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Collective Impacts through Job Crafting in a Unionized Worker Cooperative

ABSTRACT

This case study examines the impact of union worker cooperatives, with the case of Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA), on the proactive efforts of precarious workers to change their work experience and environment. Our investigation centers on workers' job crafting, defined as workers' self-initiated actions to redesign roles in alignment with identity, values, and needs to find meaning in their work. The findings highlight that CHCA's organizational structure and strategies, as a union cooperative, positively influence workers' job crafting, leading to improved individual work experiences, a reshaped work environment, and fostering worker prerogatives. The paper finds a yet unidentified form of job crafting—organizational job crafting showcasing a bottom-up organizational change process within CHCA's non-hierarchical structure. This research advances our understanding of how union worker cooperatives facilitate worker empowerment through innovative individual and organizational-level initiatives.

KEY-WORDS

UNION WORKER COOPERATIVES, JOB CRAFTING, PRECARIOUS WORKERS, ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES, SOCIAL CHANGES

1. Introduction

In the U.S., formal cooperatives and unions emerged in the early days of capitalist industrialization as common collectivist models to protect the interests of workers, their families, and their communities from the growing social, economic, and political disparities of that period (Curl, 2010). Over time, cooperatives and unions developed on their own paths as distinct ways of protecting the interests of those with low incomes, power, and influence. There have been historical examples where unions developed cooperatives to benefit their members (Rothschild and Whitt, 1986), a kind of parent-subsidiary relationship. Recently, unions and worker cooperatives have created a new organizational model connecting these independent entities equally. This model allows them to complement each other in significant ways, enhancing worker voice and accountability across multiple levels of governance (Criscitiello, 2023). This model has been termed unionized cooperatives, called union-coops (Bird, Mangan and McKeown, 2021).

The recent focus on alternative economic, organizational, and environmental models is driven by rising wealth disparities and a growing awareness of the social and environmental consequences of traditional profit-maximizing models. These alternative models criticize hierarchical decision-making processes and profits for a select few, often at the expense of fostering community, environmental, and worker benefits (Bardhan, 1988). The focus on alternatives has also led to the use of hybrid organizational structures to achieve intersecting objectives, such as social and economic outcomes. In that effort, attention has returned to unions and cooperatives as existing forms in the search for more pro-social and pro-worker organizational and governance models, especially for precarious workers[1] and others subject to labor market insecurities (Bird, Mangan and McKeown, 2021).

The research focuses on Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA), the largest worker cooperative in the U.S. CHCA is a home care agency located in the Bronx, New York City. CHCA was founded in 1985 by the Community Service Society (CSS), an antipoverty nonprofit organization, specifically to create employment opportunities for women of color and immigrant women who often are in precarious work circumstances. In 2003, CHCA invited SEIU's (Service Employees International Union) Local 1199 union (hereafter, the 1999 union), the largest healthcare union in New York City, to organize its workers, creating a union co-op, a multi-organizational hybrid (Mandiberg and Kim, 2021; Pinto, 2021). This represents one of several efforts in the U.S. to rejoin unions and cooperatives to achieve social and financial sustainability objectives (Pinto, 2021).

Our prior paper from this research highlighted the successful CHCA union co-op as a multi-organizational hybrid that has not adequately addressed a critical aspect of its matrix-based hybrid

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[1] Precarious work is defined as waged work with uncertainty, instability, insecurity, low negotiating power for workers, and/or where workers assume the risks associated with their work rather than businesses or the government (Kalleberg and Vallas, 2017).

model. The hybrid nature of such organizations combines two distinct institutional logics and organizational identities (Mandiberg and Kim, 2021). If the hybrid venture does not help workers resolve discrepancies and potential conflicts from these different logics, it is left to workers themselves to do so, perhaps with each worker resolving them differently.

This paper addresses what we found about one way the CHCA workers resolved different and competing institutional logics through the concept of *job crafting* (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001; Tims and Bakker, 2010). Job crafting activities are individual worker-initiated proactive activities to alter their work experiences through changes they introduce in what they do (task crafting), who they interact with (relational crafting), and how they understand their work (cognitive crafting), all outside of their typical job descriptions and assigned responsibilities. The concept of job crafting has also been applied to interacting teams (Leana, Appelbaum and Shevchuk, 2009).

We found a very different kind of job crafting among the workers of CHCA, in addition to individual job crafting and, due to the solitary nature of home care work, very limited team crafting. The CHCA workers are involved in organizational-level job crafting (Kim, in press) due to the unique participation of workers in cooperative governance and democratic processes in the union. We understand this organizational level of job crafting as a way CHCA workers resolve some of the issues created by the different institutional logics of this hybrid model, including, in the case of the CHCA union co-op, decisions about which organization is responsible for different types of training, benefits, and worker protection mechanisms. Workers' job crafting activities to modify their work experiences and environments at the organizational level signify empowerment processes geared towards achieving greater control over their work, a social change issue.

The next section will review the definition and the history of union co-ops in the U.S. and present our theoretical framework through the job crafting theory. Then, we will analyze the unique case of the CHCA-1199 union co-op hybrid through the lens of this theory to address our research questions. In the discussion and implication sections, we will explore the implications of our findings within the broader research landscape on job crafting and union co-ops.

Additionally, we will introduce the notion of *organizational job crafting*, conceptualized as a method of navigating conflicting institutional logic and other unaddressed complexities inherent in this hybridity. Finally, we will explore the implications of organizational job crafting for other current and proposed hybrid models, such as social enterprises and Ferreras' model of the *bicameral firm* (2023).

2. Union co-ops

Union co-ops integrate the principles, missions, and organizational forms of worker cooperatives and labor unions. They embrace core elements of worker cooperatives, such as worker ownership and participatory democratic governance. Within this distinctive model, the labor union is officially positioned to champion worker interests independent of cooperative management. Its primary

roles encompass advocating worker interests through collective bargaining, intervening in conflicts between workers and cooperative management, and facilitating connections to broader resources and advocacy movements (Levinson, 2018; Bird, Mangan and McKeown, 2021).

