MOVING BEYOND FIGHT AND FLIGHT: A CONTINGENT MODEL OF HOW THE EMOTIONAL REGULATION OF ANGER AND FEAR SPARKS PROACTIVITY

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Although the experience of negative emotions is generally associated with negative behaviors and outcomes, researchers have largely overlooked the possibility that negative emotions can lead to proactive behavior. For instance, emotions such as anger and fear can spark proactive behavior by signaling a need to change the status quo. Whereas theory and research on the topic have produced conflicting arguments and inconsistent results, I integrate a discrete emotions perspective with theories of proactivity to determine the conditions under which anger and fear prompt proactive behavior. In doing so I provide a conceptual framework that enables understanding of specific factors that determine when anger is directed away from fight that harms others and toward fight that benefits others, and when fear is directed away from flight and toward increased protective effort (fight). This article contributes to theory with a contingent model that specifies when and why anger and fear spark proactive behavior and generate functional outcomes. It also offers practical advice for organizations to effectively manage emotional experiences and thereby increase proactive behavior resulting from experienced anger or fear.

Can anger and fear spark proactive behavior? It is widely recognized that negative emotions often produce destructive effects in organizations by increasing counterproductive or uncivil behavior and limiting employees' efforts toward organizational improvement (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Maitlis & Ozcelik, 2004; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Spector & Fox, 2002). Unfortunately, negative emotions commonly arise in organizations, resulting from uncertain and changing economic conditions (Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989; Jordan, Ashkanasy, & Hartel, 2002), difficult interpersonal interactions involving abuse or a lack of support (Glomb & Hulin, 1997; Tepper, 2000), and inherent power differences between employees and supervisors (Detert & Edmondson, 2011). However, the experience of negative emotions in organizational settings can also be functional by signaling that the current situation needs to be changed, thereby motivating employees to rectify or even prevent unfavorable situations (Elfenbein, 2007; George, 2011).

Employees experiencing negative emotions may thus be motivated to initiate change, the hallmark of proactive behavior, which is defined as anticipatory action aimed at improving the situation or the self (Crant, 2000; Grant & Ashford, 2008). Scholars examining the link between negative emotions and proactivity have only tentatively developed arguments regarding the possibility of positive or negative effects (Bindl, Parker, Totterdell, & Hagger-Johnson, 2012; Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010), in part because affect has been broadly conceptualized as a stable dispositional or state emotional experience (e.g., negative trait affect or mood). In the handful of studies examining the relationship between negative emotions and proactivity, scholars have produced mixed and inconsistent findings, variously suggesting a positive relationship (Den Hartog & Belschak, 2007: Study 1), a negative relationship (Fay & Sonnentag, 2012; Fritz, Yankelevich, Zarubin, & Barger, 2010), or no relationship (Bindl et al., 2012; Den Hartog & Belschak, 2007: Study 2; Fritz & Sonnentag, 2009). These competing arguments and inconsistent empirical results suggest that organizational scholars lack a systematic understanding of whether and when negative affective experience influences proactive behavior.

Thus, to understand when negative emotions might spark proactivity, it is important to build theory that explores discrete rather than aggregate (i.e., state or trait) emotional experience. Discrete emotions, such as anger and fear, arise from distinct appraisals of events and are accompanied by specific cognitions and behaviors, including motivational goals and action tendencies (Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994; Shaver, Schwartz, Kirson, & O'Connor, 1987; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Yet proactivity scholars lose predictive ability by aggregating negative emotional experience and neglecting to tease apart those accompanying processes and behaviors (Barsade & Gibson, 2007; Gooty, Gavin, & Ashkanasy, 2009). These differences provide a theoretical foundation that can specify which discrete negative emotions, as opposed to negative affective experience in general, may spark proactivity and under what conditions they do so.
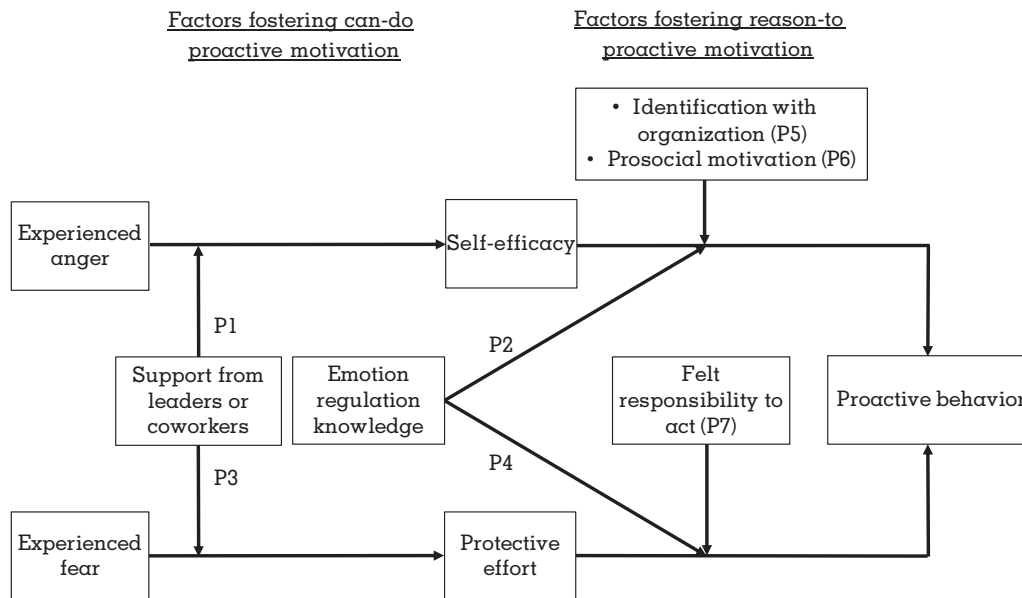
In this article I focus on two discrete negative emotions, anger and fear, for three reasons. First, anger and fear powerfully shape work behavior, since both emotions are generally thought to have destructive or counterproductive consequences (Fox & Spector, 1999; Kish-Gephart, Detert, Treviño, & Edmondson, 2009). Second, both anger and fear are exemplars of negatively valenced, high-arousal emotions that prepare an employee to take either present or future action (Frijda, 1986; Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). As such, they provide affective energy to potentially motivate proactivity. Third, anger and fear differ in significant ways that promote my goal of building a theory that describes when these negative emotions may lead to proactive behaviors. Appraisals of events that elicit anger and fear, as well as behavioral responses to these emotions, differ. For instance, whereas anger arises from perceptions of high certainty and control, fear arises from perceptions of low certainty and control (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Frijda, Kuipers, & ter Schure, 1989). And whereas anger is associated with fight (or approach) behavioral tendencies, fear is generally associated with flight (or avoidant) behavioral tendencies (Frijda et al., 1989). These differences highlight the importance of using a discrete emotions perspective that enables a more precise understanding of the factors and mechanisms driving functional responses to negative emotion

