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A Multilevel Dual-Process Model of Leaders' Proactive Personality and Followers' Daily Job Crafting

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Abstract

Despite the substantial progress reported in the job crafting literature, knowledge about how proactive leaders encourage daily job crafting behaviors in their followers remains limited. This study explores how proactive leaders foster daily job crafting behaviors among their followers. Grounded in role modeling theory, we propose a multilevel dual-process model that connects leaders' proactive personalities with followers' daily job crafting through two mechanisms: leaders' own job crafting (informative function) and their empowering behaviors (inspirational function). We further hypothesize that proactive leaders employ more empowering strategies when interacting with proactive followers. To validate these hypotheses, we collected daily diary data from 96 leader-follower dyads over 10 consecutive workdays. The results show that proactive leaders not only engage in job crafting themselves but also exhibit empowering behaviors towards proactive followers, enhancing followers' job crafting activities. This indicates that the confluence of proactive traits in both leaders and followers amplifies a leadership style that emphasizes empowerment, granting followers greater autonomy in their job crafting endeavors.

Keywords: empowering behaviors; job crafting; proactive personality; role modeling

Practitioner points

- Both receiving autonomy and learning from leaders may support employees' job crafting
- Organizations should identify and support proactive leaders who inspire and empower employees through both role modeling and direct engagement.
- Leadership development programs should emphasize both empowerment and job crafting behaviors, encouraging leaders to tailor their strategies to the proactive tendencies of their employees.

A Multilevel Dual-Process Model of Leaders' Proactive Personality and Followers' Daily Job Crafting

The evolving global work landscape demands a shift from rigid job structures to dynamic job crafting, where employees proactively reshape their roles to enhance motivation, reduce stress, and improve job fit (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Demerouti, 2014). Research links job crafting to greater engagement, satisfaction, and performance (Lu et al., 2014; Tims et al., 2012). However, its effectiveness depends largely on organizational conditions—particularly leadership styles—which can enable or constrain employees' ability to craft their jobs.

Leadership is pivotal in facilitating or hindering this proactive behavior. Research indicates that empowering leadership, characterized by the delegation of authority and encouragement of employee autonomy, significantly correlates with increased job crafting activities (Jiang et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2018). For instance, studies by Bajaba et al. (2021) and Jiang et al. (2021) suggest that leaders' empowering behaviors can promote job crafting indirectly by boosting work engagement and leveraging the proactive personalities of employees.

Prior studies have shown that empowering leadership fosters job crafting (Jiang et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2018), but they primarily treat leadership as a contextual factor rather than examining the direct leader-follower interface. Furthermore, it remains unclear how leaders tailor their empowering behaviors based on followers' proactive tendencies, leaving unanswered questions about how leadership interacts with individual differences to influence job crafting. At the same time, research has emphasized individual employee traits, such as proactive personality, as key drivers of job crafting (Rudolph et al., 2017), while largely overlooking how leaders' proactive behaviors actively facilitate or constrain employees' job crafting efforts. Although some studies suggest that coworkers model job crafting behaviors for each other (Bakker et al.,

2016; Demerouti & Peeters, 2018), little is known about how leaders' engagement in job crafting serves as a social learning mechanism for their followers.

Despite existing insights, job crafting research has yet to fully explore how leaders' proactive personalities shape their followers' job crafting through direct interaction with follower. Specifically, how do proactive leaders amplify, guide, or even restrict followers' job crafting efforts? This gap is particularly relevant because proactive leaders may simultaneously inspire job crafting while also monopolizing crafting opportunities, limiting employee autonomy. To address this paradox, our study proposes a novel dual-process model based on the motivational theory of role modeling (Morgenroth, Ryan, & Peters, 2015), considering both the informative function (leaders modeling job crafting) and the inspirational function (leaders empowering job crafting) within leader-follower dyads. By focusing on these dual pathways, we extend the understanding of how leader proactivity translates into follower job crafting and when such leadership is most effective. Our conceptual model is depicted in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The examination of leaders' proactive personality in relation to followers' daily job crafting yields three pivotal contributions to existing literature. Firstly, we introduce a multilevel dual-process model that connects leaders' proactive personality to followers' daily job crafting, offering a deeper understanding of how proactive leaders both “show (engagement in job crafting)” and “facilitate (empowerment)” followers' daily job crafting. Although previous research has investigated the potential for co-workers to emulate job crafting (Bakker et al., 2016; Demerouti & Peeters, 2018; Peeters et al., 2016), our study investigates further by examining the modeling process within leader-follower dyads, enriching the discourse on the social cognition theory's perspective on individual job crafting.

Secondly, while prior research has predominantly focused on employees' proactive tendencies as key drivers of job crafting (Crant, 2000; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Rudolph et al., 2017), our study shifts the focus to leaders, arguing that proactive leaders are not merely facilitators but active catalysts in shaping employees' job crafting behaviors. By examining how leaders engage in job crafting themselves and employ empowering leadership strategies, we provide evidence that leadership is not just a background condition but a central mechanism in the job crafting process. This perspective highlights the need to reconceptualize job crafting as a socially embedded process rather than an exclusively self-initiated behavior (Kim & Beehr, 2020). By demonstrating that leader proactivity can amplify, guide, or even restrict employees' job crafting efforts, our study advances the understanding of how leadership directly influences individual job design.

