Guterman, 2000; Tett, Simonet, Walser, and Brown, 2013), I argue that employees with high levels of either positive or negative trait affectivity are likely to react more strongly to certain trait-relevant psychological states. For example, employees with high levels of positive affectivity (similar to extraversion) may experience stronger affective consequences if their proactive engagement involves interacting with other people at work and, thus, generates social resources and fulfills needs for relatedness. For example, these employees might experience higher levels of positive affect after engaging in the job crafting dimension of ‘increasing social resources’ at work (Tims and Bakker, 2010). In contrast, employees with high negative affectivity (similar to neuroticism) may be more likely to experience strong affective consequences if their proactive engagement involves preventing problems and mistakes. Accordingly, these employees may experience higher levels of positive affect after engaging in prohibitive (as compared to promotive) voice behaviour (Liang, Farh, and Farh, 2012). Similarly, they should react more strongly to proactive engagement in the job crafting dimension ‘decreasing hindering job demands’, which has also been categorized as avoidance job crafting (as opposed to approach job crafting) (Bruning and Campion, 2019; Zhang and Parker, 2019).
**Between-person differences and within-person change in proactivity and affect**

The conceptual model (Figure 12.1) distinguishes between within-person changes and between-person differences in proactive personality and proactive behaviour. Research taking a between-person perspective typically focuses on the extent to which employees differ in their general, average, or stable levels of (work) behaviour. Accordingly, studies using between-person designs (for example, cross-sectional survey studies) aim to explain variability between employees. In contrast, research adopting a within-person perspective focuses on the extent to which employee behaviour fluctuates or changes over different periods of time, such as hours, days, weeks, months, or years. Over the past few decades, researchers in organizational psychology and management have increasingly adopted within-person longitudinal designs to investigate variability and change in different forms of employee behaviour (Zacher and Rudolph, 2020), including task performance (Chi, Chang, and Huang, 2015), organizational citizenship behaviour (Dalal et al, 2009), and innovative behaviour (Zacher and Wilden, 2014).

It is important to distinguish within-person variability in proactivity from within-person change in proactivity. While both rely on intensive longitudinal designs and measurement, within-person studies that focus on intraindividual variability (for example, many daily diary studies) are not able to draw conclusions about intraindividual change over time. In contrast, within-person studies that focus on intraindividual change can describe how and possibly explain why proactivity changes within employees over a certain period of time. Moreover, examining within-person effects of change in one variable (for example, proactive behaviour) on changes in other variables (for example, positive mood) allows stronger conclusions regarding causality than studies that focus on between- or within-person variability (Wang et al, 2017; Zacher and Rudolph, 2020).

While proactive personality is defined as a relatively stable tendency to create change in the work environment (Bateman and Crant, 1993), lifespan developmental scholars have argued that even personality traits are not ‘set like plaster’, but can change throughout the life course and up until old age (Roberts, Walton, and Viechtbauer, 2006; Srivastava et al, 2003). According to the neo-socioanalytic model of personality development and related frameworks, these changes are due to adaptation processes of individuals to their (work) environment and associated demands (Nye and Roberts, 2019; Woods et al, 2019). For
instance, researchers have shown that change in employees’ personality is influenced by characteristics of their occupations across 15 years (Wille and De Fruyt, 2014). With regard to proactive personality, researchers have demonstrated positive reciprocal effects with work characteristics, particularly job demands and job autonomy, across a time period of three years (Li et al, 2014). The affective consequences of a longer-term change in proactive personality, however, have so far not been explored empirically.

In contrast to proactive personality, changes in proactive behaviours are more likely across relatively shorter time intervals, such as hours, days, weeks, and months. Nevertheless, proactivity researchers have neglected dynamic effects of proactive behaviour (for exceptions, Fay and Sonnentag, 2002; Frese, Garst, and Fay, 2007). However, with a growing interest in the more dynamic affective and well-being consequences of proactivity, it becomes increasingly important to focus on change in proactive behaviour over time. For instance, a recent study on affective and well-being consequences of change in proactive behaviour over a time period of six months has shown that change in personal initiative can impact on subsequent changes in positive and negative moods, above and beyond variance explained by initial individual differences in personal initiative (Zacher et al, 2019). Moreover, change in personal initiative had a negative indirect effect on change in emotional engagement, and a positive indirect effect on change in emotional exhaustion through changes in positive and negative moods. A similar idea in this context suggests that the combination of employees’ more stable level of proactive personality and their more dynamic level of proactive behaviour plays a role for affective and well-being consequences of this behaviour (Cangiano, Bindl, and Parker, 2017). Specifically, employees with lower levels of proactive personality might react more negatively after engaging in proactive behaviour because they have to invest more effort into this behaviour.

