

From individual coping to collective care crafting: Reframing job crafting in sexualised workplaces

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Abstract

This paper extends job crafting theory through a feminist lens by examining how women chefs respond to sexual harassment and gendered hostility in male-dominated kitchens. Drawing on narrative interviews with twenty-one female chefs across London restaurants, the study examines how women navigate workplace sexual violence through individual coping and, unevenly and contingently, through collectively enacted practices of care and solidarity. These collective practices emerge where organisational mechanisms for safety, protection, and accountability are insufficient. The findings make two interconnected contributions. First, it conceptualises collective care crafting as a distinct form of job crafting through which women collectively reshape tasks, relationships, and meanings to sustain safety, dignity, and belonging, grounded in practices of care and solidarity. Second, it argues organisational failure as a critical boundary condition shaping when and why collective care crafting emerges, repositioning such practices as responses to institutional inadequacy. While collective care crafting enables women to create safer spaces and support one another, its necessity exposes structural inequalities and organisational failures that it cannot by itself resolve. The findings broaden understandings of job crafting beyond an emphasis on individual optimisation and performance, advancing a feminist understanding of crafting as a relational and care-based practice shaped by gendered power relations and organisational conditions.

1. Introduction

Sexism remains woven into the everyday culture of professional kitchens, where masculine hierarchies and a sexualised atmosphere shape women's working lives (Harris and Giuffre, 2020; La Lopa and Gong, 2020). To stay in the profession, women chefs navigate sexualised jokes and talk, intimidating behaviours, and after-work socialising that blurs boundaries and normalises unwanted attention, with kitchen humour frequently masking language and behaviour that escalates into coercion or unwanted touch (Lin et al., 2023). Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential* celebrated this world, reinforcing the myth that a sexual atmosphere is simply part of kitchen life (Bourdain, 2000). Recently, seventy female chefs in the UK wrote an open letter exposing the continued prevalence of sexual violence and harassment in professional kitchens (Taylor, 2025). These are not exceptional conditions but structural features of a workplace organised around gendered power.

How women respond to such conditions matters not only for their safety but because their responses reveal the often-invisible ways gendered power is reproduced, negotiated, and resisted at work. Yet this context exposes a gap in job crafting theory. Job crafting, the proactive, self-initiated changes employees make to their tasks, relationships, or perceptions of work (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001), has largely been developed in settings characterised by autonomy, psychological safety, and opportunities for self-directed change. Hostile gendered workplaces are marked instead by constraint, vulnerability, and risk (Acker, 1990; Harris and Giuffre, 2020). Here, crafting is not a matter of optimisation but of survival and of protecting dignity, and the assumptions underpinning mainstream theory begin to unravel.

This gap is both theoretical and contextual. Women chefs' responses are multifaceted and uneven. Individual strategies of survival such as spatial positioning, selective shifts, strategic silence, and emotional labour persist (Minnotte and Legerski, 2026), while some women simultaneously develop collectively enacted forms grounded in care and solidarity. These emerge not because organisations enabled supportive conditions but because they failed to ensure safety and protection. Individual and collective strategies coexist, sometimes in tension, shaped by unequal possibilities for participation based on precarity, language, and fear. While job crafting has been extended to team and collective forms (Leana et al., 2009; Tims et al.,

2013; Luu, 2017), these accounts emphasise collaboration, shared goals, and work-related outcomes, with less attention to hostile gendered workplaces where formal mechanisms are insufficient to protect workers from harm.

By bringing feminist scholarship on ethics of care and solidarity (Ahmed, 2021; Tronto, 1993, 2013) into dialogue with job crafting research, this study extends existing theory along two interconnected axes. First, it conceptualises collective care crafting as a form of collective agency through which women reshape tasks, relationships, and meanings to protect one another from sexual harassment and sustain dignity under gendered hostility, identifying its boundaries, forms, and organising principles. Second, it identifies organisational failure as a critical condition shaping when and why such crafting emerges, repositioning these practices not as evidence of women's resilience but of institutional inadequacy.

Empirically, the study draws on interviews with twenty-one female chefs working across London restaurants, from fine-dining to independent establishments, revealing both the possibilities of collective care crafting and its limits.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Job Crafting

Job crafting has become an established framework for understanding how workers proactively reshape aspects of their work rather than remaining passive recipients of job design (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Through self-initiated changes to tasks, relationships, and the meanings attached to work, employees reshape their jobs in ways that better reflect their needs, identities, and motivations (Rudolph et al., 2017; Lazazzara et al., 2020; Clinton et al., 2025). The Job Demands-Resources framework framed crafting as a behavioural strategy through which workers increase resources, seek challenges, or reduce hindering demands (Tims and Bakker, 2010; Tims et al., 2012). Meta-analytic evidence links job crafting to work engagement, job satisfaction, and improved performance (Rudolph et al., 2017; Zhang and Parker, 2019; Demerouti, 2025), while subsequent research distinguishes crafting oriented toward growth from crafting oriented toward coping and avoidance (Petrou et al., 2017; Lichtenthaler and Fischbach, 2019). Lazazzara et al.'s (2020) meta-synthesis shows that employees shape their work through both proactive efforts and reactive strategies, establishing job crafting as a mechanism through which workers exercise agency.

However, workers' capacity to exercise agency is shaped by the structural conditions in which work is organised. It presumes a worker with sufficient autonomy, stability, and choice to craft proactively, conditions that are not equally available to all. While job crafting can enhance wellbeing, it may also result in undesirable experiences (Harju et al., 2021; Demerouti, 2026). Avoidance crafting, in particular, is consistently associated with negative outcomes (Lopper et al., 2024; Petrou and Xanthopoulou, 2021). Increasingly, this body of work points to job crafting as a situated response to organisational constraint.

In hostile gendered conditions, crafting is less about maximising opportunities than about negotiating what can be sustained within everyday work. Yet job crafting scholarship has paid limited attention to how crafting unfolds in such contexts (Kalleberg, 2009; McDowell, 2009; Harris and Giuffre, 2020), where individual efforts are unlikely to overcome structurally gendered constraints. This paper addresses that gap.

2.2 Team, Collaborative and Collective Job Crafting: Promise and Limitations

Responding to the limitations of individualistic accounts, scholars have explored more collective forms of job crafting. Leana et al. (2009) introduced collaborative job crafting, showing how groups of early-childhood educators jointly modified tasks and work processes, with implications for collective wellbeing and service quality. Tims et al. (2012, 2013) examined team-level crafting, showing how teams reshape job demands and resources to enhance engagement and performance, while Luu (2017) and Silvestri (2019) highlighted how workers coordinate crafting around shared objectives. Together, these studies show that job crafting is not solely an individual endeavour but can emerge through coordination, shared practices, and collective purpose.

