

## Will Job Crafting by New Employees Lead to Positive Outcomes? The Role of Leader-Member Exchange and Individual Traditionality

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### Abstract

Every year, a large number of university graduates enter the workforce. In today's increasingly competitive business environment, how to rapidly transform these university graduates into high-performing corporate employees represents an important research topic. From the theoretical perspective of self-expression, this study examines whether job crafting can promote newcomers' task performance and creativity, and how leader-member exchange and individual traditionality influence newcomers' job crafting. We conducted a four-wave questionnaire survey among 256 newcomers, ultimately obtaining 125 valid matched questionnaires. Data analysis results show: Job crafting positively influences newcomers' work engagement, which in turn affects their task performance and creativity; For newcomers with higher traditionality, leader-member exchange can facilitate their job crafting; Individual traditionality positively moderates the indirect effect of leader-member exchange on task performance and creativity; when individual traditionality is high, the positive influence of leader-member exchange on task performance and creativity through job crafting and work engagement becomes more pronounced. This study provides new insights for organizations to enhance newcomers' task performance and creativity from the perspective of newcomer self-expression.

### Full Text

## Will Newcomer Job Crafting Bring Positive Outcomes? The Role of Leader-Member Exchange and Individual Traditionality

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## Abstract

Every year, a substantial number of college graduates enter the workforce. In today's increasingly competitive business environment, transforming these university graduates into high-performing employees rapidly has become a critical research issue. Drawing on the theoretical perspective of self-expression, this study examines whether job crafting can facilitate newcomers' task performance and creativity, and how leader-member exchange (LMX) and individual traditionality influence newcomer job crafting. We conducted a four-wave survey among 256 newcomers, ultimately obtaining 125 valid matched questionnaires. Data analysis reveals that: (1) job crafting positively influences newcomers' work engagement, which in turn affects their task performance and creativity; (2) for newcomers with high traditionality, LMX can promote their job crafting; and (3) individual traditionality positively moderates the indirect effect of LMX on task performance and creativity, such that when traditionality is high, the positive influence of LMX on task performance and creativity via job crafting and work engagement becomes more pronounced.

This study provides new insights for organizations to enhance newcomers' task performance and creativity from the perspective of newcomer self-expression.

**Keywords:** newcomer socialization; job crafting; task performance; creativity; leader-member exchange; traditionality

**Classification Code:** B849: C93

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## 1. Problem Statement

As the global economy shifts from manufacturing to knowledge and service orientation, the nature of work is undergoing profound changes, with new job positions continuously emerging (Grant & Parker, 2009). Consequently, organizations increasingly need educated knowledge workers to address new challenges, and college graduates represent the "new fuel" for knowledge-based work environments. In China, millions of college graduates enter the workforce annually. According to Ministry of Education data, since 2014, the number of national college graduates has exceeded 7 million each year and continues to rise (Li Xun, 2018). As a new generation of employees, they typically value self-direction, autonomy, innovation, and development (Li Yanping & Hou Xuanfang, 2012).

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In an increasingly competitive business environment, the ability to transform

these fresh graduates into outstanding employees is key to maintaining talent competitiveness and sustainable development.

Most existing research on organizational socialization adopts an organizational control perspective, emphasizing that organizations should employ a series of socialization tactics to enhance newcomers' organizational identification and identity (e.g., Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). However, dynamic organizational environments, increasingly flat organizational structures, and the new generation' s pursuit of individuality and freedom pose challenges to organization-centered socialization practices. Recent years have witnessed emerging theoretical perspectives in organizational socialization research. For instance, Cable, Gino, and Staats (2013) argue that socialization practices should encourage newcomers' self-expression.