Workers in organizations often have multiple interests, which sometimes can be or can appear to be divergent. For example, Pinto (2017) notes their differing institutional logics, with unions having a stakeholder logic and cooperatives having a shareholder logic. Mandiberg and Kim (2021) additionally notes that belonging to both a cooperative and a union creates multiple organizational identities. Shared broad interests and commitments have made unions and cooperatives natural allies in affecting institutional and political reforms and providing opportunities for their members to influence extra-organizational policies and events. In circumstances where there is not clear alignment between the interests of the union co-op workers as workers, and the interests of union co-op workers as co-owners of a for-profit business, the dual logics and identities that workers enact serve as a kind of check and balance. For example, a profit maximizing decision from the owner perspective might negatively impact wages and shop floor issues from the worker perspective. Having both interests represented in important decisions is more likely to yield a balanced organization and performance.

The objectives of the union movement and the worker cooperative movement closely align, as both seek to empower workers and promote agency in the workplace. They share a common goal of generating resources for the working class and fostering democratic principles within their respective organizations (Lurie and Fitzsimons, 2021). The convergence of goals between cooperatives and unions resulted in collaborative projects throughout their histories.

In the early 1800s, American workers initiated social movements to provide mutual aid and protection against the growing influence of the industrial sector. Some entities established during that era incorporated elements of unions, cooperatives, and political parties. Even as these organizational forms began to differentiate, they remained intertwined. For instance, the Knights of Labor, which emerged as the most powerful labor union in the U.S. after the Great Railroad Strike of 1877, established approximately 200 worker, consumer, and producer cooperatives between 1870s and 1880s (Hoffman, 2022). Furthermore, U.S. labor unions in the 1920s, 1940s, and 1950s had taken steps to initiate and support consumer cooperatives, mutualist banks, and credit unions to benefit their members (Eiger, 1985).

A notable development in the collaboration between labor unions and worker cooperatives in the U.S. emerged in 2003 when CHCA workers joined the 1199 SEIU union (hereafter referred to as the 1199 union). Then, in 2009, a collaborative agreement between the United Steelworkers Union (USW) and the Mondragon Federation of worker cooperatives in Spain marked another significant milestone (Schlachter, 2017). Subsequently, building on this collaborative spirit, the Cincinnati Union Cooperative was established through joint efforts, including the USW, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), and several community groups. In 2012, they introduced a model for union co-ops, integrating elements of democratic worker ownership and

union membership (Witherell, Cooper and Peck, 2012). This fragmented history of collaboration between unions and worker cooperatives in the U.S. contrasts with European countries, notably France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom, where trade unions and worker cooperatives have established strong foundations and remain actively engaged (Monaco and Pastorelli, 2013).

Union co-ops exhibit multi-organizational hybridity in their organizational structure (Mandiberg and Kim, 2021), wherein two or more distinct organizational forms collaborate to achieve a common objective, with each participating organization maintaining its original form (Powell, 1987). Recent research and advocates of union co-ops argue that these hybrid structures could yield mutual benefits for worker cooperatives and labor unions grappling with challenges. Although democratic participation is institutionalized in worker cooperatives, they often face efficiency-oriented pressure to adopt governance practices that undermine participation and other practices that make them behave more like traditional capitalist businesses, which can negatively affect their participatory democratic governance (Ji, 2016). Therefore, union representation in worker cooperatives ensures the consideration of worker owners' interests as workers, extending to democratic decision-making on the shop floor. This addresses concerns such as job security and discrimination, safeguards minority voices, and provides a stable process for dispute resolution and individual grievance filing in worker cooperatives (Levinson, 2018). Moreover, unions facilitate the scaling of cooperatives and their resources by granting access to pooled benefits like health care, pensions, training, and education. This addresses the economic challenges cooperatives might face in providing these benefits themselves. Combining worker cooperatives with unions also amplifies worker influence in the external environment of the organizations, including overcoming challenges that small cooperatives face in exercising political and policy influence. Further still, advocates of union co-ops argue that worker cooperatives can play a crucial role in bolstering unions by establishing connections with unorganized informal sector workers, who predominantly constitute the memberships of worker cooperatives. Finally, worker cooperatives provide a tangible approach for unions to create concrete strategies to combat job loss and declining job quality (Pencavel, 2002).

However, union co-ops may encounter tensions stemming from integrating multiple logics and organizational identities within this hybrid model, including how workers view their organizational membership. One potential tension lies in reconciling the divergent priorities of unions, primarily focused on labor advocacy and collective bargaining, with a cooperative's shareholder emphasis on business operations, profit-sharing, and member-centric governance (Pinto, 2017). Striking a balance between these two organizational logics and identities can lead to challenges in decision-making, resource allocation, and overall strategic alignment. Additionally, conflicts may arise concerning power distribution and decision-making authority between union representatives and cooperative members. Navigating these tensions requires attention and a commitment to finding solutions aligning with the unique objectives of union and cooperative components within the hybrid model (Mandiberg and Kim, 2021; Pek, 2023).

There is limited scholarly examination exploring these hybridity issues in the union co-op model through real-world implementation. As an emerging organizational strategy, few studies explore the practical application of the model in workplaces. Furthermore, most research on union co-ops tends to focus on principles, historical perspectives, and broad case examples, leaving us lacking detailed case studies that would pinpoint the distinctive impact of this organizational hybridity on their workers and missions. To address this gap, we investigate the case of CHCA, a union co-op of home care aides in New York City. We explore the impacts on its workers of the organizational structure and strategies of CHCA as a union co-op. In the next section, we will discuss the concept of job crafting and clarify its relevance for union co-ops.

