



**Beyond Social Mission: Understanding
how employees in Australian
community service organisations
experience their work as meaningful**

by

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Abstract

Social mission, the socially-beneficial purpose of an organisation, is a primary feature of community service organisations (CSOs). Much existing literature around social mission in CSOs focuses on its impact at an organisational level. It is viewed as providing a competitive advantage for CSOs in terms of funding acquisition, attracting clients, organisational performance, and importantly, in attracting and retaining staff. However at the individual level, working in CSOs is often associated with challenges resulting from constrained funding within the sector, e.g. low pay, high workload and reduced job security. An implicit assumption in the literature is that social mission, through its contribution to meaningful work, is key in attracting and retaining CSO employees despite these challenges. However, little is known about experiences of meaningful work in CSOs or how social mission contributes to this.

The research presented in this thesis sought to understand the experience of meaningful work for CSO employees, focussing on the role of social mission. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used to understand the contribution of social mission to the experiences of meaningful work of 36 CSO employees in South Australia. Meaningful work was shown to be a feature of CSO work for participants. It had positive outcomes for both their sense of self and their experience of work. However, meaningful work also left these CSO employees open to exploitation by their organisation. Early indications were that social mission played a strong role in both perceptions of work as meaningful and outcomes of meaningful work. Further analyses were undertaken into two aspects of meaningful work where social mission was anticipated to be particularly relevant: factors influencing meaningful work; and how employees actively shape their work to be meaningful.

Consistent with the assumption described above, social mission-related activity was demonstrated to be a primary contributor to meaningful work for

participants. However, social mission alone did not account for their experiences of meaningful work in CSOs. Social interactions and the work and working conditions also influenced participants' experiences of meaningfulness in their work.

Importantly, consideration of how participants engaged in sense-making and job crafting to actively shape their work to be meaningful demonstrated that experiences of meaningful work in CSOs were intentional rather than passive. In doing so, participants were able to view their self and their work in a positive light.

These findings were then used to build on the existing literature around meaningful work. In doing so, a new, integrated sense-making framework of meaningful work in CSOs incorporating antecedents and outcomes was developed.

This study demonstrates that while an organisation's social mission plays an integral role in employee experiences of meaningful work in CSOs, it alone is insufficient to entirely explain what makes work meaningful for CSO employees. This has implications for the way that meaningful work in CSOs is characterised and promoted within the workplace. A further contribution of this research is the introduction of a new, holistic framework for understanding meaningful work in the applied context.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

This thesis uses unit record data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. The HILDA Survey project was initiated and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS). It is managed by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research (Melbourne Institute). The findings and views reported in this thesis, however, are those of the author and should not be attributed to the DSS or the Melbourne Institute.

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1 Social mission and work in Australian CSOs

1.1 Overview

Social mission, the socially-beneficial purpose of an organisation, is a primary feature of community service organisations (CSOs). Much of the existing literature around social mission in CSOs focuses on its impact at an organisational level (e.g. Billis & Glennester, 1998; Cheverton, 2007; Drevs, Tscheulin & Lindenmeier, 2014; Frumkin & Andre-Clark, 2000; Lee & Brudney, 2015; Moore, 2000; Rothschild & Milofsky, 2006). It is viewed as providing a competitive advantage for CSOs in terms of funding acquisition, attracting clients, organisational performance, and importantly, in attracting and retaining staff. Less is known about the impact of social mission on the individual worker. What research there is often assumes that those people working in CSOs have a different orientation to their work to those working in other sectors and they pursue different values through their work (e.g. De Cooman, Geiter, Pepermans & Jegers, 2011; Hansen, Huggins & Ban, 2003; Lyons, Duxbury & Higgins, 2006; Mirvis, 1992; Mirvis & Hackett, 1983). It is assumed that CSO workers have a greater focus on altruistic values. The fit between these personal values and organisational values are presumed to explain how the organisational characteristic that is social mission affects the experience of work for individual workers.

However, existing research indicates that the fit between personal and organisational values alone does not entirely capture the relationship between social mission and the individual worker (Bonewits Feldner, 2006; Stride & Higgs, 2013). The CSO literature around the attraction and retention of staff offers an alternate explanation for linking social mission and the individual worker through meaningful work, the idea that people *actively seek* work that they find worthwhile, purposeful and satisfying (e.g. Earles & Lynn, 2009; Light, 2002; Martin & Healy, 2010; Onyx, 1998). In this study meaningful work is understood to be work that has significance and purpose because it enriches the self and contributes beyond the self (Bailey, Madden, Alfes, Shantz &

Soane, 2017; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Using meaningful work as an explanation for the link between social mission and the individual worker incorporates the idea of values fit between the individual and the organisation, but it also involves a broader sense of self that might better account for the way that social mission work is experienced. However, research into the experience of work in CSOs is rarely investigated using a meaningful work approach. This research investigates experiences of meaningful work by paid CSO employees, focusing on the contribution of social mission.

