

# A Literature Review of Job Crafting: Definition, Measurement and Related Research

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**Abstract:** Job crafting is a bottom-up behavior centered on employees, which emphasizes employees' initiative. Job crafting reveals that employees can take active actions according to their own needs and job characteristics. Job crafting helps to improve the matching degree between employees and working environment, make employees realize self-worth and create greater value for the organization. Therefore, the research on job crafting is not only beneficial to the personal development of employees, but also of great significance to organizations. In this paper, the related research on job crafting is reviewed, the connotation definition and measurement dimension of job crafting are introduced, the antecedents and outcome variables of job crafting are summarized, and the future research direction is prospected.

## 1. The definition of Job Crafting

### 1.1 Definition of foreign scholars

The idea of job crafting can be traced back to Kulik and others' discussion on job design in 1987[1]. They think that employees will make some changes that can make individuals better meet the requirements of organizational work when they carry out active job redesign, and these active bottom-up changes will have a positive impact on the organization. From the perspective of personal motivation, Wrzesniewski and Dutton(2001)[2] first defined the concept of job crafting. They defined job crafting as the behavior or cognitive changes made by individuals at the boundary of work tasks and work relationships. These changes are a series of proactive behaviors that employees spontaneously take to change their own work tasks, cognition and relationship boundaries in order to obtain better work experience and significance. Compared with the traditional organization-led job design, job crafting is no longer a top-down design behavior, but emphasizes the enthusiasm and autonomy of employees in the process of job design, which is an active construction behavior initiated by employees from bottom to top. They divide the ways of job crafting into three types: task crafting, relationship crafting and cognition crafting.

On the basis of Wrzesniewski and Dutton, Lyons(2008)[3] further divided job crafting into five types: task function, personal ability development, tactical choice, relationship promotion and relationship maintenance. Berg et al(2013)[4] further divided the three types of job crafting into three sub-categories, subdivided task crafting into adding tasks, emphasizing tasks and resetting tasks, subdivided relationship crafting into building relationships, rebuilding relationships and adapting relationships, and subdivided cognitive crafting into expanding cognition, focusing cognition and connecting cognition.

In addition, some scholars have defined job crafting from different angles. Leana et al(2009)[5] defined job crafting at the team level, and they proposed that employees would redesign work tasks in the form of collaboration and sharing. Tims and Bakker(2010)[6], from the perspective of job requirement-resource model (JD-R), defined job crafting as an initiative change made by employees to balance job demands and job resources according to their own abilities and preferences. These behaviors can make employees' ability expectations more compatible with job content. According to

the job requirement-resource model, they divide job crafting into three types: increasing job resources, increasing challenging job demands and reducing hindering job demands.

Tims et al(2012)[7] further divided job crafting into four dimensions according to the types of work resources: increasing social work resources, increasing structural work resources, increasing challenging work requirements and reducing hindering work requirements, They believe that the increase of structural work resources will enable employees to gain more job responsibilities (i.e., autonomy and diversity) and understanding of work (i.e., development opportunities), while the increase of social work resources will have more social work impact on employees (i.e., Consistent with the conclusion of Tims et al., Petrou et al(2012)[8] defined job crafting as a kind of active employee behavior, and considered that job crafting is a series of behaviors in which individuals actively seek resources, seek challenges and reduce demand in their daily work. Niessen and Weseler (2016)[9] have a new interpretation of the definition of job crafting, and they think that job crafting is an active change made by employees to work tasks and social boundaries.

## **1.2 Definition of domestic scholars**

Domestic scholars seldom explain the definition of job crafting. Zheng Yun (2009)[10] reclassified job crafting into three categories: task crafting, cognitive crafting and environmental crafting. Zhang Chunyu (2012)[11] thinks that job crafting is a bottom-up job redesign way from the perspective of employees, which breaks through the top-down way from the perspective of organizations and emphasizes the initiative of employees to change. There are many types of job crafting, such as task crafting, relationship crafting and cognition crafting, as well as personal job crafting and cooperative job crafting. Zhao Xiaoyun (2014)[12] thinks that job crafting refers to the process in which employees obtain job identity and job role by reconstructing their jobs, and its core purpose is that employees redesign their jobs to obtain a higher sense of job meaning, job involvement and job satisfaction. Qi Yajing and Wu Xinchun (2014)[13] divided job crafting into five categories: task crafting, role crafting, relationship crafting, skill crafting and cognition crafting. Tian Qitao and Guan Haoguang (2017)[14] combined with the mainstream frameworks elaborated by Wrzesniewski and Dutton, Tims and Bakker, defined job crafting as the behavior of employees, driven by their own interests and needs and based on their personal characteristics such as knowledge, skills and specialties, to adjust their work cognition, work tasks and work relationship boundaries within a certain range, balance their work requirements and resources, and match their personal, work and environment.

