An Identity-Based Perspective on Proactivity: Future Work Selves and Beyond

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I've never had a dream in my life

Because a dream is what you want to do, but still haven't pursued

I knew what I wanted and did it until it was done

So I've been the dream that I wanted to be since day one.

Aesop Rock, "No regrets"

Proactivity refers to future-oriented behavior that aims to bring about change, and that, importantly, is self-initiated (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). A growing body of research provides evidence for the relationship between proactive behavior and a range of positive outcomes, including career success (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001) and job performance (Thompson, 2005), as well as job attitudes (see Thomas, Whitman, & Viswesvaran, 2010; and Tornau & Frese, 2013, for meta-analyses).

The self-initiated nature of proactivity emphasizes that this type of behavior is relatively independent of external contingencies (Parker et al., 2010). This conceptualization of proactivity "makes room for individual goals that are not tied to external rewards but are pursued because they are interesting, highly valued, or reflect authentic values and interests" (Strauss & Parker, 2014a, p. 50). It highlights that proactive behavior is inherently linked to how individuals think about themselves, in other words, to their self-concept and identity.

In this chapter, we extend previous theorizing on how proactivity is motivated and explore how identity motivates, shapes, and constrains proactivity, and how proactive behavior in turn influences who individuals believe they are, or may become. We specifically argue that proactive behavior is often identity-congruent, and serves the purpose of expressing one's self. We further discuss the role of future work selves: hoped for, future-

oriented identities in relation to work. Future work selves constitute a motivational resource for proactivity, and drive self-directed behaviors aimed at development and change (Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2012).

Self-concept, identity, and future work selves

Before exploring the role of the self in relation to proactive behavior, we first define the key terms of self-concept and identity, and introduce the concept of future work selves. While self-concept and identity are sometimes used interchangeably (Oyserman & Destin, 2010), the self-concept can be seen as a dynamic, changing collection of individual identities (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Identities thus constitute elements of the self (Oyserman & James, 2009).

Not all identities that form part of the self-concept are accessible at any given time. Instead, "the self-concept of the moment is best viewed as a continually active, shifting array of accessible self-knowledge" (Markus & Wurf, 1987, p. 306). Depending on situational cues, different identities become activated and exert their influence on behavior, perception, and judgment (Markus & Wurf, 1987), usually without conscious awareness (Oyserman, 2009). Activated identities "cue readiness to act and to make sense of the world in terms of the norms, values, and behaviors relevant to the identity" (Oyserman & Destin, 2010, p. 1003). Which identities are activated in turn depends on the social context (Oyserman, Fryberg, & Yoder, 2007). This view of the self-concept thus takes social aspects of the self into account, and situates the self in context, rather than treating it as decontextualized (Oyserman & James, 2009). It thus reconciles psychological and sociological perspectives on identity (Markus & Wurf, 1987).

Identities can be categorized in a number of different ways. First, identities can be personal, relational, or collective (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Personal identities emphasize the distinct aspect of the self-concept that differentiate an individual from others (Brewer &

Gardner, 1996). Relational identities reflect role-related relationships, such as leader-follower (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). Collective identities reflect individuals' membership in groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

At each of these three levels, we can further distinguish between current identities and possible identities (Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999), which reflect who individuals may become (Markus & Nurius, 1986). These possible identities are particularly critical for proactive behavior as they motivate self-directed behavior aimed at bringing about change (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006). In particular, individuals' future work selves have been identified as a driver of proactive behavior (Strauss et al., 2012; Strauss & Parker, 2014b).

Future Work Selves

Future work selves are "an individual's representation of himself or herself in the future that reflects his or her hopes and aspirations in relation to work" (Strauss et al., 2012, p. 580). Future work selves are a specific type of personal possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986). In particular, they have three defining characteristics. First, future work selves are future-oriented (Strauss et al., 2012). While possible selves can also represent, for example, ideal current selves (Higgins, 1998), future work selves are selves individuals hope to hold in the future. This is critical because discrepancies between one's current self and a desired future are evaluated differently than discrepancies between the current self and a desired present (Boldero & Francis, 2000, 2002). Boldero and Francis (2000, 2002) argued that discrepancies between the present self and an ideal future self, such as the future work self, are evaluated based on the rate of progress, while discrepancies between the current self and a present standard are evaluated based on the magnitude of discrepancy. A discrepancy between one's current self and an ideal present self is experienced as a negative psychological state which in turn motivates the individual to reduce the discrepancy (Boldero & Francis, 2002) . In contrast, discrepancies between one's current self and a future self are

thus not necessarily associated with negative affect (cf. Carver & Scheier, 1990). This

implies that individuals can hold a future work self that is very different from their current

self without negative consequences for their self-evaluation.

Second, future work selves are positive reference values, rather than selves to be

avoided (Strauss et al., 2012). Strauss et al. (2012) proposed that future work selves are

hoped for, rather than feared future work selves, because feared selves would be less effective

in regulating behavior as they are less likely to provide a specific direction (Elliot, Sheldon,

& Church, 1997).

Finally, future work selves are defined as specific to work (Strauss et al., 2012).

Possible selves affect individuals' behavior in the domain of their lives to which they are

linked (Black, Stein, & Loveland-Cherry, 2001; Hooker & Kaus, 1994; Oyserman, Bybee, &

Terry, 2006). Correspondingly, future work selves are likely to be most relevant to behaviors

related to one's work and career.

