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Version: Accepted Version

Article:

Pletneva, Lidiia ORCID: 0000-0002-7976-4323 (2024) Turning work into a refuge: job crafting as coping with personal, grief-inducing events. *Academy of Management Journal*. ISSN 0001-4273

<https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2022.0604>

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Turning work into a refuge: Job crafting as coping with personal, grief-inducing events

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Acknowledgments: I could not have written this paper without the generous help, encouragement, and support of Anca Metiu, to whom I am infinitely grateful. I also express my gratitude to Kevin Corley, Gianpiero Petriglieri, and Amy Wrzesniewski for their detailed and incredibly helpful reviews of earlier drafts of the manuscript. I thank Anne-Laure Fayard, Mailys M. George, Ashley Hardin, Spencer Harrison, Pooyan Khashabi, Sally Maitlis, Mouna El Mansouri, David Sluss, Karoline Strauss, and Victoriia Zaytseva for their insightful comments on the project. I am indebted to AMJ associate editor Heather Vough and the three anonymous reviewers for profoundly developmental feedback and insights. I am grateful to my research participants for their generosity with their time and graciousness. An earlier version of this work was judged by the Managerial and Organizational Cognition Division to be one of the best accepted papers for the 2022 Academy of Management, won the Best Student-Led Paper Award, and benefited from the thoughtful feedback of three anonymous reviewers. I also presented portions of this research at the 2021 Academy of Management and at ESSEC Business Schools seminars and am grateful for the comments I received.

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Abstract

Building on an inductive, qualitative study of employees who experienced grief-inducing events such as bereavement or breakup, this paper explores how and with what consequences work becomes a refuge from grief-inducing experiences in people's lives. Using the results of 68 in-depth interviews, I develop an inductive model that shows that grieving employees do not only *find* refuge in work but can also *turn* their work *into* a refuge for themselves. In particular, the model explicates how people turn work into a refuge by engaging in job crafting behavior. I also show perceived consequences of this process which occur in both work and life domains. They tend to be positive, yet those who work significantly harder also experience negative consequences. This paper advances theorizing on grief in organizations and job crafting.

Keywords: work-life interface, grief in organizations, job crafting, coping, interviews

“They threw themselves into work” is a familiar anecdotal statement about an individual confronting difficulties in their personal life. But what does it actually mean, and how does someone use work to cope with a critical life event? Describing the role work plays for people in challenging times, organizational scholarship provides an ambiguous picture. On one hand, the literature on grief in the workplace has emphasized that, for those undergoing grief-inducing events, work can become a burden, an inopportune obligation (Freidin, Toker, & Turgeman-Lupo, 2020; Hazen, 2008; Wilson, Rodríguez Prat, & Low, 2020), a place that often negatively contributes to grief-related experiences (Petriglieri & Maitlis, 2019). On the other hand, there is a commonly held (but not fully empirically investigated) notion that work can be experienced as a positive and welcome distraction from grief (Freidin et al., 2020), even a refuge from family conflicts (Hochschild, 1997).

While the role of work is seen by the scholarship from those opposite viewpoints, what remains in common between them is the assumption that an employee who goes through challenging times *finds* either a burden or a refuge in their work. As a result, the literature has

predominantly focused on exploring recommendations for organizations, managers, and colleagues on how to alleviate the employee's experience upon returning to work (e.g., Petriglieri & Maitlis, 2019; Wilson et al., 2020) while setting aside the role the employee can play in this process. Yet, the literature on job crafting revealed that people are agentic when it comes to shaping their work experiences (Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010; Grant, Fried, Parker & Frese, 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). However, the current state of the job crafting literature has limited applicability to a grieving employee because the theory suggests that job crafting can be triggered by work-related situational antecedents (Park & Park, 2021; Zhang & Parker, 2019), thus, failing to connect personal life events with job crafting behavior.

The question of work's positive role becomes especially salient in the context of personal, grief-inducing experiences related to bereavement or a breakup, i.e., the termination of a strong, committed, romantic relationship, for two reasons. First, there have been anecdotal reports of the importance of work during such events (e.g., Crean, 2021; Saltzman, 2012; Sawyer, 2020). Second, they are considered among the most stressful events in life — the breakup of a committed relationship often rates as even more stressful than the loss of a close family member or a close friend (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Scully, Tosi, & Banning, 2000) — that everyone is likely to experience at least once (Ventura & Denton, 2021). Thus, my study asks: How and with what consequences can work become a refuge from grief-inducing experiences in people's lives? Without answers to those questions, we miss important aspects of understanding grief in the workplace such as how people manage the complexity of their lives using work, and what impact a personal, grief-inducing event may have on one's work domain.

To address those questions, I focus my study on inductively examining the underinvestigated phenomenon of work as a refuge. Based on 68 in-depth interviews of

employees who experienced grief-inducing events — such as the termination of a significant relationship as the result of bereavement or breakup — my study calls into question the assumption that people *find* the refuge in their work. Building on the job crafting theory it reveals that people can also *turn* their work *into* a refuge. Particularly, I show that individuals engage in job crafting behavior in order to cope with personal grief at work; such behavior, in turn, leads to particular consequences people perceive in both work and life¹ domains.

My study makes three theoretical contributions. First and foremost, my paper contributes to the growing literature on grief in organizations. It does so by returning agency to a grieving employee by discovering that people do not only *find* refuge in work (when such refuge explicitly depends on other actors) but can also *turn* their work *into* a refuge. Specifically, it shows that grieving employees may be more actively shaping the way that they engage with their work to address events-generated needs than previously understood, also uncovering factors — such as lack of other coping mechanisms, high importance of work, and positive experiences at work before the event — that can facilitate such a coping process. This change in our understanding of grief in organizations draws attention to the importance of a griever’s agency and the uniqueness of the grieving employee’s reasons to use work to cope for future research.

Additionally, my paper contributes to the job crafting literature in two ways. First, it offers a more holistic perspective that links a non-work-related event with job crafting behavior. Existing research views job crafting as a behavior that occurs within the work context, i.e., it is triggered by work-related stimuli (Park & Park, 2021; Zhang & Parker, 2019). My findings change our understanding of job crafting revealing that people can engage in expanding their job

¹ By the “life domain,” I refer to the “non-work domain,” i.e., the domain that includes everything but work.

aspects not only because of work-related needs and reasons but also because of the needs that are generated by what happened in people's personal lives. This knowledge is important because it refines the job crafting theory taking it beyond work context boundaries and underscores the importance of personal circumstances for understanding the reasons behind job crafting behavior.

Second, my study adds balance to understanding the consequences of job crafting. The current state of the literature still tends to focus on the positive outcomes of job crafting related to expanding job aspects (Tims, Twemlow, & Fong, 2021; Weisman, Bindl, Gibson, & Unsworth, 2022). My study shows that in addition to the positive consequences people perceived, they also experienced negative ones, such as decreased quality of life and delayed processing. In so doing, my research advances job crafting scholarship by adding needed balance placing a greater emphasis on the negative consequences and highlighting the importance of more nuanced consideration of both positive and negative outcomes for future research.

THE ROLE WORK PLAYS FOR GRIEVING EMPLOYEES

Three literatures are especially helpful in understanding the role of work for grieving employees: the literatures on grief in organizations, coping, and job crafting. All three literatures hold important puzzle pieces, but none sufficiently explain how employees can actively shape their workplace to find refuge in it in the face of grief.

Grief in Organizational Scholarship

Research on grief — the reaction to profound loss (Zisook & Shear, 2009) associated with mental anguish and sorrow (Bruce, 2002) — in organizations suggests two ways of looking at the role work plays for grieving employees. The first, more dominant view assigns a negative role to work, seeing it as a burden or inopportune obligation (e.g., Freidin et al., 2020; Hazen,

2008; Wilson et al., 2020). Organizational scholarship often treats work as a burden based on the effect grief has on people's lives. As the literature suggests, grief has a lasting impact on people (Davis & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001), affecting their ability to stay focused upon their return to work and making their experience at work very challenging (Freidin et al., 2020; Wilson et al., 2020). Furthermore, events such as those related to grief break established life routines (Morgeson, Mitchell, & Liu, 2015), leaving people lost in the chaos yet requiring immediate reaction (Crawfor, Thompson, & Ashforth, 2019; Powell, Greenhaus, Allen, & Johnson, 2019). Thus, amid such life's complexities, work is seen as a poorly timed obligation (e.g., Freidin et al., 2020; Hazen, 2008; Wilson et al., 2020).

On the other hand, organizational scholarship acknowledges the potential that work has to play a positive role during grief episodes. In particular, Freidin and colleagues (2020) call for empirical investigations of the potential that work has to distract employees from grief. Additionally, organizational scholarship suggests that work can be a place of social support and compassion (Dutton, Worline, Frost, & Lilius, 2006; Fisk, 2023; Ehrhardt & Ragins, 2019; Freidin et al., 2020; Hazen, 2003, 2008; Hochschild, 1997), which can stoke healing and evoke positive emotions (Lilius, Worline, Maitlis, Kanov, Dutton, & Frost, 2008). Furthermore, Hochschild (1997) found that people can escape in their work seeing it as refuge from family-related conflicts.

While organizational scholarship provides two such approaches to understanding the relationship between work and grief, it builds both on the assumption that an employee who goes through challenging times can *find* either a burden or a refuge in their work. As such, the scholarship emphasizes the importance that creating a supportive work environment has in alleviating a griever's experience of returning to work (Petriglieri & Maitlis, 2019) and suggests

that “more should be done by organizations” (Wilson et al., 2020: 187) to prepare for grieving employees’ return to work. Thus, the current state of the literature seems to view a grieving employee as a passive actor, while whether refuge will be found in work depends only on coworkers, managers, and organizational policies, setting aside the role the employee can play in this process.

Coping with Grief in Psychology Scholarship

Psychology scholarship provides some directions toward better understanding of how a grieving employee can experience work as a refuge or distraction. Grief has been of particular interest for scholars working on coping. As such, defining coping as the cognitive and behavioral efforts that people undertake in response to perceived demands or stressors, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) classified coping strategies as problem- versus emotional-focused responses. While problem-focused strategies aim to identify a solution to the situation, in cases related to grief-inducing events, people generally do not feel they have enough control over the situation to solve it. Thus, they tend to engage in emotion-focused coping strategies that seek to manage the emotional outcomes caused by the event (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Nes & Segerstrom, 2006). Among the wide range of emotion-focused coping strategies — self-soothing, expressing negative emotions, focusing on negative thoughts, engaging in positive reinterpretations of the event — scholarship cites escapism, including the use of alcohol and drugs, as well as a turn to activities including work (Baker & Berenbaum, 2007; Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989; Jex, Buzzell, Primeau, & Bliese, 2001; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Latack (1986) suggested that the turning-to-work strategy takes the form of immersion in work, which implies spending longer hours at work and putting more effort into it. Although

Latack (1986) elaborated on the immersion in work as a coping strategy with job stress, his study illustrates that the idea that people can turn to work to cope with stressors is not novel. However, aforementioned research leaves us with a very limited understanding of how such coping happens, especially in regard to coping with non-job stress. In particular, while it implies that people may work longer hours and put more effort into their jobs (Latack, 1986; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), it is silent about what employees are doing as they turn to work as a way to cope with grief. Thus, an understanding of the processes they undertake during their longer hours, the mechanisms that give rise to those processes, as well as the effect that such changes in work behavior can have on people and their work, remains limited.