This perspective suggests that entering a new organizational environment represents a fresh start and an opportunity for newcomers to express their self-identity ( "Who am I? What can I do?" ). Previous socialization research overemphasized newcomers' need to identify with organizational identity during onboarding, which may create tension stemming from the conflict between self-identity expression and organizational identification. If this tension becomes too intense, newcomers may choose to leave. Therefore, Cable et al. (2013) propose that during early onboarding, organizations should support newcomers in applying their personal strengths and unique perspectives to work, encouraging authentic self-expression to ultimately facilitate organizational socialization. Their empirical research demonstrates that during early onboarding, management practices emphasizing self-expression are more effective in enhancing work engagement and reducing turnover than those emphasizing organizational identification. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) also suggested in a conceptual article that job crafting—individuals' self-initiated behaviors to change task or relational boundaries—may benefit newcomer socialization. Ashforth, Myers, and Sluss (2012) view job crafting as an important way for newcomers to adapt to organizational environments because "environmental dynamism and complexity make job crafting increasingly common and routine." In modern organizations, successful socialization also requires newcomers to shape their jobs to better serve organizational goals. Indeed, research has found that newcomers adjust their job content during early employment (Ashforth & Saks, 1995; Feldman & Brett, 1983). Additionally, Cheng, Costantini, and Zhou (2019) empirically demonstrated that job crafting can enhance newcomers' perceived insider status. These studies collectively suggest that an employee-centered socialization process is gaining attention—a process that respects individual differences and emphasizes unleashing newcomers' proactivity and creativity.

Building on Cable et al.' s (2013) theoretical perspective and job crafting research, this study aims to explore an employee-centered socialization process to understand and address the practical question of "how to transform newcomers into high-performing and creative employees in modern organizations." For newcomers, new jobs inevitably involve some misfit, and they may personalize

job adjustments to better align with their individual characteristics—that is, job crafting. Job crafting emphasizes employees’ bottom-up adjustment of job content and methods based on their own needs (Hu Ruiling & Tian Xizhou, 2015; Tian Qitao & Guan Haoguang, 2017). In this study, we conceptualize job crafting as a form of newcomer self-expression and examine how LMX and individual traditionality influence newcomer job crafting, and whether newcomer job crafting promotes task performance and creativity. Moreover, empirical research has primarily focused on expansive job crafting—the dimensions of “increasing job resources” and “increasing challenging job demands.” Studies show these dimensions yield positive work outcomes (Demerouti, Bakker, & Gevers, 2015). Compared to other types of job crafting (e.g., reducing job demands), expansive job crafting is more relevant to newcomer socialization. During initial work stages, newcomers often start with basic, simple tasks. Expansive job crafting can help them enrich job content and increase challenges, thereby promoting their development. Therefore, this study focuses on expansive job crafting.

### 1.1 The Influence of Leader-Member Exchange on Job Crafting

Self-expression is influenced by interpersonal relationships (Ward, Ravlin, Klaas, Ployhart, & Buchan, 2016), and leader-member exchange (LMX) represents a crucial interpersonal relationship in the workplace (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In high-quality exchange relationships, leaders and subordinates trust and support each other, exchanging both material and non-material resources (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2012), whereas low-quality LMX is considered an economic exchange based on formal contracts (Sparrowe & Liden, 1997). Interpersonal interaction plays an important role in newcomer adaptation (Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Rubenstein, & Song, 2013). Initial LMX, as a product of early leader-subordinate interactions, likely plays a significant role in newcomer socialization. For example, Scandura and Graen (1984) found that initial LMX moderates the effects of leadership interventions. We propose that LMX influences newcomer job crafting. Under high-quality LMX, employees perceive stronger leader support and higher trust, thus having greater space for self-expression (Scott & Bruce, 1994). Additionally, high-quality LMX enhances psychological safety, making employees more likely to proactively adjust and change their work, such as expanding job resources and demands. Therefore, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 1:** LMX is positively related to newcomer job crafting.

### 1.2 The Moderating Role of Individual Traditionality

The new generation of employees exhibits diverse cultural values. Traditionality is an important variable measuring individual differences in cultural values, reflecting the degree to which individuals endorse traditional values of authority obedience (Farh, Hackett, & Liang, 2007). Research shows that individual traditionality significantly influences employee psychology and behavior (Wang, Lu, & Lu, 2014). Generally, individuals high in traditionality tend to have strong

hierarchical consciousness, respect authority, and focus more on external expectations, complying accordingly (Farh et al., 2007). We propose that traditionality influences employee self-expression in interpersonal interactions with leaders. Employees high in traditionality are more sensitive to superior-subordinate relationships, thus when engaging in self-expression behaviors (like job crafting), they are more likely to consider their exchange relationship with superiors. Conversely, individuals low in traditionality view superior-subordinate relationships as more equal, following a principle of inducement-contribution balance (Farh et al., 2007), demonstrating characteristics such as fearlessness of authority and self-direction. Therefore, low traditionality likely weakens the effect of LMX on job crafting. Thus, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 2:** Individual traditionality positively moderates the relationship between LMX and newcomer job crafting, such that the positive effect of LMX on newcomer job crafting is stronger when traditionality is high and weaker when traditionality is low.

