

## GETTING CREDIT FOR PROACTIVE BEHAVIOR: SUPERVISOR REACTIONS DEPEND ON WHAT YOU VALUE AND HOW YOU FEEL

ADAM M. GRANT

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

SHARON PARKER

University of Sheffield

CATHERINE COLLINS

University of Sheffield

Although proactive behavior is important in organizations, it is not always appreciated by supervisors. To explain when supervisors reward proactivity with higher overall performance evaluations, we draw on attribution theory. We propose that employees' values and affect send signals about their underlying intentions, which influence supervisors' attributions about whether employees deserve credit for proactive behaviors. More specifically, we hypothesize that if employees express strong prosocial values or low negative affect, the proactive behaviors of voice, issue-selling, taking charge, and anticipatory helping will have stronger relationships with supervisors' performance evaluations. We test these hypotheses with samples of 103 managers and their direct supervisors (Study 1) and 55 firefighters and their platoon supervisors (Study 2). The hypotheses were supported in both studies, suggesting that proactive behaviors are more likely to contribute to higher supervisor performance evaluations when employees express strong prosocial values or low negative affect.

*Recently, an employee at a large hospital provided physical evidence to his superiors that bacteria that cause pneumonia and other serious diseases were growing in anesthesia equipment. The equipment was not cleaned following each use, thus risking the already precarious health of patients using the same equipment . . . The employee was not thanked for being vigilant about safety . . . No changes were made, the employee was reprimanded, and his access to sections of the hospital was restricted. (Miceli & Near, 1994: 65)*

As the world of work becomes increasingly uncertain, it is no longer enough for employees to complete their assigned tasks. Organizational success and survival depends on proactivity—anticipatory action taken

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Correspondence and requests for reprints should be addressed to Adam M. Grant, CB#3490, McColl Bldg., Chapel Hill, NC 27599; agrant@unc.edu.

by employees to have an impact on the self or the environment (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). Organizations stand to benefit from a wide range of proactive behaviors from employees, including employees' voicing important issues (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), persuading executives to pay attention to these issues (Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 2001), and taking charge to improve working methods (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Researchers have linked several of these proactive behaviors to positive individual and organizational outcomes, demonstrating, for example, that employees who engage in them earn higher salaries, display greater productivity, and receive more awards and promotions (e.g., Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001; Thompson, 2005; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998; Van Scotter, Motowidlo, & Cross, 2000).

Despite these benefits, supervisors do not always appreciate proactivity. Researchers have begun to point out that supervisors may see proactive behavior as a threat (Frese & Fay, 2001; Miceli & Near, 1994; Parker et al., 2006), an ingratiation attempt (Bolino, 1999), or an ill-timed distraction (Chan, 2006). As our opening vignette illustrates, supervisors often fail to reward, and sometimes even punish, employees for engaging in proactive behavior. Although the employee took initiative in voicing an important issue that concerned the welfare of patients and threatened the functioning of the hospital, rather than rewarding the employee's efforts, supervisors reprimanded the employee. Explaining this type of reaction, Morrison and Milliken (2000: 708) note that many supervisors "feel a strong need to avoid embarrassment, threat, and feelings of vulnerability or incompetence. Hence, they will tend to avoid any information that might suggest weakness or that might raise questions about current courses of action." Similarly, Frese and Fay (2001, p. 141) point out that personal initiative, a form of proactive behavior, "is not always welcomed by supervisors . . . initiative 'rocks the boat' and makes changes. Since people tend not to like changes, they often greet initiative with skepticism."

In a recent review of the proactivity literature, Grant and Ashford (2008) noted that we lack a clear understanding of when supervisors evaluate proactive behavior as constructive versus destructive and encouraged researchers to address this question. Our objective in this paper is to answer this call by assessing moderators of supervisors' reactions to proactivity. By explaining when supervisors value proactivity, we can better understand how to design workplaces that support its expression. We draw on attribution theory to propose that employees' values and affect send signals to supervisors about whether to make internal, benevolent attributions for proactive behaviors. We hypothesize that supervisors will react more favorably to proactivity when employees express strong prosocial values and low levels of negative affect.

*Proactive Behavior and Supervisor Performance Evaluations*

Research on proactive behavior has surged in recent years. We focus on four proactive behaviors that have attracted considerable attention: voice, rational issue-selling, taking charge, and helping. Voice describes active efforts by employees to speak up and challenge the status quo about important issues (Hirschman, 1970). Issue-selling involves actively convincing higher-level supervisors to pay attention to issues (Dutton et al., 2001). We focus on rational issue-selling, a particularly proactive form of issue-selling in which employees plan in advance, gather facts, and use logic to persuade supervisors (Dutton et al., 2001; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980). Taking charge involves exercising initiative to improve work structures, practices, and routines (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Helping describes efforts to give assistance and aid to others (e.g., Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). We focus on anticipatory helping, a proactive form of helping in which employees plan in advance, offer assistance, and seek out opportunities to help others, rather than simply responding to requests (Rioux & Penner, 2001).

We direct our theoretical and empirical attention to these four proactive behaviors for three key reasons. First, these behaviors all reflect proactivity in that they represent self-starting efforts on the part of employees to act in advance to have an impact and effect change (Crant, 2000; Frese & Fay, 2001; Parker et al., 2006). Second, because researchers have observed that proactive behaviors can focus on multiple targets, we selected these behaviors in order to examine whether our general hypotheses hold across different targets of proactive behavior. As traditionally conceptualized, voice focuses on speaking up in workgroups, issue-selling focuses on influencing superiors, taking charge focuses on improving work methods for the organization, and helping focuses on taking actions to benefit coworkers (Grant & Ashford, 2008).