Job Crafting

Job crafting theory suggests that people indeed can change their work behavior by being agentic actors in their workplace to modify their jobs (Berg et al., 2010; Grant et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Such modifications can relate to task boundaries (i.e., altering the type and/or number of job tasks), relational boundaries (i.e., altering with whom one interacts at work and/or the nature of interactions), cognitive boundaries (i.e., altering the view one has of their job and the meaning assigned to it), and skill boundaries (i.e., seeking opportunities to develop new skills or simplifying the job) (Berg, Wrzesniewski, Grant, Kurkoski, & Welle, 2022; Bindl, Unsworth, Gibson, & Stride, 2019; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). More recent research has also demonstrated that those practices can be categorized as either promotion-oriented (aimed at expanding job aspects) or prevention-oriented (aimed at decreasing job aspects to prevent negative outcomes from occurring) job crafting (Bindl et al., 2019).

People engage in job crafting behavior to improve their jobs (Bruning & Campion, 2018). For instance, people may engage in job crafting to make their interactions with clients more

pleasant (Cohen & Sutton, 1998 as cited in Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001); to pursue unanswered callings (Berg et al., 2010); to achieve professional development (Rogiers, De Stobbeleir, & Viaene, 2021); or to adapt to disruptive changes in their work environment (Barclay, Kiefer, & El Mansouri, 2021). A more detailed examination of situational antecedents of job crafting reveals that they are bounded by the work context (see Zhang & Parker [2019] for a review). As a result, Zhang and Parker (2019) call for a deeper investigation of possible antecedents beyond those on which the literature focuses.

Furthermore, Roczniowska and Bakker (2016) highlight the largely unexplored dysfunctional side of job crafting outcomes that is especially counterintuitive for promotion-oriented job crafting behavior (Weisman et al., 2022). Rare are studies that show negative consequences resulting from promotion-oriented job crafting. Among those, for example, Harju, Kaltiainen, and Hakanen (2021) found that job crafting can increase burnout. Likewise, Demerouti, Bakker, and Halbesleben (2015) demonstrated that the challenge-seeking form of job crafting is linked to counterproductive behavior, such as gossiping about others and hiding mistakes. The majority of the studies, however, are focused on the positive outcomes, among which are satisfaction, commitment, performance, and well-being (see Zhang & Parker [2019] for a review). Consequently, organizational scholarship calls for a deeper investigation of the dark side of job crafting (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Tims et al., 2021).

Therefore, the job crafting literature, as well as the cited work in other research areas, provides important insights but does not fully answer the research questions my study pursues: How and with what consequences can work become a refuge from grief-inducing experiences in people's lives?

METHODS

I started my study with a broad research question — what role does work play for people during grief-related events? — and ended by focusing on the positive role of work and job crafting as coping because they emerged as the most salient themes from my grounded theory approach. Thus, the eventual goal of this study is to develop theoretical insights into work as refuge, i.e., how people cope with personal grief-inducing life events at work. The study is therefore designed using a qualitative, inductive approach, relying particularly on in-depth interviews. This method is a good fit for this research for several reasons. First, it allows exploration of what lies behind a phenomenon about which little is yet known, such as work as refuge (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Second, the study seeks to investigate people's perceptions and interpretations for which grounded theory is best suited, because the study's purpose is to produce theoretical insights related to how individuals interpret reality subjectively rather than to test hypotheses related to an objective reality (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Additionally, qualitative methods allow for detailed accounts of the processes and nuances under investigation (Edmondson & McManus, 2007; Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Such accounts are critical for this study because it aims to understand the nuances of coping while developing a model of turning work into a refuge.

Sample and Data Collection

To understand how people cope with personal grief-inducing events while working, I conducted interviews with employees who experienced bereavement or a breakup — events that necessarily induced grief². Two reasons guided my choice to focus on these kinds of events.

² The research design received approval from the ethics committee of ESSEC Business School.

First, there have been anecdotal reports of the importance of work during a breakup (e.g., Crean, 2021) and the loss of a close family member (e.g., Saltzman, 2012; Sawyer, 2020). Second, research that examined people's perception of the level of stress caused by events showed that people generally evaluate a breakup and the loss of a close family member or a close friend as among the greatest stressors in life, with the breakup of a committed relationship rated even higher than the loss of a close family member (Holmes & Rahe, 1967; Scully et al., 2000). The study was designed to be open-ended and to allow unexpected themes to emerge so as to explore the possible directions of the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This approach proved fruitful. Although the initial research focused on the meaning of work, the themes of "work as refuge" and "job crafting" arose prominently through the inductive process rather than from a deductive, *a priori* logic.

My sample was purposeful in that I sought informants who had experienced personal, grief-inducing events, such as bereavement or a breakup while holding a job. Initially, I approached potential informants with an invitation to participate in the study "about the role played by work when a person experienced a difficult life event that induced grief." I maintained this approach until I reached 41 interviews (36 of which I used in my final sample). At that point, I realized I had a choice: I could either focus on the differences between those who see their work as a refuge versus those who see it as an additional burden, or I could focus on the positive role work played for people. I decided to follow the data and to focus on the latter because there were only five interviewees who suggested work was exclusively an additional burden. For those five participants, either the event and the workplace were strongly connected (e.g., a breakup with a coworker), so the workplace was a constant reminder of the event, or the situation at work was abnormal (e.g., the business was falling apart), exacerbating an already stressful situation in

the life domain. Thus, I decided to focus specifically on exploring the complex phenomenon of work as refuge and to use those five interviews to modify filter questions that I discuss in greater detail below. I subsequently conducted 32 additional interviews, purposefully seeking people who believed that “work helped cope with the event” so that I could dig into the phenomenon and uncover its full complexity. As a result, out of a total of 73 interviews I conducted, my final sample consists of 68 interviews.

I used several sources to recruit informants. I started from my personal network and professional and social networking applications; for instance, LinkedIn, Shapr, and Facebook. I then gained access to a professional networking website among alumni and staff of an educational institution in the United States. Finally, I used snowball sampling by stating at the end of the interview that I would appreciate it if the informant could share the information about the research with other potential participants. I used that strategy to recruit participants through different sources for two reasons. First, because of the personal and sensitive theme of the research, I wanted potential informants not to feel any pressure while deciding whether to participate. Second, this strategy increased the opportunity to reach participants who represented various occupations (Patton, 1990) and organizations. This diversity would avoid the bias created by specific corporate culture or policies that affect the way people cope with personal grief-inducing events at work. For recruiting purposes, I made a website and used it to provide information about the research, collect participation forms, and facilitate snowball sampling.

I selected potential participants who said they experienced a personal, grief-inducing event when they were working. In the case of a breakup, I interviewed only those who experienced the end of a strong, committed, relationship (e.g., the couple had planned to spend the future together, or they had been married, engaged, or lived together). Before arranging the

interview, I also asked clarifying questions, including whether the event was critical and broke established life routines; whether the event primarily induced grief (mental anguish and sorrow); whether a person returned to work after the event; whether the situation at work was stable (i.e., it was not a period of crisis or abnormal conditions); and whether the event and work were disconnected (e.g., that the person lost as a result of a breakup or bereavement was not a colleague). Those questions allowed commonality among the experiences while eliminating situations where the relationship between work and personal life added complexity and interconnection that could affect the informant's emotional experiences at work in the aftermath of the event. It is important to note that, despite the filter question about the event primarily inducing grief, during the data analysis, it became clear that those who went through a breakup often had supplementary emotional experiences, such as feeling unfulfilled and undervalued, and a sense of failure. Those who experienced bereavement sometimes also felt heightened guilt and regret (e.g., if the death was a suicide, being in a conflict before the loved one's passing, or not keeping a promise to visit). Nevertheless, I do not find the presence of these supplementary feelings contradicted my core focus on grief for two reasons. First, feeling a variety of emotions is an essential part of grieving (Costello & Kendrick, 2000), which is considered to be a unique experience (Breen & O'Connor, 2007; Fisk, 2023). Second, the filter question allowed me to ensure that the primary emotions were related to grief.

I conducted interviews until data collection and analysis showed the richness of the themes and stopped producing new themes, indicating that I had reached theoretical saturation (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The final sample of 68 interviews is balanced in gender (32 women and 36 men) and represents various occupations, including software engineer, lawyer, project manager, analytics director, animator, teacher, fire lieutenant, financial advisor, etc. The sample

includes one person from France, one person from Netherlands, and seven people from Russia; the remainder and majority of the informants (59) are from the United States. Ages range from 23 to 71 years old (mean of 41). The average time since the onset of the grief-inducing event was four years, which is appropriate for this kind of study that investigates people's interpretations of their significant life events (e.g., Vough, Bataille, Noh, and Lee, 2015). It was important to explore retrospective accounts because they allowed me to investigate not only the process of using work as a refuge, but also what consequences people believed resulted, including what cost(s) the experiences incurred. Still, 12 interviewees experienced the event within six months of the time of the interview — some as recently as a month before the interview — allowing me to capture more near-term experiences. During the data analysis, I found no difference in patterns between those who experienced events several years ago and those who experienced events a couple of months ago by the time of the interview. Participants experienced the termination of a significant relationship as the result of bereavement (31) or breakup (34), and three participants experienced a breakup and bereavement. I started conducting interviews in person at locations the informant chose, but as data collection continued during the pandemic, I shifted the process online. Thus, four interviews were held in person; the rest were conducted via Zoom video call. The interviews lasted from 1 hour and 3 minutes to 2 hours and 43 minutes for an average of 1 hour and 37 minutes. Each was recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim. The appendix gives the key questions of the interview protocol I developed and used.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, I followed a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I started with line-by-line open coding, constructing memos (Charmaz, 2000). The memos involved fragments of the data with their assigned codes as well as notes with

my reflections. After I analyzed the first seven interviews, several insights caught my attention. First, I started noticing that people generally perceived their work as playing a positive role when they were experiencing personal grief-inducing events. Second, the change in their behavior at the time of the event was marked not only by a particular emotional state (such as being “sadder” or “not as cheerful as usual”) at work, but also by particular actions people took to help themselves cope with the event (such as “spending more time at work,” “perfecting work,” “interacting more at work,” or “joining more social events with coworkers”). Third, people perceived particular consequences precipitated by their actions in both work and life domains.

Those insights led me to modify my question guide as well as to more closely engage the literature on job crafting, which became one of the core research themes of the study. I iterated between collecting and analyzing data and reading and reviewing the literature on a broad range of topics including job crafting, work-life interface, grief in organizations, coping strategies, compassion, and the meaning of work. During analysis, I aimed to determine how extant research can refine theoretical insights from the data while considering the possible contributions of the research at hand.

As the result of data analysis, three main themes emerged: “work as refuge;” “job crafting as coping;” and “consequences” of such job crafting. After discovering these dominant themes, I went back to the data, recoded them, worked on developing categories within the themes (e.g., “job expanding,” “task fulfillment adjusting,” “interactions expanding,” “interactions enriching”), and started building the model. After I built its core concepts and linked them together, the next step of my data analysis was to search for the mechanisms involved in the process and add them to the model. As such, I was looking for answers to the questions of what exactly made people use work as a refuge (e.g., “need for a mental break,”

“need for emotional balance,” “need for support”), why they used exactly work (e.g., “lack of well-established coping mechanisms,” “most important activity,” “positive work experiences before the event”), and why job crafting transformed work into a refuge and led to particular consequences (e.g., “getting distracted,” “experiencing emotional counterpoint to event-generated feelings,” “feeling supported”). Once I finalized the model, I went through the data again, looking for confirming and disconfirming evidence as well as ensuring that I had not missed relevant codes.

WORK AS A REFUGE AND JOB CRAFTING AS COPING

My analyses revealed that grieving employees become active actors who turn their work into a refuge for themselves by engaging in promotion-oriented job crafting behavior, i.e., job crafting that aims to expand certain job aspects (Figure 1). Specifically, as Figure 1 portrays, I discovered that grief-inducing events generated unmet needs that people tried to address by turning their work into a refuge. They did so by engaging in the following forms of job crafting: job expanding, task fulfillment adjusting, interactions expanding, and interactions enriching. Such job crafting behavior allowed work to meet event-generated needs via the mechanism of distracting people from event-related thoughts, being the source of emotional counterpoint to event-generated feelings, and a source of support. Hence, seeing work as a refuge represented cognitive job crafting that resulted from other forms of job crafting. Consequently, job crafting fostered particular consequences (Figure 2). Those consequences occur in both work and life domains and are both positive and negative.

