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Career Development of College Students through Part-Time Work: The Role of Leader-Member Exchange and Taking Charge Behavior

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Career Development of College Students through Part-Time Work: The Role of Leader-Member Exchange and Taking Charge Behavior[*]

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Abstract

This study examines the potential benefit of college students' part-time work on their career development by focusing on leader–member exchange (LMX) and taking charge behavior in the workplace. Using a sample of Japanese college students, results from this study indicate that taking charge behavior in part-time work mediates the relationship between LMX quality with supervisors and career development (focus of career exploration, self-efficacy toward postcollege employment and proactive career behavior). The results also indicate that proactive personality and conscientiousness moderate the relationship between LMX quality and taking charge behavior, and that job autonomy and skill variety moderate the relationship between taking charge behaviors and career development. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

JEL Classification: J24, J40, M12

Keywords: part-time work, leader-member exchange, taking charge behavior, career development, college student

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Part-time work during school years is now common in many countries. For example, about 80% of students in the United States are employed at some point before they graduate from high school (Davies, 2000; Derous & Ryan, 2008). In Japan, over 90% of college students engage in part-time work before graduation (Intelligence, 2006). While one body of research suggests that part-time work during adolescence is associated with negative outcomes such as lower school attendance and lower academic performance (e.g., Bachman & Schulenberg, 1993; Paschall, Ringwalt, & Flewelling, 2002; Steinberg & Dornbush, 1991), other research points to positive outcomes such as developing occupational skills, learning about the world of work and gaining competitive advantage in the labor market (Creed, Doherty, & O'Callaghan, 2008; Curtis & Lewis, 2001; Lucas & Lammont, 1998).

In order to advance our understanding of the potential benefit of part-time work in school years, this study focuses on part-time work as an opportunity for career development of college students. In general, part-time work, especially by students, consists of relatively simplified and standardized tasks. In addition, training opportunities for part-time employees are minimal and participation in decision making is highly limited. Thus, as long as students who are employed in part-time jobs engage passively in traditional routine tasks, opportunities for learning new skills and obtaining useful information about the world of work are limited. This limits the effect of part-time work on college students' career development. On the other hand, students may be able to learn new skills and prepare for their future career via part-time work if they perform proactively beyond the passive execution of tasks (e.g., making constructive suggestions, improving the way work is executed). In short, the quality of part-time work experience could influence the degree to which students can develop and prepare for their career in postcollege employment.

This study focuses on leader–member exchange (LMX) and taking charge behavior in the part-time work setting as factors that influence the quality of students' part-time work

experience, which would in turn influence their career development. LMX is defined as the quality of the relationship between an employee and his or her supervisor (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). In this study, it means the relationship between students working part-time and their immediate supervisor in the workplace. Taking charge behavior is defined as constructive efforts by employees to effect functional change in how work is executed (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). It can be considered one form of proactive work behavior (Crant, 2000). Researchers have begun to pay more attention to this type of behavior because of the increasing needs for employees to use their initiative, be self-starting and challenge the status quo to bring about constructive change (Campbell, 2000; Frese & Fay, 2001; Frohman, 1997; Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Using these constructs, this study investigates whether the quality of LMX indirectly influences career development of college students through proactive behavior in part-time work.

As indicators of career development of college students, this study looks at attitudes, self-efficacy and behavior toward job search for postcollege employment and subsequent career. Attitudes to postcollege employment include employment commitment (i.e., the importance placed on obtaining one's preferred career) and focus of career exploration (i.e., how sure one feels in his or her preference for a particular occupation, job and organization) (Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartman, 1983). These two factors are considered important for a college student's career development because these factors determine the degree of motivation and direction toward career exploration and subsequent job search for postcollege employment. Self-efficacy in this study includes job search efficacy (i.e., an individual's confidence in his or her ability to successfully perform a variety of job search activities) (Wanberg, Kanfer, & Rotundo, 1999) and self-efficacy for executing in-role tasks and working as a member of the team and organization (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007) in the future postcollege employment. Self-efficacy plays an important role in career development

such that it is a significant antecedent of job search behavior, job search effort, and job search outcomes (Eden & Aviram, 1993; Kanfer & Hulin, 1985; Saks & Ashforth, 1999, 2000). Proactive career behavior is also examined in this study. Proactive career behavior includes such activities as career planning, skill development, consultation and networking, which can generate a range of employment options, developmental opportunities and job search competencies (Claes & Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1998). Proactive career behavior is becoming more important as dynamic continuous environmental change has created new employment settings that are characterized as “boundaryless,” and employees need to be more actively involved in the management of their own career (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Kossek, Roberts, Fisher, & Demarr).

As factors that would influence the relationship between LMX, taking charge behavior and career development, this study also examines the moderating roles of personality characteristics (proactive personality and conscientiousness) and job characteristics (job autonomy and skill variety). Personality characteristics would influence the degree to which students working part-time react to the quality of LMX and engage in taking charge behavior in the workplace. The characteristics of part-time jobs would influence the degree to which students could learn and develop their career through their taking charge behavior in the workplace.

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, this study adds to the literature on part-time work for young people and to the literature on adolescent career development by demonstrating the potential benefit of part-time work for students' career development. In doing so, this study identifies the conditions under which part-time work provides opportunities for learning and development of college students for future careers.

Second, contrary to most previous research on LMX and taking charge behavior, which tends to focus on their effects on employee performance, this study takes a look at the

roles of LMX and taking charge behavior as potential contributors to career development. This study demonstrates that high-quality LMX and taking charge behavior would be beneficial not only for the workplace through individual job performance but also for individuals, especially for adolescents, because of the effects on their career development.

Third, this study identifies boundary conditions that influence the quality of part-time work experience of students and its effects on their career development. Specifically, this study describes how individual difference factors (i.e., proactive personality and conscientiousness) and job characteristics (i.e., job autonomy and skill variety) interact with LMX and taking charge behavior in influencing career development, suggesting that students' personalities and job characteristics also matter in understanding the role of part-time work in adolescent career development.

Theory and Hypotheses

LMX in Part-Time Work

LMX theory contends that leaders develop a different relationship with each of their subordinates through a series of work-related exchanges (Graen & Cashman, 1975; Graen & Scandura, 1987). High-quality LMX relationships tend to be characterized by mutual respect, liking and trust (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975). Numerous studies have demonstrated that a high quality of LMX will result in higher employee performance (e.g., task performance and citizenship behaviors) (e.g., Gerstner & Day, 1997; Illies et al., 2007).