(Lazarus & Cohen-Charash, 2001; Lindebaum & Jordan, 2012).

Furthermore, discrete perspectives on emotion suggest not only that anger and fear differ from each other but also that not all instances of anger or fear are the same, with behavior varying based on the situation. These views describe how fear leads to withdrawal, freezing in place, increased attention, or defensive effort (Frijda, 1986; Öhman, 2008), and how anger leads to harmful or vengeful behavior, venting to a third party, withdrawal, or constructive problem resolution (Averill, 1982; Fitness, 2000; Lerner & Tiedens, 2006). Applying a discrete emotions perspective to the domain of proactivity, I propose a contingent model that identifies the circumstances under which an experience of anger or fear takes the form of proactive behavior. Anger and fear can energize employees with efficacy and protective effort, respectively, preparing them to be proactive. These energized states, I argue, are then shaped and directed toward proactivity when employees sufficiently believe that they can or have reason to act in advance.

The proposed model, summarized in Figure 1, provides several important theoretical and practical contributions. First, scholars have argued that negative emotions' role in shaping proactivity is important but undertheorized (Bindl & Parker, 2012; Grant & Ashford, 2008). Although there are hints that negative emotional experience can drive self-starting proactive behavior (Frese & Fay, 2001: 169), I develop a more detailed understanding of when and why this occurs. Second, this article contributes to theory on emotions in organizations by specifying when the negative emotions of anger and fear produce constructive outcomes at work (Barsade & Gibson, 2007; Gooty et al., 2009). Third, if anger and fear pervade organizations, and if proactive behavior can increase unit and organizational performance (Crossley, Cooper, & Wernsing, 2013; Detert, Burris, Harrison, & Martin, 2013; Frese et al., 2007), then understanding how these emotions shape proactivity can be of significant value to organizations. Addressing this question provides practical insight into how leaders, supervisors, and employees can effectively manage negative emotional experiences and thereby increase proactive behavior in the presence of anger or fear.

FIGURE 1
A Contingent Model of Anger, Fear, and Proactivity

Factors fostering can-do
proactive motivation

Factors fostering reason-to
proactive motivation

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                                        ┌──────────────────────┐
                                        │ • Identification with │
                                        │   organization (P5)   │
                                        │ • Prosocial motivation│
                                        │   (P6)                │
                                        └──────────────────────┘

┌────────────┐                   ┌─────────────┐
│ Experienced│──────────────────▶│Self-efficacy│──────────────────┐
│   anger    │                   └─────────────┘                  │
└────────────┘        P1                    P2                    │
       ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐   ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
       │ Support from │  │   Emotion    │   │     Felt     │  │  Proactive   │
       │  leaders or  │  │  regulation  │   │responsibility│  │  behavior    │
       │  coworkers   │  │  knowledge   │   │  to act (P7) │  └──────────────┘
       └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘   └──────────────┘
              P3                    P4
┌────────────┐                   ┌─────────────┐
│ Experienced│──────────────────▶│  Protective │──────────────────┘
│    fear    │                   │    effort   │
└────────────┘                   └─────────────┘
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ANGER, FEAR, AND PROACTIVITY: A DISCRETE EMOTIONS PERSPECTIVE

Anger and fear are unpleasant and high-activation emotions (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). They are also discrete emotions that, in contrast to moods, arise from a unique set of antecedents and accompany distinct motivational, physiological, and behavioral consequences (Ekman, 1992; Lazarus, 1991). In organizational settings, how employees appraise a workplace event determines the discrete emotion they experience (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). On the one hand, fear arises from appraisals about a negative event's cause, attending both a sense of uncertainty and a lack of efficacy. The hallmark of anger, on the other hand, involves appraisals of certainty and high agency (Roseman, Spindel, & Jose, 1990; Shaver et al., 1987). Consistent with this view, in this article I focus on anger as an exemplar discrete negative emotional state (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), rather than broader conceptualizations of anger, including hostility and other discrete emotions such as disgust (Watson & Clark, 1994).

Discrete emotions are also distinct from moods and traits because of their corresponding action tendencies, or states of action readiness, which involve motivational and relational goals to establish, maintain, or change a situation (Frijda, 1986; Roseman et al., 1994). Action tendencies direct and coordinate behavior, prepare a person to take action when necessary, and help address problems in social interactions (Elfenbein, 2007; Frijda et al., 1989). Anger functions to motivate action to correct a perceived wrong or to act against the source of blame (Roseman et al., 1994), whereas fear functions to motivate safety from either physical or psychological threats (Izard & Ackerman, 2000). The result is that anger generates behavior associated with approach or fight, whereas fear generates behavior associated with a tendency to avoid or take flight (Frijda et al., 1989; Shaver et al., 1987). Following this, research suggests that experiencing anger generally is associated with deviant or counterproductive workplace behavior (Fox & Spector, 1999; Rodell & Judge, 2009; Umphress, Simmons, Folger, Ren, & Bobocel, 2013). Research has also shown that employees experiencing fear generally seek protection by withdrawing from work (Ashford et al., 1989; Rafferty & Griffin, 2006) or remaining silent (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003).