Third, and perhaps most importantly, researchers have studied these four proactive behaviors in part because employees who display them offer valuable contributions to organizations. Voice increases the chances that workgroup problems are identified, resolved, and prevented (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998); issue-selling enables supervisors to revise their strategies to address important organizational issues (Dutton et al., 2001); taking charge provides improvements to working methods that increase the quality and quantity of output (Morrison & Phelps, 1999); and anticipatory helping allows employees to complete tasks effectively in the face of high demands (Rioux & Penner, 2001). In summary, voice, taking charge, rational issue-selling, and anticipatory helping are proactive behaviors directed toward a range of targets. Given each of these proactive behaviors can contribute to organizational effectiveness, we expect that, in general, employees who

behave in these ways will receive higher performance evaluations. Thus, we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 1:* Proactive behaviors are associated with higher supervisor performance evaluations.

*The Contingent Contributions of Proactive Behavior to Supervisor Performance Evaluations*

Rather than merely assuming that proactive behaviors are always associated with higher performance evaluations, it is important to examine the conditions under which supervisors evaluate proactive behaviors as contributing to overall performance (Grant & Ashford, 2008). If supervisors fail to appreciate and reward proactivity, they are likely to discourage employees from engaging in it, stifling its expression over time. Proactive behavior may be especially susceptible to such cues from supervisors because this type of action, which is often focused on challenging the status quo and doing things in different ways, can entail a greater degree of personal risk than other work behaviors (Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Parker et al., 2006).

In the sections below, we draw on attribution theory to propose that the extent to which proactive behaviors contribute to higher supervisor performance evaluations depends on the values and affect of the employees engaging in the behavior. A core premise of attribution theory is that when events deviate from norms and expectations, individuals seek to generate explanations for these deviations (Pyszczynski & Greenberg, 1981; Weick, 1995; Wong & Weiner, 1981). Because proactive behaviors go beyond minimum requirements, and emerge in unanticipated forms and situations, they often deviate from norms and supervisor expectations (Grant & Ashford, 2008). As such, when employees engage in proactive behaviors, supervisors will be likely to make attributions in order to explain these behaviors. Attribution theory indicates that in order to make attributions about an actor's behavior, observers seek out information about the intentions and motives that guided this behavior (Allen & Rush, 1998; Eastman, 1994; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). We suggest that supervisors look to employees' expressed values and affect—two central dimensions of employees' experiences of work (George & Jones, 1997)—for attribution-relevant information about whether the intentions driving proactive behaviors are benevolent.

A key assumption of our perspective is that supervisors are aware of employees' values and affect. Evidence suggests that individuals are able to judge, with reasonable accuracy, the values of others (Maierhofer, Griffin, & Sheehan, 2000) as well as their affect (Elfenbein & Ambady,

2002). Values are observable through verbal statements and behavior patterns, and affect is observable through facial expressions and verbal and body language. Supervisors have access to at least two sources of information for making inferences about employees' values and affect. First, as they develop a history of working with employees, supervisors are able to observe employees' patterns of behavior across a range of situations, which increases supervisors' accuracy (Kenrick & Funder, 1988). Second, when engaging in a particular proactive behavior, employees' values and affect can influence the manner in which employees display the behavior.

Although employees often engage in self-monitoring and impression management efforts in attempts to disguise their values and affect, self-monitoring and impression management theorists themselves recognize that, through the nature and timing of their actions, employees leak observable cues about their values and affect. For example, Bolino (1999) argued that compared to employees with prosocial values, employees with self-serving values offer less effective help because they are distracted by image concerns and also tend to expend less energy in initiative because they stop helping when their own interests have been advanced rather than continuing to help until others' interests have been served. Similarly, Hui, Lam, and Law (2000) found that employees with self-serving values help others at predictably instrumental times—they temporarily increase their helping when promotions are impending and then decrease their helping after being promoted. Thus, supervisors can judge employees' values and affect by reflecting on their interaction histories and by closely attending to employees' behavior patterns. Having articulated these assumptions, we develop specific hypotheses about how employees' values and affect influence supervisors' decisions to reward proactive behaviors.

### *Prosocial Values: Doing Good With Good Intentions*

Attribution theory suggests that, in order for proactive behaviors to contribute to higher overall performance evaluations, supervisors need to attribute the behavior to benevolent intentions (e.g., Bolino, 1999). Proactive behaviors are often idiosyncratic, unconventional, and challenging, and supervisors are more likely to accept and appreciate such behaviors when they are based on benevolent intentions (Hollander, 1958). For example, research indicates that supervisors evaluate helping behaviors more favorably when they attribute them to benevolent rather than self-serving motives (Allen & Rush, 1998; Eastman, 1994; Johnson, Erez, Kiker, & Motowidlo, 2002). We propose that the values employees express send a signal to supervisors about whether proactive behavior should be attributed to good intentions. Values are guiding principles in life, and a core dimension along which they vary is the extent to which they are

prosocial—other-oriented, benevolent, and altruistic versus self-interested, entitled, and egoistic (Grant, 2008; Rioux & Penner, 2001; Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). When employees express strong prosocial values, supervisors are likely to attribute their proactive behaviors to benevolent intentions. Employees with strong prosocial values develop a track record for engaging in proactive behaviors for the benefit of other people and the organization. They are willing to engage in proactive behaviors that contribute to organizational effectiveness even when these behaviors are personally costly (Meglino & Korsgaard, 2004). As a result, supervisors are likely to attribute the proactive behaviors of employees with prosocial values to benevolent intentions and will reward them with higher overall performance evaluations.