3. Theoretical framework: job crafting theory

Job crafting theory challenges the notion of passive workers who follow top-down job designs by managers. Instead, job crafting theory recognizes that workers proactively create, alter, and reshape their jobs to fit their values, abilities, and needs (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Situated in positive psychology and organizational studies, Wrzesniewski and Dutton differentiate job crafting into *task*, *relational*, and *cognitive* types. Task crafting consists of adding, dropping, and redesigning tasks and changing the time or effort spent on them. Relational crafting includes changes in the relational boundaries involved in work by creating, sustaining, and/or avoiding relationships with others at work. While task and relational crafting changes refer to *physical* changes in work, cognitive crafting means reframing how one sees the significance of the job to enhance the meaning of work (Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001).

Additionally, Tims and Bakker (2010) propose a version of job crafting theory that integrates with the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, offering insights into how workers mobilize and leverage job resources. Originally, the JD-R model was developed to understand work-related stress and well-being. Paired with job crafting theory, it provides a framework for comprehending how workers proactively shape their job environments to enhance their well- being and performance. Job resources encompass various aspects of the job, such as physical, psychological, social, or organizational factors, that support workers in achieving their work goals and fostering personal development. On the other hand, job demands are aspects of the job that can induce stress. Within the JD-R model, job crafting can involve actions such as increasing available job resources, adding challenges to promote growth, or reducing hindering job demands. This interplay between job crafting and the JD-R model underscores the dynamic nature of work environments and highlights the agency of workers in managing their job experiences for optimal outcomes.

Numerous studies have identified the positive outcomes of job crafting on individual workers' job experiences such as improvements in job satisfaction, self-efficacy, well-being, goal achievement, personal growth, and career adaptability (Van den Heuvel, Demerouti and Peeters, 2015; Rudolph et al., 2017). Additionally, workers' engagement in job crafting contributes to the work organization

by enhancing organizational engagement, commitment, and job performance (Tims et al., 2013).

The current literature on job crafting primarily applies this theory to conventional corporations. With the exception of proposing a different form of job crafting for collaborative work, the extant literature does not consider issues such as how workflow is organized, organizational form, supervisory and governance structures, and union representation of workers, and how these may affect job crafting. Consequently, there is limited understanding of whether and how variables such as these may influence the types of job crafting that occur and how that job crafting is understood by those enacting it. The multiple variations on the traditional bureaucratic organizational structure that is in worker cooperatives provide an initial opportunity to begin to understand whether different organizational forms, structures, and governance processes affect the types of job crafting that can occur in different organizational forms. Union co-ops, as hybrid organizations with multiple opportunities for worker participation that may affect job crafting, offer a unique opportunity to observe various types and processes of job crafting development. This exploration can enhance our understanding of if and how organizational forms, structures, and processes influence workers' job crafting. Therefore, we investigate how a union co-op's hybrid organizational forms and structures impact workers' job crafting. In the following sections, we detail our methodology and analyze the CHCA case study. It represents a first effort to understand the impact of these variables.

4. Methodology

We utilize a qualitative case study methodology to delve into our research questions, involving interviews with both worker-owners and non-owner employees at CHCA. A case study approach is well-suited for our research, especially given the unique characteristics of union co-op cases (Yin, 2009). By employing theoretical sampling (Eisenhardt, 1989), we purposefully selected a workplace that exemplifies the union co-op model, ensuring that our study captures the union co-op dynamics within a real-world context. This deliberate selection process allows us to explore the complexities of union co-op operations and their impact on worker experiences.

4.1. The case: Cooperative Home Care Associates (CHCA)

4.1.1. Overall history

CHCA is a worker cooperative that provides home care aide services in New York City. The cooperative was launched in 1985 to create safe and consistent employment for low-income women, especially women of color and immigrant women, whose employment options are typically precarious due to issues of education, training, discrimination, and structural inequalities. Guided by the slogan *quality jobs for quality care*, CHCA has dedicated itself to improving the working conditions

for home care aides and the standard of care provided to clients. From its modest beginnings with just 12 home healthcare workers, CHCA has expanded significantly, employing 2,000 homecare workers as of 2024 and achieving annual revenue of approximately USD 162.4 million. All workers are offered the opportunity to become worker-owners, and about 50% choose that option as of 2024. The wage scale is the same for worker-owners and non-owner employees. Worker-owners benefit from participation in the management and decision-making of the organization, and yearly dividends. Despite many structural benefits from CHCA, including a 401(k) retirement saving plan, CHCA workers' wages are similar to those of other home care workers. Wages are low industry-wide due to low government reimbursement rates.

4.1.2. Home care aides: CHCA workers

The CHCA workers in this study are home care aides. Most of them identify as either African-American or Latina. Their job is to provide non-medical services for clients who need help with activities of daily living and physical care. This work includes cooking, shopping, bathing, and basic self-care and may include physically demanding tasks such as lifting those in care. Home care work is individualistic, and so in the work itself, there are few opportunities to work collaboratively with others. Aides must provide services within the parameters of a care plan created by the nursing staff of a certified home care agency, based upon the individual needs of the person requiring care to maintain their community living status. Care beyond what is specified in the care plan is not allowed, including that requested by the client or their families. Aides are required to communicate with their supervisors about their job. Since home care aides are located at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy, they do not have a high level of discretion or power over their work.

Home care aides work for various agencies, including nonprofit organizations and small to large for-profit businesses, with various working conditions. The profit margins of many of the agencies are small, which often creates stress for all involved in the under-resourced agencies. Due to various statuses and conditions, including limited educational achievement, immigration status, structural inequality, and discrimination, home care aides are themselves economically challenged. In addition to their oftentimes personal challenges, home care aides generally face precarious working conditions, with CHCA's main mission being to improve these conditions. Unrepresented workers, common in small home healthcare businesses and those directly employed by families, often lack benefits and earn an average of USD 10-11 per hour with inconsistent working hours. Roughly half of home care workers receive public assistance (PHI, 2019). The workforce is mainly middle-aged women (90%) and racial or ethnic minorities (over 60%) (PHI, 2019). Safety policies in private homes are scarce, exposing aides to abuse, violence, and criminal activities from clients or family members (Karlsson et al., 2019).

