The influence of job characteristics on job crafting

A qualitative study on how job characteristics of consultants influence their perceived opportunities to engage in job crafting.

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Abstract

Job crafting is a bottom-up design and redesign approach in which employees proactively redesign and change certain elements of their jobs. Job crafting has become an interesting concept for organizations, as it is linked with numerous organizational benefits, such as higher levels of work engagement, commitment, and organizational performance. This study focuses on the relationship between job characteristics and job crafting, as in current literature, there are contrasting findings regarding how job characteristics affect the perceived opportunities of employees to craft their jobs. This research contributes to this body of literature by studying how the job characteristics of consultants influence their perceived opportunities to job craft, therefore understanding the ambiguous findings in job crafting literature. For this master thesis, a qualitative study has been conducted with a deductive approach, and ten interviews have been conducted with consultants in order to gain in-depth insights in their job crafting experiences. This study found multiple mechanisms through which the consultants' job characteristics affect their ability to job craft, as their job characteristics could encourage, facilitate, inhibit, delay, or even lower the need for job crafting. The ambiguity regarding the relationship between job crafting and job characteristics that is present in job crafting literature was found in this study as well, as job characteristics could have positive as well as negative effects on the consultants' ability to engage in job crafting. Moreover, this ambiguity showed to be hard to explain, since job crafting is also affected by other factors, such as personality traits and organizational features.

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* Not included due to privacy reasons

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction to topic

The way employees' jobs are designed can have a significant impact on the way workers experience meaningfulness of their jobs (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Grant, 2007). Traditionally, most research on job design and redesign was focused on top-down approaches, where managers or supervisors design the structure of the jobs of their subordinates (Campion & McClelland, 1993; Grant, Fried, Parker, & Frese, 2010; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Hornung, Rousseau, Glaser, Angerer, & Weigl, 2010). However, more recent literature shows interest in another perspective on job design and redesign. Instead of the traditional top-down perspective, there is an increasing interest in recent literature in bottom-up perspectives on job design and redesign (Berg, Dutton, & Wrześniewski, 2013; Niessen, Weseler, & Kostova, 2016; Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012; Tims & Bakker, 2010; Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001; Wrześniewski, LoBuglio, Dutton, & Berg, 2015; Zhang & Parker, 2018). In these bottom-up perspectives, employees proactively redesign and change certain elements of their jobs so that tasks and relationships better suit their needs, abilities, and preferences (Niessen et al., 2016). Wrześniewski and Dutton (2001) coined the concept of job crafting, which is one of these bottom-up approaches for employees to redesign their jobs. They defined job crafting as 'the actions employees take to shape, mold and redefine their jobs, by initiating physical and cognitive changes in the task and relational boundaries of their work' (Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001, p.180). These authors introduced three different categories of job crafting techniques which workers can use to proactively change the boundaries of their jobs: task crafting, relational crafting, and cognitive crafting (Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001).

In current literature, job crafting is linked to numerous benefits, such as increased meaningfulness, job satisfaction, motivation and organizational performance (Berg et al., 2013; Hackman & Oldham, 1980, Grant, 2007; Wrześniewski et al., 2015*)*. As a result, job crafting has become an interesting concept for organizations. Especially in the dynamic and rapidly changing economy organizations find themselves in today, proactive behaviour and initiatives from employees are particularly valued (Grant & Ashford, 2008). However, not everyone feels the need or has the opportunity to make changes in their current job designs. According to Berg, Wrześniewski, and Dutton (2010), the starting point for job crafting are the prescribed jobs of employees which contain tasks, expectations, and positions in the organization hierarchy. Moreover, job characteristics are antecedents of job crafting and can

therefore impact the employees' perceived opportunity to engage in job crafting. Job characteristics refer to some factors or attributes about the job and they are the specific aspects of a job that can be recognized, defined, and assessed (Naude, 2010; Steers & Porter, 1991). In job crafting literature, research has been done on the influence of certain job characteristics on job crafting, such as the level of autonomy (Berg et al, 2010; Niessen, et al., 2016; Petrou et al., 2012), work pressure (Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004; Petrou et al., 2012), task interdependence (Ghitulescu, 2007; Tims & Bakker, 2010), or task complexity (Ghitulescu, 2007). However, in the current literature, there are contrasting conceptions and research outcomes regarding how aforementioned job characteristics actually influence the employees' perceived opportunity for job crafting.

1.2 Problem formulation

In the current literature on job crafting, there seems to be contrasting research outcomes regarding the relationship between job characteristics and employees' perceived opportunities for job crafting behaviour. On the one hand, Wrześniewski and Dutton (2001) suggest that high levels of autonomy is an essential precondition for job crafting behaviour, Grant and Parker (2009) found that autonomy stimulates proactive behaviour of employees and therefore results in more initiatives to make changes to their jobs, and Petrou et al. (2012) found that employees with higher levels of autonomy in particular engage in job crafting. On the other hand, Lyons (2008) found that sales representatives with high levels of autonomy and low levels of direct supervision experienced a lack of opportunity for job crafting, and Berg et al. (2010) discovered that high-rank employees, who had high levels of autonomy and power, seemed to feel more psychologically constrained with respect to their freedom to craft and also found it more difficult to recognize opportunities to craft their jobs. Furthermore, Ghitulescu (2007) found that increased task interdependency enabled job crafting, while Tims and Bakker (2010) suggest that job crafting is more likely to occur when employees perform tasks independent of each other. They state that lower levels of interdependency between employees make it easier to job craft.

The aforementioned contradictions show that in current literature, there are ambiguous views and findings regarding how job characteristics affect the perceived opportunities of employees to craft their jobs. This master thesis will focus on the perceived opportunities of consultants to craft their jobs. Alvesson & Kärreman (2011) describe consultants as knowledge workers who work in knowledge intensive firms, where personnel is the organization's most important resource. Therefore it is essential to have qualified personnel and to secure their loyalty,

commitment, and motivation (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). As job crafting can contribute to these attributes, researching antecedents of job crafting, such as job characteristics, for consultants can be very important.

Furthermore, consultants often deal with complex problems which they have to solve in cooperation with the customer who often makes intense demands (Wallgren & Hanse, 2010). Additionally, consultants are knowledge professionals working in so-called active jobs, comprising high levels of autonomy and job control (Petrou et al., 2012; Singh & Singh, 2016). As a result, consultants can experience high levels of autonomy, work pressure, task complexity and interdependence, and therefore they will be a suitable research object as their jobs possibly possess all characteristics that are prominently considered in the ambiguous state of the field.

The aim of this master thesis is to contribute to the current literature about the effects of job characteristics on job crafting by exploring how the job characteristics of consultants influence their perceived opportunities for job crafting. In order to contribute to the existing literature, the following research question has been formulated: *'How do the job characteristics of consultants influence their perceived opportunities for job crafting?'*

1.3 Approach

In order to answer this master thesis' research question, a theory-oriented qualitative research will be conducted. A qualitative research method has been chosen because it enables the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding about the process of job crafting and the influences of job characteristics. As mentioned before, consultants will be the object of this master thesis. For this study, an interview study will be conducted in order to gain an in-depth understanding on how job characteristics of consultants affect their perceived opportunities to craft their jobs.

Moreover, in this master thesis, a deductive approach has been chosen to study the relationship between job characteristics and job crafting. In current job crafting literature, these concepts have been conceptualized and can therefore be used as starting point to study job crafting and the relationship with job characteristics. However, the current findings regarding this relationship is ambiguous, and therefore, this study will have an open outlook regarding the effects that the consultants' job characteristics have on their perceived opportunities for job crafting. When keeping an open outlook, the researcher is able to explore the relationship and thereby understand or maybe resolve the contradictory results.

1.4 Relevance

As mentioned earlier, contradictions exist in the current literature about the effects of job characteristics such as autonomy, work pressure, task interdependence, and work pressure on the process of job crafting (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Ghitulescu, 2007; Petrou et al., 2012; Tims & Bakker, 2010; Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001). Therefore, the aim of this master thesis is to contribute to this body of research by conducting a qualitative study on the effects of these job characteristics on the job crafting behaviour of consultants. In doing so, this research will provide relevant insights in the effects job characteristics have on the process of job crafting and explanations for these effects. In this way this study will contribute to the discussion about the effects of job characteristics on job crafting in the current literature. In doing so, the qualitative nature of this study will be advantageous to explain the contradicting findings mentioned earlier, as an in-depth knowledge regarding job crafting processes and the influence of job characteristics can be acquired.

Moreover, this study will provide relevant insights for consultants, managers of consultancy firms, and workers with similar job characteristics. Job crafting has many benefits for workers, such as the experience of positive meaning in work and also a positive view on the self (Berg et al., 2013; Wrześniewski et al., 2015). In addition, job crafting has also proved to be beneficial for the organization, as it can result in higher levels of work engagement, commitment, job satisfaction, and performance (Berg et al., 2013; Grant, 2007; Wrześniewski et al., 2015). This is especially important for knowledge intensive firms, such as consultancy firms, as their personnel is their most important resource (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). Although job crafting is perceived as an approach done by individual workers, authors suggest that organizations can play a role as facilitators in this process by designing certain boundaries or stimulate workers to craft in their jobs (Demerouti, 2014 ; Petrou et al., 2012). If it becomes clear how job characteristics affect employees' opportunities for job crafting, it becomes clear what could be done to facilitate and support job crafting behaviour.

As is suggested that job crafting can lead to more experienced meaningfulness and job satisfaction (Berg et al., 2013; Wrześniewski et al., 2015), it is important for workers to gain insights in how certain job characteristics influence their opportunities to craft. When employees feel the need to craft their jobs and become aware of what and how their job characteristics influence job crafting, they can ask for managerial support to facilitate their job crafting process. Furthermore, this research will provide insights in how consultants craft their jobs, which other workers can use as an example for their own job crafting process.

1.5 Outline

This master thesis is structured as follows. The thesis consists of five chapters and in the next chapter, a theoretical background regarding the concept of job crafting and job characteristics will be presented. In the third chapter, the methodological choices made in this research will be explained and argued for. In chapter four, the results of this study will be presented and discussed. This chapter will be the base for answering this thesis' research question, which will be done in chapter five, where a conclusion of the research will be given and the results and conclusions of this thesis will be discussed as well as the limitations of this research, the theoretical and practical contributions, and recommendations for further research.

2. Theoretical Background

In this chapter, a review of the current literature about job crafting and job characteristics will be presented. First, the concept of job crafting will be defined, reviewing two different conceptualizations of job crafting. Second, different forms of job crafting will be discussed. Hereafter, the case of consultants and their job characteristics will be elaborated on and the contradictions in current state of the art literature of their effects on job crafting will be discussed. Finally, the last part of this chapter will present the sensitizing concepts that will be further used in the data collection process of this thesis.

2.1 Defining job crafting

A job is defined as the 'collections of tasks and relationships that are grouped together and assigned to an individual' (Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1992, p. 173). Based on this definition of a job, job design has been described as the way 'jobs, task and roles are structured, enacted, modified, as well as the impact of these structures, enactments and modifications on the individual, group and on the organizational outcomes' (Grant & Parker, 2009, p. 319). Job design is therefore a crucial aspect of the organizational work environment. Job crafting is a bottom-up approach to job design and redesign in which employees are put in 'the driving seat' and proactively make changes in their tasks and roles. It therefore differs from the traditional top-down job design approaches in which employers or managers create those tasks and roles (Berg et al., 2013; Grant et al., 2010; Tims & Bakker, 2010; Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001; Wrzésniewski et al., 2015). The concept of job crafting therefore expands the traditional perspectives on job design and redesign.

Wrześniewski and Dutton (2001) coined the theoretical concept of job crafting and defined it as 'the actions employees take to shape, mold and redefine their jobs, by initiating physical and cognitive changes in the task and relational boundaries of their work' (Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001, p.180). They suggest that employees change their identity and the meaning of the work using three different types of crafting techniques: task crafting, relational crafting, and cognitive crafting. Task crafting involves changing the job's physical boundaries by making changes to the amount, scope, or type of tasks done at work. Relational crafting refers to changing interpersonal interactions of the job, such as the quality or amount of interactions at work. Cognitive crafting entails altering how workers perceive or interpret their jobs. A further elaboration on these three types of job crafting techniques will be given later on in this chapter.

Job crafting is not a one-time event, but a continuous process. This process is likely to be influenced by multiple factors, such as employees' career trajectories (Fried, Grant, Levi, Hadani, & Slowik, 2007), their social context (Berg et al., 2010), empowering leadership of managers (Audenaert, George, Bauwens, Decuypere, Descamps, Muylaert, Ma, & Decramer, 2020; Hetland, Hetland, Bakker, & Demerouti, 2018), individual personal characteristics (Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001; Ghitulescu, 2007), and job characteristics (Bakker et al., 2004; Ghitulescu, 2007; Petrou et al., 2012; Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001). However, due to the scope of this study and the master trajectory this thesis is written for, this thesis will focus on the influence of job characteristics on job crafting behaviour. Therefore, there is no intention to investigate the other aforementioned possible influences on job crafting. In the following section, job crafting will be further explained by juxtaposing two different conceptual approaches to job crafting.