**Literature review**

*Conceptual approaches to affective consequences of proactivity*

This chapter is not the first to conceptually discuss affective consequences of proactivity. Strauss and Parker (2014), drawing mainly on self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000), argued that proactive behaviour, as well as the motivations underlying this behaviour (for example,
intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation), can impact on employee affect and well-being. As core underlying mechanisms, these researchers proposed a sense of ownership and involvement of the self, as well as the satisfaction of important psychological needs. To further advance research on the well-being consequences of proactive behaviour, Cangiano and Parker (2016) proposed that proactive behaviour can influence employee affect and occupational well-being outcomes via a resource-generation pathway (based on self-determination theory; Gagné and Deci, 2005) and via a resource-depletion pathway (based on conservation of resources theory; Hobfoll, 1989), and that the strength of these effects depends on multiple individual and contextual factors. They argued that ‘proactivity is likely to affect mental health and well-being in multiple ways, and that moderating variables and mediating processes need to be considered’ (p 229). Proactive employees should be more likely to follow the resource-generation pathway toward well-being when they feel supported and are intrinsically motivated to engage in proactive behaviour, whereas they are more likely to follow the resource-depletion pathway toward job strain when they do not feel supported and are extrinsically motivated (Cangiano and Parker, 2016).

In another book chapter, Cangiano, Bindl, and Parker (2017) suggested that proactive behaviour is not only influenced by affective experiences (for example, Bindl et al., 2012), but that proactive behaviour also can have important consequences for these experiences. In particular, the researchers argued that proactive behaviour can generate ‘flow experiences’ (that is, enjoyable states of consciousness in which people become fully immersed in challenging, but not overwhelming, activities; Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). At the same time, Cangiano, Bindl, and Parker (2017) argued that proactivity may also give rise to negative affect, due to increased stress and anxiety about evaluations and criticism of one’s behaviour by supervisors and peers.

Finally, Parker et al. have focused on affective and well-being consequences of proactivity in the context of their research on ‘wise proactivity’, that is, proactive efforts that consider the appropriateness of the behaviour and its fit with the self and environment (Parker and Liao, 2016; Parker, Wang, and Liao, 2019). In a review of 95 studies on individual-level outcomes of proactivity, these researchers showed that strategic considerations (for example, situational judgment), social considerations (for example, supportive relationships at work), and self-regulatory considerations (for example, learning orientation) determine whether proactivity is more or less effective for individuals (Parker, Wang, and Liao, 2019). It is likely that effective proactivity
will, in turn, lead to increased positive and decreased negative affect (Carver and Scheier, 1990; Zacher et al, 2019).

**Empirical studies on affective consequences of proactive personality**

Employees with a more proactive personality have the tendency to be active rather than passive, to affect positive change in their environment, and to be relatively less constrained by situational forces than employees with a less proactive personality (Bateman and Crant, 1993). While no quantitative review of associations between proactive personality and affective states exists, a meta-analysis of cross-sectional studies found that proactive personality is negatively related to indicators of the burnout syndrome, including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced feelings of personal accomplishment (Alarcon, Eschleman, and Bowling, 2009). The researchers argue that proactive employees self-select into work environments that they can change for the better and leave work environments that do not offer such opportunities for control. Consistently, researchers have suggested that a more proactive personality may be particularly beneficial in terms of well-being when employees have high levels of personal control over stressors they face at work (Cunningham and De La Rosa, 2008). Indeed, a recent study showed that coping in the form of positive reinterpretation mediated the link between proactive personality and strain among victims of workplace bullying (Park and DeFrank, 2018).

