Job crafting as dynamic displays of gender identities and meanings in male-dominated occupations

Abstract

In this article, we explore how women craft their jobs in male-dominated occupations in ways that respond to the job demands relating to contradictory gender expectations. With material from 21 interviews with female chefs working in professional kitchens, we show, through the lens of constructing gender identities and meanings at the gender-body nexus, that three job crafting practices – negotiating physical competence, reframing creativity, and managing men co-workers' reactions – are invented as creative responses to gender-related job demands. The findings contribute to the job crafting literature by showing that women's job crafting in male-dominated occupations is less about increasing or decreasing certain types of job demands, but more about enacting "dynamic displays" – *material*, *discursive* and *fluid* – of their gender identities and meanings as situated responses to a given job demand being made. Our research indicates the importance of understanding the conditions under which job crafting is mostly likely to generate positive, negative, or mixed experiences over time.   .

Key words: job crafting, job demands, contradictory gender expectations, gender identities and meanings, male-dominated occupations, female chefs

Introduction

Job crafting has in recent years garnered increasing attention in management studies (Bindl, 2018; Niessen *et al.*, 2016). Although it distances them from the founding research paper on job crafting (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001), researchers informed by quantitative research design have spared no effort in examining the antecedents of job crafting and checking whether these antecedents are related to occupational health and performance through the establishment of a Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R). The JD-R model presumes that all job characteristics can be categorized as either job demands or job resources (Tims and Bakker, 2010; Tims *et al*., 2012; Bakker and Demerouti, 2014), and presupposes the necessity and possibility of increasing or

decreasing certain types of job demands. Gender and organizational scholars, meanwhile, remind us that women in male-dominated occupations face constant dilemmas with regard to gender-related job demands. The term "double bind" was applied to occasions when women are asked to meet at once contradictory gender expectations for feminine self-presentation and a masculine performance of work (Denissen, 2010). Aware that job crafting has never so far been studied in a male-dominated occupational context, we want to explore how women craft their jobs in order to deal with job demands concerning such contradictory gender expectations in this context.

To do so, we conducted 21 interviews with female chefs who work in London's established restaurants to learn more about their ways of coping with gender-related job demands in professional kitchens and in the male-dominated cooking sector more generally. By focusing on female chefs' job crafting practices at the micro-level, we hope to reveal that female chefs can develop embodied and situated gender selves and expressions that make their jobs more doable and their lives more liveable. We view them through the lens of constructing gender identities and meanings, and with particular emphasis on the interconnections between gender and body in the process of identity construction (Denissen, 2010; Woodfield, 2016; Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles, 2019). We show that women's job crafting in male-dominated occupation is not simply about increasing or decreasing certain types of job demands, but more about enacting "dynamic displays" – material, discursive and fluid – of their gender identity and meaning as situated responses to a given job demand.

This article first outlines recent advances in both the gender and the job crafting literature. After briefly discussing the research contexts and methods, we present the findings about female chefs' job crafting practices in response to gender-related job demands characterized by the double bind mentioned above. The article concludes with a discussion on the implications of researching women's job crafting in male-dominated occupations through the lens of constructing gender identities and meanings.

Literature review

Below we discuss the theoretical underpinning for this study before contextualizing the

gender-related job demands facing female chefs in the cooking sector. .

Job crafting in male-dominated occupations

Job crafting describes how individuals shape their job to fit their unique characteristics best without changing the core of their work (Bruning and Campion, 2018). The term 'job crafting' was first and formally defined by Wrzesniewski & Dutton, (2001) as the "physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work" (p.179) and the "action employees take to shape, mold and redefine their jobs" (p.180). More specifically, task crafting is defined as those job-related changes that result in a different number, scope or type of job tasks, while relational crafting involves initiatives to change the quality and/or quantity of interactions with others at work. The founding paper of Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) has inspired qualitative research designs (e.g. Berg *et al*., 2010a; Berg *et al*., 2010b; Vuori *et al*., 2012; all cited in Lazazzara *et al*., 2020) that explore how employees craft their jobs to better align them with their preferences, abilities and motivations in order to enhance work meanings and identity. Yet job crafting research informed by qualitative research design has not taken personal experiences that were reported in the above studies to their full potential in terms of providing insights into capturing individuals' specific experiences and thought-processes in their situational context (Lazazzara *et al*., 2020).

Still, researchers informed by quantitative research designs have given widely-ranging attention to researching the antecedents of job crafting and have set up a Job Demands-Resources model (JD-R) to find whether these antecedents are related to occupational health and performance. This widely accepted JD-R model presumes that all job characteristics can be categorized as either job demands or job resources (Tims and Bakker, 2010; Tims *et al*., 2012; Bakker *et al*, 2012; Bakker and Demerouti, 2014). In this sense, job demands refer to the physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained effort at various levels, such as work overload, emotional demands, or technological demands, etc. (Bakker and Demerouti, 2014). According to Crawford *et al*. (2010), challenge job demands are appraised *positively* as demands that have the potential to promote mastery and future gains, whereas hindrance job demands are perceived *negatively* as

constraints that block progress. Examples of challenge job demands are work pressure or job complexity, while hindrance demands include role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload etc. For instance, workers who experience conflicting role demands at work may believe that no reasonable amount of effort will be sufficient to simultaneously satisfy them all, and they then will probably dissipate energy that might otherwise have been dedicated to meeting demands associated with valued outcomes. They are thus assumed to demonstrate withdrawal behaviours and reduced engagement at work (Crowford *et al*., 2010). Further propositions about job demands are made with the JD-R model (Tims *et al*., 2012): (1) challenge job demands are related to personal gain or growth; (2) hindrance job demands are often appraised as stressful in that they thwart goal attainment or optimal functioning. Workers who engage in job crafting activities are therefore presumed to *increase* challenge demands in order to reach desirable goals or improve work performance or *decrease* hindrance job demands in order to cope with stress or adversity or to protect themselves at work.