Most LMX research appears to focus on the supervisor–subordinate relationship among full-time employees and its effects on employee attitudes and performance. However, LMX in terms of the relationship between part-time employees and their supervisors may also be of importance although almost no research has exclusively looked at LMX from this point of view. For employers, a high quality of LMX even for part-time employees would promote positive attitudes and behaviors toward their jobs, which increases workplace

performance. For students in part-time work, a good relationship with supervisors in the workplace would improve the quality of the part-time work experience and, if they can make the most of such a good relationship, it would have a positive impact on their own career development. As discussed below, LMX would influence career development via taking charge behavior.

LMX and Taking Charge Behavior

Taking charge behavior involves challenging the status quo rather than passively adapting to present conditions (Crant, 2000). Thus, taking charge behavior has potential risks such as a damaged reputation if the initiative fails or disapproval if it is seen as inappropriate or threatening (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Additionally, it can be difficult for supervisors to support taking charge behavior for their employees because it can be threatening, such as when employees question supervisors' decisions and challenge accepted practices (Frese & Fay, 2001; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). Usually, part-time workers may not be expected to engage in taking charge behavior because usually they are supposed to conduct relatively simple and standardized tasks. Therefore, part-time employees may not actively engage in taking charge behavior unless certain conditions are met.

High-quality LMX would be one of the conditions that promote taking charge behavior of part-time employees. According to social exchange theory, when quality of LMX is high, employees will feel a sense of obligation to reciprocate in order to maintain a balanced or equitable social exchange and hence will be motivated to help their supervisors and organizations (Erdogan & Enders, 2007; Tangirala et al., 2007). In addition, employees with high-quality LMX are provided with more authority to make decisions, are given special information to help them complete tasks, are consulted prior to decisions and are given special mentoring opportunities (Graen, 1989; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Schriesheim, Neider, & Scandura, 1998; Yukl & Fu, 1999). Employees in such a supportive situation tend to

engage in taking charge behavior. Furthermore, employees with high-quality LMX tend to have a trust-based relationship with their supervisors (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In this relationship, employees would believe that their supervisors are more likely to accept mistakes as learning experiences, which encourages individuals to try things beyond core tasks. They would also believe that their supervisors would support their suggestions and initiatives for change, even if it might be threatening for supervisors. Thus, high-quality LMX may encourage employees to take more risks and engage in taking charge behavior.

In short, in order to maintain a balanced or equitable social exchange, to make the most of the high-quality environment and resources provided by supervisors, and based on the trust developed with supervisors, employees with a high-quality LMX would be motivated to engage in taking charge behavior that goes beyond simple execution of their core tasks. Consistent with the these arguments on social exchange, available resources and trust, previous research has demonstrated that distributive and procedural justice, trust between coworkers, top management openness to taking charge, and felt obligation to constructive change were positively related to proactive or taking charge behavior (Moon, Kamdar, Mayer, & Takeuchi, 2008; Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006).

Hypothesis 1: Students who have high-quality LMX relationships with their supervisors in part-time work will exhibit more taking charge behaviors in their jobs than those who have low-quality LMX relationships.

Taking Charge Behavior and Career Development

As discussed earlier, part-time work in general consists of relatively simple and standardized tasks. Thus, the passive execution of routine tasks may not contribute much to career development of college students. However, if part-time employees go beyond their simple tasks and engage in taking charge behavior, they will have more opportunities to learn new knowledge and skills, explore their own career, and develop self-efficacy through

self-starting, attempting innovative and challenging activities in their jobs.

Taking charge behavior, as innovative and challenging behavior, requires a discretionary attempt to initiate and enact positive change and an intention to benefit the workplace (McAllister, Kamdar, Morrison, & Turban, 2007). Thus, employees who engage in taking charge behavior are more likely to encounter difficult and challenging situations. To overcome such barriers, they would actively search for learning opportunities and engage in learning activities (Frese et al., 1996; London & Mone, 1999). In addition, part-time employees who engage in taking charge behavior may have more opportunities to interact with full-time employees in the process of making suggestions and initiating positive change. Therefore, through taking charge behavior, students who work in part-time jobs can obtain more information about the world of work and develop positive attitudes toward their own career exploration. As a result, they may become more committed to obtaining preferred positions in postcollege employment, and they may be more likely to focus on what occupations, jobs or organizations they will pursue for their future career.

Students who engage in taking charge behavior in part-time work would also develop stronger self-efficacy for future job search and a subsequent career after graduation. Social cognitive theory suggests that self-efficacy is enhanced through enactive mastery (i.e., past performance accomplishments and successful mastery experiences) and vicarious experience (i.e., making observations of others who are successful in their jobs), among others (Bandura, 1977). Enactive mastery can be obtained if taking charge behavior successfully brings about meaningful improvement in the workplace. Even if the attempt was not very successful, students could learn new knowledge and skills that contribute to another mastery experience. Vicarious experience can also be obtained if students engaging in taking charge behavior interact with successful full-time employees in the workplace, who can be role models for the students. Thus, students who engage in taking charge behavior in

part-time work will be more likely to develop self-efficacy in conducting core tasks (i.e., in-role behavior) and self-effectively as a member of the team and organization (i.e., team and organization member proficiency) in their anticipated postcollege employment. They will also develop job search efficacy because they may become confident about demonstrating their knowledge and skills obtained through taking charge behavior in the workplace.

Finally, taking charge behavior is related to proactive career behavior such as skill development, consultation (i.e., seeking advice from others) and networking. Students who become proactive in their part-time work (i.e., engage in taking charge behavior) may also become proactive in their own future career, indicating the behavioral learning of proactivity. That is, proactivity such as self-starting, taking the initiative and being innovative would be transferred from the part-time work activity to career management activity.

Hypothesis 2: Students who exhibit more taking charge behavior in their part-time work will have higher employment commitment, higher focus of career exploration, higher self-efficacy for postcollege employment and show more proactive career behavior than students who exhibit less taking charge behavior.

Mediating Role of Taking Charge Behavior

On the basis of Hypotheses 1 and 2, it is predicted that taking charge behavior will mediate the relationship between LMX quality and career development. That is, the effect of LMX between college students working in part-time work and their supervisors on their career development are largely indirect, mediated by taking charge behavior that is the more proximal cause of the attitudes, efficacy beliefs and behaviors leading to career development.

Hypothesis 3: Taking charge behavior in part-time work will mediate the relationship between LMX quality and career development (employment commitment, focus of career exploration, self-efficacy for postcollege employment and proactive career behavior).

The Role of Personality Characteristics

Although it is predicted that LMX in the students' part-time work will influence their taking charge behavior in the workplace, individuals may differ in the degree to which they

will react to high-quality LMX to engage in taking charge behavior. This study examines two personality variables, namely, proactive personality and conscientiousness, as sources of individual difference that moderates the relationship between LMX quality and taking charge behavior.