On the other hand, when employees express weak prosocial values, supervisors are likely to attribute their proactive behaviors to more self-serving intentions. Employees with weak prosocial values are likely to engage in proactive behaviors only when they stand to benefit personally from them (Meglino & Korsgaard, 2004; Rioux & Penner, 2001). As a result, supervisors are likely to attribute their proactive behaviors to more self-serving intentions, which deserve no rewards (e.g., Bolino, 1999; Hui et al., 2000). For example, employees with weak prosocial values who take charge may be seen as aiming to achieve a better situation for themselves rather than for the benefit of the broader organization. We do not expect supervisors to punish or penalize employees for engaging in proactive behaviors based on self-serving values. Rather, we expect that supervisors will be less likely to reward employees with “extra credit” for proactive behaviors based on self-serving values because supervisors will expect that employees with self-serving values already benefit from engaging in these behaviors. Thus:

*Hypothesis 2:* The employee’s prosocial values moderate the relationship between proactive behaviors and supervisor performance evaluations. The higher the employee’s prosocial values, the stronger the positive association of proactive behaviors with performance evaluations.

#### *Negative Affect: Doing Good but Feeling Bad*

In addition to values, attribution theory suggests that affect—the moods and emotions that employees express—is also likely to influence whether supervisors attribute employees’ proactive behaviors to good intentions. Affect is a source of information for making attributions (Schwarz & Clore, 1983). By revealing what employees are feeling,

affect offers a message to supervisors about how employees' behaviors should be understood.

We propose that the negative affect that employees express sends a signal to supervisors about whether proactive behavior should be attributed to benevolent intentions. Negative affect describes moods and emotions with an unpleasant valence or hedonic tone, and our focus is on dispositional negative affect—employees' enduring tendencies to express aversive moods and emotions (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). In general, employees with high negative affect may be more sensitive to problems and injustice, which may lead supervisors to attribute their proactive behaviors to “bad attitudes.” In addition, negative affect may lead supervisors to see the behavior as a burden for an employee (Ames, Flynn, & Weber, 2004) and thereby give the employee less credit for their efforts. Negative affect may also lead supervisors to interpret the behavior as deriving from counterproductive intentions. For example, if an employee with high negative affect speaks up about issues, this behavior, with its negative tone, could be interpreted as being directed toward offering complaints and criticisms rather than bringing about constructive change. Conversely, a lack of negative affect signals free choice, self-determination, and higher levels of engagement (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Thus, when employees express little negative affect, supervisors may infer that employees are willingly engaging in proactive behavior with the constructive intention of making the situation better (Dossett & Greenberg, 1981). As a result of making these more favorable attributions, it is then likely that supervisors will evaluate employees as displaying higher job performance. Thus:

*Hypothesis 3:* The employee's negative affect moderates the relationship between proactive behaviors and supervisor performance evaluations. The stronger the employee's negative affect, the weaker the positive association of proactive behaviors with performance evaluations.

#### *Overview of the Present Research*

We investigate these hypotheses in two studies. In Study 1, we test the above hypotheses for voice, rational issue-selling, and taking charge with a sample of managers from diverse industries and their direct supervisors. In Study 2, we test the above hypotheses for anticipatory helping with a sample of firefighters and their platoon supervisors. Across the two studies, in the interest of triangulation, we use different measures of prosocial values and negative affect, proactive behaviors, and supervisor performance evaluations.

*Study 1**Method**Sample and Procedures*

We test our hypotheses with a sample of managers enrolled in a part-time executive masters of business administration (MBA) course, along with their direct supervisors. We selected managers based on the expectation that proactive behaviors would be particularly important for their job performance. Managers typically possess sufficient autonomy to engage in proactive behavior (Dutton et al., 2001) and are often rewarded for doing so (Grant & Ashford, 2008). We e-mailed an online survey link to 196 managers, who also forwarded another online survey link to a minimum of three work contacts (supervisors, peers, direct reports and/or customers). Of the 196 managers, 103 received responses from their direct supervisors. These matched pairs of 103 managers and their supervisors represent the sample for this paper. (There were 17 managers who were rated by two supervisors. For each of these managers, we randomly selected one supervisor's data for inclusion in the analyses.) Moving forward, we refer to the managers as "employees" in order to avoid confusion with supervisors.

The sample of employees was 62.1% male with an average of 33.86 years of age ( $SD = 3.85$  years). Each employee had, on average, 8 years experience from a minimum of one major functional area (accounting, finance, general management, human resources, information technology, marketing, production). Employees had an average job tenure of 2.13 years ( $SD = 1.71$  years) in their current position and an average employment in their current organization of 3.88 years ( $SD = 3.15$  years). They were currently working as managers in a variety of functional areas, including sales and marketing (23.3%), production and operations (18.4%), finance (17.5%), general management (13.6%), accounting (7.7%), human resources (3.9%), and information technology (2.9%). Their primary industries were financial services (21.4%); manufacturing, production, engineering, packaging, and construction (18.4%); professional services such as consulting, advertising, legal, and information technology (18.4%); telecommunications (7.8%); pharmaceuticals and medicine (6.8%); retail and consumer products (5.8%); government, education, and public service (4.9%); and travel and transportation (3.9%).

The employee survey included measures of prosocial values and negative affect. The survey completed by direct supervisors included evaluations of employees' proactive behaviors and overall job performance. Each direct supervisor was unique, eliminating concerns about dependencies. The supervisors had an average of 2.76 years of experience supervising the employees ( $SD = 3.04$  years). The majority of supervisors (64.1%)



had at least daily contact with the employees, and most of the remaining supervisors (30.1%) interacted with them weekly.

To balance the goals of minimizing response biases and maintaining content and construct validity, our measures consisted of between three and five items. We followed two steps to select our items. First, for each construct, we selected the highest-loading items from established measures based on previous research. Second, we carefully examined the items for content validity to ensure that they tapped the full breadth of the construct definitions. We used factor analyses and internal consistency statistics to assess their validity in the current sample.