2.1.1 Different conceptualizations on job crafting

There are two conceptualizations on job crafting which are widely applied in current research. The first to use the concept were Wrześniewski and Dutton (2001), who approached job crafting as individuals making changes in the task or relational boundaries of their work. They propose that employees make adaptations in their work in order to increase the experienced meaningfulness of their work using three different types of techniques: task crafting, relational crafting, and cognitive crafting. The second widely used approach was defined by Tims and Bakker (2010) and further developed by Tims, Bakker, and Derks (2012). They conceptualized job crafting using the demand-resources model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001; Karasek, 1979) and defined job crafting as 'the changes that employees may make to balance their job demands and resources with their personal abilities and needs (Tims et al., 2012, p. 4). Here, job demands represent job aspects that involve sustained physical, mental, or emotional effort, and job resources refer to job aspects that may be functional in achieving work goals and stimulate personal growth and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Within this job crafting approach, Tims et al. (2012) identified four different job crafting techniques. They suggest that employees can (1) increase structural job resources, (2) increase social job resources, (3) increase challenging job demands, and (4) decrease hindering job demands.

These two approaches to job crafting differ in a few significant ways. They differ in the content of crafting, as Wrześniewski & Dutton (2001) focus on changing task, relational, and

cognitive boundaries, while Tims et al. (2012) focus on changing job demands and resources. Furthermore, the approaches also differ regarding the purpose of job crafting. Wrześniewski & Dutton (2001) indicate that employees craft in order to increase meaningfulness, whereas Tims et al. (2012) see job crafting as a way to increase person-job fit.

These differences have several implications when comparing the two approaches. First, due to the differences in the content of crafting, the analysis of what behaviour is considered as job crafting and what is not is ambiguous. For example, Tims et al. (2012) argue that job crafting behaviour can go beyond task, relational, and cognitive crafting, and include skill-development (Zhang & Parker, 2018). Second, there is a debate between scholars about whether cognitive job crafting is considered a type of job crafting. Wrześniewski & Dutton (2001) argue that cognitive crafting is crucial. They see it as an important facet of job crafting and in their perspective, cognitive crafting is closely linked to meaning making (Zhang & Parker, 2018). In contrast, scholars who argue for the perspective of Tims et al. (2012), say that cognitive crafting does not lead to real changes in the design of the job and should therefore be not considered job crafting (Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012).

This thesis will focus on the job crafting approach conceptualized by Wrześniewski and Dutton (2001). Developments and insights from scholars who built on their conceptualization will also be used to further discuss this job crafting approach. This approach to job crafting has been chosen over the approach of Tims et al. (2012) due to the following reasons. First of all, the description of the ambiguity in the state of the field, as described in chapter one, is mostly based on authors who built their arguments based on this approach as well (e.g. Berg et al., 2010; Niessen et al., 2016; Ghitulescu, 2007). Second, this approach has been the basis for many qualitative studies on job crafting, which is therefore in line with the qualitative nature of this master thesis. Finally, this study considers cognitive crafting as an important facet of job crafting, since it can be an important proactive strategy for employees to create fit with their work environment, even without behavioural change (Berg et al., 2013; Niessen et al., 2016). In the following section, an in-depth discussion of the three types of job crafting techniques will be done.

2.1.2 Types of job crafting techniques

The first type of job crafting is task crafting. Task crafting entails changing the task boundaries of a job and is done by changing the number, scope, or types of tasks done at work (Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001, p. 185). Here, employees can make alterations to their

prescribed job descriptions in the following four ways (Berg et al., 2010; Berg et al., 2013). First, employees can add tasks, taking on extra tasks or projects in their jobs. Second, employees can also choose to drop tasks they, for example, do not consider to suit them. Third, employees can emphasize tasks, which means that they spend more time, energy, and attention on certain tasks they consider to be more important. Fourth, employees can redesign tasks, where employees can find new ways to execute prescribed tasks, making these tasks their own. Employees can choose to use any combination of these forms of task crafting.

The second form of job crafting is relational crafting, which involves changing the relational boundaries of the job. This involves changing either the quality or amount of interaction with others at work, or both (Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001). This means that employees change how, when, or with whom they interact when performing their jobs. Relational crafting can be done in the following three ways (Berg et al., 2010; Berg et al., 2013). First, employees can build new relationships with others at work. Second, employees can reframe existing relationships by changing the nature of the relationship to, for example, be more meaningful. For example, an employee can try to get to know a colleague better in order to change the nature of the relationship and therefore alter the content of their interactions. Third, employees can adapt relationships. This entails that employees start providing others with help and support in order to encourage them to give help and support in return. This type of relational crafting is likely to result in high quality interactions with each other, which in turn could result in high levels of mutual trust, positive regard, and vitality (Berg et al., 2013).

The third job crafting technique is called cognitive crafting and occurs when employees change the cognitive task boundaries of their jobs (Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001). Cognitive crafting does not involve changing an objective part of the job, but instead involves making changes in how one views the tasks, relationships, or job as a whole (Berg et al., 2013). Employees can frame their jobs in a different way, thinking about the greater significance of their job. Cleaners of a hospital, for example, could see their job as an essential part of the process of healing people, increasing the value and significance of their work. Cognitive crafting can be done in three ways. First, employees can expand their perceptions, which means that they broaden their perceptions of the impact their job has. This involves thinking about their job as a whole, instead of separate tasks. Second, employees can focus their perceptions on certain parts or tasks of their jobs. When employees dislike certain aspects of their jobs, they can narrowly focus on the parts that they do think are important. Third,

employees can link perceptions, making connections between specific tasks or relationships and their personal interests or aspects of their identities (Berg et al., 2010; Berg et al. 2013).

2.2 Consultants and job characteristics

Both Wrześniewski and Dutton (2001) and Tims et al. (2012) argue that job crafting behaviour of employees is influenced by the characteristics of their jobs. Consultants potentially have high levels of autonomy, work pressure, task complexity, and task interdependence (Petrou et al., 2012; Singh & Singh, 2016; Wallgren & Hanse, 2010). In the following paragraphs, a general description of consultants will be provided, and hereafter, their job characteristics will be further defined and explained.

2.2.1 Consultants

As mentioned earlier, to study the relationship between job characteristics and job crafting, consultants have been chosen as research object. Consultants are knowledge professionals, working in knowledge intensive firms and have active jobs, which means that they experience high levels of autonomy and job control (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011; Petrou et al.,2012; Singh & Singh, 2016). Moreover, consultants often perform assignments at other organizations, where they have to deal with complex problems which they often have to solve in cooperation with employees of that organization (Wallgren & Hanse, 2010). As a result, consultants have to adjust their tasks with tasks of other employees in the organization and can therefore experience high task interdependence. Additionally, Wallgren and Hanse (2010) describe that consultants deal with non-standard problems which they have to solve for customers with often high demands. Furthermore, long working hours and a frantic work pace are often a central part of the daily work of consultants (Merilainen, Tienari, Thomas, & Davies, 2004). Therefore, the work environment of consultants can be perceived as stressful and consisting of high work pressure. Moreover, Parker (2014) indicates that professionals or project-based workers, such as consultants, might particularly benefit from crafting their jobs, because they usually have more autonomy and are subjected to work situations that require crafting efforts. Therefore, consultants most likely feel the need to craft their jobs. In addition, in consultancy firms, personnel is their most important resource. Therefore, it is important for consultancy firms to have qualified personnel and to secure their loyalty, commitment, and motivation (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). As these are possible outcomes of job crafting, consultancy firms would want to stimulate job crafting behaviour. Due to these reasons,

consultants are considered to be a suitable research case to study the relationship between job characteristics and job crafting.

2.2.2 Job characteristics

In literature, there is no consensus on what exactly defines job characteristics and there exists no exhaustive list of job characteristics. According to Steers and Porter (1991), job characteristics refer to some factors or attributes about the job, and Naude (2010) notes that they are the specific aspects of a job that can be recognized, defined, and assessed. Even though there is no exhaustive list of job characteristics, many authors have tried to define job characteristics by proposing different dimensions of job characteristics. Humprhey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson (2007) for example came up with three dimensions of job characteristics: motivational, social, and contextual characteristics. The motivational dimension was further subdivided into three categories that reflect the task, knowledge, and social requirements of work (Pierce, Jussila, & Cummings, 2009). What can be concluded is that there exists a varied range of job characteristics, which can involve many attributes and aspects of a job. This study will focus on four job characteristics, which are autonomy, task interdependence, task complexity, and work pressure. In the following paragraphs will elaborate on these four job characteristics.

Hackman and Oldham (1976, p. 258) define autonomy the as 'degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out'. Autonomy on the job refers to control over the execution of a job and under high levels of autonomy, workers may be able to perform their jobs in an alternative way (Bakker et al., 2004; Kim, Im, & Qu, 2018). As a result, autonomy gives workers the ability to be flexible in their work and make adaptations to make the job fit their individual abilities and needs (Kim et al., 2018; Lyons, 2008).

Moreover, task interdependence is defined as 'the extent to which the items or elements upon which work is performed or the work processes themselves are interrelated so that changes in the state of one element affect the state of others' (Scott, 1987, p. 214). This means that actions of workers are related to other workers' actions and vice versa. There is always a certain level of interdependence present in an organizational environment, because workers do not perform tasks in complete isolation of each other (Ghitulescu, 2007). However, when

interdependence is high, the actions of workers should be coordinated with each other and therefore will be highly dependent on one another.

Next, task complexity refers to 'the difficulty or ease involved in completing the task' (Ghitulescu, 2007, p. 67). It is related to the complexity of the tasks and the amount of thinking time required to be able to complete tasks (Perrow, 1967). Complex tasks involve more uncertainty, because, due to the complexity it is not directly clear how to complete them and what the results will be. Complex tasks therefore place more demands on the knowledge, skills, and resources of the worker (Ghitulescu, 2007).

Finally, Work pressure is associated with the demands of a job. Job demands refer to the aspects of a job that require sustained physical or psychological effort (Bakker et al., 2004). Work pressure occurs when job demands are too high and concerns arise that one is not able to handle the work. The amount of work, the working tempo, and time pressure are examples of job demands that can result in work pressure (Hagen & Bogaerts, 2014). Even though work pressure can be a result of other job characteristics, jobs can be characterized by having high levels of work pressure. Petrou et al. (2012) for example describe 'active jobs' and see these as jobs characterized by high levels of work pressure and autonomy. Moreover, work pressure can be beneficial or harmful, as some authors link work pressure with negative effects, such as energy depletion and exhaustion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011), while others have shown that work pressure can have beneficial effects on for example work engagement (Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010).

2.3 Relation between job crafting and job characteristics

As mentioned before, there are contradicting findings regarding the relation between certain job characteristics and workers' perceived opportunities for job crafting. In this section, these contradicting results will be further elaborated on.

First of all, Wrześniewski and Dutton (2001), who coined the concept of job crafting, argued that autonomy on the job would be beneficial for job crafting. They asserted that autonomy encourages employees to alter job boundaries and therefore is beneficial for their perceived opportunities for job crafting. Since then, many researchers have based their studies on their conceptualization and studied the effect of autonomy on job crafting, predicting that it relates positively to job crafting. The outcomes of these studies, however, are mixed. Ghitulescu (2007) for example found that job autonomy facilitated task and cognitive crafting behaviour of teachers, but did not find a significant effect for relational crafting. This shows that

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differences exist, even between the different types of job crafting techniques. Furthermore, Kim et al. (2018) quantitatively studied the effect of autonomy on job crafting for employees of five-star hotels. They found that a high level of autonomy positively affected the task, relational, and cognitive crafting behaviour of hotel workers. This indicates that employees will tend to show more job crafting behaviour in the presence of a high level of autonomy. In contrast however, Lyons (2008) conducted a study on job crafting behaviour of outside salespersons with high levels of autonomy and practically no direct supervision. These salespersons were expected to experience great opportunities for job crafting. However, only 23% of the salespersons reported to have perceived a substantial opportunity to engage in job crafting. These results are in line with the study of Niessen et al. (2016), who found that job autonomy did not result in an increase in job crafting behaviour. Moreover, Berg et al. (2010) argue that employees with a great level of autonomy can even feel constrained to craft in their jobs, therefore suggesting that autonomy can hinder job crafting. They found that high-ranking employees felt psychologically constrained in how to craft their jobs, while it was easier for lower-rank employees to recognize opportunities to craft.

In Wrześnianiewski and Dutton's (2001) first conceptualization of job crafting, they suggested that task interdependence would hinder employees to make alterations in their tasks, as they are dependent on others and thus have less freedom to craft their jobs. Additionally, they state that employees who experience low levels of task interdependence have more latitude to alter task and relational boundaries of their jobs, and therefore perceive more opportunities to craft. Niessen et al. (2016), who studied the relation between task interdependence and job crafting using Wrześnianiewski and Dutton's (2001) conceptualization of job crafting, did not find any significant relationships between the two. They suggest that task interdependence can both foster and hinder job crafting behaviour. Working with others could limit the freedom for crafting due to the interdependence with others, while it can also facilitate job crafting as it is possible to for example swap tasks with others (Niessen et al., 2016). That task interdependence can enable rather than inhibit job crafting was also found by Ghitulescu (2007), who state that due to their interdependencies with others, teachers engage in more intensive relational crafting. The more interdependent teachers crafted more, because it gave them a broader view of their work and therefore they were able to perform their jobs better. Finally, Berg et al. (2010) also recognized that interdependencies can stimulate job crafting behaviour, provided that they have enough freedom to make alterations in the division of

tasks. This means that employees can decide for themselves which task to perform, based on their own knowledge and expertise.