Thirdly, our research extends existing knowledge by emphasizing the interactive effect of proactive personality within leader-followers dyads on job crafting. While much of the prior literature has concentrated on the Big Five personality traits as broad predictors of leadership effectiveness (Derue et al., 2011), our study refines this discussion by focusing on a more proximal trait—proactive personality—and its direct impact on a transfer of job crafting behaviors from leaders to followers. We propose and empirically test a model in which a leader's proactive personality influences employee job crafting not only through direct role modeling but also by shaping their empowering behaviors based on the proactive tendencies of their followers (Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012; Parker & Wang, 2015). This leader-follower interaction perspective advances the literature by moving beyond isolated personality traits to examine how congruence in proactive tendencies between leaders and followers fosters—or hinders—job

crafting, offering new insights into the interpersonal mechanisms driving workplace proactivity (Zhang & Cui, 2022; Zhang, Wang, & Shi, 2012).

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) define job crafting as “the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work” (p. 179). This involves increasing or seeking job resources, augmenting challenging demands, and reducing hindering demands (Petrou et al., 2018). However, our study focuses specifically on approach crafting—seeking resources and seeking challenges—because these dimensions align closely with the proactive nature of leadership. Seeking resources involves obtaining support, feedback, or tools necessary to enhance job performance, while seeking challenges entails pursuing more complex tasks to foster skill development and engagement (Bakker et al., 2016; Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2019). These behaviors reflect an approach strategy that aligns well with proactive leadership, which emphasizes empowerment and continuous improvement. In contrast, reducing demands, often associated with avoidance-oriented coping, may stem from strain management rather than a proactive redesign of work tasks (Bruning & Campion, 2018). Recent studies indicate that leaders who engage in job crafting primarily do so by seeking resources and challenges rather than by minimizing demands, as their role involves creating opportunities and fostering an environment of innovation (Bajaba et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2021; Yen, Tsaur, & Tsai, 2018; Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Zhang & Parker, 2019). Given the study's focus on how proactive leaders influence follower job crafting through role modeling and empowerment, it is more theoretically consistent to concentrate on approach crafting, as it reflects behaviors that enhance rather than restrict job roles (Petrou et al., 2018).

Leaders' Proactive Personality and Followers' Daily Job Crafting

While research has begun to consider leadership traits as precursors to job crafting (Derue et al., 2011), studies specifically focusing on a leader's proactive personality remain limited. Bateman and Crant (1993) posit that individuals with a proactive personality tend to operate with relative independence from external constraints, demonstrate initiative, and actively instigate change. Notably, job crafting—characterized as a proactive behavior (Parker & Bindl, 2016)—might not always resonate with all leaders, as it can potentially disrupt established task allocations and hierarchies. Proactive leaders, however, characterized by their initiative-taking and change-oriented behaviors, may foster a work environment where job crafting is both modeled and encouraged (Wu & Parker, 2017).

Leaders endowed with a proactive personality, often perceive themselves as agents of change and recognize the merits of proactive behaviors in achieving long-term objectives (Fuller & Marler, 2009). Given their inclination towards positive transformation, such leaders are poised to inspire their followers to challenge and enhance existing norms. This is exemplified by Fuller, Marler, Hester, and Otondo (2015), who found that leaders committed to constructive change commend their followers' proactive initiatives. Studies have also shown that leaders with a proactive personality create work climates that support employee proactivity and job redesign, thereby reinforcing the importance of leader traits in understanding job crafting processes (Zhang et al., 2012). Aligned with this perspective, our study aims to explore the relationship between a leader's proactive personality and a follower's job crafting. We propose that proactive leaders can facilitate their followers' daily job crafting endeavors through both role modeling and empowering process.

The Role Modeling Process of Leaders' Proactive Personality and Followers' Daily Job Crafting

A proactive personality signifies an inclination towards environmental adaptation (Crant, Hu & Jiang, 2016). Previous empirical studies show that individuals with a proactive personality are likely to mold their job roles by changing the levels of their job demands and job resources (Bakker et al., 2012). A longitudinal study by Li, Fay, Frese, Harms, and Gao (2014) demonstrates that having a proactive personality is positively related to increases in job challenges (e.g., workload and time pressure) and job resources (e.g., job control and supervisory support). A meta-analytic study also found that proactive personality was moderately correlated with overall job crafting, whereas other individual factors (e.g., age, gender, tenure, education) showed only weak correlations (Rudolph et al., 2017).

Although few empirical studies have directly examined the link between leaders' proactive personalities and their job crafting behaviors, insights from entrepreneurship research may indicate a positive correlation. Becherer and Maurer (1999) surveyed 215 small company presidents and found a significant positive relationship between their proactive personalities and entrepreneurial activities, such as changes in sales, profit fluctuations, and strategic decision-making. These findings inspire the proposal that leaders with proactive tendencies might also engage in job crafting, similar to their team members, as suggested by Berg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton (2010). Therefore, we propose:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): A leader's proactive personality is positively associated with the leader's daily job crafting.

Proactive leaders not only demonstrate job crafting themselves but also facilitate followers' job crafting. Specifically, proactive leaders might sculpt their roles through measures like goal setting, feedback solicitation, technology adoption for efficiency, and active engagement

with followers (Wu & Wang, 2011). Such actions not only demonstrate their endorsement of job crafting but also set a precedent for their subordinates.