Future work selves can be a motivational resource for proactive behavior (Strauss et

al., 2012; Strauss & Parker, 2014b). Before we discuss this relationship in more detail, we

first introduce a broader model linking identity and proactivity, based on recent research on

identity-based motivation (Oyserman, 2007, 2009; Oyserman et al., 2007).

Identity-based motivation and proactive behavior

Engaging in proactive behavior is generally seen as a conscious decision based on a

careful weighing of costs and benefits (Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Parker et al., 2010). The

role of identity has been discussed much less (Ashford & Barton, 2012). However, the

calculated decision of whether to engage in proactive behavior may not always be purely

utilitarian. Instead it can, as we argue here, be driven by identity-based motivation

(Oyserman, 2007, 2009; Oyserman et al., 2007), and reflect "current action in pursuit of

identity-based goals" (Oyserman & James, 2011, p. 117). We propose that proactive behavior

is particularly likely to be linked to an individual's self-concept, more so than work behaviors that are prescribed or reactive in nature. The self-initiated nature of proactivity is one of its defining features. For example, personal initiative, a proactive form of work performance (Parker et al., 2010), refers to the "pursuit of self-set goals" (Frese & Fay, 2001, p. 139). As Parker et al. (2010) put it, when engaging in proactive behavior "[t]he individual acts on his or her own volition rather than as the result of a specification or direction given by someone else" (p. 831). In deciding whether or not to engage in proactive behavior, individuals are likely to have a sense of choice. At least in individualistic cultures, choice is experienced as an opportunity to express one's identity (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In contrast, work behaviors which are reactive in nature and prescribed are less likely to provide a sense of volition.

In support of this idea, Ashford and Barton (2012) previously proposed that proactive behavior aimed at raising issues may be consistent with an individual's identity. Drawing on self-verification theory (Swann, 1983), the authors argued that this type of proactive behavior may be driven by individuals' motivation to verify their self-view. For example, for a person who might see themselves as a "fixer", finding a better way for the team to work together or preventing a problem from recurring, is linked to their identity. Suggesting a new way for the team to collaborate would thus confirm their self-view. Anseel and colleagues (Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, & Sackett, 2015; Anseel, Lievens, & Levy, 2007) proposed a theoretical framework of self-motives underlying proactive feedback seeking, and similarly argued that self-verification is a possible driver of this specific type of proactive behavior (see also De Stobbeleir, this volume).

In this sense, identity-based motivation can provide a "reason to" engage in proactive behavior (Parker et al., 2010)[1], depending on the situation. When a relevant identity becomes activated in a social context, this is likely to trigger proactive behavior linked to this identity (Oyserman & Destin, 2010; Oyserman et al., 2007; Oyserman & James, 2009).

Although research that directly investigates the link between proactivity and identity is scarce, Greguras and Diefendorff (2010) provide indirect support for the self-expressive nature of proactive behavior. In a study of 165 full-time employees in Singapore, individuals listed six short-term work related goals they were currently pursuing and indicated to what extent each of these goals was pursued because of external pressures, feelings of guilt, personal importance, or intrinsic enjoyment (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Participants high in proactive personality were more likely to pursue goals consistent with their values, interests, and needs. The authors argued that individuals high in proactive personality would "be more likely to resist social pressures and therefore set goals that are consistent with their own values and beliefs" (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2010, p. 542), suggesting that proactive individuals are likely to behave in ways that express their personal identity.

Figure 1 summarizes our model and describes the three ways in which we propose identity relates to proactive behavior: First, the discrepancy between current selves and future work selves drives proactive behavior (Strauss et al., 2012). This mechanism facilitates individuals' self-development. Second, engaging in proactive behavior can in turn inform individuals' current and future work selves and trigger identity revision. Finally, we propose

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[1] Parker et al. (2010) introduced "reason to" motivations as one category of motivational states that drive proactive behavior. The authors highlighted integrated motivation as a "reason to" motivational state which is conceptually similar to identity-based motivation. Integrated regulation reflects individuals' sense "that the behavior is an integral part of who they are, that it emanates from their sense of self" (Gagné & Deci, 2005, p. 335). There are parallels but also key differences between identity-based motivation and integrated regulation. Identity-based motivation similarly captures the notion that proactive behavior can be self-expressive, but it differs from the concept of integrated regulation in that it takes into account the dynamic interplay between context and identity. Identities become salient depending on the situation, and act as a "reason to" engage in proactive behavior only in contexts where they become accessible. In contrast, the concept integrated regulation is not explicitly context-specific.

that the identity-congruent nature of proactive behavior explains persistence in the face of setbacks. If proactive behavior is identity congruent, individuals persist in their efforts to bring about change even if they encounter obstacles. Below, we elaborate on each of the pathways in our Figure.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Identity congruence: Explaining persistence in proactive behavior

Proactive behavior requires persistence in the face of obstacles (Fay & Frese, 2001). As they attempt to bring about change, proactive individuals are likely to face resistance from others and experience setbacks (Parker et al., 2010). Drawing on conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989), scholars have proposed that proactive behavior is highly effortful, requiring considerable resources (Bolino et al., 2010). Under certain conditions, proactive behavior can even cause strain, possibly because it involves higher order cognitive functions such as anticipation, planning and decision making, which can be resource depleting (Strauss, Parker, & O'Shea, 2014). This raises the question of how proactive behavior can be sustained, and when and how individuals decide to abandon their efforts to bring about change, considering the significant amount of resources they are investing.