However, much of this literature remains oriented towards contexts of relative stability and cooperation, where collaboration is examined in relation to productivity, motivation, engagement, and performance (Li et al., 2023; Uen et al., 2021). Such research often assumes that workers have sufficient relational and organisational conditions to negotiate adjustments and that management receptiveness is present or achievable. Even where critical nuance emerges, as in Kato et al.'s (2023) study of Japanese nurses navigating institutional constraints, collective crafting is examined within organisational logics, framed as valuable when it aligns with institutional objectives. What remains insufficiently theorised is how collective crafting unfolds where gendered power relations, harassment, and fear of retaliation make collaboration itself risky. In professional kitchens, where hierarchy, aggression, and sexualised banter

organise everyday working life (Yu and Jyawali, 2021; Minnotte and Legerski, 2026), the assumption of cooperative teamwork offers limited insight into how workers navigate power, belonging, and protection, or into crafting practices that may not align with organisational priorities.

2.3 Feminist lens and job crafting

Feminist scholars have long argued that work is never neutral or disembodied but is constituted through gendered relations of power (Acker, 1990). Women working in male-dominated occupations frequently encounter hostility and devaluation (Ainsworth et al., 2014; Heilman, 2012), are positioned as outsiders (Prokos and Padavic, 2002), and remain underrepresented due to structural barriers and higher rates of occupational exit (Glauber, 2012; Frome et al., 2006; Kokkranikal et al., 2024). Occupational cultures may normalise sexism as part of professional identity, reinforcing masculine ideals of toughness, control, and endurance (Brannan, 2017; Harris and Giuffre, 2015, 2020; Powell, 2011), while those who speak out risk being judged as oversensitive or insufficiently resilient (Ahmed, 2021; Beaton and Ali, 2025). Harassment and exclusion are not anomalies but structural features that determine who belongs and on what terms.

Women working in male-dominated occupations navigate gendered workplace inequalities through situated and relational practices (Gherardi, 2015; O'Brien et al., 2023; Pullen et al., 2017). Research on sexual harassment suggests that shared experiences can foster informal practices of mutual support, solidarity, and collective sense-making through which individuals navigate and challenge unequal conditions (Fileborn, 2017; Phipps, 2020; Williams et al., 2012). Agency in such conditions is therefore not solely an individual capacity but is constituted through relationships, interdependence, and collective responsibility, embedding women's efforts to reshape tasks, relationships, and meanings within practices of mutual care and solidarity (Fotaki and Pullen, 2024; Tronto, 1993).

Tronto's (1993, 2013) ethics of care provides crucial analytical resources for understanding collective responses to workplace hostility. Rather than treating care as an individual disposition, Tronto conceptualises it as a political and moral practice involving attentiveness to others' vulnerability, responsibility for their wellbeing, competence in responding to need, and responsiveness to those affected. Care is thus relational and collective, emerging from the recognition that individuals cannot meet all their needs alone under conditions of precarity (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2017). Positioned as a political practice rooted in interdependence rather

than individual altruism, this lens illuminates how women's collective practices constitute a relational form of agency largely overlooked within job crafting theory (Antoni et al., 2020).

Ahmed's (2021) work on complaint provides a complementary feminist lens. Rather than conceptualising complaint as a discrete act of reporting, Ahmed positions it as an affective, relational, and institutional process through which experiences of harm become named, shared, and recognised as manifestations of broader organisational inequalities rather than isolated incidents. Complaint therefore reveals both the experience of harm and the organisational conditions that render such harm visible or dismissible.

Central to Ahmed's analysis is that complaint unfolds within institutions that resist it. Those who complain encounter what Ahmed describes as "institutional walls", where organisational routines and power relations delay, deflect, or neutralise challenges to misconduct. Complaint itself becomes labour, requiring those who speak out to negotiate emotional exhaustion, demands for evidence, disbelief, and the risk of retaliation, particularly in hierarchical and male-dominated workplaces (Acker, 1990; Harris and Giuffre, 2020), where speaking out may threaten employment or future opportunities (Kundro et al., 2025). Shared experiences of complaint can foster solidarity, yet that solidarity remains contingent and shaped by the unequal distribution of power and vulnerability (Ahmed, 2021; Fotaki and Pullen, 2024).

Together, these feminist perspectives illuminate the relational, affective, and political dimensions of working life that remain underdeveloped within job crafting scholarship. They show how women's collective practices emerge through unequal power relations and organisational failures to address gendered harm, and highlight the affective and relational labour involved in sustaining mutual support when organisations fail to provide safe working environments. Bringing these perspectives into conversation with job crafting theory opens new possibilities for understanding collective agency as a relational and care-based practice rather than solely an individual accomplishment.

Building on these insights, this study asks: How do women respond to gender hostility and unwanted sexual behaviours from a feminism-informed job crafting perspective, and how do organisational and structural conditions shape these practices?

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, feminist approach to explore how female chefs in London navigate and respond to everyday experiences of sexualisation and harassment in professional kitchens, building on our previous ethnographic study of exclusively male chefs' kitchens.

The methodology is grounded in feminist epistemology, which recognises women's lived and embodied experiences as a crucial starting point for understanding how power operates in gendered work settings (Harding et al., 2022). A qualitative approach is essential for examining experiences that are often silenced or rendered invisible by more conventional methods (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2021; Ahmed, 2021). While much job crafting research has privileged survey-based and psychologically oriented approaches (Tims and Bakker, 2010; Rudolph et al., 2017), qualitative scholarship has provided important insights into the situated processes through which employees craft their work (Lazazzara et al., 2020). Building on this tradition, the study emphasises the social, material, and relational dimensions of crafting (Acker, 1990; Ahmed, 2021; Pullen et al., 2023), positioning narrative accounts not as transparent reflections of experience but as active meaning-making practices (Riessman, 2008; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

3.1 Data Collection

Twenty-one female chefs working in London participated in the study. They represented a range of positions in the culinary hierarchy, from commis chef to head chef, and worked across fine dining, casual dining, and independent establishments; full details are provided in Table 1. Access was facilitated by relationships developed during a prior ethnographic study of male-dominated kitchens, which generated foundational knowledge of kitchen hierarchies, masculine norms, and workplace power dynamics, and prompted investigation into how women respond to sexual harassment. The data also indicate that more women chefs are employed in kitchens led by women head chefs than in those led by men, a critical contextual insight into the gendered organisation of kitchen work.