Individual differences exist in the extent to which people take action to influence their environments. Researchers have labeled this dispositional construct as proactive personality (Beteman & Crant, 1993). Proactive personality is considered a stable disposition to take personal initiative in a broad range of activities and situations (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). Proactive people identify opportunities and act on them, show initiative, take action and persevere until meaningful change occurs. In contrast, less proactive people fail to identify, let alone seize, opportunities to change. They are passive and reactive, preferring to adapt to circumstances rather than change them (Crant, 2000).

It is predicted that the proactive personality will moderate the effect of LMX on taking charge behavior. That is, individuals with a high proactive personality will be more likely to take advantage of high-quality LMX with their supervisors (e.g., more resources available, a higher level of trust and more support) and engage in taking charge behavior whereas individuals with a low proactive personality will miss these opportunities or be less motivated to engage in taking charge behavior even in high-quality LMX with their supervisors.

Hypothesis 4a: Proactive personality will moderate the relationship between LMX quality and taking charge behavior in part-time work such that the relationship is stronger for students with a high proactive rather than a low proactive personality.

Another individual difference factor that may moderate the relationship between LMX and taking charge behavior is conscientiousness, one of the Big Five personality dimensions (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Costa & McCrae, 1992; Costa, McCrae, & Dye, 1991). Conscientiousness refers to the extent to which someone is dependable, persevering,

hardworking, disciplined, deliberate and achievement oriented (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Highly conscientious individuals tend to adhere to the norms of reciprocity and feel obligation within the high-quality social exchange relationship (e.g., Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades, 2001). Thus, it is predicted that highly conscientious individuals who experience high LMX quality are more likely to reciprocate to help their supervisors and the workplace by engaging in taking charge behavior. Consistent with these arguments, Moon et al. (2008) found that one narrow facet of conscientiousness, sense of duty, was related to taking charge behavior. Thus, high-quality LMX would increase the sense of duty for highly conscientious individuals, which promotes their taking charge behavior. In addition, highly conscientious individuals, once having decided to improve the workplace in return for the high-quality LMX, are more likely to be responsible, motivated and hardworking, which also promotes their taking charge behavior.

Hypothesis 4b: Conscientiousness will moderate the relationship between LMX quality and taking charge behavior in part-time work such that the relationship is stronger for students with a high level rather than a low level of conscientiousness.

The Role of Job Characteristics

The relationship between taking charge behavior in students' part-time work and their career development may also be moderated by several factors. Among these factors, this study examines two types of job characteristics: job autonomy and skill variety.

Job autonomy refers to the extent to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence and discretion to the individual in carrying out his/her work (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). It is predicted that the effect of engaging in taking charge behavior in part-time work on students' career development will be higher when job autonomy is high rather than low. In the high job autonomy situation, employees who engage in taking charge behavior have more freedom to seek learning opportunities, interact with other employees and develop strategy to initiate positive change in the workplace. This increases the amount

of information they will obtain about the world of work, which will promote the exploration of their own career, develops self-efficacy through successful experience and observation of other successful employees and enhances proactive behavior for their own career. On the other hand, in the low job autonomy situation, those who engage in taking charge behavior may not have enough flexibility and freedom to take initiative, interact with people and develop strategy, which would reduce the chance of successful improvement of their tasks and workplace. It will also inhibit opportunities to obtain information on the world of work, develop self-efficacy and promote proactive behavior for their own career.

Hypothesis 5a: Job autonomy will moderate the relationship between taking charge behavior in part-time work and students' career development (employment commitment, focus of career exploration, self-efficacy for postcollege employment and proactive career behavior) such that the relationship is stronger when job autonomy is high rather than low.

Skill variety refers to the extent to which a job requires an individual to use a variety of different skills to complete the work (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). It is predicted that the effect of taking charge behavior on career development would be stronger when skill variety is low rather than high. When skill variety is low in part-time work, students have less opportunity to learn new skills and the job itself may be monotonous; the amount of information students can obtain about the world of work is also small. Thus, students employed in this type of job will be more likely to benefit from engaging in taking charge behavior that creates more opportunities to learn new skills, obtain information, develop self-efficacy and learn how to be proactive. On the other hand, when skill variety is high in part-time work, the chance of obtaining new skills is higher simply from conducting daily tasks. Students may also be able to obtain more information and develop self-efficacy in how to use many different skills in executing jobs. Thus, in such a situation, the effect of taking charge behavior on students' career development might relatively be weak because the effect would overlap with the effect of high skill variety.

Hypothesis 5b: Skill variety will moderate the relationship between taking charge behavior in part-time work and students' career development (employment commitment, focus of career exploration, self-efficacy for postcollege employment and proactive career behavior) such that the relationship is stronger when skill variety is low rather than high.

Method

Sample and Procedure

Participants were recruited from undergraduate management classes in two national universities in Japan. They were offered extra credit in return for participation in the study. In regular class hours, surveys were distributed to the students who attended the classes and they were told that participation in this study was voluntary and anonymous. Over 90% of the students who registered for these classes agreed to participate in this study and returned the surveys. In one university, surveys were administered in two different time periods. Personality variables, self-efficacy and proactive career behavior were measured in the first survey and the remaining variables were measured in the second survey. These data were matched using the unique identifier codes generated by participants (Fedor, Davis, Maslyn, & Mathieson, 2001). Because of the nature of this study, students who had no part-time work experience and who were already in their job search process were excluded from the sample, resulting in the total sample size of 123. A majority of participants were college juniors (97.2%), and included 67.0% males and 33.0% females with an average age of 21.1 years (SD = 2.2). Most participants (94.3%) had worked in part-time for one-month or more. On average, they had worked for 20.3 months (SD = 14.6) and worked 12.5 hours (SD = 8.6) per week. Participants were employed in various types of workplace including restaurants (34.1%), retail (15.4%), teaching (13.8%), services (7.3%), physical labor (2.4%), administrative assistance (1.6%) and others.

Because data were collected from two universities, it was explored whether significant differences existed in the mean levels of variables central to the study's hypotheses.

Independent sample *t*-tests for each variable revealed no significant differences between the two samples except for proactive career behavior ($t = –2.62$, $p < .05$). Thus, two samples were combined into one, prior to testing the hypotheses.

Measures

All items, originally written in English, were translated into Japanese, and some wordings were adjusted to the research context. They were back-translated to ensure that the meaning had been retained (Brislin, Lonner, & Thorndike, 1973). All items were 7-point scale (e.g., 1 = strongly disagree; 7 =strongly agree).

LMX. The quality of the relationship between participants and their immediate supervisors in part-time work was measured using Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) 7-item LMX7 scale. Sample items are “My supervisor understand my job problems and needs,” and “I have enough confidence in my supervisor that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she were not present to do so.” Cronback's alpha was .90.