## **2. Measurement of Job Crafting**

### **2.1 The dimension of Job Crafting**

Wrzesniewski and Dutton(2001)[2] defined job crafting as three types: task crafting, relationship crafting and cognitive crafting. Task crafting means that employees change their work tasks by changing the number, scope or form of work tasks. Relationship crafting refers to employees changing the scope of work social circle, the frequency of interpersonal communication or the quality of interaction. Cognitive crafting means that employees change their attitude and cognition of work and choose to regard it as a group of discrete tasks or a whole. Slemp et al(2014)[15] also divided job crafting into task crafting, relationship crafting and cognitive crafting.

On their basis, some scholars divide job crafting into different dimensions in combination with different studies. For example, Lyons(2008)[3] divides job crafting into five dimensions: relationship enhancement, relationship maintenance, skill development, task function and tactical choice. Leana et al(2009)[5] divided it into two dimensions: individual job crafting and cooperative job crafting. Laurence(2010)[16] divided job crafting into expansion job crafting and contraction job crafting. Qi Yajing and Wu Xinchun (2016)[13] divided job crafting into skill crafting, task crafting, role crafting, cognition crafting and relationship crafting.

From the perspective of job demands-resources, Tims and Bakker(2012)[7] divided job crafting into four dimensions: increasing structural job resources, increasing social job resources, increasing challenging job demands and reducing hindering job demands. Increase structural work resources,

such as actively learning new skills, actively improving work ability and professionalism, and exerting autonomy; Increase social work resources, such as actively seeking performance feedback or assistance and support from relevant personnel in the workplace; Reduce obstructive work requirements, such as actively reducing psychological pressure that consumes individual resources and is not conducive to exerting their own advantages, and low-quality socialization; Add challenging work requirements, such as actively expanding the scope of tasks and improving the difficulty of work under the conditions of their own resources. Petrou et al(2012)[8] divided job crafting into three dimensions: seeking resources, seeking challenges and reducing requirements. Nilsen and Abildgaard(2012)[17] divided job crafting into increasing challenging job demands, reducing social job demands, reducing obstructive job demands, increasing social work resources and increasing workload requirements.

## **2.2 Job Crafting scale**

At present, the scales commonly used in academic research on job crafting are mostly developed by western scholars. The more mature scale is the Job crafting Scale developed and verified by Tims and Bakker et al(2012)[7], which contains 21 items in 3 dimensions. Among them, the social work resource dimension includes five items such as "I will seek guidance from my boss", the structural work resource dimension includes five items such as "I will strive to improve my professionalism", the challenging work requirement dimension includes five items such as "I often undertake some extra work even if I don't get extra pay", and the obstructive work requirement dimension includes six items such as "I will try my best to avoid working and make myself feel depressed". This questionnaire has been widely used in the research of job crafting.

Petrou et al(2012)[8] modified Tims et al(2012)[7] 21 item scale, and obtained 13 item scales with 3 dimensions. Among them, the dimension of seeking resources includes six items such as "I will ask other colleagues to give feedback on my work performance", the dimension of seeking challenges includes three items such as "If I finish my work, I will take the initiative to ask for more tasks", and the dimension of reducing demand includes four items such as "I will try my best to simplify the complexity of work tasks".

Slemp et al(2013)[18], based on the definition of job crafting by Wrzesniewski and Dutton(2001)[2], developed a job crafting questionnaire with 15 items, and confirmed that the questionnaire supports three forms of task crafting, relationship crafting and cognitive crafting through EFA and CFA. Among them, the task crafting dimension includes five items such as "I will choose to undertake extra tasks in my work", the relationship crafting includes five items such as "I will make friends with people with similar skills or interests in my work", and the cognitive crafting includes five items such as "I will remind myself of the importance of my work to the success of the organization".

Slemp and Vella-Brodrick(2014)[15] developed a 15-item job crafting scale based on task crafting, relationship crafting and cognitive crafting, in which task crafting includes 5 items such as "introducing new methods to improve your work", cognitive crafting includes 5 items such as "thinking about how your work gives you life goals", and relationship crafting includes 5 items such as "trying to understand people at work".

