



# Weekly job crafting and leisure crafting: Implications for meaning-making and work engagement

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The present paper addresses two crafting strategies employees may display in different life domains in order to attain desired outcomes. On the one hand, job crafting is targeted at increasing social and structural job resources and challenging job demands. On the other hand, leisure crafting is the proactive pursuit of leisure activities targeted at goal setting, human connection, learning, and personal development. We hypothesized that job crafting relates positively to employee work engagement and meaning-making, especially when occupational role salience is high. Furthermore, we hypothesized that leisure crafting relates positively to meaning-making, especially when job crafting opportunities are low. Using a sample of 105 Dutch employees and a weekly survey with three measurements, we found support for most of our hypotheses. All job crafting dimensions related positively to work engagement when occupational role salience was high. Also, increasing structural resources related positively to meaning-making when occupational role salience was high. Leisure crafting related positively to meaning-making when job crafting opportunities were low. We discuss directions for future research on work and leisure, and suggest how employees and organizations may benefit by encouraging job and leisure crafting.

## Practitioner points

- Employees can proactively build their own work engagement using job crafting, especially when they view their work as a source of personal satisfaction and development.
- In workplaces where opportunities to craft are low, employees could focus on their leisure time as a source of meaning and self-reflection.
- Managers can empower and coach employees to proactively seek growth and self-fulfilment both at work and outside work, via job crafting and leisure crafting.
- Organizations and managers should encourage employees to flourish not only at work but also during leisure time, communicating that work and leisure are two life domains that can help and complement each other.

Over the past three decades, most modern organizations have switched from static jobs with fixed tasks to dynamic jobs with continuously changing tasks. Job crafting is a

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strategy employees use to reshape and improve their job conditions (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Specifically, by seeking job resources and job challenges, they shape more engaging jobs (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012). Additionally, job crafting has been theorized as a way to increase the meaning of one's work (Wrzesniewski, LoBuglio, Dutton, & Berg, 2013). Via job crafting, employees take small steps in increasing the meaningfulness of their work by changing the content or approach to work tasks and by seeking challenges or resources (Tims, Derks, & Bakker, 2016). We suggest that when employees craft their working conditions according to their needs, this purposeful behaviour will not only lead to a sense of meaningfulness, but also an increased tendency to actively make sense and reflect on what is happening in changing environments. These two elements are captured by the construct of meaning-making, which is known in the literature to be important for benefit finding and adaptivity (Park, 2010; Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012; Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2013). Meaning-making has been defined as '...the ability to integrate challenging or ambiguous situations into a framework of personal meaning using value-based reflection' (Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Schreurs, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2009, p. 509). It involves constructing a satisfying answer to the question of why a certain situation is happening or how an event can be beneficial.

We focus on meaning-making as opposed to meaningfulness because we believe that meaning-making is more relevant during changes at work (Sonenshein & Dholakia, 2012). In today's rapidly changing and dynamic work environments, employees are expected not only to perform, but also to continuously adapt to their changing surroundings (Griffin, Neal, & Parker, 2007). Job crafting is an ideal employee tool in that respect. This is because via crafting, employees enhance their personal resources and their sustainable work ability (Kira, van Eijnatten, & Balkin, 2010; Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, & Peeters, 2015). Sustainable work ability refers to employees' ability to deal with and to thrive within continuous work challenges. Meaning-making represents such a sustainable work ability because it combines the reflection process with its result, that is, meaningfulness achieved (Van den Heuvel *et al.*, 2009). Since one's conditions are continuously changing, meaningfulness can no longer be tied to static working conditions; rather, employees have to craft those conditions themselves. When employees use job crafting and instigate small changes at work, this may trigger increased attention and reflection regarding how those crafting efforts worked out and how the new situation is meaningful. This bears resemblance to the concept of self-monitoring, a form of reflection in which one observes one's current situation and consequently adjusts behaviours towards the preferred state (Bandura, 1991). Therefore, job crafting has been proposed and found to be a strategy that helps employees not only to achieve static outcomes but also to improve their personal resources and their ability to respond to work challenges (Van den Heuvel *et al.*, 2015).

However, individuals extract meaning and build their identity in multiple life domains (Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick, & Wissing, 2011) and not only through their jobs. Based on the meaning-maintenance model (Heine, Proulx, & Vohs, 2006), we propose that when employees are unable to craft their jobs in a meaningful manner, they may attach more importance to behaviours in other life domains, such as the leisure domain, as alternative triggers for meaning-making. In fact, literature has addressed leisure crafting as an alternative crafting strategy employees utilize in their free time to compensate for their unfulfilled needs at work (Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010). Petrou and Bakker (2016) defined the concept of leisure crafting as the proactive pursuit of leisure activities targeted at goal setting, human connection, learning, and personal development (e.g., leisure activities that entail challenging goals or offer opportunities for inspiring

personal relationships), and found that this behaviour is prominent among employees with a high-strain job.

In the present paper, we draw on the job crafting literature (Tims & Bakker, 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) and the compensation hypothesis within the work–leisure interface literature (Guest, 2002; Snir & Harpaz, 2002) in order to make a twofold proposition. First, because job crafting typically serves a motivation to grow, develop, and realize one’s potential through work, which is viewed as a way to actualize oneself, rather than just a job (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), we expect that crafting behaviours are more beneficial when the work domain plays a major role within one’s life. The first aim of our study is, thus, to address occupational role salience (i.e., the internalized belief and attitude that one’s work is an important means of self-definition and personal satisfaction; Amatea, Cross, Clark, & Bobby, 1986) as a moderator that strengthens the links of job crafting with work engagement and meaning-making. Second, we propose that leisure crafting (Petrou & Bakker, 2016) is used by employees to compensate for the fact that their work environment may not allow for job crafting. Our second aim is, thus, to empirically examine whether insufficient opportunities to craft one’s job can strengthen the link between leisure crafting and meaning-making (rather than work engagement, which primarily has to do with work factors and work behaviours).

In order to achieve our study aims, we conducted a weekly survey study that tests the moderating role of occupational role salience in the relationship between job crafting as predictor on the one hand, and work engagement and meaning-making as outcomes on the other hand. Additionally, we test the moderating role of job crafting opportunities in the relationship between leisure crafting and meaning-making (see Figure 1).