Taking charge behavior. Participants' taking charge behavior in their part-time work was measured using 10 items adapted from Morrison and Phelps's (1999) Taking Charge scale. Some wordings were modified to fit with the context of part-time work. Sample items were “I often try to change how my job is executed in order to be more effective,” and “I often make constructive suggestions for improving how things operate within the workplace”. Cronback's alpha was .82.

Employment commitment. The 5-item Importance of Obtaining Preferred Position scale from the Career Exploration Survey (CES) (Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartmen, 1983) was used to assess the degree of importance placed on obtaining one’s career preference in the postcollege employment. A sample items was “It is important to me to work in the occupation I prefer”. Cronback's alpha was .85.

Focus of career exploration. The 5-item Focus scale from the Career Exploration

Survey (CES) (Stumpf, Colarelli, & Hartmen, 1983) was used to assess how sure one feels in his/her preference for a particular occupation, job, and organization in the postcollege employment. A sample items was “I am sure that I know the type of job that is best for me”. Cronback's alpha was .84.

Self-efficacy toward postcollege employment. Self-efficacy toward postcollege employment was measured using three self-efficacy scales: job search efficacy, in-role behavior efficacy, and efficacy on team- and organization-member proficiency. Job search efficacy was measured with 6 items adapted from Vinokure, Price and Caplan (1991). Some wordings were modified to fit with the job search context for Japanese college students. A sample item was “I feel confident about making the best impression in interview.” Cronback's alpha was.81. In-role behavior efficacy in postcollege jobs was measured using the 5-item scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). Participants were asked the degree to which they were confident to carry out the behaviors described in the items in their future postcollege jobs. A sample item was “adequately completes assigned duties”. Cronback's alpha was .90. Efficacy on team- and organization-member proficiency was measured with the 6-item scale that combined Griffin, Neal, and Parker’s (2007) 3-item team member proficiency scale and 3-item organizational member proficiency scale. This scale assesses self-efficacy regarding the behaviors that reflect the role as a member of the team and organization in postcollege jobs. Participants were asked the degree to which they were confident to carry out the behaviors described in the items in their future postcollege jobs. Sample items were “Coordinate my work with coworkers,” and “Defend the organization of others criticize it. Cronback's alpha was .83.

Proactive career behavior. Proactive career behavior was measured with 9 items adapted from Claes and Ruiz-Quintanilla (1998). This scale was used to assess the degree to which participants have been engaged in such behaviors as career planning, skill

development, consultation and networking behaviors. Some wordings were modified to fit with the situation of college students. Sample items were “I have developed skills which may be needed in future positions” and ”I have built a network of contacts or friendship with classmates or other people to provide me with help or advice that will further my work chances”. Cronback's alpha was .89.

Proactive personality. Proactive personality was measured using Bateman and Crant's (1993) 10-item scale. A sample items was “Wherever I have been, I have been a powerful force for constructive change.” Cronback's alpha was .82.

Conscientiousness. Conscientiousness was measured using the 10-item Conscientiousness scale from the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg, 1999). A sample item was “I am always prepared”. Cronback's alpha was .80.

Job autonomy. Job autonomy was measured using the 3-item scale developed by Hackman and Oldham (1980) and revised by Idasak and Drasgow (1987). A sample item was “I have significant autonomy in determining how I do my job”. Cronback's alpha was .82.

Skill variety. Skill variety was measured using the 4-item scale developed by Morgeson and Humphrey (2006). A sample item was “The job requires a variety of skills”. Cronback's alpha was .89.

Control variables. As control variables that might influence the quality of LMX, taking charge behavior and career development variables, gender (female = 0; male = 1), part-time work experience (number of months) and number of work hours per week were included in the analysis.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among variables used in this study are presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here.

Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 predicted that taking charge behavior would serve as a mediator between LMX and career development variables. To test these hypotheses, mediated regression analysis was performed. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), four conditions are necessary to establish mediation: (1) the independent and mediating variables must be significantly related; (2) the independent and dependent variables must be significantly related; (3) the mediator and dependent variable must be significantly related; and (4) the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable should be nonsignificant or weaker when the mediator is added. The regression results are reported in Table 2.

Insert Table 2 about here.

Model 1 in Table 2 shows that, after controlling for gender, part-time work experience and working hours per week, LMX was positively related to taking charge behavior (β = .28, p < .01), which supports Hypothesis 1 and condition 1. Models 2, 4, 7, 10, 12, 15 in Table 2 show that, after control variables were taken into account, LMX was positively related to employment commitment (β = .25, p < .05), focus of career exploration (β = .32, p < .01), job-search efficacy (β = .24, p < .05), efficacy on team- and organization-member proficiency (β = .29, p < .01) and proactive career behavior (β = .23, p < .05) but not to in-role behavior efficacy. Thus, condition 2 was supported except for in-role behavior efficacy. Models 3, 5, 8, 11, 13, 16 in Table 2 show that, after control variables were taken into account, taking charge behavior was positively related to focus of career exploration (β = .28, p < .01), job-search efficacy (β = .31, p < .05), in-role behavior efficacy (β = .29, p < .01), efficacy on team- and organization-member proficiency (β = .32, p < .01)

and proactive career behavior (β = .32, p < .01) but not to employment commitment. Thus condition 3 and Hypothesis 2 were supported except for employment commitment. Finally, Models 6, 9, 11, 14, 17 show that, after control variables and taking charge behavior were taking into account, LMX became nonsignificant for job-search efficacy and proactive career behavior, which suggests full mediation. The effect of LMX became weaker, albeit still significant, for the focus on career exploration (β = .25, p < .05) and efficacy on team- and organization-member proficiency (β = .21, p < .05), which suggests partial mediation.

