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Examining Job Crafting from an Interpersonal Perspective: Is Employee Job Crafting Related to the Well-Being of Colleagues?

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Individuals engage in job crafting to create a better fit between their job and their preferences, skills, and abilities. However, the individual focus may overlook the impact of job crafting on the job context or well-being of colleagues. Therefore, an important question that is addressed in this study is whether the crafting of one person is related to the job characteristics and well-being of a colleague. This study explores the potential negative effects of a seemingly positive strategy for the individual on a colleague. Namely, we predict that when employees decrease their hindering job demands, their colleagues will be more likely to report a higher workload and more conflict. In turn, we hypothesise that colleague reports of workload and conflict are related to colleague burnout. Data were collected among 103 dyads and analyzed with the Actor–Partner Interdependence Model. The results largely supported the hypothesised relationships: Decreasing hindering job demands was positively related to colleague workload and conflict, which, in turn, related positively to colleague burnout. These findings suggest that proactively decreasing hindering job demands not only relates to personal job experiences, but also to colleague job characteristics and well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Job crafting studies have shown that employees actively change their own job design (Lyons, 2008; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). From the job crafting studies published so far, two research trends can be derived. The first trend is

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that job crafting is studied mainly at the individual level. The second trend is that predominantly positive outcomes have been studied in relation to job crafting. Regarding the first trend, most of the research has focused on the relationships between job crafting, individual and job characteristics, and the work-related well-being of the job crafter. For example, Lyons (2008) interviewed 107 sales employees and found that these employees mainly crafted their tasks and relationships at work. Furthermore, the results suggested that these forms of job crafting were related to a positive self-image and the feeling of having control over work activities. In addition, Tims, Bakker, and Derks (2013a) found that job crafting is positively related to individual work engagement, job satisfaction, and reduced burnout complaints over a period of 2 months.

However, individuals working in an organisation usually do not perform their tasks in complete isolation from their colleagues. It is more likely that employees collaborate on at least some tasks with others or are affected by the acts of colleagues in doing their own job. This shared work environment suggests that the crafting of one person may also have implications for the job of another person. Although there are some studies that showed the relevance of job crafting in a team context (Leana, Appelbaum, & Shevchuck, 2009; Tims, Bakker, Derks, & Van Rhenen, 2013b), no study has focused on the relationship between one individual's job crafting and the job characteristics of a colleague. Yet there may be important consequences for others involved when individuals craft their jobs. Therefore, the first goal of this study is to examine whether there is a relationship between employee job crafting activities and colleague job demands.

The second trend evident in the job crafting literature is the focus on mainly positive outcomes of job crafting, such as a change in job meaningfulness (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) or an increase in employees' work-related well-being (e.g. work engagement; Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012; Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012; job satisfaction; Ghitulescu, 2006). However, there is also some evidence that specific types of job crafting are related to lower performance levels or lower work-related well-being (Laurence, 2010; Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012). For example, employees may use job crafting to decrease tasks that are wearing or strenuous (Tims et al., 2013a). When these tasks are necessary for optimal performance, job crafting may decrease performance of the individual (Leana et al., 2009). Specifically, decreasing hindering job demands has been found to be negatively related to job performance (Tims et al., 2013b) and positively related to burnout (Tims et al., 2012). Similarly, Petrou and colleagues (2012) reported a negative relationship between decreasing hindering job demands and work engagement and argued that the reduction in hindering job demands may result in a less interesting or less challenging job from which employees lose their motivation (Petrou et al., 2012). As our focus is on the

interpersonal relationship between job crafting and well-being, the second goal of the study is to explore whether the crafting of hindering job demands by one person is related to burnout of the colleague. A final, third aim is to examine when decreasing hindering job demands is related to negative outcomes for colleagues. We use the Actor–Partner Interdependence Mediation Model (APIMeM; Kenny, 1996; Ledermann & Bodenmann, 2006) to examine the influence of job crafting for each person in the dyad on their own (i.e. actor effect) and their partner's (i.e. partner effect) job characteristics and burnout (Olsen & Kenny, 2006).

Using Job Crafting to Decrease Hindering Job Demands

According to Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), most employees have some room to craft their job. For example, employees may focus more on some tasks (e.g. tasks that are interesting and important) or pay less attention to others (e.g. tasks that are taxing or difficult). Although empirical studies exist that have examined job crafting (i.e. Ghitulescu, 2006; Leana et al., 2009), few of them have explicitly considered activities to decrease the number, scope, or types of job tasks (for an exception see Laurence, 2010). However, this type of job crafting is explicitly described by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001, p. 185), who also suggested that job crafting may not always be positive for others than the initiator. For example, when the crafting is not in line with organisational goals or produces negative side effects, it may unintentionally have negative consequences for the individual and/or organisation. A possible reason for the lack of studies on the negative consequences of job crafting may be that employees do not feel comfortable reporting these crafting activities (Tims et al., 2013a). Therefore, job crafting studies may be biased to positive acts of job crafting, such as taking on additional job tasks.

An approach that more clearly distinguishes between job crafting efforts to make the job more interesting and challenging or to make the job less demanding can be found in job crafting that is operationalised in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). By framing job crafting in JD-R theory, we may be able to better capture which work aspects employees change and what the consequences of these changes are for employee well-being.