#### *Employee Measures*

*Control variables.* We controlled for the demographic variables of gender, age, and job tenure, which have been related to proactive behaviors in past research. Gender is an important control in light of evidence that supervisors may expect men and women to engage in different types of proactive behaviors and make different attributions for these proactive behaviors (Kidder & Parks, 2001). Age and job tenure are important control variables given that older, more experienced employees may possess more knowledge and skill for engaging in proactive behaviors effectively (Grant & Ashford, 2008).

*Prosocial values.* Employees reported their prosocial values by responding to the four highest-loading items from the Schwartz Value Survey (Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). We asked, "How important are the following values as guiding principles in your life?" using a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = *opposed to my values* and 7 = *of supreme importance*. Sample items are "being helpful" and "being responsible" ( $\alpha = .70$ ).

*Negative affect.* Employees reported their negative affect by responding to items from Daniels' (2000) measures of affect at work. We asked the employees to rate how often they felt five specific emotions on a typical day at work using a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = *not at all* and 5 = *extremely*: "depressed, miserable, gloomy, bored, and dull" ( $\alpha = .80$ ).

#### *Supervisor Measures*

For the proactive behaviors, we focused on supervisor ratings, rather than employee ratings, to ensure that supervisors were aware of the proactive behaviors in question. In order for supervisors' performance evaluations to be influenced by employees' proactive behaviors, supervisors need to know that employees are engaging in these proactive behaviors.

*Control variables.* We controlled for relationship duration (the number of years) and the frequency of contact between supervisor and employee (daily, weekly, monthly) as these two variables might influence the opportunities supervisors had to observe employees' behaviors.

*Proactive behavior # 1: Voice.* We used four items from Van Dyne and LePine's (1998) voice scale. Because these authors reported multiple factor loadings across time and multiple raters, and all loadings were high, we selected the items that were most consistent with the construct definition. We chose items that focused on speaking up and listening to ensure that voicing opinions would be informative, and excluded items that appear to tap into multiple proactive behaviors. For example, the item "Gets involved in issues that affect the quality of work life here in the group" could capture voice or taking charge. The items, which used a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = *very infrequently* and 5 = *very frequently*, included "speaks up about organizational issues that need to be addressed" ( $\alpha = .79$ ).

*Proactive behavior # 2: Rational issue-selling.* We used three items from Kipnis et al. (1980; see also Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990). We introduced the items by asking supervisors to think about how the focal employees "go about changing your mind to get you to agree with them." The items, which used a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*, included "uses logic to convince the supervisor" ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

*Proactive behavior # 3: Taking charge.* We used three of the highest-loading items from Morrison and Phelps (1999). The items, which used a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = *very infrequently* and 5 = *very frequently*, included "tries to implement solutions to pressing organizational problems" ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

*Performance evaluations.* Supervisors rated employees' overall job performance on a five-item scale (see Ashford & Black, 1996). The items were introduced with the statement, "Thinking about the overall performance of the person you are rating, please indicate how you would rate them relative to others in the same/similar jobs on a percentage basis." The items, which used a 9-point scale anchored at 1 = *bottom 10%* and 9 = *top 10%*, included "overall performance" and "achievement of work goals" ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

### *Results and Discussion*

Means and standard deviations for all variables are displayed in Table 1. To ensure that the supervisors distinguished between the three proactive behaviors and performance evaluations, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis of the supervisor ratings of the three proactive behaviors and overall performance using EQS software version 6.1 with maximum likelihood estimation procedures. Because we expected the three proactive behaviors of voice, issue-selling, and taking charge to reflect a latent higher-order proactive behavior construct (Parker et al., 2006),

TABLE 1  
*Study 1 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations*

Variables (raters)	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Prosocial values (employees)	5.31	.61	(.70)											
2. Negative affect (employees)	1.55	.60	-.04	(.80)										
3. Proactive behavior composite (supervisors)	3.98	.54	-.06	-.23*	(.86)									
4. Voice (supervisors)	3.87	.66	-.07	-.24*	.83***	(.79)								
5. Rational issue-selling (supervisors)	4.28	.64	.01	-.16	.68***	.33**	(.88)							
6. Taking charge (supervisors)	3.83	.78	-.06	-.13	.82***	.51***	.38***	(.85)						
7. Performance evaluations (supervisors)	7.78	.98	-.04	-.01	.63***	.38***	.55***	.57***	(.85)					
8. Gender	1.38	.49	.12	-.14	-.11	-.04	-.14	-.10	-.03	-				
9. Age	33.86	3.85	-.03	-.18	-.01	.07	-.09	-.02	-.13	-.02	-			
10. Job tenure	2.13	1.71	-.10	-.02	-.04	-.06	.06	-.05	.07	-.10	.22*	-		
11. Relationship duration	2.76	3.04	-.10	-.08	.14	.07	.07	.19*	.13	-.10	.25*	.33**	-	
12. Contact frequency	1.40	1.23	.12	-.08	-.05	-.04	-.15	.06	-.02	.06	.11	.18	.38***	-

*Notes:* Internal consistency values (Cronbach's alphas) appear across the diagonal in parentheses. Correlations for the multiplicative terms are available from the authors.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

we modeled proactivity as a second-order latent construct correlated with performance evaluations. The model demonstrated acceptable fit with the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999),  $\chi^2(84) = 133.63$ , CFI = .94, SRMR = .071. Plausible alternative one-factor, two-factor, and three-factor models displayed significantly poorer fit with the data. We thus conducted our moderated regressions with a proactive behavior composite that aggregated all three proactive behaviors.