To further assess the significance of the mediation, Sobel's (1982) test was performed (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002). Results show that the intervening effect of taking charge behavior for focus of career exploration (Sobel's z = 2,21, p < .05), job search efficacy (Sobel's z = 2.43, p < .05), efficacy for team- and organization-member proficiency (Sobel's z = 2.34, p < .05), and proactive career behavior (Sobel's z = 2.45, p < .05) were all significant. Finally, although Baron and Kenny's (1986) condition 2 was not met for in-role behavior efficacy, recent researchers argue that condition 2 might no longer be essential in establishing mediation (Kenny, Kashy, and Bolger, 1998), and Sobel's test could be more appropriate. Thus, Sobel's test was also performed for in-role behavior efficacy using a boot strapping approach developed by Preacher and Hayes (2004) as well as the formal significant test (Cole, Walter, & Bruch, 2008). Results shows that the intervening effect of taking charge behavior for in-role behavior efficacy was significant (Sobel's z = 2.24, p < .05) and the bootstrap test confirmed the formal significant test (95% confidence interval around the indirect effect did not contain zero [.01, .17]). Because condition 2 (the direct relationship) was not significant, the results for in-role behavior efficacy indicate full mediation. Taken together, Hypothesis 3 was supported except for employment commitment.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that proactive personality and conscientiousness would

moderate the relationship between LMX and taking charge behavior, and Hypothesis 5 predicted that job autonomy and skill variety would moderate the relationship between taking charge behavior and career development variables. To test these hypotheses, moderated regression analysis was performed. To reduce multicollinearity when examining interactions, predictors were centered before entering into the regression (Aiken & West, 1991; Cohen, 1978). In the regression, control variables were entered in the first step, independent and moderator variables were entered in the second step, and interaction terms were entered in the last step. A significant interaction suggests the existence of a moderation effect. To avoid possible problems of high multicollinearity among interaction terms and weak statistical power, the interaction terms were entered separately to the regression to allow the direct testing of each of the moderation hypotheses. The regression results are reported in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here.

Insert Figure1 about here.

As shown in Table 3, there were significant positive interactions between LMX and proactive personality (β = .20, p < .05) and between LMX and conscientiousness (β = .20, p < .05) in predicting taking charge behavior. Plots of the significant interactions using the approach suggested by Aiken and West (1991) were shown in Figure 1. As expected, individuals with a high proactive personality and/or a high level of consciousness were more reactive to high-quality LMX to exhibit taking charge behavior. Thus, Hypotheses 4a and 4b were supported.

Insert Figure 2 about here.

Insert Figure 3 about here.

Next, there ware significant positive interactions between taking charge behavior and job autonomy in predicting employment commitment (β = .1.01, p < .05), focus of career exploration (β = 1.15, p < .01), job search efficacy (β = 1.10, p < .05), in-role behavior efficacy (β = 1.24, p < .01) and efficacy on team- and organization-member efficacy (β = 1.41, p < .01). On the other hand, there were significant negative interactions between taking charge behavior and skill variety in predicting job search efficacy (β = -1.24, p < .05) and proactive career behavior (β = -1.53, p < .01). Plots of significant interactions were shown in Figures 2 and 3. The patterns of interactions were consistent with the predictions. Taken together, Hypothesis 5a was supported except for proactive career behavior and Hypothesis 5b was supported for job search efficacy and proactive career behavior.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the potential benefit of part-time work on college students' career development by focusing mainly on the role of LMX and taking charge behavior. Results of this study generally support the major proposition developed in this paper. The quality of LMX in college students' part-time work was related to several indicators of their career development, which was fully or partially mediated by their engagement in taking charge behavior in the workplace. Additionally, college students' personality moderated the relationship between LMX and taking charge behavior, and characteristics of part-time jobs moderated the relationship between taking charge behavior and career development.

With regard to the mediating role of taking charge behavior, the results involved full mediation and partial mediation, depending on the types of career development. Taking charge behavior fully mediated the relationship between LMX and job search efficacy, in-role behavior efficacy and proactive career behavior. Among these variables, job search activity and proactive career behavior (i.e., career planning, skill development, consultation, and

networking) may require more self-starting, proactivity and self-management than other dimensions of career development. Thus, it is suggested that taking charge behavior in part-time work plays an especially important role as a mediator between the quality of LMX and those “proactive” aspects of career development. It is also indicated that students can learn proactivity through engaging in taking charge behavior in their part-time work.

On the other hand, the partial mediation results of taking charge behavior for the focus career exploration and efficacy on team- and organization-member proficiency suggest that the quality of LMX can not only indirectly but also directly influence career development, or that its effect may be mediated by other factors than taking charge behavior. The direct effect of high-quality LMX on career development can be possible such that students obtain useful advice or mentoring from their supervisors, or their supervisors become role models for their future career, which may promote their career exploration and self-efficacy toward postcollege employment. Students may also learn considerably through the passive execution of assigned tasks if the quality of LMX is high. In all, the findings on the direct and indirect effect of LMX are valuable because it is demonstrated that high-quality LMX is not only beneficial for job performance, as numerous studies have found, but also for career development of adolescents working in part-time.

With regard to the moderating role of individual personality, the results support the importance of proactive personality and conscientiousness that influence the relationship between LMX and taking charge behavior in students’ part-time work. Students with a high proactive personality and/or conscientiousness were most likely to react to high-quality LMX to engage in taking charge behavior. Thus, it appears that highly proactive and/or conscientious students are the ones who will make the most of the supportive part-time work environment (i.e., high-quality LMX) for their own career development by engaging in taking charge behavior. This is consistent with previous research that emphasized the importance of

these two personality variables in predicting future job performance and career success. Previous studies have established the link between proactive personality and job search behavior, job search success, and long-term career success (Seibert et al., 2001; Claes & De Witte, 2002; Frese, Fay, Hilburger, Leng, & Tag, 1997). It is also well known from past research that conscientiousness is related to job performance in almost all kind of jobs (Barrick & Mount, 1991) and to job search outcomes (Kanfer, Wangerg, & Kantrowitz, 2001). Thus, although this study emphasizes the importance of the quality of LMX for students' career development through taking charge behavior, individual differences can be critical contingency factors for this proposition.

With regards to the moderating role of job characteristics, this study has shed light on the interesting contrast between job autonomy and skill variety, both of which are among the core dimensions of the job characteristic model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). On the one hand, the results suggest that a high level of job autonomy may be important, but may not be the sufficient condition for career development. Students would benefit from high job autonomy especially if they engage in taking charge behavior because such a behavior in the autonomous environment enables the students to effectively learn new skills, obtain information about the world of work, and develop self-efficacy for future career. On the other hand, the results suggest that high skill variety and taking charge behavior will work in a complementary manner for some dimensions of career development. Under the part-time jobs with high skill variety, students are required to learn and use different types of skills in conducing assigned tasks, which would have a positive effect on their learning and career development. Taking charge behavior may play a compensatory role such that its effect on career development is stronger in part-time jobs with low skill variety because such a behavior creates opportunities for learning and development that otherwise cannot be obtained through simple tasks. This finding is important as majority of part-time employees

appear to engage in relatively simplified and standardized tasks.

Implications for Career Theory

This study has implications for career theory, especially theories on adolescent career development, school-to-work transition, and career self-management. This study indicates that these theories should incorporate the quality of part-time work as important factors that contribute to effective career exploration, school-to-work transition, and career self-management for adolescents. Part-time work is one of the important opportunities for students to learn about the world of work, acquire new skills, and prepare for their future career. This study demonstrated that the quality of part-time work experience matters for adolescent career development, and it is influenced by the quality of LMX and taking charge behavior in the workplace.