In this study meaningful work is understood to be work that has significance and purpose because it enriches the self and contributes beyond the self (Bailey, Madden, Alfes, Shantz & Soane, 2017; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). This concept of meaningful work is underpinned by the idea that people *actively seek* work that they find worthwhile, purposeful and satisfying (Frankl, 2006, originally published 1946), and that they have the capability, or capacity, to achieve this (Nussbaum, 2011). As will be discussed later in Chapter 2, meaningful work can be approached as being “found” through the fit between work and self, or as being “made” through sense-making around the experience of work. While in 1.2 it is shown that the CSO literature views meaningful work as emerging through the fit between social mission and the self, in this study meaningful work is viewed as a form of sense-making around the experience of work (see 2.1.1). This approach was taken to capture the subjective and agentic nature of meaningful work.

This chapter describes how social mission affects staffing and the experience of work for individual workers in CSOs. In doing so, I show that there is an assumption in the community services literature that the presence of social mission leads to the experience of meaningful work; and that this relationship needs to be investigated. A discussion of work and employment in the Australian community services sector, focusing on issues around staffing concerns, will follow to contextualise the research and demonstrate its importance. Finally, I outline and summarise the subsequent chapters within

this thesis.

1.2 Social mission in CSOs

...[a] distinguishing characteristic of many not-for-profit service organizations is their commitment to a social and often very specific mission (De Cooman, et al., 2011, p. 297)

In the literature, CSOs are defined by three organisational characteristics. One characteristic of CSOs is the people that they service. CSOs target their services towards vulnerable people within the community, those “who have a particular need by reason of youth, age, infirmity or disablement, poverty or social or economic circumstances” (ATO, 2015), such as people with disability, people escaping domestic violence, the elderly, young people, families, women, single men, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual and Intersex (LGBTI) persons, homeless people, and people from low socio-economic backgrounds (Carson, Maher & King, 2007; Lyons, 2001; Martin & Moskos, 2006).

Secondly, CSOs are not for profit organisations. There are some sources that include for profit and Government social service providers within their definition of the sector, including the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2010) and Martin and Healy (2010). However, it is generally agreed that organisations within the community services sector operate on a not for profit basis (ATO, 2015; Carson et al., 2007). That is, they are organisations that provide services to the community and any profit that is made is redirected back into pursuing the purpose of the organisation rather than being distributed to stakeholders (Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, 2018).

Thirdly, and importantly for this research, CSOs are defined by their commitment to a social mission. That is, the purpose of the organisation is for a social benefit. It is “altruistic” (ATO, 2015) and values based such that these

organisations operate to “serve clients and community need” (Carson, et al., 2007, p.1) rather than to make profit. CSOs are organisations that engage in activities that “assist or support members of the community in personal functioning as individuals or as members of the wider community” (Carson, et al., 2007, p.41). The intent is to “remove the need for support or to enable people to achieve maximum feasible independence or autonomy in their home and community, or a setting that as closely resembles this as possible” (Lyons, 2001, p.33).

An organisation’s mission encompasses the purpose, values and vision of the organisation and is often explicitly expressed in a mission statement (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003). The main audience for an organisation mission is the clients of the organisation and its employees (Babnik, Breznik, Dermol & Trunk Širca, 2014). Unlike for profit organisations, where mission focuses on “profitability and stakeholder wealth” (McDonald, 2007, p. 258), in CSOs the mission is primarily concerned with providing social benefit. This is a *social* mission, which is concerned with how the organisation aims to address specific social issues or bringing about desirable social conditions (Moore, 2000; Stevens, Moray & Bruneel, 2014) and setting out the social value that the organisation aims to produce (Moore, 2000; Stevens et al., 2014). In CSOs the organisation’s mission also outlines the long-term goals of the organisation (McDonald, 2007).

Organisations can simultaneously adopt other forms of missions; however in CSOs the social mission predominates. For example social enterprise organisations have multiple purposes, they work towards both a social mission and a profit-generation mission (Barraket & Collyer, 2009), albeit within a not for profit umbrella, and in some cases an environmental mission too (Pitta & Kucher, 2009). However it is the pursuit of a social mission that is an integral part of what defines a CSO. Therefore CSOs have (at the very least) a social mission.

Examination of the organisation mission of CSOs operating in the South Australian context demonstrates the focus on a socially beneficial purpose of these organisations. For example, UnitingCommunities (2017) describe their mission as being to:

Build compassionate communities and great lives.