In the JD-R approach of job crafting (Tims & Bakker, 2010), job crafting involves employees making proactive changes in their job demands and job resources. Job demands are those aspects of the job that may evoke strain if they exceed the employee's adaptive capability whereas job resources refer to those aspects of the job that are functional in dealing with the job and stimulate personal growth and development. The study of job crafting is, however, different from the study of job characteristics. The latter deals with

how individuals evaluate their job in terms of the availability or level of job demands and job resources. Job crafting is about employees proactively changing their level of job demands and job resources themselves. Within the JD-R framework of job crafting, four forms of job crafting have been identified (Tims et al., 2012). Two job crafting strategies concern job demands, namely decreasing hindering job demands and increasing challenging job demands. When employees are confronted with a high level of hindering job demands that may impair their job performance, they may take the initiative to lower them by proactively decreasing these job demands (Tims & Bakker, 2010). For instance, when service representatives encounter a situation for which they don't have the knowledge or personal resources to act, they may try to make sure that they don't have to deal with this situation. This form of job crafting is central to the current study as it specifically focuses on decreasing hindering job demands. A recent study by Van Wingerden, Derks, Bakker, and Dorenbosch (2013) indicated that decreasing hindering job demands was the most frequently chosen job crafting type among special education teachers who participated in a job crafting intervention. It is therefore important to examine how this type of job crafting is related to others in the work environment.

The other job crafting types are increasing challenging job demands, increasing structural job resources, and increasing social job resources and are used to make work more motivating and interesting. Studies have indeed shown that these job crafting behaviors are positively related to work engagement and job performance (Bakker et al., 2012; Nielsen & Abildgaard, 2012; Petrou et al., 2012; Tims et al., 2012, 2013b). In contrast, the job crafting strategy of decreasing hindering job demands can be used to make the job less demanding.

Important to note is that this type of job crafting is conceptually different from counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) and active coping. Although these constructs have in common that they resemble volitional behaviors, through CWBs, such as theft, abuse, and sabotage, employees intentionally harm their organisation and/or organisational stakeholders (e.g. clients, colleagues; Meijer & Spector, 2013). Active coping is described as a way of dealing with a stressful situation by taking concrete action to solve or overcome the problem (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). What differentiates job crafting from these behaviors is that job crafting is about dealing with the (everyday) work environment in such a way as to achieve a better fit between the person and the job (Berg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton, 2010). In other words, the focus of job crafting is on the individual level and it is not the employee's intention to harm the organisation or to solve organisational problems. Unintentionally and seen from the perspective of others, job crafting may negatively influence the organisation or colleagues, but this is certainly not the goal of job crafting. Compared to CWB that is specifically

focused on harming the organisation or people within the organisation, decreasing hindering job demands can be seen as self-relevant behaviors that do not have a specific target other than personal well-being.

In the context of the present study, in which we focus on the interpersonal, negative associations between job crafting of one person and the well-being of a colleague, we expect that decreasing hindering job demands may be most likely to also affect colleagues and to generate negative reactions from colleagues. This expectation is based on the idea that by decreasing the level of hindering job demands employees may shift responsibilities and tasks to other people in their work environment. As the other job crafting types are concerned with optimising the work environment by increasing job resources and challenging job demands that in turn are related to positive work outcomes, such as employee well-being (e.g. Seppälä, Hakanen, Mauno, Perhoniemi, Tolvanen, & Schaufeli, 2014) and performance (e.g. Wheeler, Harris, & Sablinski, 2012), we expect that colleagues may also benefit from these enriched jobs of others (e.g. via a process of crossover; Bakker, Van Emmerik, & Euwema, 2006).

However, when an employee decreases the amount of time spent behind the service desk to decrease his/her own emotional demands, a side effect may be that colleagues have to spend additional time at the service desk. From the perspective of the job crafter, the job is temporarily less demanding but from the perspective of the colleague, this change may result in a more demanding job as he/she will need to manage his/her emotions for a longer period of time (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003). We therefore focus on this form of job crafting, and examine why this form may be dysfunctional and related to negative outcomes (cf. Oldham & Hackman, 2010). We suggest that decreasing hindering job demands may have an impact on colleague well-being through its influence on colleague workload and the experience of conflict.

Decreasing Hindering Job Demands and Colleague Well-Being

Job design studies have shown that job characteristics are associated with how employees experience their work and how they behave at work (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). Based on the job design literature, in which employees are seen as passive respondents to their job characteristics, the job crafting concept has been proposed to complement this view (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Namely, when employees start working in a new job, they are likely to also start crafting their job to optimise their job characteristics (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). From this perspective, job crafting also influences and precedes how people experience their jobs. In particular, in the situation in which people work together in the same environment, the crafting of one person may be associated with how another colleague experiences

his/her job. More specifically, it is expected that employees who work in the same department or team are likely to be affected by the crafting of hindering job demands of their colleagues.

Few studies have been conducted that have examined the relationship between individuals' actions and colleagues' job characteristics or well-being. An exception is the study of Aubé, Rousseau, Mama, and Morin (2009), who examined the relationship between counterproductive behaviors (CWBs), such as letting someone else do part of one's work or pretending to have much more work than colleagues, and colleague well-being. These authors reasoned and found that employees who observed CWBs in some of their colleagues experienced a lower level of psychological well-being compared to their counterparts. In addition, other research has shown that well-being may be affected when employees face an increased workload because some of their colleagues are not doing their fair share of work (Karau & Williams, 1995). Studies have highlighted the fact that individual employee well-being can be affected by team-level well-being, indicating that other people at work are likely to influence how individuals feel at work. For example, when teams are high on team burnout, individuals within these teams are very likely to develop feelings of burnout themselves (Bakker et al., 2006; Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2003b).