4.1.3. Organizational structure and strategies: a hybrid form with the 1199 union

In 2003, CHCA's workforce joined the 1199 union, supported by the CHCA board and management. All CHCA homecare aids are members of the 1199 union. The hybrid organizational structure of CHCA-1199 is reflected in its communications, decision-making processes, and which organization is responsible for different worker resources. This results in all CHCA workers belonging to two distinct organizations, both with primary commitments to protecting how they view the interests of their members. This primary commitment to workers and community makes this hybridity different than profit-maximizing for-profit organizations that are also union shops.

CHCA's board of directors is responsible for governance, determining CHCA's strategic direction, and approving net profit allocations to worker-owners. Eight of the 14 board members are worker-owners, elected from amongst their members. CHCA also has a worker council of 12 home care workers, facilitating communication regarding new policies and significant financial decisions. Worker council members act as intermediaries, aiding home care workers to understand managerial decisions and relay worker feedback to administrative staff.

Established in 2007, a labor/management committee acts as the link between CHCA and the 1199 union. This committee fosters collaboration between home care workers, administrative staff, managers, and union organizers to improve CHCA operations. Additionally, eight CHCA home care workers serve as union delegates, providing input for the collective bargaining agreement and offering feedback to CHCA's president. The hybrid organizational structure is evident in the resources and opportunities available to CHCA workers, who are eligible for them from both CHCA and the 1199 union. CHCA offers comprehensive benefits as a worker cooperative, including four weeks of paid initial job training leading to certification, training programs every six months, peer and senior mentorship, 401(k) retirement saving accounts, and referrals to public benefits and social services. Meanwhile, the 1199 union extends additional resources such as health care insurance, tuition assistance for college, benefits for professional development, reimbursement for certain licensure and certification fees, diverse classes (e.g., English, GED, computer literacy, college preparation, and prerequisite courses, etc.), referrals to treatments for alcohol, drug, and mental health services, assistance with landlord/tenant disputes, and leadership training. Moreover, the 1199 union provides opportunities for CHCA workers to engage in large-scale advocacy efforts to improve their working conditions and pay.

4.2. Data collection and analysis

We obtained access to CHCA through the first author meeting with its president to discuss research interests, questions, process, the potential benefits of our research to the organization, and CHCA's shared interest in exploring the research questions. Upon completing our research, we shared the findings in an in-person meeting with the president, some CHCA staff members, and a

researcher who was also studying the organization. Apart from the initial and final meetings with CHCA management, we operated this study independently and did not receive any specific requests from them throughout the research process.

To improve the construct validity of this case study, we employed a multifaceted approach, incorporating diverse sources of evidence. This involved conducting in-depth interviews with 18 individual CHCA workers and three key leaders, including the president, a manager, and the founder of CHCA, as well as the vice president of the 1199 union. We also utilized direct observation methods to witness worker interactions within CHCA spaces.

Specifically, the first author actively participated in various settings, such as attending a monthly member meeting and flea market, engaging in an information fair for several hours, and spending time in common areas like lounges and offices at CHCA and the 1199 union on multiple occasions. The first author took handwritten, detailed, verbatim field notes. Additionally, we conducted document analysis and participated in local conferences and network meetings focusing on worker cooperatives and union issues, including discussions surrounding the CHCA case.

We conducted in-depth interviews with 18 home care workers who had participated in CHCA for at least six months. CHCA notified workers about this research by attaching a notice in the lobby of CHCA and mentioning it at various meetings. CHCA worker-members who agreed to participate were invited to interviews. The interviews were conducted at CHCA in a room separate from other staff's offices. All interviewees were required to read and sign the informed consent form. As compensation, each participant received a gift card valued at USD 20. The translation was provided for Spanish-speaking participants through a translation worker cooperative. Following the interviews, the interviewees' private information was deleted, and each was assigned a number to ensure confidentiality.

Incorporating insights from reflexivity (Finlay, 2002), we recognize and proactively address the power dynamics inherent in the interview process. Specifically, because we lack a shared ethnic, racial, social class, and for some language background with interview participants, we undertook deliberate efforts to cultivate a culturally sensitive and inclusive atmosphere. This includes demonstrating a genuine willingness to understand and respect their perspectives, minimizing interruptions, and ensuring that participants feel respected and valued when sharing their viewpoints.

The authors conducted the interviews, which lasted approximately 50-60 minutes. Questions were semi-structured to elicit rich responses. Example question topics include how they manage their tasks and relationships with their clients and client's families; when they have new ideas about how to manage their job, whether and how they change their work activities; how they participate in CHCA's training, events, meetings, and decision-making process; their work identity and its meaning; and how they value CHCA and the union. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The authors wrote additional field notes during the interviews.

Since we were interested in exploring job crafting, we used template analysis to analyze the interview data. We developed a coding template to thematically organize the qualitative data, identifying those themes we saw as potentially important or distinctive. Template analysis provides

a framework for comparing the theoretical framework and the actual data (Ray, 2009). The two researchers examined and discussed initial codes to search for themes.

The authors thoroughly read all transcripts to develop a comprehensive understanding of the data. Then, we independently generated descriptive codes guided by the research questions and theoretical framework. Any emerging topics were coded as they appeared in the data. These descriptive codes were inserted into the transcription file using Microsoft Word's comment function. Initial descriptive codes covered various aspects, such as "cultivating peer relationships", "supportive supervisor role", and "active participation in peer meetings". The authors utilized various analytic tools, including memos, illustrations, and charts/lists, to organize the codes (Locke, Feldman and Golden-Biddle, 2022). Drawing on the job crafting and related organizational studies, we collaborated to create the final coding categories. We identified commonalities and connections between codes and organized them into meaningful categories (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). The final coding categories include individual job crafting-task/relational/cognitive, increasing job resources/challenges, decreasing job demands, community identity, participation in the decision-making process, organizational structures/strategies, and organizational job crafting.