### 1.3 The Indirect Effect of Newcomer Job Crafting on Task Performance and Creativity via Work Engagement

Work engagement describes a positive, fulfilling work state comprising vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). Kahn (1990) proposed that three psychological conditions—meaningfulness, safety, and availability—directly influence work engagement. We argue that job crafting enhances these three psychological states. First, increasing job resources and challenging job demands in job crafting helps enhance psychological meaningfulness. On one hand, increasing job resources (e.g., interpersonal interaction, learning opportunities) helps employees achieve work goals (Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012), and goal attainment helps employees find self-value in work, thereby acquiring psychological meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990). On the other hand, Tims, Derks, and Bakker (2016) found that “increasing job resources” and “increasing challenging job demands” enhance work meaningfulness through improved person-job fit. Second, when crafting their jobs, employees experience a sense of control (Demerouti, Bakker, & Halbesleben, 2015), and high job control leads to psychological safety (Kahn, 1990). Third, Vogt, Hakanen, Brauchli, Jenny, and Bauer (2016) found that job crafting increases psychological resources, and individuals with more psychological resources experience higher psychological availability at work. During socialization, newcomers accumulate additional job resources and demands through job crafting, likely finding work more interesting and attractive, thereby enhancing work engagement.

High work engagement often leads to higher task performance (Peng Jian & Wang Xiao, 2016). Highly engaged newcomers invest substantial energy and resources into work to adapt to their roles more quickly and fulfill role-prescribed task performance. Additionally, high work engagement may enhance creativity (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016). Baas, De Dreu, and Nijstad (2008) argue that creativity is highest when initial motivation stems from interest, enjoyment, and

challenge in the work itself. Therefore, employees who actively engage in work based on high identification with their work tend to be more creative. We propose that work engagement positively influences newcomer creativity. Amabile (1983) posits that individual creativity comprises domain-relevant skills, creativity-relevant skills, and intrinsic work motivation. Although newcomers may lack relevant skills and knowledge, high intrinsic motivation can compensate for these deficiencies to some extent (Amabile, 1983). Thus, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 3:** Newcomer job crafting indirectly influences task performance via work engagement.

**Hypothesis 4:** Newcomer job crafting indirectly influences creativity via work engagement.

Integrating these arguments, we propose that traditionality moderates the indirect effect of LMX on newcomer task performance and creativity. Compared to employees low in traditionality, LMX quality is more likely to influence job crafting among those high in traditionality, subsequently affecting their work engagement and performance (task performance, creativity). Therefore, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 5a:** Individual traditionality positively moderates the indirect effect of LMX on newcomer task performance. Specifically, when traditionality is high, the indirect effect of LMX on newcomer task performance via job crafting and work engagement is stronger; conversely, it is weaker.

**Hypothesis 5b:** Individual traditionality positively moderates the indirect effect of LMX on newcomer creativity. Specifically, when traditionality is high, the indirect effect of LMX on newcomer creativity via job crafting and work engagement is stronger; conversely, it is weaker.

The theoretical model of this study is shown in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

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## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participants

We employed a four-wave survey design to collect data from 256 newcomers (all fresh graduates, including positions such as R&D engineers, technical service, product operations, sales, customer service, finance, administration, human resources management, and copywriting) across three subsidiaries of a large machinery manufacturing enterprise in China, with on-site questionnaire distribution and collection. To avoid common method bias and social desirability effects, we collected data from both newcomers and their mentors. During the first wave (T0), newcomers were in onboarding training and had not yet started actual work; we distributed questionnaires measuring individual traditionality

and demographic variables. After formal onboarding, we conducted surveys every four months. In the second wave (T1, 4 months post-onboarding), employees completed questionnaires on LMX, job crafting, and work engagement. In the third wave (T2, 8 months post-onboarding), employees evaluated job crafting again. In the fourth wave (T3, one year post-onboarding), we distributed questionnaires to both employees and mentors, with employees self-rating work engagement and mentors rating employees' task performance and creativity.