Based on these findings, we expect that when one person decreases his/her hindering job demands, this behavior may impact the job of other colleagues. In particular, colleague workload may be affected by decreasing hindering job demands as the focal employee may try to reduce emotional or cognitive job demands that require too much from him/her, which makes it more likely that someone else needs to take over or deal with these job demands. Related research has indeed shown that individuals may increase their work effort and as such their workload when colleagues are not performing all their job tasks (Fox, Spector, Goh, Bruursema, & Kessler, 2012).

However, not all acts of decreasing hindering job demands may impact the workload of colleagues. Another possibility is that conflict between colleagues arises when colleagues note that someone deviates from the regular standards. In other words, individuals cannot craft anything they want (Seeck & Parzefall, 2006), especially not when working together with others. Conflict may arise when individuals perceive that other individuals oppose their interests, beliefs, or values (De Dreu, Harinck, & Van Vianen, 1999). Thus, when individuals decrease their hindering job demands, colleagues may feel that their tasks or output are threatened. Conflict may also occur when, from the perspective of the colleague, the job crafter is seen as a careless or non-contributing worker or when the work values of the job crafter and colleague differ (e.g. adaptability and carefulness; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). When colleagues have different values regarding how one should behave at work they may be more likely to respond

emotionally to the changes colleagues made in their job (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Emotions follow immediately from situations in which people feel threatened by others or find the crafting of the colleague unjust (Fox, Spector, & Miles, 2001). The disagreement and felt threat associated with the colleague's job crafting activity increases the likelihood that the colleagues get into arguments with each other. Interpersonal conflict may also arise because of a perceived imbalance in people's contributions to work tasks and goals (Fox et al., 2012). In line with these findings, Cropanzano and Baron (1991) related injustice to emotions and workplace conflict. Therefore, we predict:

Hypothesis 1: Decreasing hindering job demands of A is associated with increased (a) workload of B and (b) conflict of B.

Workload and conflict, in turn, have been shown to be related to employee well-being. Building on the JD-R model, burnout will emerge as a consequence of intense physical, affective, and cognitive strain caused by prolonged exposure to specific demanding working conditions (Demerouti et al., 2001). In the present study, we examine exhaustion and disengagement as indicators of burnout. These two dimensions are generally considered to be the "core of burnout" (e.g. González-Romá, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Lloret, 2006; Heuven & Bakker, 2003). Emotional exhaustion refers to feelings of energy depletion and of being overextended by the demands of one's work. The second component of burnout, disengagement, is a type of interpersonal distancing and lack of connectedness with one's colleagues and clients. Disengagement is an attempt to make work more manageable by putting a distance between oneself and others such that they are considered impersonal objects of one's work (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

Workload, the feeling that one has too many things to do in too little time, is a job demand that has often been studied in relation to burnout (Zapf, Seifert, Schmutte, Mertini, & Holz, 2001). A study among hospital employees showed that the number of hours worked in the hospital was strongly related to feeling pressured by the job and poor mental health (Fielden & Peckar, 1999). Moreover, meta-analyses (Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010; Lee & Ashforth, 1996) have shown that workload and time pressure were strongly related to emotional exhaustion and disengagement. The opposite has also been found, namely when workload of employees who initially reported high levels of exhaustion decreased, these employees moved from feelings of burnout towards feelings of engagement at work at the 1-year follow-up (Boersma & Lindblom, 2009).

Conflict has also been found to be a major job stress factor (Isikhan, Comez, & Zafer Danis, 2004; Zapf et al., 2001). Compared to other stressors at work, such as workload, social job stressors are very common and are

found to be the most upsetting stressors for employees (Dormann & Zapf, 2002; Smith & Sulsky, 1995) because they induce feelings of being obstructed in one's goal-directed actions (Giebels & Janssen, 2005). For example, seeing that a colleague does not deal with a demanding customer or is not able to monitor a work process may cause irritations and frustrations about the behavior of that person. Frone (2000) showed that interpersonal conflict was an important job stressor that related to several deleterious outcomes for both employees and employers. In particular, bad relationships with colleagues were associated with lower subjective well-being (i.e. burnout, depression, self-esteem, and somatic symptoms; De Dreu, Van Dierendonck, & De Best-Waldhober, 2003; Leiter, 1991; Shirom & Mayer, 1993; Van Dierendonck, Schaufeli, & Sixma, 1994).

Together, these studies signal that a high workload and unpleasant interpersonal interactions, such as verbal aggression or angry exchanges, raises the individual's stress levels and may lead to burnout (De Dreu, 2008; Penny & Spector, 2005). Based on the literature about burnout, it is expected that workload may be more strongly related to the exhaustion component of burnout and that conflict may be more strongly related to the disengagement component of burnout. Workload may be more likely to relate to exhaustion than to disengagement because of the increased effort that is needed when employees have the feeling that they need to do more at work. Exhaustion then arises from the unmanageable workload (Leiter & Maslach, 2009). Disengagement is often associated with interpersonal conflict (Kahn, 1990; Parkinson & McBain, 2013). Intense negative emotions resulting from being in conflict with colleagues (Jehn & Mannix, 2001) may explain the positive relationship between conflict at work and the tendency of employees to disengage from their work. Namely, when conflict undermines honest behaviors, emotional interactions with others are suppressed, which is key to disengagement. Other studies also reported a relationship between colleague conflict and disengagement but not exhaustion (e.g. Fujiwara, Tsukishima, Tsutsumi, Kawakami, & Kishi, 2003). However, some studies also found a relationship between interpersonal conflict and exhaustion (e.g. Giebels & Janssen, 2005) making it interesting to study further the potential differential relationships of the job demands workload and conflict with these two aspects of burnout. Therefore, we predict:

Hypothesis 2: Workload of B (a) and conflict of B (b) is positively associated with increased burnout of B. More specifically, workload of B will be more strongly related to exhaustion of B and conflict of B will be more strongly related to disengagement of B.