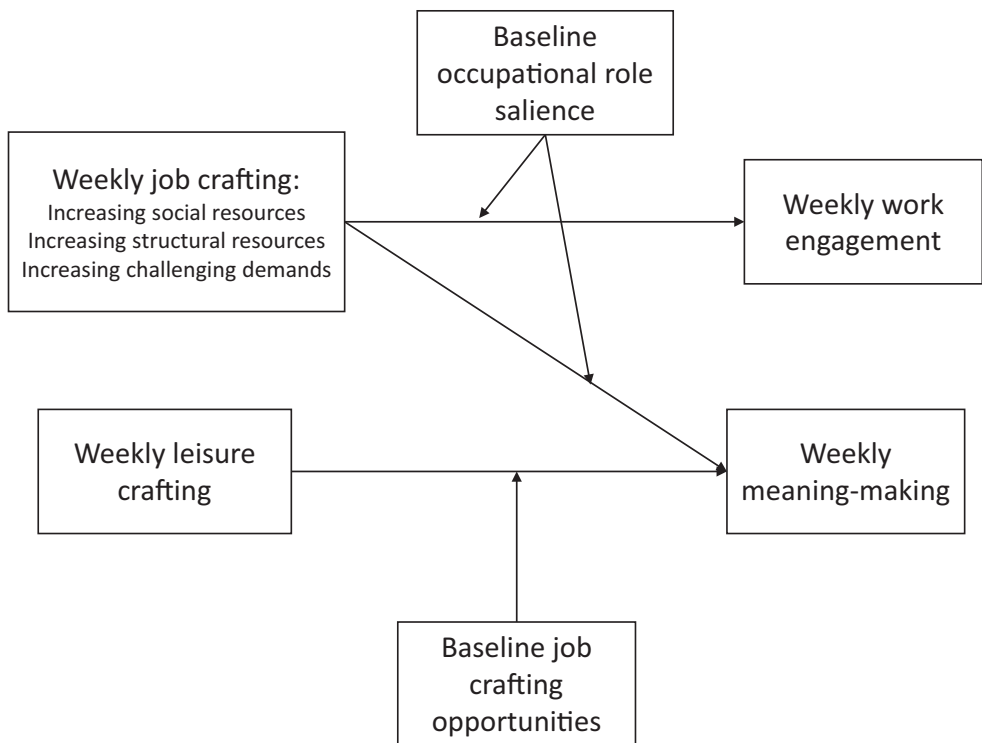


Figure 1. Our hypothesized model.

Existing literature suggests that employee job crafting and work engagement fluctuate weekly since the factors that determine them also vary from week to week (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Petrou & Demerouti, 2015). Furthermore, individuals typically participate in weekly leisure activities that occur less frequently than the days of a week, meaning that, on several days, no leisure activities are undertaken (Hubbard & Mannell, 2001). Therefore, leisure activities are more likely to evolve or fluctuate weekly, rather than daily. For these reasons, a weekly design is an ideal way to address our questions. Following existing practice within weekly studies (e.g., Bakker & Sanz-Vergel, 2013), we examine the contribution of weekly crafting strategies to weekly work engagement and weekly meaning-making over and above one's baseline (i.e., habitual) levels of work engagement and meaning-making. We note that while we view job crafting as a behaviour fluctuating over time, we think that opportunities to craft one's job are more stable, because they are linked to the nature or norms of a given job environment (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Therefore, while job crafting is measured at the week level, job crafting opportunities are measured at the baseline level.

### **Conceptualizing job crafting**

When researchers study job crafting as a phenomenon that unfolds daily or weekly, they typically employ an 'episodic' conceptualization of job crafting that sheds light on the *specific* behaviours that job crafters display on specific days or weeks. Therefore, we follow previous practice within daily and weekly research (e.g., Petrou & Demerouti, 2015; Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2014), and define job crafting as employee behaviours targeted at increasing one's social job resources (e.g., asking others at work for advice or feedback), increasing one's structural resources (e.g., increasing one's learning opportunities or autonomy at work), and increasing one's challenging job demands at work (e.g., asking for new tasks and responsibilities). The present paper forms part of a larger project that examines work and leisure as two domains that individuals can use in order to grow and develop. We have thus decided to focus on the 'expansive' (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p. 185) type of job crafting, namely increasing social and structural resources and increasing challenging demands and not on the fourth dimension of job crafting, namely decreasing one's hindrance demands (Tims *et al.*, 2012). The reason for doing so is that existing evidence so far suggests that by decreasing their demands, employees reduce the scope of their jobs which thwarts their growth and may limit their learning opportunities (Demerouti, Bakker, & Gevers, 2015).

We argue that by displaying three sets of job crafting behaviours, namely increasing social resources, increasing structural resources, and increasing challenging demands, job crafters enhance their work engagement as well as their ability to seek and experience meaning.

### *Work engagement*

There is extensive evidence confirming the links of all three expansive job crafting dimensions with work engagement. First, employees who seek social resources have been found to report higher levels of work engagement, due to gaining access to instrumental and emotional support from others and fulfilling their psychological need for relatedness (Tims *et al.*, 2012). Second, by creating enriched jobs and a motivating job environment, increasing structural resources has been found to relate to employee work engagement (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2013). Finally, by increasing feelings of competence and mastery

experiences and by creating a challenging environment that promotes growth and learning, increasing challenging job demands has been found to relate positively to employee work engagement (Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012). Therefore, displaying job crafting regularly can be expected to relate positively to employee work engagement (Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012).

### *Meaning-making*

The links of job crafting with meaning-making (rather than meaning in itself) are less prevalent and less often studied within the existing literature. Theoretical work by Wrzesniewski, Dutton, and Debebe (2003) as well as Wrzesniewski *et al.* (2013) describes how job crafting has potential links with creating meaning around one's job. For instance, imagine a hospital cleaner who starts interacting with families of patients, thereby construing the meaning of his job as more than simply cleaning (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p. 185). By seeking contacts with people that he normally does not interact with, this cleaner enhances his ability to experience a sense of meaningfulness. Employees often use cues, input, or information from others at work in order to craft a new or altered meaning about their work (Wrzesniewski *et al.*, 2003). Similarly, employees may use crafting in order to create a more autonomous job that is aligned with their needs and preferences (Tims & Bakker, 2010), or they seek challenges in order to create a more stimulating job (Tims *et al.*, 2012). By aligning the job to one's needs and values or creating tasks that are more intrinsically motivating for employees, job crafters experience their work activities in a way that is personally meaningful to them (Wrzesniewski *et al.*, 2013) and have indeed been found to report higher meaningfulness at work (Tims *et al.*, 2016). Using job crafting, employees create desired, new experiences for themselves, which are likely to trigger a reflection process based on the changes made via crafting behaviour. Meaning-making allows individuals to reflect on the meaning of work experiences in the light of personal values and life goals (Van den Heuvel *et al.*, 2009). We expect that when employees are more involved in crafting their jobs, as a result, they will be more present and aware of their surroundings. Therefore, they will be more involved in conscious reflection on how the work activities that they crafted contribute to a sense of personal meaning. We address the links of job crafting with the ability to create meaning rather than meaningfulness in itself (Van den Heuvel *et al.*, 2009). This is because the action of crafting may not only relate to the actual resources that are esteemed by employees (e.g., meaning) but also to the sustainable ability of employees to continuously seek and experience such resources (Kira *et al.*, 2010). Based on the above, we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 1:* Job crafting behaviours relate positively to work engagement (1a) and meaning-making (1b).