In addition, the results on the relationship between taking charge behavior and career development has implications for self-directed learning of employees. As individual responsibilities for learning and development is increasingly emphasized in recent years, more research is needed to better understand the mechanism in which employees become self-starting, proactive, and persistent in developing themselves for better career (e.g., Frese & Fay, 2001). This study indicates that engaging in taking charge behavior in the workplace will enable employees to learn how to be proactive in managing their own career, suggesting the learning effect of being proactive at work.

Implications for Practice

This study has implications for managing part-time workers and students who work in part-time. Employees are not merely reacting passively to the working environment and development opportunities that are assigned and offered, but also seek out environment opportunities and engage in proactive behaviors in order to expand their knowledge and skills and help organizations (Crant, 2000; Grant & Ashford, 2008). This proactive view of

employee may also apply to part-time employees, who tend to be seen as peripheral and passive recipient of the simplified and standardized tasks (e.g,, Kalleberg, 2000). In today's complex and uncertain world, organizational success and survival depend on proactivity. Thus, employers can benefit from encouraging part-time employees, as well as full-time employees, to be more proactive and engage in taking charge behavior by creating supportive environment such as increasing the quality of LMX. At the same time, increasing job autonomy in their part-time work would increase the effect of taking charge behavior on employee career development. These efforts would result in the development of skilled workforce, improvement of working methods and other constructive changes that lead to higher business performance.

For students working in part-time, they will benefit from engaging in taking charge behavior in their part-time jobs for their own career development especially when skill variety is low and/or job autonomy is high in their part-time jobs. This may be especially true for today's business environment because a growing trend is to encourage employees to become actively involved in the management of their own careers (Kossek, Roberts, Fisher, & Demarr, 1998). As a first step to be more proactive, students who work in part-time could pay more attention to developing a good relationship with their supervisors in the workplace. It would lead to the supportive environment in which the students can take risks and engage in taking charge behavior.

Limitations and Future Research

The results of this study should be viewed in light of their limitations. One potential limitation is that data collection is this study was essentially cross-sectional. Therefore, our data provides only limited support for causal inferences. In addition, because all variables were collected through self-report measures, common method bias may also be an issue. However, in one university where data were collected, several variables were measured

separately in different point of time, which would have reduced common method biases (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Furthermore, for the findings on significant interaction effects, common method bias may be less likely to be a matter of concern (Evans, 1985).

Future research could extend the findings of this study by using longitudinal research design in which actual job search behavior, job search outcomes, and even posthire career success are measured. This line of research could strengthen the validity of the findings of this study. Future research could also examine whether the findings of this study generalize beyond college students working in part-time. For example, the relationship between LMX and taking charge behavior could be applied not only to part-time employees, as demonstrated in this study, but also to traditional, full-time employees. In addition, the effect of LMX and taking charge behavior on career development might also apply to the learning and development of full-time employees.

Other individual difference and situational variables that were not included in this study could be further examined in future research. For example, self-esteem has been frequently studied in the job search and career literature (e.g., Ellis & Taylor, 1983; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Other dimensions in the Big Five personality characteristics such as extraversion and neuroticism may also have some influences in the quality of part-time experience and career development. As for the situational variables, future research could examine organizational justice, perceived organizational support (POS), and/or team-member exchange (TMX) as social exchange variables that are comparable with LMX, and would be other potential antecedents of taking charge behavior. Finally, future research could further explore other types or dimensions of proactive behavior in the workplace such as expressing voice, innovative behavior, feedback seeking and issue selling (Crant, 2000; Grant & Ashford, 2008).

In conclusion, there is still lack of research that focuses on the role of part-time work in adolescent career development. In addition, research on various kinds of proactive behaviors, including taking charge behavior in the workplace, has surged in recent years. Therefore, there are many opportunities to further advance the understanding of the role of part-time work and proactive behavior in adolescent career development.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations [a]

Variable	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. LMX	4.29	1.06	(.90)													
2. Taking charge behavior	4.35	1.04	.31 **	(.82)												
3. Employment commitment	5.18	0.89	.23 *	.08	(.85)											
4. Focus of career exploration	4.18	1.19	.32 **	.28 **	.41 **	(.84)										
5. Job-search efficacy	4.02	1.00	.27 **	.34 **	.20 *	.65 **	(.81)									
6. In-role behavior efficacy	5.05	0.90	.10	.29 **	.38 **	.38 **	.54 **	(.90)								
7. Team and org. member efficacy	4.88	0.83	.24 *	.31 **	.37 **	.41 **	.52 **	.74 **	(.83)							
8. Proactive career behavior	4.11	1.09	.22 *	.32 **	.23 *	.60 **	.63 **	.31 **	.37 **	(.89)						
9. Proactive personality	4.18	0.82	.30 **	.39 **	.16	.47 **	.61 **	.49 **	.50 **	.56 **	(.82)					
10. Conscientiousness	4.24	0.85	-.02	.18	.18	.27 **	.32 **	.47 **	.32 **	.35 **	.27 **	(.80)				
11. Job autonomy	4.41	1.30	.33 **	.34 **	.02	.02	-.02	.01	.00	.03	.11	-.06	(.82)			
12. Skill variety	4.12	1.27	.29 **	.35 **	.02	.46 **	.40 **	.15	.14	.35 **	.35 **	.27 **	.10	(.89)		
13. Gender	0.67	0.47	.01	.05	-.06	.04	.10	.09	.05	-.08	.19 *	.07	-.05	-.03	-	
14. Part-time work experience	20.29	14.58	.35 **	.14	.04	.13	.16	.04	-.05	.06	.06	-.20 **	.12	.31 **	-.01	-
15. Working hours per week	12.46	8.63	.18	.18	.02	-.01	.12	.04	.04	.13	.23	.00	.12	.19	-.05	.38 **

[a] n = 123. Numbers in parentheses are Cronbach's alphas.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 2
Results of Mediated Regression Analysis [a]

Variable	Taking charge behavior	Employment commitment		Focus of career exploration			Job-search efficacy		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Control variables	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LMX	.28 **	.25 *		.32 **		.25 *	.24 *		.16
Taking charge behavior			.08		.28 **	.21 *		.31 **	.28 **
Change in R2	.07 **	.06 *	.01	.09 **	.08	.12 **	.05 *	.10 **	.12 **
Total R2	.11	.06	.01	.11	.10	.15	.09	.14	.16