Such contradicting results are also found for the relationship between work pressure, task complexity and job crafting. Berg et al. (2010) state that high levels of work pressure, combined with a lack of formal job structure, seems to make it harder for employees to recognize job crafting opportunities. In contrast, Petrou et al. (2012) found that job crafting behaviour is more likely to occur in active work environments, which are characterized by high levels of job autonomy and work pressure. This suggests that work pressure can be beneficial for the occurrence of job crafting behaviour. Moreover, Ghitulescu (2007) found that task complexity facilitates task crafting and relational crafting. The complexity of tasks influences how employees deal with them and can require collaboration with others, therefore foster task and relational crafting (Ghitulescu, 2007).

The findings of the studies mentioned above exhibit the contradictions that exist in current literature about the effect job characteristics on job crafting. This research will seek to add to this discussion, by studying how these job characteristics affect the perceived opportunities for job crafting of consultants, whose jobs can be characterized by a combination of the aforementioned job characteristics. In this way, this study will contribute to the current knowledge about these relations.

2.4 Conceptual model

The conceptual model of this study is displayed in figure 1. The model shows the expected relationships between the central concepts of this master thesis. This section will elaborate on the relationships displayed in the conceptual model.

As described earlier this chapter, this study expects that job characteristics (autonomy, task interdependence, task complexity, and work pressure) have an influence on job crafting (task crafting, relational crafting, and cognitive crafting). In the conceptual model, each job characteristics is expected to have an effect on each job crafting technique. However, due to the ambiguity in the current field of literature on job crafting and the open approach of this master thesis, the nature of these relationships is not conceptualized.

Furthermore, this study will especially explore how these job characteristics influence the different job crafting techniques. In order to study this relationship, Wrześniewski and Dutton's (2001) conceptualization of job crafting has been used and further operationalized using the additions of other authors (Berg et al., 2010; Berg et al., 2013). The job crafting

experiences of consultants are used to explore these relationships and these narratives are used to explore how certain job characteristics either facilitated or hindered them in the different forms of job crafting. Moreover, the list of job characteristics that affect job crafting is not exhaustive and therefore the open outlook of this study provides the opportunity to explore other job characteristics of consultants that possibly influence their job crafting behaviour.
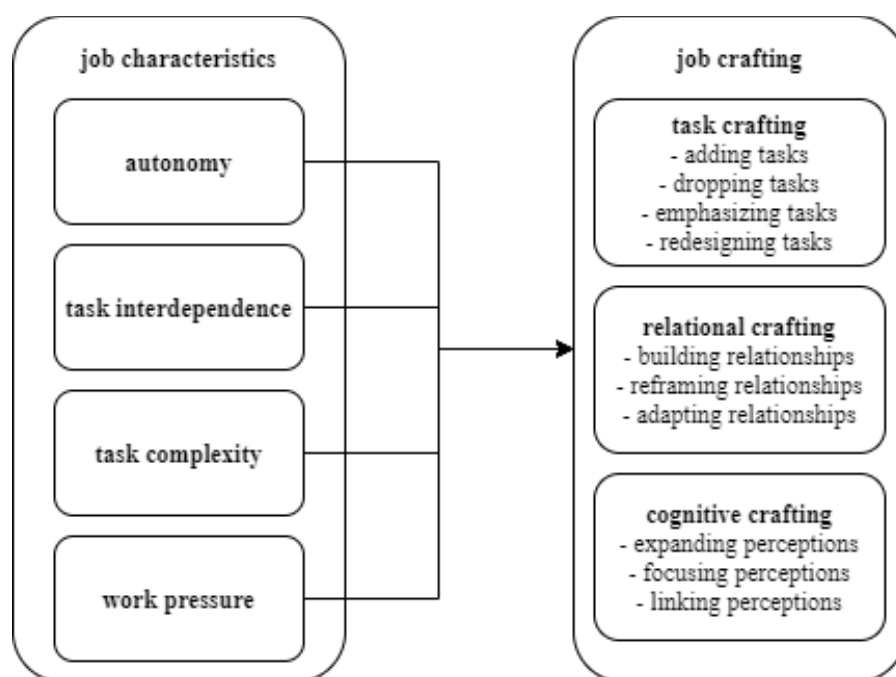

Figure 1: conceptual model

3. Methodology

In this chapter, the research methods of this master thesis will be discussed and argued for. First, the research strategy of this thesis will be discussed. Next, a case description of this thesis' research case will be given. Hereafter, the data collection method will be elaborated on. In the following section, the research instrument will be developed, based on the sensitizing concepts from chapter two. This will be followed by the method of data analysis and hereafter, the quality of this master thesis will be discussed on the grounds of different quality criteria. In the final paragraph, ethical considerations regarding the research will be discussed and elaborated on.

3.1 Research strategy

The goal of this master thesis was to contribute to the current literature about the effects of job characteristics on job crafting by exploring how the job characteristics of consultants influenced their perceived opportunities for job crafting. In order to realize this goal, a theory-oriented research has been conducted. By conducting theory-oriented research, a contribution can be made to the existing body of literature on the effects of job characteristics on job crafting. In the current state of the literature, there are contradicting findings on the aforementioned effects and, therefore, this study contributes to this body of literature, by studying how the job characteristics of consultants affect their opportunities for job crafting.

Moreover, to study these effects, the conducted study has a qualitative nature. The qualitative nature of this research fitted best with answering the 'how-question' of this master thesis. Furthermore, Wrześniewski and Dutton (2001) state that job crafting is dynamic, and therefore there are methodological challenges how to best study the process of job crafting. They argue that 'studying narratives of work may be a better way to study job crafting, for crafting takes many forms and directions, involving how people see their work and themselves in their work' (Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001, p. 196-197). In-depth insights that can be gained from such narratives are, for example, not easily extracted from survey questions where personal explanations and stories are hard to capture. Therefore, the interviews of this research were focused on narratives and experiences of the interviewees. They were asked to look back at work and developments in their work and provide narratives and examples on these. In this way, it was possible to gain in-depth insights in how job crafting had taken place and how certain job characteristics influenced job crafting.

Furthermore, in this qualitative research, deductive research methods have been applied. The research approach of this study can be regarded as deductive, because it starts with existing literature as a starting point to study a phenomenon (Myers, 2019). This master thesis uses existing literature to conceptualize the three different forms of job crafting by Wrześniewski and Dutton (2001), which was used to study job crafting in practice. However, this study has used an open outlook towards the relationship between job characteristics and job crafting, and therefore did not use predefined theoretical relationships between the concepts. This research benefited from this open view, because the current body of literature on the relationship between job characteristics and job crafting shows contradicting results. During the data gathering process, the nature of the relationship between job crafting and job characteristics was not predefined and therefore studied with an open outlook. As a result, the open view regarding the relationship between job characteristics and job crafting was beneficial for trying to explain the aforementioned ambiguity within job crafting literature.

3.2 Case description

This research focused on job crafting behaviour of consultants. As described in chapter two, consultants are an interesting case, as they potentially have high levels of autonomy, task complexity, task interdependence, and work pressure. Additionally, consultants are subjected to work situations that require crafting, and therefore will most likely feel the need to craft their jobs (Parker, 2014). Moreover, the job craft conceptualization of Wrześniewski and Dutton (2001) was based on job crafting behaviour of nurses, hairdressers, and hospital cleaners. More recent research studied job crafting and the influence of job characteristics of hotel employees (Kim et al., 2018), salespersons (Lyons, 2008), and assembly workers and teachers (Ghitulescu, 2007). Therefore, studying job crafting behaviour of consultants and the way that their job characteristics influence their ability to engage in job crafting can be interesting, because they work in a different organizational context, as they are highly educated workers who work in knowledge intensive firms (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). Due to these reasons, consultants were chosen as research case. In this research, instead of studying multiple consultants from a single organization, consultants from various organizations have been studied.

3.3 Data collection

Open-ended interviews have been used in order to collect data for this master thesis. In open-ended interviews, the gathered data consists of 'direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge' (Labuschagne, 2003, p. 101). In this research,

interviewees were asked to share their knowledge, perceptions, and experiences, and therefore it is important that the interviewer conducts these interviews in such a way that the interviewees feel compelled to openly share their knowledge and experiences (Alvesson & Lee Ashcraft, 2012).

In particular, semi-structured interview have been conducted which focused on narratives of the interviewees. For these interviews, an interview guide was used. This interview guide consisted of open-ended questions that had been prepared beforehand, based on existing literature. However, the order of the questions and follow-up questions asked was based on the answers given by the interviewees. The loose structure enabled the researcher to focus on certain topics and themes, but still have the freedom to deviate from this structure to follow new leads and insights during the interview that can spark the interviewees to tell narratives and give examples (Alvesson & Lee Ashcraft, 2012). Moreover, because the interviews were structured beforehand, the researcher was assured that all interviewees were asked the same set of questions and no important data was missed.

In this research, the interviews were conducted via Skype, as it provided the opportunity for audio and video interviewing. The researcher tried to conduct all interviews with video, but due to constraints of some consultants, some interviews have only been audio recorded. The use of Skype was beneficial in this research, as it was not possible to conduct interviews face-to-face. Consequently, Skype interviews provided more flexible and convenient conditions for interviewees to participate in this research. Sullivan (2012) argues that in video interviewing, the researcher still has access to verbal and nonverbal cues, which can provide an equal authenticity level with face-to-face interviews because it is still possible to evaluate the behavioural cues of interviewees. However, this was not possible for the audio interviews, and for the video interviews, it proved to be challenging to actually see and interpret these behavioural cues.

3.3.1 Sample selection

Normally, the number of interviews conducted would be based on the principle of data saturation. This refers to the point were no more new information is gathered by conducting more interviews (Saunders, 2012). However, due to the time constraints of this master thesis, it was not possible to aim for the exact point of data saturation. Consequently, this research tried to pursue the point were no more new information was obtained, but this point was not reached, as the last interview of this research still contained new information.

In this master thesis, ten interviews have been conducted with consultants from various organizations. An overview of the consultants is given in table 1. Since this research studied consultants from multiple organizations, there is a high level of variation among interviewees which allows for a higher level of transferability of the research outcomes. This will be elaborated on later in this chapter.

The participants of this research have been selected using snowball sampling, which occurs when 'the researcher accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants' (Noy, 2008, p. 330). In this sampling technique, the participants volunteered to participate in the research rather than being chosen (Saunders, 2012). This research benefited from this sampling technique as the consultants who took part in the study provided a network of consultants which made it easier to find potential participants. A possible danger of snowball sampling is that respondents often suggest participants who share similar characteristics or the same outlook (Etikan, Alkassim, & Abubakar, 2016). Therefore, the researcher ensured that the set of respondents was sufficiently varied by purposely asking if the interviewee could suggest consultants from different types of consultancy firms, different branches, or different levels of experience.

interviewee	type of consultant	duration interview
interviewee 1 - Inez	junior data consultant/advisor	0:45:57
interviewee 2 - Jasper	ITS management consultant	0:42:16
interviewee 3 - Merle	trainee management consultant	1:12:02
interviewee 4 - Jord	business and IT consultant	0:56:12
interviewee 5 - Jeli	interim professional/consultant in information safety and privacy	0:43:17
interviewee 6 - Bonny	consultant sustainable employability	0:34:03
interviewee 7 - Joost	senior organizational consultant/advisor	1:05:07
interviewee 8 - Marietta	information consultant/advisor security and privacy	0:37:32
interviewee 9 - Suzanne	junior data consultant in capacity management	0:56:24
interviewee 10 - Florie	project manager consultant marketing	0:44:32

Table 1: Interviewees

3.4 Interview guide

The interview guide is based on an operationalization that has been created based on the literature on job crafting of Wrześniewski & Dutton (2001) and Berg et al., (2010). In addition, job characteristics have been operationalized by means of literature on job characteristics that can affect job crafting (Berg et al., 2014; Ghitulescu, 2007). The relationship between job crafting and job characteristics is not operationalized because of the open outlook towards this relationship. The operationalization is displayed in figure 2.

Concept	Dimension	Indicator
Job crafting	Task crafting	adding tasks
		dropping tasks
		emphasizing tasks
		redesigning tasks
	Relational crafting	building relationships
		reframing relationships
		adapting relationships
	Cognitive crafting	expanding perceptions
		focusing perceptions
		linking perceptions
Job characteristics	Autonomy	
	Task interdependence	
	Task complexity	
	Work pressure	

Figure 2: operationalization

The interview guide consists of questions and topics regarding job crafting experiences and the role of job characteristics. The interviewees were asked what job characteristics are evident in their jobs, to describe how they engaged in past job crafting behaviour, and to illustrate how their job characteristics either enabled or hindered job crafting. The interview guide can be found in Appendix A - Interview guide.

3.5 Data analysis

The Skype interviews have been recorded and literal transcripts of those recordings have been made. The transcripts of the interviews were analysed by means of template analysis. Template analysis can be described as an analysis technique that 'balances a relatively high degree of structure in the process of analysing textual data with the flexibility to adapt it to the needs of a particular study' (King, 2012, p. 426). This technique provides researcher with structure for the data analysis phase, whilst also giving the researcher the required flexibility of, for example, the number of levels of coding hierarchy (King, 2012). This technique was deemed most suitable for studying the relationship between job crafting and job characteristics with an open perspective, while still providing structure during the analysis.

