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# Bringing body back: Job crafting, human agency and identity play

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*“To expect the unexpected shows a thoroughly modern intellect” – Oscar Wilde*

## Abstract

Job crafting has been understood as a better alternative to job design in expressing human agency at work. However, the discussion on agency in the existing job crafting literature has been largely confined to a cognitive process of positive meaning making and identity construction. Little is known about the bodily dimension of agency in job crafting. Through an ethnographic study of culinary organisations, we are able to elaborate how chefs' bodies and bodily encounters are always embedded in job crafting that trigger particular identity plays on one hand, and exert material limits on those on the other. The findings suggest that the body provides more than a motive/vehicle for human agency, it in itself has an agentic capacity to affect and be affected. As such, the boundaries, meanings and consequences of job crafting are not fixed, but subject to the changes emerging from human and non-human interactions in the socio-material assemblage of everyday life. The study offers an embodied approach to job crafting via identity play that deepens our understanding of human agency in a constraining environment.

**Key words:** Job crafting, human agency, body, identity play, constraining environment

## Introduction

Job crafting is a specific form of work behaviour that involves employees actively changing the (perceived) characteristics of their jobs (Rudolph *et al.*, 2017). As a proactive approach, job crafting has been understood as a better alternative to traditional job design approach in expressing human agency at work. This is mainly because job crafting is initiated by employees themselves as an individualised and bottom-up process, compared to the top down

and one-size-fits-all process driven by employers. However, the scope of discussion on human agency in the existing job crafting literature has been largely confined to the “freedom to take initiative [that] opens up opportunities for employees to create meaningful experiences for themselves” (Berg *et al.*, 2013, p.85). This emphasis almost equates human agency to a cognitive process of meaning making and identity construction (Wrzesniewski *et al.*, 2013), whereas the bodily dimension of agency exercised through job crafting is largely ignored. Without considering the role of the body in job crafting, human agency will be partially understood and so will the motivations, processes and effects of job crafting (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001).

Adopting an identity play lens, we seek to illustrate the role of the body in job crafting through an ethnographic study of chefs’ everyday work/life in three culinary organisations in London. By means of teamwork and coordination, chefs are able to present complex meal experiences for their patrons and achieve organisational goals (Fine, 1996). However, kitchen work is also understood as a highly structured, routinised, and disciplined process, similar to that of military services emphasising command and control (Bloisi & Hoel, 2008). It is therefore worth asking how chefs actually perform their day-to-day jobs in a restrictive world of work (Fleming, 2015), especially what roles do their bodies play in relation to the meaning making and identity construction process derived from job crafting.

Through a longitudinal investigation of kitchen work over a 13-month-period, we are able to report a number of examples of unintended consequences of chefs’ job crafting practices, and to elaborate further how chefs’ bodies and bodily encounters are always embedded in job crafting that trigger particular identity plays on one hand, and exert material limits on those on the other. The findings enable us to reconsider job crafting as an embodied experience, in which the role of the body is not limited to providing a motive and a vehicle for human agency, but also about generating a corporeal and distributed context for human agency. As such, human agency in job crafting is not just about making conscious changes to one’s immediate task/relational environment so as to acquire meaningfulness and a positive work identity, but also about being able to live through the unexpected consequences of change, especially when those run counter to one’s original intention and fail to produce positive meanings or identities as predicted. This means that being able to engage with a job in a constraining environment itself is human agency, rather than being able to find positive meanings or to construct positive work identity through a job.

Below we specify the theoretical underpinnings and research context of this study before discussing its theoretical and empirical implications.

### **Theoretical underpinnings**

In this section, we first summarise the limited accounts of body in the existing job crafting literature, and then introduce identity play as our theoretical construct.

#### **1. Body in job crafting: an agency debate**

In the context of restrictive world of work, employees easily feel alienated from their work (Fleming, 2015). There is a growing interest on how an agentic individual responds to organisational constraints (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Bakker, Rodríguez-Muñoz, and Sanz Vergel, 2016a; Berg, Wrzesniewski, and Dutton, 2010; Knights and Clarke, 2017). Along this line of thinking, job crafting is offered as a particularly critical path to meaningfulness in modern work contexts (Wrzesniewski, Berg and Dutton, 2010). Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) define job crafting as “the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work” (p.179). Herein, task crafting refers to any physical changes in the form, scope and type of job tasks carried out by doing fewer, more or different job than prescribed to individual. Relational crafting refers to changes in quality or amount of interaction and relationship with others. In parallel to Wrzesniewski and colleagues, another group of researchers, who focus on the different dimensions of job crafting behaviours, develop a JD-R model (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) that describes the changes employees may make regarding their job demands and job resources, such as increasing structural job resources, increasing social job resources, increasing challenging job demands and decreasing hindering job demands.

The two major streams of research above suggest that the motivation of job crafting is related to fulfilling the psychological needs of the body. In the case of Wrzesniewski and colleagues, they trace the discussion of body in job design back to the scientific management movement where time and motion regulations were applied to individual workers. The Cartesian body and mind dualism serves justification for the division of labour, which essentially turns human bodies into tools for realising labour purposes, and yet problematically abolishes humanity at work (Oldman and Fried, 2016). The frustration induced by the traditional job design is that this top down approach places constraints on the innate capacities of our bodies, suppressing our embodied experience, such as desire for amusement. For this reason, job

crafting is proposed as an alternative to traditional job design that aligns with employees' key motives, or specific outcomes that drive them to put forth effort and persistence, such as enjoyment, personal growth, friendship (Berg *et al.*, 2013). This shift is critical to foster meaningfulness by enabling employees to pursue outcomes that they care about and deeply value. Wrzeniewski and colleagues (Wrzeniewski and Dutton, 2001; Berg *et al.*, 2010; Berg *et al.*, 2013) also believe that job crafting in ways enable employees to leverage their strengths (e.g. problem solving skills, attention to detail, public speaking) and passions (e.g. learning, teaching, using technology) at work that then automatically serve as a rich source of enjoyment, engagement and meaningfulness and contribute to the construction of a desirable identity at work. In the case of Bakker and colleagues (Tims and Bakker, 2010; Bakker *et al.*, 2016; Bakker, Tims, and Derks, 2012; van Wingerden, Bakker, and Derks, 2017), they notice that proactive employees strive for congruence with their environment in terms of needs and abilities, and when employees see more of a fit between themselves and their jobs, they are more likely to experience their work as personally meaningful as well as respond with enhanced job performance.

Despite their different foci, the above two streams share a commonality, i.e. job crafting is understood as a self-oriented proactive behaviour independent of the usefulness of this behaviours for colleagues, supervisors, or the entire organisation, and with which individuals can (1) revise the meaning of their work; (2) change their work identity; or (3) improve their fit with their job. The underlying message here is that behind the shift from traditional job design to job crafting there lies an urgent need to account for employees' embodied experiences at work, i.e. the role of the body in terms of providing a motive and a vehicle for agency through job crafting. However, this common ground also leaves us with an impression that human agency in job crafting rests upon an individual's internal capacity. This is mainly because the cognitive processes of meaning making, identity construction, and fit improving all rely on an individuated and reflexive self, who is willing to stretch him and her limitlessly at work (intention) and can always reach a desirable end seamlessly (efficacy).

Surprisingly, there was little research on the unintended consequences of both intention and efficacy that one may encounter during the course of job crafting. This point links to Rofcaninet *al.*'s (2018) most recent investigation, i.e. if there is a dark side to job crafting,

considering job crafting may not always have positive outcomes for the organisation or employees. Indeed, Rofcanin *et al.* (2018) found employees may increase or reduce the extent of communication complexity of their relational work environment, which may positively as well as negatively impact on their work engagement and work outcomes. This finding echoes Berg *et al.* (2010)'s concern that job crafting techniques, such as bringing one's perceived calling into work, can bring out the sort of enjoyable and meaningful experiences, but at the same time, this process can have negative consequences when, for example, pursuing an unanswerd calling result in stress or frustration in circumstances that run counter to the organisation's goals. Together, the studies above highlight the importance of the social material context of job crafting and subsequently direct our attention to the material limits on job crafting. As insightful as these studies are, they do not account for the sources of those material limits and fail to enquire further into the effects of those material limits on job crafting as well.

For instance, Berg *et al.* (2013) provide a classic example of a history teacher who incorporates his long time passion for performing music into his curriculum, collaborates with other music teachers in his school, and draws parallel in his mind between teaching history and performing music. In so doing, it is believed that he can bring the valued part of identity of being a musician, new meaningfulness, and enhanced level of fit into his job. What we do not know is, however, what triggers his decision to make those changes to his job at a specific point in time (here and now), and how other bodies, both human and non-human, react to the changes that he made and if those interactions produce any unintended material conditions on his subsequent job crafting practices (there and then). These unanswerd questions direct our attention to the corporeal and distributed context of agency that new materialists insist upon (Krause, 2011): first, the human body does more than providing a motive and a vehicle for agency but itself has "argentic capacities", and second, rather than being a property or internal capacity of the individual, agency is a distributed phenomenon, an emergent property of interactions among bodies, both human and non-human.

As for job crafting literature, the propositions of the new materialism mean that we must examine the role of the body in job crafting in detail by paying special attention to the

functions of the body and the socio-material assemblages in which different bodies interact. Below we specify how this may be done through an identity play perspective.

2. An identity play perspective: **joining identity and body together**

The notion of play at work has increasingly been deployed by organisations to fulfil managerial agenda (Petelczyc, Capezio, Wang, Restubog, and Aquino, 2018). Despite functional advantages, it can operate through a set of tactics, techniques and aesthetics (Bogost 2016), which may benefit individuals by allowing for, for example, identity rehearsal (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010), enjoyment and fun (Statler, Heracleous, and Jacobs, 2011), overcoming frustration and tension (Proyer and Brauer, 2018), reframing work meaning (Bogost, 2016) and building relation (Proyer and Brauer, 2018).

In the context of the restrictive world of work, job crafting, which may entail playful acts, has been seen as the way to address the discrepancies between a current/existing and a desirable identity at work (Niessen *et al.*, 2016). Researchers suggest such discrepancies can be dealt with by bringing in provisional selves or experimental selves as a means of reframing their desirable work identity (Ibarra, 1999; Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010; Petriglieri and Petriglier, 2010). The notion of experimental selves strikes a chord with an emphasis on playful acts. To this end, Ibarra and Petriglieri (2010, p.13) conceptualise identity play as “the crafting and provisional trial of immature possible selves”, which gives rise to a kind of exploration and transition from current reality to future possibilities (Brown and Starkey, 2000). Ibarra (1999) further reminds us that such provisional selves is a temporal solution to sustain at present, as such identity play is not just about having fun or enjoyment at present, it can also be about enduring pain and stress for the future (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010). And yet, there is no further research on when and why a particular identity play is put on and how this play unfolds over time.