In the next section, we present our findings regarding the types of job crafting as described by the home care aides we interviewed. We emphasize our discoveries regarding how the structure and strategies of the CHCA-1199 hybrid influence their job crafting activities. Additionally, we discuss our identification of a type of job crafting, organizational, which has not been previously recognized in the literature. We also explore how we believe this type of job crafting relates to the workers' management of multiple organizational logics.

5. Findings

Our research findings show how the organizational structure and strategies of the CHCA affect job crafting among workers, operating at both individual and organizational levels. Moreover, they highlight the diversity of workers' job crafting, including in reshaping the work environments, as part of their efforts to expand worker prerogatives. The subsequent analysis provides evidence supporting our findings.

5.1 Job crafting at the individual level

Many of the interviewees focused on the resource advantages of the CHCA hybrid. In particular, different types of resources provided by CHCA and the 1199 union function differently in the lives of workers, including on workers' job crafting. The resources from the 1199 union seem more related to aspirational plans outside the current boundaries of their job and to achieve higher life goals at the individual level. Some individuals did not specify whether the resources they received

originated from CHCA or the 1199 union. However, when articulating their ambitious plans for personal development and upward mobility, they often emphasized the importance of "scholarships" for university education and a "language program", which come from the 1199 union. Recognizing the direct link between their career objectives and the available resources, they initiated job crafting behaviors, actively seeking additional resources from the two organizations.

"I had a dream. I was praying so […] Sometimes, staff called us for the 1199 union meetings at night. That's the way I discovered this option to go to school because I was trying to get a scholarship, and they had already talked to us about this. I said, 'Oh! I can do it!'" (Participant#1)

Given that most CHCA workers are women of color or low-income immigrant women facing barriers in resources, language, or networks, the resources provided by the 1199 union are particularly impactful. These resources become crucial for these individuals, serving as a means to pursue their forgotten dreams and progress. Several participants engaged in job crafting activities, actively seeking challenges like enrolling in classes at the 1199 union to prepare themselves for college and strive towards fulfilling their aspirations.

"My plan is that when I am here for ten years, I am going to take a reduction in hours and work fewer hours and then get support with social security, so with that income and fewer hours, I will have more time to study. So, I am going to take an English course and try to study nursing. I may be old, but I am still going to do it, and I will still be able to do it." (Participant#10)

Certain participants perceive CHCA as encouraging advancement within their specific roles in CHCA and fostering progress in their overall lives. Participant#5, who was a home care aide, for instance, outlined her plan to transition into the medical field within a hospital setting. As a result, when CHCA offered her an administrative position, she accepted, acknowledging it as a chance to acquire varied healthcare management skills essential for her envisioned transition to a hospital role. In such cases, participants reassess the meaning of CHCA, recognizing CHCA as a valuable opportunity and an investment in their future—a form of cognitive job crafting. As evident in the quote from Participant#2 below, participants acknowledge that CHCA's support, coupled with critical resources from the 1199 union, genuinely opens up opportunities for their personal development.

"They (CHCA) encourage you to take, you know, like to further yourself. If you wanna do, become a nurse or, you know, CNA [Certified Nurse Assistant] or whatever, they do have classes and stuff like that. Then, we also have the union, which helps you out too. It's up to you." (Participant#2)

Ironically, by supporting its workers in pursuing their dreams, CHCA might risk losing its workforce. However, our interviews with CHCA leaders underscore the organization's commitment to supporting its members' personal development to achieve their dreams. They were confident in training new workers from low-income backgrounds in the community and providing them with improved job opportunities. This aspect is distinctive to CHCA as a cooperative, highlighting its role as an advocacy organization for its mission—empowering low-income/immigrant female workers.

Among CHCA's management strategies, we found, in particular, that rigorous job training programs, supervision/peer mentor systems, and worker ownership are associated with workers' job crafting activities. Specifically, CHCA's job training programs contributed to developing workers' professional identity, a form of cognitive crafting. Home care aide work is often considered cheap and unskilled labor, reflected in low wages and benefits in the labor market. However, participants identified themselves as "professionals" whose work requires a high level of knowledge and skill and who are prepared to work confidently on complex cases. They attributed their professionality to CHCA's rigorous job training programs for specialist skills and knowledge.

Interviewer: *"Do you think you are a professional?"*

Participant#11: *"Yes. Because of the training we get, how they prepare us. […] I've gotten great training, and the teachers that trained me were excellent […] I feel very able and prepared to do this work. Here, they've prepared me even more."*

Supervising/peer mentor assistance of CHCA seems to be associated with workers' behaviors to decrease hindering job demands and engage in cognitive job crafting. Whenever employees encounter questions or challenges in their roles, they can reach out to their supervisor or peer mentors for guidance and support. Participants seem to understand the supervisor or staff's work as support, not control. Participant#4 identified CHCA's supervisory support as "open" and "comfortable".

"When you came in, they made you feel comfortable. If you had a problem, if they could help, and always made you feel like somebody […] If I need to come in and get help or recommendations or anything, I'm quite satisfied with them." (Participant#4).

Positive experiences with their supervisors and staff encourage workers to actively contact them to decrease job demands that hinder their goals. It can also be relevant to task crafting. By understanding how to address challenges with the assistance of supervisors or peer mentors, workers can become aware of potential options available to them within their legal task boundaries. This awareness can increase confidence in workers to tailor their approach to tasks.

We also found that understanding supervisors' and staff's supportive attitudes is associated with organizational identity-related cognitive job crafting, reframing how they see CHCA. Some participants said they felt like they were a part of the company and that CHCA was their agency. However, this did not appear to be related to ownership status but to their understanding of the staff's dedication and care for them.