Before analysing the data, an initial template was developed based on the operationalization of the key concepts of this study. The initial template can be found in Appendix B - Initial template. The interview transcripts were first coded with preliminary codes in order to organize the data. Later, these have been clustered together to form higher level codes, and as a result, themes developed. Hierarchical coding allows the researcher to analyse data at varying levels (Symon & Cassell, 2012). During the coding process, the initial template was constantly developing and resulted eventually in the final template, which is displayed in Appendix C - Final template.

3.6 Quality criteria

A lot of research has been conducted on characteristics and criteria that define 'quality' in qualitative research (Symon & Cassell, 2012). Many authors argue that qualitative and quantitative research cannot be assessed by the same criteria, since the methodologies used in each area are so different (e.g.. Easterby-Smith, Golden-Biddle, & Locke, 2008). In quantitative research, criteria such as validity and reliability are well known criteria to assess the quality of a research. However, in qualitative research, applying criteria such as construct validity makes little sense (Symon & Cassell, 2012). In order to assess the quality of this

master thesis, four assessment criteria developed by Guba and Lincoln (1989) have been used, which are 'credibility', 'transferability', 'dependability', and 'confirmability'.

Credibility entails demonstrating a good fit between 'constructed realities of respondents and the reconstructions attributed to them' (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 237). It assesses if the researcher has correctly captured the phenomenon studied (Symon & Cassell, 2012). In order to enhance the credibility of this research, a record of initial constructions and developments on the understanding of them has been written down in the form of a research diary. As a result, original constructions that have been changed can be checked. In addition, member checks have been done, as all interview transcripts and interpretations have been sent to the interviewees. They were able to check the correctness of the transcripts and could in this way ensure that their views were accurately captured.

Transferability refers to 'the researcher providing enough detail about the specific research case that the reader can judge what other (similar) contexts - and particularly whether their own situation - might be informed by the findings' (Symon & Cassell, 2012, p. 207). The transferability can be improved by through a thick description of the research case. In this research, a description on the job characteristics of consultants have been given, in order to improve the transferability. In addition, a description of the job characteristics of the consultants of this research is provided in the analysis.

Dependability entails 'demonstrating how methodological changes and shifts in constructions have been captured and made available for evaluation' (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 242). changes in constructions are a fundamental part of a qualitative research process, where refinement and understanding are part of the research (Symon & Cassell, 2012). The dependability of this research is enhanced through keeping a research diary where, for example, notes were kept on why certain codes were redefined or removed during the data analysis phase of the research and the researcher's analysing process is captured. Furthermore, this research benefited from the use of an initial template and a final template, as these templates capture the developments of the constructs used in this research (King, 2012).

Finally, confirmability entails making clear 'where the data came from and how such data were transformed into the presented findings' (Symon & Cassell, 2012, p. 208). In other words, it provides a description of the data collection and analysis process, so that the reader is assured that 'data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts an personas apart from the researcher and are not simply figments of the researcher's

imagination' (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p. 243). In order to improve the confirmability of this research, an elaborated description of the data collection and analysis methods of this research have been given in the methodology chapter.

3.7 Research ethics

An important aspect of conducting research is the topic of ethics. As conducting a research involves people, it is important that the researcher considers ethical issues and the potential harmful effects of the study (Holt, 2012). In this master thesis, therefore, various ethical considerations have been taken into account during the whole research process.

When the interviewees were approached to participate in the research, they have been properly informed about the aim of the study and the degree of involvement. They were also informed about their ability to withdraw at any moment in the research. Moreover, issues such as confidentiality and the anonymity of the interviewees have been explicitly addressed (see Appendix A – interview guide). During the data collection process, the interviewees were asked for permission to record the interviews and their anonymity was addressed again. The recordings and transcripts of the interviews were only used for the purpose of this master thesis and the interviewees were given the opportunity to see the transcript of their interview to check if their thoughts were accurately captured. However, the respondents that wanted to see their transcript did not propose any changes to the data. Furthermore, the participants have been asked whether they wanted to receive the final research report.

4. Results

In this chapter, the results of this master thesis will be presented. These results are derived from coding and analysing interviews with ten consultants. This chapter will first elaborate on the selection of job characteristics made in chapter two and hereafter, the job crafting behaviour of the interviewed consultants and the influence of these job characteristics will be discussed.

4.1 Job characteristics

Chapter two of this study has elaborated on four job characteristics that consultants are likely to have, and in current job crafting literature, there exists an ambiguity regarding their influences on job crafting. The four job characteristics discussed during the interviews were: autonomy, task interdependence, task complexity, and work pressure. In the following sections, the extent to which and in what way these job characteristics were present in the work of the interviewed consultants will be elaborated on.

4.1.1 Autonomy

Autonomy on the job refers to the control over the execution of a job and the discretion of an individual in scheduling the work and determining which procedures to use in carrying it out (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). All interviewed consultants indicated that they experienced a high level of autonomy and control in executing their tasks. During the analysis, autonomy was often associated with the freedom of being a knowledge professional, decision latitude, the ability to schedule their own working days, and job design.

Consultants are knowledge professionals and therefore have superior knowledge over their clients regarding the content of the assignment. Throughout the interviews it appeared that the consultants indeed had such superior knowledge which gave them freedom to set or influence their own deadlines for their assignments, as Merle for example describes.

> "Often when I start a project there is a global time scope. But the point is: clients are often business managers, directors, or someone from the management layer. And my work is about research and analysis and they often do not have a clear view on how long these things should last, as that is not their work. So when I start a new project, they will always ask me: how long do you think you need for this assignment and how much do you have available? (...) Then I can say that I will have it finished by a certain date, based on for instance two days a week." (Merle, interview 3:11)

However, this freedom can sometimes be inhibited as some assignments and projects sometimes have to be finished before a certain date.

Moreover, consultants appear to have a broad job design and often work on projects with a broad project description consisting of, for example, a problematical case or an end goal specification. Such a broad job design gives them a frame in which they have to operate, as well as freedom to make their own decisions during an assignment and schedule their working days. Bonny for example explains that it doesn't matter when they work on their tasks and indicates that some of some colleagues like to do most of their work at night and Florie mentions that she sometimes gets out of bed a few hours earlier to work on a task she decided not to do the day before. Moreover, most consultants indicate that in their assignments, there is no clearly defined route towards realizing the end product which gives them the freedom to decide how to carry out their assignments, as is explained by, for instance, Inez and Suzanne.

> "Even though they have an assignment with a certain goal, you can, as an advisor, still see for yourself how you reach that goal. You are able to choose your own route and tasks." (Inez, interview 1:8)

> "You have a deadline and often a deliverable in the form of an analysis or a presentation or an answer to a question. And indeed, you can fill in for yourself how to reach that." (Suzanne, interview 9:6)

Another aspect that is beneficial for the consultants' perceived autonomy, was the fact that most of them have little supervision in carrying out their tasks. Some consultants explained that they do have one or more supervisors, but they mention that these supervisors often do not exactly know what they are doing at what time (Suzanne), are only a supervisor on paper (Marietta), or are very facilitative (Jasper, Bonny, and Florie).

However, as much autonomy the consultants claim they have, they also mention that it can sometimes be limited by their clients, as some clients want to have some sort of control over the assignment which means that the consultants have to report and deliberate the decisions they make with the client. Despite this, all consultants indicate that they often have enough decision latitude to give substance on how to perform their work and in what way to carry out their assignments.

4.1.2 Task interdependence

Task interdependence entails the extent to which work processes are interrelated with one another, which means that the actions of one person can be dependent on others' (Scott, 1987). Ghitulescu (2007) indicates that there is always a certain level of interdependence present in an organizational environment, as workers do not perform tasks in complete isolation of one another. This was indeed the case for the consultants as all consultants indicated that they were in some way dependent on others in carrying out their tasks. Many

consultants (Inez, Merle, Jord, Jeli, Joost, Marietta, and Suzanne) explained that they believe that interdependencies are inherent to the consultancy profession. When carrying out the assignment, it is important to take into account and gather information from all stakeholders relevant to the case. As a result, consultants have to align their tasks with the information given from these stakeholders and their schedules and therefore this dependency is inherent to successfully realizing the end goal. Inez explains this in the following way.

> "For my work I have to align and communicate a lot. You never lock yourself up for a week to then show your face again or give an update. A very big part of my job consists of aligning, communicating, calling, keeping each other up to date, giving updates, and joining meetings. So yes, that is definitely a part of it. It is a big part of my job. So I also have to take into account the directions that others want to go in carrying out my work." (Inez, interview 1:14)

From the narratives of the consultants, it appeared that there were three main interdependencies present, namely dependencies with the client, dependencies with colleagues, and dependencies with workers at the client. This distinction is not made within earlier studies regarding the effect of task interdependence on job crafting, as Ghitulescu (2007) and Tims and Bakker (2010) only regard employees' task interdependence with respect to others in their work group. This distinction between these different interdependencies could be specific for knowledge workers, such as consultants, who get hired to work on projects for external clients. In performing their work, consultants will to some extent be dependent on their client as it is the person who hands them the assignment. The consultants indicated that in carrying out their tasks, they are dependent on the information they receive from their clients, their schedules, and their wishes. They indicate their freedom can be limited by their clients, since the client has an influence in the tasks they perform. Moreover, the consultants can also be dependent on their colleagues, especially when working on projects in a team. In that case, they will have to align their team roles, schedules, and tasks with one another when working on the project. Additionally, most of the interviewed consultants work on their projects at the location of the client. To be able to work on their assignments, they need the input and information from the workers who work at the client. They need to involve them and in that way gain their trust in order to successfully implement the consultant's end product or solution.

> "And I believe that the human aspect of our job is very important, because like I said: if you cannot get the people inside the organization along, you can write an amazing policy document. But if then nothing happens with that policy document, nothing will change. So that is very important." (Jeli, interview 5:18)

In sum, consultants are dependent on actions of their colleagues, clients, and employees of the client, and therefore often have to deal with high levels of task interdependence.

4.1.3 Task complexity

Task complexity relates to the difficulty or ease involved in completing a task and the amount of thought that is needed in order to complete a task (Ghitulescu, 2007; Perrow, 1967). In general, the consultants indicated that they considered their tasks as complex, as they have to perform large and non-routine tasks which take a long time to finish. They come across complex cases in which there is not one right answer or one way to carry it out (Inez), where they are constantly reinventing the wheel (Jasper), or where they have to switch between the different roles they have to take while performing their work (Joost). Yet, this is not the case for all of their tasks and projects, which is indicated by Jeli who mentions that her work consists of a combination of more and less complex cases.

> "Sometimes you come across similar assignments which you have done before. It can be quite the same trajectories. But yet they are always problems that are organization specific and therefore are different than a situation you are used to. So yes, that can be quite complex assignments. But sometimes an assignment is easier to do when the municipal has given an very clearly defined assignment and they have done some work for you in advance. Those are less complex assignments which you complete more easily." (Jeli, interview 5:6)

This also indicates that a distinction can be made between complex tasks and complex assignments that the consultants deal with. The consultants mention both complex tasks and complex assignments, and these complex assignments can consist of a combination of more complex and less complex tasks.

Another difficulty that some of the consultants experienced, was difficulty due to the high quality that they hold for themselves in carrying out tasks, therefore making tasks more complex theirselves. As they are knowledge professionals, they indicate that the client is often satisfied more easily than they are, and that they often want to take their task one step further than needed and therefore making it more complex (Jasper and Jord). Merle explains that she can choose for herself how complex she make her tasks and she takes that opportunity to challenge and develop herself.

> "we are free to make our work as complex as we want, so how complex my work is, is often because I make my work so complex (…) In general I like to challenge myself and I always want to take my work to the next level. when I think: alright, I want to discover something else, I will go one step further and

take up a new challenge. So in that sense is my work constantly complex because I touch on new subjects." (Merle, interview 3:8)

In general, it can be said that the consultants often experience a high level of complexity in their work.

4.1.4 Work pressure

Work pressure is associated with the demands of one's job, and it occurs when job demands are too high and concerns arise that one is not able to handle the work (Bakker et al., 2004). Work pressure can derive from multiple sources and it can both be beneficial and harmful. Throughout the narratives of the consultants, it appeared that almost all consultants experience some sort of work pressure in their work. Different causes were related to them experiencing work pressure as it could derive from the pressure to prove yourself (Jeli), high organizational standards (Bonny), working on multiple assignments simultaneously (Jeroen & Suzanne), and the pressure of being an expert, which was indicated by Jeli.

> "Because I am the one who has the expertise, you notice that others expect you to always have the solution. And often you do not have it, or there is none and no one has it. In that sense it is very difficult to keep everyone pleased, so for me that results in a sort of work pressure, yes." (Jeli, interview 8:9)

However, the majority of the work pressure that the consultants experienced was due to time pressure, as Inez, for example, indicated that she feels pressure to get everything done in the 40 working hours she has in a week. Furthermore, the consultants indicate that they feel this pressure growing when they get close to a deadline of one or even multiple assignments in one week.

> "the time pressure is quite interchanging. Sometimes you have many assignments simultaneously which have to be finished in a certain amount of time. and sometimes you have longer amounts of time to finish assignments or you have only one assignments instead of four at the same time. So that changes. You can somewhat steer that, but sometimes the deadlines just come around the same time and sometimes they don't. So yes, that pressure can definitely be there." (Jeli, interview 5:8)

What can be concluded from their stories is that most consultants do not experience a constant work pressure, but rather periodical work pressure with quiet periods which interchange with busy periods.