There are two important implications emanated from the notion of identity play (Ibarra and Petriglieri, 2010; Petriglieri and Petriglier, 2010) through its emphasis on provisional but possible future selves. First, no one is able to conduct identity play in isolation. This is mainly because that identity play may take place in the present but must be understood in the context of the entire life course of individuals, and that identity play in the ‘now’ is connected strongly to the past remembered and future projected selves (Brown, 2015). This also

indicates that identity play needs to take place in a material setting in which different bodies, both material and non-material, may meet and interact with each other. In other words, tracing the course of development of identity play in a material setting over time is in effect an effort of studying agency conceived as the functions of bodies and socio-material assemblages. As Klause (2011, p.302) insightfully point out, “the self’s transformation over time is itself a part of agency because we sometimes become new to ourselves in important ways as a result of what we do” in a specific social and material context.

Second, occurrences of identity play are stimulated by identity destabilisation, i.e. experiences of uncertainty, confusion and anxiety. Those moments of doubts can motivate attempts to reestablish an identity rendered fragile, or to make a transition towards a new one. Identity play therefore supports individuals in elaborating, experimenting with and consolidating the meanings assigned to the self. For us, both terms - ‘identity work’ and ‘identity play’ – imply agentic activity, and yet, ‘work’ easily evokes the impression of compliance, rationality, a means-ends orientation, whereas ‘play’ directs the selves/identities to embodied experiences and their corporeal context, such as enjoyment, intuition, spontaneity and fantasy (Brown, 2015, p.27). It also implies the need of constructing subjectivity without control by allowing for the unintended consequences of one’s bodily encounter at one specific point in time and over time. In other words, the self that sustains his/her agency-as-involvement during identity play is not a self that is fully in control of either its activity or its effect.

Based upon the above premises laid out, we would speculate that job-crafting practices are not just about changing task and relation boundaries but also about experimenting with provisional selves, prompted by the corporeal and distributed contexts where the agents are embedded.

### **Research context and methodology**

Chefs like many occupations embedded within culinary organisations demand teamwork and coordination to enable a restaurant to present complex meal experiences for their patrons and to achieve the organisational goals through kitchen work (Fine, 1996). However, kitchen



work is often understood as a highly structured, routinised, and disciplined process, similar to military services emphasising command and control (Boudrain, 2013). Becoming a chef in this context means that one has to put up with things that nobody likes and makes sacrifices accordingly. For instance, chefs suffer from burns, cuts and injuries easily and frequently at work. It is also widely known that the culinary world is a hierarchical brigade (White and Steen, 2006): while the head chef is in charge of the kitchen, the rest of the kitchen staff are expected to comply with culinary arrangements requiring discipline and skill to meet the demands of the kitchen. In fact, the kitchen environment is usefully hot and stressful with people working in close proximity to each other, and sometimes tempers flare. Each employee is in full view of all other employees working in the kitchen, so the need to demonstrate competency is important in order to gain acceptance as a culinary professional.

On the other hand, a professional chef's role is much more than the end producer of a meal. It also involves the technology of preparation, processing, and the artistic design in a culinary environment (Hegarty, 2008). The key competencies associated with a chef's role therefore include but are not limited to, time management, knowledge of products, food preparation and culinary operations, knowledge of kitchen functions and procedures, ability to work in a multi-task environment, and general communication skills (Jones, 2005). It is important to note that it is not one single competency but rather the combined or integrated attributes that contribute to the delivery of kitchen goals together. From an identity perspective, however, the different aspects of a chef's role and the different measures of competencies may generate tensions in a multi-task scenario. For instance, a chef who is obsessed with the artistic design of food may fall behind the schedule during busy service hours.

In addition, psychological boundaries of the chef community are constructed by the nature of kitchen work and the routines and tasks associated with their training as a chef. A working environment that spills over into the social arena due to the long and mostly unsocial working hours reinforces belonging (Palmer *et al.*, 2007). The nature of the work defines world-view and the values system of the whole community. Belonging is thus established on the basis of a shared history and the disciplinary markers, including both bodily cues (e.g. cuts, burns, tattoos) and verbal cues (e.g. 'yes, chef', cursing and slang) that either reinforce the kitchen's hierarchical order or promote a managerially approved attitudes or morale at work. These markers then allow the chef community to identify themselves to others and to each other in a distinctive way.

With the above context in mind, an ethnographic study was conducted within three restaurants in London between November 2017 and December 2018. The three restaurants were chosen because of their size, operation and access. The general structure of kitchens consists of head chef, sous chef, pastry chefs, chef de Partie, and commis chef. Head chefs are the in charge of kitchen who is responsible for the overall management of kitchen. Sous chef is second-in-command in kitchen who is responsible for operation of kitchen and leads the kitchen in absence of head chef, chef de partie is a chef responsible for the specific section of the kitchen, pastry chef makes pastries and desserts and commis chefs are normally the beginner in kitchen. Instead of just sitting on the corner of kitchen and taking notes, I decided to become a part of their world by voluntarily helping them in cleaning, peeling potatoes and garlic, placing plates and cutleries and other general tasks done in kitchen. I made an effort to embrace their social world by participating in their jokes, kitchen talks and going out with them for drinks or smoking breaks. The objective was to understand their world through listening their bodies - the communicating bodies (Coole, 2005; Chadwick, 2017) – which offer a lot more than verbal exchange. By situating myself in my participants' 'natural world of work', I was able to gain a close understanding of their job crafting activities including those unexpected life events that unfold over time (Ellingson, 2017). The objective of my participant observation was to explore how body is perceived and utilised in their job crafting activities. Drawing on Merleau-Ponty (1962), Thoresen and Öhlén, (2015) suggests that “observing is not about seeing the world as it is; observing is reciprocal between what is seen or observed, and the observer. Knowledge is developed through the lived body, not only through the eyes and the mind” (Thoresen and Öhlén, 2015, p. 3). That is exactly what I did.

Most of the participants confirmed to me that they had not paid much attention to the roles and responsibilities specified in their job descriptions. In fact, they did not even read their job description thoroughly, claiming “there is no escape from a busy schedule whatsoever”. Head chefs are in charge of kitchen who constantly reminds their concern about the food, its quality, efficiency, costing, presentation and overall operation of kitchen. Bodily expression such as giggling, winking, laughing, cracking jokes, playing songs, teasing, frustration and anger were evident throughout my stay in the restaurants. Their jobs require them to deal with fire, pans, knives and other equipment, lift heavy loads, stand long hours, constant bend and taste food. The cuts, burns and injuries were frequently observed. Bodily pains in knees,

backs ankles, feet, and wrists so on and so forth were also commonly seen. Health issues such as stress, diabetes, high blood pressures were spotted as well. These evidences show that chefs' bodies are indeed both 'active and passive, vehicle and victims, efficacious and constrained' (Coole, 2005).

<b>Methods</b>	<b>Illustrations</b>	<b>Data collection</b>
<b>Participant observation</b>	Participant observations were carried out in three restaurants in London over 150 hours.  Follow up inquiries. The observation notes were then clarified by having a short conversation with chefs when they were taking a break or going out for a drink after their shifts.	Participations and observations with notes-taking where possible
<b>Semi-structured interview</b>	A total of 54 semi-structured interviews were conducted with 28 chefs in three restaurants on different occasions.	Audio-recorded and transcribed

Table 1. Research Methods-Data Collection

### **Data Collection**

Data collection took place throughout my fieldtrip. The data was collected through participant observations and semi-structured interviews. To be clear, I was able to observe and interact with all kitchen members, but considering the scope of this research project, we deliberately excluded kitchen porters. I spent on average 50 hours in each restaurant before conducting interviews with 28 chefs over a 13-month-period. In total, 54 interviews were collected. Each chef was interviewed at least once, and some 3 times. One of the chefs asked me to observe how he prepared soup as if I were there to learn how to cook. In another situation, I was made part of a joke saying 'he is going to take our shits to government, things will get better soon, don't worry guys'. I found that the participants were more hesitant in the restaurant where I secured the access via management other than informal social networks. Perhaps this can be accounted for by the worry that I might pass on their secrets to the management. However, I managed to ease such worry or discomfort by immersing myself in their world: assisting in trivial kitchen work, talking about footballs, running the errands for them (buy cigarettes or energy drinks upon their requests) and going for a drink together after their shifts.. During busy days, normally Friday evening and Saturday, they will hardly get any spare time for themselves and I was asked not to interrupt. As soon as it gets busier and busier, the giggling and normal faces slowly turned out to be grumpy, frustrated, angry and a

kind of lost. Shouting and yelling were all over the place. As food orders come in slowly, a kind of relief is seen on their faces. It suddenly feels like winning a war, and some would even pop out for snacks, smoking, or drinking. Once kitchen services come to an end, chefs are expected to clean their sections and complete their daily close-up routines.

The observation and follow up interviews enable me to explore ‘meanings, moments and becoming’ (Laura, 2017 p. 34). During each field trip, I took notes where possible to record things that trigger my curiosity. The duration of interview ranges from 21 minutes to 86 minutes, all were audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim.

### Data analysis

The data analysis was done in two rounds: thematic analysis and narrative analysis. First, a thematic analysis was conducted to understand chefs’ bodily encounters, their perceptions and bodily expressions. The analysis contributed to identifying identity play strategies adopted in relation to their job crafting activities. Also, we paid special attention to distinguish job crafting activities from daily routines. Following the tradition of job crafting research, we analysed activities that were performed for self-serving purposes (Niessen *et al.*, 2016; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001).

Second, building on thematic analysis, we focused on exploring the journey of individual’s job crafting activities through a narrative analysis. The narrative stories allowed us to track the process of job crafting and chefs’ perceptions of their jobs over time. We paid special attention to the motives and consequences of identity play and identified turning points in their narration of identity development. The narrative analysis (See appendix Table 3) consists of stories in three patterns, which were summarised as follows.

Narrator	Bodily encounters at T1	Identity Play	Job crafting practices	Bodily encounters at T2	Material limits on Identity play	Adjusted job crafting practices
Daniel	Pain and strain	Masculine	Ignoring and downplaying physical discomforts by	Exhaustion and guilt	Family responsibilities	Looking after self at work and selectively

			putting on brave face and taking on additional tasks			taking on extra tasks
Paul	Boredom/ Dullness	Aesthetic	Redirecting attention and experimenting with the creative and artistic aspects of work	Escalated expectation and frustration	Commercial targets	Prioritising tasks and adjusting self expectation
Aaron	Loneliness and insecurity	Sociable	Socialising with and entertaining co-workers	Dependence and rejection	Social positioning	Re-drawing boundaries (between self-others, between work-career)

Table 2. The role of the body in job crafting via identity play

## Findings

Below we present three representative stories that explain how chefs craft their jobs in a restrictive world of work. The two authors of this paper discussed the patterns of those stories together, but the findings were assembled by one of them using first-person narrative to capture the vividness of his ethnographic experience as well as his reflections-in-the-field.