The first wave yielded 231 valid questionnaires (90.23% response rate). The second wave yielded 181 valid questionnaires (78.35% response rate). The third wave yielded 169 valid questionnaires (93.34% response rate). The fourth wave yielded 125 valid questionnaires (73.96% response rate). The final matched sample consisted of 125 participants, of which 58.4% were male, with an average age of 23.29 years, and 98.4% held bachelor' s degrees or higher. Although the overall valid response rate across four waves was 48.83%, statistical analyses revealed no significant differences between the final sample and the first-wave sample in terms of gender, education, traditionality, or other variables.

## 2.2 Measures

All measures used in this study were established scales. English versions were translated using back-translation procedures.

**Leader-Member Exchange (T1, self-report).** We used Graen and Uhl-Bien' s (1995) 7-item LMX scale, including "Generally speaking, I am very clear about whether he/she is satisfied with my performance." A 7-point Likert scale was used (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

**Job Crafting (T1 and T2, self-report).** We used Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, and Hetland' s (2012) expansive job crafting scale. Due to the similarity between two items ("I actively seek advice from my supervisor" and "I actively seek advice from colleagues"), we combined them into "I actively seek advice from my supervisor or colleagues," resulting in an 8-item scale. Increasing resources comprised 5 items (e.g., "I try to learn new things in my work"), and increasing challenges comprised 3 items (e.g., "When I finish my work, I actively ask for additional tasks"). A 5-point Likert scale was used (1 = never, 5 = often).

**Work Engagement (T1 and T3, self-report).** We used Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova' s (2006) 9-item work engagement scale, comprising three dimensions (vigor, dedication, absorption) with three items each, including "At work, I feel full of energy." A 7-point Likert scale was used (1 = never, 7 = always).

**Task Performance (T3, mentor-rated).** We used Griffin, Neal, and Parker' s (2007) 3-item task performance scale, including "He/she completes assigned work tasks." A 7-point Likert scale was used (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

**Creativity (T3, mentor-rated).** We used Madjar, Greenberg, and Chen'

s (2011) 6-item scale measuring radical and incremental innovation. Radical innovation comprised 3 items (e.g., “He/she often has highly innovative ideas”), and incremental innovation comprised 3 items (e.g., “He/she can easily improve old work processes to meet current work needs”). A 7-point Likert scale was used (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

**Individual Traditionality (T0, self-report).** We used the authority obedience dimension from Yang Guoshu, Yu Anbang, and Ye Minghua’s (1989) individual traditionality scale, comprising 6 items (Xie, Schaubroeck, & Lam, 2008), including “Organizational leaders are like patriarchs; we should obey their decisions.” A 7-point Likert scale was used (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

**Control Variables.** First, we controlled for sample source because participants came from three subsidiaries. Second, we controlled for mentor rating type because mentors rated employees in one-to-one (50% of employees), one-to-two (13%), and one-to-many (37%) configurations. Third, we controlled for prior levels of variables (T1 job crafting and work engagement). Finally, to rule out the possibility that high LMX quality might reduce self-expression and job crafting under authoritarian leadership, we controlled for leader authoritarian behavior and its interaction with LMX on job crafting. We used the authoritarian dimension from Farh, Cheng, Chou, and Chu’s (2006) paternalistic leadership scale, comprising 2 items: “He/she demands my complete obedience to his/her leadership” and “When our work tasks cannot be completed, he/she will reprimand us.” A 7-point Likert scale was used (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

### 2.3 Analytical Strategy

First, we conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS 18.0 to test the discriminant validity of core variables. Next, we used SPSS 24.0 to analyze means, standard deviations, correlations, and scale reliabilities. Finally, we performed path analysis using AMOS 18.0 to test the theoretical model.

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## 3. Results

### 3.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Before hypothesis testing, we conducted CFA on six latent variables: individual traditionality, LMX, job crafting, work engagement, task performance, and creativity. Table 1 presents the CFA results. The six-factor model fit the data well,  $\chi^2(215) = 257.76$ , CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.04, and was significantly better than alternative models. Thus, the six variables represent distinct concepts, demonstrating good discriminant validity.