4.2 Job crafting and the influences of job characteristics

According to the conceptualization of Wrześniewski and Dutton (2001), job crafting can be subdivided into three job crafting techniques, namely: task crafting, relational crafting, and

cognitive crafting. The stories of the consultants showed that all three job crafting techniques were present and they will be discussed hereafter.

4.2.1 Task crafting

Wrześniewski and Dutton (2001) describe task crafting as changing the task boundaries of a job which can be done by changing the number, scope, or type of tasks done at work. Task crafting can be subdivided into four different forms, namely adding tasks, dropping tasks, emphasizing tasks, and redesigning tasks (Berg et al., 2010; Berg et al., 2013). These four task crafting forms and the way job characteristics influence these will be discussed in the following sections.

4.2.1.1 Adding tasks

Employees can choose to take on extra tasks or projects in their jobs and in that way change their jobs and alter their job design (Berg et al., 2010; Berg et al., 2013; Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001). The consultants interviewed in this study indicated to be able to add new tasks or responsibilities to their regular job responsibilities and did this in different ways and for different reasons. The interviewees explained that they shaped their job by adding new specific tasks (Inez, Jeli, Jeroen, Marietta, and Florie), engaging in new projects (Jasper, Merle, and Jeroen), and adding responsibilities such as guiding and mentoring colleagues (Jasper, Bonny, and Jeroen). During the interviews, it became clear that the motives for adding new tasks were twofold and sometimes interrelated.

On the one hand, the consultants indicate to add tasks for personal reasons, as they describe to add tasks because of their personal interests or needs. Merle, for example, added the task of coordinating a youth association at her organization, as she indicates that she missed informal activities with the younger employees in her organization.

> "We missed informal activities and a bit of bonding with the organization. (…) Eventually we started a youth initiative which is now the youth association of our organization. We set it up and now we organize activities for employees who feel young enough to identify with the youth association, and I am very involved in that." (Merle, interview 3:13)

On the other hand, the consultants add tasks to contribute to the development and improvement of the organization and therefore contributing to organizational performance.

> "I initiated a new IT project to renew our whole IT environment. I am sure that if I did not initiate that, it wouldn't be developed. We would still be working on our stand alone computers and we wouldn't have a shared environment to share our documents and we wouldn't use Teams for meetings or

> whatever. And now I am developing and writing out the alignment of our quotation process. (...) I thought it would be useful to visually outline and develop it for the whole group." (Jeroen, interview 7:51)

This is in line with the study of Demerouti (2014), who suggests that job crafting can be beneficial for organizational performance. This motive was often related to their personal motives, as Jeroen emphasizes that he likes to be involved in improving organizational processes, and Jasper indicated that he started the development branch within his company for his own enjoyment.

When discussing how the consultants' job characteristics influence their job crafting behaviour, the most noteworthy finding was that the consultants saw adding tasks as a part of their job due to way that their job is designed. They often deal with broad problem statements or assignments with an end goal specification, which encourages and invites them to add new tasks when working on their assignments. Merle for example indicates that the tasks she needs to do change along the way as she realizes that new tasks are needed in order to complete her projects.

> "And if I look at projects. Because you have a more specific set of tasks. Or set of tasks is maybe not the correct way to describe it, but more or less a broad project description, than I have to say that my tasks often change along the way. I start my project with a global scope, and when I am working on it I often realize that other things are needed to get stuff done, so then I add those." (Merle, interview 3:16)

As their broad job and assignment description invites and encourages them to engage in this job crafting technique, the bottom-up and proactive character of job crafting as described in the current literature on job crafting can be questioned. The way the consultants' jobs are designed opens up opportunities for them to engage in this form of job crafting, and job crafting could therefore be more top-down and reactive than literature is suggesting. Managers can structure a job in such a way that employees engage in job crafting as a reaction to their job design.

Moreover, throughout the interviews, autonomy was a characteristic which the consultants often mentioned as a facilitating factor in their ability to add new tasks or responsibilities. The discretion the consultants experience gives them freedom to take on new tasks or responsibilities (Inez, Merle, Jeli, Bonny, Joost, and Marietta), gives them room for starting new initiatives (Jasper and Joost), or gives them the flexibility to deal with tasks that pop up (Florie). However, the ambiguity about the role of autonomy that is present in job crafting literature (as described in section 2.3) is also present in this study. Marietta mentions that she

has the freedom to add new tasks, but at the same time, she indicates that she is sometimes hesitant and feels constrained when deciding to add new tasks as she does not know if it is in the realm of her work.

> "Because my work is so free it is sometimes it is difficult when people propose to pick up a task together. I have no idea if that task is part of my job responsibilities or not. So then I say: well, it could be possible that I will be called back because I am doing something beyond my role here. So yes, that autonomy can sometimes be difficult." (Marietta, interview 8:27)

This could therefore mean that the ambiguity about the role of autonomy that exists in job crafting literature is legitimate as it can be facilitating as well as hindering when deciding to add new tasks. On the one hand, autonomy provides the freedom to add new tasks. On the other hand, however, it sets unclear boundaries within one's work which can make employees feel constrained in their decision to add a task because it is unclear whether a task pertains within the scope of their job.

4.2.1.2 Dropping tasks

In addition to adding new tasks, employees can also craft their jobs by deciding to drop certain tasks or responsibilities (Berg et al., 2010). Throughout the interviews, it became clear that the consultants actively engaged in this job crafting technique as they choose to either spend less time on certain tasks or to transfer them to other people and they do this for different reasons. An important motive for the consultants to drop tasks or spend less time on them was for personal reasons. Returning themes were that they spend less time on tasks they not enjoy doing (Merle, Bonny, and Marietta) or transfer tasks that they do not enjoy or deem to be unimportant (Jasper, Bonny, and Florie). However, Inez and Jeli explained that they do not rush less enjoyable tasks, as they believe that every task should be done equally, even the less enjoyable ones. Another motive for transferring certain tasks was to create a better person-job fit, as some consultants indicated that they interchange tasks with colleagues or transfer tasks that do not fit them. Bonny for instance mentions that she outsources the filing of project documents to a colleague because she has a hard time in structurally filing documents. Another example is from Merle, who transferred writing the financial substantiation of her assignment to two other colleagues who are better suited for that.

> "An example is that I had to financially substantiate my business model. That requires an extensive Excel sheet with all the details of the model that you made. Within this project I made two other colleagues responsible for the substantiation, while that was originally in the scope of my project. But I do not like that, and I am not as good in that, so I can do that but then I will not have as much

motivation left at the end of the day and the result will be worse. So that is a reason for me to check if someone else in the team is capable of doing that and then I involve him or her in my project." (Merle, interview 3:17)

When discussing other reasons for dropping tasks, the most important reason for the consultants to drop tasks was because of their experienced work pressure The consultants indicated that their main reason for dropping tasks was due to time constraints and therefore transferring certain tasks to colleagues to better distribute the work pressure between them. A factor hindering dropping tasks were the time constraints of other colleagues, inhibiting the consultants' ability to transfer tasks when their colleagues did not have time to take over their tasks. As a result, the consultants indicated to solve this problem by working overtime in order to finish those tasks. Another job characteristic that sometimes inhibited the consultants' ability to drop tasks was due to the complexity of a task. Inez and Joost for example indicate that they sometimes fails to transfer a task because her available colleagues do not have the required skills to perform that task. Moreover, Jasper explains that the transfer of certain types of projects was delayed because no one else in the organization had the experience to perform that type of tasks.

> "I've had a few times that I … Within our organization I was the first one who did a project for a certain publisher so then no one other than me had the expertise needed for those type of projects. The first time I did that project for that client I built up the expertise required. But after two of those types of projects I thought it was enough and I wanted someone else to work on those projects. But it took a while before someone else started doing those projects. So every time such projects were accepted, I was the one who got sent over to carry them out, while I actually didn't want to do them but I was the only one who had the expertise. In the end someone else volunteered to do it, but that took a while before that really happened." (Jasper, interview 2:21)

When transferring a task to a colleague, the consultants are dependent on their colleagues who need to have the time and skills to be able to take over a specific task or project. In this case, the dependency on their colleagues seems to hinder their ability to transfer a task or project. Furthermore, most consultants indicated that their autonomy had a facilitating role in the consultants' ability to drop tasks, as it provided them the freedom to actually drop certain tasks. Only Suzanne indicated that her independence sometimes delays her process of dropping tasks, as she first wants to spend time figuring out if she can perform a task herself before coming to the point of potentially dropping it. However, in general autonomy seemed to facilitate the consultants' ability to drop tasks.

4.2.1.3 Emphasizing tasks

Another technique for employees to alter their job designs is by spending more time or energy on certain tasks (Berg et al., 2013). What can be concluded from the interviews is that the consultants engage in emphasizing tasks mainly for personal reasons. Recurring themes were that they spend extra time on tasks they enjoy doing the most (Jasper, Merle, Jeli, Joost, Marietta, Suzanne, and Florie), tasks which make them feel energized (Bonny and Joost) or tasks that they deem to be more important (Merle). Suzanne for example explains that she completely loses herself in certain data analyses and therefore forgets time when working on them.

> "Those data analyses.. I can completely lose myself in those. Just because I like doing it and I want to keep analysing more and more. I believe I spend a lot of time in those." (Suzanne, interview 9:25)

From the experiences of the consultants, it can be concluded that autonomy facilitated them in emphasizing tasks. The freedom they have in scheduling their work makes it that they can choose for themselves how to fill in their work. Therefore they can allow themselves to spend more time on certain tasks if they can fit in within their given hours. They stress that it does not matter how they spend their hours and that the most important thing is that they realize a good end result. Jasper specifies that he is able to spend more time on tasks he enjoys, as long as the client is satisfied.

> "Yes that is possible, because if the client is satisfied, it is ok. And I notice that the client is satisfied quite easily, while I like to take that one next step or deliver something extra. So I do that at times that I really enjoy something." (Jasper, interview 2:22)

Furthermore, work pressure seemed to inhibit their ability to spend extra time on certain tasks. When the consultants experienced periods of high work pressure, they indicated that they did not have enough time and therefore could not afford to spend more time on certain tasks, as they felt time constraints due to approaching deadlines.

4.2.1.4 Redesigning tasks

The final task crafting technique is redesigning tasks, which relates to employees finding other ways to execute tasks, therefore making them their own (Berg et al., 2013). The stories of the consultants exhibited that they are able to either give their own twist to tasks or change tasks completely. Consultants who gave an example where they changed a task completely did this for practical reasons such as saving time (Jord) or because the original task was too difficult to carry out (Suzanne). Giving a twist to a task contributed to making the task your

own and creating a better person-task fit, and this was done for reasons such as enjoyment (Merle and Marietta), personal development (Joost and Bonny), or that it better suits their way if working (Florie). Jasper gave an example where he chose to use a new software that had experience with because of his study.

> "We also supply dashboards for clients. Those dashboards sound really fancy, but those were just files in Excel. The clients were satisfied with those, but because of my study I also have experience with Power BI. And one time at a client I decided I wasn't going to make the dashboard using Excel, but Power BI. And that went very well and the client was really satisfied with that, and now we even deliver dashboards using Power BI more often." (Jasper, interview 2:23)

Again when discussing the influence of the consultants' job characteristics, their broad job design seemed to invite them to redesign tasks. The stories of the consultants indicated that their job or assignment description does not specify how to perform their tasks. Marietta for example mentions that a part of her job is to make the workers at the client aware of the laws around privacy, but it says nowhere how to do it. She therefore takes that opportunity to make them aware in an active and modern way. This finding again challenges the proactive and bottom-up character of job crafting as described in current literature, as the job design of consultants invite them to carry out tasks in their own way.

The consultants saw their autonomy again as a facilitator in regard to their ability to craft. Their discretion gives them freedom to carry out tasks in their own way and they often take the opportunity to give their own twist in carrying out certain tasks. Moreover, the consultants' ability to redesign tasks can dependent on the client, as Jeli for example explains that she can feel inhibited in her way of performing a task, due to her dependencies with the client and the workers at client's organization.

> "It is very dependent on what the client wants. For example when the client wants you to deliver a piece and everyone will give their feedback via mail, that is his way. I would always prefer to start a conversation about it because in that way you create more involvement. But if the client says that he does not want his employees to make time for that.. then you do not have the freedom to do it in your own way." (Jeli, interview 5:20)

Another job characteristic that facilitated the consultants in redesigning was the complexity of a task. As the consultants deal with complex and large assignments, they see more possibilities to carry them out in their own way since there are multiple routes towards the end result. Suzanne explains that there are more ways to come to an answer in complex analyses and Inez mentions that she has more freedom to make her own way in writing large and

complex policy reports. Finally, Joost explains that he likes to look for improvements when he gets a similar assignment. However, he mentions that he sometimes does not have the time to make changes or improvements in his work and therefore copies things from previous assignments. This indicates that time pressure sometimes inhibits his ability to redesign how he executes a task.

4.2.2 Relational crafting

Using Wrześniewski and Dutton's (2001) conceptualization of job crafting, relational crafting has been subdivided into three different forms, namely building relationships, reframing relationships, and adapting relationships (Berg et al., 2010; Berg et al., 2013). These three forms were all present in the interviews in this study and will be discussed in the following sections.