While the job crafting theories underpinned by quantitative research designs presuppose the necessity and possibility of increasing or reducing certain types of job demand for a given purpose, gender and organizational scholars remind us that women in male-dominated occupations face constant dilemmas with regard to the contradictory gender beliefs and expectations of their men co-workers. This puts women in a double bind, whereby they must at the same time meet contradictory gender expectations for a feminine presentation of self and a masculine performance of work. The notion of a double bind implies conflicting gender role demands, which seem to be aligned with the presumption that role conflicts are hindrance job demands to be reduced (Crowford *et al*., 2010; Tims and Bakker, 2010). Given the fact that job crafting has not so far been studied in a male-dominated occupational context, we want to explore further how women *actually* craft their jobs in response to job demands concerning the above contradictory gender expectations in context, and to ask what implications this specific context holds for understanding job crafting behaviors. Below we detail the theoretical lens that may help us in this attempt.

Constructing gender identities and meanings at the gender-body nexus

Central to the studies of gender beliefs and expectations in male-dominated occupations is the issue of the double bind, obliging women to enact conflicting gender roles, such as "acting like a woman" and "performing like a man", or "showing heightened visibility as a woman" and "showing lowered visibility as a competent worker" (Denissen, 2010; Woodfield, 2016; Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles, 2019). In addressing these contradictory gender expectations, existing research, by constructing gender identities and meanings and with particular emphasis on the gender-body nexus, has covered a wide range of physically demanding occupational settings, such as firefighting (Ainsworth etc., 2014), the brewing business (Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles, 2018), construction and engineering (Powell and Sang, 2015; Wright, 2016; Denissen, 2010), the police (de Haas and Timmerman, 2010), etc. The gender-body nexus provides researchers with a means of understanding the interlinked connections between embodied and gendered attributes, characteristics and practices in the process of identity construction (Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles, 2019). In other words, it shows how bodies and identities, gender and identities are mutually constitutive, and implies the possibility of using bodies and gender simultaneously as the right tools for the job (Denissen, 2010).

In comparison to men co-workers, who are typically viewed as more bodily and socially competent, instrumental or agentic, women are understood as warm, expressive or communal. Competency is frequently labeled *masculine* because it is often associated with males, whereas warmth is labeled as *feminine* because it is often associated with females. In contrast, the *masculine* order evokes certain traits such as independence, aggressiveness, and dominance, while the *feminine* order is more closely related to gentleness, sensitivity to others' feelings and tactfulness. A consensus has grown up on such gender stereotypes across cultures and over time (Powell, 2011). Despite the variety of ways that gender is performed across workplace cultures, the dominant gender systems that favor men and oppress women are resilient. This perhaps explains women's often unwitting complicity in the reproduction of the dominant gender system. For example, a number of studies (van den Brink and Benschop, 2013; Powell and Sang, 2015) show how women can become caught within the confines of dichotomous gender relations and the limited possibilities of the incompetent worker or unfeminine woman. In this way, the normative construction of gender-appropriate activities can effectively exclude women, as women, from

doing 'men's work'.

Other studies that focus on women's agency in terms of their strategic responses to physical and psychological barriers reveal that masculine bodies, by virtue of their dominance, gain a level of visibility which further marginalizes women's bodies from salient gender characteristics. For example, Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles (2019) provide insights into women brewers' ways of coping with job demands based on physical competence, sexism and sexual harassment, and the lack of recognition (as skilled workers). They further distinguish women's responses between *downplaying* and *foregrounding* gender, and argue that these responses constitute resources for constructing their embodied and gendered working selves. Their study confirms the role that bodily practices play in identity construction and sense making. Indeed, bodies are multi-dimensional, composed of both the material (e.g. the actual bodily practices, everyday tactics and working with tools) and the symbolic (e.g. discursive constructions of bodily competence, gender dimming[1]). It is through the recognition that bodies are gendered, situated within the networks of social relations, that we understand how the symbolic is *de facto* interwoven into and inseparable from the material. This implies that women's job crafting practices must pay more attention to the material and symbolic ways in which women workers use their bodies and gender as tools for the job, shaping their identities and responses to the contradictory gender expectations.

In addition, Woodfield (2016) documents women firefighters' difficulties in seeking recognition as skilled women by highlighting the fact that achieving recognition for both physical and non-psychical skills remains an embodied, gendered, and contested process. Powell and Sang (2015) examine the persistence of everyday sexist communication in the engineering and construction sectors, while de Hass and Timmerman (2010) focus on other non-benevolent sexist treatments, such as sexual bravado, sexual posturing and the denigration of feminine behavior facing policewomen. These studies, together with Denissen's (2010) report on tradeswomen's creative reactions to their men co-workers' contradictory gender expectations, indicate a common

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[1] Gender dimming refers to women's tactics to discursively enact occupational characteristics and to situate themselves in opposition to those physically weaker by highlighting that few people of either gender were capable of some tasks (see Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles, 2019).

pattern of reactions: women in physically demanding occupational contexts have to adopt both bodily and gender practices, which *combine, vary* or *move back and forth between* masculinities and femininities to emphasize the most advantageous identity for each situation and highlight fluidity as a result of moving between different gendered and embodied identity positions and meanings.