Recruitment proceeded through three complementary strategies: nine participants were recruited through professional networks and personal contacts; five joined through a closed WhatsApp community of female chefs, with access granted only after collective agreement from group members, and seven were recruited through snowball sampling, as initial participants referred colleagues and friends. This mixed approach enabled access across hierarchical positions, from chef de partie to head chef.

All participants worked or had recently worked in London restaurants and had experienced sexualised workplace environments. Consent was obtained individually for each interview. In-depth, semi-structured interviews lasted between forty-five and sixty minutes and were conducted in person or online depending on participants' preferences. Interviews were conversational rather than strictly linear, following participants' own accounts of their experiences and their responses, and were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim.

Access was also granted to a closed WhatsApp group of approximately forty-three female chefs, five of whom were interview participants. An existing contact shared research details with group members, and access was granted only after collective agreement was reached. Observation occurred over eight months, during which the first author observed interactions without participating and used these naturally occurring conversations to identify potential participants, who were then contacted privately and invited to interview. Message frequency varied from quiet periods to intensive discussions generating twenty or more responses on active days, with around eight to ten members consistently active. Messages covered practical kitchen matters, workload, and critical incidents, alongside members requesting or offering advice and support.

Participation in digital community spaces raises distinctive ethical questions about consent, given the blurred boundaries between public and private in such settings (Akemu and Abdelnour, 2020; Pink et al., 2016). Consent was therefore treated as ongoing rather than one-time, with participants reminded of the research context at intervals and able to withdraw contributions at any point. Two protocols governed group communication: all direct quotes from WhatsApp were paraphrased rather than reproduced verbatim to protect identities; and where deeper insight into emergent themes was sought, participants were approached offline for follow-up interviews, ensuring consent separate from group participation.

Table 1: Participants' details

Name	Position	Age	Percentage of Female Chefs in Participants' Kitchens (%)	Head Chef (Female or Male)
Nadine	Sous Chef	29	16%	F
Marsha	CDP-Pastry	21	16%	M
Keisha	CDP- Pastry	29	11%	M

Hannah	Head chef and Co-owner	45	28%	F
Elena	CDP-Pastry	23	15%	M
Sofia	Head chef and Owner	44	27%	F
Ana	Head chef and Co-owner	38	50%	F
Priya	CPD	34	28%	M
Ayesha	CPD	25	15%	M
Amina	Head Chef	32	23%	F
Sara	Sous Chef	37	20%	M
Mariana	CDP	24	16%	M
Chiara	CPD	28	15%	M
Lucia	Head chef	47	40%	F
Alicia	CDP	26	12%	M
Zara	CDP	22	21%	M
Lauren	Head chef	38	25%	F
Megan	CDP	23	15%	M
Charlotte	Sous Chef	35	18%	F
Olivia	CDP	24	18%	M
Eva	Sous Chef	26	22%	M

Percentage of female chefs in participants' kitchens at the time of interview, as reported by participants. Female representation ranged from 11% to 50% across the kitchens in which participants worked.

3.2 Reflexivity and Ethics

Given the sensitive nature of the research, fieldwork required sustained reflexive attention throughout. The research team's mixed-gender positionality shaped both access to and interpretation of participants' experiences, requiring ongoing consideration of how the researchers' own subject positions inflected what was heard, seen, and felt in the field (Rodriguez et al., 2023). Interviews frequently involved expressions of distress, anger, and frustration, and managing these encounters required emotional attentiveness, creating space for disclosure while maintaining professional boundaries and prioritising participant wellbeing (Blix and Wettergren, 2015). A genuine sense of care and responsibility toward participants shaped how conversations were held and how the research relationship was sustained over time.

Ethical tension arose when participants disclosed ongoing experiences of harassment, where the boundary between researcher and advocate became difficult to hold. Interviews were paused or rescheduled where needed, and participants were signposted to support resources while their autonomy remained paramount (Holland, 1999; Harding et al., 2022; Rodriguez et

al., 2023). Reflexivity was sustained through field notes, reflective accounts, and peer debriefing; analytical rigour through prolonged engagement and iterative coding; and ethical care through ongoing consent, anonymisation, and participants' unconditional right to withdraw.

3.3 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2021), informed by feminist epistemology (Ahmed, 2021; Pullen et al., 2023) and the job crafting framework (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). This approach treats participants' accounts as situated and relational practices shaped by gendered power relations, organisational conditions, and unequal possibilities for voice and action. Our focus was not only on identifying job crafting practices but on examining how workers negotiated, adapted, and sometimes contested their responses to harassment, and how individual coping and collective care coexisted and developed across participants.

Following familiarisation with interview transcripts, we generated initial codes capturing participants' actions, interactions, interpretations, and experiences of workplace inequality. Guided by an abductive analytical approach, we moved iteratively between empirical material and theoretical insights from job crafting and feminist organisation scholarship. Task, relational, and cognitive crafting were used as sensitising concepts rather than predetermined coding categories, allowing us to remain attentive to practices that aligned with existing job crafting concepts while also recognising tensions and contradictions that extended beyond conventional understandings of individual job crafting.

Our analytical strategy was designed to capture complexity rather than assume linear progression, examining moments when collective care emerged and succeeded, moments when it was constrained or resisted, and moments when individual and collective practices coexisted.

Through repeated engagement with the data, collective care crafting emerged as a distinct analytical concept. It crystallised as we recognised that diverse protective practices, though uneven and contested, were consistently oriented toward mutual protection and solidarity rather than individual optimisation, operated through job crafting mechanisms while being fundamentally reconfigured by their care-based purpose, and were grounded in care and solidarity as constitutive organising principles. This recognition emerged from attending to

how participants articulated their motivations, justified collective actions despite risks, and evaluated success through collective protection rather than individual wellbeing.