### Daniel's masculine self

I met Daniel in Alliance, a London based restaurant that offers modern French cuisine. Daniel is a long-standing experienced sous chef who began his journey in the culinary industry 22 years ago by first training as an apprentice, with a dream of becoming a Michelin star chef one day. His story of making his way up to the head chef and then stepping down to take a sous chef's position is one of the most interesting and emotional narratives that I came across. He is quite proud of the four years of apprenticeship where was working under a highly regarded Michelin star chef. But the journey was not easy because, at the beginning, he had to accept unrealistically long hours of work, deal with trivial tasks such as dishwashing and garbage cleaning, and try hard to please and impress his bosses. He recalled the beginning of his career as follows:

*“Every week, I was working 18 to 19 hours a day, 7 days a week... they kick you, poke you, shout at you, you get cuts and bruises, you go through the hard hard stages and 4 year later*

*you come out of it, like a real man, proud, such hardship doesn't bother you anymore. It's like in an army, first you see the young guy running around with a chicken face but when they finish their training, they become soldiers, strong, physically and mentally."*

Indeed, the culinary world of work is physically, mentally and emotionally demanding which requires him standing long hours, bearing high temperature, moving and bending constantly, putting up with frustration, anger and emotional outburst, doing multiple tasks, and tolerating cuts and burns all the time. The intense physical demand of work is often responded by displaying a macho body that tends to downplay any bodily suffering as if it was not an issue for them at all. As for a chef's routines, food preparation is a relatively calm and quiet period, but when food orders flood in, each member is under immense pressure to ensure that the prescribed yet creatively moulded dishes are prepared within a restricted time frame, which proves to a real challenge even to experienced staff.

Nonetheless, Daniel was trained to believe that pride is taken by enduring hardship and tolerating bodily suffering. Such training taught him that toughness and hardship are a threshold to glory and the only way to overcome those difficulties is to show a brave face, brave enough to push his own body beyond its limit. By the time he finished his training, Daniel was already seen as an ideal employee who was dedicated, strong and capable, and on his way of becoming a Michelin chef, a recognised professional identity. To a large extent, his success in life is defined in relation to work related outcomes. He told me that when he was young he was so obsessed with his goal that he would sacrifice anything including his own body and personal life to get it.

*"When I was young, I had burn, cuts, bruises everywhere still you don't care about that. It's nothing, it's kind of man thing, it is so stupid but this is what it is. I am telling you, if you moan at such little things, you will get bullied, isolated and become a job to those people. In fact we were pushing, pushing and always pushing. But we were proud, we worked hard to make things work ...the physical hardship was nothing..."*

In dealing with **pain and strain**, he stressed how capable he was by presenting **a masculine self** that is bold, fearless, and vigorous and unbeatable. At the same time, he downplayed his own bodily suffering for the sake of making himself more acceptable in the eyes of others. For instance, Daniel is aware that anyone who is 'not tough enough' is often labelled as incapable, uncommitted and impassionate for the job. At one point, I noted that Daniel had a

bleeding hand, but he quickly returned to his section wrapped with double gloves. I got an impression that showing competency is an essential part of his job:

*“I am an iron man ok!! I don’t feel pain? ... just joking mate. Yes, it was painful, but I don’t want to let my guys down. I know, I could have gone home, head chef cannot tell me to continue to work due to health and safety regulation ... [But] come-on, I am strong enough. You know, it is a part of job, just get on with it.”*

Herein, the **masculine self** is assured through **job crafting activities** amplifying macho characteristics such as being tough, aggressive, competitive and ambitious by means of taking additional tasks and challenging tasks, enduring long working hours, and putting up with physical discomfort at a same time. Discourses on commitment and loyalty are also widely circulated and indicated by behaviours such as not taking an available break, postponing one’s own appetite, using personal unpaid time to refine dishes, continuing one’s work even when one is on medicine. When work intensity takes the toll of the body, however, Daniel told me that some of his fellows resorted to unusual approaches to ‘top up’ their energy level:

*“It is too much and to be able to manage work demand, people take drugs, cigarettes, and drinks. You do need drugs at some point; the body can’t cope with it, no way. Lots of people do drugs...When you are so bloody tired, you need to chill out, wind down, you take a beer, you need it. Even after home, you start drinking more, and come back to work with hangover the next day, yes, it’s bad, but you just need it...”*

The torn body that is struggling to cope with a demanding job is temporarily sustained by consuming caffeine, painkillers, smoking, energy drinks and alcohol. Despite his effort to extend the functioning of tired and **exhausted** body, Daniel confessed after a while that he reached a stage where his body ‘refused’ any abusive attempts against it. For example, he told me that the cuts and injuries are often due when an exhausted body does not correspond to the conscious intention of handling a knife properly: *“chefs get cut with knives when exhaustion and lack of sleep make them sleep-working.”* Daniel also mentioned to me that he would barely have any energy left at the end of the day and usually return home with a ‘dead’ body: *“serving high standard food ... no energy left to make decent food for you or your family, sounds pathetic, hein?”*

Indeed, overtime the exhausted body proves to be problematic not only to chefs themselves, but also their **families**. Daniel did not hide to me the fact that his wife and kids suffered from

his long working hours and lack of energy. But he said he had been blind to their suffering until one day something happened:

*“I was busy working as normal, I had a message from my partner saying ‘our son fell from stair and he has been taken to hospital’. Since they were already in hospital, I thought let me finish the service hours and then go to the hospital. Stupid me! I thought it was a minor thing. I should have called her immediately, but I was damn busy. Man, I can’t describe to you, how guilty I was and still am today... hands broken, head stitched, face swollen, my son was lying on the bed with plasters everywhere and my partner in tears, who am I? I found myself helpless... never ever had such horrific feelings in my life. I could have lost my son?!”*

For Daniel, it was a tragic moment that he could not let go. The incident, however, accidentally ‘awakened’ his body once again by making him realise that stretching himself too much at work was not what he truly desired. The bottom line is that he did not want to lose his family, their love and support and felt regret about missing so many important events in life.

*“With the hours I work it is almost impossible to establish any kind of healthy relationship... The fact that I missed so many birthday celebrations with my families hurts me.”*

Although he has no other viable options but to accept the current working conditions to make a living, with a guilty face, Daniel began to question the worth of bodily sacrifice that he made over years in search of a ‘fulfilled’ job. For instance, he is overweight due to delayed eating and excessive consumption of food and drinks and this subsequently gave him back pain and joints problems. However, he emphasised to me that keeping fit is not just an individual need but also the means of sustaining his family:

*“I am hobbled by back pain since last three years. I do remember once had a bad muscle cramp and had to take a week off.... Before, I was ignorant about my health worked as if I was superman, but see the price I’m paying now... what I did wrong in the past, I need to look after myself first, I have kids behind... This constant competition to see who can push him more is just stupid! Where does it stop?”*

For Daniel, the masculine aspect of self that he once played with, which fuelled him with enormous pride and satisfaction, has gradually turned into a **self-defeated feeling** and **guilt**. He mentioned that it took some time for him to realise how his body had been a victim of his own ambitions: a passionate chef who had been following a mirage of success but knocked down by chronic illness and **family responsibilities**. Those are exactly the reasons why he



stepped down from the head chef role: *“I stepped down from the role of Head chef... I can't do that many hours, it would kill me... I work for providing for my family not losing them”*. Like Daniel, a few chefs that I interviewed mentioned at some point that ***selectively taking extra task and looking after oneself first*** was something that they gradually learned over time after perhaps many trials and errors.

One evening, I observed that the floor manager in the restaurant took a food order after the kitchen services were about to close. Daniel and his colleagues were already half way through tidying up the kitchen. He was quite upset to find out that another food order was taken. Especially one of the dishes ordered by customers was time consuming to prepare. To my surprise, Daniel told his assistant chef *‘just say the food ingredients run out of stock’* when it was clearly not the case. Afterwards I approached him privately asking why he had said that, Daniel reasoned: *“I work hard but not a robot anymore...”*

### **Paul's aesthetic self**

Paul is a newly promoted head chef working in Bella restaurant in London that offers Italian cuisines. His was brought into the culinary world by an attempt to fund his travel. As a college leaver, he felt he had barely any other options to fund his travel than working in a kitchen, which, to his belief, was easy to get in. His first job in a professional kitchen was dishwashing, but he was soon captivated by what he termed the ‘artistic side’ of cooking in the kitchen. For this reason, he managed to secure a ‘chef de partie’ position while he was travelling in Europe. But the turning point of his career was when he was travelling in the USA he began to take some formal training as a chef. There came a traveller-turned-chef who shared with me his career stories.

Although the nature of cooking is creative, chefs in the kitchen are often compelled to reproduce prescribed recipes. As a result, their jobs can be repetitive, monotonous and boring, and their creative potentials are often hammered by harsh and realistic business demands. The orchestra of ‘yes chef’ by chef the parties as a response to the orders read by head chef/ sous chef can be observed throughout service time in many restaurants. Paul claimed that most of the kitchens are like a one-man show where head chefs command and control and run a kitchen like an army. Any deviation in terms of attitude and execution is hardly tolerated. When this kind of control takes its extreme form, a chef's body can suffer from ***boredom and dullness***. Paul recalled a story of how his ex-boss, a head chef reacted when others failed to meet his standards:

*“I worked in a Michelin star restaurant, under a very specific man [the head chef] ... he knew exactly what he wanted, how he wanted, when he wanted... [It is not unusual] to see this guy throwing trays at others and yelling ‘what the fuck is this’...”*

Being a head chef himself, Paul showed his empathy with his ex-boss. For him, the head chef’s responses were fierce yet ‘reasonable’, because this is essentially about ‘maintaining a professional order’.

*“It’s like a jungle where a lion is the king, head chef is the lion in the kitchen, and he has to be a lion. If he let other roar they will eat him, [and] I won’t let this happen either. For me the standard of food is the most important. I don’t want to cook food that is not going to make you feel good... [From an artistic point of view] I am also gifting you the intimacy of my personal taste, if I don’t love my job I could be a truck driver or something else, I can make more money by, say, working for the underground.”*

Paul’s expressions illustrate two things. First, as a head chef, there is an opportunity for him to express the artistic side of self that can be shown through the dishes he makes, which he cherishes very much. For this reason, he is not willing to let anyone question or violate this **artistic self** that brings taste to cooking. Second, being a head chef, he is also acutely aware of the importance of work outcomes. Actually, his success is measured and validated in relation to business outcomes. Despite of head chefs’ command and control on plating, presentation, side dishes and the recipe, the final product depends on how artistically and creatively those ingredients are assembled together. For many chefs, their interactions with food through touching, smelling, tasting, and watching are gratifying in their own right. Chefs also feel valued when they receive appreciation, compliment and positive feedback from customers and colleagues. It is through an emphasis on the artistic and creative dimension of cooking, the boredom associated with disciplinary control and repetition can be mitigated temporarily. Looking back, Paul also reckoned, when he was working as Chef de partie, the only way to express his creativity without undermining a head chef’s ‘big ego’ was to cook ‘special dishes of the day’ or ‘taste menu’ as an experiment: *“I had to do things exactly the way that my head chef wanted until I proved my creativity. Then I got to the point where the head chef handed me a blank piece of paper and told me to write my specials for this week”*. The job crafting activities here consist of taking additional and challenging tasks to be able to **experiment with the creative and artistic aspects of cooking**.

When I was shadowing him, Paul stressed several times how important cooking tools are for producing artistic outputs. For him, knife is an extended part of his body, which allows him to artistically cut, chop or slice foods into the finest shape possible. Although knives and other utensils are provided in the kitchen, I observed that Paul always carried his own private set of knives in his bag. According to Paul, those knives are essential for demonstrating his artistic flair: *“It is a tool what I can think of at least in kitchen...[as an] extension of my hand. I need to feel the knife and once the knife builds rapport with my hand it would produce magic... [Earlier in my career] I didn’t get what people were saying to me ‘listen to the knife’, I now get it completely”*. This account is somewhat similar to the classic Chinese story of ‘*The Chef Cuts the Ox*’. For Paul, this is all about following his ‘*Tao*’ in terms of seeing things intuitively that goes beyond the physical dimension. Instead of separating tools from the individuals who use them, Paul’s artistic flair can be best understood in their interactions. Here, it is actually the non-human body interacting with the human body and then enable individuals to bring out their artistic potential to the most.