"[…] even though I am not an owner, I feel they are a part of me. I think because of the people and the environment. The staff is also dedicated and makes this part of their lives. They are all dedicated, which made me feel like a part of the company." (Participant#11)

Although ownership is not necessary to develop this type of cognitive job crafting, owner participants presented stronger cognitive job crafting than non-owners regarding their identity, seeing a clear connection between CHCA, their personal and professional development, feelings of security, and more engagement with the cooperative. Participant#9, who became an owner in 2017,

said that she wanted to commit more to CHCA meetings and felt more happiness and security after being an owner. Participant#10 showed cognitive change after becoming an owner in terms of understanding the significant role of CHCA in her career development.

"When I go to a [owner] meeting, they call me. So, I am happy [...] I waited so long to be part of this! I feel more secure now". (Participant#9)

"I stay as a worker-owner because, aside from incentives, I feel I can still grow and reach higher levels of professionalism and different work opportunities." (Participant#10).

In sum, we found that CHCA's resource provision with the 1199 union and its strategies of rigorous job training, supervisor/mentor assistance, and worker ownership encouraged participants' cognitive job crafting, motivated seeking resources/challenges, and decreased hindering job demands.

5.2. Job crafting at the organizational level

Home care work is conducted individually in each client's home without interacting with other co-workers. It is hard for home care workers to communicate with other workers during work to discuss how to alter their work and its environment. Hence, our findings did not observe collaborative job crafting at the team level, the highest level examined by job crafting theory.

Unexpectedly, we found a different type of job crafting activity that workers collectively developed at an organizational level to change their work environment in their workplace and the larger society in pursuit of social change. The organizational structure and strategies of CHCA as a socially progressive union co-op were key in developing this type of job crafting.

Conceptually, CHCA's union structure provides workers with the capacity for collective mobilization when workers' rights might be challenged within CHCA. With the union's backing, CHCA workers could confidently articulate their demands at the organizational level. However, our interviewees did not discuss workers utilizing the union structure for influence within CHCA. Only a few participants proudly shared their experiences of participating in outside advocacy rallies. Within our sample, CHCA workers highlighted the 1199 union as a substantial resource for individual job crafting, particularly in realizing aspirational personal development plans. However, when detailing collective efforts to enact changes within CHCA, the 1199 union was noticeably absent from their narratives. The only instance captured in documentation reviews involved CHCA union delegates challenging and amending a CHCA policy—a USD 40 deposit when workers received cell phones for their work from CHCA (Schneider, 2010).

We attribute the rare occurrence of utilizing union power in workers' collective bargaining within CHCA to the fundamental alignment between the cooperative and the union on critical issues. Furthermore, as a worker cooperative, CHCA offers a distinctive structure to amplify workers' involvement in management and decision-making processes. This includes a worker-owner voting majority on the board of directors, owner meetings, management groups, peer/senior mentor

groups, and a worker council. These diverse opportunities for worker influence at the organizational level function as an institutional channel for workers to collectively convey their feedback, address complaints, or propose new ideas regarding their jobs and management without resorting to the union's collective bargaining power.

Worker governance and meeting participation at CHCA seem, in many instances, to capture workers' opinions, including non-owner workers. Similar to other large cooperatives, CHCA has representative democratic rather than direct democratic participation in governance. As a large worker cooperative, CHCA counterbalances the loss of direct decision-making involvement with multiple meetings, encouraging workers' input into decision-making, thus avoiding the loss of worker perspectives that may occur in cooperative degeneration (Langmead, 2017). For example, the owner and board of directors' meetings are the final opportunities for workers to exercise their collective influence in decision-making. Before those opportunities, in management groups, workers and administrative members discuss plans to improve their work and relationships among them. Through peer/senior mentor groups, workers give feedback, offer suggestions, or raise questions about tasks or administrative processes. Additionally, diverse formal and informal meetings are a significant way to create collective cohesion and identity regardless of ownership status.

Some participants expressed that these organizational structures embody workers' rights in management and decision-making processes. Participant#6, who serves in dual roles as both an owner and board member, described their active participation in management and decision-making processes.

"One of the best things for the [CHCA] workers is that you make decisions for the company. Because they are the board of directors […] And then there is a group of management. Whatever problems we have, they have to make changes, and they get together." (Participant#6)

Certain instances illustrate the effective translation of workers' voices into final decision-making. Participant#6 narrated the instances of disagreement between workers and administrative members that arose when certain workers challenged their performance evaluations by coordinators and overtime payment issues. In response, during a board meeting, workers proposed a new system allowing them to evaluate the coordinator's performance, which has since been implemented. Participant#6 recalled a particular board meeting:

"I know the coordinator does evaluations, and they gave them to us, and we checked them and signed and agreed. Sometimes, we don't agree […] So, because I like to speak my mind, I said to the president, 'You know, if they do an evaluation for us, we're supposed to do an evaluation for you, the coordinator.'" (Participant#6)

"They decided to cut overtime payments for a while, not forever. So, the board voted for that. Then one of the board members forgot about that, and they started fighting with me […] I said […] 'Let me see the check. Oh, they cut the overtime payment […] I read the memo [the meeting minutes], and that was the decision [not a permanent cut] made in the board.'" (Participant#6)

In this example, Participant#6's activities as a worker-board member are not only about her own experiences but also reflect ownership of CHCA that worker-owners feel, undoubtedly reinforced

by the hybrid presence of the union. This case shows the organizational level of activities to change management policies from the bottom-up based on the institutional structure of the cooperative.

The above activities show how workers change their task, relational, and cognitive boundaries to affect the organizational level. Their formal task boundary as a worker is limited to providing home care services to their clients. However, due to the organizational structure and strategies of CHCA as a unionized worker cooperative, CHCA workers collectively broaden their tasks by incorporating new ones such as attending various meetings and events, occasionally gathering opinions from their peers, and representing workers' voices. Moreover, some interviews reveal that workers challenge existing policies, such as performance assessment and overtime payment, illustrating a collective shift in how tasks are evaluated and compensated, consequently impacting their approach to job tasks. While our findings do not provide conclusive evidence, the system of worker involvement, which includes peer mentorship and participation in diverse management groups discussing job task execution, encourages workers to identify and address task-related issues collectively.