Some scholars have developed job crafting scales suitable for specific fields and working environments. For example, Ghitulescu(2006)[19] developed a job crafting scale for manufacturing enterprises; Leana, Appelbaum and Shevchuk(2009)[5] developed a job crafting scale for the early childhood education industry; Nielsen et al(2012)[17] developed a 15-item scale based on the scale developed by Tims et al. These scales are only suitable for measuring job crafting behavior of occupational groups in specific fields.

When Chinese scholars measure employee job crafting, they generally use the mature scale developed by western scholars for reference, and adjust and modify the items according to the specific content of the research, The designed scale is generally only applicable to specific conditions. The most frequently used scales are the scales developed and verified by Tims and Bakker et al. (2012)[7], which contain 21 items in 3 dimensions, and the scales developed by Slemp et al. (2014)[15], which contain 15 items in 3 dimensions. For example, Qi Yajing and Wu Xinchun (2016)[13] compiled a job crafting

questionnaire for primary and secondary school teachers in China, including five factors, namely, task crafting, role crafting, relationship crafting, skill crafting and cognitive crafting. Zhong Wang et al(2019)[20] researched and developed a job crafting scale for knowledge workers in China, including five factors, namely, ability crafting, relationship with leaders and organizations, cognition crafting, relationship with colleagues and customers, and task crafting.

### **3. Related research**

#### **3.1 The antecedents of Job Crafting**

##### **3.1.1 Personal level**

Wrzesniewski and Dutton(2001)[2] think that the motivation of job crafting comes from three personal needs: the need of personal control, the need of self-image building and the need of interpersonal relationship. It is the basic principle of social identity theory to build a positive self-image, which is also applicable in work. When people's work makes it difficult to build this positive self-image, they will have the motivation to correct this situation. Wrzesniewski and Dutton(2001)[2] think that when these three demands of employees are not met by the current job design, employees will have the motivation of job crafting. Tims and Bakker(2010)[6] think that employees with higher initiative personality, self-efficacy and promotion focus are more likely to reshape their jobs than those with lower scores on these individual differences. Tims and Bakker et al(2014)[21] think that employees with high self-efficacy may show more job crafting behaviors, and the higher their self-efficacy, the easier it is for them to change their job characteristics because of their belief in what they can do at work and their subsequent work behaviors. Niessen et al(2016)[9] and Liu Shuzhen et al(2019)[22] also believe that employees with high self-efficacy tend to have higher self-confidence in their own crafting ability, so they will take more crafting behaviors in actual work. Niessen et al(2016)[9] also believe that in order to better experience their own control and competence in work and maintain good social relations with others around them, individuals tend to take more crafting behaviors. Petrou and Demerouti et al(2015)[23] thought that employees'adjustment focus, promotion focus (i.e., driven by growth and challenges) or prevention focus (i.e., driven by obligations and safety) may affect their job crafting level. Tian Qitao et al(2017)[14] believe that psychological empowerment will make employees more likely to have job crafting behavior. Jiang Yunjie et al(2019)[24] found that individuals with high harmonious passion are often driven by the need of inner autonomy, and consciously and spontaneously make normative and reasonable changes to existing work tasks and social relations in the workplace, and it is more likely to reshape their work behaviors.

##### **3.1.2 Organizational level**

Kira, van Eijnatten and others (2010)[25] think that organizational change is one of the organizational factors that lead to job crafting, and job crafting is an effective means for employees to deal with organizational change, because it can improve employees'sustainability and adapt to changing job demands at any time. Tims and Bakker(2010)[6] organizational feedback is another organizational factor that leads to job crafting, When employees feel that they are out of balance with their jobs and want to make changes, if organizations pay attention to which aspects employees need to adjust and give corresponding feedback, they will encourage employees to show job crafting behavior. Zhao Xiaoyun et al(2019)[12] believe that organizational support can help improve employees'work attitude, enhance their positive work experience, and then drive their crafting behavior; Research by Sun Yongbo et al(2020)[26] shows that various trainings implemented by organizations can help individuals form good job cognition, stimulate their motivation to reshape, and then promote their job crafting. The type of leadership is another organizational factor that leads to job crafting, for example, Wang, Demerouti and Blanc(2017)[27] believe that transformational leadership can stimulate employees'job crafting by cultivating their adaptability. The relationship between leadership style and job crafting of Chinese scholars has also been studied. Yang Jianchun and others (2019)[28] believe that authorized leaders will promote the increase of their job crafting behavior by

giving individuals more autonomy and trust; Tian Hongbin et al(2019)[29] found that service-oriented leaders will actively contribute to individual professional mission through job crafting; Wang Hongyu and others (2018)[30] believe that coaching leadership can also positively predict employees'job crafting behavior.