People are at the heart of all we do. We will work alongside South Australians as they strive for a bright future and great lives, supporting them to overcome adversity and disadvantage. We will do this in a way that is non-judgemental, generous and supportive; that embraces diversity; and that values and promotes fairness, justice and the benefits of strong communities. (para. 1)

UnitingCommunities (2017) identify their purpose as supporting people experiencing adversity and disadvantage to build great lives. The language used in setting out the organisation's mission suggests an altruistic purpose, using terms such as "compassionate" and "at the heart" (UnitingCommunities, 2017). In setting out their mission UnitingCommunities (2017) also establish the values of the organisation, i.e. that they are non-judgemental, generous, supportive, embrace diversity and that they value fairness, justice, and strong communities. Some CSOs operating in the South Australian context set out parallel purposes within their organisation mission. For example, the Salvation Army (2017) simultaneously pursues a religious purpose alongside their social mission. They identify their mission as follows:

The Salvation Army is a Christian movement dedicated to sharing the love of Jesus. We share the love of Jesus by:

- Caring for people
- Creating faith pathways
- Building healthy communities

- Working for justice (para. 1)

Meanwhile, Centacare (2017) pursues a social mission, a religious mission and an environmental mission, adhering to Catholic values including the “care of God’s creation” which involves the belief that the earth is a gift that should be respected. As such, the organisation pursues sustainable living goals (Centacare, 2017).

The impact of the mission of an organisation goes beyond simply communicating the purpose of the organisation. It provides a common purpose that ideally unites individuals working within the organisation (McDonald, 2007) and provides a means for establishing an organisational identity (Bonewits Feldner, 2006). According to Khalifa (2012):

...a mission is a genuine and energizing purpose of business – a purpose that is both affective and effective to create a sense of meaning and a sense of direction in the hearts and minds of the members of the organization. (p.242)

In not for profit organisations, including CSOs, the mission is such a core feature of organisational identity that deviation from or alteration of the organisational mission is viewed as challenging the integrity of the organisation whereas in for profit organisations similar alterations to the organisation mission is viewed as a form of innovation (Moore, 2000).

As a source of organisational identity, social mission has become a crucial management tool (Analoui & Karami, 2002). CSOs rely on their social mission and their values orientation to provide them with a competitive advantage in a number of areas. Social missions are used in the acquisition of Government funding (Moore, 2000), attracting clients and volunteer staff (Billis & Glennester, 1998; Drevs et al., 2012; Lee & Brudney, 2015; Rothschild & Milofsky, 2006), and improving organisational performance (Cheverton, 2007; Frumkin & Andre-Clark, 2000; although this has been debated, e.g. Helmig,

Hinz & Ingerfurth, 2015). Importantly for this study, CSOs additionally rely on social mission to provide them with a competitive advantage in the attraction, retention and motivation of their paid staff (CBB, 2015; Hogan, 2014; Muldowney, 2014; Rothschild & Milofsky, 2006; Schoshinski, 2013; VCOSS; 2007).

1.2.1 Social mission and staffing

Social mission and the values-based organisational purpose it articulates, is thought to play a strong role in what attracts workers to the community services sector. According to the Productivity Commission (2010), Australian not for profit employees report that they are attracted to their work because they have a commitment to the ethics of the organisation, because the work is rewarding, and because it offers flexible working arrangements, staff autonomy, and flexible hours. Because of these intrinsic rewards, not for profit employees were willing to accept lower than average wages (Productivity Commission, 2010).

Similarly, studies into the Australian CSO workforce have demonstrated that workers are attracted to the sector by the opportunity to engage in value-based work toward a social benefit and are less interested in pay than these intrinsic rewards. Earles and Lynn (2009), in a study of the community services workforce in Queensland, demonstrated that participants had joined the community services workforce because they had “a desire for meaningful work and a commitment to social justice” (p.115). This corresponds with earlier findings from Onyx (1998) that Australian non-profit managers were more concerned with work that was meaningful and through which they could enact social and political change than they were with achieving higher pay.

Factors related to the social mission of work were again shown to be associated with staff attraction in CSOs by Martin and Healy (2010). As demonstrated in Table 1.1, Martin and Healy (2010) showed that the principle reasons provided by CSO employees for what attracted them to work in the sector were the

desire to help others and to do something worthwhile.

Table 1.1 Reasons attracted to work in the community services sector (%), Martin & Healy (2010) ^a

	Child Protection	Juvenile Justice	Disability Services	General
Desire to help others	73	69	76	80
Desire to do something worthwhile	71	70	68	76
Learning, training, application of skills	51	50	45	28
Variety in tasks	45	48	46	51
Job security	32	42	28	20
Career prospects	31	45	21	22
Independence, autonomy, responsibility in work	30	34	39	42
Work being valued and appreciated	24	32	44	44
Supportive co-workers and management	21	26	29	37
Pay	19	24	16	12
Flexibility in hours, shifts	17	20	36	30
Other reasons	3	4	4	3

Source: Martin & Healy (2010)

^a Note: Multiple reasons could be selected, so values do not sum to 100%

Similar evidence showing that not for profit employees have a greater focus on intrinsic rewards based on their social mission activity and a lesser focus on monetary rewards than do workers in other sectors can also be found in the international context. In a US study, Light (2002) observed that the not for profit workforce is:

...a workforce that comes to work in the morning motivated primarily by the chance to do something worthwhile, savoring the chance to make decisions on its own, take risks, and try new things, and puts mission above all else (p.6).