The idea that job crafting can be transferred between leaders and followers is grounded in motivational theory of role modeling (Bandura, 1997; Gibson, 2004; Morgenroth et al., 2015), which elucidates how role models impact role aspirants' pursuit of achievements (Morgenroth et al., 2015). According to this theory, role models are defined as 'individuals who influence role aspirants' achievements, motivation, and goals by acting as behavioral models, representations of the possible, and/or inspirations' (p.468). Role modeling involves two primary functions: informing role aspirants on methods of achievement and inspiring them with the possibilities of success (Morgenroth et al., 2015). In terms of informative function, when role models exemplify a relevant job or goal, role aspirants may view these tasks as achievable and can vicariously learn from these exemplars, thereby enhancing their motivation to engage in similar activities. Employees often look to their leaders for guidance, observing their actions and behaviors as cues for what is considered acceptable and desirable within the organization (Gibson, 2004). The trickle-down effect further exemplifies how leader behaviors cascade to influence subordinate actions (Rofcanin et al., 2018; Wo et al., 2015). Recent research suggests that job crafting is not only an individual initiative but can be socially transmitted within workgroups, particularly through leader-follower interactions (Demerouti & Peeters, 2018; Yaffe & Kark, 2011).

This process can be seen as a social learning journey, where employees become aware of their leaders' proactive strategies and initiatives through interactions, meetings, and communications. Furthermore, by observing their leaders, employees identify possible modifications to their roles (Xin et al., 2020). For instance, Peeters et al. (2016) found that employees who observed their coworkers engaging in job crafting were more likely to engage in

similar behaviors themselves. Extending this perspective to leadership, Bakker et al. (2016) demonstrated that leaders who actively engaged in job crafting set a behavioral precedent that their followers emulated. Additionally, documents and feedback from leaders facilitate **replication** and reference to these proactive behaviors. Therefore, by demonstrating job crafting in their own actions, leaders with proactive personalities act as role models who educate employees on effective job crafting techniques. By engaging in job crafting themselves, these leaders illustrate practical steps and strategies for customizing roles, thus providing employees with a tangible model to emulate. This role of 'showing' aligns with the informative function of role modeling, where leaders' actions guide employees on practical methods of job crafting (Li et al., 2020). Consequently, we propose:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): A leader's proactive personality indirectly promotes a follower's daily job crafting, mediated by the leader's own daily job crafting.

The Empowering Process of Leaders' Proactive Personality and Followers' Daily Job Crafting

The motivational role modeling theory asserts that the similarity between role models and role aspirants is crucial in determining the effectiveness of role models as exemplars of achievable possibilities (Morgenroth et al., 2015). Individuals tend to consciously assimilate attributes from those they perceive as similar to themselves, thereby enhancing this perceived similarity through imitation. In alignment with this perspective, employees are more likely to emulate the job crafting behaviors of leaders with whom they share personality traits or work-related characteristics. This perceived similarity with leaders encourages employees to see themselves as capable of replicating their leaders' actions.

Expanding on the theory, it posits that similarity plays a pivotal role not just in the initial imitation of behaviors but also in the sustained influence that role models have over their aspirants. The more employees see their leaders as similar to themselves—especially in proactive personality traits—the more effectively these leaders can serve as role models. This similarity fosters a deeper connection and understanding, making the leaders' actions more relevant and attainable to the followers.

Previous research supports the notion that individuals with similar personal attributes often gravitate towards each other, as aligned dispositional characteristics can enhance the likelihood of mutual appreciation and understanding (Reis, 2007). Driven by this mutual connection, proactive leaders are well-positioned to offer tailored support to proactive followers, addressing their specific needs and circumstances. In doing so, proactive leaders can delegate significant responsibilities to these followers, bolster their confidence in their ability to effect change, and encourage innovation in their roles (Zhang & Bartol, 2010). This tailored approach echoes the state of role-based followership, suggesting that proactive followers can themselves foster leadership behaviors, such as providing empowerment and resources (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014).

Additionally, research indicates that congruence between leader and follower personalities often results in favorable work outcomes (Schaubroeck & Lam, 2002; Zhang et al., 2012). Within teams, demographic and cognitive homogeneity often correlates with enhanced team efficacy (Kang, Yang, & Rowley, 2006). This congruence, or leader-follower fit, is also underpinned by a cognitive framework (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Atwater and Dionne (2007) suggest that demographic alignment can seed initial leader-follower compatibility, which may evolve into a profound fit based on shared values, attitudes, and personalities. This mature fit

typically fosters individualized leadership characterized by empowerment and developmental support. Reinforcing this, Byza et al. (2019) demonstrate that congruence in traits, such as openness to change—a hallmark of a proactive personality—significantly boosts followers' sense of psychological empowerment. In scenarios where both leaders and followers exhibit strong proactive personalities, this shared trait enhances the followers' inclination to emulate the leaders' job crafting. It also compels the leaders to intensify their empowering leadership, granting followers greater autonomy in their job crafting endeavors. Thus, we put forth:

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Followers' proactive personality moderates the relationship between leaders' proactive personality and daily empowering behaviors, such that the relationship is stronger for followers with higher proactive personality than those with a lower level.

Mediating Role of Leader's Empowering Behaviors

In the realm of leadership dynamics, the inspirational function of role modeling theory offers a compelling explanation of how leaders with proactive personalities influence employee behavior and enhance job crafting through empowering behaviors (Morgenroth et al., 2015). Leaders who embody proactive personality often serve as inspirational role models, actively engaging in behaviors that distribute power among their followers. This includes granting increased responsibilities and augmenting decision-making autonomy, which are critical aspects of empowering leadership behaviors (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005; Zhang & Bartol, 2010).