Table 2: Structure employed for Data Analysis for Individual Coping and Collective Care Crafting

Job Crafting Dimension	Individual Job Crafting (Coping)	Collective Care Crafting (Solidarity and Care)	Analytical Interpretation: Conditions and Tensions
Task Crafting	• Avoiding risky tasks • Changing work routines • Working on tasks independently for safety	• Shared task allocation • Peer mentoring on safety • Collective organisation to prevent isolation and protect one another (Attentiveness to shared vulnerability)	Individual task adjustment provides immediate protection but is insufficient when harassment is persistent and structural. Through attentiveness to shared vulnerability, individual concerns can become recognised as collective concerns, generating shared responsibility for safety where organisational arrangements fail to provide safe conditions.
Relational Crafting	• Strategic silence • Emotional regulation • Personal boundary management	• Shared voice and collective reporting • Boundary-setting together • Mutual support and checking in after difficult shifts (Collective complaint and responsiveness)	Individual relational strategies enable survival but cannot adequately address persistent hostility. Where formal reporting and accountability are insufficient, women move towards collective voice and complaint, creating shared practices of mutual protection and responsiveness to harm.
Cognitive Crafting	• Internalising responsibility • Accepting harassment as normal kitchen culture • Individual coping through disengagement or accommodation	• Collective meaning-making • Making sense of shared experiences • Recognising patterned gendered inequality • Developing shared political consciousness • Mentoring others (Caring-with through solidarity)	Individual sense-making can support survival but may leave structural patterns unrecognised. Through collective meaning-making, individual experiences become understood as patterned inequality, enabling caring-with, shared political consciousness and possibilities for action beyond individual coping.

4. Findings

The findings reveal how women engage in both individual and collective job crafting practices in response to sexual harassment and gendered workplace hostility. Rather than

following a linear progression from individual to collective practices, these forms of crafting coexist and interact, shaped by organisational conditions, individual positioning, language proficiency, legal status, and precarity. The following sections examine task, relational, and cognitive crafting in turn.

4.1 Task Crafting: Individual Adjustments (coping) and Collective Task Rearrangements

Task crafting refers to how employees alter task boundaries to shape work (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Among female chefs, it unfolds within tasks that are entangled with social and material conditions, taking two analytically distinct forms: individual task adjustments through which women manage exposure to hostile and sexualised working conditions, and collective task rearrangements grounded in care, shared vulnerability, and collective refusal. These forms coexist, shaped by organisational conditions, individual positioning, and access to collective action.

For Mariana, the uniform became a material part of the job that she refused to accept as given.

"The uniform is made for men, a heavy, oversized jacket. You have to wear it. It's supposed to look professional, but inside, you don't feel comfortable at all. Your body resists it. I decided to buy my own. I want to look nice, feel good, not be exposed, and still be a chef."

Mariana's decision to purchase her own uniform and refuse the so-called "unisex" template is a form of individual task crafting: a refusal to accept a garment that neither fitted her body nor protected her dignity. Her crafting becomes a subtle feminist intervention, reshaping the material elements of work to resist exposure and reduce the risk of sexist behaviour. This is the first form of task crafting, individually enacted, materially embedded, and oriented toward protection within existing conditions, enacted from necessity rather than choice.

Yet individual task adjustments could not address the structural and repeated nature of the hostility women faced. Task crafting therefore shifts from individual coping toward collective rearrangement, driven not by organisational opportunity but by shared recognition of vulnerability and a collective refusal to absorb harm in silence.

As Eva's account reveals: "I remember one guy wearing the chef's uniform I'd used the day before and saying, 'My d*** feels good in it,'

while looking straight at me. They always find a way to make fun of us, to intimidate us. Sometimes they'd even take our trousers to the toilet, and honestly, we never knew what the hell they were doing with them. The worst moment was when a guy pulled down my friend's trousers in front of everyone. She was so shaken with tears and a red face that she immediately grabbed the knife next to her, ready to attack him. That was the moment they saw our real strength. We all took a stand that day and decided to fight together. One of the demands we put was for the owner to buy a uniform for female employees. We agreed we wouldn't buy our own either; why should we? After these incidents, the management agreed to buy uniforms made for female chefs."

Eva and her colleagues' collective effort to secure female-designed uniforms accomplished more than immediate coping. Ongoing experiences of vulnerability and unease became the catalyst that bound them together, interrupting the symbolic control embedded in the task's materiality. Their collective demand represents the second form of task crafting: no longer enacted individually but collectively organised, no longer absorbed within existing conditions but actively reshaping them. Care and shared vulnerability are the organising principles that make this shift possible, and reclaiming the uniform becomes a form of collective crafting aimed at restoring women's dignity (Bell and Vachhani, 2020).

Similar negotiations unfolded around changing facilities. Lauren recalled an earlier kitchen:

"Most of the time, our changing area was the toilet. The actual changing room was for men. They'd say, 'Go ahead, use it,' pretending to leave but still watching from somewhere. You could feel their eyes waiting, amused, like it was for their pleasure. Even the head chef would say, 'Just use the toilet or find a corner.' Once, the manager offered his office. None of it felt right. You feel like an outsider, reminded that the space isn't yours. It had been this way for years, but eventually, we decided enough was enough. We put every incident together, wrote a formal complaint, and said that if they ignored us, we'd take it further. That changed everything. We now have a small changing area of our own. It's not perfect, but it's safe, and it's ours."

Such collective interventions illuminate what Acker (2006) describes as the materiality of inequality regimes, the ways in which physical spaces and artefacts quietly reproduce women's vulnerability. The absence of female changing rooms and the narrowness of workstations reveal women's constant exposure to the male gaze and to sexual assault. Task crafting here moves beyond individual acts of coping to become a collective effort to redesign a sexist workspace, refusing to accept unwanted sexual behaviours as simply part of kitchen life.

The affective dimension of this shift is powerfully captured by Charlotte:

"I still remember when a young girl first came into the kitchen doing her job but the men's eyes followed her like she was prey, waiting for the right moment to pounce. She was innocent, and I knew in that moment she needed someone to protect her. As a woman, you recognise that fear instantly because you've lived it yourself. That is why we must stand together. If we do not fight collectively, they will pick us off one by one."

Charlotte's account illustrates how affective attentiveness to shared vulnerability prompts the shift toward collective care crafting. The WhatsApp group became a space where this orientation materialised, with messages such as "don't worry, we'll find you a job," "expose that bastard," and "record evidence" revealing collective task rearrangement grounded in mutual protection. Care becomes both political and practical: not collegiality in a conventional sense but an embodied solidarity through which women protect one another from conditions that leave them structurally exposed.

Zara's account further illuminates the limits of individual crafting and the necessity of collective response:

"The head chef kept me isolated from the other two female chefs on the rota. He acted caring and flexible, but underneath it was clear he was behind sex, and when you said no, he would make your life hell. It's painful. Later, when I talked to other girls and realised it was happening to all of us, we gathered evidence and reported him. He was sacked. Standing together was the only way to stop him."

Zara's experience exposes the limits of job crafting as an individual coping strategy. In her account, flexibility operated as a tool of sexual coercion, and the women's collective action was the only effective means of countering this abusive power. Collective care crafting becomes a necessary extension of job crafting, enabling women to resist practices that would otherwise leave them bearing the burden of coping in silence.