Variable	In-role behavior efficacy		Team- and organization-member efficacy			Proactive career behavior		
	Model 10	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15	Model 16	Model 17
Control variables	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LMX	.09		.29 **		.21 *	.23 *		.15
Taking charge behavior		.29 **		.32 **	.27 **		.32 **	.28 **
Change in R2	.01	.08 **	.07 **	.10 **	.14 **	.05 *	.10 **	.11 **
Total R2	.02	.09	.08	.11	.15	.07	.12	.14

[a] In all analyses, LMX and/or taking charge behavior were entered after control variables were entered in the first step. Due to the space limitation, beta coefficients for control variables were not reported here, but can be available from the author.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 3

Results of Moderated Regression Analysis [a]

Variable	Taking charge behavior			
	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
Control variables	-	-	-	-
LMX	.19	.23 *	.27 **	.29 **
Proactive personality	.32 **	.30 **	.19	.15
Conscientiousness				
LMX x Proactive personality		.20 *		
LMX x Conscientiousness				.20 *
Change in R2	.15 **	.04 *	.10 **	.04 *
Total R2	.20	.24	.15	.18

Variable	Employment commitment		Focus of career exploration	
	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**
Control variables	-	-	-	-
Taking charge behavior	.09	-.46	.32 **	-.31
Job autonomy	-.02	-.70 *	-.11	-.88 **
Taking charge behavior x Job autonomy		1.01 *		1.15 **
Change in R2	.01	.05 *	.09 *	.06 *
Total R2	.01	.06	.11	.17

Variable	Job-search efficacy				In-role behavior efficacy		Team- and organization-member efficacy		Proactive career behavior	
	Model 5	**Model 6**	**Model 7**	**Model 8**	**Model 9**	**Model 10**	**Model 11**	**Model 12**	**Model 13**	**Model 14**
Control variables	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Taking charge behavior	.38 **	-.19	.21 *	.81 **	.32 **	-.36	.35 **	-.42	.22 *	.97 **
Job autonomy	-.20	-.89 **			-.11	-.93 **	-.10	-1.04 **		
Skill variety			.32 **	1.18 **					.27 **	1.34 **
Taking charge behavior x Job autonomy		1.04 *				1.24 **		1.41 **		
Taking charge behavior x Skill variety				-1.24 *						-1.53 **
Change in R2	.13 **	.05 *	.18	.05	.09 *	.07 **	.11 **	.09 **	.16 **	.07 **
Total R2	.17	.22	.22	.27	.10	.17	.12	.21	.18	.25

[a] In all analyses, independent and moderator variables and interaction terms were entered after control variables were entered in the first step. Due to the space limitation, beta coefficients for control variables were not reported here, but can be available from the author.

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

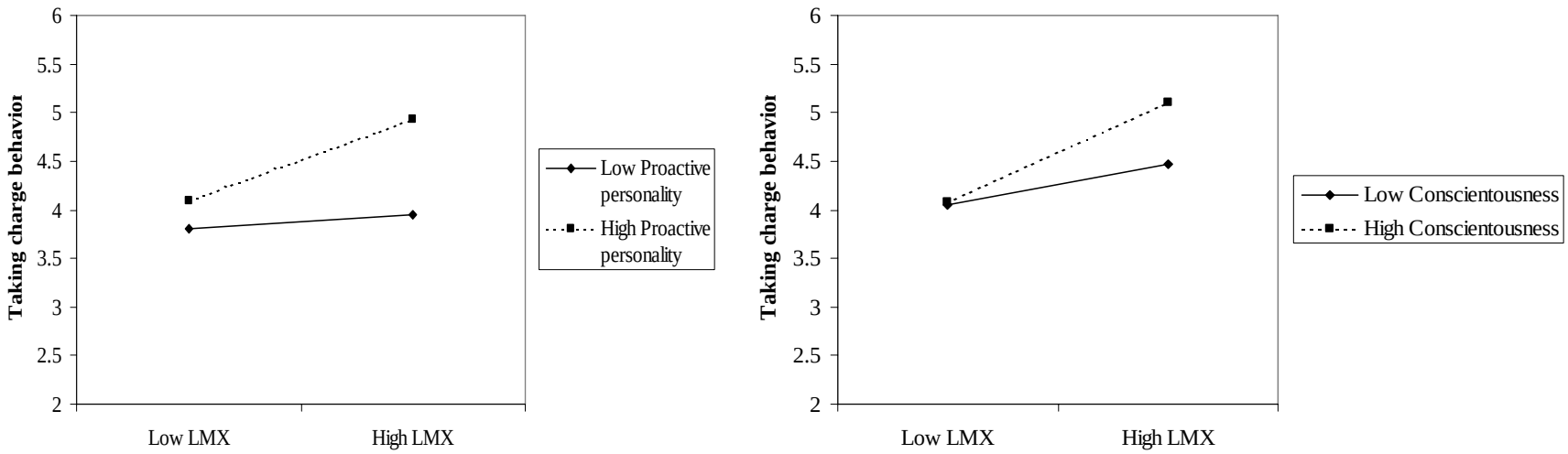

Figure 1. Interactions between LMX and Personality.