Whereas these results only narrowly suggest that anger leads to fight and fear leads to flight, the model developed here moves beyond this work to identify the specific forces directing anger and fear away from these responses to increase, or at least not limit, proactive behavior. The experience of discrete emotions readies a person for action, but whether the person ultimately takes

action, as well as what form this behavior takes, depends on the situation (Cosmides & Tooby, 2000; Lazarus, 1991; Roseman, 2011). For example, anger may lead to counterproductive or deviant behaviors (Fox & Spector, 1999), withdrawal (Fitness, 2000; Glomb, 2002), constructive problem resolution (Averill, 1982; Fitness, 2000), or silence (Geddes & Callister, 2007). Similarly, fear may lead to "carefulness when the threat is transitory; protective effort when there is no immediate way of escape or immediate need to escape; [and] escape when such is possible and the threat is more than protective behavior can handle" (Frijda, 1986: 198). The variability in responses to anger and fear suggests that there are situations where these emotions can motivate constructive responses, such as proactive behavior.

Factors Directing Anger and Fear Toward Proactivity

What, then, leads employees to act in advance to constructively change the situation and overcome anger's tendency toward fight or fear's tendency toward flight? Building on the notion that behavioral responses to anger and fear are situationally contingent, in the proposed theoretical model I examine the instances in which anger and fear spark proactivity. Below I define proactive behavior, describing its broad motivational antecedents, and then detail how certain factors provide motivation to guide anger or fear toward proactivity.

Defining proactivity. When employees are proactive, they act in advance rather than react, taking action to change themselves and/or the situation (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Proactive behavior is individual level, discretionary, and future focused (Parker et al., 2010). When they are proactive, employees generally intend to be constructive and to make an impact (Grant & Ashford, 2008). Common forms of proactivity include speaking up with suggestions (Detert & Burris, 2007); selling issues to top management (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998); taking charge or initiative by introducing new policies, procedures, or practices (Frese & Fay, 2001; Morrison & Phelps, 1999); and seeking feedback about performance and job status (Ashford, 1986).

Proactivity involves the deliberate, motivated, and goal-directed planning and enactment of behavior (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker et al., 2010). Various models of proactivity converge on the notion that three motivational states precede proactive behavior's planning and execution. First, employees assess whether proactivity is possible, including assessments of efficacy (Can I do it?) and control (Is it feasible? Frese & Fay, 2001; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). Second, employees also assess whether proactivity is worthwhile for achieving relevant goals or expressing values (Grant & Rothbard, 2013; Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Third, affective states, which provide energy to act in advance and persist in overcoming barriers to change, can fuel proactive effort from employees (Bindl et al., 2012). Scholars refer to these three proactive motivational states as *can-do, reason-to,* and *energized-to* motivation, respectively (Parker et al., 2010).

Anger and fear provide potential energized-to motivation. As high-activation unpleasant emotions, both anger and fear mobilize psychological and physiological resources for people to take action (Cosmides & Tooby, 2000). This potential energized-to motivation can take the form of *efficacy* following anger (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006), activating an energized psychological state whereby employees feel more potent and able to change the situation (Shaver et al., 1987). In fear, this energy can take the form of *protective effort,* such as increased focus on a threat and readiness for defensive action (Frijda, 1986; Izard & Ackerman, 2000). The proactive potential of fear, therefore, lies in guiding employees' effort toward constructive action to protect themselves or others from harmful situations.

This suggests that experiencing anger and fear can energize proactivity to change the situation, but it does not explain *when* this will occur. Understanding when employees have sufficient can-do or reason-to proactive motivation following anger or fear helps to specify when these emotions' behavioral outcomes take proactive forms. I argue below that managing emotional experience with support from others or via self-regulation increases can-do proactive motivation following anger or fear. Furthermore, when experiencing anger, having reason to act on behalf of others increases reason-to motivation and redirects anger's reactive and deviant tendencies (which, by contrast, harm others) and thus increases the likelihood of proactive behavior. Moreover, when experiencing fear, the likelihood of proactive behavior increases with factors that foster employees' belief that action is necessary (i.e., when no escape or exit is apparent). These

can-do and reason-to factors help channel the proactive potential of anger or fear, turning the energy from these negative emotions into constructive behavior.

Can-Do Proactive Motivation When Experiencing Anger or Fear

Managing the intense experience of anger or fear is essential for fostering can-do proactive motivation. When employees are able to regulate or control their emotional experience, anger can lead to action to correct an injustice, whereas fear may lead to increased effort and careful planning; without control, anger can lead to rage or lashing out, and fear can lead to panic or immobility (Lazarus, 1991; Parrott, 2001). Thus, some means of effectively regulating emotional experience is necessary for increasing the likelihood of proactivity's characteristic planned, deliberate, and anticipatory behavior.

The process of emotion regulation involves changes in how people experience, express, and modify emotions (Gross, 1998). Whereas emotion regulation processes can involve preemptively avoiding an emotional experience's impact, the focus here is on reappraising the situation or modifying behavior during or after an emotional experience (Gross & John, 2003). Emotion regulation processes are broadly conceptualized here as involving either others' support to help manage emotional experience or an individual's emotion regulation knowledge (Parrott, 2001). Others' support reflects the degree to which employees have access to advice, assistance, or training from leaders or coworkers that might help the employees deal with emotional experience (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). Emotion regulation knowledge refers to individual differences in one's "awareness of the most effective strategies to modify and nurture emotions in particular situations" (Côté, DeCelles, McCarthy, Van Kleef, & Hideg, 2011: 1074). This knowledge consists of regulation skills and abilities that can be learned and gained from experiences over time (Côté & Miners, 2006).

Support from others supplies can-do proactive motivation following anger. When experiencing anger, people feel a sense of agency and efficacy to act in a given situation (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). This sense of efficacy helps individuals believe they can influence and change difficult situations (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006). Although increased efficacy usually provides can-do motivation to be proactive (Parker et al., 2006), in the case of anger it can activate a desire to seek revenge or punish the perceived source of anger (Shaver et al., 1987). Thus, for anger to energize proactivity, such desires must be transformed into a sense of efficacy to act in advance rather than reactively punish or harm.

