

A Proactive Bottom-Up Approach to Enhancing Organizational Performance: A Dynamic Process Perspective on Job Crafting Postprint

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Date: 2023-10-09T00:00:00+00:00

Abstract

Bottom-up proactive employee initiatives to improve and reshape work can effectively compensate for motivational deficiencies inherent in top-down work design within organizations. Therefore, this study focuses on job crafting to investigate how individual and team job crafting can enhance organizational performance. First, based on action theory, we conduct an in-depth analysis of “job crafting behavior itself” to construct a dynamic process model of job crafting, elaborating in detail on the developmental process of job crafting and the mutual influence processes between individual and team levels. Second, we explore two mechanisms through which employee job crafting influences individual performance at the individual level. Finally, employing a team process perspective, we elucidate the mechanisms through which team job crafting influences team performance. The dynamic process model of job crafting derived from this study can provide theoretical guidance and practical reference for organizations to diffuse and institutionalize job crafting as a generalizable work model.

Full Text

Preamble

ChinaXiv Cooperative Journal: Advances in Psychological Science

2023, Vol. 31, No. 10, 1814-1827

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<https://doi.org/10.3724/SP.J.1042.2023.01814>

Conceptual Framework: Proactive Endeavors to Foster Organizational Performance via a Bottom-Up Approach: Job Crafting from a Dynamic Process Perspective

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Abstract: Employee-initiated bottom-up improvements and job crafting can effectively address the issue of insufficient top-down job design motivation in organizations. Therefore, this study focuses on job crafting and explores how individual and team job crafting can enhance organizational performance. First, based on action theory, we conduct an in-depth analysis of “job crafting behavior itself,” thereby constructing a dynamic process model of job crafting and elaborating on the developmental process of job crafting as well as the mutual influence between individual and team job crafting. Second, we investigate two mechanisms through which employee job crafting affects individual performance at the individual level. Finally, we apply a team process perspective to explain the role of team job crafting in team performance. The job crafting dynamic process model extracted from this study provides theoretical guidance and practical references for organizations to diffuse and solidify job crafting as a promotable work pattern.

Keywords: job crafting, dynamic process, mediating mechanism, organizational performance

1. Problem Statement

Job crafting describes the process through which employees autonomously adjust and redesign their job roles, work relationships, and work environments to achieve a better person-job fit (Tims et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Distinct from traditional job design concepts, this bottom-up, proactive behavior—guided by positive values—achieves an organic integration of individual developmental needs and job characteristics (Tims et al., 2022; Hu & Tian, 2015) and has increasingly become a key strategy for organizations to cope with uncertainty and gain competitive advantage (Petrou et al., 2016; Li & Li, 2020). Theoretical and empirical research demonstrates that employee job crafting not only enhances individual work engagement and meaningfulness (Rudolph et al., 2017; Zhang & Parker, 2019) but also positively promotes team performance (McClelland et al., 2014) and organizational innovation (Demerouti, 2014; Wang et al., 2016). Unlike conventional top-down, centralized management and motivational approaches, job crafting offers a bottom-up opportunity and pathway for improving employee and organizational performance (Hu et al., 2020). How organizations can proactively identify and seize these opportunities while effectively addressing challenges or constraints encountered during the job crafting process represents an urgent practical problem.

Reviewing existing research on job crafting (Rudolph et al., 2017; Tian et al.,

2020; Wang, 2020), we identify three primary limitations. First, the analytical level is relatively singular. Current explorations remain confined to the individual level, lacking a comprehensive understanding of the overall systemic impact of job crafting within organizations. In particular, how job crafting escalates to the organizational level and becomes a promotable work pattern has not been thoroughly examined. Second, the research scope is relatively narrow. Existing studies treat other organizational members as passive observers and recipients of crafting behaviors, limiting their focus to identifying reasons and mechanisms through which job crafting enhances individual work performance and satisfaction (Demerouti, 2014; Wang et al., 2016). However, they overlook the possibility that others may actively intervene, support, exclude, or even resist crafting initiatives, making it difficult to provide a complete explanation of how job crafting improves team and organizational performance. Third, the theoretical perspectives are limited. Previous research has primarily employed individual-level frameworks such as social learning theory, the job demands-resources model, and attribution theory to analyze job crafting effects (Ji, 2022; Tims et al., 2015). As job crafting research gradually extends to the team and organizational levels, there is an urgent need to incorporate additional theoretical perspectives to better explain and analyze job crafting phenomena in organizations.