Integrating the literature and the first two hypotheses, in the final hypothesis we test whether workload and conflict as reported by B function as

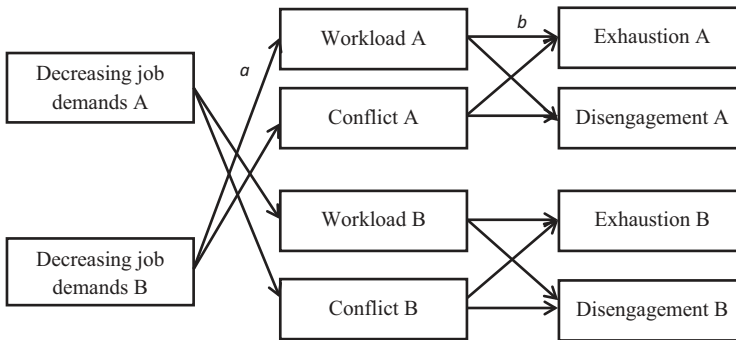


FIGURE 1. Double APIMeM with workload and conflict as a mediator of the relationship between decreasing job demands by A and burnout of B.

Note: Hypothesised relationships are presented. Direct effects (c') and controlled relationships are omitted for reasons of clarity.

mediators in the relationship between decreasing hindering job demands of A and burnout of B (see Figure 1). We expect that the job crafting of one person does not relate directly to the well-being of the colleague but that this relationship is explained by an increase in the workload of and conflict with the colleague. These job characteristics, in turn, are related to burnout.

Hypothesis 3: Workload of B (a) and conflict of B (b) mediate the relationship between decreasing hindering job demands of A and burnout of B.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Participants were recruited from different organisations through phone and email contact. Based on social networks of four Master's students, a total of 356 individuals were approached to participate in our online study. Participation in the study was voluntary. Those individuals who agreed to participate in the study were instructed to ask a colleague with whom they interacted and collaborated often at work to participate with them. Once the dyads were known, they received a unique identification number that they needed to enter in the online questionnaire. In this way, we could identify the specific dyads. Participants filled out the online survey during working hours. A total of 206 complete questionnaires were collected, resulting in 103 dyads of colleagues (response rate of 28.9%). The sample consisted of 90 males (43.7%) and 116 females (56.3%). The average age of the participants was 30.75 years old ($SD = 6.43$). On average, participants had worked for five

years in their current organisation ($SD = 4.10$). Participants worked in different sectors: in the retail sector (38.9%), in commerce (15.5%), business services (12.6%), the banking sector (11.7%), social services (9.7%), architecture (5.8%), or financial services (5.8%).

Measures

Decreasing hindering job demands was measured with a subscale of the job crafting scale developed and validated by Tims et al. (2012). An example item of this subscale is “I make sure that my work is mentally less intense.” Participants rated the items on a 5-point frequency scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *very often*). Reliability of this six-item scale was .77.

Workload was measured with four items from Karasek’s (1985) job content instrument. The four items refer to quantitative, demanding aspects of the job. An example item is “Do you have too much work to do?” Responses were given on a 5-point frequency scale, ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). Cronbach’s alpha was .90.

Conflict was measured with a modified version of the Interpersonal Conflict at Work Scale (ICAWS; Spector & Jex, 1998). The original ICAWS focuses on the general work environment but for the present study we were interested in the relationship with the colleague. We therefore adapted items to specifically refer to the colleague. For example, the item “How often do you get into arguments with others at work?” was modified to “How often do you get into arguments with your colleague?” Answers were provided on a 5-point frequency scale, ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). Cronbach’s alpha was .85.

Burnout was measured using the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou, & Kantas, 2003; Demerouti, Mostert, & Bakker, 2010). The OLBI uses 16 items to measure two dimensions: exhaustion (eight items) and disengagement (eight items). All items were scored on a 4-point frequency scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 4 (*totally agree*). Higher scores indicate a higher level of burnout. Example items for the exhaustion dimension are “After my work, I regularly feel worn out and weary” and “After my work, I regularly feel totally fit for my leisure activities” (reverse scored). The disengagement scale is exemplified by items such as “I frequently talk about my work in a negative way” and “I get more and more engaged in my work” (reverse scored). Cronbach’s alpha for the exhaustion subscale was .70 and for disengagement it was .77.

Task dependence was included as a control variable to rule out the possibility that it explained the covariation between actor job crafting and colleague workload, conflict, and burnout symptoms. It was measured with four items from the scale developed by Pearce, Sommer, Morris, and Frideger (1992). Items were slightly adapted so that they better corresponded to

interdependence among colleagues. For example, the item “This task can be performed fairly independently of others” was rephrased as “Most of my tasks can be performed fairly independently of my colleague.” Items were rated on a 5-point frequency scale, ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). Cronbach’s alpha for this scale was .80.