Having access to work-related support from leaders or coworkers can simultaneously weaken desires to retaliate and enhance feelings of efficacy to proactively resolve an anger-inducing situation. For example, mentorship from leaders or talking through a problem with a trusted coworker can help angry employees think about ways to constructively respond (Averill, 1982). Indeed, mentors may "help the angry person see the situation differently or perhaps take a particular stance in generating a solution or expressing his or her frustration" (Geddes & Callister, 2007: 727). In this way mentors not only help employees talk about the angry experience but also serve as advocates who can help employees use their frustration to consider proactive action and, thus, have the efficacy to confront and potentially resolve the situation (Geddes & Callister, 2007). Moreover, when individuals experiencing anger perceive that they have opportunities to act, the likelihood increases that their anger will take constructive forms (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006). Mentors who help identify opportunities for employees to speak up about a frustrating situation can increase perceptions of efficacy that proactivity is a viable means for channeling anger. Evidence for this notion comes from a study of university students experiencing an anger-inducing situation: students perceiving opportunities to respond to a proposed tuition increase were more likely to proactively recruit others to sign a petition, compared to participants perceiving no opportunities to act (Harmon-Jones, Sigelman, Bohlig, & Harmon-Jones, 2003). Mentors therefore foster can-do motivation by increasing efficacy to act in advance to resolve the situation. Without support and advice from others, angry employees are unlikely to feel able to be proactive.

> *Proposition 1: Support from others moderates the relationship between experienced anger and self-efficacy such that there is a positive relationship when employees have high levels*

of support and a negative relationship when employees have low levels of support.

Emotion regulation knowledge supplies can-do proactive motivation following anger. In turn, feeling efficacious when experiencing anger can lead to proactive behavior when employees have the ability to regulate this negative affective experience. Without such an ability, anger's efficacy can lead employees to lash out, seek revenge, or possibly suppress their anger (Fox & Spector, 1999; Geddes & Callister, 2007). One means of channeling their anger into more functional outcomes is for employees to regulate their tendency to immediately respond, taking an adaptive and future-focused approach instead (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006; Parrott, 2001). A high level of emotion regulation knowledge helps employees transform their efficacy into proactivity by planning to address the situation constructively. Planning helps individuals focus on future actions, rather than the emotion-triggering event, increasing the likelihood of constructive behavior following anger (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006). Supporting this notion, individuals asked to recall an angry experience reported being more likely to proactively resolve a situation if they had a long-term focus, as compared to individuals with a short-term focus, who reported being more likely to derogate or verbally attack others (Fischer & Roseman, 2007). In organizational contexts, instead of yelling out during a meeting, an angry employee who is able to regulate this response may instead decide to remain silent while planning to deliberately speak up at another time, thereby constructively using the anger to identify problems and suggest solutions (Grant, 2013). Employees with low regulation knowledge, however, may also express their anger, but with less control and constructive intent (Geddes & Callister, 2007).

Emotion regulation knowledge may also turn anger's efficacy into proactivity by enabling employees to reassess the situation. Cognitively reappraising an angry experience, which involves changing the way one thinks about the anger-inducing event (Gross, 2008), increases the likelihood of an adaptive response, rather than a focus on revenge. In other words, reappraising the situation helps to constructively channel anger's energy. Indeed, the reappraisal of an angry experience can "convert anger about the status quo into passion for change" (Grant, 2013: 1708).

Being able to reappraise a situation thus helps employees harness anger's energy and direct it toward changing the situation. Furthermore, employees with high regulation knowledge may reappraise the situation, using their frustration to reframe it as a challenge or opportunity, rather than a disappointment (Jordan et al., 2002). Thus, when experiencing anger, employees able to reappraise a situation focus on future opportunities rather than past threats and are therefore more likely to use their frustration to be proactive than are those unable to regulate the emotional experience.

> *Proposition 2: Emotion regulation knowledge moderates the relationship between self-efficacy following anger and proactivity such that there is a positive relationship when employees have high emotion regulation knowledge and a negative relationship when employees have low emotion regulation knowledge.*

Support from others supplies can-do proactive motivation following fear. As briefly mentioned above, fear arises from appraisals of threat, uncertainty, and a lack of ability to influence or modify a negative situation or outcome (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Öhman, 2008). The uncertain possibility of threat can activate protective effort, including preparing to protect the self, increasing attention toward a threat, or looking for ways to avoid or flee from a situation (Frijda, 1986; Izard & Ackerman, 2000). When individuals experience fear, they naturally tend to deal with this uncertainty by looking for cues from others, primarily leaders and managers (Rachman, 1990), about how to respond and behave (Gino, Brooks, & Schweitzer, 2012; Schachter, 1959; Taylor, 2006). The presence of supportive cues from others when employees feel fearful can increase constructive protective effort, whereas the absence of such cues can increase paranoid arousal, effort, and cognitions (Chan & McAllister, 2014).

Support from supervisors and leaders can increase constructive protective effort when employees experience fear for at least three reasons. First, leaders and managers can model appropriate behavior, signaling what behaviors are expected in difficult situations (Lazarus, 1991) and serving as exemplars of how to take action (Rachman, 1990). For example, leaders can signal which behaviors are necessary for changing the situation, such as seeking feedback or proactively

identifying problems. Supporting this notion, I (Lebel, 2016) found that when supervisors were perceived to be open to input, employee fears of layoffs or economic downturn were positively related to proactively speaking up at work.

Second, leaders and supervisors can guide employee fears toward positive outcomes and away from negative outcomes during times of uncertainty. For example, in a longitudinal survey study of a merger between two large corporations, Schweiger and DeNisi (1991) found that communication from leaders about how the merger would unfold significantly increased job satisfaction and reduced employee perceptions of negative outcomes during and after the merger. Moreover, supportive communication from leaders may create hope and optimism, increasing confidence and mobilizing fearful employees toward action and away from flight responses (Huy, 1999). Doing so helps increase employees' effort to effectively change the situation while at the same time reducing fear's potential for excessive vigilance and paranoid thoughts.