We argue that the motivational properties of identity provide insights into individuals' persistence in their proactive behavior. As reflected in the quote at the beginning of the chapter, when proactive behavior is perceived as identity congruent, it will be seen as particularly meaningful and self-expressive (Oyserman, 2009), rather than as merely utilitarian. The self-expressive nature of proactivity explains why individuals invest time and energy in proactive behavior, even if the costs of doing so seem to outweigh the benefits. If a

behavior is perceived as congruent with one's identity, difficulties in engaging in the behavior will be interpreted as an indication that the behavior is important, which will further enhance persistence. On the other hand, individuals are reluctant to engage in identity-incongruent behaviors, even when forgoing them has negative consequences. For example, Oyserman et al. (2007) found that that participants who see health promotion as incongruent with their (social) identities are likely to feel conflicted about corresponding behaviors. Difficulty in engaging in identity-incongruent behavior means that the behavior will be interpreted as "pointless and 'not for people like me'" (Oyserman & Destin, 2010, p. 1002).

Identity congruence thus explains why individuals persist in their proactive behavior, sometimes even when the costs seem to outweigh the benefits. If they encounter difficulties and setbacks, individuals for whom a proactive behavior is identity congruent will interpret this as an indication that the behavior is important (Oyserman, 2009) and will continue in their efforts. If on the other hand proactive behavior is seen as identity-inconsistent, difficulty will undermine effort (Oyserman, 2009; Oyserman & Destin, 2010).

To date, we know little about how proactive behavior is sustained over time and when proactive goals, i.e., goals that are self-set and aimed at bringing about a different future (Parker et al., 2010), are abandoned. Further research is needed to explore these questions, and the role of identity congruence in motivating persistence in proactive behavior.

Self-development: Future work selves and proactive behavior

In addition to expressing current identities, future identities can also provide a powerful driver of proactive behavior (Parker et al., 2010). Previous research has primarily focused on the role of future work selves in motivating proactivity (Guan et al., 2014; Strauss et al., 2012; Strauss & Parker, 2014b; Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015). Like other possible selves, future work selves provide a standard against which the current self is compared, and thus an incentive for future-oriented behavior (Oyserman et al., 2006; Strauss et al., 2012).

Importantly, not all future work selves motivate proactive behavior. Strauss et al. (2012) showed that salience is a key characteristic that determines the influence of future work selves on behavior. Future work selves that are salient are clear and easy to imagine. Consequently, they are frequently activated in a person's working self-concept (Markus & Wurf, 1987), and have a strong influence on behavior (Leondari, Syngollitou, & Kiosseoglou, 1998). Across three different studies, Strauss et al., (2012) found that future work self salience was positively related to proactive career behavior. In a cross-sectional study of 397 employees from a range of occupations and 103 Australian doctoral students, the authors found that future work self salience was positively related to proactive career behavior, after controlling for career identity and future orientation. A longitudinal study of 53 doctoral students in the UK demonstrated that future work self salience predicted proactive career behavior 6 months later, after controlling for initial levels of proactive career behavior.

Taber and Blankemeyer (2015) also found that future work self salience predicted proactive career behaviors. In a cross-sectional study of 113 students at a US university, the authors found that the effects of future work self salience on proactive skill development and networking were (partially) mediated by career adaptability. Career adaptability reflects individuals' resources that enable them "to solve the unfamiliar, complex, and ill-defined problems presented by developmental vocational tasks, occupational transitions, and work traumas" (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012, p. 662), and is composed of four dimensions: concern about the future, a sense of control over one's environment, curiosity to imagine different possible pathways for one's career, and a sense of confidence in one's ability to pursue career aspirations (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). Taber and Blankemeyer found that the effects of future work self salience on proactive skill development were fully mediated by confidence, while curiosity partially mediated the relationship between future work self salience and proactive career networking.

In a three-wave lagged study of 270 college students in China by Guan and colleagues (Guan et al., 2014), future work self salience "consistently predicted career adaptability, job search self-efficacy and employment status, which provide[s] strong evidence for the positive role it plays in new entrants' job search success" (p. 144). Future work self salience was significantly related to participants' employment status three months later, and this relationship was partially mediated by career adaptability and job search self-efficacy.

Together, these studies provide preliminary support for the importance of future work self salience for proactive career behaviors and career-related outcomes. In addition to salience, a further important characteristic of future work selves is their elaboration. In a cross-sectional study of 233 doctoral students in the UK, Strauss et al. (2012) showed that the effect of salient future work selves on proactive behavior was further strengthened when future work selves are also elaborate. Drawing on self-complexity theory (Linville, 1982, 1985), the authors proposed that more elaborate future work selves which contain a larger number of different elements are less vulnerable to negative feedback (Niedenthal, Setterlund, & Wherry, 1992). Individuals with elaborate future work selves are thus more open to considering information threatening their future work self, which allows them to plan for contingencies and further strengthens the link between salience and behavior.

Salient future work selves are likely to promote proactive behavior through a number of different mechanisms (Strauss et al., 2012). First, they create a discrepancy between the status quo and the desired future (Carver & Scheier, 1990), which can stimulate the generation of proactive goals (Strauss et al., 2012; Strauss & Parker, 2014b), aimed at initiating change in the self or in one's environment (Parker et al., 2010).

Second, because of their future-focus future work selves are less limited by individuals' need to be pragmatic (Strauss et al., 2012). Time can act as a resource which enables individuals to set maximal goals (Pennington & Roese, 2003), i.e., goals that

represent the most individuals could wish for (Idson, Liberman, & Higgins, 2000). At greater

temporal distance, individuals' idealistic selves, their selves reflecting values and principles

and a sense of one's "true" self, are more likely to be activated. When focusing on their more

immediate rather than their more distal future, individuals' pragmatic selves become

activated, resulting in a focus on practical concerns (Kivetz & Tyler, 2007). Salient future

work selves thus lay the basis of self-development by encouraging individuals to pursue their

best possible future.