4.2.2.1 Building relationships

As a first form of relational crafting, employees can build and engage in new relationships with others at work (Berg et al., 2010; Berg et al., 2013). The interviewed consultants all indicated to establish new relationships when performing their work and did this for different reasons. Often their motives to get to know new people were twofold. On the one hand, most interviewed consultants simply enjoy meeting new people, but on the other hand it helps them in performing their work as they often need the input of others in order to make their assignments a success, which is indicated by many consultants. Merle for instance states the following.

> "I like to get to know new people, so I do that just out of interest and curiosity. But I also do it because it helps you with organizational intensity. So to understand what really goes on at an organization or within a team it is helpful to speak with multiple people from different angles. So from customer service employees, to secretaries, to directors. They all have a different story and as a consultant it is helpful to hear different voices because it gives you context in an assignment." (Merle, interview 3:26)

This suggests that establishing new contacts could be inherent to the consultancy profession as it is needed to engage with new people in order to successfully carry out an assignment.

Throughout the interviews, it became clear that task interdependence as well as the fact that some consultants work at the client's organization have the most striking influence on the amount of new relationships that the consultants established. Consultants working on their assignments at the client indicated that they have the possibility to meet and talk to new people every time a new assignment started. They explain that it is an inherent part of their

job to introduce themselves and meet all the workers at the organization, especially for long lasting assignments. In combination with their aforementioned dependency on these workers, they are encouraged to establish new relationships. However, a noteworthy finding was that some consultants sometimes felt constrained with their dependency with someone, as their task interdependence sometimes obliges them to work with a certain person, even though they don't like to work with that person. This was indicated by Inez.

> "On the other hand, it makes it somewhat difficult sometimes. If I don't like to work with someone, but I am still dependent on that person for the assignment.. then I still have to keep working with that person in order to realize the goal of the assignment." (Inez, interview 1:32)

Some consultants also explained that they felt the freedom to make new connections, therefore indicating that their autonomy has a facilitating role in building new relationships. Inez for example indicated that she is able to independently make connections with other departments, and Jeli said that she feels the freedom to talk to whoever she wanted and that no one tells her who she can or cannot talk to at the client.

4.2.2.2 Reframing relationships

Besides building new relationships, employees can also reframe existing relationship by for instance getting to know the people they work with better (Berg et al., 2010; Berg et al., 2013). From the interviews, it can be concluded that the consultants value their relationships at work as they spend extra time nurturing them and getting to know the people they work with in an informal way. A distinction can be made between reframing the relationship with direct colleagues and with the employees at the client's organization. The consultants engaged in reframing their relationships with colleagues for multiple reasons, for instance making their interactions more enjoyable (Inez, Jasper, Merle, Joost, and Florie) or in order to improve their ability to work together (Jasper, Bonny, and Joost). Joost for instance mentioned that he sometimes goes cycling with some of his colleagues and takes that opportunity to spend some time to get to know some of them better.

> "In the season I will sometimes go cycling with a group of colleagues. I do not have a direct connection with a few of them, so I take that moment to have some social intercourse with those colleagues as well." (Jeroen, interview 7:34)

Consultants working on assignments at the client's organization indicated that they spend time to get to know workers there in an informally manner and their motives was often twofold. They indicated to spend time to get to know the workers at the client because of

personal reasons as it is improves their working environment, but at the same time they do it because they often need them to carry out their assignment and therefore they want to improve their work relationship with these workers. Many consultants indicated an important and easy way to get to know other people was at the coffee corner, as they explained that they often have informal talks with people while getting a coffee.

When discussing the way that the consultants' job characteristics influenced how they reframed their relationships, it became clear that both their dependency on some people and the fact that some consultants work at the client's organization encouraged them to invest in certain relationships. Suzanne for instance explains that she does not often work with colleagues, but instead works with employees of her clients. She admits that she invests a lot of her time to get to know these employees in order for her to better enjoy her working days.

> "Especially with projects where I am physically present a lot of the time. It makes your work more enjoyable. See, as a consultant you don't really have colleagues. Like, sometimes you are on a project with another consultant, but often the senior is much less present than you are. So you still want to have a collegial atmosphere when you are at the client, so I think that is why I have so much informal contacts at the client." (Suzanne, interview 9:40)

However, Jeli argues that if she has a smaller assignment with a short duration, she is less proactive in getting to know the people at the client's organization because she is only there for a short amount of time and therefore does not see the benefits of investing her time in those relationships as she leaves the organization rather soon.

Autonomy again seemed to be a facilitating factor for this job crafting technique, as the consultants indicate that they have the freedom to schedule hours in such a way to get to know colleagues or workers at the client better (Jasper, Bonny, and Suzanne), and that no one stands in the way of investing extra time in certain relationships (Inez, Joost, and Marietta). However, Joost also explains his freedom to invest in his invest in his relationships with colleagues is sometimes inhibited because of time constraints. This indicates that the work pressure he sometimes experiences is hindering his ability to nurture some of his relationships at work.

4.2.2.3 Adapting relationships

As the theory of Berg et al. (2013) describes, employees adapt relationships by offering help and support to others, which encourages others to provide help and support in return. In line with this theory, many interviewed consultants explained that they proactively provide

support to their colleagues with the knowledge that they will receive the same type of support in return. Bonny explained that she feels a sentiment of unity within her department which encourages her to provide help and support to her colleagues and vice versa, whilst Merle likes to provide help to others and notices that it works the other way around as well. Moreover, some consultants also indicated to provide help in the form of mentoring and guiding colleagues as Inez and Jasper sometimes guide new colleagues, and Joost has taken up the responsibility to function as a mentor for junior consultants within the organization.

Consultants who often work at the client's organization sometimes provide help to workers there, but they mention that the amount of help they can give is limited due to the scope of their assignment. Inez, among others, explains that she limits the amount of support she gives because of ethical reasons, as she is paid to work on her own assignment and not to provide support to others.

> "I do believe that if you are working on an assignment as an extern, you should always consider how much time it costs. It is no problem to help with simple stuff, but sometimes I get questions like 'I am working on this subject and I think that your expertise can help me with that, could you help me?'. But when those are things that are beyond the realm of your assignment, you have to think about how much time that would take because you are hired to do something else." (Inez, interview 1:43)

Work pressure seemed influence the consultants' ability to adapt their relationships the most. When the consultants experience high levels of work pressure, their ability to provide help and support to others is inhibited. They indicated that they do not think about proactively supporting colleagues when they experienced too much workload, or that they have to tell colleagues they are not able to help them because of time constraints and therefore cannot spend their time on other things. Florie for instance gave the following answer when asked if she sometimes felt inhibited when colleagues asked for help.

> "Yes, sometimes that occurs. But then I often just do not react or tell them I do not have time to help." (Florie, interview 10:28)

Additionally, autonomy seemed to facilitate their ability to proactively help others, as some consultants indicated that they have their discretion provides them the ability to choose to provide help and support to others.

4.2.3 Cognitive crafting

Task and relational crafting involve making physical changes in aspects of jobs. In contrary, the third job crafting technique, cognitive crafting, does not relate to making physical

changes, but instead involves making perceptual changes, therefore changing the cognitive boundaries of the job (Beg et al., 2010; Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001). Cognitive crafting can be subdivided into three forms, namely: expanding perceptions, focusing perceptions, and linking perceptions (Berg et al., 2013).

4.2.3.1 Expanding perceptions

The first way in which employees can change the cognitive boundaries of their job is by expanding their perceptions regarding the impact of their job, and thus relates to how employees perceive their tasks, relationships, or job as a whole (Berg et al., 2013; Wrześniewski et al., 2013). Throughout the interviews with the consultants, it became clear that a lot of the consultants (Inez, Merle, Jord, Jeli, Bonny, Joost, Marietta, and Suzanne) are able to see the higher significance of the work they do. They indicate that they are able to ascribe such a higher significance because they work on assignments in the social or health sector. They explain that do not directly add value to these sectors, but indicate to be able to see that have an indirect contribution with their work, which Inez explains as follows.

> "So we do not directly make sure that youth get better care, or that social securities are distributed better. We do not directly take care of that, and I do not provide care or remit social securities myself. However, I do work at departments and organizations which make sure that congregations are able to spend their resources smarter through which the right things can be done in the right areas, and the right care is provided to the right people, and the resources are well spent." (Inez, interview 1:38)

In a similar vein, some consultants try to zoom out when performing tasks in order to see how they support a larger organization with the tasks they carry out. Jord for instance mentioned that he chooses to take on assignments from organizations that deliver a societal value and says that his contribution is only to support the organization. This indicates an overlap between task crafting and cognitive crafting, as Jord can choose assignments that positively influence his ability to zoom out with respect to the societal value he delivers with his work. Moreover, Joost likes to zoom out to see how his tasks are related to others and how they all connect on a higher level. Joost also attempts to do this when working in a project team, as he tries to see how his work relates to the work of his colleagues in his team and how their work together is connected to the organization as a whole.

However, consultants who did not work on assignments for such sectors (Jasper and Florie) indicated that they struggle to ascribe a higher significance to their work. Florie explains that she misses meaningfulness of her work in that aspect, and Jasper believes that he has a very minimal societal contribution with the work he does.

A noteworthy finding was that the work characteristics of the consultants did not really influence how they perceived their tasks, relationships, or job as a whole. Only Joost mentioned that he sometimes does not have the time to zoom out and reflect on the work he does, indicating that work pressure sometimes inhibits his ability to expand his perceptions regarding his work. Instead, the consultants indicated that they simply enjoy doing their work and therefore do not feel the need to engage in this form of job crafting. Additionally, since many of the interviewed consultants work on assignments in the social or health sector, they do not feel the need to explicitly put their work in perspective. For some consultants, the societal value they deliver is obvious and therefore do not need to expand their perceptions in order to see the value they have with their work.

The fact that cognitive crafting does not change the physical boundaries of a job, but rather involves changes in perception, could be a reason why the job characteristics studied in this master thesis did not seem to have an influence on this job crafting technique. Tims and Bakker (2010) do not even see cognitive crafting as a true form of job crafting, but instead see it as a way of employees to cope with certain circumstances. This could explain why job characteristics such as autonomy, task interdependence, and task complexity did not seem to influence the consultants' ability to expand their perceptions.

4.2.3.2 Focusing perceptions

In the second form of cognitive crafting, employees can focus their perceptions on certain parts or aspects of their job that are valuable to them (Berg et al., 2013). The consultants interviewed in this study did not seem to engage in this job crafting technique, except for Jord, who indicated that he focuses on the tasks he enjoys, especially when he has to carry out tasks that he does not enjoy doing, therefore motivating him to carry out these less enjoyable tasks.

> "I motivate myself by taking small steps from the output, so I can quickly show something. And if someone is pleased with that small result, I pull myself up from that satisfaction. I try to create some type of game for myself. And then I intertwine those tasks that I enjoy less with the more enjoyable tasks and then I make sure that it yield short cycled payoffs." (Jord, interview 4:22)

Other consultants did not mention to explicitly focus on certain tasks or aspects of their job. Instead they explain that there are always aspects of the job that are less enjoyable or relevant, such as administration, meetings, or typing reports of meetings. These are aspects of the job that are less enjoyable or relevant, but the consultants indicate that these tasks need to be done

in order to do the more enjoyable and relevant aspects of the job. As these are only small aspects of their job, it becomes more easy to accept them as part of their work.

Another reason why the consultants did not really engage in this job crafting technique, was due to their ability to drop tasks that did not fit them or were less enjoyable or interesting. Bonny and Marietta for explain indicates that they have the freedom and ability to transfer tasks they do not enjoy doing. This indicates that their autonomy enables them to make actual changes and therefore lower the need to engage in this job crafting technique. Moreover, Jasper and Florie mentioned that they are able to report to their supervisor about tasks that they do not want to do anymore.

> "I try to make clear to myself why I do not enjoy doing a certain task. Then I make sure that I don't have to do those tasks anymore, so I tell my supervisor. (...) I report that to my manager and then he will ensure that I won't have to carry out those tasks anymore" (Jasper, interview 2:37)

This suggests that, besides their freedom to make actual changes, their supervisors also have a facilitating role in making these changes.

4.2.3.3 Linking perceptions

The third form of cognitive crafting can be done by linking personal interests, values, and goals to their work, making connections between aspects of their identity and their work (Berg et al., 2013). Some consultants indicated that they linked tasks with their personal ambition and do this by wanting to do new types of tasks and examine if they are still learning form the tasks they carry out. Bonny for example mentions that she thinks it is important to learn something new from each assignment she does, while Jasper stresses that he is able to keep interested by doing new things. Inez also stresses the importance of personal growth as she claims to be very ambitious.

> "With every task.. well, not every task of course.. but with a lot of tasks I examine if I am still learning from them. I believe it is very important to keep developing myself. In the end, I am a very ambitious person and I know where I want to be in a few years from now. If the task I am doing is not contributing to that, then that is something I can give back to the client." (Inez, interview 1:40)

Throughout the interviews, a returning theme was that linking perceptions often led to actual action. As the consultants link their personal interests and goals with their work, it often results in making physical changes. Some consultants (Merle, Jord, Jeli, Joost) indicated that they have the freedom to choose or influence which assignments to take on and take that freedom to choose assignments that fit their interests, values, and ambitions. Others (Inez and

Jasper) explained that they were able to transfer tasks or assignments that did not match their interests or ambitions, whilst some consultants even indicated that they chose to work in a particular sector because of their values and interests (Bonny and Joost). Moreover, Florie explained that when she goes to a congress with her organization, she attends workshops that directly link to here interest for data information.