Third, employees perceiving support from leaders and coworkers have increased efficacy, which, in turn, increases constructive effort following fear. When employees feel a sense of efficacy, they have increased can-do motivation for proactively dealing with rather than avoiding a potential threat. Public health research demonstrates the importance of efficacy in shaping behavioral responses to fear. Fear can motivate individuals' active and adaptive responses to prevent disease or illness, but only when they feel they have efficacy to act; otherwise, individuals feel helpless and avoid acting at all (Witte & Allen, 2000). In this case, having social support from a peer or mentor helps employees develop confidence in their own abilities, thereby increasing perceived efficacy (Parker, 1998) and potential proactive effort should the need arise. By contrast, employees experiencing fear and with low levels of support are unlikely to believe they can effectively deal with uncertainty and so direct their protective efforts toward paranoid or avoidance behavior (Chan & McAllister, 2014).

> *Proposition 3: Support from leaders and coworkers moderates the relationship between fear and protective effort such that fear increases constructive effort*

> *when support is high and paranoid effort when support is low.*

Emotion regulation knowledge supplies can-do proactive motivation following fear. Perceiving leaders' and coworkers' support increases employees' ability to constructively deal with fear. Employees also need can-do motivation to activate their protective effort and take action when the need arises. That is, while support increases potential effort, employees still need to regulate their emotion to act rather than freeze or flee. Emotion regulation knowledge can supply a sense of self-efficacy to complete a difficult task when fearful. For example, reminding oneself of past successes helps one persist in facing challenges (Salovey, Detweiler-Bedell, Detweiler-Bedell, & Mayer, 2008). Therefore, when afraid of failing on a work task, employees with high regulation knowledge may remind themselves of past successes completing similar tasks, increasing their confidence of success despite facing obstacles (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009). In this way, having emotion regulation knowledge directs employees' protective effort when fearful toward proactively tackling problems and finding ways to succeed. Conversely, employees with low regulation knowledge are unlikely to see a way to overcome challenges, leading them to focus on negative outcomes and thereby reducing the likelihood of proactivity.

Emotion regulation knowledge also directs employees' protective effort to carry out proactive behavior rather than freeze or avoid the situation. For example, employees may recognize that they can "harness the motivational qualities of emotion," using fear to direct their protective effort toward seeking feedback or getting an early start on an important task (Salovey et al., 2008: 536). Thus, being able to regulate emotion helps channel fear's protective efforts into proactivity, helping individuals avoid negative outcomes. In this case employees use their emotion regulation knowledge to recognize and face their fear by making detailed plans in advance, which helps them accomplish an important task rather than avoid it (Parrott, 2001).

> *Proposition 4: Emotion regulation knowledge moderates the relationship between protective effort following fear and proactivity such that there is a positive relationship when employees have high emotion regulation knowledge*

and a negative relationship when employees have low emotion regulation knowledge.

Reason-to Proactive Motivation When Experiencing Anger

As briefly described above, experiencing anger stimulates brain activity associated with approach (Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009) and invokes a sense of agency to move against another (Shaver et al., 1987). Psychological forces that guide this efficacy toward benefiting others and away from intentions to harm play an important role in determining whether anger sparks proactivity. I argue below that feeling committed to an organization (identification with the organization) or feeling motivated on behalf of others (prosocial motivation) provides individuals with the constructive motivation to guide anger's energy toward proactivity. Employees with high identification or prosocial motivation adopt an other-focused motivational lens, making proactivity that benefits others or the organization seem worthwhile. Without such reason-to motivation, the tendency to move against others, following anger, is more likely to default to deviance or retaliation.

Identification with the organization supplies reason-to proactive motivation following anger. When employees can channel anger's efficacy and focus their motivation on a larger purpose or entity, such as the organization, proactivity likely will ensue. Identification with an organization is the extent to which individuals feel oneness with the organization (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Employees who highly identify with their organization are primarily motivated to promote and enhance the larger group or organization's welfare (Brickson, 2000). They also feel highly invested in, and intensely experience, the organization's successes and failures (Pratt, 1998). This attachment to the organization increases perceptions of instrumentality and valence to take proactive action on the organization's behalf (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). Following this, an angry employee who is committed to the organization is likely to initiate efforts to change and improve the organization. Indeed, research suggests that employees who experience anger at work and who highly identify with their organization are often motivated to proactively initiate change by reporting problems with current work practices (Gutierrez, Howard-Grenville, & Scully, 2010) or by speaking up to management (Stickney & Geddes, 2014).

Another way that identifying with the organization may turn anger into proactivity is by generating comparisons with outgroups (Brewer & Gardner, 1996), motivating people to "ensure the welfare of the group, often relative to other groups" (Brickson, 2000: 85). Therefore, employees are more likely to focus on competitive threats (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996), creating a willingness to fight and act on behalf of the organization to improve its status and performance (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). In this case anger's impetus to move against is directed toward perceived outgroups, with employees being driven by a need to distance themselves from rival organizations (Brewer, 1991). For example, having a high level of identification may motivate employees frustrated or angered by the organization's declining performance to scan the competitive environment for potential threats from rival organizations (Parker & Collins, 2010). Here anger functions to motivate employees to initiate change and identify problems so as to reestablish the organization's perceived performance and status relative to rival organizations (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006). Additionally, managers highly identified with their organization and angered by threats to the organization's image may also develop initiatives to surpass rival organizations or groups (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996). These examples highlight that experienced anger combined with a strong organizational identification makes it worthwhile to proactively change the status quo and improve the organization's position.

> *Proposition 5: Identification with the organization moderates the relationship between self-efficacy following anger and proactivity such that there is a positive relationship when employees have a high level of identification and a negative relationship when employees have a low level of identification.*

Prosocial motivation supplies reason-to proactive motivation following anger. Being prosocially motivated can also guide anger's efficacy toward proactive behavior. When employees are prosocially motivated, they are driven to benefit other people (Batson, 1987).