A number of primary studies have examined direct associations between proactive personality and affective states. First, a study found that positive and negative affect mediated the positive relationship between proactive personality and innovative behaviour (Li et al, 2017). Proactive personality was positively related to positive affect and negatively related to negative affect. Second, a similar study found that positive affect and work engagement serially mediated the positive relationship between proactive personality and innovative behaviour (Kong and Li, 2018). Again, proactive personality was positively related to positive affect. Finally, a set of two studies found that job reflective learning and activated positive affective states serially mediated the relationship between proactive personality and employee creativity (Li et al, 2019). Specifically, learning from successes influenced joviality, whereas learning from failures led to attentiveness.

Several studies have examined interactive effects of proactive personality with other variables on affective experiences as outcomes. First, a study found that the combination of high job demands and low job control only predicted strain among employees with a more (versus
less) proactive personality (Parker and Sprigg, 1999). Second, a more recent study found that high levels of negative affect strengthened the positive indirect effects of proactive personality on task performance and affective commitment via job engagement (Haynie, Flynn, and Mauldin, 2017). Third, a study showed that a more proactive personality buffered the positive relationships of two role stressors (that is, role ambiguity and role conflict) with negative affect (Zhang, Crant, and Weng, 2019). Finally, another recent study showed that a more proactive personality weakened the positive effect of hostile customer relations on workers’ mental health symptoms (Mazzetti et al, 2019).

In summary, there is evidence that individual differences in proactive personality are positively associated with positive affect and well-being, and negatively associated with negative affect and strain. While some studies suggest that a more proactive personality supports employees in coping with occupational stressors and, subsequently, reduces strain, overall there is currently mixed evidence whether a more proactive personality buffers or boosts the effects of unfavourable work conditions (for example, high demands, low control) on employee strain.

**Empirical studies on affective consequences of proactive behaviour**

A relatively larger number of studies has investigated relationships between different forms of proactive behaviour and employee well-being outcomes; most of these studies have focused on between-person differences in proactive behaviour and well-being outcomes and not on within-person changes in these constructs. These studies can be broadly classified into studies that demonstrated beneficial effects of proactive behaviour on affective outcomes, detrimental effects on affective outcomes, and both positive and negative effects (that is, dual-pathway studies).

**Beneficial effects of proactive behaviour**

Consistent with most studies on proactive personality, several studies found positive relationships of proactive behaviour with well-being and negative relationships with strain, including cross-sectional, diary, and experimental studies. First, a cross-sectional study showed that employees’ proactive coping behaviour was positively related to positive affect (Greenglass and Fiksenbaum, 2009). Another cross-sectional study of older employees found a positive relationship between proactive behaviour and positive affect which, in turn, was related to a later anticipated retirement age (Claes and Van Loo, 2011). Similarly,
a study reported a positive relationship between personal initiative and occupational well-being, and a negative relationship with emotional exhaustion (Wang and Li, 2015).

Another cross-sectional study with teachers showed that proactive behaviour was positively related to affective well-being outcomes, including job satisfaction and commitment (Ghitulescu, 2018). In addition, collaborative behaviour buffered the negative link of proactive behaviour with experienced conflict. Based on an extended job demand–control model, a set of two studies found that employees’ voice behaviour and their perceived ability to manage personal resources buffered the effects of perceived abusive supervision on various negative affective and behavioural reactions, including dissatisfaction, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intentions (Frieder, Hochwarter, and DeOrtentiis, 2015).

Second, based on affective events theory (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996), a daily diary study showed that problem-focused voice in meetings was related to lower negative affect at the end of the next workday (Starzyk, Sonnentag, and Albrecht, 2018). Contrary to expectations, suggestion-focused voice was not related to positive affect at the end of the next workday. Based on control theory, a weekly diary study showed that proactive behaviour during the work week buffered the negative effects of unfinished tasks at the end of the week on competence need satisfaction and rumination on the weekend (Weigelt et al, 2019).

Third, a quasi-experimental field study with 39 employees showed that a job-crafting intervention decreased negative affect and increased self-efficacy and job resources (Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, and Peeters, 2015). Another randomized controlled field experiment with entrepreneurs showed that the need for cognition positively predicted the maintenance of personal initiative following a training (Mensmann and Frese, 2019). In contrast to expectations, personal initiative maintenance had no effects on general and professional affective well-being outcomes.