Strategy of Analysis

The hypothesised model was set up in a structural equation modeling (SEM) framework using the Actor–Partner Interdependence Mediation Model (APIMeM; Kenny, 1996; Ledermann & Bodenmann, 2006). The APIMeM investigates the influence of a predictor variable for each person in the dyad on their own (i.e. actor effect) and their partner’s (i.e. partner effect) outcomes using a standard multivariate regression model (Olsen & Kenny, 2006). In addition, the APIMeM incorporates mediators to assess the intervening mechanism between a set of initial independent variables and a set of outcome variables within actors and among partners (Finn, Mitte, & Neyer, 2013). Data of both members are included in the model and the errors of the outcome variables are correlated to account for the dependence that exists within the data (Kenny, Kashy, & Cook, 2006).

The AMOS software package (Arbuckle, 2003) was used to carry out the analyses. Because the dyad members cannot be distinguished from each other based on some grouping variable (e.g. gender in heterosexual couples), we followed the procedure described in Olsen and Kenny (2006). These authors describe in detail how to deal with interchangeable dyadic data using SEM. A pairwise data setup was used (Griffin & Gonzalez, 1995), meaning that each score is entered twice, once as an actor variable and once as a partner variable. When the dyad members are interchangeable, estimating the APIMeM with pairwise data requires placing a specific set of restrictions on the model parameters. In addition to equal actor and partner effects, interchangeability entails that the predictor variables (i.e. decreasing hindering job demands by A and decreasing hindering job demands by B) have a common mean and variance and that the outcome variables (e.g. exhaustion reported by A and exhaustion reported by B) have a common intercept and residual variance.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The correlations, presented in Table 1, show a pattern that is largely in line with the hypothesised relationships: Actor decreasing hindering job demands positively associates with partner workload and partner workload relates

TABLE 1
Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations (SD) among the Study Variables (N = 206)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1 Decreasing job demands A	3.47	.68	—											
2 Decreasing job demands P	3.44	.67	.51**	—										
3 Workload A	3.74	.89	.10	.39**	—									
4 Workload P	3.87	.70	.41**	.29**	.35**	—								
5 Conflict A	1.62	.67	.30**	.32**	.18	.21*	—							
6 Conflict P	1.53	.62	.10	.07	.05	-.02	.18	—						
7 Exhaustion A	2.26	.40	.24*	.23*	.18	.20*	.05	.11	—					
8 Exhaustion P	2.24	.44	.30**	.15	.13	.34**	.06	.07	.18	—				
9 Disengagement A	2.29	.49	.24*	.16	.18	.37**	.02	.16	.76**	.31**	—			
10 Disengagement P	2.24	.46	.38**	.20*	.12	.39**	.24*	.15	.28**	.70**	.43**	—		
11 Task dependence A	3.16	.91	-.14	-.07	.14	-.16	-.01	.05	-.11	-.29**	-.21**	-.13	—	
12 Task dependence P	3.29	.82	-.12	-.17	.02	-.13	.03	.02	-.07	-.38**	-.13	-.01	.54**	—

Note: A = actor; P = partner. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

positively to partner exhaustion and partner disengagement. Partner conflict is not associated with partner exhaustion and disengagement. However, these correlations do not take into account the dependence of the data.

Dependence of Observations

The use of dyads in the present study is likely to result in dependence of data as both partners' variables share some variance. To assess the dependence, we followed the approach advocated by Kenny et al. (2006) and Griffin and Gonzalez (1995) and calculated pairwise intraclass correlations (ICCs). The ICC quantifies the proportion of response variable variability that is due to mean differences across dyads (Peugh, DiLillo, & Panuzio, 2013). The ICCs were all significant, indicating that job crafting, workload, conflict, and burnout were significantly correlated within dyads (i.e. dependence existed in each of the variables). The ICCs were as follows: decreasing hindering job demands: $\rho = .51, p < .01$; workload: $\rho = .33, p < .01$; conflict: $\rho = .18, p < .05$; exhaustion: $\rho = .18, p < .05$; disengagement: $\rho = .42, p < .01$; and task dependence: $\rho = .49, p < .01$.

To examine whether dyad members were statistically indistinguishable, the I-SAT model was estimated ($\chi^2 = .001, df = 42, p = 1.00$). The chi-square of this model was zero, indicating that dyad members were perfectly indistinguishable (Peugh et al., 2013). This means that we could constrain the following model parameters to be equal: actor effects, partner effects, predictor means, predictor variances, outcome intercepts, and residual variances (Olsen & Kenny, 2006). The corrected chi-square model fit statistic for the proposed model was $\chi^2 = 11.01, df = 42, p = 1.00$. These fit indices indicate that the proposed model fits the data well. In addition, other SEM fit measures (TLI, CFI, and RMSEA) were also adjusted to correct for the fact that interchangeable dyadic data were used (see Olsen & Kenny, 2006). The adjusted fit indices of the proposed model were: TLI = 1.00, CFI = .95, and RMSEA = .06.

Hypotheses Testing

To test the hypotheses and the mediation model, the estimation and testing of all direct relationships and all indirect relationships has been recommended (Ledermann & Macho, 2009). In the APIMeM, the expected mediation could be carried via two types of indirect effects for each direct effect: mediation of actor effects (i.e. mediating the association between decreasing hindering demands of A and burnout of A) and mediation of partner effects (i.e. mediating the association between decreasing hindering demands of A and burnout of B; see Figure 1) (Ledermann & Bodenmann, 2006). Because we have two mediators and two dependent variables, there are eight types of

indirect effects: four indirect effects via the actor mediators (i.e. workload and conflict of A) and four indirect effects via the partner mediators (i.e. workload and conflict of B). Mediation of direct partner effects also has eight types of indirect effects: four via the actor mediators (i.e. workload and conflict of A) and four indirect effects via the partner mediators (i.e. workload and conflict of B).