Yet, despite temporal amusements through exercising his aesthetic acumen, Paul and others are often hammered by increasing workload, arguments, frustration and other contingent issues that keep their artistic passions at bay. Paul expressed his dissatisfaction as follows:

*“We need to deal all the problems of the restaurant through the kitchen, any problems in a restaurant is somehow linked to the kitchen and the kitchen has to fix it. If something goes wrong on the table, it’s the kitchen fault ... [I know] the job is not just about dealing with demands but being creative. But when you are so tired, do you think about being creative, no, get the job done, be practical... We don’t have the luxury of that (being creative)”*.

The narration naturally reminds me of a heated exchange between Paul and his manager. One evening, I saw a queue of customers waiting for tables while the kitchen was dealing with almost impossible number of food orders. While Paul and his team were doing their best to prepare food at the high standard by paying attention to every single detail, they were reminded first by floor staff of customers’ dissatisfaction of waiting time. Following that, the manager popped into the kitchen a while later and demolished the rhythm of kitchen work by saying: *“guys, speed-up, forget about the flowers, the dripping (presentation details), just get dishes out”*. Paul was furious and immediately involved into a heated exchange with the manager, yet he had no other choice but to compromise his standard in the end:

*“It sucks, dealing with idiots. How do you expect to serve to all customers at the same time when the restaurant is packed, stupid, they should sell frozen food and run a fast food chain ... It is fucking crazy that a manager tells me how to do my job properly when he has never cooked before... If ... you’ve got a manager like that, your mind-set is ruined. Your confidence and mood are totally totally ruined.”*

This episode captures so vividly the complexity of running a business that emphasises both quality and quantity. For Paul, this event simply reminded him of placing too much emphasis on the aesthetic aspect of his job is not always appreciated or even possible. While confessing his disappointment to me, at some point he even consulted me if he had raised his expectation too high and became unrealistic about the nature of his business. I shrugged my shoulder not saying anything. Indeed, there is a risk of framing creative practices within a business territory as a way of fulfilling one’s potential or calling. The following narration describes how much he was torn between the artistic and the commercial side of things:

*“I am also responsible for maintaining cost, my bonus depends on hitting the profit target ... if the business doesn’t make money, no matter how many artistic and creative dishes I’ve cooked, I will be fired ...fair enough ...”*

Indeed, Paul’s capacity to direct his attention to the creative aspect of his job that he deeply cares about and enjoys also depends on other bodies that he interacts with and the contingent situations where he is situated. Because of a prolonged **frustration**, he told me now he realised that he would have to re-adjust his **self-expectation** and not get so obsessed with perfection and aesthetics.

*“[This is like] I put all my heart and soul into a dish that I feel immensely proud of... [but] the customer can still complain it is not the way they expected... The artistic side of cooking is easily taken over, and suddenly you don’t care anymore and you start thinking, oh, it’s just a job.”*

Such disappointment and frustration compelled him to question the worth of his original intention and effort to serve high quality food creatively and artistically. On a busy evening, I even observed Paul yelling at his own staff: *“come on, team, orders are piling up, do not try to be experimental, you are not a Michelin chef yet.”*

For Paul, there is no escape from compromising and adopting a safe strategy by **prioritising tasks and adjusting self-expectations**. In his own reasoning, Paul reiterates: “*learn to be practical*”, “*workable*”, “*get the job done*”. Yet, Paul remains optimistic because of his future plan to open a restaurant of his own. For him, this is the only way to escape from restrictive work demands and to pursue his artistic flare further through cooking.

### **Aaron’s sociable self**

The third story is taken from Aaron who works as a chef de partie in Bloom restaurant that offers a fusion of multiple Asian cuisines. Inspired by his mum and having worked within his mum’s restaurant, he is emotionally attached with food and kitchen. After obtaining a university degree in Business Management, he took an office job for six months, which he then described to me as ‘a suffocating cage’. Following his callings, he decided to come back to kitchen with a determination of becoming a successful entrepreneurial chef. Undoubtedly, kitchen work is a calling for him and he insisted that he would never leave the kitchen ever again. Similar to Paul, he also has a plan to open his own restaurant after accumulating enough ‘career capital’.

It is commonly known that a chef’s working hours are long and irregular, and this creates difficulty for their social life (Bourdian, 2007). Since chefs are working while the world is socialising, they cannot be with their families and friends other than those who work within the same restaurant. Aaron confirmed to me that most chefs, including himself, do not socialise with people outside the culinary world very often:

*“Maybe it’s your partner’s birthday, she will get angry because you didn’t take a day off for her, which you can’t do obviously...I missed many wedding ceremonies of my friends. It’s true that all chefs lost their friends because you don’t have time to socialise with them unless you work in the same restaurant...I can’t even remember when was the last time I met a [non-chef] friend”.*

Aaron’s loss of social life is not an individual case but rather a representation of the common practices in the culinary world. In order to repair the social wound of **loneliness and social insecurity**, Aaron attempted instead to build a close relationship with his colleagues. Aaron claimed that kitchen is like a family to him and some of the colleagues are as close as family members. Indeed, I observed them sharing information and seeking suggestion from each

other on very personal matters. Aaron also insisted that no one is able to work in the kitchen in a long time without sharing ‘a family culture’ of the kitchen.

*“The people I live with and the people I work with are all from this profession...you work 60-70 hours a week, you see your co-workers more than your family, and they end up becoming your family. If you don’t like the people you spend that many hours, it’s a huge problem... you won’t be there for long.”*

The reason of seeing work colleagues as family members is not only driven by their social needs but also the necessity to cope with job demands. Chefs like Aaron tend to portray themselves as *sociable* by engaging in a range of relational crafting activities at work, such as showing care to others by helping out, accepting additional tasks, engaging in conversations about hobbies and interests, cracking jokes together, and even getting the same tattoos. Those unique bodily and verbal cues glue chefs together as a community and also become their markers when they identify themselves to each other and to others outside the culinary world. For instance, I observed this instance: when the restaurant got busier, the social relation once was lubricated by jokes, humour and fun would fall into silence, frustration, screaming, shouting and anger. Yet, as Aaron explained, *“this is due to the pressure of work, not something personal...people don’t get mad at it.”* Indeed, I had observed them returning to normal conversations as soon as the work pressure cooled down. At one point, I even saw the head chef thanking his members, having a fist bump with one another, and hugging others one by one almost immediately after a ‘kitchen fight’:

*“Knives, fires, burns, yelling, screaming, or shouting all chime in, it’s like a lifelong party in the kitchen among friends and we are like families.”*

The bonding within a kitchen did not happen in one restaurant only. Aaron mentioned that they have a WhatsApp group for about thirty chefs working in London where they discuss their daily experiences, seek career suggestions, and share job opportunities. This emotional attachment is perhaps the reason behind Aaron’s statement: *“once you are in, it is not easy to get out of the culinary world”*. In addition to emotional attachment, the chef community also develop professional skills and social networks that are only useful to this sector: *“You hardly have any contacts outside; even if you get a job interview elsewhere, your skills won’t be valued. I know some of my friends left the kitchen but then came back because of that”*. These reasons explain why chefs can be easily locked up in the culinary industry: *“Kitchen is*

*my comfort zone, it makes me happy because I can only feel my existence inside the kitchen. 90% of my friends are from restaurants and my best friend in London is also a chef.”*

It is worth noting that working and socialising with colleagues from the same industry shapes Aaron’s value system and worldview in particular ways. Whenever he goes out for dinner, for example, *“I take every opportunity available to ask the waiter or waitress to pass on my compliment to the chef. I know how meaningful that small appreciation is to us. Just like a doctor knows another doctor’s pain.”* He also told me that he had confronted his girlfriend several times when she used to rush to make a judgement about the food or service in a restaurant.

In contrast, his experiences outside the culinary world sometimes made him feel quite alienated because a sense of rejection that he experienced caused largely by an unfavourable **social positioning** that others assigned to him. Below are two examples that Aaron mentioned, one on himself, the other on his chef friend:

*“It’s other people’s view that makes you question what you’re doing. Some people treat you like you are less educated than them. They think you are working in a kitchen because you have no degree. And yes, you can be told off by managers, floor staff or even strangers sometimes... I heard people talk to me like, ‘you are an educated man why are you working in the kitchen?’ Of course, I haven’t done anything wrong but it’s a strange feeling ... [It] made feel I am at the bottom of a society”.*

*“When my chef friend who works in a gastropub met his girlfriend’s friends for drinks, they asked him ‘what do you do’ and my friend goes like ‘I’m a chef in a pub’, some responded right away, ‘oh it must be hard work’, ‘look at your hands’, ‘why don’t you change a job?’ Those guys were making a fuss about the bruise and callus on his hands ... I feel sorry for my friend. I really do. This is like he was put down in front of his girlfriend ... Maybe it’s me getting psycho, but I’d be really sad if someone makes comments to my face like that.”*

To avoid this unfavourable social positioning, Aaron now prefers to introduce himself to others as an entrepreneurial chef than just a chef: *“I don’t want others to categorise me. Yes, I am a chef, I am proud of it, but they know nothing about my profession. They see me differently when I tell them I am going to set up my own business.”* For this reason, his hope to run his own restaurant one day kept growing. At the same time, however, he was worried

about his limited exposure outside the kitchen. In fact, it was not just the number of social contacts that worried him, but also his overall skills set, especially communication:

*“Running a restaurant is not easy, I don’t have contacts other than chefs, but I need to talk to people, suppliers, investors, estate agent etc., it’s difficult. My speaking has been ruined, you heard me talking (swearing and using slang words) ...[The fact is] when we are busy, we don’t have enough time to complete sentences... Oh, yes, don’t expect, ‘please’, ‘thank you’ bla bla bla...”*

Indeed, hanging out with colleagues and friends who work in the kitchen provided Aaron with a sense of security and comfort, yet this ‘sociable’ image that Aaron played with was not unproblematic: Aaron’s career mobility and connections to the world outside the kitchen were affected accordingly. Once I asked if he had a feeling of getting stuck in, Aaron nodded his head and told me that he had already implemented a ‘new year plan’ to change the current situation. He named things such as focusing more on developing soft skills at work rather than simply socialising with colleagues, learning how the restaurant is run from a financial perspective, and talking to successful entrepreneurial chefs to get the ball rolling etc. Viewed in this light, his *adjusted job crafting practices* seemed to be about redrawing boundaries between self and others and between his current job and future career.

## **Discussion**

Below we specify the empirical and theoretical implications of this study.

### **(1) Job crafting as an embodied experience**

Our findings above have illustrated a number of examples of unintended consequences of job crafting activities that shed light on an embodied perspective of human agency. Indeed, we see job crafting as an embodied experience, in which our bodies and bodily encounters provide a corporeal and distributed context for human agency. As such, human agency in job crafting is not just about making conscious changes to one’s immediate tasks and relations so as to acquire meaningfulness and a positive work identity, but also about being able to live with the unexpected consequences of changes being made, especially when those run counter to one’s original intention and fail to produce positive meanings or identities.