Building on these limitations, this study focuses on the dynamic process through which job crafting enhances organizational performance, analyzing key pathways and boundary conditions. Organizational performance represents the effective output demonstrated by an organization at different levels to achieve its goals, encompassing not only individual-level behaviors and outcomes related to target tasks but also team-level action processes and performance (Aguinis, 2013; DeNisi & Smith, 2014). Accordingly, this research addresses the following questions: (1) By integrating ontology and action theory, we conceptualize job crafting as action to reveal its dynamic process, depicting both the developmental trajectory of job crafting and the cross-level mutual influence between individual and team job crafting. (2) Based on social distance theory, we uncover the underlying psychological mechanisms and boundary conditions through which employee job crafting influences individual work performance. (3) Grounded in an entity-based team process perspective, we analyze the process mechanisms and boundary conditions through which team job crafting affects team performance. The research aims to establish a theoretical model of job crafting that is acceptable, replicable, promotable, and capable of generating long-term impacts on individual and organizational performance. Simultaneously, it provides practical guidance for organizations to proactively harness the benefits of job crafting and effectively address challenges encountered during the process.

2.1 Basic Research on Job Crafting

In organizational management research, the study and analysis of job crafting primarily follow two theoretical perspectives: the role perspective and the resource perspective. The role perspective originates from the seminal work of Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), who found that employees actively change job content and reshape job roles to achieve identity and meaning. They defined job crafting as the physical or cognitive proactive changes individuals make to break the task or relational boundaries of their jobs, subdividing it into three aspects: (1) task crafting—actively changing the number, scope, and type of work tasks; (2) relational crafting—actively changing the quality and quantity of interpersonal interactions at work; and (3) cognitive crafting—actively altering existing perspectives and ideas about work. The other stream is the resource perspective (Tims & Bakker, 2010), which posits that individuals engage in job crafting to cope with external pressures and challenges and balance their job resources and demands. This perspective suggests job crafting includes four components: (1) increasing structural job resources (e.g., seeking learning opportunities); (2) increasing social job resources (e.g., obtaining supervisor feedback); (3) increasing challenging job demands (e.g., adding task content); and (4) reducing hindering job demands (e.g., reducing mental stress).

In recent years, scholars have further developed the conceptual connotations of job crafting. For example, Lichtenthaler and Fischbach (2019) proposed a classification model dividing job crafting into promotion-focused (actively addressing problems and challenges, proactively improving and enhancing work performance) and prevention-focused (reducing work content, avoiding specific tasks, circumventing conflicts and risks) types based on regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997). Bruning and Campion (2018) integrated role and resource perspectives to divide job crafting into four dimensions: (1) approach role crafting (including job role expansion and social relationship expansion); (2) approach resource crafting (including designing one's own work, adaptation, and metacognition); (3) avoidance role crafting (reducing job roles); and (4) avoidance resource crafting (reducing resource seeking). Zhang and Parker (2019) proposed a three-level theoretical framework where promotion-avoidance motivation theory occupies the highest level, leading to different orientations of job crafting (approach crafting vs. avoidance crafting); the role perspective sits at the second level, determining specific forms of crafting (cognitive crafting vs. behavioral crafting); and the resource perspective resides at the bottom level, indicating different contents of crafting (whether to reshape resources or adjust job demands).

Based on these theoretical perspectives and conceptual definitions, researchers have developed various measurement scales. Representative instruments include: (1) Tims et al.'s (2012) 21-item scale based on the resource perspective, comprising four dimensions—increasing structural job resources, increasing social job resources, increasing challenging job demands, and reducing hindering job demands; (2) Slemp and Vella-Brodrick's (2013) 15-item scale based on Wrzes-

niewski and Dutton's (2001) three-dimensional framework; (3) Weseler and Niessen's (2016) 14-item, five-dimensional scale based on the role perspective, including expanding task crafting, reducing task crafting, expanding relational crafting, reducing relational crafting, and cognitive crafting; and (4) Bruning and Campion's (2018) 30-item, seven-dimensional scale including five approach crafting dimensions and two avoidance crafting dimensions. This study builds upon the approach-avoidance motivation theory and primarily examines two types of job crafting: approach crafting and avoidance crafting, using Bruning and Campion's (2018) scale as the primary measurement tool.

2.2 Empirical Research on Job Crafting

2.2.1 Individual-Level Job Crafting Research

Since Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) formally introduced the concept of job crafting, research in this area has flourished. Beyond explaining conceptual connotations based on different theoretical foundations and developing corresponding measurement tools, researchers have explored numerous antecedents and outcomes of individual job crafting (Rudolph et al., 2017; Zhang & Parker, 2019). Antecedent research encompasses both individual traits and motivations, as well as job characteristics and social context influences. Outcome variable analyses primarily focus on four aspects: individual attitudes, behaviors, psychological resources, and career development (Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2016; Wang et al., 2016).