Light (2002) showed that not for profit workers (66%) were more likely to

identify the chance to accomplish something worthwhile as their main reason for coming to work than were private (41%) or public sector (47%) workers. Carpenter and Gong (2016) meanwhile used real-effort experiments with US college students to investigate the relationship between mission preferences and financial incentives on productivity. They demonstrated that when there was a match between organisation mission and the mission preferences of the worker, these workers produced 72% more output than their counterparts who did not have mission match (Carpenter & Gong, 2016). In addition, while financial incentives improved the productivity of both mission matched and mission mismatched workers, they were more salient for mission mismatched workers, suggesting that mission matched workers were more motivated by the organisation mission (Carpenter & Gong, 2016).

Similar motivations for working in CSOs were again shown in the European and Asian context. Flanigan (2010), who investigated not for profit employees in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon, and Sri Lanka, observed that not for profit “employees are drawn to their careers by a desire to make a difference and do something worthwhile, and often they are willing to sacrifice financial rewards in order to attain this sense of purpose” (p.71).

Social missions have also been implicated in driving retention in CSOs. It is assumed that the type of activity undertaken by these organisations, which is determined by the social mission of the organisation, results in work becoming meaningful for workers. In a study of the CSO workforce in Queensland, Earles and Lynn (2009) identified that CSO employees remained in their current position because of the “nature of the work, the meaningfulness of the work and the sense of connectedness to others” (Earles & Lynn, 2009, p.115). Similar conclusions have been drawn in the US context. Light (2002) observed that despite stress, burnout and a lack of resources, workers in the not for profit sector “come to work because they love their job” (p.6). Meanwhile, McCambridge (2001) observed that retention of workers in the not for profit sector is associated with meaningful work, rather than salaries, benefits, or a

fast career path.

Brown and Yoshioka (2003) more specifically investigated the link between social mission and both job satisfaction and retention in CSOs. They surveyed 304 employees of a not for profit youth and recreational services organisation in regards to their attitudes towards the organisation's mission statement. The findings of their study demonstrated that positive attitudes toward the organisation's values as set out in its mission statement were linked to both intentions to remain with the organisation and job satisfaction, even though this was overridden by dissatisfaction with pay.

1.2.2 Individual workers and social mission

Social mission has been acknowledged as a point of difference that organisations use to attract and retain staff. In doing so, CSOs assume that social mission has an impact on individual workers and the way that they experience their work. However, there is limited research into how this organisational characteristic affects the experience of work for individual workers.

Social mission, as a form of organisation mission, provides CSO workers with a clear understanding of the purpose of the organisation and how they fit within this context. Light (2002) demonstrated this in a telephone survey of not for profit, public and private sector workers. Their study showed that more of the not for profit workers who completed the survey could describe how their job contributed to the organisation's mission (69%) than could public (63%) or private (57%) workers. However, social mission can be about more than just improving a worker's understanding their role within the organisation. When the organisation mission is in line with their personal values, it can provide workers with "an avenue for blending spiritual selves with work selves" (Bonewits Feldner, 2006, p.74).

Social mission also sets out the values enacted through both the work and the work environment. CSO workers are thought to have a different orientation

to their work than do other workers. Mirvis and Hackett (1983) demonstrated, using US data from the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey, that not for profit workers had a greater nonmonetary orientation and gained more intrinsic rewards from their work than did workers in for profit and government contexts. In the not for profit sector “the work itself provides meaningful compensation” (Mirvis, 1992, p.39) for employees. Hansen, et al. (2003) demonstrated that not for profit workers valued an interesting or challenging job, and they placed less emphasis on salary, benefits, or opportunities for advancement than did for profit employees (Hansen et al., 2003). In particular, CSO workers are interested in the values-based work set out by the social mission of the organisation. Not for profit sector workers have been shown to value contributing to society more strongly than do workers in the for profit sector (Lyons et al., 2006). De Cooman et al. (2011) demonstrated that not for profit workers valued making a positive difference in people’s lives, and were more motivated by achieving personally meaningful outcomes than were for profit workers. Similarly, Hansen et al. (2003) showed, based on a survey of 10,667 college graduates that CSO workers are strongly motivated by a desire for a job in which they could “do good or help others” (p.6).

The values-based nature of work set out by the organisation’s social mission promotes a fit between the individual’s self, including their personal values, and the purpose of the work, i.e. the social mission of the organisation. As a result, a number of positive outcomes in relation to the experience of work have been identified. These are outlined below.

1.2.2.1 Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction amongst CSO workers is increased when they value engaging in work that is socially beneficial rather than the monetary rewards of work. Several international studies have shown that CSO workers have greater job satisfaction than workers in other sectors. Based on data collected through telephone interviews with 1190 working adults in the US, Mirvis (1992) showed that a higher proportion of non-profit workers reported that they like

their work and that it is valued by their employer and fewer not for profit workers reported that they did not like their job than business and government workers. Similarly, Borzaga and Tortia (2006) demonstrated, in a study of 2066 staff employed by not for profit, public and for profit organisations, that not for profit workers reported the highest degree of satisfaction with their work of workers across all three sectors.