### **Occupational role salience as a moderator**

Employees with high occupational role salience treat their work as an important means of self-definition and personal satisfaction (Amatea *et al.*, 1986). Individuals whose work is central in their life tend to be characterized by work ethic endorsement, that is, for them, work is desirable and rewarding in its own right and not simply because of the extrinsic rewards that work may bring (Hirschfeld & Feild, 2000). Furthermore, such individuals are more likely to invest time and energy into the work domain (Bal & Kooij, 2011) and even

display extra-role efforts at work (Diefendorff, Brown, Kamin, & Lord, 2002). This means that job crafting activities are indicative of commitment and strong action readiness, which makes it more likely that they are displayed systematically and, thus, lead to the desired end states, such as work engagement.

Similarly, when the work domain is central to individuals, they treat it as a primary source of meaning and identity (e.g., for a review, see Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). The more important work is for employees, the more likely it is that they will spend most of their time on activities within the work domain (Stryker & Serpe, 1994) and that they will derive purpose from their jobs (Harpaz & Snir, 2003). It can, thus, be suggested that these employees will use cues and information from the work environment (i.e., their most important and salient life domain) in order to build meaning around their work and around themselves (Wrzesniewski *et al.*, 2003). In other words, for employees with high work centrality, work should be the primary source and trigger of self-reflection.

All in all, our reasoning is in agreement with the job characteristics model (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Hackman & Oldham, 1975), suggesting that a resourceful job (i.e., involving autonomy, feedback, task significance, task identity, and skill variety) motivates employees, especially the ones who want to grow through their work. Therefore, employees with resourceful jobs or jobs that are high in scope (which is the targeted outcome of job crafting) are found to be happier (Spector, 1985) and experience more meaningfulness (Johns, Xie, & Fang, 1992), especially if they find it important to have a job that helps them to grow. We can, thus, expect that when the occupational role is more salient to employees, they will engage in job crafting in order to create such jobs that will make them enthusiastic (i.e., work engagement) and capable of seeking and finding meaning (i.e., meaning-making).

*Hypothesis 2:* Occupational role salience moderates the links between job crafting and work engagement (2a) and between job crafting and meaning-making (2b). The relationships are stronger when occupational role salience is high.

### **The compensating role of leisure crafting**

Opportunities to craft one's job are an obvious and important factor fostering job crafting behaviours (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). If employees do not experience the necessary space provided by others or by objective job characteristics at work, they cannot engage in the flexible job crafting practices that improve their jobs. However, not all jobs provide opportunities for job crafting. For instance, qualitative research has revealed that for some jobs, the average yearly episodes of major job crafting incidents reported by participants did not exceed 1–2 per year (Lyons, 2008) or three throughout one's career (Berg *et al.*, 2010). How are people then supposed to engage in autonomous and self-determined actions that provide access to desired outcomes, such as a meaningful life?

According to self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), individuals are determined to satisfy their innate psychological needs and when this is not possible in one domain (e.g., work), they may attempt to achieve this within another domain (e.g., leisure; Vallerand, 2000). Similarly, the meaning-maintenance model (Heine *et al.*, 2006) postulates that individuals have a need to experience a meaningful life and when this need for meaning is threatened in one life domain, they are likely to address it in another life domain.

The premises of the meaning-maintenance model have been explored both qualitatively and quantitatively in relation to the interplay between work and leisure. For example, when individuals have a job that does not fulfil their ambitions and passions or is incongruent with their values, they are likely to use leisure activities in a more consistent manner and as a compensating mechanism (Berg *et al.*, 2010; Vogel, Rodell, & Lynch, 2016). Similarly, when the resources of a job (e.g., in terms of tasks, relations, and knowledge) are depleted, employees are most likely unable to address their unmet needs within their job (e.g., via job crafting); therefore, they can be expected to compensate for these needs via leisure activity (Grant, 2012). In other words, when a job provides very low opportunities for crafting (e.g., possibilities to reshape one's task, to seek additional contact with others, or to learn), employees may attach more importance to behaviours in alternative life domains (e.g., leisure crafting) and they may see them in a different light. Consequently, leisure crafting is likely to be displayed more consistently as a potential pathway to seeking and experiencing meaning.

In fact, leisure activity has been argued and repeatedly found to be a significant identity-shaping pillar within people's lives. It has the potential to guide individuals' understanding of who they are and what matters for them, as well as what the meaning of their life is (Newman, Tay, & Diener, 2014). Therefore, we expect that leisure crafting helps employees to create meaning around their lives and that this is even more the case when they lack the opportunities to do this at their work. Hence, we formulate our last two hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 3:* Leisure crafting relates positively to meaning-making.

*Hypothesis 4:* Job crafting opportunities moderate the relationship between leisure crafting and meaning-making. The relationship is stronger when job crafting opportunities are low.

## Method

### **Participants and procedures**

Respondents were 105 Dutch employees within different occupational sectors recruited with network sampling by research assistants (Demerouti & Rispens, 2014). Out of 220 employees who were contacted, 119 employees completed all three surveys (response rate = 54%). After excluding 14 participants who worked <2 days per week, 105 respondents (44 men and 61 women) formed the final sample for the analyses. The mean age of the participants was 40.7 years ( $SD = 13.7$ ). Men worked a mean of 37.1 hr ( $SD = 4.7$ ) per week, while women worked a mean of 30.1 hr ( $SD = 8.1$ ) per week, which corresponds well to the average working hours of the Dutch population across gender (Statistics Netherlands, 2015). The occupational sectors included health care (19%), industry (14%), education (13%), business (7%), government (7%), and commerce (6%); the other participants were evenly distributed across sectors such as media, ICT, or other services.

Upon agreement, participants received an e-mail invitation with the link to an online survey and information introducing the purpose of the research and ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation. Since some participants did not work every day, the e-mail was sent every Wednesday and asked respondents to fill it in on the last working day of their week – whichever that was. Reminders were sent to participants who did not fill in the survey every Friday and at the weekend. At week 1, respondents completed a survey

containing demographics and the baseline versions of work engagement, meaning-making, work role salience, and job crafting opportunities (i.e., baseline survey) as well as a survey containing the weekly versions of job crafting, leisure crafting, work engagement and meaning-making (i.e., weekly survey). At weeks 2 and 3, they only completed the weekly survey.