Gender-related job demands facing female chefs in professional kitchens

Given the low representation of female chefs in the cooking sector and the growing concerns and frustrations expressed by female chefs on social media in recent years[2], it would seem useful to ask how they craft their job in ways that respond to the gender-related job demands at work. In the last 30 years, more women have become employed and self-employed in the cooking sector than ever before. But according to the Office of National Statistics women hold only 17% of the chef positions in the UK. Macho attitudes in professional kitchens have been identified by many (Blanc, 2008; Meloury and Signal, 2014; Steno and Friche, 2015) as an almost acceptable aspect of kitchen work, and such kitchens are therefore often metaphorically referred to as an army or a brigade (Bourdain, 2000; Druckman, 2010; Fine, 1996; White, 2006).

Existing research shows that the emphasis on professional kitchens having a 'macho-ism culture' rather than macho-ist behaviour from a few actors (Harris and Giuffre, 2010) holds important implications for female chefs and the work they do in this situation. First, historically and socially accepted macho-ism in the kitchen puts constant pressure on female chefs' bodily performance, while assuming explicitly or tacitly an idealized body-gender image of 'big tough men in big tough[3] uniform' (*ibid*). For the sake of living up to the idealized body-gender image, female chefs therefore need to prove to others that they are physically capable of working long and irregular hours, enduring burns, cuts, and physical injuries (e.g. back pain), and lifting heavy things (e.g. stocks, utensils etc.).

Second, a professional chef's role is much more than the end producer of a meal. It also involves

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[2] https://www.mic.com/articles/191407/metoo-generational-divide-for-some-female-chefs-sexual-harassment-was-something-you-tolerated

[3] A chef's uniform is designed to protect her/him from the heat of stoves and ovens and from being scalded by boiling liquids, for example.

the technology of preparation, processing, and creative design in a culinary environment (Harris, 2015). For this reason, creativity is widely recognized as one of the most important skills for a chef. Yet the fact that female chefs are, more often than not, pushed to the pastry section[4] as a gendered niche (Crompton and Sanderson, 1986; Bradley, 2013) or to accepting tedious and trivial positions from grocery shopping to chopping salads (Harris, 2015), can testify to the difficulties when they seek recognition for their creative skills. Robinson and Beesley (2010) point out that the pastry section of the kitchen is recognized as a creative environment, in which a specific type of creativity and technique that emphasizes delicate handling and softer detail in the production of pastries is promoted and deemed 'better suited' to females (Lee *et al*., 2019). Representations of female chefs performing mundane kitchen work are repeatedly portrayed in the media and the cinema and reinforced through the antics of celebrity chefs. Not surprisingly, the "real creative" positions, known as the jobs in "hot sections", are often occupied or even gate-kept by those who claim that such jobs are essentially "men's territory" (Harris and Giuffre, 2010).

Third, the macho-ist culture also influences the everyday interactions and socialization in professional kitchens. For example, Blosi and Hoel (2008) observe that in the cooking sector there has traditionally been a high degree of tolerance of swearing and cursing, sex-related dirty talk or jokes, pornography sharing, and other sexist treatment. In addition, sexist communication and arrangements can be exacerbated or complicated by the fact the kitchen is an environment that is usually hot and stuffy, with people who risk injury working in close proximity to each other in a constrained space and behind the scenes (Harris and Giuffre, 2010), or by an occupational culture that tolerates alcohol and drug use especially in high-end restaurants and amongst young chefs (Giousmpasoglou *et al*., 2018). The physicality of the role and the physical work setting suggest that female chefs might experience difficulties in fitting in if they are not readily socialized into a workplace characterized by the macho-ist culture (*ibid,* p.651).

Methodology

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[4] As StarChefs 2005 survey reveals, women make up 80% of bakers and 77% of pastry chefs as well as 84% of all the cooks who work under them as patissiers. See details at: https://www.starchefs.com/features/editors_dish/salary_survey/index.shtml

An ethnographic study exploring job crafting practices in the catering sector was conducted before the current project began. In this study, we were told by restaurant managers or owners that they did employ female chefs in their restaurants, but during our three months of fieldwork (more than 12 visits during different shifts) in three fine-dining restaurants in London, we never managed to see or talk to any female chef. This extreme lack of visibility of female chefs triggered our interest in developing a research project dedicated to them and to their underrepresented voice in job crafting research. Although the fieldwork provided us with a background understanding of the cooking sector, the current research is a qualitative investigation, in which data were collected through semi-structured interviews with female chefs only. Some of the participants were associated with female advocacy groups such as 'Countertalks[5]' or 'Ladies of restaurants[6]'. In addition, one of the participants was listed as the most influential woman in the hospitality sector in the UK in 20XX[7].