In the Australian context, Martin and Healy (2010) also showed that CSO workers reported levels of overall job satisfaction equal to the average for the Australian female workforce, levels of satisfaction with 'the work itself' that slightly exceeded the average for the Australian female workforce.¹ These high levels of job satisfaction in CSOs are further increased when workers have a non-monetary orientation to work. Borzaga and Tortia (2006) demonstrated that not for profit workers with greater intrinsic and relational attitudes experienced higher levels of satisfaction and those who valued monetary rewards experienced lower levels of satisfaction with their work.

Within the community services context, job satisfaction has been associated with the type of work being conducted and the impact of this work on others. In a study of newly qualified Australian social workers, Healy, Harrison and Foster (2015) found that overall their participants reported high levels of job satisfaction. Their results showed that job satisfaction amongst these newly qualified social workers was primarily associated with the ability to make a positive difference to other people's lives through their work (Healy et al., 2015).

1.2.2.2 Experience of work

In addition to increasing job satisfaction, gaining value from doing work that

¹ Martin and Healy (2010) adopted a broader definition of CSO and as a result included two subsectors of respondents in public sector social service types: child protection and juvenile justice. Respondents from these subsectors reported lower average levels of overall job satisfaction (7.2 and 7.5, respectively) than the national average for the Australian female workforce (7.7). The respondents in remaining two subsectors, disability services and general community services, reported overall job satisfaction levels that were equal to the national average. Additionally, in both of these subsectors the average level of satisfaction with 'the work itself' was 7.9, which exceeded the average for the Australian female workforce of 7.7.

is socially beneficial has been shown to positively influence the way that CSO workers experience the negative aspects of their work. Scott and Pandey (2005) demonstrated, based on responses from 274 managers in state health and human service agencies, that when social service participants reported higher levels of public service motivation (an employee's "orientation to deliver services to people with the intention of doing good for others and society"; Selander, 2015, p. 1398) they perceived less red tape in their work.

1.2.2.3 Worker engagement

Social mission promotes increased work engagement. Selander (2015) investigated work engagement in the community services sector using a sample of 1412 Finnish welfare service employees. This study not only found that community services sector employees reported higher levels of work engagement than are generally reported in work engagement studies, they also demonstrated that social mission plays a role in this. Selander (2015) showed that both public service motivation, the need to do work that helps others and benefits society, and value congruence, the fit between organisational and personal values, are associated with increased work engagement.

1.2.2.4 Work commitment

Finally, the organisational values that are set out by an organisation's social mission have been shown to increase workers commitment to their CSO. Stride and Higgs (2013) explored the relationship between staff values, perceived organisational values and staff commitment to the organisation. Based on data collected from 286 participants employed by two UK charities, they demonstrated that there was a positive relationship between the perception of organisation two types of organisation values and staff commitment. These organisation values are universalism (values concerned at a broad social level with helping others, such as social justice) and vision values (values concerned with the direction of the organisation, such as development).

1.2.3 The research problem

As shown above, existing research into the impact of social mission on the individual worker considers people working in CSOs as having a different orientation to their work to those working in other sectors and they pursue different values through their work (e.g. De Cooman et al., 2011; Hansen et al., 2003; Lyons et al., 2006; Mirvis, 1992; Mirvis & Hackett, 1983). It is shown that CSO workers have a greater focus on altruistic values. The fit between these personal values and organisational values are presumed to explain how social mission, as an organisational characteristic, affects the experience of work for individual workers.

However, the fit between personal and organisational values alone does not entirely capture the relationship between social mission and the individual worker. Firstly, the relationship between personal and organisational values and social mission may not be as strong as it has been assumed. Stride and Higgs (2013) were unable to demonstrate a significant relationship between the fit between personal and organisational values and increased staff commitment, although they did show that the perception of organisational values played a role in staff commitment. This suggests that although values are involved in linking social mission with staff experiences of work, this link is not necessarily about the congruence between personal values and organisational values.

Secondly, the fit between personal and organisational values does not account for the deeper connection with the core self, i.e. the tie with the spiritual self, which is associated with engaging in social mission work. Bonewits Feldner (2006) described social mission as having a spiritual impact on the individual, allowing them to express their spirituality within the work context. While there is a connection between values and spirituality, spirituality extends beyond values. This again suggests that what links social mission with individual experiences of work is broader than the match between values.

An alternative explanation for linking social mission with the experiences of

individual workers is proffered by literature around the attraction and retention of workers in CSOs. This literature identifies that social mission is associated with experiences of meaningful work (e.g. Earles & Lynn, 2009; Light, 2002; Martin & Healy, 2010; Onyx, 1998). Meaningful work is the idea that people actively seek work that they find worthwhile, purposeful and satisfying. This explanation incorporates the idea of values fit between the individual and the organisation, but additionally involves a broader sense of self. CSO literature often explicitly describes work in the sector as “worthwhile” (Light, 2002, p.6), having “purpose” (Flanigan, 2010, p.71) or being “meaningful” (Earles & Lynn, 2009, p.115). However, research into the *experience* of work in CSOs is rarely investigated using a meaningful work approach. This research sets out to investigate experiences of meaningful work by paid CSO employees, focusing on how social mission contributes to this by providing a source of meaning for staff.