Insert Figures 1 and 2 about here

Grief-Inducing Events and Unmet Needs

Each of the informants experienced a personal grief-inducing event: the termination of a significant relationship. Such events included a breakup or the death of a family member or close friend. Those disruptive and critical events had a powerful effect on participants' lives. First, such events broke their settled routines and opened a wide void. As Alex³, a welder who experienced a breakup, described: "There was definitely the immediate sense of loss. That routine, I mean that routine, you know, ended very, very abruptly." Second, the events induced different feelings, primarily grief-related. Frederick, an anesthesiologist who lost his father, described feeling as follows: "There is a lot of grieving around. That is the kind of thing that still, every once in a while, it comes to mind, and there's still something that, you know, is kind of tough to think about." A range of other emotional experiences included feeling like a failure, unfulfilled, undervalued, guilt, and regret, as well as loss of control and normalcy. As teaching assistant Theresa, who lost her mother, said: "I felt helpless about losing my mom [...] and I felt tremendous guilt for not being there." Finally, in addition to the feelings related to the contexts of the events, the events' occurrence made people vulnerable, as program officer Emily, who experienced a breakup, testified: "It made me a little bit more vulnerable."

Consequently, disruption, event-related feelings, and vulnerability created certain needs. The disruption made people constantly dwell on what happened or think about how to build new routines. Such mental processes were exhausting, and "it was just too overwhelming," as Richard, a leasing agent who experienced a breakup, noted. Thus, the disruption created a need for a mental break that would allow people to take time off from constantly thinking about the

³ The names of all informants are pseudonyms.

past or the future. Event-related feelings created a need for emotional balance reached through emotional counterpoint to event-generated feelings — e.g., feeling fulfilled, valued, productive, successful, and in control. As Oliver, a director of operations who lost his grandfather, suggested: “We still need balance. And even though a sad or tragic situation happens, we can’t let that consume us.” Finally, vulnerability caused people to need support. “When you are thrown into a position of weakness and vulnerability [...] it put me in the need for support,” said construction modeler Blake, whose mother died. Work became the tool to meet those needs, albeit through grievers’ active actions, namely job crafting. In rare cases, people did not change their work behavior much because work already met their needs. For the majority, however, event-generated needs required a stronger response. Their current work, if left unchanged, would not meet those needs. Thus, those people got involved in job crafting to make their work even more of a refuge than it would have been otherwise so that their needs could be met.

Factors Facilitating Work-as-Refuge Experience

Participants suggested several reasons why they used work and not hobbies or other activities in the life domain to cope with the event. Those reasons include the following: work was the most easily available tool to cope when people lacked well-established coping mechanisms; work had a higher level of importance compared to other types of activities, thus, had greater potential to respond to event-generated needs; and positive experiences people had at work before the event that involved positive emotional experiences, engaging work, and supportive environment. While some had well-established coping mechanisms — for example, meditation — the majority did not. Work, then, was the easiest available option because it was already there for them being a pre-existing obligation. As residential life coordinator Michael, who experienced a breakup, noted, “Since I had to do it anyways, it was easy to continue doing it

and to, like, lean into it.” Also, project manager Roxana, who experienced a breakup suggested that the fact that work was an obligation contributed to the ease of using it to cope:

You know, sometimes if I’m sad about something, I’ll give myself a day to wallow and feel sad about it. But after that, if I allow myself to keep doing that, it doesn’t serve me well. So, what I need is I need to be forced to, like, get up and do stuff and focus on something else.

Things such as hobbies and sports were other sources that met event-generated needs.

However, for many such activities could not meet their needs to the extent work could. People suggested that, among the level of importance of activities in their lives overall at the time of the event, work went after personal life (and even first for some people). As the result, it had more potential to meet event-generated needs. Alan, a team leader who experienced a breakup, suggested that things like hobbies and exercising had way less power to give him what he felt he needed (the feeling of being successful):

It had to be work because for me, personally, that was higher on the Maslov Pyramid for me than, let’s say, sports or music. [...] So, work was really the logical option for me. Why? Because I felt it would be the area that I could make most impact both in external recognition as well as in recognition from myself. [...] I just wanted to prove to myself and my surroundings that I could be successful, especially after that whole situation made me feel unsuccessful.

Similarly, Mia, a campaign manager who also experienced a breakup, said that her hobbies were not related to either interaction with people nor did they make her feel the way she wanted to feel: successful and loved. In contrast, her work gave her those exact results:

I had failed at keeping this person in my life, and I had failed at, like, being lovable. [...] [At work], I could still prove to myself that I could get people to like me, and I could get validation and versus like a hobby or something else. [...] I needed other people to need me, and my hobbies would be for me basically, like, photography, and hiking, and skating... Like, for one thing, there’s time to think while you’re doing those things. But also, my success is, even if I felt good about them, there’d be nobody calling me saying good things about me and to me, and that was what I really was afraid of not having anymore, I think. And if I can still have people

telling me I'm special and still feel like I'm succeeding at something, then I don't have to feel like a complete failure.

Finally, many people already had positive experiences before the event be it emotional experiences, engaging type of work, or supportive work environment. For instance, they felt they were successful, as in Mia's case, or did something meaningful and enjoyable, as did Lora, a school principal who experienced the loss of her husband and both children: "I believed that I wanted to teach to make a difference, and I loved working with kids." Additionally, for some people, work felt engaging, so it was easy to immerse themselves in tasks and stay focused, as software engineer Nick, who experienced a breakup, noted:

Just work in general, for me, it's mental gymnastics. You really gotta think hard about some of the problems we're working on, so it's very engaging, very easy to just, like, get lost in it and then realize: "Oh, it's been 4 hours since I've gotten up and walked around."

Furthermore, for many, work was already a source of support they relied on before the event. As Olga, a pharmacist who experienced the loss of her father, said: "I had coworkers that were so understanding and supportive [before the loss], and that really was the key: that my coworkers were sensitive." Thus, such positive experiences prior to the event facilitated the use of work as a coping mechanism.

How Job Crafting Turns Work into a Refuge: Job Crafting Tactics

When their life domain was challenging, work became the domain that tended to help informants deal with those struggles. However, it was the actions of people — namely, job crafting — that turned their work into a refuge for them. As an analysis of the data suggested, people tended to engage in job crafting behavior for anywhere from two weeks up to six months and even longer in rare cases. To some, work helped simply by being there for them. They saw it as a refuge from relentless thoughts about the event, as a source of positive emotional

experiences, and as a source of support. As it stood, work already met the needs that the event would come to generate. For such people, their work behavior remained unchanged or altered only to a small extent. However, the event-generated needs of the majority required a stronger response, and work, if left unaltered, could not meet those needs. Job crafting allowed people to act in ways that would help them spend even more time in the present instead of continually thinking about the future or past; to experience even more positive feelings; and to receive even more support.

Notably, people's agency was essential for the work-as-refuge experience. In two rare cases, people felt their work was mostly an additional burden because they wanted to take time to process the event but instead had to continue working hard. That was the case for those who felt their work was too constraining and intensive, and they felt little or no agency over it. For instance, Zoe, who lost her grandmother, suggested that she wanted to process the event right away but felt she had no time for that. She was pursuing another degree at the university in addition to her full-time job as a teacher, and at work, she had such a restricted teaching schedule that she felt she could make no changes there:

I'm the type of person who, when something big happens, I like to take a moment to, like, settle, you know, and I didn't have that kind of time. So, I felt like I didn't have time to process what was happening, which I didn't like. [...] [my job] is very rigid, so you teach at this time and this time and this time. You can't change it. So, I didn't have a choice. You just have to do what your schedule is; you don't have any freedom to change anything.

In those two cases, people still saw their work as refuge to some extent; however, they acknowledged that having more agency at work would make a work-as-refuge experience extensively more fruitful.

The rest of the people felt having agency in one way or the other and tended to engage in promotion-oriented job crafting that involved increasing their involvement with work and interacting more with others at work. Only in exceptionally rare cases did they reduce the amount of work they performed or avoided interactions with certain people at work. My data analysis induced four forms of promotion-oriented job crafting tactics that participants used to turn work into a refuge: job expanding, task fulfillment adjusting, interactions expanding, and interactions enriching.⁴ In the following sections, I explain how the process of rendering work a refuge occurred through different forms of job crafting tactics. I also provide illustrative examples of each job crafting tactic in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Job expanding. Job expanding refers to adding tasks to cope with an event. While prior findings related to immersion in work suggested that people spend longer hours at work, my findings reveal how exactly they used that additional time. I found that job expanding crafting involved broadening the scope of tasks, volunteering for tasks not normally part of the job, or learning new, work-related skills.⁵ For instance, Karoline, a project manager who experienced a breakup, suggested that she almost withdrew or pulled back from her life domain so that, when

⁴ I build my findings on emergent forms of job crafting tactics; however, it is important to note that they are generally examples of broader categories discovered by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001). As such, job expanding and task fulfillment adjusting are task-oriented forms of job crafting, and interactions expanding and interactions enriching are relational-oriented.

⁵ Although more recent studies distinguish skill crafting as a different category, that category implies the intention to develop skills (e.g., Berg et al., 2022; Bindl et al., 2019). In my study, I categorize “learning new skills” more as a task-oriented tactic because intending to learn new skills was generally related to filling in the time with work-related activities rather than developing a particular set of skills seeking challenging activities. The participants saw the development of skills as a consequence rather than an initial intention.

she was not working, she would only have time to sleep. She asked for additional projects to stay as busy as possible in her work domain:

I was asking for lots of work. I was asking [my supervisor] to give me more projects in order to work on them from morning till night, get tired, fall asleep and remember nothing, wake up in the morning — and all thoughts are about work again. [...] Probably this saved me.

Likewise, other participants, instead of asking for tasks, exhibited self-initiative and took more tasks on themselves, as in the case of Nick, a software engineer who experienced a breakup: “I created lots of work for myself to try and keep my head out of the sad think-space. [...] it was never anything that anybody asked me to take a look at and focus on.” Some people did not change the kinds of tasks they conducted but simply did more work; for example, John, a fire lieutenant who experienced a breakup, worked significantly more hours by taking extra shifts: “For a while after the break-up, I also kind of threw myself at work. I picked up a lot of extra shifts, and I didn’t find myself very comfortable being by myself for a while.”

Volunteering for tasks not normally part of the job was another way to fill in the extra time spent on or at work. Lori, an office manager at a college who experienced a breakup, started volunteering for events that were not part of her job to keep herself busy in the evenings and on the weekends:

And then I volunteered for events through campus activities. So, I helped with, like, with all of their nighttime and evening events. You know, their dances and their parties, homecoming. I worked a lot, a lot of hours during homecoming.

Finally, some people filled in extra time spent at work by learning new skills. For some, it was the consequential activity that resulted from initiating tasks that happened to require additional knowledge. This was the case for Taylor, an IT security specialist who experienced a breakup and took work that had “always been there but no one wanted to do”: “Some of them

[the initiated tasks] needed some competencies I didn't have at that time, so I had to learn how to use this kind of software or how to develop on this language or this kind of thing." While for others, like content manager Jonathan, it was simply another way of keeping themselves busy by learning something new. When Jonathan went through a breakup, he took coding courses that he did not necessarily need at that time but saw it as an opportunity to stay busy: "Some of that time I spent taking coding courses and things like that, and I gained a little bit of experience there."