There are two-fold implications of this embodied view: a) The discussion of body in job crafting research has been understood merely as a motive and a vehicle to human agency but our research has illustrated that the body itself has agentic capacities. b) In addition to seeing subjectivity in job crafting as a controlled and self-governed process achieved through reflexivity, our research suggests the possibility of having subjectivity without control and sovereign by taking into account of the unintended consequences of bodily encounter at one particular point in time and over time.

*a) The functions of the body: a corporeal context for human agency*

Different to the traditional job design approach, which sees a chef's body as regulated and inscribed by structural conditions, job crafting theories recognise the role of human bodies in providing a motive and a vehicle for human agency by examining the ways of generating positive meanings and identities at work. However, this way of understanding human agency still locates it firmly within an individuated process, our findings suggest, on the contrary, that human agency is emerged through both human and non-human interactions in a socio-material assemblage of everyday life. Such bodies and bodily encounters transcend the boundaries of work and life, prompting different forms of identity play and exerting material conditions on these plays at the same time. Our findings thus direct our attention to the fact that even the same body is capable of producing different functions in different contexts.

For instance, a chef's body is the one that has to "learn how to put up with burns, cut and injuries" (Fine, 1996, p.85), to tolerate "a certain militaristic aspect to it" (Bourdain, 2007, p.66), and to endure "the long and mostly unsocial working hours" (Palmer *et al.*, 2007, p.319). In order to survive in the culinary world, these bodily encounters then trigger a chef's identity play that brings forward the 'masculine', 'aesthetic' and 'sociable' aspects of his work identity as a temporary solution to discomfort, boredom, and loneliness respectively. However, when bodily encounters at a different point in time reinforce, intensify, or renew these embodied experiences, the chef has to stop experimenting with their 'desired' provisional selves and instead to confront the material conditions that render the previously 'desired' work identity desirable-no-more. Through an identity play perspective, we are then able to specify the functions of the body, i.e. to affect and be affected. It is precisely these functions that provide the corporeal context for human agency, not as a property of the self, but an innate capacity inherently oriented towards a future of becoming-other. In other words, the role of body is not just about providing a motive or a vehicle for human agency, but also

in itself can be defined according to the capacities afforded by a situation, where “you don’t know beforehand what a body or a mind can do in a given encounter, a given combination” (Deleuze, 1988, p.125), but instead always engage in an uncertain experiment with the unknown capacities.

In addition, we have shown that the temporal meanings generated through job crafting practices at one specific point in time does not offer a full account of meaningfulness. The meanings of work constructed through job crafting activities are not something stable, uncontested, or non-negotiable. On the contrary, those meanings last until the material conditions of the body change and render the previously generated meanings less relevant, contested, or even meaningless. As we have shown in the three examples, the disparity between a chef’s interactional/communicating body and the ‘yes chef’ body become evident as material conditions change. It thus implies that the masculine body can be kneeled down, an aesthetic body can be compromised and a sociable body can be readjusted due to the material limits that the bodies are bound to react to.

*b) Socio-material assemblage and bodily encounters: a distributed context for human agency*

The discussion of subjectivity in existing job crafting research revolves around a controlled, self-governed, and self-reflexive process of identity construction. Viewed from an identity play perspective, our findings suggest that the consequences of job crafting can be temporary and unintended, which also confirms that a sovereign self is neither necessary nor desirable. For instance, the intended meanings drawn through a masculine body can cause unintended consequences such as bodily deterioration and health problems. As such, the attempt to constructing socially ‘desired’ meanings by ignoring bodies and bodily encounters over time is not going to be sustainable.

Above all, our findings have demonstrated an alternative way to account for subjectivity without control in job crafting by paying attention to the role of the body and bodily encounters at one specific point in time and over time in the socio-material assemblage that involves both human and non-human interactions. Indeed, the socio-material assemblage and bodily encounters provide a distributed context for human agency. For instance, the example of seeing knife as an extension of chefs’ hand illustrates the interaction of human body with non-human bodies. Knife handling and cutting precision are not about the individuated transferrable skills or having a good quality instrument, instead the effect of the interactions between a chef’s hand and the knife and his emotional attachment is context dependent. It

thus illustrates the role of non-human bodies that may strengthen or constrain human agency through job crafting activities.

More crucially, our findings confirm that bodily encounters are the source of human agency at work, however, the processes of job crafting may, counter-intuitively, involve interactions taking place outside the workplace settings. This indicates that the motivation of job crafting cannot be predetermined nor can be defined solely within a work context, and we need to rethink of the boundaries, meanings, and results of job crafting in the following ways: (i) it is essentially not a job that is crafted, but a self that constantly becomes other through their bodily encounters in everyday life; (ii) this self-becomes-other process underlying the job crafting practices has to be understood in the entire life course of an individual, including things that fall out of the work domain, such as one's family responsibilities, or social representations of the culinary world etc.; (iii) the meanings and results of job crafting are not stable, but always subject to change due to the unpredictability of life events that one may experience at a particular point in time and over time by interacting with other human and non-human bodies.

## (2) Towards a processual lens to identity play

Instead of seeing human agency located within an individual self as an attribute of the body, our thematic analysis and narrative analysis have shown that human agency is a distributed phenomenon. Using identity play as a theoretical lens, we have illustrated how bodies and bodily encounter are always embedded in job crafting processes that trigger identity play on the one hand, and exert material limits on it on the other hand. This implies that identity play is as much about experimenting with a provisional self for the sake of experiencing fun and joy here and now, as about accommodating ambiguities, including pain and struggle, there and then, leading to a future-projected self. However, it is not just the representations of desired identities in the future that propel identity development in the present (Ibarra, 1999), the alleged 'desired identity' may prove to be desirable-no-more when material conditions exert limits through the body. This processual lens to identity play then enables us to understand when and why a particular kind of identity play crops up here and now and then transforms into something else there and then. This point reaffirmed that identity play has to be understood in the entire life course of the individuals. More importantly, it indicates the possibility of studying identity development by tracing the material conditions that enable or disable a particular identity play.

Our research also advances our understanding of identity play as a particular form of identity work that prompts identity construction in constraining environments. Specifically, we have shown that how individuals create circumstances through identity play from which they work on their identities subsequently. In other words, experimenting with provisional selves in a gradual co-constructive process of social creation precipitates the following identity work. As such, identity play and identity work should not be perceived as two isolated or dichotomous concepts, but should be understood through their interactions in continuity that together helps individuals cope with change and resist constraints (Fachin and Davel, 2015).

## **Conclusion**

Our paper makes a three-fold contribution to the existing literature.

First, by focusing on the role of the body in job crafting, our research confirms that job crafting indeed has a dark side to it, and provides a more nuanced understanding on what triggers the dark side of job crafting and pinpoints when exactly job crafting positively or negatively impacts on individual employee's work engagement and outcomes. These findings suggest that the body in job crafting provides more than a motive and a vehicle for human agency, it in itself has an agentic capacity to affect and be affected. To this end, we would add a condition to the claim that 'job crafting is a better alternative to job design in expressing human agency at work' only when the role of the body is taken into consideration.

Second, using identity play as a theoretical lens, we have illustrated how bodies and bodily encounter are always embedded in job crafting processes that trigger identity play on the one hand, and exert material limits on it on the other hand. This point extends our understanding of studying identity development in a constraining environment by tracing the material conditions that enable or disable a particular identity play. We thus offered a processual approach to exploring the entanglement of the discursive, material, and symbolic of identity practices in work settings (Coupland and Brown, 2012; Cutcher *et al.*, 2017).

Third, unlike existing research which only speculates what is going on in a chef's job crafting process, our first-hand empirical investigation of the culinary life of professional chefs provides a much richer and more complex account of their day-to-day work. In our view, this investigation carries more weight to revive Fine (1996)'s study on the chef community. We hope that our research would encourage researchers in the future to understand chefs and

others who work within a constraining environment in their own right without taking a reductionist approach to manipulate job crafting as a variable on work outcomes.

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## Appendix

Table 3 Narrative analysis

Narrators	Bodily encounters		Identity Play and Material condition		Exemplar segments
<p><b>Daniel</b> (Sous Chef) <b>Jack</b> ( Head Chef) <b>Tex</b> (Chef de Partie) <b>Robert</b> (Chef de Partie) <b>Andrew</b> ( Pastry Chef) <b>William</b> (Chef de Partie) <b>Kane</b> (Commis Chef) <b>Nigel</b> (Chef de Partie) <b>Ramiro</b> (Chef de Partie)</p>	<p>Bodily encounters at T1</p>	<p>Pain and Strain</p>	<p>Masculine</p>	<p>Job crafting Practices</p>	<p><b><u>Bodily encounters with Pain and strain</u></b>  <i>“It sounds crazy but I remember I got burnt by hot sizzler platter very badly. I mistakenly gripped the hot platter and had blisters on my three fingers. In kitchen, you are seen to be incompetent if you are not able to manage it. You should try to avoid it, but this is not always possible. But, there is no point of moaning about it. No one like it, we all need to get along with this.” (William, Chef de Partie)</i></p> <p><i>“It’s long hours standing, not taking break...13-14 hours a day with zero rest, you can feel it, it’s hard, especially in London’s busy life.” (Kane, Commis Chef)</i></p> <p><i>“Look at my hand, I was finishing Salmon fillet and got knife through my hand. I had to go to hospital for the stitch. I was stupid, should have been careful...if you keep getting injured they will question on your capability, [therefore] some people even don’t bring it out.” (Ramiro, Chef de Partie )</i></p> <p><i>“We have so much in our head, so much to do, and you will easily forget any cuts. You don’t even remember when you had a cut in your finger. I won’t know how many cuts in my hand until I squeeze lemon on my hand. In many occasion I wouldn’t even know until I see blood. I would not even know when it happened, where it was from...” (Robert, Chef De Partie)</i></p> <p><i>“A lot of kitchen has no ventilation, no window if you get you are lucky, in kitchen there are crazy people...it’s not a normal environment. People goes to this environment and survive...” (Andrew, Pastry Chef)</i></p> <p><i>“You are working in hot place wearing heavy chef cloths, and you have to stand there for 12 hours, ok, the next day you have to stand for 12 hours, and another 12 hours and so on. You feel your feet, sweating all day, dam it.” ( Chef de Partie, Nigel)</i></p> <p><b><u>Expressing Masculine self</u></b>  <i>“I want to beat myself, I want to be the best...I tell people don’t give up. If there are guys doing it, why</i></p>

*can't you do. Be yourself the best. If these guys can be a Michelin star chef, why not you?"(Nigel, Chef de Partie)*

*"...if he is real chef he won't walk out of door, will take the pressure and make it work." (Jack, Head chef)*

*"I remember I wasn't well for some time and still came to work. If I keep calling off sick, I will be in the bad book....it's embarrassing to express pain, I don't want to be a coward. I don't want my head chef to feel that I am weak and a moaner."(Tex Chef de Partie)*