Among outcome studies, the impact of job crafting on individual performance has received the most attention. Research in this domain has further specified effects on different performance types, such as in-role performance (Alonso et al., 2019), extra-role performance (Geldenhuis et al., 2021), objective performance (Gordon et al., 2018), counterproductive work behavior (Demerouti et al., 2015), and overall performance (Berdicchia & Masino, 2019). Generally, findings indicate that job crafting promotes individual performance. However, research also shows that different types of job crafting exert varying effects on personal performance. From the resource perspective, Bakker et al. (2012) found that seeking resources and challenges positively correlates with work performance, while reducing hindering demands negatively correlates with it. Similarly, Berdicchia and Masino (2019) noted that not all dimensions of job crafting affect individual work performance. Specifically, increasing structural resources and challenging demands positively relate to work performance, reducing job demands negatively relates to work performance, but increasing social resources shows no relationship with work performance. From the role perspective, Geldenhuis et al. (2021) found that task crafting enhances in-role performance by increasing meaningfulness, cognitive crafting improves both in-role and extra-role performance by enhancing meaningfulness, while relational crafting only positively correlates with extra-role performance.

Beyond examining antecedents and consequences, some studies have analyzed the mediating and moderating roles of job crafting. In mediation research, Guan and Frenkel (2018) found that job crafting mediates the relationship between HR practices and both in-role and extra-role performance. Li et al. (2020) indicated that job crafting only mediates the relationship between proactive personality and innovative performance when organizations lack high-involvement work systems. Similarly, Hur et al. (2021) found that when employees perceive high organizational support, their perception of corporate social responsibility promotes work performance through job crafting. In moderation research, Vogel et al. (2016) noted that job crafting weakens the relationship between value incongruence and employee work engagement and performance. Zahoor and Siddiqui (2023) discovered that increasing social and structural resources buffers the negative relationship between customer rudeness and service recovery performance and emotional exhaustion.

Through this review of individual job crafting research, we find that distinguishing different content dimensions and conceptual facets of job crafting is crucial for accurately analyzing its effects. Since different dimensions represent distinct orientations of change and design that employees make to job resources and work environments, they lead to different outcomes. Moreover, compared to discussions of job crafting antecedents and outcomes, analyses of the pathways and boundary conditions through which job crafting influences individual and organizational performance are relatively lacking. Current research rarely examines the composition and development of job crafting behavior itself, and few studies analyze job crafting outcomes from a dynamic process perspective.

2.2.2 Team-Level Job Crafting Research

Compared to the increasingly mature individual-level job crafting research, exploration of team job crafting remains in a developmental stage. Conceptually, Leana et al. (2009) first extended job crafting to the team level based on the role theory framework, proposing collaborative job crafting—where employees cooperatively reorganize and redesign work to achieve team goals. Tims et al. (2013) emphasized that team job crafting does not require every team member to craft the same aspects of their jobs. Instead, it is an implicit process of collective, coordinated effort that jointly determines what and how to craft in a goal-oriented manner to ultimately achieve team objectives (Mäkikangas et al., 2016).

Empirically, scholars have primarily examined the effects of team job crafting on individual-level and team-level variables. Regarding individual-level effects, Uen et al. (2021) found that team job crafting positively relates to individual innovative work behavior, mediated by team psychological capital. Alonso et al. (2019) noted that team job crafting positively correlates with individual job satisfaction. Team job crafting also promotes individual work performance and organizational commitment, particularly when individuals perceive low organizational support (Cheng et al., 2016). Regarding team-level effects, McClelland et al. (2014) found that team job crafting positively enhances team work en-

agement and in-role performance through team control, team interdependence, and team efficacy. Yadav and Dhar (2021) discovered that team job crafting positively affects service recovery performance.

Notably, some scholars have also explored the relationship between team and individual job crafting based on social learning theory. Results show that team job crafting inspires individual job crafting (Tims et al., 2013). Additionally, researchers have examined the mediating and moderating roles of team job crafting. For instance, Tuan (2020) found that team job crafting mediates the relationship between charismatic leadership and team performance. Mäkikangas et al. (2016) found that team increases in structural and social resources strengthen the relationship between work engagement and team performance. Chinese scholar Wang (2020) proposed a comprehensive theoretical model examining antecedents and consequences of team job crafting based on work design theory and team operation models, though no empirical findings have been published yet.

Overall, team job crafting plays a crucial role in employee development and organizational performance (Oldham & Hackman, 2010). However, current research on the effects and mechanisms of team job crafting remains limited. Conceptually, team job crafting is more complex than individual job crafting, requiring more precise definition of its structural dimensions. More critically, future research needs to apply theoretical frameworks appropriate for team-level analysis to accurately verify and explore its differentiated effects, rather than simply replicating individual-level research logic to team job crafting studies.

In summary, both theoretical foundations and empirical testing in the job crafting domain have achieved certain accomplishments, particularly at the individual level. Nevertheless, many issues require deeper exploration. The most prominent problem is that existing research remains fragmented and dispersed, lacking an overarching framework that organically integrates scattered individual- and team-level job crafting studies, thereby preventing a comprehensive understanding of job crafting's overall systemic impact on organizations. Therefore, the core purpose of this study is to construct such a model that reveals the process through which job crafting influences organizations, making job crafting acceptable, replicable, promotable, and capable of generating long-term impacts on individual and organizational performance.