Yet collective task crafting was not equally accessible. Participation was shaped by organisational position, language, migration status, and legal precarity. Senior chefs with authority could openly challenge unsafe task allocations, while junior or precarious workers risked retaliation for visible resistance: "I wanted to speak up, but I was worried about losing my shifts" and "I do not want any trouble" (Elena). Legal precarity constrained participation even where women were deeply committed to mutual protection.

Individual task crafting therefore persisted alongside collective efforts. Some women continued managing exposure through personal strategies, choosing certain shifts, avoiding particular areas, or working silently, not because they rejected collective effort but because their circumstances made visible participation risky.

As Pullen and Rhodes (2021) remind us, bodies once treated as objects of control can become agents of change, reworking the material and organisational boundaries of the job. Task crafting in this context is not about optimising performance but about reclaiming dignity, safety, and the right to occupy space on one's own terms (Benschop and Lewis, 2025).

4.2 Relational Crafting: Individual Boundaries and Collective Co-Construction of Relational Norms

Relational crafting refers to how individuals shape the social boundaries of their work by managing who they interact with and on what terms (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). In contrast to accounts framing it as an individually driven strategy for building positive working relationships, this section examines two forms: individual boundary work through which women manage exposure to sexualised interactions, and the collective co-construction of relational norms grounded in care, mutual witnessing, and shared refusal of sexualised workplace culture.

Sara describes a kitchen culture where sexualised banter circulates as a way for men to assert status and perform power:

"Jokes are all about who is going to make her naked, who is F*** her, how long one can sex or it's show-off each other, and it's like a group mentality. If it is not personal, I don't care, don't engage with that, just carry on working. And when it is too much, just say NO to that nonsense. You must be strong, not afraid."

Her response illustrates relational crafting as boundary work: she manages exposure by withholding engagement from conversations that too easily slip into unwanted sexual touch or intimidation (Doden et al., 2024). Her strategy exposes a tension common in male-dominated workplaces, where she must remain part of the social flow to stay employable while distancing herself to stay safe. Alicia similarly describes having to be tough: "you need to be tough with these guys otherwise they are waiting for opportunity.. must stop them when you feel it is not right." Zara shuts down unwanted familiarity the moment someone calls her "sweetheart" or "darling": "I'm a chef, not your love." Individual boundary work is thus necessary, constrained, and ultimately insufficient against persistent structural hostility.

Individual boundary management, however creative, could not address the collective and structural nature of the hostility women faced. It is at this point of exhaustion and recognition that relational crafting shifts toward a more collective form, driven by the shared realisation that individual endurance was no longer enough. Megan captures this transition:

"We started talking more over breaks, after work, even setting up a WhatsApp group and started to share what happens and helping each other."

What begins as individual adjustment evolves into a practice of collective care, where relational crafting is directed not only toward personal protection but toward shared survival. This transition is sharpest in Olivia's account, where a sexual assault becomes the moment that shifts relational crafting from self-protection to collective action:

"After what happened to me, something shifted inside. I felt it so deeply that I couldn't ignore. I knew I had to fight, not only for myself but for every woman who had been silenced. I started speaking out, posting about it, naming what had been done. And once I did, other women began sharing their stories too. It felt like we were finally breaking the

silence we'd been carrying alone. We need to keep going our own #MeToo, until this changes for good."

Relational crafting here moves from avoidance to collective action, converting private suffering into a shared voice. Being part of the women's WhatsApp group allowed the researcher to witness this collective orientation in practice: daily frustrations shared, suggestions offered, and small acts of care woven through messages. Relational crafting becomes a way of working against oppression rather than simply navigating it.

A further development emerges as women extend relational crafting beyond immediate survival toward reshaping kitchen culture itself, so that those who come after them enter a different world. Hannah describes how, after years in the kitchen, she chose to mentor newly arrived chefs:

"After many years being in kitchen, I decided to support young lads, they need to be mentored, they are not bad just influence of old boys. In my kitchen, I set up zero tolerance for any sexual assault or any banter. We have a calm kitchen!"

Her relational crafting is directed toward disrupting the reproduction of masculine norms by guiding younger chefs, purpose-driven rather than self-protective, and oriented toward reshaping the conditions others will inherit. Priya extends this further: "Two of us started our own recruitment agency to support recruitment and find the place to ensure their safety and dignity." Such efforts move beyond navigating existing conditions toward actively building alternative structures of care and protection.

Ana's account adds a further dimension, drawing on her experience as a single mother: "The practice of seeing mom as a disadvantage is also another form of sexual violence. I remember how difficult to be a mom and work as a chef, in my kitchen I introduce flexible working hours. I don't want our motherhood force us to leave the job you love. One mom can feel the other mom." Her account reframes relational crafting as an ethic of care and responsibility (Tronto, 1998): using her authority to create flexible arrangements, she challenges norms that penalise mothers in professional kitchens, introducing care as a structural rather than personal principle.

Yet collective relational crafting was constrained by organisational position. Women with greater seniority and authority were better positioned to initiate protective relational practices:

“Before, I would go along with the kitchen...because that is how you survive. But now that I have reached a position where I can help others” (Ana). Visible acts of support could also be interpreted as political alliances against management: “I was given shifts different from those girls. You need to be careful how we support each other...” (Priya). Collective care therefore required continual negotiation.

Women’s differing life circumstances also shaped their capacity to participate. Some intervened directly: “I ensure that I protect my other girl. I always step in if I see it [unwanted sexual behaviours]” (Charlotte). For others, opportunities were constrained by responsibilities beyond work: “I really want to support others, but... I don’t have capacity” (Chiara). Participation could also carry emotional costs: “I wanted to help, but I was struggling myself...” (Sara). Commitment to collective care was widely shared, but opportunities to enact it were unevenly distributed.

Language and migration status further shaped participation. A chef who had recently migrated to the UK and was less confident communicating in English participated less frequently in collective discussions and relied on trusted colleagues to navigate workplace communication: “Sometimes I just let others speak because my English isn’t good enough” (Nadine). Collective relational crafting therefore unfolded through unequal opportunities for voice, with linguistic confidence shaping participation in collective meaning-making and mutual protection.

Individual relational crafting therefore persisted alongside collective practices. Some women continued managing their interactions individually, not because they rejected solidarity but because precarity, language barriers, and fear of retaliation made visible participation risky, operating within constraints that collective action alone could not overcome.