*"I don't call sick unless I have a real issue. In many time, I take medicine and go for walk, of course when it is minor..." (William, Chef de Partie).*

*"I want to be best out of best. I want to be the chef that nobody has ever done." (Robert, Chef de Partie)*

*It is a physically demanding, mentally stressful job...We work long hours together ...We know it's not normal and difficult but we are proud of what we capable of do that others can't. It's weird, that is what I like about the job." (Ramiro, Chef de Partie)*

**Job crafting activities in relation to Masculine**

**body** (Ignoring and downplaying physical discomforts by putting on brave face and taking additional tasks)

*"In both preparation and service it is a race. In a busy restaurant, the preparation is a race, there will be lists of job to do and you must get those ready by the time before service begins...You expect good profile visitors, you don't want to make a mistake and it has to be done on time...." (Ramiro, Chef de Partie)*

*"...If you take a break when the restaurant is busy, people think you are not serious at work. I wanted to learn...it was ok for me to work long hours, no problem."(Tex., Chef de Partie)*

*"Being a chef, I feel responsible [for]knowing that customers are eagerly waiting for food perhaps that makes me to ignore the minor cuts, burns and injury. I won't afford to rest and enjoy food when infinite job is waiting for in my section. Each restaurant has their peak time when we even need to hold pee for hours that is a reality.... I can wait but not my customers!"(William, Sous Chef)*

*'In some busy days, I work more than 15-16 hours a day without a break. In theory, you can take a break but when it is very busy you won't be able to take it although they don't tell, you are expected not to take. I have many experience of the days when I worked even*

	Bodily encounters at T2	Extended tiredness and Exhaustion	Lacking energy and feeling guilt	Adjusted job crafting practices	<p><i>I wasn't well. Since my pay is based on the number of hours I work I can't afford to lose hours, at the end of the month, I need to pay bills. In many occasions I wouldn't even tell head chef that I am not well otherwise they may ask me to take day off which I won't get paid.(Kane, Commis Chef).</i></p> <p><b><u>Body encounters at T2 extended exhaustion and guilt (Material limit)</u></b></p> <p><i>"Kitchen is like a machine; everyone is working and always working". (Nigel, Chef de Partie)</i></p> <p><i>"I am working through an injury. I've got torn ligaments in my right hand and it always fucking hurts during service. Some time I need to take Ibuprofen" (Andrew, Pastry Chef)</i></p> <p><i>"I quit smoke for a year and then I started smoking three months again. It is good because it helps you going. When head chef sees you tired, he will tell you; do you need to go for smoking? Only way to get out of busy kitchen. It is good, I needed it man." (Robert Chef de Partie)</i></p> <p><i>"People smoke weeds, take energy drinks and some would even drink alcohol even before they begin the work. I can smell it, but, as long as they do job carefully I don't care. I understand it's not easy job." (Jack, Head Chef)</i></p> <p><i>"I Never really understood foot pain until I developed huge blisters coming up on the soles of my feet.. not cool on a 16 hours shift. The buggers popped obviously, and I ended up in hospital with sepsis. Wasn't cool at all". (Kane Commis Chef)</i></p> <p><i>"I refuse to let my diabetics hold me back, nor anyone tell me that I can't do something because of it. But I know I can't do what I used to do in the past"(Tex, Chef de Partie).</i></p> <p><i>"Where you close one night and don't leave till 11:30 at night and then have to turn and be back at 9 am I have horrible insomnia and couldn't not go to sleep till 4:30, am-feeling exhausted." (Robert, Chef de Partie)</i></p> <p><i>Despite these daily ups and down, I would rather treat myself, I should be proud by myself as I am handling such a difficult task. I don't care what others say. Just get drunk, forget everything, every shit will get fucked up ( Nigel, Chef de Partie.</i></p> <p><i>I need to push you and find the point until you can bear it, because I need you. Although you are important to me, I need you, you won't control me. I expect each to meet the job expectation otherwise there will be problem. I need to kick your ass but keep you loyal. I need to make you believer but I also want</i></p>
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*to push you, push you to get more out of you. .”( Jack, Head Chef)*

**Material limits on identity play- Family responsibilities**

*“You are so exhausted that you just want to leave job but then you remember back to your family and the mortgage and bills, then there is no way of turning back.” (Robert, Chef de Partie)*

*“I have a true passion for my career, but I know I have made a big sacrifice to my personal life. My biggest worry is not to fall addicted with infinite demand of kitchen work.” ( Nigel, Chef de Partie)*

*“I have small kids, when they are off I am working, which make me feel bad. Doesn't matter how much I love this job, a part of me is always my family. When you were single there was no issue, then you got in relationship where the challenge is to make her understand the nature of job and spend most of the time when I am off. But after kids, it gets even complicated, but I we need to understand I am chef this is what the reality is, I work in social hours. I had friends, who changed the career immediately after he was in a serious relationship with his girlfriend or I have seen some changed their kitchen job after having kids. I have sacrificed a lot to reach this stage;”( Ramiro, Chef de Partie).*

*“My partner doesn't understand, I have a 8 year old and never get to see her when you work 60 hours a week.”(Tex, Chef de Partie).*

*“You are not eating on time, not eating properly, sometime, I swear to god you don't have time to eat. That is why you start having issue in your health. I am sure one day your body can't make it, there is limit. It is hard job. Even after work, I am working in my head, need to think about food order, preparation and staffs' absence. I am still working when I am at home, but, unfortunately, I don't get paid for this. You always live with the pressure, now it has become a habit.” ( Jack, Head Chef)*

*“It's crazy hours, I have worked up to 70 hours a week, some members were absent, and I was asked to work six days a week, but this happens again and again, I didn't have any option rather than saying yes... Of course, I will earn more money, would that compensate my social life? They don't care about you, only work. They just think that you are a donkey who should work anytime they want. It is ridiculous, I am sick and tired of this kind of things. I am seriously thinking of changing job”( William, Chef de Partie).*

*"I love my family and I love what I do. Yes she hates my hours, yes she hates the way I look and feel after a long stretch but now she supports what I do. I won't let my passion kill my relationship. I have one year old daughter; I can't be ignorant any longer."* ( Andrew, Chef de Partie)

*"Unless your dating someone in the industry it will 90% of the time fail. Due to hours, no time off and just the way we are. I am a head chef and I have not had a day off since 2 weeks" ( Jack Head Chef).*

**Adjusted job crafting activities-** (Looking after self at work and selectively taking on extra task)

*"In this kind of job, you need to be healthy otherwise how would you work. no way, you can survive without managing eating, sleeping and working time. Even it is too busy, I take my time, I don't care, the work can't be important than my health."* (Tex, Chef de Partie)

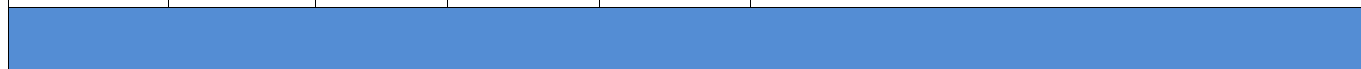
*"When I feel the kitchen is not having enough resources, and it will put pressure to me and my staff, I will rather change menu, make it brief with few items. Of course I can't make it too simple.. I need to save my job but I will not make it complicated at all. I don't like madness."* (Jack Head Chef)

*"I go for swimming. I am 48 I got to listen to my body. If I don't go for swimming and it is even worst. I have a terrible back problem. If I don't swim my back starts giving me problem. I do stretching too. I have pain killers in my bag all the time. Also, it's important what you eat; You eat shit you get shit out of it. Now, I do care about my food very seriously."* ( Ramiro Sous Chef)

*"I have recently been diagnosed of diabetes. Let me tell you, in kitchen we work long hours and it gets so busy that in most of time anyone could hardly get proper time to eat. Although we are allowed to take time to eat, we get so busy either I forget it or just grab something quickly. I won't afford to enjoy food when infinite job is waiting in my section. It is just ongoing machine....By the time we finish shift around 11, we eat dinner. After being diagnosed of diabetes, I changed my schedule of eating. Even it is too busy, I take my time, I don't care, the work can't be important than my health. If I am healthy, so I have work. I have to say, I abused my body in the past a lot, not anymore."* (Tex, Chef de Partie)

*"I am having fucking back pain but thanks god its minor. At some point, a sharp pain bugs me a lot, but I need to be careful on what I should do or not. I take*

				<p>tablets (Pain reliever). I have heel spurs, a kind of heel pain. I use orthotics for my shoes, it works, I feel difference, although, not 100%. I found leaning on the wall helps when there is a sudden sharp pain on lower back. As I told you before, I am not anymore working many hours like before; I try not to work more than 50 hours a week.”( Ramiro Sous Chef)</p> <p>I made the serious mistake of staying far too long in a same kitchen where I was under appreciated and worked far harder than the others simply I wouldn't complain. I change the job, it changed my life. I went to the kitchen where everyone is supportive and the head chef was eager to teach.’</p> <p>“My section is vegetables and soups. I like my section but I really want to know more about other sections too so that I can save my job. laughs. When I get time, I would rather prefer to help a colleague cutting fillet than helping porters in cleaning.”(Kane Commis Chef)</p> <p>“I really wanted to work with two chefs in London, the only way you can work with them is to step down. I have a great admire for them and I learnt a lot from them.”(Nigel, Chef de Partie)</p>
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<p><b>Ash</b> (Pasrty Chef) <b>David</b> (Chef de Partie) <b>John</b> (Chef de Partie) <b>Julian</b> (Sous Chef) <b>Neil</b> (Commis Chef) <b>Paul</b> (Head Chef) <b>Peter</b> (Chef de Partie) <b>Thomas</b> (Chef de Partie)</p>	<p>Bodily encounter at T1</p>	<p>Boredom/ Dullness</p>	<p>Aesthetic</p>	<p>Job crafting practices</p>	<p><b><u>Bodily encounter with Boredom and Dullness</u></b></p> <p>“Having to repeat myself over and over and over again to the point that that I cannot move on to do something else more productive.”( Thomas, Chef de Partie)</p> <p>“You do need to know your place, I had a hard time talking to sous chef about my idea of food and I thought we were having a normal conversation, but he told me ‘well if you wanna be a sous chef I guess I can go home’. You need to know the boundary of what you are allowed to do and see the opportunity when you can put your things in a right way.”(John , Chef de Partie)</p> <p>“Because of consistency, we normally don't get to be creative unless they are good enough to be the head chef. You can make changes but be prepared for an ass beating” ( Neil, Commis Chef)</p> <p>“It will always be done the way I want in the end. I am the head chef and that's how it should be.”( Paul, Head Chef)</p> <p>“Those boxes of potatoes, sacks of onions, cleaning the cold room, preparing salads and the everyday routine jobs are damn boring.”(Neil, Commis Chef)</p>
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*"It will be boring and redundant until you become a head chef/ sous chef. Until then, unless your head chef is supportive, you are like a piece of equipment doing redundant work and expected to move faster and faster like a racing car."(David, Chef de Partie)*

### **Expressing Aesthetic self**

*"I don't compromise with my food. It is yes or no. When I create something and it is nice and people like it, I want to beat myself, I want to be the best. I have my own standard set, you won't see many restaurants that fused many different cuisines in a single menu"( Julian, Sous Chef.*