This project comprises two major modules: Module 1 focuses on macro-level qualitative research by establishing a dynamic process model of job crafting to explain how employees and teams execute job crafting activities. Module 2 concentrates on micro-level quantitative research, focusing on the psychological processes and behavioral outcomes of individuals and teams in response to job crafting, primarily exploring individual and team effects and their mechanisms. Specifically, the project includes three sub-studies: Module 1 corresponds to Study 1, while Module 2 corresponds to Studies 2 and 3.

3.1 Study 1: Dynamic Process Model of Job Crafting

Existing research on job crafting typically introduces the concept directly—that is, based on role perspective, resource perspective, or their integration—while rarely analyzing the process of job crafting itself. This lack of understanding of job crafting’s dynamic process makes it difficult to implement targeted interventions or support for employee job crafting in practice. This sub-study focuses on job crafting itself, examining which factors and their combinations affect the completion of job crafting activities to meticulously depict the dynamic changes inherent in job crafting. Additionally, based on this understanding, it reveals the mutual influence process between individual and team job crafting. Compared to existing research, this sub-study has two distinct characteristics: First, it treats job crafting as a process—transforming the “point” of job crafting into a “line” —not by directly introducing the job crafting concept but by analyzing job crafting itself. Second, based on an understanding of the job crafting process, it establishes connections at both individual and team levels to explore their mutual influence, thereby addressing the limitation of existing research that separates individual and team job crafting (Tims et al., 2022).

Ontology and entity theory represent two different process research approaches. Entity theory defines reactions and changes as the movement of “entities” across different stages or states (Tuckman, 1965). Based on an “input-output” process framework (Marks et al., 2001), it posits that “subsequent changes caused by initial reactions can be explained through some repetitive mediating mechanisms.” Ontology advocates viewing things themselves as processes (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007; Davis, 1971), suggesting that things can change in multiple aspects—including structure, behavior, events, and boundaries (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002)—and that these changes themselves constitute a worthwhile research process, as they lead to different outcomes. Job crafting requires not only initiating changes from job and task inputs but also constructing appropriate task structures, work contexts, and process boundaries to accommodate these changes, while aligning with corresponding team member characteristics. Simultaneously, job crafting itself continuously experiences processes of “collaborative identification” or “exclusion and alienation,” even reaching states of “non-team” or “de-teamification.” Given these characteristics, we argue that ontology offers unique advantages for understanding the job crafting process. For instance, when considering structure, behavior, and boundaries related to job crafting, it can break free from the constraints of predetermined theoretical frameworks in entity theory (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007; Davis, 1971), making it suitable for focusing on job crafting itself.

Although ontology provides a perspective for understanding the job crafting process, it does not offer a specific analytical framework. In this regard, action theory and the concept of “flow” built upon it can fill this gap. Action theory is widely applied to discuss human behavior and consciousness processes (Nitsch & Hackfort, 2016), with the advantage of integratively considering people, tasks, and environments, as well as their closest approximation to everyday action real-

ity (Pels & Kleinert, 2022). Action results from the interaction between people and environment, representing the process through which people, tasks, and situations respond to environmental demands. According to action theory, flow is a state in which individuals are completely immersed in activities that require no reflective self-consciousness yet involve deep control (Engeser & Schiepe-Tiska, 2012, p. 1). Based on action theory and the concept of flow, job crafting can be viewed as an action, the process of which forms flow, and flow implies evolution and change. Flow-based action continuously undergoes changes and serves as the context for action change, thereby generating subsequent actions.

As a state, flow is associated with pleasant experiences and performance (Engeser & Schiepe-Tiska, 2012). Because ontology offers a different perspective from entity theory for understanding problems, and action theory and the concept of flow provide frameworks for analyzing specific issues, we conduct this research by integrating ontology and action (flow) theory, proposing the dynamic process model of job crafting shown in Figure 1.