Finally, salient future work selves enable individuals to imagine themselves in the

future, through the process of episodic prospection. Episodic prospection allows individuals

to project themselves into, and thus pre-experience, the future (Atance & O'Neill, 2001). This

allows individuals to anticipate, for example, the resources their future work self will require,

which in turn motivates proactive behavior aimed at building these resources (Strauss et al.,

2012).

These three mechanisms outlined by Strauss et al. (2012) explain how future work

selves motivate the setting of proactive goals, but have yet to be tested empirically. Here we

propose a further mechanism, integrating recent research on identity-based motivation

(Oyserman, 2007, 2009; Oyserman et al., 2007) with insights from developmental

psychology (Vygotsky, 1978). We suggest that proactive behavior can also be a way of

"trying out" a future work self (cf. Ibarra, 1999). In engaging in proactive behavior

individuals often go beyond their current job role and enact behavior consistent not with their

current self, but with their future work self. By enacting work behaviors that lie beyond their

current role, individuals perform what may still be beyond them, which in turn contributes to

their development (Vygotsky, 1978). Bagash, Strauss, and Eubanks (2015) suggested that,

depending on their implicit leadership theories (Eden & Leviatan, 1975; Engle & Lord,

1997), individuals may see proactive behavior, such as taking charge (Morrison & Phelps,

1999), as reflective of a leader identity. Engaging in proactive behavior may thus be a way of claiming a leader identity (DeRue & Ashford, 2010), which forms part of one's future work self. As we discuss below, the success and failure of proactive behavior linked to one's future work self in turn informs individuals' identities.

Identity revision: Consequences of failure and success in proactive behavior for the self

Future work selves are continuously revised and adjusted. As Brandtstädter (1999) put it, "[a]s individuals move through their life cycles, they continuously revise and reinterpret the goals and plans they adopt for themselves in response to previous history, as well as in response to changes in competencies, motives, and external demands" (p. 58). We propose that success and failure in proactive behavior provide important information about progress towards one's future work self, and can trigger change in an individual's future-oriented self-concept.

Aspects of the self-concept may be modified (A. E. Wilson, Buehler, Lawford, Schmidt, & Yong, 2012) and even dropped, "depending on contextual affordances and constraints" (Oyserman & James, 2011, p. 120). Drawing on previous research on self-complexity (Linville, 1985, 1987; Niedenthal et al., 1992; Stein, 1994), Strauss et al. (2012) argued that more elaborate future work selves, i.e., future work selves which are detailed and complex, and contain "a larger and more diverse range of features" (p. 583), would be less affected by negative feedback. Extending this argument, we propose that individuals can "revise" their future work self by changing their commitment to specific features (Carroll, Shepperd, & Arkin, 2009). The malleability of future work selves is likely to be adaptive and important for individuals' functioning. Abandoning valued personal goals is stressful (Brandstätter, Herrmann, & Schüler, 2013). However, giving up on unattainable goals is critical for individuals' well-being (Wrosch, Miller, Scheier, & De Pontet, 2007; Wrosch, Scheier, Carver, & Schulz, 2003; Wrosch, Scheier, Miller, Schulz, & Carver, 2003).

Drawing on Carroll and colleagues' (2009) process model of self-revision, we suggest that future work selves are revised in response to success and failure in the proactive goals aimed at bringing them about. Failing to achieve proactive goals linked to a future work self is likely to initially raise doubt, and result in rising anxiety, and ultimately in a fall of expectations regarding one's future work self (Carroll et al., 2009). Future work selves are particularly likely to be revised in response to setbacks in proactive goals if continuing to pursue a proactive goal also makes an undesired self more likely (Carroll et al., 2009). Corresponding feared selves are thus critical in determining whether setbacks in relation to proactive goals trigger a revision of a future work self. We argue that, in addition, self-revision in response to setbacks in the pursuit proactive goals is especially likely if individuals attribute their failure to enduring factors within themselves that are beyond their control (Weiner, 1985).

Carroll et al. (2009) prompted business and psychology students to imagine a future work self as business psychologist, and then exposed students to information threatening this future work self. When participants were told that pursuing their desired future work self was not only unlikely to be successful but would also make a feared future self (working in a low-paid office job) more likely to become reality, this resulted in increased self-doubt and anxiety, and decreased commitment to this future self. However, it is important to note that Carroll et al.'s (2009) set of studies used experimentally induced possible selves. To date, we know little about change in salient future work selves in response to setbacks in proactive goals.

While failure in relation to proactive goals can trigger a downward revision of one's future work self, with identities being adjusted and possibly abandoned, success may have the opposite effect and strengthen individuals' commitment to their future work self, and encourage an upward revision. Success and failure in proactive behavior are likely to promote

reflection, which will in turn influence future episodes of proactive behavior (Bindl, Parker, Totterdell, & Hagger-Johnson, 2012). Positive feedback is likely to increase individuals' *can do* motivation (Parker et al., 2010), their efficacy beliefs and outcome expectancies in relation to proactive behavior. These will in turn increase individuals' commitment to their future work self, and make it more likely that they will set further proactive goals aimed at bringing it about.