In addition to generating critical feedback to the board and management, CHCA's periodic meetings amongst workers helps to create and reinforce the collective identity of the workforce. This results in a different way that the relationships workers build with each other impacts CHCA at the organizational level. When participants described their relationships with other workers at CHCA, they repeatedly used "united" and "we". These terms present their strong collective identity.

> *"It's actually the 22 of us that did the training together. On our days off, we get together and make plans to go eat, make ice cream, and do different activities like that […] Organically, we were all united, and all happened to have similar temperaments. It's been nice that we got unified like we did."* (Participant#11)

In their description of "we", their distinguishable collective identity as *family* and *professional* was found, such as "…*we are family. We are all very close. We are in constant communication* (Participant#11)" and "… *we are different in terms of professionalism, sense of ownership, and pride* (Participant#7)".

Interestingly, a corresponding collective identity has emerged, much like individual participants who see their connections with colleagues as family-like and value their professional roles. This highlights the close connection between individual and organizational levels of job crafting. We offer two possible explanations for these interconnected outcomes. In one scenario, individuals shaping their relationships and work identity through various interactions might influence colleagues to similarly engage in job crafting, potentially fostering shared normative crafting. This individual-to-collective influence can also work in reverse, where collectively formed new identities, developed through meetings and interactions, act as a foundation for workers to reinterpret the significance of relationships and work individually.

However, the frequency of whole-group social gatherings at CHCA has declined since 2008, coinciding with the organization's expansion. Participant#6, who joined CHCA before 2008, expressed nostalgia for the past when members gathered weekly to share concerns about their jobs, offer mutual encouragement, and collectively advocate as part of a tightly bonded community. In the interviews,

we also noticed signs that some participants were becoming less connected or identified with the cooperative. Some non-owner participants did not understand the definition of cooperatives, CHCA's history, and the process of becoming an owner. Even Participant#11, who felt a sense of belonging to CHCA, mentioned that she might not have received detailed ownership information. Interviews with the CHCA president and staff revealed efforts to share ownership information with workers during various occasions, such as initial training and office presentations. However, there appears to be a gap between these efforts and some workers actually obtaining or retaining the needed information.

Understanding CHCA's history is crucial. Before 2008, a majority of CHCA workers were owners (e.g., 68% in 2010—Schneider, 2010) and deeply committed to cooperatives. However, following New York City's recommendation in 2008 to hire laid-off home care workers from other agencies due to a significant budget cut in Medicaid, many new CHCA workers lacked a genuine connection to the cooperative approach.

Given the uncovered patterns and insights within the findings, the subsequent discussion and conclusion further explore the interpretation of these results, their alignment with existing literature, and the broader implications for future research and practical applications.

6. Discussions

In light of the robust literature on individual job crafting, but the lack of research on it in alternative organizations, we were unsure what, if any, job crafting would be evident in our study. Going into the interviews, observation, and document review, it was unclear how the union co-op hybrid and strategies of CHCA might obviate, inhibit, or promote job crafting. In addition, we didn't have any indication about how unique job characteristics and the work environment of home care aides (e.g., lack of discretion, collaboration, and power) influence their job crafting. We found instances of all three types of individual job crafting, with no evidence of team job crafting. In addition, there was strong evidence for a different kind of job crafting due to the alternative organizational structure of the CHCA-1199 hybrid. Through interviews, we identified some emerging themes in our research questions.

Our research uncovered a distinctive type of job crafting at CHCA that transcended the typical individual or team levels traditionally explored in job crafting studies. Our interviews and document review revealed that workers express their views on CHCA policies through their representatives during board meetings, CHCA and union feedback forums, and nonconflictual interactions with supervisors and managers. Strong collective cohesion emerged through these interactions, with a shared sense of identity that was different than ones associated individually with CHCA and 1199, such as viewing themselves as a family, owners, and professionals. These activities extend their task, relational, and cognitive boundaries beyond their individual job (home care work) to management and governance at the organizational level. Initially, we attempted to interpret this phenomenon

as collaborative crafting, also referred to as collective or team crafting, based upon interdependent teamwork. However, we realized that it did not stem from *interdependent* job tasks and activities; rather, it manifested as job crafting of a different kind and at a different level—*organizational job crafting*. We defined *organizational job crafting* as workers' combined activities to collectively modify their job tasks, relations, and cognitive aspects, thereby shaping their organizational work environment (Kim, in press).

We highlight that CHCA's organizational structure and strategies, particularly as a union co-op, facilitated cooperation among workers in shaping their work environment to align with their personal, collective, and social interests at the organizational level. According to Berg, Dutton, and Wrzesniewski (2013), job designs that allow autonomy and discretion lead to increased opportunities for job crafting, and restrictive job designs constrain it. However, in general, home care aides have limited autonomy and discretion in the design of their work and their work environment due to the solitary nature of home care work and workers' low-level status and power in the health care system. As a worker cooperative, CHCA offers numerous opportunities for its workers to engage with the administration and actively participate in decision-making processes. Furthermore, the union structure within CHCA enhances workers' collective power to represent their voices within the organization and connects them to broader advocacy movements to increase labor rights in society at large.

These hybrid forms and strategies between a worker cooperative and a union encourage workers to extend their task, relational, and cognitive boundaries beyond their individual job (home care work) to the management and board governance at the organizational level and to the interface between the union co-op and broader social and policy issues. Organizational job crafting at CHCA also seems to occur when workers have a strong collective identity within the organization. This derives from CHCA's cooperative form and the intentional processes and events that reinforce collective identity. This led the researchers to think more specifically about how the three types of identities—individual, relational, and collective (Sedikides and Brewer, 2015)—relate to the three types of job crafting—individual, collaborative, and organizational job crafting (Mandiberg and Edwards, 2013). Collective identity can act as a buffer against such issues as stigma and powerlessness and is a promoter of innovation and change (Mandiberg and Edwards, 2013).