Finally, in an experimental study, the researchers manipulated affect (positive, negative, and neutral), and measured proactive personality, proactive behaviour in a team interactions task, as well as affective experiences and physiological activation (Wolsink et al, 2019). The study results showed that positive affect reduced proactive behaviour among participants with a more proactive personality, whereas negative affect increased proactive behaviour among participants with a less proactive and more passive–reactive personality. In addition, participants with a more proactive personality experienced increased positive affect...
after showing proactive behaviour, whereas more passive–reactive participants experienced reduced negative affect after showing proactive behaviour (Wolsink et al, 2019).

**Detrimental effects of proactive behaviour**

Other studies in this area have found negative effects of proactive work behaviours on affective and well-being outcomes, including cross-sectional, diary, and longitudinal studies. First, a cross-sectional study by Bolino and Turnley (2005) investigated links between ‘individual initiative’, a dimension of organizational citizenship behaviour, and occupational well-being outcomes. Individual initiative involves working compulsively above and beyond expectations to complete work tasks. The researchers found that higher partner-rated individual initiative was related to higher self-rated role overload, job stress, and work–family conflict.

Second, a daily diary study across three workdays showed that daily personal initiative was positively related to daily cortisol output, an indicator of strain. In contrast to expectations, a test of the hypothesized association between daily personal initiative and fatigue in the evening did not meet conventional levels of statistical significance, and work overload and negative affect did not emerge as mediators (Fay and Hüttges, 2017). The researchers argued that employees’ resources (for example, time, energy) are limited and they need to invest additional effort to maintain task performance and show initiative, which should lead to strain.

Third, a two-wave survey study across two weeks examined employee motivations as moderators of the association between proactive behaviour and job strain (Strauss, Parker, and O’Shea, 2017). The researchers hypothesized that when employees experience pressure and coercion at work (that is, high controlled motivation), and this cannot be compensated by high levels of autonomous motivation, proactive behaviour is likely to lead to job strain due to resource depletion. Results showed that supervisor ratings of employee proactive behaviour were positively associated with employee job strain when controlled motivation was high and, at the same time, autonomous motivation was low. Under all other conditions, proactive behaviour was unrelated to job strain. Strauss, Parker, and O’Shea (2017) concluded that proactive behaviour only leads to strain when employees experience pressure and obligation without experiencing autonomous motivation.

Consistent with the study by Strauss, Parker, and O’Shea (2017), a recent longitudinal study with three measurement waves found that
proactivity can have costs, especially if it is externally motivated (Pingel, Fay, and Urbach, 2019). Specifically, based on conservation of resources theory, the researchers found that proactive behaviour was positively associated with emotional and cognitive strain. Emotional strain, in turn, was positively related to employee withdrawal. Moreover, external motivation for proactivity strengthened the effects of proactive behaviour on strain.

**Dual-pathway effects of proactive behaviour**

Consistent with the dual pathway model of proactivity and well-being (Cangiano and Parker, 2016), a third set of recent studies has shown that proactive behaviour can be a double-edged sword at work, as it leads to both favourable and unfavourable employee outcomes. First, a qualitative study examined the ‘emotional journeys’ that employees go through when engaging in proactive behaviour (Bindl, 2019). Results suggested three narratives associated with these journeys, including a ‘proactivity-as-frustration’ narrative (that is, proactive behaviour as a generally unpleasant action), a ‘proactivity-as-threat’ narrative (that is, proactive behaviour that derailed at the beginning due to fear), and a ‘proactivity-as-growth’ narrative (that is, proactive behaviour that is first associated with negative affect and later with positive affect and sustained motivation).

Second, based on self-determination theory and the stressor-detachment model, a daily diary study found empirical support for an ‘energy-generating pathway’, in which daily proactive behaviour is positively associated with perceived competence and, in turn, feelings of vitality at the end of the work day (Cangiano, Parker, and Yeo, 2019). Moreover, the researchers found that, when perceived punitive supervision is high (that is, supervisors are perceived as prone to blaming employees for their mistakes), a ‘strain pathway’ exists, in which daily proactive behaviour is positively associated with anxiety at the end of the workday which, in turn, is negatively related to detachment from work at bedtime.