Empirical studies have demonstrated that when leaders provide followers with enhanced autonomy and greater decision latitude, they instill a sense of capability and influence, which is pivotal for fostering an empowered workforce (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Crant & Bateman, 2000). Moreover, by cultivating trust through relational-oriented behaviors—such as showing respect and expressing genuine concern for employees' well-being—these empowering actions

create an environment ripe for motivation. In such settings, employees are more likely to feel inspired to take control of their roles and engage in job crafting activities (Kim & Beehr, 2019).

As noted, job crafting is an activity that can be socially transmitted, the role of leaders' empowering behaviors is crucial in inspiring employees to effectively tailor their jobs. Current literature reveals that empowering leadership behaviors inspire employees to seek necessary resources and challenges, significantly boosting their engagement at work and facilitating job crafting both at individual and team levels (Chen, 2024; Rizkawati & Andrias, 2022; Xin et al., 2020).

Recent research underscores that employees who experience such empowering behaviors from their leaders not only feel more valued and competent but are also more likely to engage proactively in their work, leading to enhanced job performance (Hu et al., 2022). These behaviors not only enhance employees' beliefs in their capabilities but also lay the foundational groundwork for engaging in job crafting activities. As employees take proactive steps to reshape their roles, they can achieve higher levels of performance and satisfaction (Jiang et al., 2021).

In summary, through empowering leadership behaviors, leaders with proactive personalities also serve as role models who inspire employees, reinforcing that job crafting is not only advantageous but also achievable. Empowering behaviors, which include granting greater autonomy and providing support and resources, encourage employees to assume more responsibilities (Jiang et al., 2021; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). This role of 'facilitating' aligns with the inspirational function of role models, where proactive behaviors and empowering leadership inspire employees to actively shape their roles and affect meaningful changes.

Thus, we expect:

Hypothesis 4a (H4a): Leader empowering behaviors mediate the relationship between leaders' proactive personality and followers' job crafting.

Combining H3 and H4a, we propose:

Hypothesis 4b (H4b): The indirect link between a leader's proactive personality and a follower's daily job crafting via leader's daily empowering behaviors is stronger for followers with higher proactive personality than those with a lower level.

For H4b, we propose that the moderating effect of employees' proactive personality is more likely to influence leaders' empowering behaviors than their job crafting. Unlike empowering behaviors, which are directed toward others, job crafting is inherently self-initiated and often occurs without direct follower involvement.

In short, our model delineates the important roles of leaders' job crafting and empowering behaviors as clarified by role modeling theory (Morgenroth et al., 2015), enhancing our understanding of job crafting among employees, particularly those with varying proactive personalities. This contribution is crucial in advancing scholarly comprehension of the mechanisms that underpin job crafting in organizational contexts.

Method

Participants and Procedures

We collected data through the alumni network of a large university in central China using a daily diary survey design to measure job crafting and empowering behaviors. This method minimizes recall bias and enhances accuracy by capturing events closer to when they occur (Breevaart et al., 2016). The first author invited 123 participants via WeChat (a widely used communication tool in China), explaining the study's purpose and procedures. Participants were instructed to invite their line manager or a subordinate, ensuring each dyad comprised unique

leader-follower pairs from different companies. To maintain anonymity, participants were labeled as either “leader#” or “follower#” in our records. All participants interacted in-person daily, with no remote work involved, and signed informed consent forms.

Before beginning the 10-day daily survey, leaders and followers completed an initial questionnaire assessing demographics, proactive personality, and control variables. Daily surveys, sent separately at 5 PM, measured job crafting (self-reported by leaders and followers) and leader empowering behaviors (reported by followers). Participants had to return surveys by 9 PM, with reminders sent at 8 PM. Those completing all surveys received a USD 15 incentive.

A total of 105 dyads initially enrolled, but 9 withdrew, resulting in 96 complete leader-follower dyads—each from a different company—with a final response rate of 89%. The sample included 48 (50%) leaders and 47 (49%) followers who were male, and 75% of leaders and 68% of followers held a bachelor's degree or higher. The average leader-follower relationship tenure was 2.73 years ($SD = 1.08$). Participants represented diverse industries, including education, IT, finance, medical services, real estate, and consulting, and held various roles (e.g., HR manager, consultant, engineer, programmer). The average daily leader-follower communication time was 33.90 minutes, indicating substantial daily interaction. Our final sample comprised 960 daily observations across all participants.

Measures

For the scale of leader empowering behaviors developed by Schilpzand et al. (2018), we used Brislin's (1986) technique (i.e., the translation–back translation procedures). For the other scales (i.e., proactive personality, job crafting), there are Chinese versions available (Xu et al., 2019). As we did not want participants to spend much time filling in the questionnaires, we kept the questionnaire as short as possible. It is also a common practice to use limited items in diary

research because the participants are asked to rate the same scale repeatedly (Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen, & Zapf, 2010).

Proactive personality. Leaders and followers self-reported their proactive personality using a six-item short version of the Proactive Personality Scale (Claes et al., 2005). A sample item is: "I am always looking for better ways to do things". Responses were recorded on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). The Cronbach's alphas were 0.66 for leaders and 0.74 for followers.

Daily job crafting. Following the work by Petrou et al. (2012), we used truthfulness scale rather than frequency scale to assess daily job crafting. This approach aimed, on one hand, to reduce the likelihood of range restriction for crafting activities that are relatively infrequent yet impactful on a daily basis, and on the other hand, to lessen the pressure on respondents to justify specific behaviors. The measure includes two key dimensions: seeking resources (4 items; e.g., "Today, I have asked my supervisor for advice"); seeking challenges (3 items; e.g., "Today, I have asked for more responsibilities"). Responses were recorded on a 5-point scale (1 = not true at all, 5 = totally true). The average Cronbach's alphas were 0.87 for leaders and followers.