### **3.1.3 Situational level**

Tims and Bakker(2010)[6] proposed that the mismatch between people and positions or jobs is one of the reasons that affect job crafting. There are two kinds of mismatches between people and positions: one is that the job-related qualifications of employees do not match the job demands; The second is that the resources provided by work do not match the needs of employees. When these two situations are in an unbalanced state, employees will feel that there is a mismatch between themselves and their positions or jobs, showing more job crafting behaviors. Lyons(2008)[3] and Leana et al(2009)[5] confirmed that the degree of decision-making freedom is positively correlated with job crafting, and if employees can have higher autonomy in their own work arrangements and working methods, they will have job crafting behavior. The research of Petrou et al(2012)[8] also shows that a high degree of job stress and job autonomy will promote employees'job crafting behavior of seeking resources and challenges. Wrzesniewski and Dutton(2001)[2] think that the independence of tasks and the discretion of work have an impact on employees'job crafting behavior. Leana(2009)[5] and others also found that job task independence and job challenges are positively related to job crafting, which indicates that job demands can stimulate proactive behavior,The research of Kim, Im and Qu(2018)[31] also demonstrates this result. Leana et al(2009)[5] also found that task independence can inhibit collective job crafting, but it has nothing to do with individual job crafting. The latest research by Filomena et al(2020)[32] shows that job insecurity also affects employees'job crafting behavior.

### **3.2 Result Variables of Job Crafting**

Wrzesniewski and Dutton(2001)[2] think that job crafting will bring two kinds of influences: enhancing job meaning and shaping positive job identity. Leana et al(2009)[5] also believe that collective job crafting is positively related to job satisfaction, and collective job crafting is positively related to performance, especially for less experienced employees. However, Leana(2009)[5] also found that employees'job crafting may deviate from the organization's goals and cause difficulties in the management of the organization. Tims and Bakker(2010)[6] believe that job crafting will bring a series of positive results to employees, including improving people-job matching, improving job significance, improving job satisfaction, and enhancing job involvement; Job crafting will also bring a series of positive results to the organization, including improving organizational commitment, improving organizational performance and reducing turnover rate. Tims and Bakker et al(2012)[7] also found that employee job crafting can predict colleagues'evaluation of their personal performance; Moreover, job crafting negatively affects job burnout, which means that employees who show more job crafting have lower job burnout. The research of Petrou et al(2012)[8] also shows that the job crafting behavior of employees seeking challenges will significantly affect their job engagement, but the job crafting behavior of reducing demand may have a negative impact on their job engagement. Nielsen et al(2012)[17] have proved that job crafting is positively correlated with job involvement and job satisfaction, and they have come to the conclusion that job crafting is negatively correlated with job burnout. Slemp et al(2013)[18] think that job crafting is positively correlated with employees'job satisfaction and job enthusiasm, and it will also positively affect organizational citizenship behavior. Rudolph(2017)[33] found that defensive job crafting reflects withdrawal behavior, which may have a negative impact on job engagement and job performance and strengthen turnover intention by reducing obstructive job demands and lowering job objectives. Bizzi(2017)[34] demonstrated that the centrality of organizational network regulates the relationship between job crafting and job performance, that is, when an individual's position in the organizational network is the center, job crafting is positively correlated with performance, whereas job crafting is negatively correlated with performance. Kim et al(2018)[31] found that the change of job characteristics accompanied by individual crafting behavior will affect their happiness perception. Lu et al(2018)[35], based on the theory of resource conservation,

think that when individuals reshape their jobs, the redistribution of resources is conducive to the emergence of new ideas, thus having a positive impact on individual creativity.