Data collection

We conducted 21 interviews with female chefs from 17 different restaurants, probing themes around the challenging aspects of their day-to-day jobs and their work environments, their coping strategies and desired support, if any. All of the restaurants were authentic sit-in restaurants,[8] ranging from casual dining (3) and premium casual (9), to fine dining (5). 18 of the participants were white while one identified as British African, one as Arabic and one as British Asian. The age of the participants ranged from 23 to 50, the average age being 37. The hierarchy of the kitchen is still influenced by the idea of 'the brigade de cuisine 'system developed by the famous French chef Auguste Escoffier[9]. Six of the participants were head chefs and two of these six were also co-owners of the restaurant. Two participants were Sous Chefs,[10] 11 were Chefs de Partie[11] (CDP), and one was a Commis Chef[12]. Most of them had trained before working in a professional kitchen; the rest had trained on the job. Some identified themselves as head chefs; the remaining

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5 https://countertalk.co.uk/
6 https://www.facebook.com/ladiesofrestaurants/
7 To protect the participant, we do not specify the year here.
8 Sit-in restaurants serve from moderately priced food in a casual atmosphere to full-service with specific dedicated meal courses.
9 Escoffier is known for streamlining the organization of professional kitchens, known as the brigade de cuisine, which is a system of hierarchy found in restaurants and hotels employing extensive staff. This structured team system delegates responsibilities to the different individuals who specialize in certain tasks in the kitchen.
10 Sous Chefs supervise the activities of all kitchen staff, including chefs and specialty chefs.
11 Chefs de Partie (CDP) are known as station chefs or line cooks, who are in charge of a particular area of production.
12 Commis Chefs are basic chefs who work under a CDP.

participants stated that that their head chefs were male. Table 1 gives a summary of the demographic and/or work related information regarding our research participants.

We first approached a few participants on social media by following their accounts. Once the connections were established, we sent interview invitations and at the end of the interviews we followed a snowball approach, asking our interviewees to nominate other relevant and suitable female chefs. Three participating head chefs invited one of the authors to their workplace to conduct the interviews, while the rest of the interviews were conducted in a convenient location (e.g. in a café or a park) in London, at the interviewees' request. The interviews ranged in length from 70 minutes to 120 minutes, the average duration being 95 minutes. All the interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The aim of the interviews was to explore the gender-related job demands facing female chefs in professional kitchens and their strategic responses. Instead of following a static template, the research emphasised "the processuality and complexity" aspects of job crafting (Poggio, 2006, p. 229). This enabled us to visualize and discover more complex and dynamic displays of gender identity and meaning underlying their job crafting practices.

--*TABLE 1 INSERTED HERE*--

Data analysis:

The data were analysed through a coding and recoding process. The process was to go through the interview transcripts over time. It was also an iterative process of re-visiting the literature and identifying broad themes and other emerging themes. The themes were outlined according to the female chefs' description of the work they did. It is worth noting that the three gender-related job demands identified in our paper were most significant (by frequency count) but by no means exclusive. First, their attributes were identified via descriptive coding (Wolcott, 1994), such as their age, position, and years of experience, as well as the number of employees working in their kitchen, and the number of female chefs working in their kitchen. Second, informed by the literature review, after revisiting the narrations a number of times we identified three gender-related job demands in the transcripts. Rather than treat coding as a process for simplifying

or reducing data, we considered second-order coding as an analytic process of "expanding, transforming and reconceptualising data, opening up more diverse analytical possibilities" (Coffey, 1996, p. 29). During this process, we first manually highlighted possible codes, colours and numbers, and then sought to link on NVivo the data categories with the concepts identified in our literature review. After the second-order coding, the themes of job crafting practices were re-interrogated and interpreted to explore the relationships and generate meanings by referring to the dynamic gender displays. This guided us to reflexively interpret and analyse the dimensions, consequences and relationships between the datasets in different situational contexts (Strauss, 1987). Table 2 gives the structure of our analysis.

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Female chefs' job crafting in professional kitchens

Below we present the three job crafting practices that female chefs employ in response to the gender-related job demands in the male-dominated cooking sector, viewed through the lens of constructing gender identities and meanings at the gender-body nexus. .

Negotiating physical competence

Due to the bodily demands of the role and the male domination of the sector, female chefs need to constantly prove themselves to others as physically fit for the job by negotiating their physical competence. In our study, 18 of the 21 female chefs who participated in this research crafted their jobs in ways that involved adopting qualities associated with masculinity, such as toughness and strength, and accentuating characteristics typically ascribed to males, such as dominance (masculine). For example, Caroline, despite having a delicate body frame, portrayed herself as a tough woman who could endure any physical strain: *'You get burns, cuts, pains all over, and you don't complain about it…'* Sophia joined a gym to train her body to combat a biased view of female bodies as weak and unsuitable for the chef's role: *'…I joined a gym and focused on lifting metals so that it could help me at work…'* Sylvia was not afraid of showing her dominance when she felt that her authority was being undermined: *'the work pressure and environment automatically bring a different person out of you…when I started taking a lead or being more in*

charge, they started rubbing their backs off…you've got to toughen up, use your words, your tone, frown a bit if necessary, to make sure they can't get over you…'

Seventeen of the female chefs created a discourse of understanding occupational appropriateness and suitability from the perspective of health (or the body's resilience) and long-standing presence, and subsequently validated the bodily techniques they had acquired as well as the everyday tactics they developed by emphasizing that they were among the few people, of either gender, who could cope with physical demands in a sustainable way (gender-neutral). For example, Caroline explained: '*when I was young I was part of the gang who used drugs, drank and smoked a lot, [but] these days I have reduced a lot of my drinks…I do yoga, sleep on time, and go to the gym, [because] this is the only way to work in the kitchen for years'*. Charlotte echoed this: '*I've seen men wanting to appear physically more capable by using cocaine, but they ended up not turning up for work on another day…I was 15-16 years already in the kitchen …my service time says everything about me*'. Eliza did not shy away from self-affirming: '*…girls fell into the trap of being macho… I always think differently…even those lads complained about me… if things are heavy, asking for help…just don't damage your body*'.