To test our moderating hypotheses, we followed the ordinary least-squares regression procedures recommended by Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken (2003). We began by mean centering the independent variable (supervisor ratings of proactive behavior) and moderating variables (employees' reports of prosocial values and negative affect). Next, we multiplied each pair of centered variables to create interaction terms. We then conducted a hierarchical regression analysis predicting supervisor performance evaluations from the independent variable (supervisor ratings of proactive behavior), moderating variables (employees' reports of prosocial values and negative affect), and interaction terms. We entered the control variables, proactive behaviors, and moderators in the first step and the interaction of each proactive behavior and each moderator in the second step. The results are displayed in Table 2.

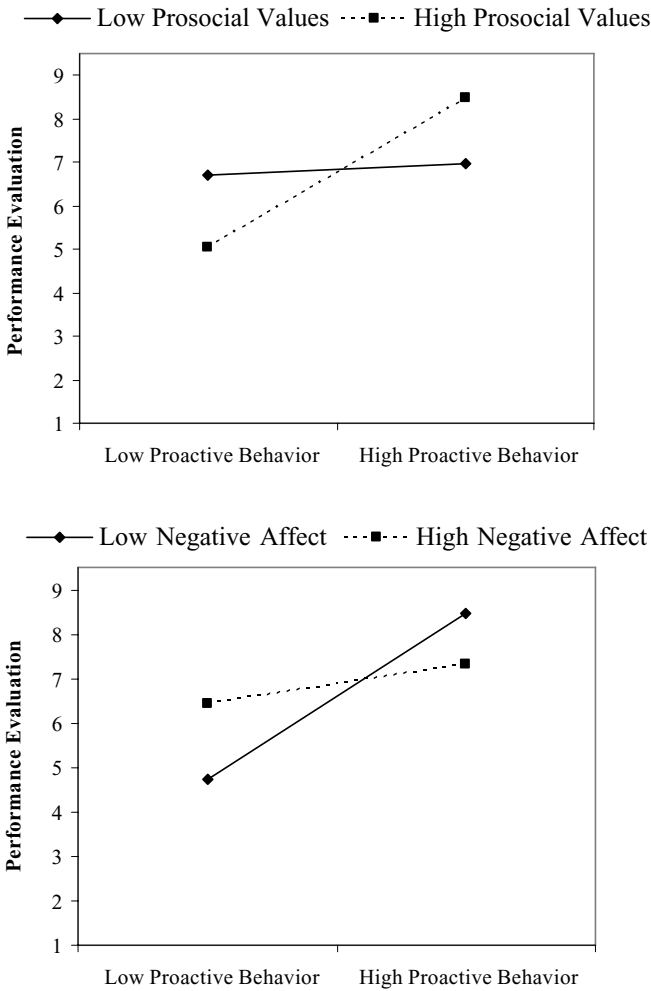
The analysis showed that, in support of Hypothesis 1, proactive behavior was a significant predictor of supervisor performance evaluations. We also found statistically significant interactions between employees' prosocial values and negative affect and their supervisors' ratings of proactive behavior in predicting supervisor performance evaluations. We interpreted the significant interactions by plotting the simple slopes at one standard deviation above and below the independent variable (proactive behavior) and moderator variables (prosocial values and negative affect). The results, displayed in Figure 1, show that supervisors' ratings of proactive behavior were more positively associated with their evaluations of employees' performance when employees expressed strong prosocial values (Panel A) or low negative affect (Panel B). For employees with strong prosocial values, the simple slope for the relationship between proactive behavior and supervisor performance evaluations was positive and differed significantly from zero,  $t(98) = 8.63$ ,  $p < .001$ . For employees with weak prosocial values, the simple slope did not differ significantly from zero,  $t(98) = 1.72$ , *ns*. For employees with low negative affect, the simple slope was positive and differed significantly from zero,  $t(98) = 7.79$ ,  $p < .001$ . For employees with high negative affect, the simple slope also differed significantly from zero but was weaker,  $t(98) = 3.20$ ,  $p = .002$ . These findings support Hypothesis 2 and 3.

Although these results support our hypotheses, they are subject to at least two key limitations. First, the managers in our sample were

TABLE 2  
 Study 1: Regressions for the Moderating Roles of Prosocial Values and Negative Affect

	Step 1				Step 2			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>
Step 1								
Gender	.18	.18	.09	1.03	.03	.17	.02	.18
Age	-.03	.02	-.11	-1.19	-.02	.02	-.09	-1.08
Job tenure	.09	.05	.16	1.70	.11	.05	.18*	2.08*
Relationship duration	.02	.03	.07	.68	.03	.03	.09	1.08
Contact frequency	-.06	.08	-.07	-.75	-.04	.07	-.04	-.51
<b>Proactive behavior</b>	<b>1.24</b>	<b>.16</b>	<b>.69</b>	<b>7.84***</b>	<b>.94</b>	<b>.17</b>	<b>.52</b>	<b>5.56***</b>
Prosocial values	.10	.14	.06	.67	.06	.13	.04	.44
Negative affect	.26	.15	.16	1.75	.13	.14	.08	.90
Step 2								
<b>Prosocial values x</b>								
<b>Proactive behavior</b>					<b>.76</b>	<b>.27</b>	<b>.26</b>	<b>2.80**</b>
<b>Negative affect x</b>								
<b>Proactive behavior</b>					<b>-.56</b>	<b>.28</b>	<b>-.16</b>	<b>-1.98*</b>
Adjusted R-squared				.42				.51
$\Delta$ Adjusted R-squared								.09**

Notes: The rows for proactive behaviors, the interactions, and change in r-squared appear in bold because they represent the tests of our hypotheses. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



**Figure 1: Employees' Prosocial Values and Negative Affect Moderate the Relationship Between Proactive Behavior and Supervisor Performance Evaluations (Study 1).**

working in diverse industries and organizations under distinct supervisors. It is possible that proactive behaviors were differentially valued by different supervisors in different industries or organizations. To address this limitation, it is necessary to test whether employees' prosocial values and negative affect moderate the proactivity-performance evaluation relationship within a single occupation with common supervisors. Second,

in order to demonstrate that the observed relationships are robust, it is important to conduct a constructive replication that demonstrates similar patterns of association using different independent, moderating, and outcome variables.