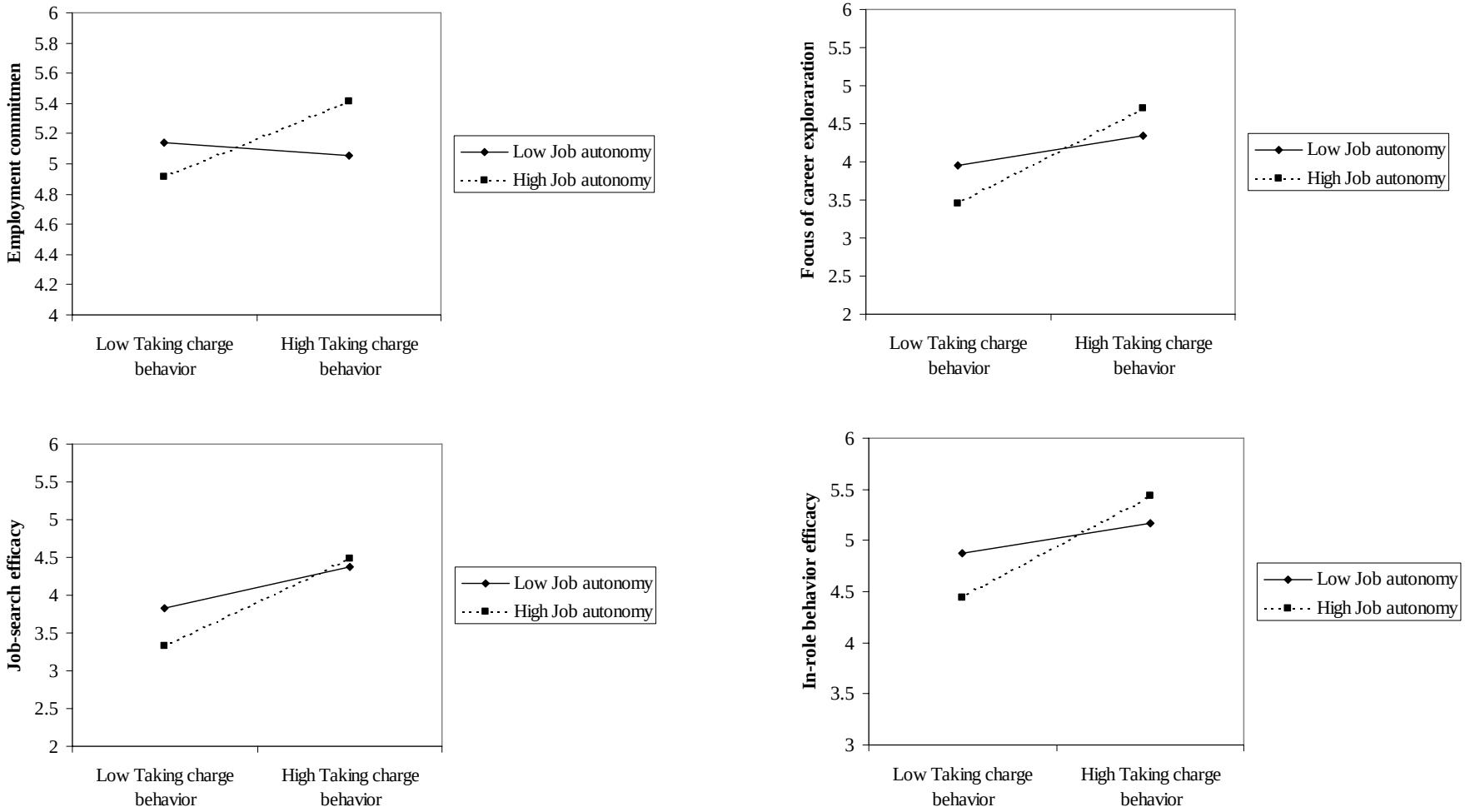

Figure 2. Interactions between Taking Charge Behavior and Job Autonomy.

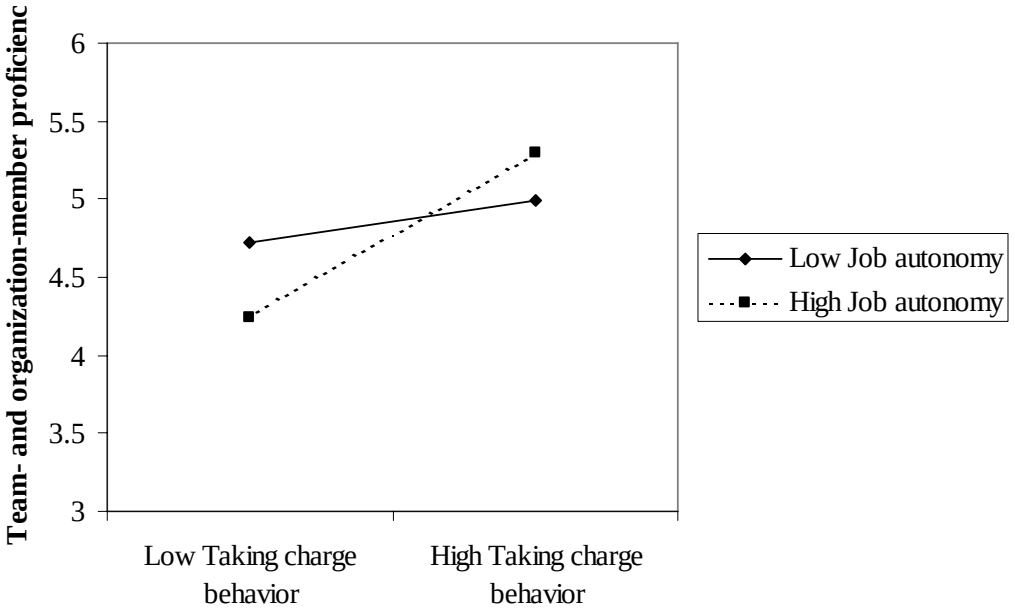

Figure 2 (Continued).

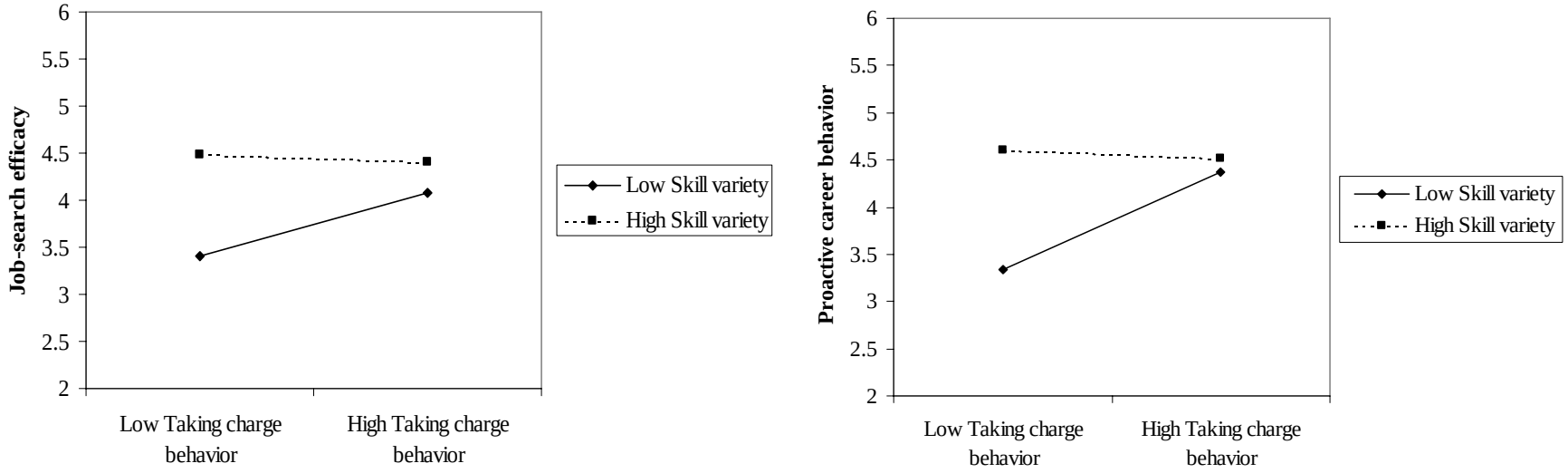

Figure 3. Interactions between Taking Charge Behavior and Skill Variety.