Task fulfillment adjusting. The task fulfillment adjusting form of job crafting refers to altering the way one does their work. I found this form of job crafting to involve three tactics: putting more effort into tasks, reprioritizing them, and inventing new ways of implementing them. Some participants put more effort into tasks by perfecting their work, not because it was necessary for the work itself but to find excuses to work on something longer. For instance, Robert, a financial advisor who went through divorce, compared putting the extra effort with excessively perfecting a joint compound before sanding it. There is no need, nor did he see a point in overpreparing presentations for clients, but that is exactly what he did:

I just kind of got to go a little overboard with helping people [clients] solve some of those problems. [...] It wasn't necessarily work I needed to do. It was nice, the clients liked it, but it's not essential that I do that kind of thing all the time. [...] I'm thinking in construction terms, like doing drywall, when you put joint compound on top of drywall, it doesn't have to be perfect 'cause you're going to sand it away anyway later. But I was making it perfect. [...] I probably did a lot of stuff I didn't need to do, a lot of extraneous stuff that I probably didn't present to most people. Just depending on how the conversation with them actually went. So, I think it was a lot of overpreparing.

Similarly, Helen, a childcare worker who lost her mother, shared that she would meticulously organize game cards for kids who would not even notice if they were unorganized:

We'd have these games that the kids would play, and, you know, they don't have to be perfectly well organized, all the cards perfectly, you know, put together and things like that. So, I would sit there and do some of those things [...] And most of

the time, kids don't really care. They just play with whatever is there anyway, but I'd sit there and double-check everything, and so things that weren't super critical, they were not critical, and it's not, like, no one was asking me to do it.

While people tended to use putting more effort into tasks tactic to fill in the extra time spent at work, they engaged in reprioritizing tasks and inventing new ways of task implementation to stay focused and complete their regular work when it was too challenging to finish otherwise. For instance, program officer Emily started prioritizing business trips and asked her manager to send her on as many as possible. Organizing and coordinating those trips was the easiest way for her to get into working mode and avoid thinking about the breakup: "I did ask for trips as much as possible. [...] I wanted more trips because I was the one that had the ability to do it, and it was a coping strategy." Similarly, Silas, a software engineer who lost his friend, among different activities he had to complete, prioritized coding because it was the easiest way to stay focused on at work: "I'd be doing engineering work, 'cause, like I was saying, that's just something I feel like I can just get in the zone. So, I definitely did more of that and just emphasized that more."

Inventing new ways of implementing tasks generally included either collaborating with people to get into the working mode or coming up with tools that would help them remember tasks. For instance, project manager Nancy had to come up with creative solutions as part of her job. It was the kind of task that she had always done by herself. However, when her mother passed away, it was too challenging to stay focused on work when she was alone, and event-related feelings did not allow her to be in the right creative mode for such a task. That is why Nancy started seeking collaboration to brainstorm solutions instead of coming up with them on her own: "I think I probably sought collaboration more because I knew it would help me get the energy I needed to get into that creative space." While Anna, a sales manager who lost her

grandfather, started keeping a diary where she wrote every assignment down, something she had never done before:

I was forgetting basic things. I was forgetting to call a client; I was forgetting to reply to a client. So, at that moment, I started keeping a diary. That is, up to the fact that I went with pieces of paper in my hands into the office of the head, and I was writing down his every word, every errand. I realized that I was forgetting everything, and I started writing everything down.

Interactions expanding. Interactions expanding involves adding and managing interactions that transform work into a refuge by increasing the number of interactions in the workplace or engaging in more social events with coworkers. In rare cases, people decreased the number of interactions at work when they did not have the energy for it or if they wanted to avoid talking about the event at work. Nevertheless, most participants tended to increase the number of interactions to cope with the events. Some of them spent the extra time interacting by discussing and processing what happened. That was the case for Waylen, a senior laboratory technician who experienced a breakup: “I needed somebody to talk to, so there was a little bit more interaction [at work].” Others used additional interactions to talk about topics unrelated to the event to fill in extra time spent at work. For instance, Michael, a residential life coordinator who experienced a breakup, suggested he was happy to have such an excuse to stay late at work:

I’d really just say, like, making myself available to people. [...] like, text or call, you know, at pretty much all hours of the day, and I’d respond, and with emails, I’d make sure I’d reply to every email before I go home for the day.

Likewise, some people engaged in more social events with coworkers. For instance, community relations manager Kate, who experienced the loss of her husband, suggested that she became more engaged in coffee breaks during her workday, when her colleagues typically interacted with each other: “I was more consistent about participating in the casual group coffee breaks.”

Others expanded their interaction with coworkers even beyond the work domain. For example, John, a fire lieutenant who went through a breakup, engaged himself in more events with coworkers not only at work but outside, such as taking trips together:

I can say that, socially, I was more available to do things with other people [coworkers], to go on trips and stuff with other coworkers, which we tend to do fairly often, or to go to work events and stuff. So, I probably did that a little bit more than I would have done normally.

Interactions enriching. Interactions enriching refers to adding and developing conversational topics previously not raised. Within this form of job crafting, two tactics helped people turn their work into a refuge: opening up and sharing more personal information and deepening the quality of interactions. Some participants, like Karoline and Taylor, preferred to keep work completely separate from the event. However, overall, participants suggested they shared the event at work. For many, it was the first time that they opened up and provided such personal information, as software engineer Nick, who experienced a breakup, noted:

Probably it was one of the first really, really personal pieces of information I'd share. You know, obviously I've been, like, "Oh yeah, I like to play the drums" or "I like this kind of music," but, like, in terms of really, really impactful information, it's probably the first time that I'd shared anything like that with them.

For some, like fire lieutenant John, who experienced a breakup, such sharing even went against their personality:

I'm generally a pretty private person, so I think I opened up more to them and was just kind of honest about where I was at, what I had gone through, and where I was hoping to go, and kind of shared quite a bit of detail that I normally probably don't do.

Deepening the quality of interactions was another tactic that participants used. Ralph, an artist who experienced death of his father, described it as follows:

It was way more personal and intimate and sense of well, you know, the topic of conversation at least for the few people [coworkers] that I did talk about more in detail with somebody, kind of more of a quality over quantity thing to a degree.

Interestingly, deepening the quality of interactions did not necessarily mean discussing the event. As Alex, a welder who experienced a breakup, noted, in his case, it was more about deepening non-event-related interactions, such as getting into the depth of the question discussed and showing a thorough interest:

Probably the quality of it [interaction] did [change]. I think when, for instance, we are in the truck driving to a job site, you know, like, not just “How you doing? How was your weekend? What did you do?,” but, you know, maybe continuing to ask them about, like, “How are you enjoying things? Are you seeing anybody new?,” you know, or “What's that like?” [...] So, I would say the quality of our conversations have changed.

Why Job Crafting Turns Work into a Refuge: The Mechanisms

My findings revealed three mechanisms through which job crafting turned work into a refuge — getting distracted from event-related thoughts, experiencing emotional counterpoint to event-generated feelings, and feeling supported — each of which responded to event-generated needs: the need for a mental break, emotional balance, and support. In this section, I elaborate on those mechanisms in more detail.

Getting distracted from event-related thoughts. Almost all job crafting tactics distracted people from event-related thoughts. The exceptions were the following tactics: opening up and sharing more personal information, increasing the number of interactions at work that included event-related topics, and deepening the quality of interactions related to the event. Through distracting, people’s work became a place that kept their mind in the present as opposed to returning to recurring thoughts, thus, addressing the need for a mental break. Those thoughts were generally related to the past, such as memories or regrets about what was or was not done, or to the future, such as what to do next or how to build a life without the person who was gone. Job crafting, in contrast, provided the opportunity to stay in the present. “It was mindfulness,”

Valeria, an executive associate who lost her brother, noted. Thus, people could disconnect from overwhelming, event-related thoughts and focus on a task or interaction requiring immediate attention. As senior laboratory technician Waylen, who experienced a breakup and engaged in job expanding and interactions expanding as forms of job crafting, suggested:

Work kept me as best as it could have kept me distracted so that I wasn't just, you know, in my own thoughts. [...] it's something to keep my mind where I have to focus on the work so that my mind can't wander to other things that I was, you know, going through that time.

Similarly, business executive Chad emphasized that, for him, it was interaction with people at work that distracted him and, thus, helped him cope. He suggested that he increased such interactions, which allowed him to disconnect from overwhelming thoughts about the death of his sister-in-law:

When you're working with another person, your mind is with that person, so you're not caught up in your own grief. You're not caught up on what you gotta do tonight. You're just engaged, and you're in the moment. So, working with people allows you to be in the moment, in the present as opposed to when you're not working with people. Then you wander to the future and wander in the past. [...] In other words, it was my intent to increase talking to people.

Likewise, Patricia, a teacher, suggested that work distracted her, giving mental breaks in between periods of processing. The breaks provided an opportunity to recharge in the work domain and then deal with breakup-related thoughts in the life domain. Such distraction then gave her the respite she needed to deal with what happened:

[Work] gave me the time that I could forget about it for a while and then at night I'd have to deal with it, or on the weekends, I'd have to deal with it, or at the holidays, I'd have to deal with it, and that was OK, but it had given me the respite that I needed to have the energy to deal with it when I had the time to do so.

And if something reminded some people about the event at work, they sought to eliminate the reminder and keep their focus on work. As Alex, a welder who experienced a breakup, shared:

It's like a distraction. [...] When I'm at work, and once in a while, you know, things would come up, like my coworkers would ask, like, "Well, how you doing? How's home?" I am, like, "Fine, I guess, but let's get back to work," because then I wouldn't have to think about it or deal with it. [...] That distraction of being at work, telling myself that it's OK to put my feelings, my personal emotions aside, what I'm going through my personal life aside, and just focus on this right now, that's like a vacation for myself.

Experiencing emotional counterpoint to event-generated feelings. Experiencing emotional counterpoint to how events made people feel was the other mechanism that allowed people to cope by engaging in job crafting behavior. It met the need for emotional balance. This mechanism also operated in all the job crafting tactics, except for opening up and sharing more personal information and deepening quality of interactions when they were related to the event. While people's life domains were broken, uncertain, and abnormal, participants' work domains remained cohesive, predictable, and ordinary, allowing them to experience normalcy and certainty while feeling emotional chaos in their life domains. When former school principal Lora lost her husband and children, work made her feel grounded in an otherwise upside-down world: "It was kind of the foundation or the rock that stabilized everything else, that stayed the same when the rest of the world changed." For business intern Isabelle, who lost her father, work provided a sense of steadiness whereas, in her personal life, everything felt unsteady and made no sense: "It was like a safe space where everything, like, made sense at the time. Like, nothing in my personal life made any sense, and so it [work] was reliable and steady."

Another common feeling in addition to grief in breakup-related events was a sense of failure; in contrast, at work, people felt successful. Nora, a project manager who experienced a breakup, described it as follows:

It was really helpful for me to have something that I knew I could succeed at, that I could control, 'cause it was, like, you know, my failed relationship was out of my control, and I had no control over what was going on. [...] [At work], I am certain

that I can control this, and I know that I can do a good job and that if I just, like, finish this, that, and the other thing, like, it is in my control to succeed.

Furthermore, residential life coordinator Michael felt unfulfilled in his relationship so sought fulfillment by working more intensely: “I was feeling fulfilled there [at work] where I wasn’t in the relationship.” And for teacher Patricia, who experienced a breakup, it was challenging to stay at home, where her ex-husband remained for some time after their split, like a constant reminder of the reason they broke up. As a result, she engaged in job expanding as a form of job crafting that, at work, produced positive emotional experiences she lacked at home:

I felt humiliated and terrified at home, but I got to work [...] I felt cared for, safe. Um, you know, I felt like I was a whole — much more of a whole person here than I did when I went home [...] I felt appreciated, respected, and I felt like I was in control, whereas at home I wasn’t in control of anything.