Chinese scholars have also made research on the impact of job crafting. The research of Yan PeiLin (2016)[36] also proves that job crafting has a significant positive impact on the matching between people and work and job meaning, and can positively affect job engagement. Geng Qingling et al(2016)[37] believe that individuals who try to reshape their work can often experience higher work fun and significance, and will also do more civic moral behaviors and organizational citizenship behaviors to help others. Lv Xuning et al (2017)[38] show that job crafting will positively affect individual job performance, job satisfaction and career satisfaction by improving their job engagement level. Wang Ping et al(2017)[39] found through empirical research that individual crafting behavior will make them experience more sense of job competence and control, and then drive their psychological empowerment perception to improve, and finally promote their good performance. Xin Xun et al (2018)[40] believe that employees who carry out job crafting can often generate more positive emotions, which will ultimately benefit the acquisition of their creative performance. The research of Yin Kui et al (2019) [41] also shows that both task crafting and relationship crafting have a positive impact on employees'job meaning. Research by Liu Yunshuo et al(2019)[42] shows that job crafting behavior can positively promote the creativity of employees in Chinese context. Research by Liu Shuzhen et al (2019)[22] shows that in the process of crafting, individuals often learn new things and take on new challenges, which can improve their self-efficacy and change their work cognition, thus providing them with innovative cognitive resources and promoting their innovative behavior. Yang Jie et al (2020) [43] believe that the job crafting of employees and teams can provide sufficient resources for individual innovation behavior.

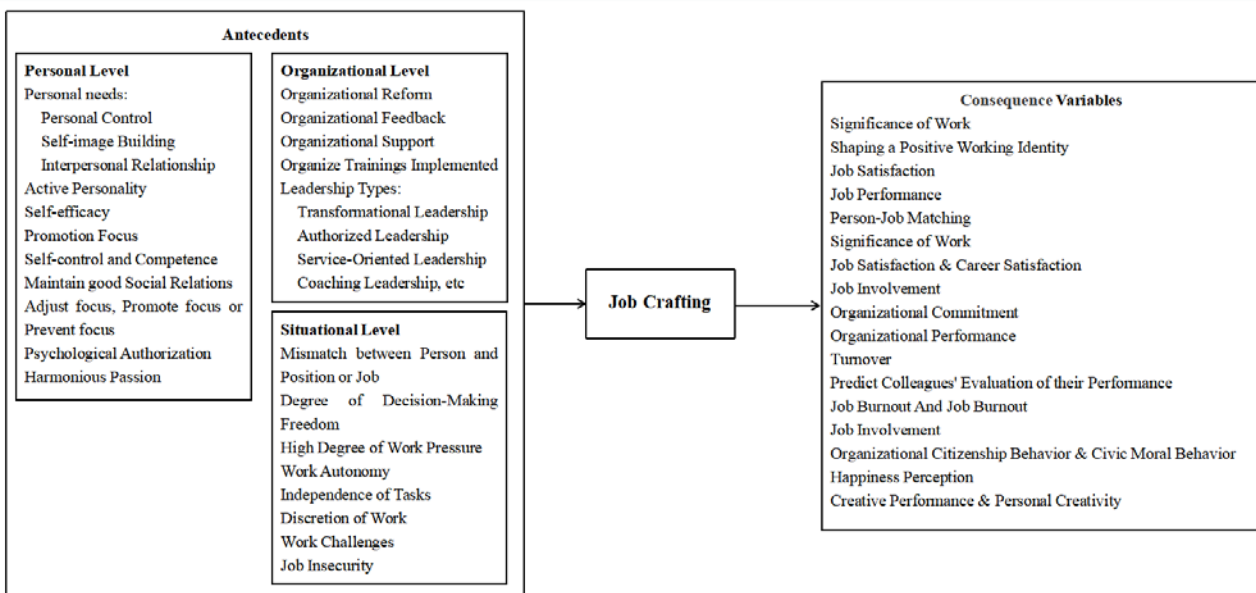


Figure 1. The antecedent and consequence variables of job crafting

#### 4. Future research prospects

The new generation of employees have gradually become the main force in the labor market, They have highly achievement-oriented and self-oriented, pay attention to work fun, pursue equality, dare to resist authority and other unique work values, which are different from the work cognition of the older generation of employees, and even have contradictions and conflicts with the work concepts of some traditional industries. At the same time, the theoretical circles pay more attention to the job crafting at the behavioral level, and some studies still question whether the job crafting at the cognitive level needs to be transformed into behavior, which is the real job crafting. In the future, it is necessary to strengthen the research on cognitive crafting, especially paying attention to the influence of cognitive crafting of new generation employees.

Moreover, with the rapid development of the Internet and its wide application in various industries, the situation of remote office and online office has increased; At the same time, artificial intelligence has gradually penetrated into various industries, and man-machine cooperation has become a new working mode. These new scenes put forward new requirements for employees' knowledge and skills, and employees' definition of work boundaries and cognition of work roles need to be adjusted. Therefore, the new ways to reshape employees' work in the new situation should be paid attention to in future research.

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