1.3 Contextualising the research problem: Work and employment in Australian CSOs

This research stems from an interest in understanding how work is experienced by employees engaged in care work that I developed while working at a research institute focused on studying labour in the Australian context. Having been involved in a number of research projects looking at how various parts of the care work workforce (including the community services workforce) experienced their work, I became curious about how individual workers balance tensions between challenging working conditions, such as low pay, and the intrinsic rewards gained from engaging in care work. I decided to investigate how work is experienced in CSOs because I was particularly interested in social mission and the assumption that this kind of work is more meaningful for employees, and how this influenced the way that individuals experienced their work.

Beyond my personal desire to understand this aspect of work, the relationship between social mission and meaningful work is interesting within the context

of work and employment in the Australian community services sector. The following section outlines the context for this research, including both the tensions between demand and funding in the Australian community services sector and challenges for attracting and retaining staff.

1.3.1 Tensions between demand and funding in the Australian community services sector

A crisis has been identified in the community services sector in Australia, where there have been persistent staff shortages in the face of increased demand for services from Australia's most vulnerable people (Harrington & Jolly, 2013). This section describes the challenges facing CSOs and their employees. Understanding the reasons that employees disregard these challenges and continue to work in the sector, including the desire for meaningful work as a result of the social mission of the organisation, is important to optimise attraction and retention of employees to meet existing and future staffing needs.

The community services workforce is a small but expanding part of the Australian workforce. According to the Australian Government Department of Jobs and Small Business (2017), since the 1990s the "Health Care and Social Assistance" sector has been the main source of new jobs in the Australian labour market. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) found that the community services sector is expanding at a rate "much faster than average growth across all industries in Australia" (AIHW, 2015, p.54). Using 2016 Census data (ABS, 2017), Table 1.2 provides a breakdown of the proportion of employees working in the community services related sub-industries of the "Health Care and Social Assistance" industry over time. It shows that the proportion of the overall Australian workforce that were employed in CSOs increased by 1.1% between 2006 and 2016. Meanwhile, employment projections for the "Social Assistance Services" sub-industry indicate that the workforce will grow by 66,800 (17.3%) by 2022 (Department of Jobs & Small Business, 2017).

Table 1.2 Proportion of Australian employees working in CSOs, 2006 and 2016

	2006		2016	
	N	%	N	%
Community Services Industries ^a	377589	4.31	545423	5.39
All Industries	8770710	100.00	10110945	100.00

Source. ABS. (2017). 2016 Census- Employment, Income and Education

^a Note: Community Services Industries used were "Health Care & Social Assistance, nfd," "Residential Care Services", and " Social Assistance Services"

Demand for the services provided by CSOs in Australia is increasing. There are a number of factors that mean the population of vulnerable people in Australia relying on services from the community services sector is expanding. These include but are not constrained to the following:

- The Australian population is ageing. According to the latest population projections the proportion of the population aged 65 years and older is expected to increase from 15% in 2014 to 21% by 2054 (ABS, 2013). Older Australians are a significant consumer of community services (ACOSS, 2014b).
- The gap between the Indigenous population and the general population in Australia is substantial. Indigenous Australians continue to experience lower levels of education, employment, household income and wealth, increased levels of disability, and poorer general health than the rest of the population (AIHW, 2017; 2015). These factors make the Indigenous population vulnerable and therefore more likely to require services from CSOs.
- A substantial proportion of the population experience mental health issues. The National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing reported that 45% of Australians will experience a mental disorder during their lifetime and, in 2007, 20% of the population had experienced a common mental disorder in the last 12 months (ABS, 2008). As a result of the high demand, mental health services

comprise a key element of service provision by CSOs (ACOSS, 2014b).

- Domestic violence remains an issue in Australia. According to the 2016 Personal Safety Survey over 2 million adult Australians had experienced partner abuse (ABS, 2016d). Meanwhile over 2 million adult Australians had witnessed violence toward their mother, and over 820,000 adult Australians had witnessed violence toward their father before the reached 15 years (ABS, 2016d). Domestic violence services comprise a substantial subset of the services provided by CSOs in response to the high demand for these services (ACOSS, 2014b).
- Homelessness is increasing in Australia. The proportion of the Australian population who identified that they were homeless in the 2016 Census was 116,427 (or 50 persons per 10,000), which is a 5% increase from the 102,439 (or 48 persons per 10,000) who identified themselves as being homeless during the 2011 Census (ABS, 2016b). Homelessness services already comprise a substantial subset of the services provided by CSOs in response to the high demand for these services (ACOSS, 2014b) and demand for these services will continue as this vulnerable subset of the population increases in size.
- Demand for disability services in Australia is increasing. The 2015 ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers estimated that 4.3 million Australians were living with disability (ABS, 2016c). According to ABS Census data, the number of people needing help with core activities increased from 821,646 in 2006 to 1,202,944 in 2016 (ABS, 2016). In response to the Productivity Commission's (2011) finding that Australia's system of disability supports was "underfunded, unfair, fragmented and inefficient" (Productivity

Commission, 2011, p.2), the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) began in 2013. It heralds dramatic changes to the disability sector in Australia. When fully implemented, the NDIS will fund the supports of approximately 460,000 people with disability (NDIA, 2016). The national roll out of the NDIS is anticipated to necessitate a doubling of the disability workforce (Productivity Commission, 2017).