Feeling supported. Such job crafting tactics as opening up and sharing more personal information, deepening the quality of interactions related to the event, and increasing the number of interactions at work that included event-related topics morphed work into a refuge because it made participants feel supported. Along with disrupting established life routines and introducing a range of negative feelings, the event made people vulnerable. Such vulnerability created a need for support. Although some people may have had a well-developed support system in their life domains, they often still sought support in all domains, including work. This was the case for project manager Nancy, who experienced the loss of her mother. She engaged in interactions enriching as a form of job crafting behavior, which, because she felt supported, allowed her to reinforce work as a refuge:

I really sought the support of people in my work network, and I was fortunate to be working in an organization that was very supportive [...] I think it [work] definitely was [helpful] [...] having all those relationships that were present for me throughout that really difficult period in my life and so I received support from those people.

Others did not have a well-developed support system in their life domain or had no access to it because they lived far away from loved ones. For instance, in the case of relational manager Kate, who lost her husband and opened up more to her coworkers, work became the place she could rely on for a support system and a refuge from isolation:

Work provided a support system, social interactions, so I didn't become isolated. [...] it was an important source of social interaction for me, since I really kind of came to the point where I had no immediate family left, especially when I, you know, lost my husband. It's just me now and the cats.

Still, others had high expectations and requirements for themselves and attempted to appear OK when they did not feel OK. For those engaging in interactions enriching form of job crafting allowed to turn work into a refuge from those expectations. It was a safe space where people could connect to others, process the event, and feel accepted even when not being their best selves. For instance, office manager Lori, who experienced a breakup, suggested that opening up and sharing what happened with her colleagues allowed her to feel supported and accepted, i.e., to feel that it is OK not to be OK:

I knew that I could count on my friends [at work] to support me, and they knew that I was going through a hard time, yet they still supported me. And I didn't necessarily — oh, that's where I was going to say, I didn't have to be strong all by myself. I could rely on other people to help me. If I was having a bad day, they could say, "It's OK to have a bad day. Let's go for a walk after work, or let's go to dinner."

Indeed, it was often challenging to stay as productive at work as during normal times. Although the majority still did their best to figure out how to stay productive, with some feeling that they were even more productive than before the event, one exception was Sophia, who relied on her coworkers to get her job duties completed. This was another type of support altogether for Sophia, a facilities director who experienced a breakup, that resulted from engaging in interactions enriching form of job crafting behavior:

They [coworkers] helped me through this. [...] Like, that's what I mean about all these people are ... debt of gratitude. They covered for me when I couldn't hit deadlines. They helped me pick up the pieces. My secretary is usually on all of the emails, so she knew what I needed, my responsibilities, and she organized the staff to pick up some of that.

Turning Work into a Refuge

As a result of job crafting as coping that via the aforementioned mechanisms allowed people to address event-generated needs otherwise unmet, people started seeing their work differently altering its meaning. It was not just work for them anymore, it was also a refuge from what was happening in their lives. In some rare cases people already used work as a refuge before the event and simply used it this way again when the grief-inducing event occurred. However, the majority did not experience work as a refuge previously and did not perceive it that way when the grief-inducing event happened. It was the result of engagement in other forms of job crafting, that people altered the meaning they assigned to their work. For example, IT security specialist Taylor stayed late at work doing extra tasks “to find the reason to be at work” when his breakup happened. Subsequently, Taylor started perceiving his work in a new way – “it is like the ostrich, I bury my head in the sand and my work was this sand pool.” Also, Henry, an animator, said that work became much more than just being work:

Before I got divorced, work was just like: “Oh, it's OK. I'll just go do my job and go home.” And then, you know, you realize what you have. It's like: “Oh, work can be so much more for me than just go work, earn money, go home.” I mean, there's so much more... like emotional support... I relied on my church too, but I mean, I mean work, work was great. It really kept me preoccupied so I wouldn't go crazy.

Thus, engaging in the other forms of job crafting resulted in a form of cognitive job crafting when people reframed the meaning of their work adding a refuge aspect to it. In addition to “refuge”, participants also called their work “an anchor,” “a crutch,” “a hospital,” and “a vacation.” Silas, a software engineer who experienced the loss of a friend, said: “Work is, like,

separate physical space, almost, like, a weirdly like a vacation spot, like a beach house or something like that, which is totally different than the rest of life.” Alba, a head of publishing who experienced a breakup, referred to her work as “an anchor”:

To me, it felt like an anchor. It was like, “OK, I’m gonna have this thing and it’s gonna stay with me and it’s like a reliable thing that I have that pays me well and I can live off of it.”

And Robert, a financial advisor who went through a breakup, suggested:

It [work] was a refuge. It was, like, you know, it was where I didn’t have to think about it, where I could, like, build my skills up and feel like I had control over something, that I was getting better at something.

Perceived Consequences of Job Crafting as Coping

The mechanisms through which job crafting allowed participants to turn work into a refuge also led to consequences people perceived. The informants suggested that consequences took place in both the work and life domains and tended to be positive. Consistent with prior research, I found that people saw work-related consequences as the result of engaging in promotion-oriented job crafting behavior, such as professional growth and an increase in organizational commitment. However, in addition to work-related outcomes, people also saw life-related consequences, such as avoidance of worsening depression and substance abuse, expanded friendship network, and personal growth. Nevertheless, those who were involved in very intense job crafting for a long period of time (a process often accompanied by added stress and poor self-care) suggested that, along with positive consequences, some were also negative, such as decreased quality of life and delayed processing of the event. The negative consequences were generally suggested by participants who worked one-and-a-half to two times harder for more than three months. Some consequences occurred immediately during the period of job crafting, and others occurred afterward, when the informants were no longer involved in job

crafting. In the following sections, I explain the consequences in more detail. I also provide illustrative examples of each consequence in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

Professional growth. Working longer hours and doing more work eventually resulted in professional recognition. Those who spent more time at work learning new, work-related skills or volunteering also suggested that their work skills developed as a result of those activities. Thus, such changes in work behavior resulted in professional growth in one way or another. For instance, Mika, a health program specialist who experienced a breakup, noted that he received validation from his colleagues for the extra work he did: “I started being more seen and validated by my supervisor and the people that I work with, and they started thanking me for some of the things that I would do.” Lori, an office manager who experienced a breakup, said that the way she worked when grieving her relationships contributed to her promotion: “I do truly think that because I was working so hard at that point in time, and I was trying so hard, I think that’s part of the reason I got a promotion.” Similarly, Robert, a financial advisor who experienced a breakup, suggested that the extra effort he put into work — working harder, longer hours, learning new skills — allowed him to “climb the ladder fast”:

All of the stuff, all the research I did, I figured out how to do this job and so I climbed the ladder fast. We have 10 levels and so, like, level 10 is really hard to get, to do, and you kind of progress throughout, and so, I went from level 0 to level 4 in a year, which is super-fast when you’re doing it yourself.

Increase in organizational commitment. Additionally, people believed that job crafting behavior increased their organizational commitment. If some knew prior to the event that they had a supportive network at work on which they could rely, others did not expect they would

find so much support and compassion in the workplace. As a result of opening up, deepening the quality of interactions at work, as well as spending more time with coworkers, not only did they receive support, but they also became more loyal to their organization because of the people who work there. For instance, although Sophia, a facilities director who experienced a breakup, did not enjoy her work much and considered retirement, she said that, after the grieving experience, she enjoyed her job a lot more “because it's no longer about what I do, but who I do it with [...] and I don't have any plans to retire anytime soon.” Similarly, licensed sales agent Griselda, who lost her father, suggested she still worked for the company because of her colleagues who supported her when she was grieving:

I don't know another company that would make me feel safe and support me on so many different levels that maybe they do. Yeah, the culture and the people are really the only reason I'm still at the company, like, it's not the job, it's the people.

For some people, not only relational factors at work contributed to organizational commitment but also having the opportunity to immerse in their work. Patricia, a teacher who went through a breakup, was going to look for a job at another school before the event. However, she changed her mind because she realized what a supportive workplace she had as well as how escaping into it could be helpful during challenging times:

I value this place I think even more. I value the campus and the ability to feel safe, and, like, it's a second home. I've called it my second home many times, and some of my long-term colleagues don't feel that way 'cause they've never had to feel like it was their place of escape like I did. So, I think — I definitely hope — that I have retained my appreciation for the place and the people.

Avoidance of worsening depression and substance abuse. Because of the event, it was easy to slide into depression. People believed that working longer hours and staying focused on work allowed them to avoid that. Taylor, an IT security specialist who experienced a breakup,

believed that taking extra shifts, doing extra work, and learning new skills that filled in the extra time spent at work made him not fall deeper into depression:

I was probably a bit depressed, but the fact that I did not let myself think about it, not let myself sink in depression, I did not fall deeper and deeper, and I did not have time. So, it was a good thing that I tried to keep myself busy.

Likewise, Adan, a real estate developer, suggested that using work to cope with the breakup allowed him to avoid worsening depression:

I think that [immersing in work] was probably what saved me from spiraling into a deep dark sadness because I was able to focus my energy and pain somewhere, it allowed me to have an outlet.

For others, the event raised the risk of alcohol abuse or engagement in other harmful activities. Job crafting helped them avoid that as well, as in the case of licensed sales agent Griselda, who lost her father:

I've definitely struggled with drinking and stuff, and so it's, like, if I just stay off, if I stay working, and I just keep working, then I'm not going to fall into that pattern or feeling like I need to go home and have a drink.

Expanded friendship network. Some participants suggested that their friendship network had expanded as a result of job crafting. Opening up and sharing more personal information connected people on a personal level, beyond the work one, as John, a fair lieutenant who experienced a breakup, noted: "I think I kind of developed relationships with people that I probably wouldn't have otherwise on a personal level, as opposed to just like a work workplace level." As a result, in addition to building stronger relationships with coworkers within the work context, some people suggested that they continued developing those relationships in the life

domain. For instance, Alex, a welder, said that one of his colleagues with whom he shared about the breakup, became his friend:

One of them stopped being just a coworker and is now somebody that, you know, I would call a friend, somebody that I like to get together with on the weekend. Yesterday we watched Ukraine-England play together so, yeah, that's great.

Furthermore, some people noted that they continued interacting with colleagues outside of work even when they no longer worked at the same company, as happened with Theresa, a teacher who lost her mother:

I definitely appreciate my colleagues and the support of my colleagues. That hasn't stopped even with changes and stuff, you know there's... I still have some lifelong friends that came out of that experience.

Personal growth. Some participants remarked that the whole experience and the way they behaved within their work context during the grief period led to personal growth. For instance, after returning to a normal schedule, some participants realized in hindsight that they did not want to work that much and that they had other activities in their lives to which they wanted to devote their time. Project manager Karoline, who worked nights and weekends to alleviate the pain of a breakup, was one of those. This experience led her to reconsider her work-life balance:

I realized that I don't want to work that much. [...] I realized that I was working in such a way... I just wanted temporarily to go there, but I'd not like to work like that constantly. [...] Work will satisfy 1/7 of my life ambitions and goals. This is what I got for sure.

Similarly, Nick, a software engineer who experienced a breakup, decided to dedicate more high-quality time to his kids to catch up with the lack of time he was dedicating to them when working almost twice more than his work required:

I'm looking back and thinking like: "Wow, OK, last year went by really fast. What the heck was I even doing the whole time?" And it was all just work, work, work. [...] Yeah, that last year was pretty pretty crummy for the kids.

Furthermore, staff development specialist Tori, whose friend died and who experience a breakup later, suggested that the decision to use work to cope with the events made her realize that she can create conditions on her own that will help her deal with difficult situations, including using work for that purpose:

I probably came to the thought that you can create conditions for yourself to deal with the situation, to feel more comfortable, to find additional resources, and including at work, you can get emotional support in understanding situations.