We hypothesised partner effects (e.g. job crafting of A is related to burnout of B), but to account for the dependence in the data we also included actor effects in our analysis. We used a bootstrapping procedure to estimate and test the indirect effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The APIMeM was estimated including all direct effects between predictors, mediators, and outcome variables. Table 2 displays the effect estimates of the APIMeM model.

As predicted in Hypothesis 1a, the results showed that actor decreasing hindering job demands was positively associated with partner workload (referred to as *a* effects in Table 2). Regarding the relationship between actor decreasing hindering job demands and partner conflict, both the actor and the partner effects were statistically significant, thus supporting Hypothesis 1b but also indicating the presence of an actor effect. These results suggest that when person A decreased his/her hindering job demands, both this person and the colleague reported higher levels of conflict with each other.

In line with Hypothesis 2a, the *b* effects (Table 2) showed only a statistically significant actor effect between workload and exhaustion, indicating that employees who experienced a higher workload were also more likely to experience exhaustion. However, regarding the relationship between workload and disengagement, we also found both a statistically significant actor and a partner effect. In other words, workload was positively associated with one's own disengagement and with colleague disengagement. Conflict was not associated with exhaustion for both dyadic effects but the actor effect from conflict to disengagement was statistically significant, supporting Hypothesis 2b.

In Hypothesis 3, we predicted that partner workload and conflict would mediate the relationship between actor decreasing hindering job demands and partner burnout. To test the significance of the indirect effects, this hypothesis was tested using phantom models (Ledermann, Macho, & Kenny, 2011) with 95 per cent bootstrapped confidence intervals. Three of the four hypothesised indirect relationships were significant (the results of APIMeM indirect effects are shown in Table 3). The only exception was the relationship between actor decreasing hindering job demands to partner exhaustion via partner conflict. As can be seen in Table 3, when we control for all other possible relationships other than the hypothesised ones, only two other indirect relationships (from the possible 16) were statistically significant. Namely, the relationship between actor decreasing hindering job demands to actor disengagement via actor conflict, and actor

TABLE 2
Effect Estimates Setting the Direct Effects Equal across Dyad Members
(*N* = 206)

<i>Effect</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Standard Error</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Standard Estimate</i>
<i>a</i> effects (X → M1)				
Actor effect	-.036	.057	.522	-.031
Partner effect	.487	.057	<.01	.413
<i>a</i> effects (X → M2)				
Actor effect	.109	.051	<.05	.115
Partner effect	.145	.051	<.01	.153
<i>b</i> effects (M1 → Y1)				
Actor effect	.080	.028	<.01	.154
Partner effect	.030	.028	.28	.058
<i>b</i> effects (M1 → Y2)				
Actor effect	.077	.029	<.01	.131
Partner effect	.083	.029	<.01	.141
<i>b</i> effects (M2 → Y1)				
Actor effect	-.004	.031	.886	-.007
Partner effect	.011	.031	.728	.017
<i>b</i> effects (M2 → Y2)				
Actor effect	.093	.034	<.01	.127
Partner effect	-.006	.034	.853	-.009
<i>c'</i> effects (X → Y1)				
Actor effect	.035	.036	.323	.058
Partner effect	.098	.036	<.01	.160
<i>c'</i> effects (X → Y2)				
Actor effect	.095	.037	<.01	.137
Partner effect	.033	.037	.377	.047

Note: X is the independent variable (decreasing job demands), M1 is the mediator workload, M2 is the mediator conflict, Y1 is the dependent variable exhaustion, Y2 is the dependent variable disengagement. Controlled for task dependence.

decreasing hindering job demands to actor disengagement via partner workload. Hypothesis 3 was partially accepted. In sum, partner workload mediated the relationship between actor decreasing hindering job demands and partner burnout (i.e. exhaustion and disengagement), and partner conflict mediated the relationship between actor decreasing hindering job demands and partner disengagement.

TABLE 3
Results of Indirect Effects

		<i>Estimate</i>	SE	CI	p
Actor-actor effects					
1	Decreasing JD A → Workload A → Exhaustion A	-.003	.005	-.014-.005	.411
2	Decreasing JD A → Workload A → Disengagement A	-.003	.004	-.014-.005	.356
3	Decreasing JD A → Conflict A → Exhaustion A	.000	.003	-.007-.006	.738
4	Decreasing JD A → Conflict A → Disengagement A	.010	.006	.001-.026	.019
Actor-partner effects					
5	Decreasing JD A → Workload A → Exhaustion P	-.001	.002	-.009-.001	.339
6	Decreasing JD A → Workload A → Disengagement P	-.003	.005	-.016-.005	.379
7	Decreasing JD A → Conflict A → Exhaustion P	.001	.003	-.004-.008	.436
8	Decreasing JD A → Conflict A → Disengagement P	-.001	.003	-.009-.006	.676
Partner-actor effects					
9	Decreasing JD A → Workload P → Exhaustion P	.039	.015	.013-.071	.004
10	Decreasing JD A → Workload P → Disengagement P	.038	.015	.010-.072	.003
11	Decreasing JD A → Conflict P → Exhaustion P	-.001	.004	-.010-.007	.818
12	Decreasing JD A → Conflict P → Disengagement P	.014	.007	.002-.032	.005
Partner-partner effects					
13	Decreasing JD A → Workload P → Exhaustion A	.015	.012	-.007-.040	.201
14	Decreasing JD A → Workload P → Disengagement A	.040	.018	.008-.080	.013
15	Decreasing JD A → Conflict P → Exhaustion A	.002	.004	-.040-.012	.517
16	Decreasing JD A → Conflict P → Disengagement A	-.001	.004	-.011-.007	.736

Note: JD = job demands; A = actor; P = partner; SE = standard error; CI = 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals. Controlled for task dependence.

DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to contribute to the literature on job crafting by examining the relationship between one person's job crafting activities and the experienced job characteristics and well-being of a colleague. As the current job crafting literature has mainly focused on *intrapersonal*, positive relationships between job crafting and employee well-being and performance, this study aimed to shed light on the potential and unintentional *interpersonal* and negative effects of job crafting. By collecting data from colleagues who regularly work together, the potential negative associations between one person's activities to decrease his/her hindering job demands and the job characteristics and well-being of colleagues could be studied. This information is particularly important for employees who are confronted with crafting colleagues or for managers who want to encourage job crafting among employees. The present study shows that when employees try to decrease their hindering job demands on their own initiative, their colleagues report a higher workload and both employees report higher levels of conflict with each other. These results indicate that there may be a shift in responsibilities and tasks when one person crafts his/her hindering job demands or that conflict between colleagues arises in response to the changes the job crafter made. In other words, this type of job crafting may not always be appreciated by colleagues (cf. Parker & Collins, 2010). Furthermore, as hypothesised, workload and conflict as reported by the colleague mediated the relationship between actor decreasing hindering job demands and partner burnout. We will now discuss the results in more detail.

Theoretical Contributions

The expected partner effect, in which actor decreasing hindering job demands is related to partner workload was fully supported in this sample. This finding is even stronger in light of the absence of the actor effect (i.e. no relationship between actor decreasing hindering job demands and actor workload). Interestingly, though, this finding may also be somewhat puzzling as it may indicate that decreasing hindering job demands is not related to an immediate alleviation of the workload of the job crafter. This result may be explained by the cross-sectional design of the current study as it may take some time to experience a real decrease in workload by means of decreasing hindering job demands. For example, it may be that a person decreases his/her job demands when (s)he has so many tasks that there is a pressing need to relieve some of the workload. In this scenario, decreasing job demands may still render the job high on workload whereas a colleague who gains tasks may immediately experience a higher workload.

With regard to the relationship between decreasing hindering job demands and conflict, both the partner and the actor effect were statistically

significant. This finding implies that when the actor decreased his/her hindering job demands, both colleagues reported higher levels of conflict with each other. Although it was not hypothesised, it is unlikely that one person reports high levels of conflict whereas the other member of the dyad reports no or very low levels conflict: The questions asked about explicit acts of conflict, such as rude behavior and yelling at each other (Spector & Jex, 1998). These are serious conflict behaviors that will be noticed and reported by the other person as well. As conflict is an interpersonal problem, it is logical that both members of the dyad report being in conflict with each other. In sum, we may conclude that actor decreasing hindering job demands is positively related to partner workload and to conflict reported by both parties. These findings indicate that activities to reduce demands may indeed be risky and can be criticised by colleagues.

Based on the findings reported in burnout studies (Crawford et al., 2010), in the second hypothesis, an actor effect was predicted, namely the higher the workload and conflict an employee reports, the more likely it is that this person will also report higher levels of exhaustion and disengagement. As expected, actor workload was positively related to actor exhaustion. Contrary to our expectations, however, actor workload was also related to actor and partner disengagement. Thus, when one person reported having a lot of work to do in a short period of time, not only did this person feel disengaged from work but also his/her colleague attempted to create distance from the job by actively ignoring the job or client's unique qualities (Alarcon, 2011). As the actor effect is controlled for in the analyses, this finding may be explained by a shared or collective work environment (Totterdell, 2000). Relating to burnout, such a work environment could be characterised by high job demands and a lack of job resources (e.g. Bakker, Demerouti, De Boer, & Schaufeli, 2003a; Bakker, Demerouti, Taris, Schaufeli, & Schreurs, 2003c). Another possibility is that people who regularly hear their colleagues complain about their workload and have negative attitudes may take over these negative attitudes from each other by a process of crossover (see Bakker et al., 2006).

In line with earlier studies (Fujiwara et al., 2003; Kahn, 1990; Parkinson & McBain, 2013), actor conflict was only related to actor disengagement and not to actor exhaustion, and indeed suggests that conflict is more likely to be related to the attitudinal aspect of burnout than to the physical aspect of burnout. However, given that workload also related to disengagement suggests that more research is needed to be able to reach firm conclusions about the potentially differential relationships of job characteristics such as workload and interpersonal conflict with specific aspects of burnout.

The final aspect of this study was to test whether actor decreasing hindering job demands is associated with partner well-being via partner workload and via conflict. Three of the four hypothesised indirect effects were

statistically significant, emphasising the necessity to take others into account when making adjustments in one's work. Considering that of the 16 possible indirect effects only two other types of indirect effects also reached significance, these results provide substantial support for the idea that an individual's activities to decrease hindering job demands can impact how others feel at work.

Limitations

Certain limitations should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of this study. First, we used self-reported measures, which can give rise to common method variance and artificially inflated relations between constructs. However, correlations among the variables and the estimates are not so high as to expect that this is a serious threat in the present study. With regard to the correlations between actor-rated variables, Kenny and Cook (1999) argued that actor effects are generally stronger than partner effects because actor effects are usually self-reported data. Thus, the actor effect may be inflated by method variance (i.e. a rater effect). Importantly, the hypothesised partner effects that are the main focus of the present study are found while controlling for actor effects, showing that people who work with someone who decreases his/her hindering job demands experience a higher workload/conflict and report higher levels of burnout, controlled for their own levels of decreasing hindering job demands and workload/conflict on burnout.