Across these narratives, relational crafting takes two analytically distinct forms. As individual boundary work, it involves managing exposure, withholding engagement, and asserting professional identity: necessary but fragile strategies that provide limited protection. As collective co-construction of relational norms, it involves sharing experiences in WhatsApp groups, mentoring, collective complaint, checking in after shifts, and building alternative care structures. Care and solidarity are not incidental but constitutive organising principles, echoing what Ahmed (2023) describes as the feminist killjoy’s refusal to absorb what should not be absorbed.

4.3 Cognitive Crafting: Individual Sense-Making and Collective Meaning

Cognitive crafting refers to how employees reinterpret the meaning of their work (Wrzesniewski et al., 2013). In mainstream accounts it is framed as a proactive strategy for enhancing meaning, identity, and engagement. Here it takes a more constrained and politically charged form: rather than enhancing meaning, female chefs use cognitive crafting to navigate and endure sexualised and exploitative conditions (Yang et al., 2022). This section examines two forms: individual reinterpretation through which women make sense of hostile conditions in ways that allow them to remain in the profession, and collective meaning-making grounded in shared recognition of structural harm.

Feminist scholars remind us that such reinterpretations are situated responses to power and inequality rather than merely individual sense-making moves (Harding et al., 2022). Lucia captures the first form clearly:

"In a week of joining the kitchen, I realised that the job isn't just about cooking. You have to be ready for all the other stuff that comes with it, even when you never wanted any of it."

Lucia reinterprets what being a chef means in a male-dominated kitchen not to enhance meaning but as a protective adjustment recognising the conditions she faces and accommodating them in order to survive. Elena takes this further:

"To be honest, if they don't involve me in their banter, I don't care.. it doesn't bother me. I don't have the energy to fight it anymore. I just let it go. I'd rather focus on enjoying what I do."

By reframing kitchen banter as something not worth her energy, Elena turns disengagement into a workable coping strategy focused on what she can control. In contrast, Amina advocates a more confrontational individual stance:

"You know how it is in the kitchen, you've got to stand up for yourself. If something makes you uncomfortable, you have to speak up. You've got to be strong."

Amina reframes strength as refusing compromise and calling out harmful practices directly. Yet such reframing places the burden of safety on the individual woman rather than exposing

the precarious conditions that produce it. These accounts represent the individual form of cognitive crafting: protective in orientation and constrained by the very conditions it seeks to navigate, enabling women to remain in the profession without altering what makes such navigation necessary.

Individual reinterpretation, however, carries its own costs, absorbing rather than addressing structural hostility. Cognitive crafting then shifts toward a collective form, driven by the shared realisation that individual sense-making is no longer sufficient. Sofia captures this transition:

"Working as a woman in the kitchen with these men made me realise the fight was never just mine. What happens to one of us happens to all of us. We only get through it by holding each other up, because we're all hurting in different ways. Some moments change you, moments when you finally see that the only way forward is together."

Sofia's account marks a critical turning point. Her realisation that the struggle is shared rather than individual represents a shift from personal survival to collective awareness, from cognitive crafting as accommodation to a politically situated practice of collective meaning-making. She elaborates: "After all that frustration, I was determined to make a change, but I didn't know how. Then I realised that teaching young chefs could be the best way to make an impact. So alongside my chef work, I teach once a week, a great opportunity to shape the newcomers." Teaching becomes a deliberate act of reshaping the meaning of kitchen work for those who come after her.

Women with greater organisational authority could reshape meaning more publicly, as Ana and Hannah's accounts demonstrate, while junior or precarious workers risked retaliation for challenging kitchen culture. Cognitive crafting therefore also involves strategically judging when, how, and with whom experiences of harm can be raised. One participant postponed disclosure until she had secured alternative employment: "I would speak up [once] I had another job lined up" (Ayesha). Others shared selectively with colleagues perceived as safer: "I'd rather tell one person than everyone" (Zara). Silence here reflects not an absence of awareness of structural inequality but a protective response to organisational and employment risk.

Individual cognitive crafting therefore persisted alongside collective practices. Some women continued to interpret their experiences individually, not because they rejected collective

understandings but because legal precarity, language barriers, organisational position, and fear of retaliation constrained their visible participation. These quieter forms of sense-making were themselves situated responses to structural constraints, demonstrating that collective care and collective consciousness were neither equally accessible nor inevitable.

Across these narratives, cognitive crafting takes two analytically distinct forms. As individual reinterpretation, it makes sense of hostile conditions and finds ways to remain in the profession without being diminished by it, enabling survival under conditions that remain structurally unchanged. As collective meaning-making, it becomes a shared project through which women come to recognise their individual experiences as part of a structural pattern, and through which that recognition becomes the basis for collective action, mentoring, and cultural change (Pullen and Rhodes, 2021; Benschop and Lewis, 2025).

Across task, relational, and cognitive crafting, a consistent pattern emerges: individual survival strategies persist alongside collective care practices, shaped by unequal access to participation and risk. Collective care crafting created spaces of mutual protection, yet it did not eliminate organisational risk. Participants negotiated whether, when, and how to disclose harassment: “We need to be careful when we complain...otherwise they’ll say there is no evidence” (Marsha). Even where formal investigations occurred, responses often failed to protect women: “They kept saying they were looking for someone to replace him [Harasser]. Until I left, they kept saying the same thing” (Zara). Formal recognition did not translate into accountability, a failure that made collective care necessary while constraining how visibly women could participate in it.

Access to collective care was distributed unevenly. Senior women with authority, linguistic confidence, legal security, and time outside work could participate more visibly and initiate protective practices, while others contributed through quieter forms of care: sharing information, offering reassurance, strategic silence, or remaining attentive to colleagues’ wellbeing. Rather than constituting organised resistance aimed at structural transformation, collective care crafting represents everyday collaborative practices through which women expanded the possibilities for care, protection, and resistance. These practices did not dismantle gendered organisational inequalities, but they reconfigured everyday workplace relationships in ways that disrupted their routine reproduction, positioning collective care crafting as a situated form of collaborative job crafting where organisations have failed to provide adequate safety and protection.

5. Discussion

This study examined how women chefs reshape their work in sexualised, male-dominated kitchens where individual job crafting is constrained by gendered hostility and inadequate organisational protection. Women engage in task, relational, and cognitive crafting in varied and overlapping ways, from individual coping and self-protection to collectively enacted practices of care and mutual support. Rather than following a linear progression, these practices coexist and interact, with collective care crafting emerging contingently and unevenly.

Importantly, collective care crafting was not equally accessible to all women. Shift patterns that isolated women, caring responsibilities, legal precarity, fear of retaliation, language barriers, and differences in organisational position shaped women's capacity to participate, so its uneven emergence reflects differences in structural positioning rather than differential commitment to collective action. Where it did emerge, collective care crafting enabled localised forms of safety, support, and protection that individual coping could not provide alone, though it could not substitute for formal mechanisms of safety, accountability, and protection from sexual harassment.