*Baseline work engagement* was measured with the 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006) including three subscales, namely vigour (e.g., 'At my work, I feel bursting with energy'), dedication (e.g., 'I am enthusiastic about my job'), and absorption (e.g., 'I am immersed in my work'). Participants could respond to these statements using an answering scale ranging from 0 = never to 6 = always. For the analyses, we used a composite score of all nine items (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .95$ ), since according to previous validation research (Schaufeli et al., 2006), the one-factor solution fits the data well.

*Baseline meaning-making* was measured with five items from the meaning-making scale by Van den Heuvel et al. (2013). Items (e.g., 'I have an understanding of what makes my life meaningful';  $\alpha = .72$ ) were rated on a scale ranging from 1 = totally disagree to 6 = totally agree.

*Baseline occupational role salience* was measured with the 5-item 'occupational reward role' subscale from Amatea et al.'s (1986) Life Role Salience Scales. All items (e.g., 'It is important to me to feel successful in my work') were rated on a scale ranging from 1 = totally disagree to 5 = totally agree ( $\alpha = .66$ ).

*Baseline job crafting opportunities* were measured with a 7-item self-constructed scale (see Appendix): First, we generated eight items based on existing job crafting instruments (e.g., Tims et al., 2012). Preliminary analyses showed that although the items largely loaded on one factor, one item ('If I want, I can ask others for help at my work'.) was responsible for the emergence of a second factor. After removing this item, SPSS (version 21; IBM Corp, 2012) factor analysis with both varimax and direct oblimin rotation clearly revealed one factor (i.e., based on both the eigenvalues and the scree plot). Confirmatory factor analysis with AMOS confirmed that a one-factor solution fit the data well;  $\chi^2 = 26.86$ ,  $df = 14$ ,  $p < .05$ , CFI = .94, TLI = .92, GFI = .93, SRMR = .06. The alpha for the retained seven items was .83 and all factor loadings ranged between .48 and .89.

### **Weekly survey**

For the weekly survey, all items were adjusted to refer to the week level. They followed the sentence 'During the previous week. . .' so as to avoid repetition.

*Weekly job crafting* was measured with Tims et al.'s (2012) job crafting subscales. They comprised five items for increasing social resources (e.g., 'I asked my colleagues for advice';  $\alpha$  ranged from .84 to .89), 5 items for increasing structural resources (e.g., 'I tried to develop my capabilities';  $\alpha$  ranged from .77 to .79), and five items for increasing challenging demands (e.g., 'I took on extra tasks even though I did not receive extra salary for them';  $\alpha$  ranged from .79 to .84); the answering scale ranged from 1 = never to 5 = very often.

*Week-level leisure crafting* was measured with Petrou and Bakker's (2016) leisure crafting weekly questionnaire (e.g., 'I have tried to build relationships through leisure activities';  $\alpha$  ranged from .95 to .97); the answering scale ranged from 1 = never to 5 = very often.

*Weekly work engagement* was measured with six items of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli et al., 2006; see also, Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2009; for a



similar approach). We included two items for vigour (e.g., 'I felt strong and vigorous while working'), two items for dedication (e.g., 'I was enthusiastic about my work'), and two items for absorption (e.g., 'I was completely immersed in my work'). Answering categories ranged from 0 = never to 6 = always. Following Schaufeli *et al.* (2006), we computed an overall work engagement index for each of the 3 weeks. This decision was supported by item-level principal axis factoring analyses of our data for each of the three occasions that the present study took place, which resulted in one engagement factor that explained 67%, 73%, and 72% of the variance in the 3 weeks, respectively. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values ranged from .90 to .93 across the 3 weeks.

*Weekly meaning-making* was measured with three items from Van den Heuvel *et al.* (2013). Items (e.g., 'I actively took the time to reflect on events that happened in my life';  $\alpha$  ranged from .71 to .86) were rated on a scale ranging from 1 = totally disagree to 6 = totally agree.

### **Analytical approach**

Our data entail a multilevel structure because weekly measurements are nested within individuals; therefore, MLwiN was used to conduct multilevel regression analyses. Baseline variables represent between-level (between-persons) variables, while weekly variables represent within-level (within-persons) variables. The intraclass correlation was computed for the two dependent variables (i.e., 77% for weekly work engagement and 57% for weekly meaning-making) revealing that sufficient variance was left to be explained by within-person fluctuations. Preliminary analyses revealed that a two-level null model predicting weekly work engagement fit the data better than a one-level model;  $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 207.77, p < .001$ , and a two-level null model predicting meaning-making fit the data better than a one-level model;  $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 95.81, p < .001$ ; justifying the use of multilevel analysis.

Between-level independent variables were grand-mean centred, and within-level independent variables were group-mean centred (Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen, & Zapf, 2010). Because participants who work less have fewer chances to perform job crafting and more chances to perform leisure crafting, we controlled for weekly working hours in all analyses. Furthermore, we controlled for the effects of the baseline version of work engagement and meaning-making to the weekly versions of the dependent variables (i.e., meaning-making and work engagement, respectively). To test our hypotheses, we conducted two multilevel regression analyses. The first regression analysis (predicting weekly work engagement) was built on the basis of four nested models comprising successively the intercept (Model 0), the control variables (Model 1), the three weekly job crafting dimensions (Model 2), and baseline occupational role salience (Model 3). Consequently, each interaction term was entered in the model separately, namely weekly increasing social resources by baseline occupational role salience (Model 4a), increasing structural resources by occupational role salience (Model 4b), and increasing challenging demands by occupational role salience (Model 4c). This is in line with previous interaction analysis practices (Bolino, Hsiung, Harvey, & LePine, 2015) that deal with small sample sizes, especially in the case of multiple and conceptually interrelated interaction terms. Similarly, the second regression analysis predicting weekly meaning-making was built on the basis of four models comprising successively the intercept (Model 0), control variables (Model 1), the three weekly job crafting dimensions as well as weekly leisure crafting (Model 2), baseline occupational role salience and baseline job crafting opportunities (Model 3), weekly increasing social resources by baseline occupational role salience

(Model 4a), increasing structural resources by occupational role salience (Model 4b), increasing challenging demands by occupational role salience (Model 4c), and weekly leisure crafting by baseline job crafting opportunities (Model 4d).

## Results

### Testing our hypothesized models

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for all study variables. Tables 2 and 3 present the findings of the regression analyses. Due to space constraints, only Model 2 and Model 4 are shown per regression analysis; results for all other models are available upon request.