Decreased quality of life. Decreased quality of life occurred in different forms: some people constantly felt extreme fatigue, some experienced health deterioration, and some felt they did not dedicate enough time and attention to the life domain. A more detailed analysis suggested that in those cases intensive job crafting was generally accommodated by not taking care of oneself. For instance, some participants experienced a lack of sleep because of either their exhaustive work schedule or because of the event-related stress; they did not eat enough because of the stress caused by the event; and they were not as physically active as they normally were.

Henry, an animator who experienced a breakup, was one of those:

I was tired and then I come home, and I want to sleep, but then I have little kids, and I don't want to sleep in the day. I'd never see them. I mean, it was pretty terrible. My work schedule was bad. I don't know if I could do it now. I was younger then, but, yeah, it's very stressful, just, you know, working those kinds of hours and sitting all the time, and it wasn't healthy. It wasn't healthy for my mind or my body.

Likewise, after three intense months of working 12 hours per day, often including weekends, and not taking care of herself, Lori, an office manager who experienced a breakup, started to have “terrible migraines” that took several months to cure:

I'm working 12 hours a day. I'm not taking care of myself. I've got this expectation I put on myself. Nobody else put this expectation on. It was only me that I kept pushing myself to work harder, do more events, be better, to prove to everybody else that I was OK. So, it's kind of like they worked together and then the stress of both of that, the expectation I put on myself, caused a lot of those migraines.

Personal trainer Peter, whose girlfriend died, was one of those who suggested that, because of the high-level intensity they placed on themselves at work, they became less involved in relationships in their life domain that affected the quality of life: “I have no — absolutely no — personal life, you know. I’ve lost touch with most of my friends and much of my family, so those are probably negative outcomes.”

Delayed processing of the event. Finally, some participants identified delayed processing of the event as a negative consequence. This was the case for those who were engaged in too prolonged and intense job crafting related to job expanding. For instance, Mia, a campaign manager who experienced a breakup, observed that, nine months after it, too many things started suddenly triggering memories about her ex-boyfriend. Those situations caused delayed grief while right after the breakup, she immersed herself in work precisely to avoid grieving. She believes that, had she given herself space for grieving back then, she would not have had so frequent grief-inducing triggers nine months later:

If I had just let myself think about all the reasons I missed him and all the reasons I was sad and all the things that were good about it, that probably would not have happened. It would have been very sad, but, like, that would have been in the past. And I never actually did that. I was just, like, well, I have to get over him and focus on work, and when I did think about him, it was, like, negative things. Yeah, and now my brain is kind of reminding me that there’s a lot still.

Similarly, team leader Alan suggested that, ten months after a breakup, he finally faced the grief that he had been postponing by immersing himself in work. He concluded that, while work can be used as a helpful distraction therapeutically in the short run — providing mental breaks to deal with grief, for example —in the long run, that therapeutic quality diminishes, playing a harmful role instead:

I don’t think that was the best way of dealing with things. In hindsight, what I would conclude from that whole period was that work can be a very good distraction if

you also allow yourself time and mind space to deal with your emotions at the same time. If you don't, [like me] then work does not function as a therapeutic element anymore, but it just becomes a distraction, and I don't think it's healthy for me to avoid emotions. [...] And then, [ten months after the breakup], I had to still deal with the emotions that I basically had left in the queue for 10 months or a year. Yeah, and they, for me personally, emotions don't just go away. They will stay there. You have to work through them, work whilst they're somewhere in the closet.

Therefore, the analysis suggested the ambivalent role of promotion-oriented job crafting behavior, which, in some circumstances, can have negative consequences alongside positive ones.

DISCUSSION

I began my article by discussing that even in cases where organizational scholarship looks at work as a refuge rather than an inopportune obligation, a grieving employee is assigned the passive role of one who *finds* refuge in work. My research calls into question this assumption and shows that grievers do not only *find* refuge in their work, i.e., are passive stakeholders of organizational policies and passive recipients of support and compassion, but can also *turn* their work *into* a refuge as active actors by engaging in job crafting behavior. The use of a grounded theory approach yielded an inductive model of turning work into a refuge (Figure 1), adding breadth and precision to the literature on grief in organizations and job crafting. Specifically, as Figure 1 portrays, I discovered that a grieving employee turns work into a refuge by engaging in promotion-oriented job crafting behavior. Additionally, the study shows the perceived consequences that job crafting tactics produced (Figure 2). Those consequences took place in both the work and life domains and can be both positive and negative. In the remainder of this discussion, I elaborate on the theoretical and practical implications of these findings. I subsequently outline the limitations of the study and offer suggestions for future research.

Theoretical Contributions

My study makes three theoretical contributions to the literature on grief in organizations and on job crafting. The key contribution — that is, to the literature on grief in organizations— challenges the assumption that grievers are passive actors who *find* refuge in work. Additionally, my work contributes to the job crafting literature by bringing a more holistic perspective to it through introducing a non-work-related antecedent of job crafting and by adding needed balance to the understanding of the consequences of promotion-oriented job crafting behavior.

Grief in organizations. My findings and subsequent inductive model for turning work into a refuge make the paper's major contribution to the growing literature on grief in organizations by recognizing that grieving employees can act agentially to change their work to be a refuge. The current state of the literature sees work as a burden, an inopportune obligation for grieving employees (e.g., Freidin et al., 2020; Hazen, 2008; Wilson et al., 2020) or a place where employees who go through challenging times can find distraction from grief (Freidin et al., 2020), support, compassion (Dutton et al., 2006; Fisk, 2023; Freidin et al., 2020; Hazen, 2003, 2008; Hochschild, 1997) and even a refuge (Hochschild, 1997). In both cases, an employee is assigned the passive role of someone who either does or does not find comfort in work activities and relationships. My study uncovers the nuances of the work-as-refuge phenomenon and challenges the idea that work is a place where people only passively find refuge, support, and compassion (Dutton et al., 2006; Freidin et al., 2020; Petriglieri & Maitlis, 2019). Instead, my findings suggest that people can also become active agents in turning their work into a refuge for themselves. Specifically, people are likely to turn their work into a refuge when they lack well-established coping mechanisms; work has a higher level of importance compared to other types of activities; and when prior work experiences are positive that involves

positive emotional experiences, engaging work, and supportive environment. Thus, my study returns agency to a grieving employee and, to my knowledge, is the first that explicates the processes occurring within the work-as-refuge phenomenon, including during overtime hours (Latack, 1986), as well as shows how those processes affect a griever's work and life. This knowledge changes our understanding of grief in organizations by highlighting that grieving employees may be more actively shaping the way they engage with their work than previously understood. In so doing, my research draws attention to the importance of agency of a grieving employee for future research on grief in organizations.

Furthermore, my study brings clarity to understanding the uniqueness of the reasons a grieving employee might want to use work to cope by introducing cognitive, emotional, and relational needs grief-inducing events generate. Consequently, it provides directions in understanding how such unique experiences should be taken into account by organizational stakeholders. While existing research introduced a needs-supplies fit perspective in regard to relational needs fit, i.e., the necessity to meet specific employees' needs through relationships at work rather than through providing general support (Ehrhardt & Ragins, 2019), I complement and extend this perspective by introducing cognitive needs fit (such as a need for a mental break) and emotional needs fit (such as a need for emotional balance). For example, if one individual feels helpless and the other one feels like a failure due to an event, those individuals have different needs that they will try to address turning work into a refuge seeking different emotional experiences at work (feeling helpful and feeling successful accordingly). By so doing, my research builds the foundation for a more detailed investigation of the uniqueness of the grieving experience, including the variety of needs grief-inducing events can generate depending, for example, on the context (e.g., the loss of a particular family member, breakup,

disability, disability of a family member) and how grieving employees can act in conjunction with the organizational stakeholders to address such needs.

Job crafting. The second contribution of my paper is that it reframes the job crafting literature by offering a more holistic perspective that expands work-related job crafting boundaries and introduces a non-work-related antecedent of job crafting. Particularly, my data shows that the antecedents of job crafting can go beyond the work domain and arise from the life domain, such as grief-inducing events. Job crafting is likely to cross the work-life boundary when the work domain has more potential than the life domain to meet unmet needs generated as a result of such an event. While the life domain generally evolved around the event, the work domain provided a space separate from the event. In that space, people could feel supported and take mental and emotional breaks from what was happening; they had a choice whether to process the event or to focus on work. Individuals then engaged in job crafting because their current work, if left unchanged, would not meet the needs generated by the event to the necessary extent; it is through job crafting that they transformed work into a refuge to make it address those needs. Those findings enrich job crafting theory, making it more comprehensive by expanding the work-context boundaries (Park & Park, 2021; Zhang & Parker, 2019). By so doing, the findings underscore the importance of understanding the holistic experiences of employees and acknowledging the impact personal life events can have on employees' work behavior and work-related decisions (Powell, Greenhaus, Allen, & Johnson, 2019). Thus, the holistic perspective directs future research toward further examining the antecedents of job crafting beyond the work context. For instance, although my paper is focused on one of the most difficult experiences one can have, these experiences are also objectively negative (at least in the context of Western culture). However, stressful life events go beyond negative experiences; for

example, when listing other stressful life events, scholars include marriage (Scully et al., 2000). Future research should examine whether and in what circumstances such stressful but emotionally positive events can prompt job crafting and what mechanisms go into play then.

Lastly, my study adds needed balance to the literature's existing focus on the positive effects of promotion-oriented job crafting behavior (Zhang & Parker, 2019) by uncovering perceived negative consequences of it. When people worked significantly harder for an extended period — i.e., a greater focus on work lasted for more than three months — in addition to positive consequences, they also experienced negative outcomes, such as a decreased quality of life and delayed processing of the event. While there are rare studies that show the dark side of job crafting (e.g., Harju et al., 2021; Demerouti et al., 2015), there is still a tendency to focus on positive outcomes of promotion-oriented job crafting. Therefore, the scholarship requires a deeper understanding of the dark side of job crafting (Grant & Ashford, 2008; Tims et al., 2021), especially of promotion-oriented job crafting, as well as the conditions that may add negative consequences to the positive ones (Weisman et al., 2022). My findings answer corresponding calls and expand our current understanding of the impact that promotion-oriented job crafting can have on people as well as illuminate the importance of time in the job crafting literature (Weisman et al., 2022), such as when promotion-oriented job crafting is too intense and prolonged, it leads to perceived negative consequences. In so doing, my research draws attention to the necessity of taking negative outcomes into account when exploring how job crafting behavior could be prompted. Furthermore, it provides insights for further investigation of why negative consequences could result from promotion-oriented job crafting behavior. In particular, the following questions present themselves: Did negative effects occur because the antecedent for promotion-oriented job crafting involved negative emotions? Or were there other reasons

specific to the context of grief that caused people to perceive negative outcomes? In other words, would it still be the case if the event was positive or still negative but unrelated to grief? Future research should explore those questions in both grief-related and non-grief-related contexts.

Practical Contributions

The findings here have practical relevance for employees who experience personal, grief-inducing events and for their managers. Knowing the tactics that employees can use to cope with the event provides opportunities for overcoming a difficult time and even benefitting from it. Also, knowing the potential negative consequences of certain coping tactics can stop a grieving employee from using them in a harmful way. As the findings show, the intensity of using work as a refuge differs, especially in terms of whether and how people engage in job expanding form of job crafting. While some may work extra hours over two weeks, others immerse themselves, even doubling their work hours for months. A fair question then arises: Is turning work into a refuge — particularly immersion in work — healthy? Despite respondents' repeated attestations to the helpful, positive effects of engaging in work as a refuge, the type of effects and their duration is complex. First, creating positive narratives about grief-inducing experiences and how one successfully deals with them through work can be another form of coping (e.g., Vough & Caza, 2017). Second, the job expanding form of job crafting is a coping strategy that primarily involves avoiding event-related thoughts and emotions. Avoidance strategies can have short-term benefits (Roth & Cohen, 1986). Because immediately processing grief-inducing events can lead to overwhelming distress, avoidance strategies can reduce it, providing needed time for absorbing stressful information and for a mobilization of effort to change or adapt to a new environment (Roth & Cohen, 1986). However, avoidance strategies are not recommended long term, as they can slow healing (Harper, O'Connor, & O'Carroll, 2015; Lepore, Silver, Wortman,

& Wayment, 1996). Moreover, while some participants emphasized their appreciation for work, several wished they had more time to process the event before returning to work. Thus, work as a refuge — particularly immersion in work — may not be a long-term solution for dealing with a personal, grief-inducing event, but it can provide a needed break till the person is ready to reflect on the challenging experience. Similarly, it can offer respite from processing the event.