### *Study 2*

In this study, we seek to address the above limitations. First, we report data from a single industry, occupation, and organization in which two common supervisors rate the performance of all employees. Second, to meet criteria for constructive replication, we assess a different proactive behavior (anticipatory helping) and use different measures of prosocial values, negative affect, and supervisor performance evaluations.

The current study also differs in that we used employees' own self-reports of proactive behavior, rather than supervisory reports, which represents a more conservative approach. In Study 1, we measured proactive behaviors from the supervisor's perspective with the assumption that if supervisors were not aware of employees' proactive behaviors, they could not make decisions about whether or not to reward them. However, in the current organizational setting, supervisors are able to directly observe employees' proactive behaviors through working closely together on interdependent tasks. If our hypotheses are correct, it should be possible to show that employees' self-reports of proactive behavior operate in the same way as supervisor reports.

### *Method*

#### *Sample and Procedures*

In this study, we test our hypotheses with a sample of 55 paid municipal firefighters at a fire department in the midwest United States, along with their platoon supervisors. The firefighters were all male with an average tenure of 8.85 years in the department. Both platoon supervisors worked closely with all 55 firefighters, overseeing training and core task activities. The first author distributed consent forms and surveys during a required monthly training session. Firefighters reported their prosocial values, negative affect, and anticipatory helping behaviors. Two platoon supervisors evaluated each firefighter's job performance.

#### *Firefighter Measures*

*Prosocial values.* Firefighters responded to a 10-item altruism scale (International Personality Item Pool, 2001). The items, which used a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = *disagree strongly* and 7 = *agree strongly*, included "I am concerned about others," "I am indifferent to the feelings of others (reverse scored)," and "I love to help others" ( $\alpha = .75$ ).

*Negative affect.* Firefighters responded to the 10-item Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (Watson et al., 1988). The items, which used a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = *not at all* and 5 = *very much*, included “upset,” “distressed,” and “guilty” ( $\alpha = .89$ ).

*Anticipatory helping.* Firefighters responded to three items adapted from existing measures (Rioux & Penner, 2001). Using a Likert-type scale anchored at 1 = *never* and 5 = *very often*, we asked, “How often do you: (a) Make proactive efforts to find new ways to benefit coworkers? (b) Seek out opportunities to have positive impact on coworkers at work? (c) Try to find ways to do good for coworkers outside the boundaries of your job?” ( $\alpha = .81$ ).

#### *Supervisor Measures*

*Performance evaluations.* Two platoon supervisors evaluated firefighters’ overall job performance by responding to the prompt, “Please rate each firefighter’s overall job performance in the past month.” The item used an 11-point scale anchored at 0 = *not at all successful*, 5 = *average*, and 10 = *extremely successful*. Because the two supervisors displayed good consistency ( $r = .60, p < .001$ ), we averaged their ratings to represent firefighters’ performance evaluations.

#### *Results and Discussion*

Means and standard deviations for all variables are displayed in Table 3. We tested our hypotheses with the same moderated regression procedures as in Study 1 (Table 4). In support of Hypothesis 1, anticipatory helping was associated with higher supervisor performance evaluations.

TABLE 3  
*Study 2: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations*

Variables (raters)	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Prosocial values (employees)	5.59	.61	(.75)				
2. Negative affect (employees)	1.43	.63	-.47***	(.89)			
3. Anticipatory helping (employees)	3.70	.72	.12	.06	(.81)		
4. Performance evaluations (supervisors)	7.23	1.08	.08	.05	.37**	.60***	
5. Tenure	8.85	7.44	.17	.05	.05	-.11	-

*Notes.* Cronbach’s alphas appear across the diagonal in parentheses. Correlations for the multiplicative terms are available from the authors.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



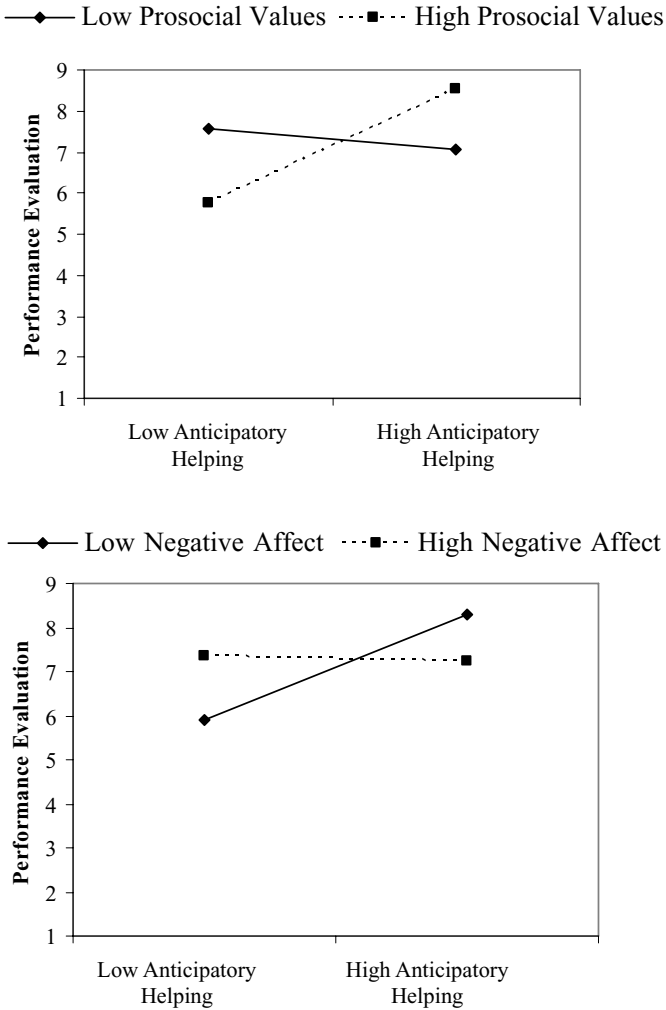
TABLE 4  
*Study 2 Regression for the Moderating Roles of Prosocial Values  
 and Negative Affect*