Fourteen of the female chefs combined or moved between masculine and gender-neutral expressions, as indicated above by Caroline. It is important to note that in their interactions the female chefs' responses to bodily performance pressure were situationally evoked and they might well have modified or adapted the presentation of a gendered working self according to situational contingency and without seeing their different responses as mutually exclusive. For example, Olivia mentioned that, '*you need to show you are strong because you are in a minority position surrounded by men all the time*'. Being strong means '*stronger than men if someone challenges you in your face*', but '*I am not the kind of person who is necessarily picked on… working in the kitchen the last 10 years, it does boost my confidence…I just do my best now*'. In the case of Ann, despite insisting '*…it is not a male job, but it's sad that it's a very male-dominated industry*' and '*women are as good as men*', she recalled a lesson she learned that influenced her current decision on recruitment to the kitchen that she was in charge of: '*I remember once I was working in a cooking school where there were 26 female chefs working with me, I observed a lot of bitchiness,*

cattiness, not willing to break a sweat. I know men are rough, but putting all women together sometimes can be an absolute nightmare…so I need a balance in my kitchen'

Reframing creativity

Culinary work is a creative job and chefs are often described as creative and skilful individuals (Fine, 1996). However, women's creativity is often undermined because the main actors in the kitchen, occupying key positions, are seen to be men and because of the perception that women lack the required cognitive and technical skills for creativity (Pecis, 2016). In fact, female chefs are often pushed to the pastry section where their creativity is recognized only in a prescribed way, or are relegated to trivial and tedious tasks with little recognition of their creativeness and skill.

In response to the lack of recognition for their creative skills, 10 of the female chefs in our study employed job crafting practices that reframed creativity in the pastry section by promoting a relational approach to creativity and advocating a notion of creativity in everyday life that celebrates feminine traits, such as gentleness, sensitivity to the feelings of others, and tactfulness (feminine). For example, Joanna believed that 'a *woman's brain does things differently, in how we prepare food, handle details or design a menu*'…Sylvia emphasized: '*creativity is about…meeting others' expectations…this is what women are most good at. We pay attention to details and listen to what people want*'. Olivia tried to justify the emotional element in creativity: '*women bring in to the kitchen a sense of calmness; when people are relaxing they are creative*'. Outside the kitchen, Francesca found inspiration in everyday life through interacting with her online followers on social media platforms: '*I am addicted to Instagram… I record and take pictures of what I cook… The comments I receive are encouraging … it makes me feel like trying out new things even more*'.

Thirteen of the female chefs attempted to discursively relabel creativity as a set of transferrable skills, i.e. skills that once learned and mastered could then be applied in different settings. In doing so, female chefs sought to elevate the status of pastry and other non hot-section jobs (gender-neutral). For example, Sylvia maintained: '*I am very good at mixing up flavours, I read books, try to put new ideas together and I am very organized…these are the skills you need*

wherever you are'. Lolla confirmed: '*…they have a stereotype that I will be good in pastry. But you can be good in everything…it's about the same set of skills'.* Sarah's example showed how she gained access to a hot section position by withstanding discouragement: '*the head chefs were looking for a chef to work in the grill section. I asked him, "Can I apply for the job?" He said "You can, but I will never take you." I asked why. He said "In the grill section no women can survive…" Still, I applied. Fortunately, he left the kitchen before me and the new head chef didn't mind me working in grill'.*

Six of the female chefs were able to combine or move between feminine and gender-neutral practices in regard to creativity, as Sylvia indicated above. Take Lolla as another example: she moved between multifaceted gender expressions, which allowed her to frame her creativity in ways that met different gender expectations and therefore resisted gender boundaries. Lolla started her career in a restaurant where she was assigned to work alone in the pastry section. When her promotion application to become a Sous Chef in this restaurant was rejected due to feedback on her lack of 'all-round knowledge and skills', she resigned: '*I wanted to go to the hot section… I had developed the creative skills through pastry, so why not'?* After securing an opportunity to work in the meat section in a different restaurant, Lolla recalled: '*I've learned most from colleagues who are generous and understanding… creative ideas just crop up when people inspire each other… there's no way you can develop creative skills all by yourself'.* Similarly, Caroline, in her capacity as a Head Chef, indicated the importance of maintaining a balance between cultivating skills and nurturing people: '*The main thing is to use stuff, utensils, ingredients etc. in a creative way but within the given guidelines. At the same time I need to let people have their own space, otherwise they will get bored and they will not grow either'.*

Managing men co-workers' reactions

Kitchen work is described as macho work where shouting, screaming, swearing and bullying are often tolerated as a part of the job. In a typical professional kitchen environment female chefs are exposed to conversations that evoke sexism, dirty talk and jokes, often as part of the normalized social interactions. Verbal and visual cues evoking female bodies and sex are widely available through the sharing of video clips or metaphorical referencing. For example, a carrot is compared

to a penis and butchering a whole chicken is described as 'raping'. In these circumstances, some female chefs feel unconformable even when male chefs deploy affectionate terms, such as '*queen of the restaurant', 'I like your smile'* or '*you look fit'*. Moreover, the spatial arrangements of the kitchen can make things even worse: '*In my last job we were expected to change in corridors and its ok for boys but what about us? We are asked to go to the female toilets for customers'.* Clearly, female chefs become an easy target for sexist communication and arrangements in the kitchen. For this reason, female chefs have to craft their jobs in ways that manage the reactions of others when their embodied selves and gendered bodies either attract unwanted attention or are seen as out of place.