Leader's daily empowering behaviors. Followers rated their leader's empowering behaviors using three items adapted from Schilpzand et al. (2018). The example item was "Today, my supervisor has requested my opinion on work-related decisions that may affect me." Prior research confirms that this abbreviated scale strongly correlates with the full empowering leadership measure (Schilpzand et al., 2018). Responses were recorded on a 5-point scale (1 = not true at all, 5 = totally true), with an average Cronbach's alpha of 0.90.

Control variables. We included controls such as *relational demographics*, *relationship tenure*, and *leader-member exchange (LMX)*. Previous studies focusing on the dyadic level of

analysis showed the influence of relational demographics (e.g., Tsui & Charles, 1989). Because we have dyadic data of leaders and followers, we included *gender similarity* as a control variable. Following previous studies (e.g., Zhang et al., 2012), we created a dummy variable (0 = same gender, 1 = different gender). We also controlled for relationship tenure (i.e., leaders reported how long they had worked with the follower in years). Leader-follower personality fit may also result in high levels of LMX (Zhang et al., 2012), which may be related to follower job crafting (Radstaak & Hennes, 2017). LMX was reported by followers responding to seven items developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). A sample item is “This leader and I have an extremely effective working relationship”. Responses ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 6 (“strongly agree”). Cronbach’s alpha was 0.87.

Analyses

The proposed model consists of a 2-1-1 multilevel mediation model, where the independent variable X is measured at level 2 and the mediator variable M and the dependent variable Y are both measured at level 1 (Petrou et al., 2012; Zhang, Zyphur, & Preacher, 2009). We confirm sufficient variance across both levels to justify multilevel modeling (level 1 variance: leader’s job crafting, 38%; leader’s empowering behaviors, 46%; follower’s job crafting, 45%; level 2 variance: leader’s job crafting, 62%; leader’s empowering behaviors, 54%; follower’s job crafting, 55%).

We used Mplus 8.4 software for all of the analyses (Muthén and Muthén, 1998–2015). We followed Preacher (2011) for the appropriate Mplus syntax for MSEM (multi-level structural equation modeling) to analyze the hypothesized model (Example F: 2-1-1 MSEM model with random slopes). We set Mplus to use Bayesian estimation with a Gibbs sampling algorithm (specifically, the Random-Walk Metropolis algorithm, as indicated by “RW”).

Results

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the study variables. To confirm the distinctiveness of the variables involved in the current research, we conducted multilevel confirmative factor analysis (MCFA). This analysis incorporated three items (indicators) for daily empowering leadership, two dimensions (indicators) each for leader's and follower's job crafting, and six items (indicators) each for general measures of leader's and follower's proactive personality. In terms of the goodness of fit, the results reveal that the measurement model demonstrates acceptable fit ($\chi^2 [153] = 257.46, p = .00, RMSEA = 0.03, CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.89, SRMR_{within} = 0.05, SRMR_{between} = 0.08$). We evaluated the proposed measurement model against five alternative models, with the results detailed in Table 2. This comparison indicates that the proposed model outperforms the alternatives.

Insert Tables 1 &2 about here

Testing Hypotheses 1-2

The results for the indirect effects are presented in Table 3 (Models 1a, 1b, and 1c), which includes unstandardized estimates (B) and standard errors (SE). At the between-person level, the leader's proactive personality is positively associated with their daily job crafting ($B = 0.18, SE = 0.09, p = .04$) but not with their daily empowering behaviors ($B = 0.09, SE = 0.10, p = .36$). Both the leader's daily job crafting ($B = 0.30, SE = 0.08, p < .01$) and daily empowering behaviors ($B = 0.53, SE = 0.09, p < .01$) positively influence the follower's daily job crafting. These results support Hypothesis 1. Additionally, the indirect effect of the leader's proactive personality through their daily job crafting on the follower's daily job crafting is significant (estimate = 0.08; 95% CI [0.005, 0.174]), indicating that proactive leaders positively impact their followers' job crafting through role modeling. This also supports Hypothesis 2.

Insert Table 3 about here

Testing Hypotheses 3 and 4

To test the hypothesized moderation and moderated indirect effects (Hypotheses 3 and 4), we estimate Model 2, which includes follower's proactive personality as a moderator. Table 3 shows the results of Model 2. The interaction of leader's proactive personality and follower's proactive personality is significant for leader's daily empowering behaviors ($B = 0.28$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = .01$). We plot this interaction at conditional values (± 1 standard deviations of the mean) of follower's proactive personality. As shown in Figure 2, leader's proactive personality is positively related to leader's daily empowering behaviors when followers are high in proactive personality (simple slope = 0.23 , $SE = 0.11$, $p = .03$) but not significant when followers are low in proactive personality (simple slope = -0.14 , $SE = .12$, $p = .22$). The difference of the two simple slopes is also significant (difference = 0.37 , $SE = 0.15$, $p = .01$). These results support Hypothesis 3. Further, indirect effect of leader's proactive personality on follower's daily job crafting via leader's daily empowering behaviors is significant at high levels of follower's proactive personality (estimate = 0.20 ; 95% confidence interval [0.015 , 0.394]) but not significant at low levels of follower's proactive personality (estimate = -0.12 ; 95% confidence interval [-0.333 , 0.078]). These findings support Hypothesis 4, suggesting that a leader's proactive personality stimulates follower daily job crafting by empowering followers with high proactive personality levels only.