While prosocial motivation can involve trait-like properties, the focus here is on the temporary psychological state of aiming to promote others' welfare (Grant, 2008).

Employees with prosocial motivation are likely to be proactive following anger for a variety of reasons. First, since employees with prosocial motivation place a strong emphasis on the importance of promoting others' well-being, they are more likely to be comfortable putting their own egos and reputations on the line in taking actions that may create constructive change (Meglino & Korsgaard, 2004). For example, when angered at witnessing mistreatment, an employee can respond in a variety of ways, including helping the victim or punishing the instigator, or not respond at all (O'Reilly & Aquino, 2011). An employee focused on coworkers' well-being is more likely to proactively address the situation by speaking up or letting top management know about the issue rather than remaining silent. In this case, having a prosocial motivational lens helps to deemphasize the perceived risks of being proactive, combining with anger's increased efficacy and optimistic outlook (Lerner & Keltner, 2001). The result is increased proactivity, since employees view speaking up or initiating change as likely to benefit others. Second, when employees are prosocially motivated, they value taking anticipatory action to improve the welfare of others (Grant, 2008). Third, a focus on others' needs makes expressed anger more constructive, rather than destructive, in its intent (Geddes & Callister, 2007). Indeed, prosocial motivation can increase perspective taking, leading employees to view mistreatment and injustice through the lens of the target (Grant & Berry, 2011). Thus, anger channeled through a prosocial focus may take the form of "empathetic anger," sparking an employee to speak up for, take initiative on behalf of, or proactively provide support to another individual (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009: 182).

> *Proposition 6: Prosocial motivation moderates the relationship between self-efficacy following anger and proactivity such that there is a positive relationship when employees have high levels of prosocial motivation and a negative relationship when employees have low levels of prosocial motivation.*

Reason-to Proactive Motivation When Experiencing Fear

As described above, the discrete emotion of fear qualitatively differs from anger, since it directs behavior toward avoidance rather than approach (Roseman et al., 1994). While focusing on the needs of coworkers or the organization is enough to guide anger's approach tendency toward proactive behavior, these forces are insufficient for directing fear away from avoidance. That is, having an orientation toward benefiting others is insufficient for approach following fear; employees need a strong motivational reason to be proactive and not withdraw or remain silent. Indeed, as several scholars suggest, it is a rare instance when employees overcome their fear to actively attempt change (Detert & Edmondson, 2011; Kish-Gephart et al., 2009; Morrison & Milliken, 2000). The question then becomes, "Following fear, when do employees have sufficient reason to approach rather than avoid?"

Fear directs employees toward the easiest route to safety, typically by escape, avoidance, or freezing to look for a threat (Öhman & Mineka, 2001). Yet in some cases employees can neither flee nor avoid taking action. When flight options are blocked or are perceived as unavailable, fear's typical behavioral consequence is increased defensive action (Blanchard, Hynd, Minke, Minemoto, & Blanchard, 2001; Öhman, 2008). When individuals strongly feel a responsibility to act—that they need or should act—they have a powerful reason to proactively protect themselves or others rather than withdraw from the situation. Without feeling a personal need to act, fearful employees are unlikely to be proactive, assuming they should retreat from the situation, or that coworkers will provide safety.

Felt responsibility supplies reason-to proactive motivation following fear. When employees perceive a felt responsibility to act, they feel a strong obligation or duty to bring about change (Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Schilpzand, Hekman, & Mitchell, 2015). Situational factors influence felt responsibility, which is a psychological state that reflects one's willingness to make improvements, deal with problems, and put forth extra effort (Fuller, Marler, & Hester, 2006). How employees perceive their role in the social environment shapes whether they feel it is appropriate to act (Schilpzand et al., 2015). Put differently, employees feel responsibile to

act when they believe that their role requires it or that no one else is responsible.

When both feeling fear and perceiving a felt responsbility to act, employees are unlikely to view withdrawal or silence as providing safety. First, employees with a felt responsibility "attach negative valence to *not* taking action" (Morrison & Phelps, 1999: 407), increasing perceptions that withdrawal or silence will lead to negative outcomes. Second, a felt responsibility to act creates feelings that one must change the situation to protect oneself, because no one else can or should act. In other words, having a felt responsibility compels individuals to act despite feeling fearful, because they perceive it is their responsibility relative to their peers (Schilpzand et al., 2015). For example, a manager leading a project and worried about its progress may seek colleagues' feedback or proactively make personnel changes, rather than withdraw from the task or avoid making changes. In this case the manager feels compelled to act even when fearful, perceiving that no one else can or should. Withdrawing or remaining silent would not provide protection, since negative outcomes are likely if the manager does not take action to change the situation.

Similarly, having a felt responsibility may create a sense of personal ownership to complete a task, leading employees experiencing fear to proactively protect themselves from negative outcomes. Kish-Gephart and colleagues (2009) hinted at this notion, speculating that employees motivated by personal goals, such as a promotion, would feel that action was necessary and would thus be compelled to overcome their fears. For example, a salesperson seeking a promotion but fearful about a supervisor's reaction to decreased sales volume may take proactive action, such as initiating customer outreach or improving customer service policies. In this case the salesperson feels personally responsible for reaching the sales target and taking the action necessary to earn the promotion. Therefore, since inaction or avoiding clients would most likely harm a chance at promotion, proactive efforts to gain the supervisor's approval are more likely than withdrawal.