Carroll (2014) suggested that positive feedback can promote upward self-revision, particularly when it is clearly linked to a desired future self. In an experimental study of 67 undergraduate students, participants were given information about a graduate program in business psychology and provided with positive feedback regarding their GPA. Participants who had not only been told that their GPA exceeded the entry requirement of the program but had also been assured that this made it more likely for their desired future self as a business psychologist to become reality increased in confidence and were more likely to commit to applying to the program. This provides initial support for the idea that success can promote upward self-revision, via its effect on expectations to achieve a future self. However, the future selves in this study were experimentally induced, and upward revision was assessed as increases in participants' intention to pursue a new career. Little is known about how success affects long-held salient future work selves.

Beyond the Personal Self

So far we have focused primarily on the individual level of the self-concept, both in terms of current selves and future work selves. However, proactive behavior can also be motivated by identities located at the relational and collective level of the self-concept. We first discuss social identification and its relevance for proactive behavior, before turning to collective and relational future work selves.

Identification and different targets of proactive behavior

Identification refers to the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of their membership in groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). When individuals identify with a group, they are likely to engage in proactive behavior aimed at shaping the future of this group. Parker et al. (2010) suggested that identification with the team or organization is likely to promote proactive work behavior, aimed at changing the internal organizational environment, or proactive strategic behavior, aimed at improving the organization's fit with its external environment (Parker & Collins, 2010). Ashford and Barton (2012) similarly argued that identification with the organization would motivate individuals to raise issues on its behalf. Liu, Zhu, and Yang (2010) drew on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and proposed that an employee identifying with the organization would be motivated to direct voice at colleagues so that they may benefit from the employee's suggestions, because he or she regards the interests of the organization as his or her own. On the other hand, employees who identify with the leader, rather than the organization, are more likely to direct voice at the leader "so that the leader can directly benefit from them" (p. 193). The authors investigated personal identification with the leader and social identification with the organization as mechanisms in the relationship between transformational leadership and peer-rated voice. In a study of 191 employees from different organizations in China, they found that social identification with the organization partially mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and voice directed at peers, while personal identification with the leader fully mediated the relationship between leadership and voice directed at the leader. This suggests that identification with specific groups or individuals can motivate proactive behavior aimed at their benefit.

Further support for the importance of different levels of the self-concept comes from research investigating different foci of commitment (see also Belschak & Den Hartog, this

volume). Commitment is defined as "emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization" (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 1). While commitment and identification are conceptually distinct, they are highly correlated (van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006), and identification can be seen as an antecedent of commitment (Meyer, Becker, & Van Dick, 2006). Research on different foci of commitment can thus provide insights into the relationship between identification with different targets and proactive behavior.

In a study of 196 Australian public sector employees, Strauss, Griffin, and Rafferty (2009) found that commitment to the organization was positively related to self-reported proactive behavior targeting the organization, but not to proactive behavior targeting the team. Belschak and Den Hartog (2010) investigated whether commitment to one's team, organization, and career was significantly related to corresponding proactive behaviors, rated by employees' peers. In a cross-sectional study of 117 employee-coworker dyads from a broad cross-section of organizations in the Netherlands, the authors found limited support for a clear-cut link between foci of commitment and targets of proactive behavior. Team commitment was a consistent predictor of proactive behavior aimed at benefitting the organization, co-workers, and the individual, respectively. Career commitment was significantly related to proactive career behavior, but organizational commitment did not predict peer-ratings of proactivity.

While the studies we have described provide preliminary evidence that identifying with a group may motivate proactive behavior aimed at benefitting this group, the support for links between different levels of identification – career, team, or organization – and corresponding targets of proactivity is mixed. This may be because the target of proactive behavior is not always identical with its beneficiary. For example, individuals may make a suggestion for a solution to an organizational problem because they identify with the

organization and thus see its success as their own success (Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

However, they may also make a similar suggestion with the aim of distinguishing themselves

from others and, as we argued above, expressing their personal identity. In this way the

behavior itself does not always signal a clear motivation.

Research on organizational citizenship behaviors has long discussed the possibility

that the same behavior can be linked to a number of different motives, benefitting the

organization, others, or the self (Bolino, 1999; Rioux & Penner, 2001), thus reflecting

different levels of identification. Empirical support for a matching of the target of

identification and the beneficiary of organizational citizenship behavior is mixed, with some

studies showing an exact matching of foci (Olkkonen & Lipponen, 2006), while others

suggest the possibility of a spill-over from one focus of identification to another (Rupp &

Cropanzano, 2002), similar to the study of Belschak and Den Hartog (2010). Similar

arguments have been applied to proactivity (e.g., Belschak & Den Hartog, 2010; Liu et al.,

2010).

We suggest that future research should go beyond the utilitarian aspects of

proactivity. Going beyond a social exchange perspective and emphasizing the unique features

of proactive behavior that distinguish it from other positive work behaviors has the potential

to further our understanding of the interplay between proactive behavior and different levels

of self-construal. For example, identification with a group is likely to make proactive

behavior aimed at shaping the future of this group self-expressive, regardless of its

instrumental benefits (Oyserman et al., 2007). Similarly, relational identification as a

follower may make proactive relationship building identity-congruent. Next, we argue that

proactive behavior may not only be expressive of identification with current collective and

relational selves, but also motivated by collective and relational future selves.