Insert Figures 2 about here

Supplementary Analyses

To assess the robustness of our findings, we conducted polynomial regressions to explore potential congruence effects of leaders' and followers' proactive personalities. The results indicated that leader empowering behaviors were more pronounced when both leader and follower exhibited high levels of proactive personality, compared to three other scenarios: both leader and follower at low levels, leader high/follower low, and leader low/follower high. For more details, please refer to the supplementary file.

Discussion

This study examines how leaders' proactive personality influences followers' daily job crafting, using a multilevel dual-process model with daily diary data from leader-follower dyads. Findings reveal that proactive leaders frequently engage in job crafting, modeling this behavior for followers. Additionally, leaders tend to empower proactive followers more, while employees with lower proactivity receive less empowerment. Supplementary polynomial regressions support this, showing that leader empowerment strengthens when followers' proactive traits closely align with theirs.

Theoretical Implications

Our study extends the existing literature by offering several contributions. First, prior research on proactive personality and leadership has primarily examined how proactive leaders influence organizational outcomes at a broad, strategic level (e.g., Fuller & Marler, 2009; Wu & Parker, 2017). However, far less attention has been given to how leaders' proactivity translates into employees' daily work behaviors—particularly job crafting. Based on role modeling theory (Morgenroth et al., 2015), our study demonstrates that leaders' proactive personality influences follower job crafting through two distinct mechanisms: (1) by directly modeling job crafting behaviors and (2) by empowering employees to engage in job crafting. This dual-process model

refines prior theories by differentiating between behavioral demonstration and psychological empowerment, highlighting that proactive leaders not only show the way but also facilitate employee autonomy in crafting their roles.

Second, regarding the concern that proactive leaders may simultaneously inspire job crafting while also monopolizing crafting opportunities, our findings suggest that proactive leaders' job crafting does not appear to restrict employees' crafting opportunities. This may be because leaders and employees operate in different spheres of work, minimizing task overlap. Leaders primarily engage in strategic crafting (e.g., setting goals), while employees engage in execution crafting (e.g., refining methods). Jiang et al. (2023) highlight this distinction, noting that in Chinese organizations, leaders have goal autonomy while employees have execution autonomy. If leaders overstep and dictate execution strategies, it may hinder employees' ability to craft their roles, counteracting the intended benefits of role modeling.

Third, we advance the literature on leader-follower congruence in proactive personality by demonstrating that the impact of a leader's proactive personality on job crafting is contingent on the follower's own proactive tendencies. While prior studies have acknowledged that proactive personality is a key predictor of employee job crafting (Rudolph et al., 2017), they have largely overlooked the interactive effects of leader and follower proactivity. Our findings reveal that when both leader and follower exhibit high proactive personality, leader empowering behaviors are significantly stronger, creating an optimal condition for job crafting transfer. This underscores the importance of leader-follower personality fit, extending theories of leader-member exchange (LMX) differentiation by specifically linking personality congruence to job crafting outcomes (Atwater & Dionne, 2007; Zhang et al., 2012).

Fourth, by adopting a multilevel, daily diary approach, this study provides fine-grained insights into the moment-to-moment dynamics of job crafting transfer. While most leadership research on proactivity has been cross-sectional or longitudinal at the macro level, our findings reveal how leader behaviors fluctuate on a daily basis, shaping employees' proactive work behaviors in real time. This methodological contribution aligns with the call for more temporal and within-person investigations in the proactivity literature (Breevaart et al., 2016), offering a more nuanced perspective on how leadership fosters job crafting at the micro level.

Practical Implications

Our study also offers several practical implications. First, our findings highlight the critical role of proactive leaders in fostering job crafting behaviors. As organizations face rapid change and increasing complexity, job crafting serves as an essential strategy for employees to adapt, remain engaged, and enhance job fit (Petrou et al., 2018). Leaders should be encouraged to model job crafting behaviors themselves, providing employees with visible examples of how to seek resources and challenges effectively.

Second, our findings underscore the importance of empowering leadership in supporting job crafting. Beyond serving as role models, leaders need to actively empower employees by granting them autonomy, providing developmental feedback, and encouraging them to take initiative. Organizations should focus on leadership development programs that teach managers how to balance control with empowerment, ensuring that job crafting is facilitated rather than restricted. Additionally, structured coaching and mentoring programs could be implemented to help leaders tailor their empowering strategies to different employee needs, particularly recognizing that proactive followers may require different levels of guidance compared to less proactive ones.

Third, our findings suggest that leader-follower proactive personality congruence plays a significant role in job crafting transfer and empowerment. Specifically, proactive leaders are more likely to empower followers who share similar proactive tendencies, leading to higher engagement in job crafting. Training programs should teach leaders to ensure that all employees—regardless of their initial proactivity—receive support to shape their roles. By addressing both high- and low-proactivity employees, organizations can maximize the benefits of job crafting across the entire workforce.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite its contributions, our study has some limitations. First, our data came from 96 leader-follower dyads over 10 working days, which, while rich in detail, limits generalizability. A larger sample would strengthen our findings. Additionally, our use of snowball sampling may have introduced bias, as participants likely had pre-existing positive relationships. Research on leader-member exchange (LMX) shows that high-quality relationships lead to greater trust and empowerment (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Teng et al., 2020). Although we controlled for LMX, future studies should use random sampling to reduce potential bias.