> "I think everything I do on the technical side is very interesting and fun. And I try to link that with programming, which is the direction in which I graduated. So then I try to really find that connection. For example, once a year we go to a very big congress in America. When we are there, I always attend the workshops that interest me, like the sessions about personal growth or data information, as well as the workshops that are useful for my work." (Florie, interview 10:35)

It showed that autonomy did not directly influence the consultants' ability to link perceptions, but it does facilitate their ability to take actual actions in order to perform those tasks that link with their personal interests and ambitions. This means that autonomy can have an indirect influence on someone's ability to make connections between someone's personal identity and one's work.

5. Conclusion and discussion

In this final chapter, an answer on the research question of this study will be given, which will be done in section 5.1. Within section 5.2, the value and quality of this answer will be discussed by reflecting on the limitations of this study. Finally, both the theoretical and practical implications of this study will be discussed and recommendations for further research will be provided.

5.1 Conclusion

The aim of this master thesis was to contribute to the current literature about the effects of job characteristics on job crafting by exploring how the job characteristics of consultants influence their perceived opportunities for job crafting. In order to contribute to the existing literature, the following research question had been formulated: *'How do the job characteristics of consultants influence their perceived opportunities for job crafting?'*

The narratives of the consultants showed that their job characteristics can influence job crafting in various ways. As a result, this study found multiple mechanisms regarding the way that these job characteristics influenced their perceived opportunities for job crafting. Previous research mainly distinguished the nature of the influence of these job characteristics, describing a positive or negative influence. However, this study extends this distinction and found that these job characteristics can encourage, facilitate, inhibit, delay, or even lower the need for job crafting, therefore distinguishing different mechanisms regarding this influence.

Furthermore, this study found that a the researched job characteristics can relate to job crafting in various ways. They related differently with different job crafting techniques, whereas task interdependence was for instance mostly encouraging consultants to engage in relational crafting, it was often considered to be inhibiting their ability to task craft. Moreover, the job characteristics could also have different relational mechanisms within the same job crafting technique, as task complexity for instance was considered to be encouraging or facilitating in the consultants ability to redesign tasks, while this complexity was hindering or delaying their ability to drop a task. Various mechanisms were also present in the relationship between job characteristics and single forms of job crafting, as, for example, autonomy can facilitate as well as inhibit the consultants when adding new tasks. The presence of these various mechanisms shows that the ambiguity regarding the relationship between job characteristics and job crafting that is present in job crafting literature indeed exists, as these job characteristics can relate to job crafting in multiple ways. A reason for this ambiguity

could be that different personalities or situations play a role in how the consultants value and experience their job characteristics. Certain job characteristics could therefore be helpful in some situations for some people, but hindering in other situations or for other people.

Moreover, this study found that the different job crafting techniques did not only relate with the job characteristics, but also with each other. A returning theme was that by means of task crafting, consultants engaged in relational crafting as well. When the consultants for instance added a new tasks, it was often followed with meeting new people because of the addition of the new task. Additionally, cognitive crafting was less present in this study and did not seem to be influenced as much by job characteristics as the other forms of job crafting. However, it was found to be relating to the other two types of job crafting. The consultants' ability to engage in task and relational crafting shapes the cognitive perceptions of their work, which lowered their need for cognitive crafting, as they were able to make actual changes.

A final remark is that this study was encouraged by an ambiguity that is present in literature regarding the relationship between job characteristics and job crafting. This study shows the same ambiguity, as the job characteristics can influence job crafting in various ways. However, this ambiguity is hard to explain, as the different job crafting techniques differ from each other and other factors such as personality traits and organizational features play a role in how employees value and experience their job characteristics.

5.2 Discussion

Throughout this study, methodological choices have been made which could have impacted the results of this study, and therefore, a reflection on these methodological choices will be given, followed with a reflection of the role of the researcher during the execution of the study. Hereafter, a reflection will be given on the theoretical choices made during this study, and the final section will elaborate on theoretical and practical contributions, as well as recommendations for further research.

5.2.1 Methodological reflection

The methodological decisions made throughout this study can be reflected upon, using the quality criteria described in section 3.6. As described in chapter three, a qualitative research approach has been used in order to study job crafting behaviour and the influences job characteristics, as Wrześniewski and Dutton (2001) argue that job crafting could best be studied by means of narratives of work, which is possible when using qualitative research methods. In terms of credibility, the qualitative nature of this study and the use of narratives

indeed provided a detailed description and in-depth insights regarding job crafting experiences and the way job characteristics influenced the ability to engage in job crafting, and therefore helped to reach the aim of this master thesis. Moreover, job crafting was a difficult concept to study because of the subjective and individual nature of job crafting experiences. Especially cognitive crafting appeared to be a confusing concept as it was often hard for the interviewees to provide answers to what extent they used this form of job crafting. However, because of the deductive approach taken in this study, job crafting could be conceptualized, which made it more easy for the interviewees to comprehend this theme. Nonetheless, cognitive crafting still appeared to be a difficult concept to study, lowering the quality of the conclusions regarding this job crafting technique.

Additionally, this study benefited from the open view towards the relationship between job crafting and job characteristics, as new mechanisms regarding this relationships have developed during this study. Moreover, this made it possible to acknowledge and explain the ambiguity regarding this relationship that is present in job crafting literature. The use of template analysis also contributed to the ability to study this relationship with an open outlook, as it provided structure during the analysis phase, as well as the flexibility regarding the number of levels of coding hierarchy, which was useful during the analysis of the data. Additionally, the use of template analysis also enhanced the dependability of this research, as the development of the constructs used in this research were captured by means of the initial and final template. Moreover, notes have been kept during the analysis phase, which captured the researcher's analysing process and show how constructions have been developed.

Throughout this research, interviews were conducted using Skype, because it was not possible to conduct interviews face-to-face. The researcher tried to conduct all interviews with video, but due to constraints of some consultants, some interviews have only been audio recorded. Conducting interviews using Skype provided flexible and more convenient circumstances for the interviewees to participate in this research. However, this way of interviewing made it challenging and sometimes impossible to interpret verbal and non-verbal cues, which can be more easily done in face-to-face interviews, therefore lowering the quality of the results of this research. Transcripts have been made of the interviews, and the respondents were able to check the correctness of the transcripts to ensure the their stories were accurately captured in order to enhance the credibility of this research. However, the respondents that wanted to see their transcript did not propose any changes to the data.

Furthermore, this study researched different types of consultants from various organizations, instead of a single organization. This improved the transferability of this study, since the results can be more related to consultants in general, instead of case-specific consultants. Moreover, an extensive description of the consultants' job characteristics has been provided in the results section, and therefore, readers of this study are able to judge whether they might be informed by the findings. Additionally, the participants of this research have been selected using the snowball sampling technique. As a result, the majority of the participants volunteered to participate, rather than being chosen. On the one hand, this sampling technique made it more easy to find participants, and on the other hand, this resulted in a group of proactive group of participants who were either interested in the concept of job crafting or already familiar with the concept. Consequently, their proactivity and interest towards the theme could mean that their engagement in job crafting could be more related to personal motives instead of their job characteristics. A possible danger of this sampling technique is that respondents often suggest participants who share the same characteristics or outlook (Etikan et al., 2016). The researcher assured that the set of respondents was sufficiently varied by purposely asking if the respondent could suggest consultants from different types of consultancy firms, different branches, or different levels of experience. Moreover, in order to keep the sets of respondents sufficiently varied, the researcher had to reject two consultants who volunteered to participate in this study, because they shared too many characteristics with other respondents.

Finally, in terms of confirmability, this study provided an elaborated description of the data collection and analysis methods that have been used. Moreover, the coded transcripts have been added in Appendix D: Coded transcripts. In this way, the researcher shows how the data was collected and analysed, enhancing the confirmability of this study.

5.2.2 Reflexivity

In this section, the role of the researcher and the implications this has on the outcomes of this research will be discussed. First of all, being an Organization Design & Development student brings along an interest and focus on structural and organizational features. As a result, this research focused on the relationship between job crafting and job characteristics, and was less focused on additional features that impact job crafting, such as the role of organizational culture, leadership, and personal characteristics. Second, the researcher had prior assumptions regarding what consultancy profession entails and what job characteristics are relevant for

consultants. This impacted the selection of the job characteristics that was made in chapter two of this research and therefore, other job characteristics of consultants that can influence their ability to job crafting could have been overlooked. Finally, the researcher knew some of the interviewees personally, which has had a positive and negative effect on the research. On the one hand, it made the conversations with the interviewees more natural, which made the interviews flow better. On the other hand, however, it made the researcher less critical towards the stories of these interviewees which could negatively influence the quality of the outcomes of this study.

5.2.3 Theoretical reflection

In this section, a reflection will be given on the theoretical choices made throughout this study and the impact they have on the results of this study. The most important theoretical decision that was made in chapter two, was the decision to use the job crafting conceptualization of Wrześnianiewski and Dutton (2001) instead of the conceptualization of Tims and Bakker (2010). Looking back, this decision contributed to the theoretical contributions that can be made with the findings of this study. The description of ambiguity regarding the relationship between job crafting and job characteristics, as described in chapter one, is based on authors that used this conceptualization as well. As a result, the explanation of the findings clarifies this ambiguity better because it matches the conceptualization of the research that was used to describe this ambiguity in the first place. Moreover, the conceptualization of Wrześnianiewski and Dutton (2001), in contrast to the conceptualization of Tims and Bakker (2010), considers cognitive crafting an important facet of job crafting. Although cognitive crafting was harder to study and was used less intensive than other job crafting techniques, researching cognitive crafting still provided important findings regarding job crafting behaviour of the consultants and is therefore viewed as an important theme within this study.

5.2.4 Recommendations

The following sections will elaborate on the theoretical and practical contributions of this study, followed with recommendations for future research.

5.2.4.1 Theoretical contributions

This study focused on how job characteristics influence job crafting for consultants and this was done in a qualitative way. This study contributes to current job crafting literature by focusing on job crafting behaviour of consultants: knowledge workers with complex jobs. As

a result, insights are obtained regarding how these knowledge workers engage in job crafting in practice and the way this is influenced by their job characteristics. Four theoretical contributions of this study will now be discussed.

First, this study contributes to the current body of job crafting literature by confirming and explaining the ambiguity regarding the effect of the researched job characteristics on job crafting. In the current state of literature, there are studies who describe that, for example, autonomy has a positive effect on job crafting (e.g. Kim et al., 2018; Wrześniewski & Dutton, 2001), while other studies argue that autonomy does not positively affect, or even inhibits job crafting (e.g. Berg et al., 2010; Niessen et al., 2016). This study acknowledges and explains this ambiguity, as it describes how the researched job characteristics could both positively and negatively affect an employees' ability to engage in job crafting, while in other studies' outcomes regarding a certain job characteristic were either positive or negative and did not provide explanations for these disparate findings.

A second contribution relates to the different mechanisms regarding the way that job characteristics influence job crafting. Previous research mainly focused on the nature of the influence of these job characteristics, describing that a job characteristic had a positive or negative effect, or a facilitating or hindering effect on job crafting. This study found different mechanisms relating to this effect, making a distinction between an encouraging or facilitating influence and a hindering or delaying influence, instead of describing just a positive or negative influence of a certain job characteristic.

The third contribution relates to the bottom-up and proactive character of job crafting, as it is often described in literature. Throughout this study, it became clear that the consultants were invited to engage in job crafting, due to their broad job and assignment description. Their job design opens up opportunities to job craft, and therefore, the bottom-up and proactive character of job crafting can be questioned. In this case, job crafting seemed to a reaction to this broad job design, and managers can influence job crafting in a top-down manner by the way they structure an employee's job. This finding is in line with the study of Demerouti (2014), who argues that organizations can stimulate job crafting behaviour and encourage employees to make changes themselves. This could also be viewed from a socio-technical perspective, which argues that employees' jobs should be structured in a way that gives them enough regulatory potential in order to experiment, respond to problems, and make changes (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2010). Although this perspective does not mention job crafting, it

does stress the influence the structure of a job has on the employees' ability to make changes in their job.

The fourth contribution relates to the different types of job crafting techniques, as described by Wrześniewski and Dutton (2001) and Berg et al. (2010; 2013). These authors describe these as separate job crafting techniques, while in practice, it seems that these different techniques are related and overlap with each other. For example, a returning theme in this study was that by means of task crafting, consultants engaged in relational crafting as well. When employees add a new task, it was often followed with meeting new people or spending more time with people because of the addition of the task. Moreover, cognitive crafting was found to be relating to the other two types job crafting. The ability to engage in task and relational crafting shapes the cognitive perceptions of one's work and in this case actually lowered the need for cognitive crafting, as the consultants were able to make actual changes. So, the different forms of job crafting are separated in theory, but in practice there is an overlap between them as they can sometimes be related with one another.