Likewise, since leaders can shape the emergence of job crafting (e.g., Den Hartog & Belschak, 2012), managers who understand the work-as-refuge phenomenon can better help employees overcome challenging circumstances in several ways. First, they can create conditions that facilitate the experience of work-as-refuge for grieving employees. My study shows that positive experiences at work — such as performing engaging work; having positive emotional experiences; and having a safe, supportive workplace environment — before the event can facilitate the process of turning work into a refuge. Therefore, creating such conditions lays the foundation for using work as a refuge when needed, thus potentially transforming negative experiences into positive or even beneficial situations for both employee and employer.

Second, managers can support grieving employees by ensuring they have the right amount of agency over their job and providing job crafting opportunities (Schüler, Franzke, Boehnlein, & Baum, 2023), including those associated with relational crafting, allowing employees to activate new work relationships and reactivate those that may have languished (Wu, Antone, Srinivas, DeChurch, & Contractor, 2021). In the two instances when people felt unable to alter their jobs to meet event-generated needs, work felt more of a burden than a refuge. However, those with agency over their jobs suggested work played a mostly positive role, which they reinforced by engaging in promotion-oriented job crafting behavior. Thus, I

argue that, while it is important to create the conditions that facilitate the coping process, it is also critical for grieving employees to use the conditions as they see fit.

Third, managers can prevent the potentially harmful effects of too intense and lengthy immersion in work. My findings show that short-term immersion produces positive outcomes. However, when people work significantly harder, adding stress and ignoring self-care, for more than three months, their quality of life suffers. A timely talk with a manager about the intensity of their job crafting behavior may prevent that suffering.

Furthermore, this study reveals that outsized efforts at work can signal to managers that an employee needs help due to pain and difficulty in their personal life. The literature on compassion suggests that noticing suffering is essential to the compassion process (Dutton et al., 2014). Indeed, people do not always share their personal lives with coworkers or managers. For managers whose employees do not disclose grief-inducing events, being aware of job crafting as coping can prevent them from misinterpreting an employee's behavior and signals that something is amiss in the employee's life. Additionally, understanding the work-as-refuge phenomenon can dispel unreasonable expectations, such as believing that the employee's new behavior (e.g., working overly hard) is permanent.

Transferability, Limitations, and Future Research

Recent trends, such as rising divorce rates (Amato & James, 2010) or the social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Stroebe & Schut, 2021), make investigating the context of grief-inducing events even more timely. The variety of study participants' occupations make the findings highly transferable. While the study sample generally represents knowledge workers (Alvesson, 2001), who, apart from few exceptions, received a college education or higher, the literature suggests that people can engage in job crafting regardless of their

occupation or education level, be they a lawyer (e.g., Sturges, 2012) or cleaner (e.g., Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), making the findings transferable to a wider audience.

However, the sample has several characteristics to consider: Its participants were able to return to their jobs, their work was unrelated to the death of a loved one or ex-partner, and they had stable work environments. Therefore, when they wanted to forget about the event, they could separate it from their work life, because work had no strong attachment to the event, and they did not experience any abnormal work-related stress. Yet not everyone will have those experiences. The relationship between work and the event can be more complex. For instance, a lost loved one may have worked in the same office (e.g., Aquino, Sheppard, Watkins, O'Reilly, & Smith, 2014; Han, 2012) or a coworker could have passed away (e.g., Peticca-Harris, 2019; Pfeffer, 2018). People can become unmoored when grieving and lose their jobs. Future research could explore the bigger picture and account for such complexities.

Additionally, the current study focuses on those who thought work helped them cope with the event. Therefore, it is no surprise that most participants suggested that work already was a source of positive experiences. It engaged them and offered a supportive environment and positive emotional experiences. However, not all employees will have the same circumstances; rather, it is a boundary condition for my study, which focused on the positive role of work. Thus, future research should explore factors affecting whether work will play a positive role of a refuge or will become an additional burden for a grieving employee.

Furthermore, although this paper provides insights on differences in the choice of job crafting tactics depending on the context of grief-inducing events (and, thus, needs such events generate), this is not the focus of the current study. Further research should explore in more depth the factors that affect people's job crafting choices, especially in relation to tactics that

distract from event-related thoughts versus those that allow to process the event. One such factor, for instance, can be traditional versus flexible work practices, such as hybrid or remote work, which are prevalent in the post-pandemic world (Rowley, 2023; Newman, Eva, Bindl, & Stoverink, 2022; Vyas, 2022). My own sample includes several remote workers. Although my data analysis did not provide insights on how their choice of job crafting forms differed from those who worked on site, it might be because my study focused not on the differences but on the overall processes that grieving employees' behavior incorporated when turning work into a refuge. Thus, having the remote workers in my sample suggests my findings are transferable to any work setting. However, it does not contradict the idea that remote and on-site workers may make different choices related to job crafting forms. Another factor to consider is that the choice of job crafting tactics might be affected by how people think about their identities (Linville, 1987; Thoits, 1986); for example, whether people are integrators or segmentors among their different identities (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006). Thus, I invite explorations of the factors that can affect the selection of job crafting forms.

Regarding the cultural context, the sample was generally based on a U.S. population but also included French, Dutch, and Russian representatives. I observed no differences in their behavior, probably because each represented Western culture. Thus, the findings likely can be transferred to other countries with a Western culture. Yet culture can matter for work-life interconnections (Allen, French, Dumani, & Shockley, 2020; Ollier-Malaterre & Foucreault, 2017), how people view work (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton 1985), and, hence, how they engage in it as a refuge. Including non-Western participants in future research may unearth cultural differences in how work-as-refuge is used.

Conclusion

The effects of personal grief-inducing events may last for years (Davis & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001). People cannot fast forward to a moment when they have begun to recover. They must go through the process of coping with the event to stay on track with their lives. The participants of this study chose work as a place to cope with their grief. Work then became a refuge, albeit a refuge that was actively shaped by their actions. Though their life routines were broken by painful events, people engaged in job crafting behavior and modified their work routines which led to perceived consequences in both work and life domains.

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TABLE 1.**Job crafting tactics**

Form of job crafting	Tactics	Illustrations
Job expanding	Broadening the scope of tasks	I had the opportunity to dig deeper into more complex issues, to handle things that people do not want to do, you know, sometimes in IT, and I think it is the same thing for all the work, you always have small tasks that do not really bother you but that could really improve your daily work if they were done. But nobody ever wants to do them. (IT Security Specialist, breakup) I was trying to create more tasks, more things to distract from, more projects. (Senior Laboratory Technician, breakup)
	Volunteering for tasks not normally part of the job	I like teaching, and it was just another way of working to make me feel like I was making a difference and using my skills and knowledge. And it was an evening thing, so it gave me something to do in the evening. (Former School Principal, death of husband and children) I decided to pick up some things that weren't as related to my position. So, our agency is doing COVID-19 testing, and so I went out with teams, I'd go to homeless shelters and help to do the testing events there. (Health Program Specialist, breakup)
	Learning new, work-related skills	I preoccupied my time. If I'm thinking about work, I'm not thinking about my problems and if I have extra work to do or I'm even learning something new, like, sometimes I would even do training videos. (Animator, breakup) It was learning more, learning more skills because I had to change some things, right, so, the way the pandemic is going and it's like, you know, a lot of things are working toward remote work and the work-from-home thing. (CEO, breakup)
	Task fulfillment adjusting	Putting more effort into tasks I worked both harder and smarter because I had time to do both. [...] The tasks that I did... I was extremely meticulous, I made sure that they were 100% perfect because they were already not very hard and I had the time to do it. (Content Manager, breakup) I think I even put in an excessive effort. I may have shifted my focus from my loss to work. (Sales manager, death of a grandfather)
	Reprioritizing tasks	If it was a case of who wants to go outside with the kids or who wants to do quiet things that are less interactive, I would typically choose the type of things that would keep me more busy, you know, so being outside and roughing their games, they're more active, play versus spending the time with their more quiet, calm kind of play. I probably did take more of the more active things to keep my mind busier. (Childcare Worker, death of a mother) I would spend a lot of time speaking with prospects, meeting new prospects, whereas I could have spent more time coaching my interns. (Team Leader, breakup)

	Inventing new ways of implementing tasks	<p>What I ended up doing is I would write some macros on my computer, like Excel macros. [...] So, I would run it and it would just kind of look at that and so it would like highlight areas where maybe I made a mistake or it would show, you know if something was not built in and then I can go back and fix it. (Project manager, death of a father)</p> <p>I was making daily activities like don't forget, I mean, really obvious things that were part of my job. Yeah, much much more list-oriented than I am now or then or before then. (Office Manager, breakup)</p>
Interactions expanding	Increasing the number of interactions at work	<p>I was more interested in talking to people more, or going to lunch or things like that as opposed to before I would sometimes eat at my desk or I wouldn't even take lunch at all. (Animator, breakup)</p> <p>When you're talking to other people, that just helps you, it's just better than not talking, period. [...] In other words, it was my intent to increase talking to people [clients]. (Business Executive, death of a sister-in-law)</p>
	Engaging in more social events with coworkers	<p>After work, if there was even an inclination that they were going to go do something at work, then I would ask, which I never would before if I could tag along. Because now I'm either gonna go tag along with them or go home alone, so preferably I'm going to tag along and have a good time. So, I was definitely more prominent and present in their social circles after the breakup. (Real Estate Developer, breakup)</p> <p>I went out drinking with my coworkers more often than I had before. [...] At work, I did try to become more involved with various groups or committees. (Content Manager, breakup)</p>
Interactions enriching	Opening up and sharing more personal information	<p>Up to that level, yeah, that was like the first time [when I opened up], I mean other than that, it was always pretty light, nothing, nothing as serious. (Senior Laboratory Technician, breakup)</p> <p>It was nice to be able to kind of discuss things [with coworkers] and not be able to, you know... I processed emotions on my own accord and things like that, but it was nice to have a support system like that [...] It was really cathartic to a degree to try to talk about it. (Artist, death of a father)</p>
	Deepening the quality of interactions	<p>[Before the event, it was] the normal stuff, but not anything really heavy or intense or super personal, like "What she did on the weekend" or "Where you going on vacation?", and that kind of stuff, "What you had for dinner last night?" You know, that the normal work conversations you have in passing but not super deep. [...] Yeah, and then they, the people start sharing similar stories and events in their own lives, right? [...] then it's more personal and deeper. (Facilities Director, breakup)</p> <p>The conversations might have been deeper. [...] For those coworkers who were willing [to go to the depth in conversations], and when we had time, we could go to a new deep place that we didn't go before. (Pharmacist, death of a father)</p>

TABLE 2.