We expected job crafting to relate positively to both work engagement (Hypothesis 1a) and meaning-making (Hypothesis 1b). As can be seen in Tables 2 and 3, out of the three job crafting behaviours, only weekly increasing challenging demands related positively to weekly work engagement, while only increasing structural resources related positively to weekly meaning-making. These two findings provide partial support to Hypothesis 1a and Hypothesis 1b, respectively.

We additionally predicted that job crafting would be related to work engagement (Hypothesis 2a) and to meaning-making (Hypothesis 2b) particularly when occupational role salience was high. All three interaction terms between job crafting and occupational role salience related significantly to weekly work engagement. Simple slope tests revealed that weekly increasing social resources was positively related to work engagement when occupational role salience was 1 *SD* above the mean (estimate = .25, *SE* = 0.12, *p* < .05), but not when it was 1 *SD* below the mean (estimate = -.17, *SE* = 0.13, *p* = .21). Similarly, increasing structural resources was positively related to work engagement when occupational role salience was 1 *SD* above the mean (estimate = .55, *SE* = 0.13, *p* < .001), but not when it was 1 *SD* below the mean (estimate = -.17, *SE* = 0.11, *p* = .11). Finally, increasing challenging demands was positively related to work engagement when occupational role salience was 1 *SD* above the mean (estimate = .42, *SE* = 0.10, *p* < .001), but not when it was 1 *SD* below the mean (estimate = .02, *SE* = 0.11, *p* = .89). Figures 2–4 present all plotted interactions. Taken together, these findings fully support Hypothesis 2a.

Out of the three interaction terms between job crafting and occupational role salience, the one for increasing structural resources related significantly to weekly meaning-making (see Table 2). Specifically, simple slope tests revealed that weekly increasing structural resources was positively related to weekly meaning-making when occupational role salience was 1 *SD* above the mean (estimate = .58, *SE* = 0.16, *p* < .001), but not when it was 1 *SD* below the mean (estimate = .14, *SE* = 0.13, *p* = .30; see Figure 5). These findings provide only partial support to Hypothesis 2b.

Finally, we expected leisure crafting to relate positively to meaning-making (Hypothesis 3) particularly when job crafting opportunities are low (Hypothesis 4). As predicted, leisure crafting related positively to meaning-making. In addition, the interaction term between weekly leisure crafting and baseline job crafting opportunities negatively related to weekly meaning-making (see Table 3). Simple slope tests revealed that although the regression slope of this link was significant and positive when job crafting opportunities were 1 *SD* above the mean (estimate = .21, *SE* = 0.10, *p* < .05), the slope was steeper when job crafting opportunities were 1 *SD* below the mean (estimate = .49, *SE* = 0.10, *p* < .001; see Figure 6). These findings provide support for Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4.

**Table 1.** Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for the study variables ( $N = 105$  employees and  $N = 315$  occasions)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Working hours	33.02	7.67	—									
Baseline variables												
2. Work engagement	4.27	1.12	.21*	—								
3. Meaning-making	4.71	0.69	-.11	.33**	—							
4. Occupational role salience	3.15	0.62	.16	.09	-.04	—						
5. Job crafting opportunities	2.70	0.70	.12	.39**	.15	.14	—					
Weekly variables												
6. Increasing social resources	2.01	0.83	.08	.28**	.14	.03	.30**	—				
7. Increasing structural resources	3.07	0.77	.17	.57**	.20*	.18	.54**	.51**	—			
8. Increasing challenging demands	2.27	0.90	.13	.45**	.19	.22*	.40**	.61**	.59**	—		
9. Leisure crafting	2.40	1.07	-.14	.15	.32**	.12	.16	.21*	.22*	.37**	—	
10. Work engagement	3.90	1.09	.14	.82**	.35**	.21*	.34**	.32**	.62**	.50**	.08	—
11. Meaning-making	4.10	1.00	-.04	.20*	.53**	.01	.19	.24*	.29**	.16	.27**	.10

Note. Before computing correlations, all weekly variables were aggregated per respondent (i.e., they were averaged over the 3 weeks). \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 2.** Multilevel estimates for models with weekly work engagement as dependent variable ( $N = 105$  employees and  $N = 315$  occasions)

Model variables	M2		M4a		M4b		M4c	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
Intercept	3.86**	0.05	3.86**	0.05	3.86**	0.05	3.86**	0.05
Working hours	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01
Baseline work engagement	0.79**	0.05	0.79**	0.05	0.79**	0.05	0.79**	0.05
Weekly increasing social resources	0.06	0.09	0.04	0.09	0.04	0.09	0.05	0.09
Weekly increasing structural resources	0.13	0.09	0.14	0.09	0.19*	0.09	0.14	0.09
Weekly increasing challenging demands	0.25**	0.09	0.24**	0.09	0.22**	0.08	0.22*	0.09
Baseline occupational role salience			0.16	0.08	0.16	0.08	0.16	0.08
Weekly increasing social resources × baseline occupational role salience			0.34*	0.15				
Weekly increasing structural resources × baseline occupational role salience					0.59**	0.13		
Weekly increasing challenging demands × baseline occupational role salience							0.33**	0.11
$-2 \times \log$		599.17		590.21		576.69		586.97
$\Delta -2 \times \log$		18.23**		5.38*		18.90**		8.62*
df		3		1		1		1
		$R^2$		$R^2$		$R^2$		$R^2$
Within-person variance		8%		11%		16%		12%
Between-person variance		81%		82%		81%		82%

Note. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

Additionally, we reran both regression analyses with all interaction terms in the same model (i.e., the last model of each regression analysis comprised all interaction effects simultaneously). In these additional analyses, three interaction effects were rendered non-significant. The effects that stayed significant included the interaction effect of increasing structural resources and occupational role salience on work engagement ( $B = 0.50$ ,  $SE = 0.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the interaction effect of leisure crafting and job crafting opportunities on meaning-making ( $B = -0.19$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

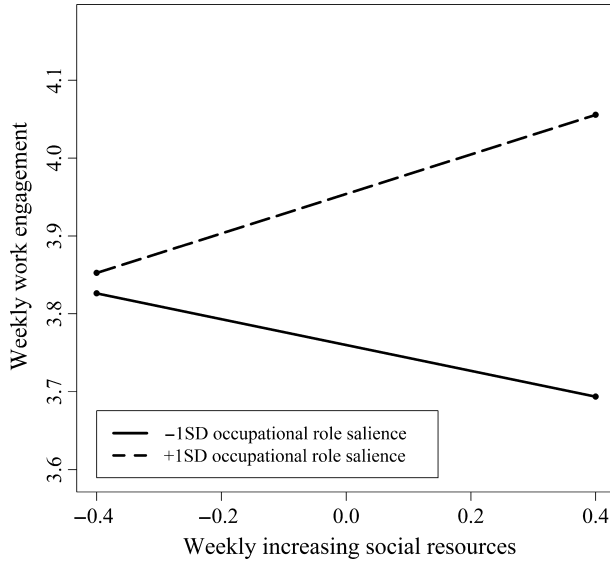
### Testing for alternative models

Although discussing alternative models is not the primary aim of this paper, we ran additional analyses to test for additional possibilities accounted for by our data. First, through one multilevel regression analysis, we tested weekly job crafting as the predictor