*"I chose the kitchen job, I love cooking. For me. It's an art and passion something that comes from the inner soul. I feel good and proud when I receive a good feedback from the customer" ( Peter, Chef de Partie.)*

*"When you love what you do there are always gaps to do new things and that keep you excited and entertained."( Paul, Head Chef)*

*"For me standard of food is important, I don't want to cook food that is not make you feel good or please you."(Neil, Chef de Partie)*

*"The smile on someone's face once they(customer) take that first bite of my food. It's instant gratification."(John, Chef de Partie)*

*"Seeing and hearing the people enjoying the food I've made for them, the smell of a BBQ kitchen, and the look of the food when you're done. What's there not to love about it"( David , Chef de Partie).*

*"I have a knife from 20 years or over, my mom gave my first knife for my 21<sup>st</sup> birth day, I still have it. You get what you pay for. I look for the knife that fits with my hand well and good weight. I don't like other people using my knife. I think chefs who are serious to their job, they have their own knife."( Julian, Sous chef)*

**Job crafting practices in relation to Aesthetic body**(Redirecting and experimenting with the creative and artistic aspects of work)

*"I stepped down to chef de Partie chef as I want to learn different cuisines. I read lots of books and play with recipe whenever I get a chance."(Neil, Chef de Partie)*

*"Once or twice a month, we have a deal that we could make specials of anything left over from the previous night's service. We would make a dish and we would*



					<p><i>all try them and pick one, a lot of fun truthfully.”(John ,Chef de Partie)</i></p> <p><i>“You want to produce something is beautiful, you take an idea, mould idea, share idea with the people around you and upon a time you shape a creation and idea”. (David Chef de Patie)</i></p> <p><i>“You will earn your creativity by practicing on your own when the moment come you get an opportunity to give your input and impress your head chef”(Julian , Sous Chef)</i></p> <p><i>“You got to understand its head chef’s menu; I won’t change anything without consulting with him, if I do that is the quickest way to piss him off. But, there is always room for creativity within all recipes and food. It’s important to find something within given receipe uniquely.”(Peter, Chef de Partie)</i></p> <p><i>“I work with the menu and opportunity to be creative, that is what I escape with everyday bullshit( Paul, Head chef).”</i></p>
	Bodily encounter at T2	Escalated expectation and frustration	Commercial targets	Adjusted job crafting activities	<p><b>Escalated expectation and frustration (Material limit):</b></p> <p><i>“I don’t think I will disagree with my head chef, even when I have disagreement, I will have to do what we have been told. If I don’t follow the way, I can easily be reprimanded. Even if the food quality is good, some head chefs are so fussy they want exact same techniques to be followed. Believe me this is the world when you tell the truth to people it pisses off them”(David, Chef de Partie)</i></p> <p><i>“I hate managers just keep taking more and more customers without acknowledging kitchen capacity.”</i></p> <p><i>“An owner who doesn’t know shit about the food and tells you how you should cook, and you have no power to stop that.” (Paul, Head Chef)</i></p> <p><i>“I will rock it till I die, some days it feels close, hahaha. I don’t do this for money, I don’t do this for fame, I do this cause I love it. I can be dead inside and take one bite of some food and it becomes orgasmic.”( Peter, Chef de Partie)</i></p> <p><i>“You need to be inspirational not for others but yourself too. I tell people don’t give up. If there are guys doing it, why can’t you do. Be yourself the best. If these guys can be a Michelin star chef why not you? If you won’t give up, you will get there, it may take 20 years or more or many not reach there, but if you don’t try the chances you to be the best won’t be there” (Julian, Sous Chef).</i></p> <p><i>“Every task that I found boring, I turn it into a game.</i></p>

*Can I do it faster/better/more accurate/ creatively than last time. Challenge myself ”( Neil, Commis Chef).*

*“Well, when you work 14 hours a day, it’s too much. The kitchen is always in pressure, they want everything perfect, how can you do when you are in pressure not for few minutes its hours and hours”( David, Chef de Partie).*

*“Some time, I am working from 8 am to 10-11 pm, due to understaffing, I did 8 double shifts in a row and still not able to keep up. And a head chef expects it to a standard, but there is no way to you can do your best when you are extremely busy”(Peter, Chef de Partie).*

*“It is sometime struggle to be a chef with dietary restriction, well; I will work until I can survive”( Ash, Pastry Chef).*

*“I did an old school apprenticeship. So that was part of my problem. They taught through fear and you did nothing but what they wanted you to. It simply does not work in modern kitchens and truthfully, it's dumb. It stifles creativity in the kitchen and will stagnate your food! A chef who won't allow his staff to approach them isn't worth anything” (Julian Sous Chef).*

*“Over worked, under paid, under staff and not enough supplies ordered. The boss not paying bills and leaving us deal with angry suppliers” ( Paul, Head Chef).*

*“Doesn't matter how good you are in handling knife, you still get cuts which is not because you didn't have good knowledge of knife rather it's just tiredness, work pressure and stress, so many things need to be done and you get distracted by other things.” (John, Chef de Partie).*

**Material limits on identity play: Commercial targets:**

*For me, I always like the idea of clock, the job of the clock is to tell us a time, it has just one job, doesn't matter what it looks like, doesn't matter how big or small it is, its job is to tell us time. If clock can't tell the time right that is useless clock even it was made up of gold or silver, it could be labelled by top to brand, if it doesn't tell the time what is point of having it.( Julian, Sous Chef)*

*“it is hard, very hard, you have to compromise. I always can't gain, gain and gain, you need to lose something to gain something.”(Neil, Commis Chef).*

*“This is a never stop factory, you have seen us how*

				<p><i>busy we were. I am running all the time, If anything run out from my section, I will be told off” ( David, Chef de Partie.)</i></p> <p><i>“I know it’s( knife) an important tool, it helps a lot, but I am not bothered about it. I just use whatever available there. At the end of the day you just need to get the job done. When you get busy, you don’t care about perfection, it’s not possible when there is a long list of food orders hanging next to you. My head chef knows the dices were not perfectly done but what can be done, as everyone has to focus on doing job quicker keeping fine knife skills under the carpet” (Neil, Chef de Partie)</i></p> <p><i>It is also important to check what is left from yesterday and how can I use for the menu. Good chef uses every part of the food. I don’t waste even single part of the chicken, the each and every part will be used. In my jobs interviews, I receive questions about budgeting, which is important for the selection. I should be considering myself as a business owner as I am planning everything of the kitchen. I am responsible to maintain cost and the profit that we make, my bonus depends on hitting the profit. I must think about every possible way to use it. I must care about the business because I have a job because of business. (Paul Head Chef)</i></p> <p><b><u>Adjusted job crafting activities-</u></b> (Prioritising tasks and adjusting self-expectation)</p> <p><i>“I know we like to say ‘creativity’ and ‘passion’, but the reality is how much we get paid and what is best for you and your family ( Peter, Chef de Partie)”</i></p> <p><i>“When it is a choice between taking £30 k Salary and £45 K salary it’s (compromise) a hard choice to make for the sake of family”( Julian, Sous Chef.</i></p> <p><i>“You have to be multi-tasking, if you don’t, you will get lost, stressed in busy restaurant, you got to be multi-tasking” (Neil Commis Chef).</i></p> <p><i>“I do it all the time. It’s insane to run kitchen speedily busting out 5 tickets at a time as the tickets keep pouring out. I ran my ass off all day today..sucked. You have to step up and do the impossible, because that’s what this jobs calls for, it is being a chef. I live for this shit and this is me” (Thomas Chef de Partie).</i></p>	
<b>Aaron</b> (Chef de Partie) <b>Alex</b> (Commis)	Bodily encounter at T1	Loneliness and insecurity	Sociable	Job crafting activities	<p><b><u>Bodily encounter at T1- Loneliness and insecurity</u></b></p> <p><i>“The sacrifice that I made in my personal life, working uncountable hours in a week, my health, my interest, missing all important event of life, which is a real</i></p>

<p>Chef)  <b>Dinesh</b>  (Chef de  Partie)</p> <p><b>Francesco</b>  (Chef de  Partie)</p> <p><b>Harry</b>  (Chef de  Partie)</p> <p><b>James</b>  (Head  Chef)</p> <p><b>Michael</b>  (Pastry  Chef)</p> <p><b>Muhamma  d</b>  (Sous Chef)</p> <p><b>Oscar</b>  (Commis  Chef)</p>					<p><i>sacrifice, man, It hurts” ( Muhammad, Sous Chef.</i></p> <p><i>“Get home by 1:00 AM, and opens at 8:00 AM, It sucks. Bad hours, no time with family and work holidays, less pay then other professions. You feel intimidated and lonely” ( Francesco, Chef de Partie).</i></p> <p><i>“I am told that not to question head chef, don’t expect social life, consider smoking, drugs and drinking normal and learn sarcasm. It is scary right, and I am into it. Especially when you are young it is tougher than the other established chef as I will be tolerating all nonsense all day every day. Yet, I like because I am learning something new and it’s all about food. I hope my genuine passion for food won’t get killed by this chaos” ( Oscar, Commis Chef).</i></p> <p><i>“You need to be afraid of me, a little bit, not like a bully or not anything in bad way” (James, Head Chef)</i></p> <p><i>“If you wish to work in kitchen for long time, it’s important to work together, support each other. You go for drink after work, make jokes, be part of fun. Otherwise you will be isolated and may be less preferred than others. You don’t want to lose your hours” ( Oscar , Commis Chef).</i></p> <p><i>“I feel bad when you work hard and underappreciated. In fact, I don’t care much about it but isn’t it a good feeling to hear some words of appreciation from your boss when you know you are working so hard that you don’t have time for yourself. Where there were days like today when I was working constantly 5 days a week, hardly have a time for rest. In the morning, suddenly the head chef sent me a message asking me to come to work, even though it was my day off, without any second thought; I rushed out and head back to kitchen. After covering all the orders the head chef didn’t even say thank you, a simple thank you would have been enough to ease the pressure.”  ( Alex , Commis Chef)</i></p> <p><i>“Yeah, overworked, understaffed, when you’re doing too many hours and really late nights you end up becoming very tired, I become quite a recluse. And I’ve not even seen my flatmate, I don’t end up socialising with any of my friends. Erm, it becomes quite lonely, you get really depressed, on top of being paid really poorly, and just about getting by on your rent and bills, I feel I get stuck a lot of the time. That obviously plays on your mind quite heavily” ( Michael , Pastry Chef.</i></p> <p><b><u>Expressing Sociable self</u></b></p> <p><i>“See all my colleague more than my own family. Well</i></p>
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*that's the life in a kitchen” (Muhammad Sous Chef)*

*“You had a hangover from last night, feel like sick and wish to call off sick but you realise that if you take a day off your colleagues will be hit by your absence, If you don't have a sort of love to your kitchen you will call off sick and your colleagues will do the same”(Aaron, Chef de Partie).*

*“I have seen the, most of the chefs I know including like myself have had a partner says that says either you stop taking extra shifts or I leave you. And, still gone on to take the extra shift. It's strange, we build a relation with colleagues and start emphasising the kitchen over the relation. It is a general life style. It is not something that you just get over. I have had 3 partners who told me that I needed to be relaxed and be at home for the relationship to be worked. Each time bla..bla..I am sorry, I work in the kitchen I am needed to work long and unsocial hours. This is what happened to many chefs I know. Until you find the partner who understand long hours of working in kitchen, you are going to ruin the relationship. That is why I say, so many people say people end up with the business, my partner is from this business, my head chef partner from the similar business” (Harry, chef de Partie).*