Mechanisms leading job crafting to turn work into a refuge

Mechanism	Illustration
Getting distracted	<p>It [work] distracted me. When you teach you completely forget about yourself because you're dividing all of your energy into other people. Like, all you want is to help the 30 children in front of you. So, when you're teaching from the classroom, you don't exist. Almost, like, all about them. So then it enables you to kind of leave your problems outside. Or when you go home, you have to deal with them again, but at work, you don't really think about yourself 'cause you don't have time 'cause you're busy, busy, busy. (Teacher, death of grandmother)</p> <p>I remember feeling that was just the main thing was like “Oh, I haven't even thought about [friend's name] for a few hours.” And that, you know, that was at least, like, the bit of respite. (Software Engineer, death of a friend)</p>
Experiencing emotional counterpoint to event-generated feelings	<p>[At work] there were some acquaintances, people, it was still different emotions, I could laugh with someone, think about something, worry about the work situation, then it would be solved, I would feel satisfaction that it had been solved. (Operations Director, breakup)</p> <p>I feel like spending some of that extra time at work I think might have been a way to help bolster my sense of self-importance where if I was feeling inconsequential or feeling like I didn't matter. I feel like spending the extra time at work was a way to say “No, no, I'm doing something important, I am valuable.” (Database Administrator, breakup)</p>
Feeling supported	<p>We had a really great relationship that we had built up at that point and she [the manager] was really understanding and supportive. Uh, and so I felt like I could be honest about what was what, you know, where I was at in a given moment and how things were going. And she was super understanding. (Analyst, breakup)</p> <p>If something was late, if something was not communicated clearly if there was something off, I don't want to sound like an excuse, but I may not have been at my best, and people were willing to accept that and gave a little bit more grace. They would – instead of saying, like, “Why is this like this? Why is this wrong?,” they would say, “Are you sure? Can we double-check?” And I recognized that, and I said, “OK, let me look. Let me double check.” (Director of Operations, death of a grandfather)</p>

TABLE 3.

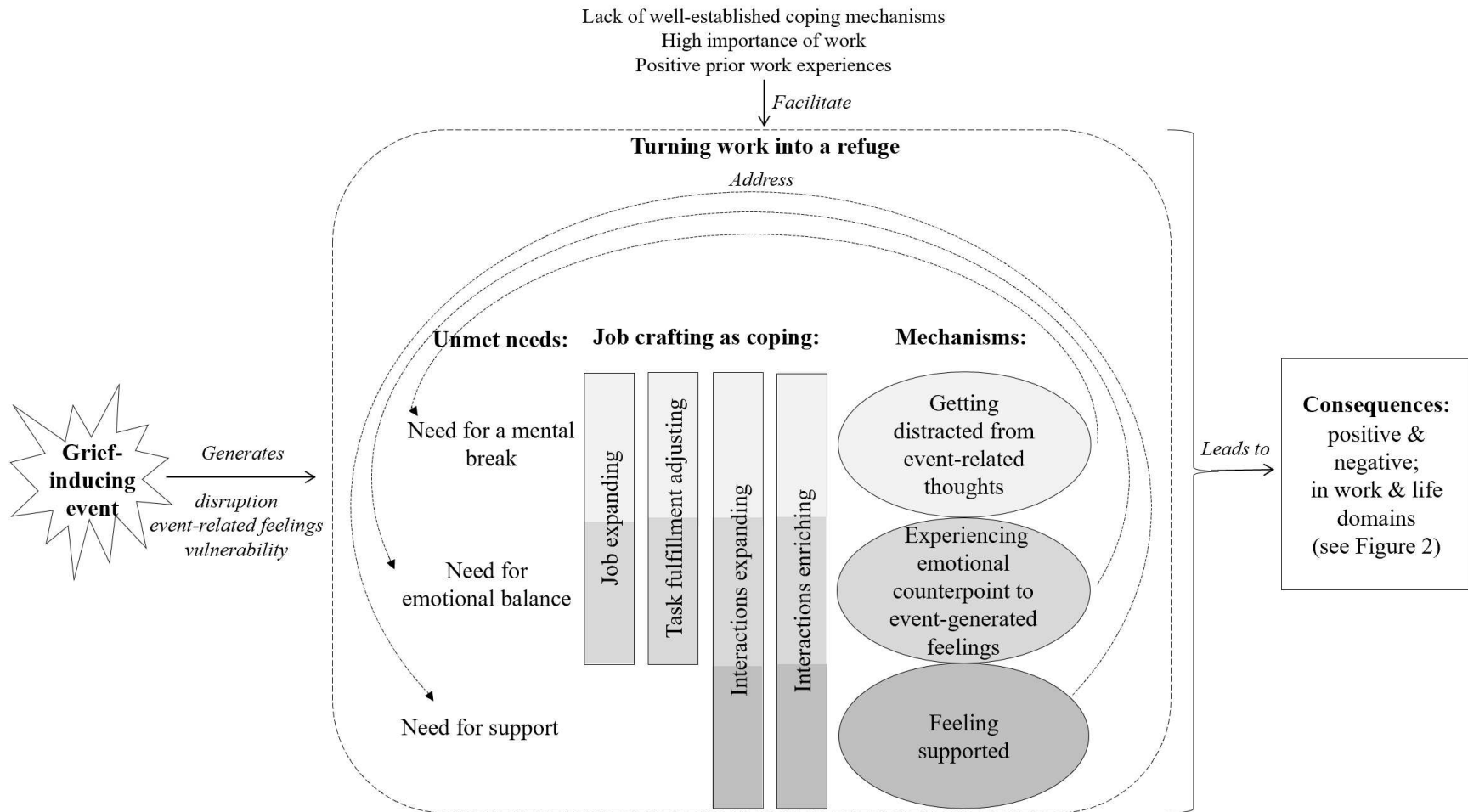
Perceived consequences of job crafting as coping

Domain	Consequences	Illustration
Work domain consequences	Professional growth	<p>I was praised. I was a great efficient manager. [...] I definitely think I showed myself because I was repeatedly told, “How happy we are that you are working with us,” the director said, “That you work with me,” “Thanks to you the start-up of a kindergarten was right on time as we wanted.” (Project Manager, breakup)</p> <p>I improved my skills, so I learned things I was not necessarily supposed to know. [...] It helped me in the future to obtain the job I have today, I think. (IT Security Specialist, breakup)</p>
	Increase in organizational commitment	<p>It helped build my loyalty to my organization [...] it was like to be in a work environment where it felt like I could go through something like that and people could demonstrate caring empathy and understanding and where I could have the flexibility to manage my emotions and my life and my work in a way that worked for me. I really valued that and I could see the value in it and that has made it feel like, oh, this is a really good working environment for me and one that I'd like to stay in. And so, I think in that sense this is the longest I've ever been at a particular job or like with a particular organization, and I think that that is probably a part of it is that to be able to see that I could, like, go through a hard time when I wasn't my best self. (Analytics Director, breakup)</p> <p>That support was really important to me. Before, it might have been like “Oh, you know, if I need to find a new job, I can find a new job” or “it's OK, I can do that.” And, so, this [organization's name's] community has become like a home to me, really important. (Office Manager, breakup)</p>
Life domain consequences	Avoidance of worsening depression & of substance abuse	<p>I do not want to be dramatic, but I know that people that have trouble at home start drinking or this kind of thing, and at least I did not have time to do it (IT Security Specialist, breakup)</p> <p>I could have turned to alcohol and I could have turned to drugs, I could have turned to, you know, stuff that was really destructive. And, you know, and I didn't do any of that. (Personal Trainer, death of a girlfriend)</p>
	Expanded friendship network	<p>The first guy that I mentioned he was the first one that I told; I still interact with him on an almost daily basis. [...] Actually, we just went and had drinks on Saturday and then he came over and we hung out and I showed him some of my projects. So, there's a little bit of finally getting to the point where we can have some outside of work interactions. Yeah, I definitely consider him a friend. (Software Engineer, breakup)</p> <p>They became more like friends in addition to coworkers. Uhm, and even after that period, I would be interested to spend time with them or talk with them because of the closeness that we</p>

	had developed. (Management & Program Analyst, death of a girlfriend)
Personal growth	Some of the good things that came out of that, I learned a lot about myself, what is important to me and my job, my workplace values. (Office Manager, breakup) I think knowing how I was [working hard] during those nine months [...] I knew I didn't want either one of those things. [...] I have plenty of plans, surprises for me and friends, things like that, to be able to just live all the time instead of work all the time. (Life Coach, breakup)
<i>NEGATIVE:</i> Decreased quality of life	If you have so much stress and you put everything on your shoulders you have this cortisol that's consistent [...] I also understood after a period of time working with the doctor that I had an autoimmune disorder that they didn't realize so that was something because I was so focused on work. [...] I think working that many hours it's hard to take care of yourself because you will end up working so long that you really can't you don't give yourself the time. (Real Estate Developer, breakup) I think it was helpful at the time, but, like, I mean, I still neglected other relationships and things that I enjoyed. (Senior Claims Adjuster, death of father)
<i>NEGATIVE:</i> Delayed processing of event	I think I'm putting a band-aid on a bullet hole a little bit, you know, and maybe I'm not fully processing everything. Maybe I'm just kind of suppressing it and repressing it and putting it away and pretending it doesn't exist. [...] I know that it [immersion into work] is obsessive. I know that I'm just covering it up and I'm putting a band-aid on something that I haven't processed and let go of in any way. (Personal Trainer, death of a girlfriend). The more time passes, the more certain things trigger me and I'm like, oh, wow, I'm still holding on to all these things that maybe I would have fixed by now, or maybe I would have moved past, but like memories that I haven't allowed myself to think about and stuff... So yeah, I think like overall it's good, and it made me almost a better worker, but yeah, there's a lot of catching up to do mentally. (Campaign Manager, breakup)

FIGURE 1.

Model of Turning Work into a Refuge from a Personal, Grief-Inducing Event



Note: Shades of gray illustrate how different job crafting forms are connected to different mechanisms.

FIGURE 2.

Perceived Consequences of Job Crafting as Coping

Consequences		
	Work domain	Life domain
Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Professional growth- Increase in organizational commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Avoidance of worsening depression & of substance abuse- Expanded friendship network- Personal growth
Negative		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Decreased quality of life- Delayed processing of event

APPENDIX

Selected Questions from the Interview Protocol

1. You said you were willing to share the personal grief-inducing event that happened in your life. Please tell me about it. What exactly happened and when?
2. Tell me more about the work you did back then.
3. How did the event affect your life?
4. What emotions did the event cause?
5. For how long were you under the event's effect? How long was the period of intense grieving?
6. During this time, what role did work play for you/ *how work was helping you?*
7. What has changed (if anything) in the way you were working during that period?
8. Talking about your schedule, what has changed? *Did you start working more or less? How much? What did you do during this extra time?*
9. Talking more about the tasks you did – did you change anything? *Why?*
10. Tell me more about the interactions with people at work back then. How different was it from the interaction before the event?
11. What made you work like that?
12. How long were you working like that?
13. The changes that you made in the way you were working, what effect did they have on your work back then? Did they have positive and/or negative effects?
14. Talking about the impact on your life – how did the way you worked affected your life? *(in positive and negative ways)*
15. Taking a long-term perspective, what effect did the way you worked back then have on your professional life later on? *(in positive and negative ways)*
16. And how about non-professional life effects in a long-term perspective? *(in positive and negative ways)*
17. What else helped you cope with the event?
18. Back then, what do you think made you use work as a way of coping rather than hobbies, for instance, or any other kinds of activities?
19. Before I ask you something else about that time, let me ask you a general question. Different people see different meanings in their work. I will give you a description of the three types of meaning presented in the literature. In terms of the meaning you would give to your work right now, please evaluate each description from 1 to 7, where 1 is being not at all similar to you and 7 is being very much similar to you (adapted from Wrzesniewski et al., 1997 and Berg et al., 2010). What made you choose this rating?
20. So, this is the metaphor you chose for your work in general. How about the time when the event happened, what metaphor would you choose for work in terms of the role it played for you back then? What makes you choose this metaphor?

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