Thirteen of the female chefs had fought against the male gaze by resisting through verbal or physical threats and suspending their feminine traits and attributes (masculine). For example, Grace reported her Sous Chef's sexual harassment behaviours to her restaurant manager, but to no avail; and when this person attempted once more to take advantage of the constrained space to squeeze her and smack her bottom, Grace waved a knife in front of his face and yelled: '*if you dare touch me again I swear I will cut your penis off'!* Sara was proud to be '*a woman with muscles, nobody can come too close to me, they'd think twice*'. Ironically, she was then rumoured to be a lesbian woman, and she never denied such rumours: '*people think I'm lesbian, I'm not, but they don't need to know, I don't feel bad about it ... I have been brought up being tough*'. Olivia adopted a similar approach that endorsed Sara's: '*there was a girl working with us, she was very pretty, always doing make up, long hair etc.... She had a couple of incidents where guys were making inappropriate comments about her...she did nothing wrong but...it's just easier for a tom boy sort of girl to fit in...*' The above excerpts illustrate that female chefs enacted a masculine perspective that promotes certain masculine practices and attributes as a coping strategy to protect them from falling victim to the sexist arrangements and communication in the kitchen. These confirm the bodily displays of gender through using tools (a knife to deter sexual harassment) or adapting their appearance (muscle, no make-up, short hair).

For others, sacrificing feminine traits and attributes in the kitchen is not totally necessary. Eight of the female chefs had adopted job crafting practices concerning the correction and education of

unwanted sexist behaviours. For example, when Lilly's male colleague was teasing her, saying, *'why are you angry, are you on your period?'*, Lilly replied, '*Yes, I am excused because I'm on my period, but remember people can be angry without any reasons*' Charlotte, for her part, maintains "*females can be like a mother, talking about what's going on and finding ways to help them. I'm not a mother but the environment makes me act like one*". Lolla echoes this view: '*people like to be looked after…I teach them, give them a chance… they don't see their partners often, they don't know how to reach out to females properly, so I teach them the difference between a joke and an insult*'. Similarly, Eliza feels the urge to play a nurturing role in the kitchen: '*you see those junior chefs, they go to the kitchen at the age of 16 or 17, working long hours, many hours, without social skills. They don't know how to talk to people. They only know how to cook and take on the industry bully… I've seen those young lads broken and it's really sad… [so] I asked myself what I can do, the answer is to support and nurture them*'. Indeed, as female chefs grow in age, gain more authority, or serve for many years in the kitchen, they seem to feel more comfortable with a feminine perspective that promotes understanding and nurturing people even when sexist treatments prevail. This feminine perspective can also be understood as a practical wisdom in dealing with the physical and psychological constraints of kitchen work. As Emily put it, '*you spend 10-11 hours a day, work in the basement, with no natural light, no windows, no ventilation, small space, and you are there with the same people every day… if you don't get along with them, it's very difficult …*'.

The practical wisdom does not have to take a gendered form. Nineteen of the female chefs had crafted their jobs in ways that neutralized non-malicious banter and bodily gestures and distanced themselves from the view that their work environment is sexist (gender-neutral). Charlotte, for example, enacts a gender-neutral perspective on sex-related dirty talk, and denies the view that sex talk serves only the masculine order of domination: '*Yes, they talk about girls, about dating, last night's sex. I am part of the conversation, but it doesn't affect me, I don't think they are talking about anything cruel or disgusting …*' Like Charlotte, Lauren learned to neutralise the meaning of one-off unexpected body contact: '*…it was my head chef who came to me and touched my face in front of everybody. And I did not know what to say. I feel like, what had I done that let him do that? … thinking of it now, it was totally unnecessary. It's maybe just about making fun of a*

newcomer in the kitchen.' Being aware of the culture of using drugs and alcohol in the cooking sector, Rosie added: *'when men are drunk or doped, whatever they say to you, good or bad, don't take it personally, they are silly, and that's all…'* In regard to the constrained spatial arrangements that disadvantaged female chefs, such as there being no changing room or female toilets for female chefs, Lolla remained optimistic: *'Restaurants never considered the spatial challenge that a female chef faces, [because] they've never had a large enough number of female chefs…'.* Lily shared with us her aspiration to work in an open kitchen in the future: '*…in open kitchens…you are happy because you are seen by customers and no-one can be angry or shouting…"*

In response to sexist communication and treatments, fifteen female chefs embraced job crafting practices that were rather fluid and developed only *in situ* according to their embodied experiences, as indicated by Lilly, above. Eva gave another good example: '*there are many layers of pressures. In a really busy kitchen you work 16 hours a day, running around, it [sexism treatment] just added another [layer]... When you are so busy you end up ignoring things that you would resist under normal conditions… you asked, how would I react? It kind of depends, on the day, the service, the manager and my energy level basically…'* In a different case, Caroline defended kitchen humour and distinguished it from sexist comments: *'Most chef love kitchens because of kitchen humour. I have a quite good team, perhaps I am working with them, they always make it normal, not talking about sex often… [However] if sexual jokes were made about a waitress in the restaurant, I need to stop them. It is not acceptable'.*

Discussion

Based on a qualitative case study of female chefs working in professional kitchens in the male-dominated cooking sector, we have explored how women respond to gender-related job demands through their job crafting practices, viewing them through a lens of constructing gender identities and meanings at the gender-body nexus. The findings above provided answers to the two research questions noted above (p.4). We have shown that female chefs creatively employed three job crafting practices – negotiating physical competence, reframing creativity and managing men co-workers' reactions – in response to job demands concerning the contradictory gender expectations that they encountered. Our paper has thus responded in the following ways to a

recent call for researchers to "better account for the diverse contexts in which job crafting occurs" and its derived need to "reconsider the way job crafting behaviours are examined" (Lazazzara *et al*., 2020, p.14)