**Table 1. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results (N = 125)**

Model	$\chi^2/df$	$\Delta^2(\Delta df)$	RMSEA
Six-factor model	1.20	—	0.04
Five-factor model	2.11	78.36(5)	0.09
Four-factor model	2.52	453.36(9)	0.11
Three-factor model	2.85	547.41(12)	0.12
Two-factor model	4.11	884.08(14)	0.17
One-factor model	4.44	954.03(15)	0.18

*Note:* Six-factor model = traditionality, LMX, job crafting, work engagement, creativity, task performance; Five-factor model = traditionality, LMX, job crafting, work engagement, creativity+task performance; Four-factor model = traditionality, LMX, job crafting, work engagement+creativity+task performance; Three-factor model = traditionality, LMX, job crafting+work engagement+creativity+task performance; Two-factor model = traditionality, LMX+job crafting+work engagement+creativity+task performance; One-factor model = all items loaded on a single factor.

### 3.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliability coefficients. Results show that LMX (T1) was significantly positively correlated with job crafting (T2),  $r = 0.26$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; job crafting (T2) was significantly positively correlated with work engagement (T3),  $r = 0.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; work engagement (T3) was significantly positively correlated with task performance,  $r = 0.24$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; and work engagement (T3) was significantly positively correlated with creativity,  $r = 0.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ . These results provide preliminary support for our hypotheses.

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations (N = 125)**

Variable	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender	—	—											
2. Education	—		0.57* <sup>±</sup>										
3. Sample source	—		0.22* <sup>-</sup>	—									
				0.18* <sup>-</sup>									

Variable	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
4. Leader authoritarian behavior (T1)	3.78 (0.71)	0.21*	0.27*	0.66)									
5. Individual traditionality (T0)	—	0.36*	0.19*	0.49*	0.87)								
6. LMX (T1)	5.38 (0.86)	0.19*	0.26*	0.50*	0.38*	0.94)							
7. Job crafting (T1)	—	0.19*	0.38*	0.33*	0.42*	0.36*	0.90)						
8. Work engagement (T1)	—	0.24*	0.20*	0.21*	0.36*	0.69*	0.94)						
9. Job crafting (T2)	—	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.96)					
10. Work engagement (T3)	—	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.36*	0.94)				
11. Task performance (T3)	—	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.94)			
12. Creativity (T3)	—	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.24*	0.36*	0.69*	0.94)			

*Notes:* (1)  $p < 0.05$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ . Cronbach's coefficients are in parentheses. (2) T0 = first wave, T1 = second wave, T2 = third wave, T3 = fourth wave. (3) Gender (0 = male, 1 = female); Education (0 = junior college, 1 = bachelor's, 2 = master's or above).

### 3.3 Hypothesis Testing

We used path analysis to test hypotheses. First, the theoretical model demonstrated good fit,  $\chi^2(31) = 43.47$ , CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.02. Second, path analysis results are shown in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]. After controlling for T1 job crafting, the regression coefficient of LMX on job crafting was non-significant ( $\beta = 0.05$ ,  $t = 0.62$ ,  $p = 0.54$ ), failing to support Hypothesis 1. Figure 2 also shows that the interaction between LMX and traditionality positively affected T2 job crafting ( $\beta = 0.18$ ,  $t = 2.36$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ), indicating that traditionality moderates the LMX-job crafting relationship. We plotted the moderation effect and conducted simple slope tests. As shown in Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper], when traditionality was high (one SD above the mean), LMX was positively related to job crafting ( $\beta = 0.25$ ,  $t = 2.30$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ); when traditionality was low (one SD below the mean), the relationship was non-significant ( $\beta = -0.14$ ,  $t = -1.10$ ,  $p = 0.27$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

#### Figure 2. Path Analysis Results

*Notes:* (1)  $p < 0.05$ ,  $p^* < 0.01$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; coefficients are standardized, standard errors in parentheses. (2) T0 = first wave, T1 = second wave, T2 = third wave, T3 = fourth wave. (3) Control variables included leader authoritarian behavior, LMX  $\times$  authoritarian behavior interaction, sample source, and mentor rating type. For simplicity, these are not shown in the figure.