Collective and Relational Future Work Selves

To date, future work selves have been discussed primarily in terms of personal selves (Strauss et al., 2012), emphasizing unique aspects of the self (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). However, like other possible selves (Cinnirella, 1998; Lord et al., 1999), future work selves can also be considered at the collective and relational level of the self (Strauss et al., 2012). While a substantial body of research has investigated the role of personal future selves (Oyserman & James, 2011), collective or relational future selves have received considerably less attention.

Relational future work selves can be seen as "representations of hoped for role relationships" (Strauss et al., 2012, p. 595). Relational future work selves are likely to promote proactive behavior targeting social relationships (Lord et al., 1999; Strauss et al., 2012), such as proactive relationship building (Ashford & Black, 1996; Thompson, 2005). A relational future work self that involves, for example, an individual's role relationship as a carer may facilitate proactive efforts to improve the relationship with a client. Importantly, we propose that relational future work selves are specific to dyadic role relationships. The relational future work self in our example focuses on the particular relationship the individual holds with a specific client, rather than reflecting a more personal future work self of being a caring person more generally.

Mirroring the mechanisms outlined by Strauss et al. (2012) for personal future work selves, relational future work selves may provide a basis for mental simulation, and thus facilitate anticipating a dyad partner's future needs. They may create a discrepancy between the current and the desired relationship and motivate efforts to improve the relationship (Carver & Scheier, 1990), and they may facilitate a more open and creative approach to thinking about a role relationship (Ibarra, 1999).

Previous research on individuals' proactive efforts to shape specific relationships has focused primarily on instrumental motives, such as receiving positive performance evaluations. Ashford and Black (1996) argued that proactive efforts to build a positive relationship with one's supervisor "may be undertaken for […] instrumental reasons" (p. 210). In their longitudinal study of 103 MBA graduates in the US, newcomers who proactively built relationships with their supervisors received higher performance ratings, which the authors interpreted as support for their argument.

Research on job crafting has also begun to explore proactive efforts to shape relationships, and has conceptualized proactive relationship building as a means for increasing social resources (Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012; Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012, 2013). However, measures of job crafting targeting social resources do not distinguish between proactive efforts to build relationships with one's coworkers or one's supervisor, and thus tell us little about proactivity specifically targeting dyadic role relationships.

Together these studies highlight that individuals are proactive in shaping social relationships, and suggest that they do so because of the benefits they anticipate. Instrumental motives are certainly likely to play a role in proactive relationship building. However, we suggest that relational future work selves represent a promising area of future research which may provide insights not only into the motivation behind proactive relationship building, but into the self-regulatory processes underlying it.

Collective future work selves are "individuals' representations of their group or organization in the future that reflect their hopes and aspirations" (Strauss et al., 2012, p. 595). While collective future work selves reside by definition within the individual, the processes through which these selves are constructed are inherently social. These social processes constitute a fruitful area of research. For example, leaders are particularly likely to

play a key role in shaping collective future work selves. By encouraging social identification with the collective, they may make collective future work selves more salient (Kark & Shamir, 2002; Lord et al., 1999). Collective future work selves are also a potential mechanism through which leader vision may be translated into proactive behavior (Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2009). Griffin et al. (2010) argued that leaders' communication of a vision creates a discrepancy between the status quo and a desired future which highlights the need for change. A longitudinal study of 102 public sector employees in Australia provides some initial support for this argument. The authors found that, controlling for initial levels of proactivity, leader vision was positively related to proactive behavior one year later, at least for employees who felt confident in going beyond their prescribed job role. We suggest that leaders' visions may be translated into collective future work selves which form the basis of proactive goals aimed at shaping the future of the organization.

Avenues for Future Research

Throughout this chapter we have highlighted what we consider to be promising avenues for future research. So far little research has explicitly investigated the link between identity and proactivity, and there are few studies to date on the role of future work selves in facilitating proactive behavior (Guan et al., 2014; Strauss et al., 2012; Strauss & Parker, 2014b; Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015). Our model of the potential links between identity and proactive behavior provides an organizing framework for this underdeveloped area of research. Below, we further discuss specific directions for future research.

Characteristics of Future Work Selves

To date, research on future work selves has focused on their salience, i.e., the extent to which they are clear and easily come to mind, and their elaboration, i.e., the extent to which they contain a complex set of diverse features (Strauss et al., 2012). Salience is generally considered a key characteristic that determines the influence of possible selves on

behavior (see Oyserman & James, 2011, for a review). Studies to date have used the measure

by Strauss et al. (2012) which instructs participants to mentally travel in to the future and rate

how clear and accessible the resulting mental image is (Cai et al., 2015; Guan et al., 2014;

Strauss et al., 2012; Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015). However, future research is needed to

explore further possible characteristics that may determine the consequences of future work

selves for proactive behavior, such as, for example, the perceived control in relation to a

future work self (Norman & Aron, 2003). Proactive behavior aimed at bringing about a future

work self inherently implies working towards an uncertain future, but we know little about

the influence of varying degrees of uncertainty. It may be that the relationship between the

uncertainty of a future work self and proactive behavior is likely to be U-shaped (Oyserman

& James, 2011). If a future work self is very likely to become reality, irrespective of one's

own efforts, there is no need to act. If on the other hand a future work self seems

unattainable, this will undermine proactive efforts to bring it about.

       Similarly, the role of the temporal distance of future work selves deserves further

attention. Previous studies on future work selves did not specify a time frame when

instructing participants to envision their future work selves (Cai et al., 2015; Guan et al.,

2014; Strauss et al., 2012; Taber & Blankemeyer, 2015). Individual differences in time

perspective (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999) are likely to influence the temporal distance of

individuals' future work selves (Oyserman & James, 2009). Different arguments can be made

regarding the effect of temporal distance on the motivation effect of future work selves. On

the one hand, individuals are more ambitious in relation to distal rather than proximal goals

(Mogilner, Aaker, & Pennington, 2007; Pennington & Roese, 2003). On the other hand,

future selves that feel closer in time more strongly influence an individual's current identity.