Rather than interpreting women's collective practices primarily as evidence of resilience, the findings draw attention to the organisational conditions that made them necessary. These practices took three forms: collective task rearrangement, co-constructed relational norms, and collective meaning-making. The discussion develops two contributions: the first conceptualises collective care crafting as a distinct form of collective job crafting grounded in care and solidarity; the second identifies organisational failure as a boundary condition shaping when and why such practices emerge, bringing institutional responsibility more centrally into job crafting scholarship.

5.1 Contribution 1: Collective Care Crafting: Extending Job Crafting Beyond Individual Adaptation

First, this study extends job crafting theory by conceptualising collective care crafting as a distinct form of collective agency through which workers collectively reshape tasks, relationships, and meanings to protect one another, sustain dignity and belonging, and navigate conditions of gendered inequality and institutional inadequacy. Existing scholarship has predominantly framed crafting as an individual process through which workers redesign their work to enhance personal fit, wellbeing, and effectiveness (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001;

Tims and Bakker, 2010; Rudolph et al., 2017). By contrast, crafting can also emerge through collective practices oriented towards protecting others from gendered harm and addressing shared vulnerabilities rooted in sexual harassment and coercion.

We identify three interrelated forms. Collective task crafting involves the collective reshaping of work arrangements, knowledge sharing, and task allocation to reduce exposure to harassment, through practices such as peer mentoring on safety, sharing knowledge about which colleagues perpetrate harassment, and organising responsibilities to minimise exposure to known harassers. Tronto's (1993, 2013) emphasis on attentiveness and responsibility extends task crafting beyond individual adjustment by showing how recognising others' vulnerability generates a collective responsibility to organise work protectively.

Collective relational crafting involves the development of supportive relationships, shared voice, and protective relational norms. Through warning one another about perpetrators or situations likely to involve unwanted sexual attention, checking in after experiences of harassment, and creating spaces for disclosure and support, individual experiences of harm become collectively recognised and addressed (Ahmed, 2021; Tronto, 1993, 2013). Ahmed's conceptualisation of complaint shows how experiences that remain individualised or silenced can be brought into collective visibility, while revealing the institutional barriers shaping whether they are heard. Tronto's responsiveness extends this by directing attention to how care involves responding to recognised needs rather than merely noticing them.

Collective cognitive crafting concerns the collective reinterpretation of workplace experiences involving harassment. Through sharing experiences and recognising recurring patterns of coercion, workers move beyond individualised understandings of these behaviours as personal difficulty or unavoidable culture towards collective recognition of systematic gendered inequality and institutional failure. Ahmed's (2021) work helps conceptualise this as a process of naming and making institutional problems visible: what appears individual can, through collective articulation, become understood as a patterned organisational problem. Tronto's (2013) notion of caring with connects shared recognition of vulnerability to solidarity and justice, transforming what becomes perceptible as requiring collective attention.

Together, these three forms demonstrate that collective care crafting remains grounded in the mechanisms of job crafting, reshaping tasks, relationships, and meanings (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001), while reorienting their purpose from individual optimisation towards collective protection, dignity, and care. The concept expands understanding of worker agency by

highlighting how agency can be relationally produced (Fotaki and Pullen, 2024). It does not replace individual job crafting: the two coexist, sometimes in tension, with participation shaped by organisational position, legal security, language proficiency, and available time. It therefore expands the repertoire of job crafting rather than marking a transition away from individual strategies.

To clarify the boundaries of collective care crafting, we identify three defining conditions. First, it requires coordination across workers rather than isolated individual responses: individually avoiding men known to harass represents personal coping, whereas collectively sharing knowledge about perpetrators or reorganising work to prevent women working alone with them represents collective care crafting. Second, it remains connected to job crafting mechanisms, involving changes to tasks, relationships, or meanings within everyday work (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001; Tims et al., 2012). Third, care and solidarity must be constitutive rather than incidental, organising practices around mutual responsibility and protection rather than merely coordinated action (Tronto, 1993, 2013; Fotaki and Pullen, 2024).

Although collective care crafting may challenge existing power relations and sexual hierarchies, it is analytically distinct from resistance. Resistance is more explicitly oriented towards confronting power and pursuing structural change (Hodson, 1995), whereas collective care crafting centres on reshaping everyday work practices to sustain safety, dignity, and belonging under constraint. Some practices may resemble, contribute to, or evolve into resistance without being reducible to it. By enabling women to recognise shared experiences, develop collective understandings of gendered inequality, and coordinate protective responses, it can generate relational resources through which broader forms of resistance may become possible.

Care and solidarity organise the practices through which women assume mutual responsibility for safety, and this is what distinguishes collective care crafting from collective action more broadly. This understanding of care as an active, relational, and political practice is consistent with Tronto's (1993, 2013) ethics of care. Its enactment, however, is contingent on women's structural positioning, including organisational position, legal status, language proficiency, time, and access to collective spaces. Its scope is also limited: while it can reshape everyday tasks, relationships, and meanings, it cannot resolve the structural inequalities that produce vulnerability or substitute for organisational accountability.

This distinction also separates collective care crafting from related concepts. It differs from individual coping because it extends beyond self-protection towards collective responsibility for others' safety. Although it shares features with communities of coping, particularly solidarity and mutual support, the two are distinct: communities of coping primarily help workers endure difficult labour processes (Korczynski, 2003), whereas collective care crafting centres on reshaping tasks, relationships, and meanings to reduce vulnerability and improve immediate working conditions. It also differs from team and collaborative job crafting, which concern coordinated changes aimed at improving team functioning and organisational outcomes (Leana et al., 2009; Tims et al., 2013), emerging instead where organisations fail to protect workers from hostile conditions. Collective care crafting is also distinct from feminist solidarity. Feminist solidarity concerns mutuality, shared responsibility, and collective orientation towards addressing gendered inequalities (Littler and Rottenberg, 2021; Wickström et al., 2021), whereas collective care crafting captures how such commitments become enacted through the reshaping of everyday work, including tasks, relationships, and meanings. Similarly, while complaint names experiences of harm and makes institutional failure visible (Ahmed, 2021), collective care crafting involves both responding to harm and reshaping everyday working conditions. Complaint may therefore be one expression or outcome of collective care crafting, but it does not exhaust the practices through which collective care is enacted.