#### Figure 3. Moderating Effect of Traditionality on the LMX-Job Crafting Relationship

*Notes:* T1 = second wave, T2 = third wave.

As shown in Figure 2, after controlling for T1 work engagement, job crafting still significantly influenced work engagement ( $\beta = 0.24$ ,  $t = 2.86$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ), and work engagement significantly positively influenced newcomers' task performance ( $\beta = 0.23$ ,  $t = 3.00$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ) and creativity ( $\beta = 0.34$ ,  $t = 4.20$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). We further tested the indirect effects of job crafting on task performance and creativity. As shown in Table 3, the indirect effect of job crafting on task performance via work engagement was 0.09, with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero (LLCI = 0.02, ULCI = 0.21). The indirect effect on creativity was 0.13, with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero (LLCI = 0.05, ULCI = 0.25). Thus, Hypotheses 3 and 4 were supported.

#### Table 3. Indirect Effects (N = 125)

Path	Indirect Effect	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Job crafting (T2) → Work engagement (T3) → Task performance (T3, supervisor-rated)	0.09	0.02	0.21
Job crafting (T2) → Work engagement (T3) → Creativity (T3, supervisor-rated)	0.13	0.05	0.25

*Notes:* (1) Bootstrap method with 2,000 resamples. (2) T2 = third wave, T3 = fourth wave.

Results for the moderated indirect effects are shown in Table 4. For task performance, when traditionality was high (one SD above the mean), the indirect effect of LMX on task performance via job crafting and work engagement was 0.014 (95% LLCI = 0.001, ULCI = 0.051); when traditionality was low (one SD below the mean), the indirect effect was -0.008 and non-significant (95% LLCI = -0.037, ULCI = 0.002). The difference in indirect effects between high and low traditionality was significant (95% LLCI = 0.004, ULCI = 0.085). For creativity, when traditionality was high, the indirect effect was 0.021 (95% LLCI = 0.002, ULCI = 0.065); when traditionality was low, the indirect effect was -0.012 and non-significant (95% LLCI = -0.052, ULCI = 0.004). The difference between high and low traditionality was significant (95% LLCI = 0.005, ULCI = 0.101). Thus, Hypotheses 5a and 5b were supported.

**Table 4. Moderated Indirect Effects (N = 125)**

Outcome	Traditionality	Indirect Effect	95% CI	
	Level		Lower	Upper
Task performance	High (+1 SD)	0.014	0.001	0.051
Task performance	Low (-1 SD)	-0.008	-0.037	0.002
Creativity	High (+1 SD)	0.021	0.002	0.065
Creativity	Low (-1 SD)	-0.012	-0.052	0.004

*Note:* Bootstrap method with 2,000 resamples.

## 4. Discussion

In the context of newcomer socialization, this study examined the outcomes of newcomer job crafting and explored how LMX and individual traditionality influence job crafting from an interpersonal perspective. Findings reveal that LMX positively influences newcomer job crafting only for newcomers high in traditionality; newcomer job crafting indirectly influences task performance and creativity via work engagement; and traditionality positively moderates the indirect effects of LMX on task performance and creativity. Specifically, when traditionality is high, LMX positively influences newcomers' task performance and creativity through job crafting and work engagement; when traditionality is low, this effect is non-significant. These findings not only supplement and extend newcomer socialization literature but also provide practical implications for managing newcomer socialization.

### 4.1 Theoretical Implications

First, this study enriches organizational socialization research by adopting a newcomer self-expression perspective. Unlike the organization-centered perspective, the self-expression perspective emphasizes an employee-centered socialization process. Based on Cable et al.'s (2013) theoretical view, we found that newcomer self-expression positively influences work engagement and performance. Additionally, this study extends the self-expression perspective by integrating job crafting theory and research, conceptualizing job crafting as a form of newcomer self-expression. Although Cable et al. (2013) proposed that self-expression during socialization would unleash newcomer creativity, empirical evidence was lacking. By considering both task performance and creativity as outcome variables, our results provide empirical support for the self-expression perspective.