*“I remember when I got the results from doctor about diabetes, my chef would let me go have a double ciggies break, allow me to eat on time. Sometimes the kitchen is closer than the famil.”(Dinesh Chef de Partie).*

*“I grow up in the kitchen like what Gordon Ramsay TV shows presents. That was my life, every day, all day. I remember, I worked so so hard, every day all day, I was pushed by my head chef. I adore him. Since my parents died, I see him as my father. He is the most important guy in my life. My mentor, best friend, I still afraid of him. He made me to believe in the kitchen.”(James, Head Chef).*

**Job crafting activities-** (Socialising with and entertaining co-workers)

*“Sometime, if we finish early, we go to pub. Someday, we stay longer, reach home 2;00 AM in the morning which allow only 4-5 hours of sleep. I know, It's not good for the health and family too. But, I can't say no to colleagues all the time” ( Harry Chef de Partie).*

*“If you want to work in kitchen, you should join their club and become a part of what they do. That is how*

				<p><i>we become close” (Dinesh Chef de Partie).</i>  <i>I have a good relation with head chef, sometime we go for drink when we are off” ( Alex, Commis Chef).</i></p> <p><i>“In a preparation times we are less busy then we make fun, jokes talk about personal stuff. That is best part of the kitchen” ( Michael, Pastry Chef.)</i></p> <p><i>“I love listening music, I enjoy it.... Some would even call me a DJ of the kitchen. I don’t want to work in the kitchen that restricts music” ( Dinesh , chef de Partie).</i></p> <p><i>“Even in the worst situation, people crack jokes, and I am also a part of that humor that allows you to forget your hardship. I think, this allows people to form a community as you are comfortable to talk about your colleagues and that builds intimacy”( Harry, Chef de Partie).</i></p> <p><i>“I am famous in this restaurant as the person who makes jokes and make the place live, some would even call me a chatterbox. I can’t work without talking people; I need some things to talk about unless I am very tired. My colleagues tell me that the kitchen will be quite on the day I am off. It makes me feel good to know that I get missed by colleagues.”(Oscar, Commis Chef)</i></p> <p><i>“In the morning I go around and make sure that chefs are greeted including dish washer. We will have a couple of jokes , couple of coffees and begin the day.”( James, Head Chef)</i></p>	
	Bodily encounter at T2	Dependence and Rejection	Social positioning	Adjusted job crafting practices	<p><b>Dependence and Rejection (Material limit)</b></p> <p><i>The longer in the career, I am living life in compromising. But, I am in the situation neither leave the job nor can able to take the pain any more. Even I start new, what should I do? It won’t be easy at all after many years of working in kitchen” ( Muhammad, Sous Chef).</i></p> <p><i>Long hours and stressful work, it is usually hard to relate with the people who are not from the industry” ( Francesco, Chef de Partie).</i></p> <p><i>“To be honest, most chefs hangover with chefs. I think it is because of common interest and profession. We can easily relate each other”( Harry, Chef de Partie).</i></p> <p><i>“Trust me; I discuss some of my personal matters with my colleagues here. I always seek suggestions about insurance, mortgage, even when I need to buy camera or going for holiday” ( Dinesh Chef de Partie).</i></p> <p><i>“Three of us worked together in previous restaurants, in fact since last 8 years. If we decided to leave the job, we would leave together and join new place together. If that doesn’t happen one will fist leave and</i></p>

*the rest will follow him in a couple of month time. We all know our families and it is just like a big joint family. I am lucky to work with such a good colleague” ( Harry, Chef de Partie).*

*“We chefs have a WhatsApp group, we are around 30chefs working in London. I don’t know many of them in person but you will get help when needed. We share information about our daily issues, receipe, supplies and job opportunity. Manyof our friends have found job through this network” ( James , Chef de Partie).*

*“Some time jokes can cause conflict and whether other person in the position to take a battle or not. You choose what you want to do, whether take joke as a joke or not, in some cases I react and make them clear that it is an issue. If I have a time I always go for it, otherwise you just ignores you don’t have time to battle or to have any conversation. Some time I keep this to talk after the busy hours but by then I will be too tired to bring it back again. You just want to go home and find your bed” ( Michael Pastry Chef).*

*“I started kitchen job as a part time kitchen porter, I wasn’t sure if I would be a chef one day. I didn’t realise how I got so quickly trapped into the industry. It’s already more than 2 years, I don’t have any confident to come out of culinary industry” ( Oscar, Commis Chef).*

**Rejection**

*“Once I wanted to have a talk to the customer who complained my food. Normally its head chef who talk to the customers, but he wasn’t there that is why I wanted to go. I just wanted to know what was wrong with food and what the customer wanted. I know sometime floor staffs make a mistake in taking orders and then put blame on customers. As soon as I stepped out of the kitchen, I was told by manager that I shouldn’t speak to the customer because I wouldn’t know how to speak with them. Oh, come on, give me a break, I am not dumb. They will make you feel that you are not welcome and should dump yourself inside the wall of kitchen. I hate it, absolutely hate it”( Francesco, Chef de Partie).*

*“I just think that the unsociable hours and the low pay it just combines to this feeling that your status isn’t as high and knocks your self-esteem. You work when everyone else is having a great time, so then your status is immediately lowered because you’re working to please them. You’re working to serve them, then you’re immediately having a lower status. Once after my shift, I went to the Bar of the restaurant which open longer than kitchen. One of the customer asked me what I was doing, I said I am working as a chef in this restaurant, then the customer said ‘oh that’s a shame,*

*my son is your age and he is in University' and it made me really bad" (Harry, Chef de Partie).*

*"There are restaurants where managers think that anyone can be a chef. Anyone come today as a porter can be a Commis chef in a few months' time because people are keep leaving and there is always a need of people. It makes our profession less appreciated as if like anyone can be a chef without going through rigorous training. Some manager and owner take advantage of this and make you feel like you are not valuable and easily replaceable. After working in kitchen for many years, it's painful that my skills are made cheap" (James, Head Chef).*

*"Those who work outside (floor staff) in clean and ironed cloth somehow see themselves that they are superior to us. I hate when people try to undermine our work while enjoying the food that I cook." (Muhammad, Sous Chef).*

*"We are undervalued, it is one of the lowest ranked job, people can easily look down to you. In one of our social gathering of our community we needed someone to lead the next communal gathering program. I was keen to lead, I like interaction with people and have been involved in activities. But, I was rejected because I work in the weekend. Not only that, I was indicated that if I lead the project, 'the image of the community will be less credible". It made me sad, I couldn't sleep on that night. I don't go there anymore" (Dinesh, Chef de Partie).*

*"It's hard to have normal conversations with normal people. Just trying to understand them while trying to explain us is difficult" (Michael, Pastry Chef).*

#### **Material limits on identity play –social positioning**

*"I used to get micromanaged by the owner, the owner had no clue about restaurant business, I finally told him, you are in the wrong business, you obviously don't know what you're are doing. I am chef, if you want me to work for you, respect is minimum. How can I grow in this kind of restaurant when you are in pressure to work with the limited supplies? For example, he wants to sell organic chicken but don't want to pay more than the price for boiler, how come it is possible, does he want me to do wrong thing, no way, I am a proud chef can't go that direction. I called him out, then I quit a week later" (Muhammad, Sous chef).*

*"You will be covering many absences and sicknesses, and you ended up adding more and more hours instead*



*of developing yourself. I joined kitchen from kitchen porter and haven't taken any courses. It has already been two years I have worked as a chef but fell like I am stuck. I must balance between what I do now and what I want to become in future. I am planning to move to Michelin restaurant or would like to work under the established chefs in London. At least I can tell people that I am working under celebrity chef" (Harry, Chef de Partie).*

*"In restaurant, you will normally have a close contact, and this is how you get a job. This will make your job easy, no doubt, but my contacts have been very narrow. I am losing my confident. Sometimes, I just feel like this is my life and I should just get along with it" (Dinesh, Chef de Partie).*

*"I joined the kitchen not just because I wanted to limit myself into a chef. There are a lot of food industries, factories where you can work in sales and management positions. I am looking for opportunity within the food industry, may be in sales department" (Alex, Commis Chef).*

*"I have learnt not to be too close with work colleagues. I used to be very close to them but not anymore. If you get too close, the expectation will grow. You will be asked to cover their absences, help their section and sometime borrowing money too, at a point it will become impossible. But, the day when you can't say yes to them, they will easily act like an enemy. I have had many such experience. That is why I am saying, come to work, do your job and go home. Easy" ( James Head Chef).*

**Adjusted job crafting practices-** Re-establishing the boundaries (between self-other, work-career)

*"I joined kitchen from kitchen porter role. It was for to make money for living. But then, I began to work more hours. Within a year time I have become a chef (Commis chef). I have good friends, I have a job and confident to find a new job even I lose one. But, when you see your working life( long hours, demanding work), sometime I feel like I should move to the other sector without delay. I am young it may be easier to switch sooner than later. I am in dilemma". Alex, Commis Chef)*

*"I made a serious mistake of staying far too long in a same kitchen where I was under appreciated and worked far harder than the others simply, I wouldn't complain. I change the job, it changed my life. I went to the kitchen where everyone is supportive, and the*

*head chef was eager to teach and let you grow.”(Harry, Chef de Partie).*

*For me, its important to believe me on what I do and my passion. I would rather face them proudly who try to undermine me. Afterall, they (customer) eat what I cook, I know more about food than them. So, I am superior than them anyway. (James Head Chef)*

*I think we undervalue our self as well. We are chef we must be proud of what we do despite whatever the others say. I wouldn't let anyone to play with such nonsense. I hope to be a successful chef one day. I have many challenges ahead. I need to challenge myself and keep moving. I can't be working in the same restaurant for a long. (Dinesh, Chef de Partie)*

*“We are in restaurant industry, contacts are very important. I would like to be in touch with all chefs, you never know when you needed their help. But I want the balance in between my personal life and work life. I also want to meet different people. Recently, I went for a week hiking holiday and met a couple of people working in bank. It was wonderful to see how similar our stories are. I always thought they are higher level than me but then found that the pain is everywhere, some are seen some are hidden.” (Harry, Chef de Partie).*

*“My plan is to open my own restaurant. I will save some money and gather experience and hopefully I will find a business partner too. I can't see myself working in kitchen only in all my life” (James, Head Chef).*

*“There are some workaholics people ready to work any time and any hours, try to undermine others or make other look bad. I am not scared of raising voice when things are not right, I don't care, I can't tolerate anymore” (Dinesh, Chef de Partie).*

*“I know when I was in the beginning of my career I liked to be appreciated by others, which you normally waited for, but now it doesn't make much different to me.”(Muhammad, Sous Chef)*

*“You prepare meals for managers who will in turn screw you hard and last minutes orders after getting done with your duties. Fucking shit sucks! I just give them what is available, No more extra effort, No more expensive food” ( Francesco, Chef de Partie).*