Holding calendar time constant, A. E. Wilson et al. (2012) found that participants predicted

that they would hold more "favorable qualities at a future time that seemed close rather than distant" (p. 342), suggesting that more proximal future work selves will be more positive.

How future work selves relate to the present also matters for their link with behavior. As Oyserman and James (2011) argued, "the present is experienced as separate from the future and the future feels distal, vague, and open. When the future begins later, there is not much that can be done now – except wait for the future to arrive. Conversely, the present can be seen as connecting fluidly to the future, and as such, as a time for setting the groundwork for what will become possible in the future. When the future begins now, current action is immediately necessary" (p. 129).

Further research is also needed regarding the content of future work selves, such as the extent to which they reflect intrinsic or extrinsic values, which may determine the well-being outcomes of pursuing a future work self (Vansteenkiste et al., 2007). Instructing research participants to provide future work self narratives in addition to rating the salience of their future work self has the potential to provide richer insights into the nature of future work selves. Moreover, to date we know little about how stable future work selves are, and how future work self salience develops over time and is shaped by individuals' experiences. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to investigate the potential reciprocal relationship between future work selves and proactive behavior. While there is preliminary evidence from a longitudinal field experiment that encouraging individuals to engage with their future work self results in greater levels of proactive behavior, at least for some individuals (Strauss & Parker, 2014b), further studies employing rigorous experimental designs are needed to more clearly establish the causal relationship between identity-based motivation and proactive behavior.

Consequences of proactive self-development

Proactive behavior is generally portrayed as having primarily positive consequences for individuals, such as by enhancing their job performance (Thompson, 2005) or career satisfaction (Seibert et al., 2001). Guan et al. (2014) found that students with salient future work selves were more likely to obtain employment. Strauss et al. (2012) suggest that proactive behavior aimed at bringing about a future work self may provide a basis for creating future person-environment fit (Edwards, 1996). While this argument has yet to be tested, there is empirical as well as theoretical support for the idea that proactive self-development based on future work selves is likely to be beneficial. However, there may also be downsides to investing time and energy in bringing about one's future work self. Research on affective forecasting suggests that individuals tend to overestimate their affective reaction to future events (Dunn & Laham, 2006; T. D. Wilson & Gilbert, 2005) . This means that achieving one's future work selves may not result in genuine happiness. It is however important to note that research on affective forecasting focuses primarily on "happiness", rather than on, for example, the experience of meaning (Ryan & Deci, 2001).

When investigating the benefits of the self-expressive and identity-congruent characteristics of proactive behavior for individuals' well-being, cultural differences need to be taken into account. Proactivity is likely to be self-expressive primarily in individualistic cultures that value actively seeking success and overtaking others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Markus and Kitayama (1991) argue that controlling and shaping one's environment, as reflected in proactive behavior, is not universally preferred across cultures. Collectivistic cultures value alignment over more proactive forms of control. Future research should explore the consequences of proactively pursuing one's future work self, using a broad range of indicators of well-being and accounting for cultural differences.

Intersection of collective and personal identities

Drawing on Strauss et al. (2012), we make a clear distinction between personal, relational, and collective future work selves. This is based on the notion that different levels of the self-concept are unlikely to be activated simultaneously (Kark & Shamir, 2002; Lord et al., 1999). However, to date we know little about how clearly this distinction holds when individuals imagine their future work self. Further research is needed to explore whether personal future work selves can be clearly distinguished from relational future work selves. Conceptualizing future work selves more broadly, beyond a clear distinction between the three levels of the self-concept, may provide fruitful avenues for future research. For example, just as the present-oriented self-concept can be seen as individuals' theory about who they are (Oyserman, 2001), future work selves may represent working theories of who individuals hope to become in the future. Future work self could thus be thought of as an individual's theory of their hoped for future self in relation to work, encompassing a range of different possible future identities (Oyserman & James, 2009), including collective and relational identities.

Further research is also needed to explore the intersection of future work selves and collective identities. While collective future work selves can form the basis of proactive behavior aimed at shaping the future of a team or organization, social identities can also restrict what individuals can imagine for themselves, and thus create barriers to proactive behavior. Social identities may influence the formation of a future work self by signaling that certain roles or achievements are not suitable or attainable by people that share a particular social identity (Oyserman & James, 2011). For example, a woman from a working class background, who is presented with images of only wealthy male politicians in the media, might consider a future work self as politician as outside of the realm of possible future selves for "people like me". In support of this idea, research has shown that the perceived

likelihood and desirability of attaining certain possible selves can differ by social identity (Lips, 2000, 2007). For instance, women are more likely to feel that their social identity is incompatible with a future work self in a professional area which is strongly stereotyped as male, such as science and engineering, or high power roles (Lips, 2000). Discrepancies between different social identities can operate at a subconscious level, as demonstrated by a study of the implicit attitudes of college students towards math (Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002). The authors tested students' implicit associations between math and gender, and found that women who implicitly associated math with "male" were less likely to associate math with their own identity. This effect was present even for women who were taking math majors.