In addition, demand for services is further increased by co-morbidity, where people concurrently experience more than one of the factors listed above. The result is that these people are even more vulnerable and at risk (AIHW, 2015) and are therefore in greater need of the services provided by CSOs.

As the demand for services provided by CSOs is increasing, the relative funding provided to the sector has been shrinking. Staffing in CSOs is heavily impacted by the lack of funding in the sector. CSOs in Australia operate within the context of “chronic underfunding” (ACOSS, 2013, p.23) for services in the sector (ACOSS, 2013; 2011; 2010) and acknowledge that the cost of delivering services is often greater than the funding provided (ACOSS, 2013; 2011; Cortis & Blaxland, 2017; Productivity Commission, 2010). In addition, the funding context in the community services sector affects the experience of work for CSO employees. Excessive reporting requirements attached to government funding takes funds away from service provision and impedes access to resources (ACOSS, 2011; VCOSS, 2018), especially as resources often have to be reallocated from other areas to cover the cost of these reporting requirements (ACOSS, 2013). Furthermore, there is an expectation that CSOs will limit the use of funds for purposes not directly related to service delivery, further constraining access to resources in the sector (Productivity Commission, 2010). For staff this can result in a lack of support for training and development (ACOSS, 2011; Productivity Commission, 2010). Moreover, the lack of resources in the sector means that CSOs often adopt flatter organisational structures, to reduce staffing costs, meaning that there are

limited opportunities for career advancement (ACOSS, 2011; VCOSS, 2018).

Further to the already constrained funding in the sector, what the sector described as a “tsunami of cuts to community-based services” (ACOSS, 2015, p. 3) was introduced in the 2014-2015 Federal Budget. These cuts consisted of almost \$1 billion to community service provision across the Department of Social Services, Attorney-General’s Department, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Department of Health (ACOSS, 2015). They included a \$241 million cut to the Department of Social Services over four years with the condensing of 18 grant programs into seven grant programs (ACOSS, 2014; 2014b), and an estimated \$165 million reduction over three years in real funding as a result of the Administered Programme Indexation Pause (ACOSS, 2015; 2014). These funding cuts have yet to be restored and continue to impact the provision of services (ACOSS, 2018). According to Cortis and Blaxland (2015), CSOs operating in New South Wales reported that the impacts of these funding cuts on their organisations included changes to their governance and management, a complete restructuring of services, the closure of services and cessation of programs, reductions to staff hours, and staff redundancies.

The impact of the funding cuts was exacerbated by the context in which they occurred. These cuts occurred simultaneously with other reductions to critical social and community services (i.e. legal assistance, ATSI funding, housing and homelessness services, community advocacy), placing additional burden on the sector (ACOSS, 2014b). In addition, concurrent changes to the financial supports available to people living with low and mid-ranging incomes (i.e. income support, NewStart, family payments, the age pension, the disability support pension, and Medicare co-payment for GPs) increased demand for services by placing additional financial burden on an already vulnerable cohort (ACOSS, 2014; 2014b).

ACOSS have described the impact of the additional funding cuts on staffing

in the sector; identifying funding cuts and the resulting uncertainty around funding were “a significant barrier...in [organisations] meeting their obligations to staff...” (ACOSS, 2015, p.4). Funding constraints in the sector affect the use of resources, including the use of paid staff (ACOSS, 2013; 2011). In the annual Australian Community Sector Survey (ACSS), conducted by the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), CSOs reported that they rely on staff (both paid and volunteer) working additional hours to overcome the underfunding in the sector (ACOSS, 2013; 2011). These funding constraints also negatively impact the ability of organisations to attract and retain staff (ACOSS, 2010).

The tension between sector growth/demand and chronic underfunding has resulted in skill shortages. The AIHW (2015) observed that there are substantial workforce shortages in the community services sector. This is supported by an earlier finding from the Productivity Commission (2010) that CSO workers would prefer to increase their work hours if they could.