In addition, we tried to minimise common method variance by: (a) using different scale ranges; (b) asking two colleagues to participate in the study; and (c) correlating uniqueness between the same constructs measured among both dyad members (see Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Second, although the results of this study are consistent with a causal interpretation, the data are correlational in nature, and definitive conclusions about causality are unwarranted (Fernet, Gagné, & Austin, 2010). For example, it may well be possible that employees who decrease their hindering job demands experience a high workload and temporarily terminate or abandon certain tasks to adapt to this high workload (Wickens & Hollands, 2000). Furthermore, research has shown that job demands are related to burnout (Bakker et al., 2006) and decreasing hindering job demands may be a result of feeling mentally exhausted and disengaged from work. Longitudinal research is necessary to examine whether high job demands can be reduced by means of employees decreasing hindering job demands. There are some studies that show that crafting job resources, for example acquiring more opportunities for development or more autonomy, are related to higher levels of these job resources at a later time (Tims et al., 2013a), also in comparison with a control group (Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, & Peeters, 2012). It would be interesting to see future studies that examine how job

crafting, and in particular decreasing hindering job demands, evolves over time. Reciprocal patterns may also be examined in which colleagues willingly help each other out when one person needs a reduced workload by taking over and increasing their own workload temporarily.

A third and final limitation is that participants were instructed to ask a colleague with whom they interacted often at work to participate with them in the study. This may have resulted in the forming of dyads who have strong relationships with each other. Nevertheless, we found substantial support for our model (a negative relationship between actor decreasing hindering job demands and conflict), indicating that non-response bias was not a serious threat in our study. However, it would be advisable in future research that dyads be formed randomly by a third party (e.g. supervisor or HR manager).

In addition, the aim of the present study was to investigate how the job crafting of one person may be related to how a colleague experiences his/her work. Our reasoning was based on the idea that colleagues likely need to deal with the situation that the job crafter created. The job needs to be done—even when a person is not responsible for dealing with a customer, the customer is there and needs to be helped. As such, we were not interested in dyads who are highly (in)dependent on each other regarding the performance of their job tasks. For this reason, we collected data among all kinds of dyads and controlled for task dependence to rule out that it may have influenced the relationships we tested. The results highlight that actor decreasing hindering job demands relates to how colleagues experience their job regardless of the level of task dependence. It would be interesting for future research to study the role of task dependence in the relationship between actor decreasing hindering job demands and partner workload/conflict in more detail.

Practical Implications and Future Research

Although the findings of this research need to be further validated, some practical implications can be suggested. As depicted in this study, employees who take the initiative to change their hindering job demands may to some extent influence the job and well-being of others at work. Related to the other job crafting types, it was expected that decreasing hindering job demands would be most likely to be associated with negative outcomes, such as conflict and burnout. It is therefore important to intervene when individuals who are working in the same environment craft their hindering job demands individually. In these work situations, agreement among individuals should be achieved first before individuals can make adjustments in their job. In other words, team job crafting may be more likely to lead to successful outcomes than individual job crafting (see also Leana et al., 2009; Tims et al., 2013b). When individuals are able to share their work experiences and to collectively

exchange job demands and resources, conflict may be less likely to occur as well as a shift in workload. Providing this information to employees via workshops or training may help teams or departments to better achieve their shared and individual goals (cf. Van den Heuvel et al., 2012). An interesting avenue for future research would be to examine how increasing job resources and challenging job demands are related to colleague outcomes. Such a study could examine whether colleagues also benefit from the increased resources provided by others or whether some resources may be scarce and will not be available when others increase them (e.g. support).

Importantly, the aim of this study was to examine negative outcomes of a particular type of job crafting: decreasing hindering job demands. As previous studies have shown that this type of job crafting was associated negatively with self-reported performance and work engagement (Petrou et al., 2012; Tims et al., 2012) and the current study shows that it also negatively relates to the well-being of colleagues, it seems especially important to inform employees that this type of job crafting may not be as beneficial as might be expected. Although decreasing hindering job demands that stand in the way of optimal performance seems to be a useful strategy, it becomes more and more evident that it does not contribute to better well-being or a better job. Individuals may benefit more from increasing their job resources such that they are better able to overcome the hindering job demands (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005). Interventions could focus on these job crafting strategies and provide employees with knowledge on how to increase their resources and not on how they could decrease demands.

In addition, future studies should try to unravel what the goal is of decreasing hindering job demands. A possible explanation may be that employees who decrease their hindering job demands are already too overwhelmed by their job and see decreasing their demands as a final means to enable them to perform their core tasks sufficiently well. It could also be tested how decreasing hindering job demands relates to negative work behaviors, such as counterproductive work behaviors or withdrawal from work. While decreasing hindering job demands is not aimed at harming others but at changing the individual's job demands, they may share some antecedents or outcomes that can explain how this form of job crafting is different from the other forms of job crafting.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to address possible downsides of a specific job crafting form, decreasing hindering job demands, by focusing on the relationship between decreasing hindering job demands and colleague reports of workload, conflict, and burnout. Colleagues of individuals who decreased

their hindering job demands reported a higher workload, more conflict, and more burnout complaints. These findings indicate that employees need to be aware of the potential impact their crafting actions may have on the job and well-being of colleagues.

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