Second, our proactive personality scale had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.66 for leaders and 0.74 for followers, which is acceptable but not ideal. Future studies should refine measurement instruments to improve reliability. Additionally, we relied on self-reported measures for leaders' proactive personality and job crafting behaviors, which may introduce common method bias. Future research should integrate peer and subordinate ratings to enhance data robustness.

Third, although our study does not focus on reducing demands as a form of job crafting, its potential role in balancing performance and well-being warrants consideration. Avoidance crafting, which involves minimizing job demands to manage workload and prevent burnout, may

function as a “release-valve” that allows employees to conserve resources for future approach crafting (Demerouti & Peeters, 2018). Given that seeking resources and challenges can be cognitively and emotionally demanding, employees may intermittently engage in demand reduction as a strategic means to sustain their proactive efforts over time. This perspective aligns with the conservation of resources (COR) theory, which suggests that employees strategically regulate their resource expenditure to prevent depletion (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Leaders who emphasize approach crafting may unintentionally create high-expectation environments that increase workload and stress, making avoidance crafting an adaptive strategy for maintaining long-term engagement (Van Wingerden et al., 2017). Thus, while our findings highlight the role of leaders in fostering approach crafting, future research should explore whether occasional avoidance crafting helps employees sustain their proactive efforts and balance performance demands with well-being.

Lastly, we examined leader-follower dyads, but future research could extend this to team-level dynamics. How does a proactive leader influence job crafting at the team level? Can a leader’s proactivity create a culture of collaborative job crafting? Meta-analyses suggest that empowering leadership fosters team-level proactivity (Seibert et al., 2011), but the role of proactive personality in team crafting remains underexplored. Additionally, while our study focused on top-down modeling, job crafting may also be transmitted peer-to-peer within teams (Xie et al., 2019). Future research should investigate whether team members learn job crafting from colleagues, expanding beyond the leader-follower framework.

Conclusions

The current study underscores the critical role of leaders’ proactive personality in facilitating employee job crafting. Findings reveal that leaders promote job crafting through both

role modeling and empowering behaviors, with particularly strong effects among proactive followers. This dual-process mechanism highlights how leader traits influence follower proactivity, shaping job crafting as a socially transmitted behavior.

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Table 1 Means, standard deviations, and correlations among study variables

Variables	Means	SDs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Person-level										
1. Leader proactive personality	5.10	0.65	—							
2. Follower proactive personality	5.12	0.67	.04	—						
3. Leader-member exchange	4.30	0.68	.05	.47**	—					
4. Gender similarity	0.32	0.47	-.04	-.01	-.05	—				
5. Relationship tenure (in years)	2.73	1.08	.06	-.09	.06	.21*	—			
Day-level										
6. Leader daily empowering behaviors	3.48	0.71	.08*	.25*	.31**	-.04	.03	—		
7. Leader daily job crafting	3.48	0.67	.19**	-.06	.01	-.01	.02	.02	—	
8. Follower daily job crafting	3.31	0.68	-.03	.31**	.25**	-.08*	-.04	.23**	.16**	—

Notes.

96 leader-follower dyads, 10 days, and 960 occasions. Following previous studies (Qin, Huang, Johnson, Hu, & Ju, 2018), for correlations among the day-level variables 6-8, we person-mean centered these variables. For correlations between day-level variables 6-8 and personal-level variables 1-5, we did not center nor aggregate the day-level variables 6-8.

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 2 Multilevel confirmatory factor analysis

Models	χ^2	<i>df</i>	$\Delta\chi^2 / \Delta df$	RMSEA	SRMR-	SRMR-	CFI	TLI
					within	between		
Proposed measurement model	257.41***	153		.03	.05	.08	.91	.89
Alternative model 1	493.10***	159	235.69***/6	.05	.10	.10	.71	.65
Alternative model 2	306.13***	157	48.72***/4	.03	.05	.10	.87	.84
Alternative model 3	341.06***	157	83.65***/4	.04	.05	.11	.84	.81
Alternative model 4	304.78***	157	47.37***/4	.03	.05	.10	.87	.84
Alternative model 5	531.84***	164	274.43***/11	.05	.06	.12	.68	.63

Notes.

Model 1: leader job crafting and leader empowering behaviors combined;

Model 2: leader proactive personality and leader job crafting combined;

Model 3: leader proactive personality and leader empowering behaviors combined;

Model 4: employee proactive personality and employee job crafting combined;

Model 5: leader-rating measures and employee-rating measures combined separately.

RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, SRMR = Standardized Root Mean Residual, CFI = Comparative Fit Index, TLI = Tucker–Lewis index.

Table 3 Results of the Multilevel Models for Testing the Effect of Leader Proactive Personality on Follower Daily Job Crafting

Dependent variables	Leader daily job crafting		Leader daily empowering behaviors				Follower daily job crafting	
	Model 1a		Model 1b		Model 2		Model 1c	
	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE	B	SE
Between-person								
Intercept	3.45***	0.38	2.13***	0.36	2.22***	0.38	0.48	0.42
Leader-member exchange	-0.00	0.08	0.30***	0.08	0.27**	0.09	-0.00	0.07
Gender similarity	-0.07	0.12	-0.07	0.12	-0.09	0.12	-0.08	0.09
Relationship tenure (in years)	0.02	0.05	0.02	0.05	0.04	0.05	-0.01	0.04
Leader proactive personality (LPP)	0.18*	0.09	0.07	0.08	0.04	0.08		
Follower proactive personality (FPP)					0.11	0.09	0.19**	0.07
LPP*FPP					0.28*	0.11		
Leader daily job crafting							0.30***	0.08
Leader daily empowering behaviors							0.53***	0.09
R ²	0.09		0.19		0.26		0.56	
Within-person								
Leader daily job crafting							0.15**	0.05
Leader daily empowering behaviors							0.35***	0.05
R ²							0.26	
DIC					4341.800		4344.596	
pD					342.211		345.513	

Note.