	Step 1				Step 2			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>
Step 1								
Job tenure	-.002	.002	-.16	-1.16	-.002	.002	-.13	-.99
<b>Anticipatory helping</b>	<b>.54</b>	<b>.20</b>	<b>.35</b>	<b>2.61*</b>	<b>.60</b>	<b>.20</b>	<b>.40</b>	<b>3.06**</b>
Prosocial values	.23	.28	.13	.81	-.03	.28	-.02	-.10
Negative affect	.14	.26	.08	.55	.11	.24	.07	.47
Step 2								
<b>Prosocial values x Anticipatory helping</b>					<b>.87</b>	<b>.44</b>	<b>.27</b>	<b>2.00*</b>
<b>Negative affect x Anticipatory helping</b>					<b>-.65</b>	<b>.28</b>	<b>-.30</b>	<b>-2.33*</b>
Adjusted R-squared				.09				.23**
<b><math>\Delta</math> Adjusted R-squared</b>								<b>.14**</b>

*Notes.* The dependent variable is supervisor performance evaluations. The rows for the proactive behavior anticipatory helping, the interaction, and change in r-squared appear in bold because they represent the tests of our hypotheses.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

There were also statistically significant interactions between anticipatory helping and both moderators—prosocial values and negative affect—in predicting supervisor performance evaluations. The significant interactions, which are displayed in Figure 2, show that employees' self-reports of anticipatory helping were more positively associated with supervisor performance evaluations when employees expressed strong prosocial values (Panel A) or low negative affect (Panel B). The slope for the relationship between anticipatory helping and supervisor performance evaluations was positive and significant for employees with strong prosocial values,  $t(54) = 3.66, p = .001$ , but not for employees with weak prosocial values,  $t(54) = -.39, ns$ . Similarly, the relationship between anticipatory helping and supervisor performance evaluations was positive and significant for employees with low negative affect,  $t(54) = 3.90, p < .001$ , but not for employees with high negative affect,  $t(54) = .88, ns$ . These findings provide support for Hypotheses 2 and 3, constructively replicating the results of Study 1 in a distinct single-organization sample and with different measures of key variables.



**Figure 2: Firefighters' Prosocial Values and Negative Affect Moderate the Relationship Between Anticipatory Helping and Supervisor Performance Evaluations (Study 2).**

### *General Discussion*

Most existing proactivity research has simply assumed that proactive behavior will translate into higher performance, and little has been known about when proactive behavior is likely to receive credit from supervisors (Chan, 2006). We sought to explain when supervisors reward proactive

behavior with higher performance evaluations. We found support for the moderating roles of prosocial values and negative affect with samples of managers and their direct supervisors, as well as firefighters and their platoon supervisors. Our research therefore fills a gap in previous research, highlighting that the values and affect that employees express are related to supervisors' decisions about whether to give credit for proactive behaviors.

### *Contributions*

Our first contribution lies in linking employees' values to the proactivity-performance evaluation relationship. Values are thought to be key psychological inputs into proactive behavior, as employees need to determine what is important to them in order to make agentic choices about when and how to enact self-starting behaviors (Grant & Ashford, 2008). However, researchers have devoted little attention to the role of employees' values in supervisors' decisions about rewarding proactive behaviors in performance evaluations. Our findings suggest that supervisors are more likely to give credit for proactive behaviors to employees with prosocial values. Although further research is needed to explore the mechanisms through which this pattern occurs, we suggest that the proactive behaviors of employees with prosocial values are likely to be directed toward benefiting others—coworkers, supervisors, the wider team, and/or the organization—behaviors of interest to supervisors who are responsible for facilitating collective goal achievement. As such, our research highlights that employees' values are related to supervisors' judgments of proactivity as a contributor to performance.

Our second contribution lies in linking affect to the proactivity-performance relationship in a similar way to that described above for prosocial values. Although researchers have begun to examine the links between employees' affect and their own proactive behaviors (e.g., Sonnentag, 2003), little research has examined the role of employees' affect in supervisors' judgments of proactive behaviors and performance evaluations. Our research directly addresses this issue by identifying a surprisingly strong link between the negative affect that employees express and the extent to which their proactive behaviors are associated with higher supervisor performance evaluations. We find that negative affect is linked not to the likelihood of proactive behavior but rather to how it is perceived by supervisors. Our findings thus suggest that employees' affect is related to supervisors' judgments of whether employees should receive credit for proactivity.

Our third contribution lies in answering answers recent calls for more integrative theory and research on proactive behavior (Crant, 2000; Grant

& Ashford, 2008; Parker & Collins, in press). Whereas most research in this domain has focused on predicting and explaining single proactive behaviors, we aimed to test a more general theoretical perspective that would account for patterns common to multiple proactive behaviors that differ in their intended target. Indeed, our findings suggest that employees' prosocial values and negative affect play similar roles in supervisors' reactions to four different proactive behaviors of voice, issue-selling, taking charge, and anticipatory helping. As such, our research helps to synthesize knowledge about proactivity.