Social identities may also influence future work selves when they generate additional future identities which are incompatible with a potential future work self. Individuals may feel that they must choose between incompatible future selves, or negotiate among multiple future selves, depending on their social identities. For example, academically gifted girls have been found to be influenced by considerations of both work and family roles when discussing salient future selves, while academically gifted boys were focused only on work (Curry, Trew, Turner, & Hunter, 1994). Differences such as these, originating in social identities, may affect the degree to which individuals invest resources and proactively work towards a future work self. Future research is needed to explore this possibility.

Finally, in particular our discussion of collective future work selves has been grounded primarily in social psychological research on the self-concept which views collective future selves as situated within a person's self-concept, and thus as relatively enduring individual variables. From this perspective, context and situation are seen as playing a secondary role (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004), such as by making different identities salient or shaping their influence on behavior. In contrast, processual approaches to

the self-concept would provide a different perspective and may offer insights into how collective future selves are negotiated and defined in social interactions (see e.g., Gecas, 1982).

Practical implications

An identity-based perspective on proactive behavior has important practical implications for organizations aiming to enhance proactivity in their workforce. Identity-congruent motivation provides a *reason to* motivation for proactivity (Parker et al., 2010) which has received relatively little attention in the literature to date (Ashford & Barton, 2012). In this chapter we argued that proactive behavior may not always be utilitarian but can be based on identity-congruent motivation. This suggests that identity-congruent proactivity may be relatively unaffected by rewards; instead, attempts to incentivize proactive behavior may undermine the self-expressive nature of proactivity (Strauss & Parker, 2014a).

However, there is evidence that identity-based motivation is open to change (Oyserman & Destin, 2010), which highlights the potential to enhance proactivity through training and development interventions in organizations. To date however most research on interventions based on identity-based motivation and possible selves has focused either on students (Day, Borkowski, Punzo, & Howsepian, 1994; Oyserman, Terry, & Bybee, 2002), or on career counselling (Plimmer, 2012), rather than investigating proactive behavior in organizations more generally. For example, in a study of African American high school students, Oyserman and colleagues (Oyserman et al., 2002) showed that a 9-week small-group intervention resulted in improved behavior and increased school attendance as well as well as in improvements in the balance of students' expected and feared possible selves. The intervention included strategies such as strengthening group membership, creating more concrete links between the present and a desired future, and building the skills that would be required to pursue expected possible selves and avoid feared possible selves.

A rare example of a future work self intervention in an organizational setting is a ten month longitudinal field experiment carried out by Strauss and Parker (Strauss & Parker, 2014b). The authors found that participants who underwent an intervention based on future work selves showed an increase in proactive behavior aimed at changing the future of the organization. However, these effects were only found for individuals high in future orientation. This is in line with previous research which has shown that individual differences determine how responsive participants are to interventions based on ideal identities (Ouellette, Hessling, Gibbons, Reis-Bergan, & Gerrard, 2005). Together these studies suggest that increasing the salience of future work selves has the potential to enhance proactive behavior, however individual differences need to be taken into account.

In addition, leaders are likely to play a critical role for identity-congruent motivation for proactivity in a number of ways. First, in particular transformational leadership may encourage identity-congruent proactive behavior aimed at benefitting the organization by enhancing employees' social identification with the organization (Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Second, by encouraging social identification with the team or organization, leaders may make collective future work selves more salient (Kark & Shamir, 2002; Lord et al., 1999). Finally, leader visions may form the basis of collective future work selves (Strauss, Griffin, & Parker, 2009), and thus stimulate proactive efforts to change the future of the organization. This suggests that organizations can potentially increase identity-congruent proactivity by selecting and developing transformational leaders who stimulate social identification and provide clear visions of the future.

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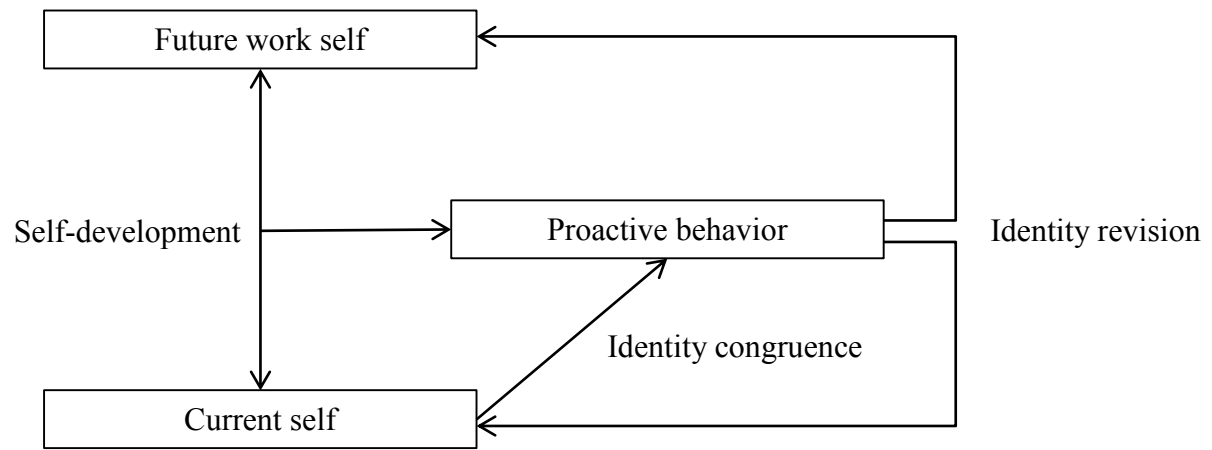
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Figure 1. Identity and proactivity