The concept also contributes to debates about agency and power in gendered organisations. Rather than viewing agency as an individual capacity exercised by autonomous workers (Acker, 1990), collective care crafting highlights agency as relational, distributed, and produced through mutual attentiveness and responsibility. Drawing on Tronto (1993, 2013), it emerges through recognition of shared vulnerability and the development of collective responsibility for one another's wellbeing and dignity, while Ahmed's (2021) analysis of complaint illuminates how naming harassment as harm rather than normalcy transforms isolated experiences into collective knowledge and action. Care and solidarity thus become organising principles through which workers create localised forms of protection within unequal workplaces (Fotaki and Pullen, 2024).

Importantly, collective care crafting does not suggest that workers can overcome structural inequalities and harassment through collective action alone. It highlights both the possibilities and the limitations of relational agency under conditions of sexual violence and organisational failure: workers create safer spaces, support one another, and incrementally reshape everyday

experiences, while broader structural inequalities may remain unresolved (Brannan, 2017). Nor should it be understood merely as adaptation. Over time, these practices can transform individual experiences of harassment into shared understandings of harm and generate the relational resources through which broader resistance and organisational change may emerge.

5.2 Contribution 2: Reconsidering Job Crafting Under Conditions of Organisational Failure

Second, this study identifies organisational failure as a critical boundary condition shaping when and why collective care crafting emerges. Organisational failure here refers to conditions in which formal mechanisms for safety, protection, and accountability are insufficient to address workers' experiences of harm and inequality. Existing scholarship conceptualises crafting as an active process through which workers reshape tasks, relationships, and meanings (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001; Noesgaard and Jørgensen, 2024), and has shown that opportunities to craft are shaped by autonomy, employee status, social relations, and organisational constraints (Sekiguchi et al., 2017; Tims and Parker, 2020; Lazazzara et al., 2020; Turek et al., 2024). Less attention has been paid to contexts where organisational arrangements are not simply constraining but insufficient to provide basic conditions of safety. Under such conditions, crafting becomes a collective response through which workers develop informal practices of care and protection in the absence of adequate institutional support.

The findings demonstrate that collective care crafting emerged not from supportive organisational conditions but from contexts where formal structures of protection were insufficient. Participants described workplaces where female changing facilities were absent, uniforms were designed around male bodies, reporting mechanisms were inadequate, perpetrators remained in positions of authority, and sexualised behaviour was normalised as part of kitchen culture. These conditions represent systematic organisational failure, where responsibility for worker safety is inadequately addressed through formal structures. Women's collective practices therefore emerged because institutional responses left experiences of harm insufficiently recognised and acted upon (Ahmed, 2021), consistent with feminist scholarship showing that occupational cultures often normalise harassment as inevitable rather than as a failure of institutional responsibility (Harris and Giuffre, 2020; McDowell, 2009).

These practices should not be interpreted as evidence of successful adaptation or individual resilience. A feminist analysis requires attention not only to how workers respond to inequality but to why they are placed in situations where informal systems of care become necessary.

Drawing on Ahmed's (2021) analysis of institutional refusal, women's collective practices emerge as responses to institutional walls that systematically fail workers. Collective care crafting demonstrates workers' capacity to create safety and belonging within difficult circumstances, but its emergence simultaneously signals the limitations of the mechanisms intended to provide these conditions. It is an indication of what happens when formal protections are insufficient, not a substitute for organisational responsibility.

By bringing organisational failure into view, this study expands the boundary conditions of job crafting theory. Much research has conceptualised crafting as proactive behaviour undertaken within relatively supportive environments, broadly compatible with organisational objectives (Leana et al., 2009; Tims et al., 2013; Luu, 2017). Our findings reveal a different context, marked by persistent constraint, vulnerability, and inadequate institutional accountability. Here, experiences of harassment, fear, and frustration became shared through interpersonal encounters, and the recognition that harm was patterned rather than solely individual provided a basis for collective care crafting (Gherardi, 2019; Ahmed, 2021). Yet organisational failure did not deterministically produce collective care; its emergence depended on whether women could recognise shared vulnerability, develop supportive relationships, and access spaces in which collective practices could be coordinated.

This reframing challenges assumptions within job crafting scholarship regarding autonomy, choice, and individual agency. Rather than viewing workers as autonomous actors who independently optimise their work, this study highlights how agency may be relationally produced under conditions of constraint (Fotaki and Pullen, 2024). Workers may collectively develop protective practices not because organisational structures enable such action, but because existing structures provide insufficient responses to gendered risks and vulnerabilities. Bringing organisational failure into the analysis therefore positions power, inequality, and institutional conditions as central rather than peripheral concerns within job crafting research (Acker, 1990; Brannan, 2017).

This contribution also shifts analytical attention away from narratives that celebrate women's resilience. Framing such responses primarily as resilience risks emphasising women's capacity to adapt while obscuring the organisational conditions that make such coping necessary (Bridges et al., 2021; Witmer, 2019), and the invisible labour involved (Daniels, 1987; Hatton, 2017) exposes the limits of worker-led responses while reinforcing the need for organisational accountability. The theoretical implication is not that collective care crafting resolves gendered

workplace harm, but that its emergence exposes the conditions under which workers are compelled to reconstruct their work collectively to sustain safety and dignity. This study therefore positions organisational failure as an important boundary condition for understanding the limits of individual job crafting, extending scholarship beyond contexts of relative stability and cooperation. More broadly, it reframes the central question of job crafting from how workers individually adapt their work to how they collectively create the conditions necessary for safety, dignity, and belonging when organisational structures fall short.

6. Conclusion

This paper has argued that job crafting, when examined in hostile and gendered workplaces, is not a neutral act of self-enhancement but a constrained, relational, and collectively enacted practice of survival, care, and solidarity. We introduce collective care crafting, grounded in care and solidarity as its constitutive organising principles, to capture how crafting operates under conditions of structural vulnerability. It does not claim structural transformation as an immediate outcome, yet its cumulative weight has the potential to unsettle the conditions that sustain gender violence over time.

Several limitations warrant acknowledgement. This study was conducted within a single occupational setting, and while the dynamics identified here are likely to resonate across contexts marked by gendered hostility and structural precarity, future research should explore collective care crafting in other male-dominated environments. An intersectional lens would enrich this analysis by examining how race, class, and migration status shape the conditions under which collective care crafting emerges. Quantitatively oriented studies with larger samples could test the three dimensions of collective care crafting more extensively.

The everyday acts seen here remind us that resistance does not always roar. Sometimes it whispers through quiet redesigns, small refusals, and shared acts of care, yet it is a force for change. In these gestures, the possibility of more humane and equitable workplaces begins.

7. References

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