Our study also offers a fresh look at the performance evaluation process. Considerable research in the performance appraisal literature has examined how the psychological states experienced by raters themselves influence their evaluations of employees (Arvey & Murphy, 1998). In contrast, we have provided new insights into how the psychological states expressed by employees are associated with raters' evaluations. Our findings point to understanding the conditions under which supervisors give and withhold credit for desirable behaviors, or a lack thereof, as a valuable direction for performance appraisal research. As proactive behaviors become more important, we need to understand how they are perceived and can be encouraged by supervisors, especially because they are often risky (Morrison & Milliken, 2000).

#### *Limitations and Future Directions*

Our research is subject to several noteworthy limitations. In particular, we drew on attribution theory to explain how employees' values and affect would moderate the proactivity-performance evaluation relationship but did not directly measure supervisors' perceptions of attributions for employees' proactive behaviors. That aside, our consistent findings across two studies match fine-grained theoretical predictions drawn from attribution theory, which strengthens our confidence that the hypothesized mediating mechanisms are indeed operating. However, future research will need to measure supervisors' attributions and perceptions of employees' values and affect directly. Such an investigation will help to explain whether proactive behavior accompanied by self-serving values and/or negative affect is merely perceived by supervisors as less valuable or whether such proactive behavior actually offers less constructive contributions. For example, as noted earlier, self-serving anticipatory helping might be only offered at times that are instrumental for making a favorable impression. In addition, directly measuring supervisors' perceptions and attributions will help to rule out the possibility that supervisors simply perceive such behaviors more negatively, without making a particular attribution. It is plausible that proactive behavior accompanied by negative

affect is simply perceived as less useful, as in the case of voice with strong negative affect being perceived as threatening or challenging rather than constructive.

There is also a need to directly assess our assumption that supervisors were aware of employees' values and affect. Based on previous research, we assumed that employees' values and affect were observable to supervisors, such as through employees' facial expressions or body language. We believe this is a reasonable assumption, especially because the supervisors had considerable experience with the employees they were rating and therefore had access to employees' track records of behaviors from which to infer values and affect. Nevertheless, we did not explicitly test whether and how employees' values and affect were reflected in their actual track records of behavior. We recommend that in future studies, researchers assess supervisors' general perceptions of employees' values and affect, as well as supervisors' perceptions of the specific values and affect underlying employees' proactive behaviors. We also did not examine whether our findings are unique to proactive behaviors or whether they apply to core task behaviors as well. We hope to see researchers address these issues in the future.

Examining the two studies in tandem, a surprising finding emerged. As predicted, supervisors gave the most favorable performance evaluations when employees who expressed strong prosocial values or low negative affect engaged in high levels of proactive behavior. However, we did not expect supervisors to give the lowest performance evaluations when employees who expressed strong prosocial values or low negative affect engaged in low levels of proactive behavior. This pattern across both studies suggests that, from an attributional perspective, expressing prosocial values and low negative affect may be a double-edged sword. Perhaps supervisors hold such employees to higher standards, giving them credit if they display proactivity but penalizing them if they fail to live up to their "proactive potential." In addition, there was an interesting difference between the two studies. Our two moderators of prosocial values and negative affect were not correlated for managers (Study 1  $r = .04$ ) but displayed a strong negative correlation for firefighters (Study 2  $r = -.47$ ). Future research is necessary to explain this difference, but we expect that contextual differences are at play. Because firefighting is a dangerous helping profession, firefighters with weak prosocial values are less likely to find fulfillment in risking their own lives to help others, and this perception of misfit might result in negative affect. In contrast, the managers were working in a variety of occupations, so there is little reason to expect those with weak prosocial values to experience greater negative affect.

Furthermore, we recommend examining values and affect with greater precision. For example, researchers could study specific values such as

conformity, power, and security; discrete negative emotions such as fear and anger; and discrete positive emotions such as calm, determination, and cheerfulness. Researchers could also examine contextual moderators of the proactivity-performance evaluation relationship, such as environmental uncertainty (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). Finally, it is possible that supervisors' beliefs about the value of proactive behaviors will moderate the proactivity-performance evaluation relationships. Supervisors may be more willing to give credit to proactive behaviors when they believe that the specific proactive behaviors contribute to organizational effectiveness.

### *Practical Implications*

Our findings about the moderating roles of affect and values offer valuable practical insights for supervisors by underscoring a potentially perilous bias and an opportunity for improvement. By only rewarding proactive behaviors of employees with strong prosocial values and low negative affect, supervisors may be discouraging key proactive behaviors that are based on more self-serving values and negative affect. Indeed, self-serving values and negative affect can contribute to organizational effectiveness by promoting creativity, voice, network building, and other efforts to change the status quo (e.g., Fineman, 2006; Frese & Fay, 2001; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). Thus, our research suggests that it will be valuable for supervisors to create cultures, climates, norms, and reward systems that encourage proactive behaviors, even when they are based on negative affect and self-serving values. At the same time, employees may benefit from the knowledge that expressing weak prosocial values and high negative affect may prevent supervisors from appreciating their proactive behaviors. On one hand, this knowledge may motivate employees to express their values and emotions more carefully. On the other hand, it may motivate employees to search for jobs, occupations, industries, and organizational cultures in which self-serving values and negative affect are accepted and encouraged, providing a better fit for their values and affective tendencies.

### *Conclusion*

Campbell (2000, p. 57) noted that "Initiative, judgment, and speaking out are qualities many firms have attempted to suppress . . . unanticipated consequences often result when employees—even with the best of intentions—exercise initiative." However, little research has addressed the conditions under which supervisors give employees credit for being proactive. By identifying strong prosocial values and low negative affect

as two factors that strengthen the relationship between proactive behavior and supervisor performance evaluations, our research offers both theoretical and practical implications for enabling supervisors to give—and employees to receive—credit for proactive behavior.

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