First, we explored women's job crafting in a male-dominated occupational context for the first time by focusing on their ways of coping with the gender-related job demands characterized by a double bind. While the JD-R model presupposes the necessity and possibility of increasing or decreasing certain types of job demands, our research provided a more nuanced understanding of job demands *in situ*. In our case study, we verified that the three gender-related job demands facing female chefs in the cooking sector can be understood as representative of role conflicts at work. However, female chefs did not simply consider those gender-related job demands as hindrances to be overcome. Rather, they creatively enacted "dynamic displays" of their gender identities and meanings, which allowed them to (re-)assess and (re-)adjust the ways (how and why) and the timings (when) of responding to a particular gender-related job demand over time.

For instance, "bodily performance pressure" incarnates the contradictory gender expectations of female chefs in the kitchen in terms of "acting like a woman" and "performing like a man", However, female chefs did not simply seek ways to decrease their gender role conflicts, but instead responded creatively to physical and socio-psychological demands that were originally designed for or better suited to 'big and tough men in big and tough uniforms'. In cases where female chefs' authority was undermined by their male co-workers, for example, they were keener to display their physical competence (being tough, loud, and strong) as opposed to showing their inclination to strike a work-life balance and to ensure their resilience and enduring presence in the kitchen. This reminded us that female chefs' responses to bodily performance pressure were situationally evoked in their interactions and they might well have modified or adapted the displays of gender identity and meaning according to situational contingency (the 'how' and 'why') and without seeing their different responses as mutually exclusive.

Similarly, the "lack of recognition for creative skills" resembles a double bind which requires female chefs to "show heightened visibility as a woman" while still showing "lowered visibility as a competent worker". In cases where females were denied access to a more 'creative' position due

to the lack of recognition for their creative skills, many of them did not contest the arbitrary decision or judgment being made, but instead chose to wait for opportunities to emerge by either letting discouragement subside or choosing a new job. These findings are in line with the existing literature that notes the importance of the temporary dimension in job crafting (Sturges, 2012). This allows workers to manage the pace and timing of their responding to particular job demands. This 'when' aspect of job crafting was also cross examined in cases where female chefs responded to sexist treatments by taking into account "*the day, the service, the manager and my energy level"* or detecting when exactly a joke or a comment about a female colleague became unacceptable.

It is worth noting that asking the 'how' 'why' and 'when' questions in job crafting should not be confused with "avoidance coping" which is blamed for failing to make actual and specific changes to work conditions (Tims and Bakker, 2010). Female chefs in our study were clearly aware of bodily performance pressures, lack of recognition for their creative skills, and sexist communication and treatments in their day-to-day work. In professional kitchens, however, male bodies are construed as ideal and masculine norms predominate. Negotiating the physicality of the role and navigating their physical work settings is therefore a recurring theme that female chefs could never wish away (Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles, 2019). Since men have had a numerical and normative advantage on the jobsite and in the industry for centuries (Denissen, 2010), it might be more realistic to consider job crafting as the kind of practical wisdom that allows women to deal with contradictory gender expectations through situated responses based on their embodied and lived experiences.

The job crafting theories informed by quantitative research designs have shown themselves to be obsessed with making actual and concrete changes to a job's boundaries through increasing or reducing certain types of job demand (Crowford *et al*., 2010; Tims and Bakker, 2010; Tims *et al*., 2012; Rudolph *et al*., 2017). Related to this point, new measures for job crafting are published as a steady stream, but none of it clearly accounts for the context in which the measure is expected to fit most effectively (Lazazzara *et al*., 2020). Our study has provided greater in-depth understanding of the way in which a gendered occupational context may influence job crafting and

why women display varied preferences for different job crafting practices. In other words, we have put more emphasis on the central role that contextual conditions play in discerning the nature of a particular gender-related job demand and allowed space for women's situated responses.

Second, through the lens of constructing gender identities and meanings at the gender-body nexus, our study has verified that women are able to make use of their bodily and gender practices simultaneously as the right tools for coping with gender-related job demands (Denissen, 2010; Woodfield, 2016; Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles, 2019). Our findings are consistent with previous research that highlights women's strategic responses in terms of combining, varying, or moving back and forth between masculinities and femininities. We also expanded the understanding of the gender-body nexus in the construction of gender identities and meanings by emphasizing women's embodied and lived experiences in three interrelated dimensions: the ***material*** means, such as female chefs' bodily displays of gender via downplaying cuts and burns, doing body-building exercises, waving a knife to deter sexual harassment, making their physical appearance less feminine (no make-up, short hair, being muscular), foregrounding a female body with menstrual flows in order to emphasize differences, or obscuring their sexual orientation etc.; and ***discursively*** framing their working bodies as resilient and tenacious, constructed in opposition to other 'weaker' workers, of both sexes, or neutralising non-malicious banter and bodily gestures and distancing themselves from the view that certain workplace treatments and arrangements in the kitchen denote discrimination. In particular, female chefs' responses to bodily performance pressure can be evoked in interactions and they might well adopt a ***fluid*** presentation of bodily and gender practices according to situational contingency, such as foregrounding gender to emphasize their enduring presence as well as their physical competence.