We first focus on job crafting itself (the left side of Figure 1). Job crafting is the process through which individuals take action to complete job crafting tasks. To understand this process, we draw on action theory and the concept of flow (Pels & Kleinert, 2022) to decompose the completion of job crafting tasks into two types of elements: (1) task elements, which refer to job crafting tasks; and (2) functional elements, which refer to behaviors related to task completion (observable activities), psychological states (including cognition, emotion, motivation, and will), and skills (action capabilities). The job crafting process actually manifests as two types of structural matching: first, matching among similar elements (e.g., among behavior, psychological states, and skills); and second, matching between task elements and functional elements. At this point, job crafting action further transforms into examining these two types of structural matching. By definition, job crafting occurrence inevitably causes changes in tasks, situations, boundaries, or behaviors. Based on this premise, we argue that matches exist between one person's behavior, psychological state, skills, and tasks and another person's behavior, psychological state, skills, and tasks. We term this initial matching (see the part marked with number 1 in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper]). Additionally, there is secondary matching, which primarily manifests as the match between job crafting task elements and functional elements—that is, the match between functional elements (behavior, psychological states, and skills) and their combinations with tasks (see the parts marked with numbers 2 and 3 in Figure 1). Beyond this structure, another characteristic of the job crafting process is its dynamic nature. This dynamism includes at least two aspects: (1) the dynamics of initial and secondary matching under given task conditions; and (2) changes experienced under task-changing conditions to complete corresponding tasks and maintain continuous matching. In this dynamic process, structure exists on a continuum between complete matching and complete non-matching. The two types of structural matching are constantly changing, and at any moment they occupy some point on this continuum. Flow occurs when matching exists; without matching, there

is no flow. For job crafting, initial matching forms the basis for secondary matching, and secondary matching emerges from initial matching. Once established through initial matching, secondary matching helps solidify initial matching and, in turn, solidifies itself, further regulating the dynamics of flow. In the job crafting process, without task processing and its matching based on environmental demands, there is no flow. The job crafting process involves the continuous fluctuation of these two types of structural matching, with ongoing adjustment and optimization to maintain structural matching during continuous change.

Based on this process understanding, we further explain the relationship between individual and team job crafting. According to group flow theory (The integrative group flow theory, Pels & Kleinert, 2022), the overall matching relationships between individual members and other team members create emergence at the team level (see the right side of Figure 1). Group structure describes and explains team systems, team tasks, and team environments, as well as how these factors match. Two types of structural matching constitute group structure: first, group initial matching—the matching among team members' tasks, behaviors, psychological states, and skills (marked with number 1 on the right side of Figure 1); and second, group secondary matching—the matching between the team's overall behavior, psychological states, skills, and their combinations with team tasks (marked with numbers 2 and 3 on the right side of Figure 1). Regarding dynamism, team job crafting exhibits similar dynamic change processes at the team level as described above at the individual level. Its dynamic process manifests as continuous fluctuation of the two types of structural matching, with ongoing adjustment and optimization to maintain matching during continuous change, except that this matching occurs at the team level.

How then does individual-level job crafting develop into team-level job crafting? According to Pels and Kleinert (2022), the overall matching relationships among individual members and other team members create emergence at the team level. This team-level matching based on member relationships represents a new characteristic. This characteristic is a team behavior that individual members cannot perform without other team members. In other words, team job crafting originates from individual job crafting but differs from a simple aggregation of individual job crafting; it is an emergence of individual job crafting, resulting from the simultaneous construction of all individual matching relationships. In this process, each team member contributes to team emergence. A small individual event (e.g., a change in an individual team member's behavior) may lead to large team changes (affecting not only overall team behavior but also the completion of team job crafting tasks). In team contexts, the structure and dynamics of individual job crafting processes evolve into team job crafting through the above-mentioned processes of triggering, emergence, and construction.

The above describes the process from individual to team. However, throughout the entire dynamic process, teams and individuals influence each other. This process includes not only individual influence on the team but also team in-

fluence on individuals. Team job crafting' s influence on individuals primarily manifests as solidification, supplementation, and incubation. Here we focus on explaining the solidification process, using emotion as an example of a psychological state mentioned in the text. Suppose team secondary matching is perceived by individual members as a positive experience (e.g., experiencing happiness due to good team progress). This experience will be shared among team members, solidifying and strengthening the maintenance of secondary matching. On one hand, happiness (positive emotion) leads to initial matching tendencies that maintain secondary matching (e.g., identity identification). On the other hand, this shared emotion represents team initial matching (happiness is a shared emotion among team members), which both promotes team secondary matching (e.g., coordinating team actions) and solidifies individual initial matching (e.g., interpersonal relationships) and secondary matching (e.g., actively engaging in behaviors to achieve common goals). This also exemplifies how secondary matching solidifies itself by solidifying initial matching.

In summary, we argue that individual and team job crafting establish a criss-crossing dynamic relationship through both within-level sequential matching processes (from initial to secondary matching at both individual and team levels) and cross-level bottom-up (from individual to team) formation (e.g., emergence) of higher-level initial and secondary matching, as well as top-down (from team to individual) influence (e.g., solidification) on initial and secondary matching. Within a specific time period, the above-mentioned chains of matching relationships can be reversed or interrupted. Taking the number 1 on the left side of Figure 1 as an example, Member 1' s psychological state may influence Member 2' s psychological state or vice versa, or Member 2' s psychological state may influence Member 1' s job crafting (manifesting as interruption, i.e., indirect influence). The relationships reflected by other numbered pathways in Figure 1 are similar to the example above. In other words, through the description of these dynamic process relationships, Figure 1 provides a general framework system within which researchers can always find corresponding points or paths for their topics of interest, and they can also 截取 specific segments for study as needed.