Second, from an interpersonal perspective, this study examines the influence of LMX on newcomer job crafting and its boundary conditions. Cable et al. (2013) demonstrated that management practices encouraging self-expression enhance newcomer work engagement. We extend this by investigating how LMX influences newcomer self-expression. Results show that LMX effects on self-expression are moderated by employee characteristics—that is, LMX influences job crafting depending on newcomers' cultural values. Given new generation employees' value profiles and the definition of job crafting, they may view themselves as job owners, with self-expression behaviors (job crafting) depending more on personal preference than leader exchange relationships. Furthermore, traditionality positively moderates the indirect effects of LMX on task performance and creativity, theoretically clarifying the conditions under which LMX influences newcomer performance through job crafting and enriching research on LMX' s influence mechanisms on employee performance.

Third, this study reveals positive work experiences that newcomers encounter in new organizational environments. Existing research often focuses on the negative aspects of socialization for newcomers, such as reducing uncertainty, anxiety, and stress, while neglecting newcomer enthusiasm and creativity. In a context of accelerated labor mobility, a critical challenge for modern organizations is rapidly transforming newcomers into high-performing employees. We argue that socialization researchers should shift focus from negative to positive aspects. Newcomers represent fresh blood for organizations, and their work engagement and creativity are essential for organizational development and innovation. Although scholars have called for more research on newcomer work engagement and creativity (Bauer et al., 2007; Saks & Gruman, 2018), empirical studies remain scarce. This study finds that newcomer job crafting enhances work engagement, which not only improves task performance but also unleashes creativity.

#### 4.2 Practical Implications

Our findings offer practical insights for rapidly developing newcomers into high-performing employees. First, managers should value newcomers' proactive behaviors in adjusting job content during socialization. Since job crafting enhances work engagement and subsequently task performance and creativity, managers can provide supportive organizational environments that encourage job crafting, such as increasing job autonomy and independence (Tims & Bakker, 2010) and fostering a climate that encourages job crafting. Considering new generation employees' value profiles, job crafting may also be an effective approach to managing them (Wei, He, Luo, & Xi, 2018). Second, managers should differentiate strategies when encouraging and guiding newcomer job crafting. For employees high in traditionality, whether they expand job boundaries likely depends on relationship quality with leaders. Thus, when managing such employees, leaders can promote job crafting by building and maintaining high-quality exchange relationships. For employees low in traditionality, their job crafting is less influ-

enced by superior-subordinate exchange relationships. Although LMX quality does not affect job crafting for low traditionality employees, this does not mean they should not develop high-quality LMX, as extensive research demonstrates LMX' s direct relationships with many work variables.

### 4.3 Limitations and Future Directions

This study has several limitations that future research could address. First, the survey design and sample selection could be improved. Newcomer socialization is a dynamic, continuous process. Although scholars have used longitudinal designs, more research capturing dynamic processes is needed (Allen, Eby, Chao, & Bauer, 2017). Dynamic model building, testing, and understanding present challenges (Vancouver, Tamanini, & Yoder, 2010). While we used multi-wave and multi-source data to reduce common method bias, we only repeatedly measured job crafting and work engagement, which cannot fully reflect the dynamic nature of newcomer socialization. Future research could employ longitudinal designs with repeated measurements of all variables to better capture causal relationships and developmental trends. Additionally, our final sample of 125 newcomers is relatively small and drawn from three subsidiaries, limiting external validity. Future research should expand industry scope and collect larger samples to enhance generalizability.

Second, our sample consisted entirely of fresh graduates. Future research could broaden sample types. On one hand, Ashforth (2001) argues that fresh graduates face greater transitions and challenges than job changers, and Bauer' s et al. (2007) meta-analysis confirms that newcomer type influences socialization. On the other hand, Akkermans and Tims (2017) propose that work experience may influence employees' job crafting strategies. Future research could examine different newcomer types to explore differences in job crafting strategies and their effects during socialization.

Third, we adopted an employee-centered socialization perspective. Future research could integrate this with the organization-centered perspective to explore how organizations can achieve an optimal balance between encouraging newcomer self-expression and enhancing organizational identification.

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## 5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates the positive effects of newcomer job crafting on task performance and creativity, and reveals that LMX' s positive effects on job crafting, work engagement, and performance are contingent upon newcomers' traditionality. From the perspective of newcomer self-expression, this research provides new insights and implications for organizational socialization theory and practice.

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