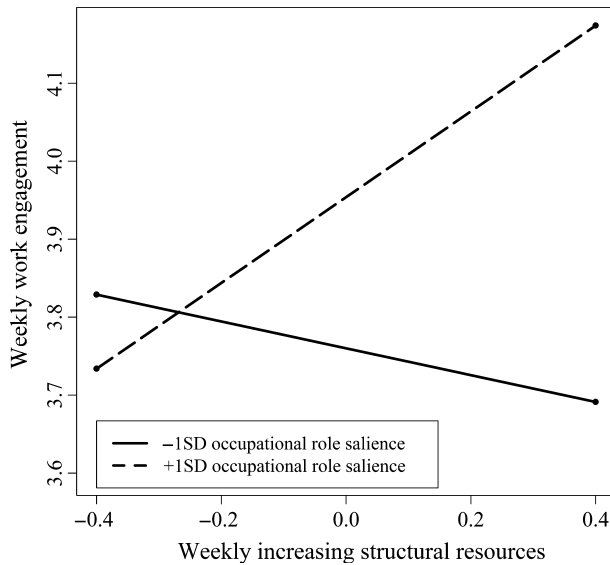
**Table 3.** Multilevel estimates for models with weekly meaning-making as dependent variable ( $N = 105$  employees and  $N = 315$  occasions)

Model variables	M2		M4a		M4b		M4c		M4d	
	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B	B	SE B
Intercept	4.04**	0.07	4.04**	0.06	4.04**	0.06	4.04**	0.06	4.04**	0.06
Working hours	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01
Baseline meaning-making	0.77**	0.10	0.73**	0.09	0.73**	0.09	0.73**	0.09	0.73**	0.09
Weekly increasing social resources	-0.03	0.11	-0.04	0.11	-0.04	0.11	-0.04	0.11	-0.01	0.11
Weekly increasing structural resources	0.33**	0.11	0.33**	0.11	0.36**	0.11	0.33**	0.11	0.30**	0.11
Weekly increasing challenging demands	0.07	0.10	0.06	0.10	0.05	0.10	0.05	0.10	0.04	0.10
Weekly leisure crafting	0.34**	0.07	0.33**	0.07	0.34**	0.07	0.33**	0.07	0.35**	0.07
Baseline occupational role salience			0.12	0.11	0.12	0.11	0.12	0.11	0.12	0.11
Baseline job crafting opportunities			0.26**	0.09	0.26**	0.09	0.26**	0.09	0.26**	0.09
Weekly increasing social resources × baseline occupational role salience			0.30	0.18						
Weekly increasing social resources × baseline occupational role salience					0.36*	0.16				
Weekly increasing structural resources × baseline occupational role salience							0.21	0.14		
Weekly increasing challenging demands × baseline occupational role salience										
Weekly leisure crafting × baseline job crafting opportunities									-0.20*	0.09
-2 × log $\Delta$	725.66	713.05	713.05	711.13	711.13	713.54	713.54	711.45	711.45	711.45
-2 × log $\Delta$	36.55**	2.96*	2.96*	4.87*	4.87*	2.46	2.46	4.55*	4.55*	4.55*
df	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Within-person variance	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>
Between-person variance	16%	17%	17%	18%	18%	17%	17%	18%	18%	18%
	43%	50%	50%	49%	49%	50%	50%	49%	49%	49%

Note. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .



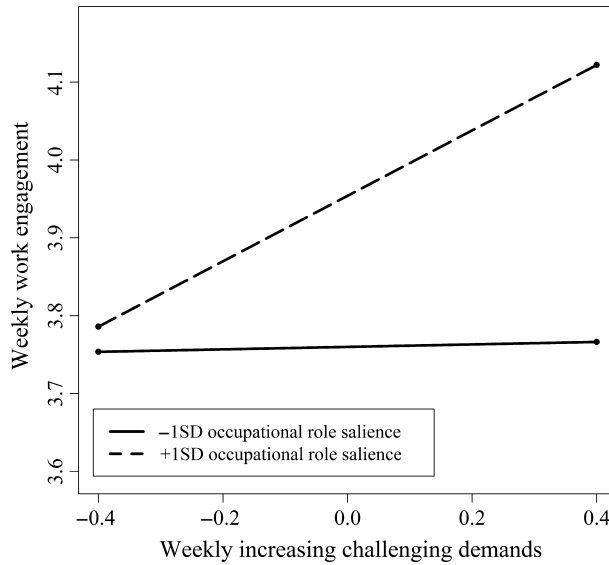
**Figure 2.** The link between weekly increasing social resources and weekly work engagement moderated by baseline occupational role salience.



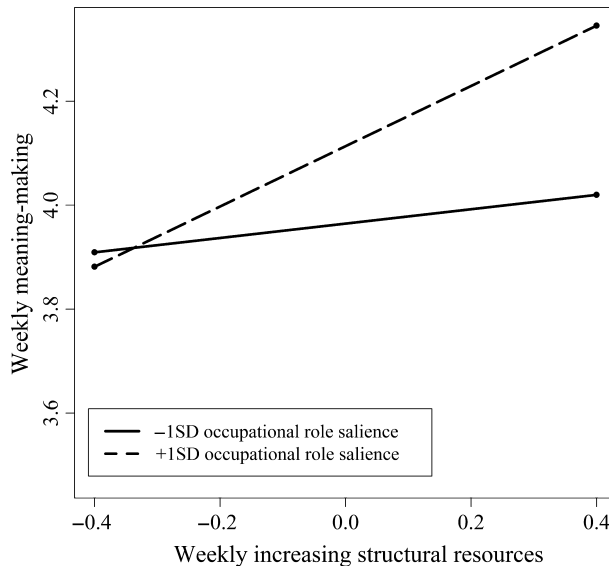
**Figure 3.** The link between weekly increasing structural resources and weekly work engagement moderated by baseline occupational role salience.

of weekly leisure crafting. The results showed that leisure crafting was not predicted significantly by any of the three crafting variables, namely, increasing social resources ( $B = 0.19, SE = 0.10, p = .06$ ), increasing structural resources ( $B = 0.08, SE = 0.10, p = .40$ ), and increasing challenging demands ( $B = 0.12, SE = 0.10, p = .22$ ).