Employees may also feel compelled to take proactive action following fear when they perceive that others cannot escape from threat. This can occur when employees perceive that their coworkers lack the skills to act or when the organization lacks the resources to respond to a competitive threat (Schilpzand et al., 2015). For example, employees fearing layoffs may make suggestions for improvement, especially if they view the current leadership as incapable of avoiding layoffs. In this case the employees take it upon themselves to proactively protect the group, believing that they need to act. Being proactive in this situation is not driven primarily by identifying with the organization's or coworkers' interests. Rather, proactive action is likely to follow fear only when employees feel that they *personally* must act, since commitment to an organization can fuel beliefs that employees should remain quietly loyal and that others in the organization will act (Hirschman, 1970). Moroever, employees reporting being fearful at work, but having low felt responsibility to act, assume that someone else will take action to deal with a challenging situation (Schilpzand et al., 2015). With low felt responsibility, employees are thus likely to respond to fear with inaction or withdrawal.

In summary, these arguments suggest that feeling responsible to act influences how fearful employees view potential paths for using their protective effort. When feeling personally responsible to act, employees view flight options as blocked, thereby mobilizing efforts to proactively achieve protection from a threat. When not feeling personally responsible, proactivity is less likely, since employees view withdrawal or silence as providing safety.

> *Proposition 7: Having a felt responsibility to act moderates the relationship between protective effort following fear and proactivity such that there is a positive relationship when felt responsibility is high and a negative relationship when felt responsibility is low.*

DISCUSSION

When do anger and fear spark proactivity? Although anger is often associated with fight and fear with flight, these emotions' behavioral consequences often vary depending on the situation. Following this contingent perspective, this article provides a conceptual framework for understanding the factors that direct fear away from flight and toward proactive effort and anger away from fight actions that harm others and toward actions that benefit others. Because experiencing anger and fear is common in organizations, and because proactive behaviors can improve

organizational performance, understanding when and why these emotions influence proactivity is of both theoretical and practical importance.

Theoretical Implications

The proposed framework provides new insights into how emotions shape proactive behavior within organizations. Recent reviews note that prior conceptualizations of proactivity have been mostly cognitive in nature, generally overlooking the role of emotions (Bindl & Parker, 2012; Grant & Ashford, 2008). Moreover, the limited number of studies exploring the link between negative emotions and proactivity has produced conflicting results (e.g., Den Hartog & Belschak, 2007; Fay & Sonnentag, 2012). I argue for the utility of focusing on discrete emotional experience to specify when and why negative emotions such as anger and fear spark proactive behavior. Doing so provides a more systematic understanding of affective influences on proactivity, identifying the microprocesses that redirect anger or fear toward proactive behavior. Rather than lumping the experience of anger and fear together over time or into a broad negative affective construct, a discrete emotions lens provides a means to better understand the proximal motivational factors shaping proactivity. Thus, this article adds to previous research (e.g., Bindl et al., 2012), since focusing on the valence and activation of emotion is insufficient for understanding how negative emotions influence proactivity.

This article also contributes to the proactivity literature by considering discrete emotional experience in the context of situational factors, answering calls for the integration of "hot" affective motivational pathways with "cold" cognitive ones (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker et al., 2010). Whereas proactivity scholars have noted that current approaches suffer from focusing on emotional *or* cognitive antecedents of proactivity (Morrison, 2011), the perspective presented here provides a balanced approach integrating these views and suggesting that *both* processes are necessary to understand what drives proactivity. The proposed model suggests that proactivity can be influenced by anger or fear's hot energy in combination with relatively colder can-do pathways. Additionally, the reason-to pathways described in the model, such as identification with the organization and felt responsibility, have an affective component but also involve a cognitive

process of weighing proactivity's potential costs and benefits (Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). Therefore, this article develops a more comprehensive understanding of the "affective-laden expectancy like calculus" preceding proactivity (Detert & Burris, 2007: 870; see also Ashford et al., 1998), identifying key contingencies that direct anger or fear toward proactive behavior.

This article makes a secondary contribution to the literature on emotions in organizations by helping to answer the important question, "Under what conditions can negative affective responses lead to positive organizational outcomes?" (Barsade & Gibson, 2007: 52; see also Gooty et al., 2009, and Lindebaum & Jordan, 2012). Adopting a discrete view of emotions helps us move beyond broad notions that negative emotions can spark change (George, 2011) or have functional outcomes (Averill, 1982; Parrott, 2001), shedding light on when certain negative emotions spark proactivity. Focusing on the unique characteristics of negative emotions provides a more precise understanding of the motivational factors directing these emotions toward functional outcomes. For example, this article describes how a focus on benefiting coworkers or the organization can direct anger's energy and urge to act toward proactive behavior to help, rather than harm, others. In so doing, this article contributes to theory on discrete emotions by identifying the specific factors that drive anger away from fight and fear away from flight, increasing predictive ability and understanding of the negative emotion-behavior relationship (Roseman, 2011).

Finally, this article extends a nascent body of theory and research exploring the role of discrete negative emotions in shaping positive outcomes in organizational settings (Bohns & Flynn, 2012; Geddes & Callister, 2007; Lebel, 2016). Specifically, the article builds theory on why fear can increase rather than decrease effort at work. This theory complicates the assumption that fear uniformly produces negative consequences, such as withdrawal or silence (Morrison & Milliken, 2000), by specifying when fear may motivate proactivity. The key lies in understanding when fear's protective effort takes constructive rather than paralyzing or paranoid forms. A similar contribution lies in describing why anger takes proactive rather than reactive forms via a sense of proactive self-efficacy. Additionally, by linking anger to the domain of proactivity, this article contributes not only by identifying when constructive outcomes

can occur but also by specifying *which* constructive outcomes follow from experiencing anger. Doing so adds nuance to our understanding of anger in organizations, answering calls for more research on the consequences of anger expression at work (Gibson & Callister, 2010).