Third, another within-person, longer-term longitudinal study investigated effects of change in personal initiative over six months on changes in emotional engagement and exhaustion over the following six months (Zacher et al, 2019). Based on the control-process theory on affect, the researchers hypothesized that changes in positive and negative mood mediate these effects conditional upon employees’ level of perceived organizational support. Moreover, based on action regulation theory, they assumed that change in job autonomy also acts...
as a mediator. Results of the study showed that change in personal initiative negatively predicted change in positive mood and, when perceived organizational support was low, positively predicted change in negative mood. In addition, consistent with previous studies on effects of proactivity on work characteristics (Frese, Garst, and Fay, 2007; Li et al, 2014), change in personal initiative positively predicted change in job autonomy. Change in personal initiative had a negative indirect effect on change in emotional engagement, and a positive indirect effect on change in emotional exhaustion through changes in positive and negative mood, but not through change in job autonomy. The researchers also tested a reverse causal model (that is, effects of change in occupational well-being on change in personal initiative through changes in affect and job autonomy), which did not yield significant indirect effects.

**Suggestions for future research**

The goal of this chapter was to address the hitherto rather neglected topic of affective consequences of proactivity. To this end, I presented a conceptual model on the affective consequences of (change in) proactive personality and behaviour, and I reviewed existing theoretical and empirical work on the topic. Now, I will outline suggestions for future research.

Future research on the affective consequences of proactivity could use the conceptual model presented in this chapter (Figure 12.1) to examine why and when individual differences and change in proactivity lead to positive and negative affective and well-being outcomes. First, more experimental and longitudinal work is needed on the mechanisms that translate (change in) proactivity into (change in) affective experiences. In particular, future studies should examine whether or not proactive behaviour leads to the intended positive changes in the self and the environment. While these intended changes are mentioned in definitions of proactivity (Grant and Ashford, 2008), proactive behaviour may not always yield the intended outcomes. In addition, more research is needed on the relative importance of different psychological states, including perceived changes in resources, need satisfaction, and goal progress, in mediating effects of proactivity on affective outcomes. Previous research has theorized on these mechanisms (for example, Strauss, Parker, and O’Shea, 2017; Zacher et al, 2019), but not explicitly addressed and compared them.

Second, the conceptual model suggests that individual and contextual demands, resources, and barriers, as well as individual differences in trait
affectivity, moderate the processes leading from proactivity to affective outcomes. A few studies have examined single moderators of association of proactivity with well-being and strain, such as motivation (Strauss, Parker, and O’Shea, 2017), punitive supervision (Cangiano, Parker, and Yeo, 2019), and perceived organizational support (Zacher et al., 2019). A crucial next step is to compare the relative importance of these boundary conditions to develop a more specific yet parsimonious model of the outcomes of proactivity.

Third, there is a broad range of proactivity constructs (for example, personal initiative, voice, job-crafting, feedback-seeking), as well as various affective and well-being outcomes (for example, high- and low-activated positive and negative affect, emotional engagement and exhaustion) that can be considered in future studies. It remains to be investigated whether the mechanisms and boundary conditions suggested by the conceptual model apply to all of these proactivity constructs and outcomes or only to specific ones. Importantly, future research should examine which types of proactive behavior are most beneficial and which are most detrimental to employees’ positive affective experiences and well-being – both in the short term and in the long run.

Finally, with regard to study designs, the literature review in this chapter suggests that more studies on within-person changes in proactivity and affect across different time intervals are needed. The few existing studies on the affective consequences of proactivity have used cross-sectional, diary, longitudinal, and experimental methods. Nevertheless, the vast majority of these studies have focus on between- or within-person variability, not change. Thus, future work should assess proactivity and affective outcomes (as well as potential mechanisms and boundary conditions) across multiple time points to better understand how change in proactivity is associated with previous, concurrent, or subsequent changes in affective experiences and occupational health and well-being outcomes (for example, Zacher et al., 2019).

**Conclusion**

The number of between- and within-person studies on the affective and well-being consequences of proactivity has increased over the last few years, and the empirical evidence suggests that proactive personality and behavior can have both beneficial and detrimental effects on affective experiences and well-being. Future research should focus on the mechanisms and boundary conditions of these effects to better understand why proactivity constitutes a double-edged sword
in terms of affective and well-being outcomes in the work context. In particular, more research is needed that focuses on change (instead of variability) in these constructs.

References