Second, we tested the possibility of meaning-making being the mediator between job crafting and leisure crafting, on the one hand, and work engagement on the other hand.

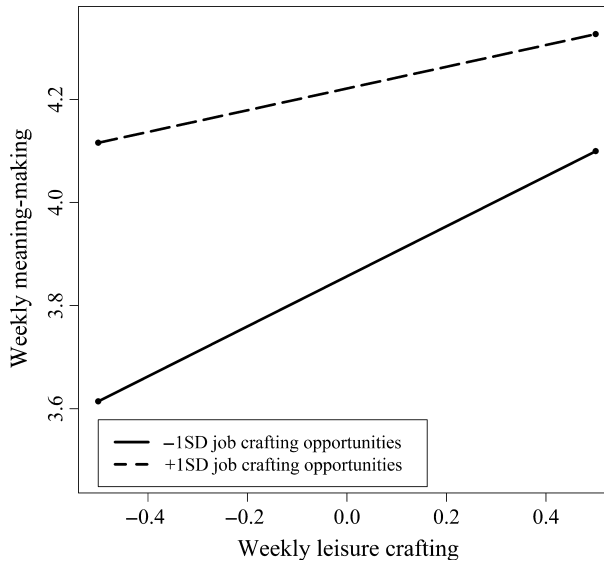


**Figure 4.** The link between weekly increasing challenging demands and weekly work engagement moderated by baseline occupational role salience.



**Figure 5.** The link between weekly increasing structural resources and weekly meaning-making moderated by baseline occupational role salience.

Although weekly meaning-making positively related to work engagement in one initial regression analysis ( $B = 0.14$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $p < .05$ ), the effect became non-significant when job crafting and leisure crafting were entered as predictors in the model. Furthermore, Monte Carlo analyses revealed no significant indirect effects of job/leisure crafting on work engagement via meaning-making. In other words, the confidence intervals for the indirect effects (namely, of increasing social resources, increasing



**Figure 6.** The link between weekly leisure crafting and weekly meaning-making moderated by baseline job crafting opportunities.

structural resources, increasing challenging demands, and leisure crafting) all included zero.

Finally, we tested whether the statistical interactions between weekly job crafting and weekly leisure crafting related to weekly work engagement and meaning-making. Two out of the six tested interaction effects were found to be significant, namely the interaction between leisure crafting and increasing social resources on work engagement ( $B = 0.53$ ,  $SE = 0.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and the interaction between leisure crafting and increasing challenges on work engagement ( $B = 0.38$ ,  $SE = 0.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Simple slope tests revealed that the slope of the link between increasing social resources and work engagement was positive and significant when leisure crafting was 1 *SD* above the mean (estimate =  $.30$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and non-significant when leisure crafting was 1 *SD* below the mean (estimate =  $-.21$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ ,  $p = .12$ ). Furthermore, the slope of the link between increasing challenging demands and work engagement was positive and significant when leisure crafting was 1 *SD* above the mean (estimate =  $.42$ ,  $SE = 0.12$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and non-significant when leisure crafting was 1 *SD* below the mean (estimate =  $.05$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ ,  $p = .70$ ). When we reran analyses with all the interaction terms in the same regression step, the only effect that remained significant was for the interaction between increasing social job resources and leisure crafting.

## Discussion

In the present study, we expected that expansion-oriented job crafting relates positively to both work engagement and meaning-making, especially when occupational role salience is high. In addition, we argued that leisure crafting relates positively to meaning-making, especially when job crafting opportunities are low. Our findings indeed revealed that job crafting relates positively to work engagement particularly when occupational role salience is high. Increasing structural resources was the only job crafting dimension



that, additionally, related positively to meaning-making, again, particularly when occupational role salience was high. Finally, as hypothesized, leisure crafting related positively to meaning-making, particularly when employees reported limited opportunities to engage in job crafting, suggesting that they compensate with leisure activities for the crafting behaviours they cannot display at work.

### **Theoretical contributions**

Our first theoretical contribution is that we refine the links between job crafting and work engagement/meaning previously found via daily and weekly studies (Petrou *et al.*, 2012; Tims *et al.*, 2016), by addressing occupational role salience as an important moderator. Specifically, we have shown that job crafting is linked to employee work engagement and meaning-making when employees view their work as an important pillar within their life. This is because these employees are more likely to use work activities in order to experience satisfaction or self-esteem, so they exert work efforts in a systematic and persistent manner (Littman-Ovadia & Lavy, 2016). Therefore, their job crafting behaviours are more persistent and guided by action readiness and, thereby, more likely to lead to the desired outcomes. This is in line with previous work according to which employees who perceive work as being central in their life, experience job autonomy, and value autonomous work methods (Mannheim & Dubin, 1986). Thus, they are more likely to utilize the job domain or job activities in order to build an engaging work environment (Bal & Kooij, 2011) and to extract meaning (Van Zyl, Deacon, & Rothmann, 2010). Interestingly, our results suggest that none of the links of job crafting with work engagement or meaning-making was significant when occupational role salience was low. Although we did not formulate explicit hypotheses for low levels of occupational role salience, these non-significant effects could be explained by the fact that employees who do not consider work important may display job crafting in unsystematic manner or for extrinsic rather than intrinsic reasons. Therefore, they are unable to benefit from the potential of job crafting.

Our second contribution is that we address meaning-making as an important correlate of crafting strategies, either at work or during leisure time. In other words, employees who engage in flexible crafting behaviours are likely to be also cognitively flexible and, thus, experience meaning in their life (Kira *et al.*, 2010; Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2010). This is in agreement with previous theoretical and empirical work showing that different life domains (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002) such as work (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012) and leisure (Iwasaki, 2007) are sources of meaning in people's life. By making it more salient to people why their life matters and what they achieve through their daily activities, both work and leisure help people to seek, create, and experience a meaningful life.

Finally, our third theoretical contribution is that we address leisure crafting as a strategy that may compensate for insufficient job crafting opportunities rather than a strategy that is simply enacted parallel to job crafting (Berg *et al.*, 2010; Vogel *et al.*, 2016). In that way, our study offers empirical support to the meaning-maintenance model (Heine *et al.*, 2006). Our results, thus, suggest that although both life domains (i.e., work and leisure) are able to stimulate meaning-making, their success and ability to do so is dependent on whether employees regard work important (i.e., occupational role salience) and whether they have opportunities to craft their jobs. When employees cannot craft their jobs, it seems that their leisure crafting strategies have even more potential to contribute to meaning-making.