It's also important to recognize the organizational-level distinct impact of the 1199 union on individual job crafting among workers. Specifically, the scarce yet valuable resources offered by the 1199 union, such as scholarships and job training programs for careers beyond home care aides, play a pivotal role for these precarious workers. The connection to these robust resources through the union serves as a catalyst for workers to pursue aspirational life goals that are often forgotten or abandoned, such as attending college, acquiring English proficiency, and transitioning to higher-level roles in the public health sector. Upon recognizing these potential resources, workers initiated job crafting activities, such as actively pursuing additional resources and challenges, to attain their life goals. These findings in the U.S. context are consistent with research suggesting that providing structural and social resources at the organizational level offers additional opportunities for workers

to participate in job-crafting activities (Guan and Frenkel, 2018). CHCA and 1199's organizational job crafting facilitation has important social change implications for low-power precarious workers and others. Resources provided through the 1199 union should be viewed through the lens of fostering social change for precarious workers. They struggle with frustration due to the lack of viable options for social mobility, persistent work insecurity, and financial vulnerability (Macmillan and Shanahan, 2021). In particular, the union's involvement at CHCA serves as a bridge, connecting CHCA's precarious workers to distinctive social mobility opportunities and improved job security. Despite CHCA being a large worker cooperative, it cannot independently provide its workers with these high-cost resources. Therefore, the existence of the larger hybrid union within the CHCA structure proves indispensable for the well-being of these precarious workers.

7. Implications

This study offers unique insights into job crafting, worker cooperative research and practice, and the strategies available to precarious workers to exert some control over their work environments and pursue prosocial goals. Job crafting research that pays attention to organizational structure, including alternative and non-hierarchical organizations, has many opportunities for impactful findings. Our review of the job crafting literature indicates that most studies have investigated job crafting in traditional bureaucratic and hierarchical organizations. Thus, the job crafting research to date assumes hierarchy as the norm and that job crafting will be similar across organizational structures (Chen and Mandiberg, 2023). While some recommended that job crafting interventions concentrate on instructing workers to learn individual job crafting skills (Van Wingerden and Poell, 2017), it is crucial to recognize that workers' job crafting is not solely dependent on individual skill attainment. For precarious and low-power workers, job crafting is greatly influenced by how the organization provides structural and social resources through pro-worker management (Mansour and Tremblay, 2021). Additionally, union co-ops should be recognized as an effective organizational structure and strategy for precarious workers, who typically face challenges related to personal and social resources as well as collective power (Pinto, 2021). The scarcity of worker resources and power in precarious working conditions hampers workers' autonomy and discretion in their workplace.

This restrictive environment may discourage or constrain job crafting activities, limiting them to individual-level psychological adjustments to the existing precarious working conditions, potentially perpetuating exploitative labor relations. This study found that the key strategies of union co-ops, in particular, providing resources for personal and professional development, implementing participatory decision-making at different organizational levels, facilitating relationship-building, and adopting management practices that prioritize the well-being of workers, encouraged workers' job crafting. Hence, worker cooperatives should prioritize incorporating these key strategies into their organizational structure and practices to bolster support for their workers' job crafting endeavors.

Finally, our 2021 paper (Mandiberg and Kim) addresses that neither the cooperative nor the union have directly assisted the worker-union members in resolving the competing institutional logics and competing organizational identities that they face. We suspect that organizational job crafting is one way that workers collectively try to resolve those dilemmas. If the organizations comprising the hybrid do not assist their workers in resolving these competing influences, workers must find either collective or individual approaches to resolution on their own. At the collective level, organizational job crafting affords workers shared understanding and strategies and facilitates the organizations to pursue pro-worker and pro-social objectives. Individual job crafting may provide a framework for understanding how individual workers resolve these conflicts in their work, but has no collective or organizational impacts and thus affords no social outcomes. Individual job crafting alone, without the support of organizational-level crafting, may even promote the antisocial and anti-environment activities of hierarchical profit-maximizing organizations by minimizing their organizational dysfunction, especially as it affects workers.

The lack of attention to how organizational hybridity creates the potential of conflicting logic and identities is also an issue for hybrid social enterprises and may become an issue for new and proposed hybrid models such as the *bicameral firm* (Ferreras, 2023). Future research needs to address these issues.

8. Limitations

We want to highlight several cautions regarding the scope of this study. Firstly, the reliance on a convenience sampling strategy introduces a potential bias towards volunteers who actively participate in CHCA's events, express higher satisfaction with CHCA, or are more inclined to share their experiences. While randomized sampling would have been preferable, its implementation proved challenging. Secondly, the CHCA-union hybrid may be unique in its structure and industry. It is unclear if the findings apply to other organizations, especially those seeking social justice outcomes. Suggestions for similar hybridity in non-cooperative-union ventures, such as a bicameral firm (Ferreras, 2023), may facilitate similar job crafting. Additionally, this study raises theoretical issues regarding what is and is not included in job crafting theories, which principally come from the management literature with its assumptions and biases. We have begun addressing some of these issues (Kim, in press) in a paper on job crafting among precarious workers as an effort to control their precarity. Additional work addressing broader theoretical issues and critiques of the job crafting literature is required. Thirdly, due to the study's static nature, it does not capture dynamic changes in job crafting over time. Lastly, this study's scope is both constrained and advantaged by its exclusive focus on home care work and workers within a large union co-op. Other union co-ops with different structures and strategies may yield varying job crafting outcomes. Consequently, the findings may not be readily generalizable to diverse sectors within union co-ops.

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