Overall, this sub-study addresses the current academic lack of analysis of job crafting itself, which leads to practical ignorance of factors that hinder and facilitate job crafting. Focusing on job crafting itself and based on ontology, action theory, and flow theory, it attempts to reveal two dynamic processes of job crafting. The first is the process of job crafting itself; the second is the mutual influence process between individual and team job crafting. In revealing the job crafting process itself, we first decompose the completion of job crafting tasks into task and functional elements, then focus on two core concepts—structure and dynamics—consider their matching, and simultaneously establish connections between the two types of matching structures, proposing a dynamic process model based on structural matching. Regarding the mutual relationship between individual and team job crafting, based on the above understanding of the job crafting process, we reveal a bottom-up process from individual to team

involving triggering, emergence, and construction, as well as a top-down process from team to individual involving solidification, supplementation, and incubation.

Finally, we emphasize that the above dynamic process model is currently only a framework. In specific research, we will further optimize and refine the current classification of functional elements (behavior, psychological states, skills) and task elements (e.g., considering whether focusing solely on tasks themselves is appropriate or whether further refinement is needed) based on analysis of multiple cases. We will also summarize factors that facilitate and hinder structural matching and their coping mechanisms to enrich and improve this baseline model. Methodologically, we plan to select teams from multiple industries (e.g., medical teams, online platforms, intelligent manufacturing and design companies). In the first phase, we will use the critical incident technique through interviews and descriptions of typical behaviors to grasp the typical characteristics and element composition of individual and team job crafting within teams. In the second phase, we will employ multiple methods including semi-structured in-depth interviews, secondary company data (actual work records of interviewees and teams), and participant observation to understand the dynamic evolution of individual and team job crafting.

Additionally, although the above model provides in-depth analysis of the action itself by focusing on job crafting action, it does not consider the specific outcomes resulting from this action (e.g., performance). Therefore, the subsequent studies (Studies 2 and 3) will build upon Study 1 by selecting representative topics to explore the impact of job crafting action on performance. Study 2 primarily examines the performance effects of individual job crafting action, which refers to the matching between personal job crafting task elements and psychological state functional elements (e.g., cognitive factors represented by task urgency, responsibility perception, and psychological detachment). Study 3 primarily examines the impact of team job crafting action on team performance, which refers to the matching between team job crafting task elements and team psychological state functional elements (e.g., cognitive factors represented by team reflexivity and transactive memory systems, and emotional factors represented by team conflict). Matching reflects the magnitude of “flow,” which can actually be manifested through the degree of consistency in relationships between variables (similar to whether scores on variables covary). Through these two sub-studies (i.e., exploring variable relationships from a “flow” perspective rather than simple “variable relationship analysis”), we aim to preliminarily test the reasonableness of the framework proposed in Study 1 while extending existing empirical research findings.

3.2 Study 2: The Influence Mechanism of Job Crafting on Individual Work Performance

This study primarily explores how employee job crafting affects their work performance based on social distance theory (conceptual model see Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]). This theory suggests that social distance reflects the closeness and connection between individuals and groups (Lieberman et al., 2007). When employees in an organization change and reshape their current work, this behavior will alter their social distance from the organization. Because individual job crafting affects the degree of social interaction and connection between employees and the organization by reconstructing work content and methods, work relationships, and work environments, it further changes the psychological distance between individuals and the organization. This change in psychological distance leads employees to develop different behavioral cognitions, ultimately affecting their work performance. As previously noted, distinguishing dimensions of job crafting is key to accurately analyzing its impact. Based on this, Studies 2 and 3 in this project both subdivide job crafting into approach and avoidance job crafting (Bruning & Campion, 2018) and propose hypotheses accordingly. Approach job crafting represents positive, problem-solving and improvement-oriented crafting behaviors, primarily manifested as continuously seeking resources and challenging job demands. Avoidance job crafting represents avoidance-oriented crafting behaviors, manifested as reducing hindering and social job demands, decreasing work tasks, and systematically withdrawing from work.

3.2.1 The Relationship Between Individual Approach Job Crafting, Employee Responsibility Perception, and Work Performance

Approach job crafting (e.g., expanding job responsibilities or social relationships) can reduce the social distance between employees and the organization, stimulating employees' responsibility perception. Responsibility perception reflects employees' beliefs in voluntarily implementing behaviors beneficial to the organization, encompassing concern for organizational interests and helping the organization achieve its goals (Eisenberger et al., 2001). When employees engage in approach job crafting, they not only achieve higher work engagement and better job fit through communication and feedback with supervisors and colleagues (Wang et al., 2016) but also increase their own job satisfaction and well-being (Rudolph et al., 2017) and bring more resources and opportunities to the team and organization (Bipp & Demerouti, 2015), thereby enhancing the degree of social interaction between individuals and the organization. Under this close psychological distance, individuals' organizational identification and insider identity perception are strengthened, further stimulating employees' helping intentions and responsibility perception (Van Knippenberg, 2000). Employees' responsibility perception then promotes improved work performance. Driven by high organizational responsibility perception, employees not only strive to complete in-role work tasks but also set higher work goals and contribute more

extra-role proactive behaviors, thereby helping the organization overcome development obstacles and improve operational efficiency. Therefore, this study proposes:

H1a: Employees' approach job crafting positively influences individual work performance through their responsibility perception.