Interestingly, increasing structural resources was the only job crafting dimension that related positively to meaning-making, particularly when occupational role salience was high. In an organizational intervention among employees who were asked to come up with self-set job crafting goals, it was found that seeking resources increased their perception of developmental opportunities (Van den Heuvel *et al.*, 2015). In other words, employees who increase their structural resources conduct their work in an autonomous way and realize their potential (Tims *et al.*, 2012, 2013). Naturally, expressing oneself freely is what guides meaning in life, because under that condition people can align their life according to their values (Ryan, Huta, & Deci, 2008). Although social interactions tend to be a primary source of meaning (Kahn, 2007), the link between crafting social resources and meaning-making was not revealed by our study. Additional future research is necessary to examine this further. One cautious interpretation could be that social interactions can sometimes be used by people simply in order to ventilate their feelings (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). Although that could provide a short-lived feeling of pleasure or satisfy feelings of relatedness, this is unlikely to lead to self-awareness. Increasing challenging demands was also unrelated to meaning-making. Increasing challenges can be perceived as a more extraverted, action-focused process; meaning-making on the other hand is related to a more introverted, reflection-focused activity. Perhaps it could be that while new job challenges can contribute to immediate feelings of work engagement (e.g., Demerouti, Bakker, & Halbesleben, 2015; Petrou *et al.*, 2012) via mastery experiences and competence, these challenges may need a longer time period to be incorporated within one's self-image.

### **Compensation versus spillover perspective**

Our expectation and finding around the moderating effect of job crafting opportunities seem to comply with the compensation hypothesis within the work–leisure domain (Guest, 2002), suggesting that people pursue in one domain what they cannot find in another domain. However, work and leisure may interfere with each other in more diverse ways. For instance, according to the spillover hypothesis, different life domains may directly influence each other or they may display similar patterns of activities (Guest, 2002; Kabanoff & O'Brien, 1980). Although such a perspective is not clearly or consistently confirmed by our findings, there are certain reasons as to why spillover possibilities cannot be excluded and compensation is not the only perspective applying to our findings. First of all, the link between leisure crafting and meaning-making was positive and stronger for low job crafting opportunities and again positive but weaker for high levels of job crafting opportunities. While the former represents most likely a compensation mechanism, the latter could reflect spillover processes or the phenomenon of work–self facilitation (i.e., one's work improves one's private life, which translates into increased energy and motivation; Demerouti, 2012). In that sense, the work and the non-work domain may help and strengthen each other and together they help the individual to perform better in any of the two domains (Hill, 2005). Second, and in a similar vein, our additional analyses revealed that job crafting relates to work engagement also when leisure crafting is high, suggesting that work and leisure may have joint effects in boosting one's work motivation. Taken together, our findings are in line with existing literature (Lambert, 1990; Petrou & Bakker, 2016), suggesting that research should not treat different perspectives on work–life interface as mutually exclusive since such different phenomena can be equally true.

### **Limitations and future research**

Our study is not without limitations. First, self-report may have led to common method bias, although self-report is appropriate when people report private events (Conway & Lance, 2010), such as meaning-making and work engagement. Second, our analytical method cannot infer causality or exclude alternative interpretations of our results (e.g., work engagement and meaning-making as predictors of crafting). Third, our model does not address alternative and perhaps more complex representations of the work–leisure interface (e.g., positive ‘spillover’ phenomena from the leisure domain to the work domain) for which a different and more extensive list of variables should have been measured. Furthermore, our Dutch version for the occupational role salience measure exhibited a reliability that was somewhat below satisfactory standards, which should be explored further by additional validation research with larger samples. Finally, our sample size can be viewed as marginal based on existing standards within multilevel diary designs (Ohly *et al.*, 2010). We can only speculate that this could explain why some of our interaction effects were rendered non-significant when tested simultaneously in the analyses. Future research with larger sample sizes should replicate our study and explore this further.

Additionally, future research could perhaps try to uncover alternative relationships within the tested models, such as reciprocal links between crafting strategies and meaning-making. Another possibility would be to address occupational role salience as a predictor (rather than a moderator) and test, for instance, whether employees with high occupational role salience engage in higher job crafting or lower leisure crafting. Furthermore, future research could refine our research model by addressing additional concepts. One way to do this would be to measure individual differences variables and test whether certain individuals are more inclined to experience compensation phenomena (e.g., achieve within one domain what they cannot attain in another domain), while other individuals might be more inclined to spillover phenomena (e.g., ‘repeat’ learning experiences of one domain within another domain). The role of leisure (rather than work) role salience could be examined as an alternative. Also, the decreasing hindering demands job crafting dimension could be included to test additional possibilities, such as that employees with low occupational role salience decrease their demands more. Also, leisure activities may be an important source of recovery from work-related pressure, and therefore future studies might include recovery related outcomes in their designs. Finally, our study seems to suggest (but does not test directly) that low job crafting opportunities should lead to lower levels of actual job crafting. Although this seems to be the case in our data (judging from our intercorrelations), future studies could explore more the distinction between ‘attempted’ versus ‘actual’ or ‘successful’ job crafting.

### **Practical recommendations**

A first practical implication following from our results is for organizations to stimulate job crafting among their employees since it may help them increase their work engagement and meaning-making. This can be done through workplace interventions which have often been used in practice and have led to positive employee and organizational outcomes (Van den Heuvel *et al.*, 2015; Wingerden, Bakker, & Derks, 2016).

Regarding leisure crafting, it may be less straightforward for organizations to implement this due to what – on the surface – may seem as contradicting interests. However, based on our study, we would recommend individual employees to reflect on

their use of leisure time and opportunities to actively craft this according to their needs. On a team level, teams could find ways to share and integrate leisure activities, for example, within team outings. On the organizational level, it could be a start to recognize the importance of leisure activities and give employees the space either to pursue leisure activities outside work or to share their leisure activities if they wish in work-related social events. We do not see a direct need for organizations to actively encourage employees top-down in this area, since this may feel forced and intrusive to some individual employees. All in all, employees should be viewed as active agents capable of using both their work and their leisure domain as they see fit, in order to improve their working and private lives.

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## **Appendix: The job crafting opportunities scale**

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### Items

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1. If I want, I can change the number of tasks I carry out at work
  2. If I want, I can change the type of tasks I carry out at work
  3. If I want, I can change with whom I work
  4. If I want, I can change the way I work with others
  5. If I want, I can make my work less demanding
  6. If I want, I can make my work more challenging
  7. If I want, I can look for the resources I lack in order to complete my job
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*Note.* Answering categories ranged from 1 = never to 5 = very often.