Through the lens of the gender-body nexus in identity construction, we demonstrated that job crafting is about appropriating situated bodily and gender practices as the right tools for a given job demand, rather than about increasing or decreasing certain job demands *per se*. This is perhaps the reason why female chefs' job crafting practices that we reported in this article did not fit neatly with the JD-R model (Tims and Bakker, 2012), nor with the three types of job crafting activity identified by Wrzeniewski and Dutton (2001). While we take heed of the warning by Lazazzara

et al. (2020) against using the term 'job crafting' too liberally to avoid losing the original and intended meaning of the construct, we also believe that job crafting researchers should allow contextual workplace factors to be considered for understanding workers' preferences for certain forms of job crafting in a given situation. For instance, "managing men co-workers' reactions" as a response to sexist treatment in the kitchens is not as simple as changing relational boundaries between female chefs and their co-workers. As a matter of fact, female chefs could not decide whom they interacted with in terms of increasing or decreasing the number of relational ties, but rather they carefully managed their ways of interacting with their co-workers by engaging in dynamic displays of gender identity and meaning that emphasized what seemed to them the most advantageous self or expression for each situation. This is clearly exemplified in the female chefs' strategic responses that distinguished the kinds of banter or bodily gestures that were acceptable in their situationally evoked interactions with their male co-workers.

In sum, the theoretical ambition of the JD-R model is to develop a scale to measure job crafting in terms of increasing or decreasing certain types of job demands (Tims & Bakker, 2010; Tims *et al.*, 2012). Our study, nonetheless, suggests that job crafting as dynamic displays of gender identity and meaning should move beyond a way of conceptualizing job crafting that seeks merely to 'decrease/increase', and its associated limitation of describing certain types of job demands only as positive or negative. Instead, we should embrace a more relational analysis of work conditions in a specific occupational context. This suggestion allows us to pay more attention to contextual factors that treat job crafting practices as means of addressing job demands in given situations. We therefore call for a shift of the focus of attention in job crafting theory from assessing which type of job demands facilitate job crafting to understanding the contextual conditions (the 'when' 'why' and 'how') under which job crafting is mostly likely to generate positive, negative, or mixed[13] experiences over time. It is hoped that our qualitative investigation can be understood as a successful example that takes personal experiences seriously and provides insights into capturing individuals' embodied and lived experiences and thought-processes in their situational context (Lazazzara *et al*., 2020).

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[13] If we take our stand from the assumption of job crafting's temporality, 'mixed' has the sense of producing parallel positive and negative accounts over time.

Conclusion

The gender-related job demands facing women in male-dominated occupations are much more complicated than asking women to get a job done by simply following specific task procedures and personnel arrangements as their male counterparts do. These demands required women to get a job done in specific ways, meeting the contradictory expectations and beliefs of men co-workers[14] long before women entered a male-dominated occupational context. As a strategic response, female employees have to show their willingness, efforts and practical wisdom to create more relational harmony and satisfaction with their bodies, roles, and occupational contexts through context-dependent job crafting practices. Our study contributes to the job crafting research in that it considers the importance of learning about the conditions under which job crafting is mostly likely to generate positive, negative, or mixed experiences in a specific occupational context and the implications of this for reconsidering workers' preferences for different job crafting practices in this context.

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[14] Here, we take "men co-workers" as a congregated concept without implying that every single male worker in the cooking sector holds the same contradictory expectations of female workers. In fact, a number of female chefs in our study acknowledged the help from specific male chefs in their career and personal development and expressed their gratitude to them.

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Pseudo-nym	Work Status (Full time or Agency)	Position	Age	Years of service	Size of the kitchen	No. of Female chefs	Head Chef (Female or Male)
Ann	F	Head chef	44	28	8	2	F
Caroline	F	Head chef & Co-owner	50	35	6	-	F
Charlotte	F	Head Chef	36	21	22	2	F
Emily	F	CDP-Pastry	23	8	12	2	M
Mariana	A	CDP- Pastry	42	5	9	1	M
Francesca	F	CDP-Pastry	24	5	10	3	M
Joanna	F	Executive chef	46	27	25	3	F
Eliza	F	Head chef & Co-owner	48	22	7	4	F
Sarah	F	CDP	41	10	7	2	M
Rosie	F	Commis Chef	24	5	13	4	M
Olivia	F	Sous Chef	33	10	13	2	M
Lily	F	Sous Chef	40	9	15	3	M

Grace	F	CDP	36	11	6	1	M
Sylvia	A	CPD	25	6	20	2	M
Sara	F	Head chef	42	22	5	-	F
Sophia	A	CDP	31	12	14	2	M
Lola	A	CDP	25	7	14	3	M
Lauren	A	CDP	29	8	12	2	M
Eva	F	CDP	42	5	9	1	M
Emma	F	CDP	27	6	13	2	M
Jessica	F	CDP	24	5	11	2	M

Table 1: demographic and work related information on the female chefs interviewed

Gender-related job demands	Job crafting practices	Constructing gender identities and meanings	Conceptual implications for job crafting
Bodily performance pressures	Negotiating physical competence	Masculine	Job crafting is about enacting dynamic displays – *material, discursive,* and *fluid* – of gender identities and meanings as situated responses to a given job demand being made.
		Gender-neutral	
Lack of recognition for creative skills	Reframing creativity	Feminine	
		Gender-neutral	
Sexism communication and arrangements	Managing men co-workers' reactions	Masculine	
		Feminine	
		Gender-neutral	

Table 2: Job crafting as dynamic displays of gender identities and meanings in a male-dominated sector