5.2.4.2 Practical contributions

Job crafting can be beneficial for workers, such as the experience of positive meaning in work and job satisfaction (Berg et al., 2013; Wrześniewski et al., 2015), as well as the organization, such as higher levels of work engagement, commitment, and organizational performance (Berg et al., 2013; Grant, 2007; Wrześniewski et al., 2015). Although the main goal of this study was to contribute to job crafting literature, it provides practical contributions because of the benefits job crafting can yield for both workers and organizations.

A first practical contribution of this study relates to the importance of the initial top-down design of a job, and how it relates to an employee's ability to job craft. Throughout this study, it became clear that the job design is an important factor in an employee's ability to craft their job, as it is the starting point for job crafting. However, as employees' job design can yield both positive and negative effects on job crafting, there is no 'one size fits all' approach to stimulate job crafting. Managers should create the freedom in employees' job design, to employees the freedom to 'sit in the driver's seat' and actively shape the boundaries of their job. However, as this freedom can sometimes make an employee feel constrained to engage in job crafting, a supporting and facilitating role of the supervisor can be complementary to stimulate employees to engage in job crafting. Because there is no 'one size fits all' approach,

it is important that the supervisor focuses on individual needs when stimulating employees to engage in job crafting.

Second, in this study, it was often a combination of personal and organizational characteristics that stimulate job crafting, which shows the importance of individual characteristics in job crafting. Because of individual differences, supervisors should adapt their supervisory role for different personalities in order to guide and stimulate employees to engage in job crafting.

5.2.4.3 Recommendations for further research

The findings and limitations of this study, open up some interesting research topics and recommendations for future research. First of all, consultants appeared to be an interesting research case for studying the relationships between job characteristics and job crafting. Many consultants perform client assignments and therefore do not only have relationships and dependencies with colleagues, but also with clients. Moreover, consultants often work on their assignments at the organization of the client, resulting in relationships and dependencies with workers at the client's organization as well. These different dependencies are interesting to look at, and therefore research on the effect of these different dependencies on job crafting is an interesting topic for further research. In contrast, it could also be interesting to study workers with the same job characteristics, but only have interdependencies with colleagues and work in only one organizational environment, such as internal advisors.

Furthermore, this study gave insights on the ambiguity regarding the relationship between the researched job characteristics and job crafting. This research was focused on consultants who are knowledge professionals with complex jobs, and as a result, they experience a lot of freedom in performing their job. It would be interesting to find out whether this ambiguity is also present when researching employees, such as production line workers, who have less complex jobs and experience less freedom in their job, or that perhaps different mechanisms are present.

A final recommendation relates to other characteristics that influence an employees' opportunity to job craft. As aforementioned, this study focused on the influence of job characteristics on job crafting, and therefore neglected influences such as personal differences between employees. This study illustrated that job crafting was often stimulated by a combination of personal and job characteristics, and therefore, it would be interesting to see what differences there are in the perceived opportunities to job craft, when employees work in the same organizational environment. Future research could focus on the perceived job craft

opportunities of employees with similar jobs within a same organizational environment and thus with the same job characteristics, to see how individual differences affect their opportunities to job craft.

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Appendix A: Interview guide

Introductie

Hallo, ik ben Sander Bouwmans en ik ben een master student Organizational Design & Development aan de Radboud Universiteit in Nijmegen. Om te beginnen wil ik u heel erg bedanken voor uw deelname aan dit interview. Dit interview is een deel van mijn afstudeeronderzoek waarin ik onderzoek doe naar de relatie tussen job crafting en werkkenmerken. Job crafting gaat over het eigen maken van je werk, door middel van aspecten of taken van je werk te veranderen. Zo zou een werknemer bijvoorbeeld nieuwe taken binnen zijn of haar baan toe kunnen voegen (denk aan op je nemen van extra projecten, of het bedenken en organiseren van promotiestunts), of extra hulp bieden aan collega's of klanten. Tijdens dit interview zal ik vragen naar voorbeelden en ervaringen uit het verleden en ben ik geïnteresseerd naar hoe u bepaalde kenmerken hierbij als behulpzaam of verhinderend hebt ervaren.

Dit interview is volledig anoniem en alles dat u zegt zal vertrouwelijk worden behandeld. Het interview zal ongeveer een uur duren. We beginnen met een aantal algemene vragen over uw werkzaamheden en vervolgens gaan we dieper in op uw job crafting ervaringen. Heeft u nog vragen voordat we beginnen? Geeft u toestemming om het interview op te nemen, zodat ik het na afloop kan uitwerken? Dan zal het interview nu beginnen.

Algemene vragen + vragen werkkenmerken

- Zou u uzelf en uw organisatie kort kunnen introduceren?

- Wat is uw huidige functie?

- Zou u voor mij een normale werkdag kunnen beschrijven, hoe ziet zo'n dag eruit? *Doorvragen naar taken en werkrelaties*

  a. *(Belangrijk: bij werkrelaties draait het hier om de mensen waarmee ze dagelijks werkt. Voor de consultants zullen dit waarschijnlijk niet haar collega's zijn, maar de werknemers van het bedrijf waarmee ze werkt)*

- Hoe worden deze taken en samenwerkingen voor uw vastgesteld? Heeft u een formele taakomschrijving; wordt van bovenaf bepaald; heeft u hier eigen inbreng in?

- Wat zijn kenmerkende eigenschappen van uw werk?

  a. Hoeveel controle/autonomie ervaart u bij het uitvoeren van uw taken *(autonomy)*

  b. Moet u tijdens het uitvoeren van deze taken deze veel afstemmen met anderen? *(task interdependence)*

  c. Ervaart u uw werk en de taken die u hiervoor uitvoert als complex of eenvoudig? *(task complexity)*

  d. Ervaart u een bepaalde vorm van werkdruk tijdens uw werk? Zo ja, hoe uit zich dat? *(work pressure)*

  e. *(samenvatting geven van bovengenoemde antwoorden zodat het helder is welke werkkenmerken de respondent bezit)*

Task crafting

· Weet u nog een situatie waarin u hebt besloten om veranderingen in uw werk of takenpakket te maken? Weet u bijvoorbeeld eens besloten om een extra taak of taken op te nemen en zou u deze kunnen beschrijven? *(adding tasks)*

· Heeft u dan ook wel eens besloten om taken te laten vallen? (Bijvoorbeeld door iets door iemand anders op te laten pakken) Zou u kunnen beschrijven hoe u dit gedaan heeft? *(dropping tasks)*

· Op welke manier hebben de eerder genoemde werkkenmerken een rol gespeeld bij het doorvoeren van deze veranderingen? *Doorvragen naar autonomy, task interdependence, task complexity, work pressure (facilitators)*

· Kunt u dan ook voorbeelden beschrijven van situaties waarin u ooit veranderingen wilde doorvoeren waarbij u weerstand of verhindering ervaarde? Welke werkkenmerken speelde hierbij een rol en op welke manier? *Doorvragen naar autonomy, task interdependence, task complexity, work pressure (inhibitors)*

· Steekt u ooit extra tijd en energie in bepaalde taken van uw werk, of juist minder? Kunt u hier voorbeelden van noemen? *(emphasizing tasks)*

· Hoe speelden hierbij uw werkkenmerken een rol? *Doorvragen naar autonomy, task interdependence, task complexity, work pressure (facilitators/inhibitors)*

· Kunt u voorbeelden geven waarin u een eigen draai aan uw taken geeft? *(redesigning tasks)*

· Op welke manier spelen volgens u uw werkkenmerken een rol hierin? *Doorvragen naar autonomy, task interdependence, task complexity, work pressure (facilitators/inhibitors)*

Relational crafting

· Zou u iets kunnen vertellen over de werkrelaties die u tijdens uw werk heeft? Hoe zijn deze voor u?

· Legt u wel eens bewust nieuwe contacten tijdens uw werk? Hoe deed u dit? *(building relationships)*

· Heeft u wel eens in werkrelaties geïnvesteerd of juist verminderd? Op welke manier? *(building relationships)*

· Op welke manier hebben uw werkkenmerken u hierbij geholpen of juist gehinderd? *Doorvragen naar autonomy, task interdependence, task complexity, work pressure (facilitators/inhibitors)*

· Kunt u een situatie herinneren waarbij u extra tijd en moeite geïnvesteerd hebt in uw werkrelaties om zo aard van deze relatie te veranderen? (Om zo bijvoorbeeld de mensen waarmee u werkt beter te leren kennen) Zou u een voorbeeld kunnen beschrijven? *(reframing relationships)*

· Hoe speelden volgens u uw werkkenmerken hierbij een rol? *Doorvragen naar autonomy, task interdependence, task complexity, work pressure (facilitators/inhibitors)*

· Heeft u ooit uw bestaande werkrelatie veranderd door meer hulp en ondersteuning te bieden aan anderen? Zou u een dergelijke situatie kunnen beschrijven? *(adapting relationships)*

· Hoe speelden volgens u uw werkkenmerken hierbij een rol? *Doorvragen naar autonomy, task interdependence, task complexity, work pressure (facilitators/inhibitors)*

Cognitive crafting

· Wat voor rol heeft uw werk in uw leven?

· Hoe ziet u de bijdrage die u levert met uw werk aand de samenleving?

· Heeft u deze denkwijze wel eens veranderd en zo ja, op welke manier dan? *Door bijvoorbeeld in en uit te zoomen, of door te kijken vanuit een lange of korte termijn visie (Expanding perceptions)*

· Richt u uw energie ooit op specifieke taken of werkrelaties die u het waardevolst vindt? Hoe doet u dit en waarom specifiek op deze taken of werkrelaties? *(focusing perceptions)*

· Linkt u bepaalde taken of relaties in uw werk wel eens aan uw persoonlijke interesses of doelen? Zou u hier een voorbeeld van kunnen noemen? *(linking perceptions)*

· Als u terugkijkt op al deze veranderingen in perceptie die u gemaakt heeft, hoe hebben bepaalde werkeigenschappen hierbij een rol gespeeld? *Doorvragen naar autonomy, task interdependence, task complexity, work pressure (facilitators/inhibitors)*

Afsluiting

Dan zijn we nu beland aan het einde van het interview en wil ik u graag bedanken voor uw antwoorden. Heeft u op nog toevoegingen, vragen, en/of opmerkingen?

In de aankomende weken ga ik het interview uitwerken en zal ik deze naar u toesturen om door te lezen en eventueel opmerkingen of toevoegingen door te geven aan me. Wilt u het uiteindelijke onderzoeksrapport in het Engels, of een korte samenvatting van het onderzoeksrapport in het Nederlands ontvangen? Dan wil ik u nogmaals heel erg bedanken voor uw medewerking.

Appendix B: Initial template

1. Job crafting
1.1 Task crafting
       1.1.1 Adding tasks
       1.1.2 Dropping tasks
       1.1.3 Emphasizing tasks
       1.1.4 Redesigning tasks
1.2 Relational crafting
       1.2.1 Building relationships
       1.2.2 Reframing relationships
       1.2.3 Adapting relationships
1.3 Cognitive crafting
       1.3.1 Expanding perceptions
       1.3.2 Focusing perceptions
       1.3.3 Linking perceptions

2. Job characteristics
2.1 Autonomy
2.2 Task interdependence
2.3 Task complexity
2.4 Work pressure
2.5 Additional characteristics

3. Relationship job crafting and job characteristics
3.1 Facilitating job characteristics for job crafting
3.2 Inhibiting job characteristics for job crafting
3.3 Additional characteristics relating to job crafting

Appendix C: Final template

1. Job Crafting
1.1 Task crafting
        1.1.1 Adding tasks
            - Adding new tasks
            - Adding new responsibilities
            - Adding tasks inherent to work
            - Adding tasks for organizational development
        1.1.2 Dropping tasks
            - Transferring tasks
            - Spending less time on tasks
            - Interchanging tasks for creating better person-task fit
        1.1.3 Emphasizing tasks
            -Spending more time on tasks
        1.1.4 Redesigning tasks
            - Changing a task completely
            - Giving own twist on carrying out tasks
 1.2 Relational crafting
        1.2.1 Building relationships
            - Building relationships needed for assignments
            - Building relationships at the client
            - Networking
            - Avoiding relationships
        1.2.2 Reframing relationships
            - Fostering existing relationships
            - Getting to know colleagues better
            - Getting to know workers at client better
        1.2.3 Adapting relationships
            - Providing help to colleagues
            - Providing help to workers at client
            - Guiding and mentoring colleagues
1.3 Cognitive crafting
        1.3.1 Expanding perceptions
            - Putting impact of work into perspective
            - Zooming out to see bigger picture
        1.3.2 Focusing perceptions
            - Focusing on enjoyable tasks
            - Some aspects of job just need to be done
            - Making actual changes
        1.3.3 Linking perceptions
            - Choose work based on personal interests, goals, and values
            - Linking work to personal growth

2. Job characteristics
2.1 Autonomy
        2.1.1 Freedom of being a knowledge professional
        2.1.2 Decision latitude
        2.1.3 Ability to make own schedule
2.2 Task interdependence

- Work pressure hindering expanding perceptions
        - Work pressure of others hindering dropping tasks
        - Working at the client hindering building relationships
        - Working at the client hindering adapting relationships
3.4 Job characteristics delaying job crafting?
        - Autonomy delaying dropping tasks
        - Task complexity delaying dropping tasks

4. Additional characteristics related to job crafting
4.1 Personal characteristics
4.2 Organizational characteristics
4.3 Role of supervisor
4.4 Scope of assignment

Appendix D: Coded transcripts*

Appendix E: Research diary*