3.2.2 The Relationship Between Individual Avoidance Job Crafting, Employee Psychological Detachment, and Work Performance

In contrast, individual avoidance job crafting (e.g., reducing job responsibilities or social relationships) increases the social distance between employees and the organization, leading to employee psychological detachment. Psychological detachment describes a state where individuals are physically and psychologically distant from work, no longer allocating and consuming resources to meet work demands (Sonnentag, 2012). Since avoidance job crafting aims to reduce task demands and social interaction at work (Nielsen & Abildgaard, 2012), this behavior not only decreases individual work engagement but also triggers work withdrawal and increased turnover intentions (Rudolph et al., 2017). Simultaneously, this behavior tends to create higher interpersonal conflict within organizations (Tims et al., 2015). Under these circumstances, the social distance between employees and the organization continuously increases, leading to reduced organizational commitment and gradual psychological detachment from existing work requirements and content. This psychological detachment further reduces individual work performance. On one hand, high psychological detachment indicates decreased focus on current work, making it difficult to devote full attention to work tasks and easily leading to reduced work quality (Fritz et al., 2010). On the other hand, high psychological detachment creates stronger boundaries between work and non-work roles (Ashforth et al., 2000), requiring employees longer time and more resources to return to normal work patterns. Given a fixed total amount of resources, resources available for task consideration and completion are reduced. Therefore, this study proposes:

H1b: Employees' avoidance job crafting negatively influences individual work performance through their psychological detachment.

3.2.3 The Moderating Role of Task Urgency

Task urgency refers to individuals' subjective cognition that the time available may be insufficient to complete tasks (Szollos, 2009). This cognition not only represents high time pressure to complete tasks but also affects individuals' information processing and cognitive evaluation (Lallement, 2010). Specifically, under low task urgency, individuals possess more cognitive resources and higher levels of construal, leading to increased information exploration and deep processing. Under high task time pressure, individuals exhibit lower construal levels and tend to adopt simple information processing strategies (Liberman & Trope, 1998). Therefore, as task time pressure increases, employees' construal levels

decrease. Lower construal levels cause individuals to narrow their psychological scope, focusing more on immediate, concrete needs rather than longer-term goals (Liberman et al., 2007). However, individual responsibility perception is not only abstract but also transcends personal interests, focusing more on the organization's long-term development (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Weng & Xi, 2011). Under these circumstances, the positive effect of individual approach job crafting on responsibility perception will weaken. This study infers that the negative moderating effect of task urgency will be further transmitted through employees' responsibility perception, ultimately reducing individual work performance. Therefore, this study proposes:

H2a: Task urgency moderates the positive relationship between employees' approach job crafting and responsibility perception, and consequently moderates the positive indirect effect of approach job crafting on individual work performance through responsibility perception. When task urgency is high, the above relationship and effect are weaker.

Similarly, as task urgency increases, individuals' lower construal levels strengthen the positive relationship between avoidance job crafting and psychological detachment. Under these circumstances, employees' perspectives become more short-term, focusing on satisfying their own immediate needs rather than considering long-term development issues, and the degree of psychological detachment caused by avoidance job crafting will continuously increase. Simultaneously, increased employee psychological detachment further reduces individual work performance. Therefore, we propose:

H2b: Task urgency moderates the positive relationship between employees' avoidance job crafting and psychological detachment, and consequently moderates the negative indirect effect of avoidance job crafting on individual work performance through psychological detachment. When task urgency is high, the above relationship and effect are stronger.

3.3 Study 3: The Influence Mechanism of Team Job Crafting on Team Performance

This study primarily explores the effects of team approach and avoidance job crafting on team performance from a team process perspective (conceptual model see Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper]).