Directions for Future Research

This article suggests a number of exciting avenues for future research. First, since the proposed model does not explore proactivity's role over time (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Parker et al., 2010), future research could explore how negative emotions influence different stages of the proactivity process. For example, Bindl and colleagues (2012) found that low-activated negative mood at work (including feeling dejected) is positively associated with proactive envisioning (e.g., identifying situations to be changed) but not with the enactment of proactive behaviors. This suggests that negative emotions can help individuals proactively envision and plan, but may not be sufficient for individuals to carry out this behavior in certain situations. Future research might thus benefit from exploring which discrete emotions influence specific aspects of the proactivity process or how different emotions may interact to influence different aspects of proactivity. Additionally, future research should consider the possibility of feedback loops, with the execution of proactive behavior creating additional affective experiences or further opportunities to be proactive. For example, employees who are proactive despite fear may build efficacy over time that weakens future experienced fear, thereby spurring more proactivity (Kish-Gephart et al., 2009). As another example, anger-driven proactivity may invigorate other employees to enact change and provide them with the confidence to do so, creating virtuous cycles of emotion and proactivity. Conversely, unsuccessful proactive attempts may fuel negative emotions, creating destructive cycles of proactivity and emotion (Hareli & Rafaeli, 2008).

Second, future research could explore the role of negative *and* positive emotions in influencing proactivity. This could include exploring shifts from experienced negative to positive emotion (Bledow, Schmitt, Frese, & Kühnel, 2011). For example, hope and fear arise out of appraisals of uncertainty but differ in a focus on positive or negative outcomes and, thus, in approach or avoidance tendencies (Roseman, 2011). Consequently, a shift in how employees view uncertain events at work may influence whether they actively attempt to change the situation and reduce existing uncertainty or remain passive or inactive because of too much uncertainty. While Proposition 3 above hints at the role of leaders in creating hope for employees and switching the focus to positive outcomes following fear, future research could explore this as well as other negative-positive emotional combinations in greater detail.

Third, the focus on emotions and proactivity at the individual level overlooks how collective- or group-level negative emotion influences proactive behavior. A recent meta-analysis suggests that the relationship between group-level negative mood and constructive outcomes is context dependent (Knight & Eisenkraft, 2015), indicating value in identifying the contingent factors that may direct group-level negative emotions toward proactive behavior. For example, are there factors that can increase employees' proactivity despite a powerfully shared climate or culture of fear (Ashkanasy & Nicholson, 2003)? Similarly, future research could explore whether group-level negative emotions can spark proactive behavior not only within organizations but also outside of organizations in the form of social movements (Martorana, Galinsky, & Rao, 2005), such as the recent Occupy movement. Additionally, it may be the case that group-level experienced anger sparks proactively deviant behavior, involving action to create change that counters organizational norms or policies (Morrison, 2006). For example, collectively felt anger may simultaneously increase group efficacy to create change and lower the risk of acting counter to organizational norms, energizing individuals to move against existing organizational practices to create change (Huy, Corley, & Kraatz, 2014).

Fourth, the model conceptualizes proactivity as intended to constructively change the situation, limiting the scope of the article to proactive behavior's constructive, rather than destructive, outcomes. Future research could explore the underlying mechanisms at work when proactivity sparked by negative emotions produces destructive outcomes. For example, employees driven by fear may proactively and defensively speak up, trying to distract attention away from important problems, or place blame on others rather than constructively deal with the situation (Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003). Moreover, there may be instances when anger's motivation to

move against others is enhanced out of interpersonal competition, leading angry employees to proactively harm others they perceive as competitors, thereby creating spirals of harmful behavior by taking deviant action to constantly out-do rival employees (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Identifying the boundary conditions when negative emotions lead to proactively deviant behavior will help extend research by painting a more complete picture of this behavior's potentially constructive and destructive aspects (Grant & Ashford, 2008).

Finally, future research could explore the role of gender in shaping the relationships between fear and proactivity. While responses to threat are often characterized as fight or flight, social psychological research suggests that an alternative response to threat involves a tendency to affiliate or seek out others to provide joint protection, referred to as "tend and befriend" (Taylor, 2006). Such a tendency is more marked in women than men, with women more likely to seek help or help others (Blanchard et al., 2001; Taylor et al., 2000). Moreover, compared to men, women have been socialized to have a collective identity and are therefore more inclined to take action to protect others rather than the self (Cross & Madson, 1997). By contrast, men are expected to be aggressive and have fight responses following fear (Blanchard et al., 2001). This suggests that gender may influence the form of proactivity following fear resulting from a threat, with men more likely to protect the self and women more likely to protect others, such as by proactively helping coworkers.

Practical Implications

The proposed model provides practical guidance for leaders and employees wishing to effectively manage experienced anger and fear or to increase the frequency of employee proactivity in the presence of these negative emotions. Anger and fear are commonly experienced in organizations and often thought to result in negative or dysfunctional outcomes. The proposed model adds complexity to the view that anger and fear produce universally negative outcomes. Thus, a first step for leaders and employees is to recognize that anger and fear can produce functional outcomes. Perhaps even more important, leaders and employees should recognize that behavior resulting from these emotions is contingent on a variety of factors.

The contingent factors in the proposed model also suggest specific actions leaders and employees can take to guide anger and fear toward constructive outcomes. First, leaders may be able to stoke collective or prosocial motivation to turn anger into proactivity, directing employee commitment to the organization or coworkers toward constructive outcomes. In particular, leaders may be able to highlight comparisons with rival organizations to help guide employees' anger toward proactivity and improve the status quo. Second, leaders can help employees direct their anger or fear by providing support, mentorship, and clear communication. Third, organizations can provide opportunities for employees to develop skills for managing anger and fear, possibly through emotional intelligence training or by observing others handling difficult situations. Finally, the theoretical model developed here focuses on factors that direct anger and fear toward proactivity once these emotions have already been experienced, and it therefore *does not* suggest that managers and leaders should create anger and fear in employees but, rather, that they should attempt to manage these emotions once they are elicited. The challenge for leaders and managers, then, is to recognize and take action to manage employees' negative emotional experiences.

Conclusion

In this article I have argued that the negative emotions of anger and fear can spark proactivity in certain situations by signaling a need to change the status quo. The proposed contingent model intends to guide future research by suggesting that discrete emotional experience should be considered in conjunction with emotion regulation and how employees perceive situational factors. By doing so, researchers and organizational leaders can better understand when the energy from angry or fearful experiences can be channeled into positive, constructive, and functional change.

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