N = 96 leader-follower dyads, n = 960 occasions. The reported values are unstandardized estimates (B). * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

DIC = Deviance Information Criteria; pD = Estimated Number of Parameters.

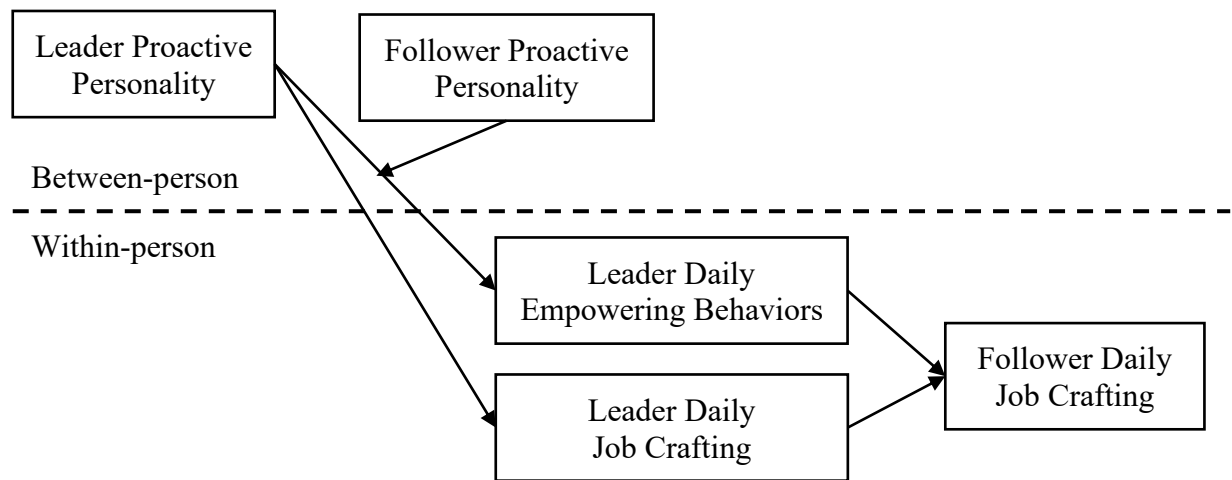


Figure 1 The hypothesized multilevel dual-process model of leaders' proactive personality and followers' daily job crafting

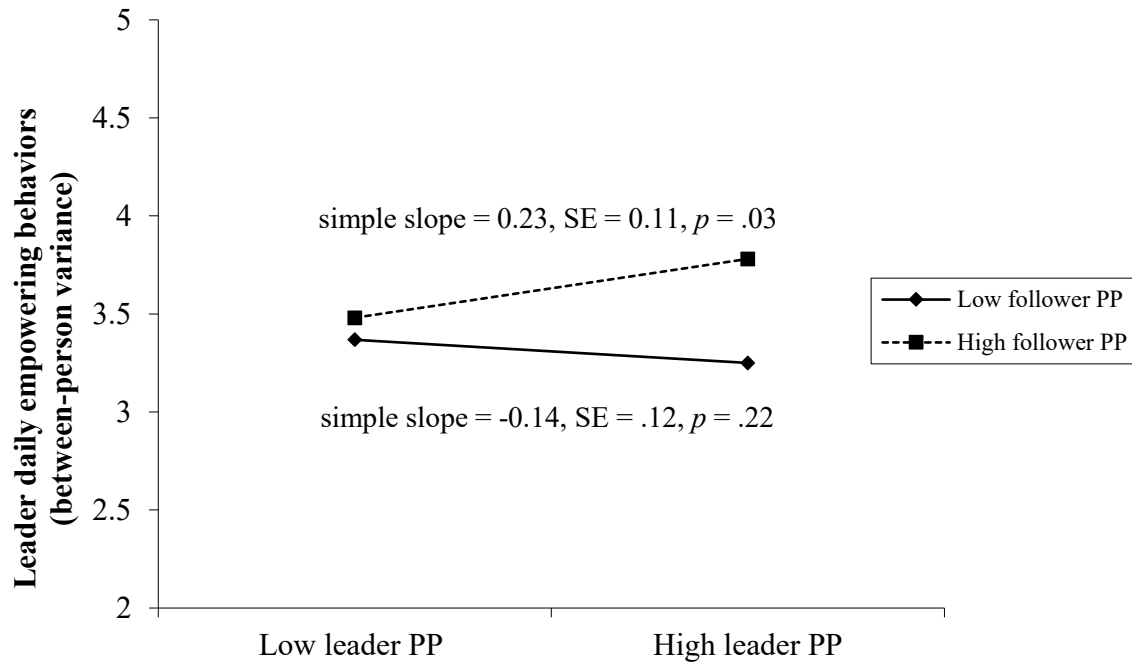


Figure 2 Moderation effect of follower proactive personality on the relationship between leader proactive personality and leader daily empowering behaviors (between-person variance)

Note.

PP = proactive personality