3.3.1 Team Approach Job Crafting, Team Reflexivity, and Team Performance

Team reflexivity refers to team members' public reflection on team goals, strategies, and processes, making corresponding changes to adapt the team to current or future environments (Konradt et al., 2016). As a team transition process, team reflexivity occurs before performance episodes, focusing on evaluation and

planning activities (Marks et al., 2001). Research indicates that feedback information, as key information for behavioral norms and performance improvement, is an important proximal factor triggering team reflexivity (Konradt et al., 2016). Team approach job crafting, as a goal-oriented team proactive behavior, provides important feedback information for team development, including quality resources and challenging job demands (Tims et al., 2013). Under these circumstances, teams adjust team goals based on achieved accomplishments and carefully consider resource planning and specific action plans for addressing challenges. Strengthened team thinking and focus on working more effectively can lead to higher performance. First, team reflexivity provides direction for team performance improvement, offering a more systematic and comprehensive understanding of past problems (Schipper et al., 2007), which helps teams consider how to work more effectively. Second, team reflexivity focuses not only on past achievements but also prepares for future team actions (LePine et al., 2008). This proactive advancement of team goals promotes the translation of reflective content into actual team actions, providing action support for team performance improvement (De Jong & Elfring, 2010). Therefore, this study proposes:

H3a: Team approach job crafting positively influences team performance through increased team reflexivity.

3.3.2 Team Avoidance Job Crafting, Team Relationship Conflict, and Team Performance

Team relationship conflict refers to the tension, anger, hostility, or other negative emotions that arise when team members perceive inconsistencies or incompatibilities among each other (Tyler & Blader, 2003). As an interpersonal interaction process, team relationship conflict is often triggered by team-level heterogeneity (Mohammed & Angell, 2004). Team avoidance job crafting increases team-level heterogeneity by strengthening the team's rejection of tasks that exceed work requirements and consume substantial emotional resources (Mäkikangas et al., 2016), thereby inducing team relationship conflict. Specifically, as established work tasks, teams cannot completely avoid hindering job demands long-term. This means only some team members can engage in job crafting through avoidance strategies. However, this behavior increases peers' workload and creates imbalanced team resource allocation, leading team members to focus on their own interests rather than collective benefits (Tims et al., 2015). For individuals unable to engage in avoidance job crafting, hostility emerges when they perceive their interests are violated (de Wit et al., 2012). For team members who do engage in avoidance job crafting, they not only refuse to undertake these hindering job responsibilities but may even distance themselves from teammates who cannot engage in avoidance job crafting. These mutual hostilities and distancing trigger team relationship conflict. When team relationship conflict occurs, it not only distracts team members' work focus and reduces their task engagement (Shaw, 2011) but also creates barriers to team

communication and collaboration (Dechurch et al., 2013), thereby reducing team performance. Therefore, this study proposes:

H3b: Team avoidance job crafting negatively influences team performance through increased team relationship conflict.

3.3.3 The Moderating Role of Team Transactive Memory Systems

Transactive memory systems refer to a cooperative division of labor system formed among team members to encode, store, and retrieve knowledge in different domains, emphasizing interdependence (Wegner, 1987). It highlights the distribution of team members' knowledge and expertise and how these dispersed knowledge bases are integrated. When team transactive memory system levels are high, team members perform their respective duties in different professional domains (Ellis, 2006). This means the quality resources obtained and increased job demands from team approach job crafting are relatively independent, thereby increasing the necessity for team communication. In this scenario, team approach job crafting strengthens team members' communication about increased resources and job demands, as well as discussions about resource allocation and handling challenging tasks. Different professional domains lead team members to provide more detailed presentations of their work performance, difficulties encountered, and development plans during communication. This helps teams identify limitations in past development and adjust team actions accordingly, setting more targeted resource allocation and team development plans, thereby enhancing team performance. Therefore, this study proposes:

H4a: Team transactive memory systems moderate the positive relationship between team approach job crafting and team reflexivity, and consequently moderate the positive indirect effect of team approach job crafting on team performance through team reflexivity. When team transactive memory levels are high, the above relationship and effect are stronger.

Similarly, under high-level team transactive memory systems, team members form an interdependent yet各司其职 cooperative pattern (Wegner, 1987). Although team avoidance job crafting represents the team's avoidance of some hindering job demands, when team transactive memory systems are high, these hindering job demands are also independent yet interrelated. Under these circumstances, these hindering job demands are more likely to require team coordination rather than being completed by a small number of individuals, fundamentally reducing the probability of team relationship conflict. Reduced team relationship conflict can significantly promote team members' work engagement and communication collaboration, ultimately enhancing team performance. Based on this, this study proposes:

H4b: Team transactive memory systems moderate the positive relationship between team avoidance job crafting and team relationship conflict, and consequently moderate the negative indirect effect of team avoidance job crafting on team performance through team relationship conflict. When team transactive

memory levels are high, the above relationship and effect are weaker.

Methodologically, unlike Study 1, Studies 2 and 3 will employ multiple research methods including experiments (with interventions) and surveys for cross-validation. We plan to select cross-industry working MBA and EMBA students and multi-source paired samples from enterprises as research subjects. For survey data collection, we will conduct three phases with one-month intervals between each (adjustable based on actual sample conditions). Phase 1 (T1) will measure independent variables, moderating variables, and control variables. Phase 2 (T2) will measure mediating variables. Phase 3 (T3) will measure dependent variables.

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