Given the demand for services, one of the primary concerns of Australian CSOs is the attraction and retention of staff (ACOSS, 2013; AIHW, 2015)². In particular CSOs struggle to attract staff with suitable skills (Cortis & Blaxland, 2017; VCOSS, 2018). The AIHW (2015) reported that although there are high numbers of suitable applicants for positions in the community services sector, CSOs experienced difficulties attracting both workers for higher skilled positions and experienced workers. More recently, in a study of 398 CSOs in New South Wales, Cortis and Blaxland (2017) demonstrated that nearly half of the organisations in their study experienced difficulties attracting and retaining staff with degree level qualifications (40.7%), and almost one third had difficulty attracting frontline practitioners (32.5%). These authors previously conducted similar studies of CSOs in the Australian Capital

² Other major concerns for CSOs are issues around underfunding and funding uncertainty, e.g. the challenge of remaining viable, unmet demand for services, pressure to attract non-government funding, and increased regulation and reporting obligations (ACOSS, 2013)

Territory (Cortis & Blaxland, 2016) and Tasmania (Cortis & Blaxland, 2016b). In each of these studies it was shown that responding CSOs experienced difficulties both in recruiting and retaining both direct service and indirect service employees (Cortis & Blaxland, 2016; Cortis & Blaxland, 2016b). In addition, given that the community services workforce is an older workforce, the existing shortage of staff and skills is likely to worsen in the future as the existing workforce retires (AIHW, 2015).

Skill shortages in the sector have primarily been attributed to the funding context. Prior to the funding cuts announced in 2014, the community services sector acknowledged that they were already struggling not only to meet the high demand for services but also to meet their staffing requirements. In the 2014 ACSS, organisations acknowledged that they needed to increase their capacity (33% reported that they need to increase capacity between 11-25%, and 30% reported a need to increase between 26-50%) to meet the demand for services (ACOSS, 2014b).

Despite the need to increase the capacity of CSOs to meet the demand for services, funding uncertainty in the sector resulted in organisations decreasing their paid staff. The 2014 ACSS identified that 62% of the organisations surveyed had not extended staff contracts, 34% had delayed filling vacancies, and 35% had delayed recruiting staff as a direct result of funding uncertainty (ACOSS, 2014b). In a subsequent submission to the Australian Senate Community Affairs Committee Inquiry ACOSS (2015) identified that by October 2014 some organisations were commencing redundancies as a result of funding uncertainty in the sector.³

Difficulties attracting suitable workers have additionally been attributed to: a lack of clear pathways through education into the sector, decreased pay and job security, the demanding and emotionally draining nature of working with vulnerable people, and a lack of awareness of the sector amongst the general

³The 2014 ACSS is the most recent version released by ACOSS.

public (VCOSS, 2018).

1.3.2 Challenges for attracting and retaining CSO staff

A number of additional challenges have been identified in relation to attracting and retaining staff in CSOs. These include the high workload in the sector, the challenging nature of the work, low pay and job security, and decreased opportunities for training and career progression.

1.3.2.1 High workload

Work in CSOs is often characterised by high workloads resulting from the high demand for services which are exacerbated by funding constraints and staffing issues. Employees in the Australian community services sector face high caseloads and long waiting lists and are required by organisations to work additional hours (ACOSS, 2013; 2011; Carson et al., 2007), in particular to undertake the reporting and form-filling requirements of the job (VCOSS, 2018). The impact of these “tight resources” (Carson et al., 2007, p. 110) on workloads is further exacerbated by the complexity of work, which results from working with clients who often have co-morbidity issues (Carson et al., 2007). In addition, high turnover rates further contribute to the burden placed on workers by creating a loss of expertise within CSOs, requiring tasks and responsibilities to be shared amongst remaining staff until the position is filled, and introducing further work around recruiting and training new staff (ACOSS, 2011b; Cortis & Blaxland, 2016).

1.3.2.2 Nature of the work

The work environment and the work itself can be challenging for employees in CSOs. Working in CSOs can be risky given the client groups that the sector services and the nature of the work undertaken. CSO employees often work with clients that are difficult or distressed and they do so in highly charged situations and environments that place them at risk, in particular for client-initiated violence (Meagher & Cortis, 2010). ACOSS (2011) observed that there is a high incidence of workplace incidents and adverse events within the sector. Emotional exhaustion and burnout were also prevalent within the

community services sector (ACOSS, 2011; VCOSS, 2018). This impacts not only the individual worker experiencing burnout but the remaining workforce as well, given that burnout is linked to staff turnover and turnover within the sector is high (Martin & Healy, 2010). Staff turnover negatively affects remaining staff by increasing workload through the need to cover work while a replacement is being sourced and the need to train a new staff member.

1.3.2.3 Gendered work, low salaries and low job security

Work in the community services sector, like other forms of care work, is acknowledged to be undervalued, affecting working conditions such as pay and job security. This undervaluation of care work is primarily attributed to the feminised nature of this type of work (Allebone, 2011; Cortis & Meagher, 2012). The community service sector in Australia employs a high proportion of female workers, with over 80% of community service employees being female (ABS, 2016f). Highly feminised work is associated with “pervasive cultural expectations that care work be performed out of altruism or duty, not for money, and [...] that workers in caring occupations willingly accept lower pay for the opportunity to perform satisfying or mission-driven work” (Cortis & Meagher, 2012, p. 380). Undervaluation of work in the community services sector impacts both the attraction and retention of staff as well as staff morale (Allebone, 2011; Cortis & Meagher, 2012).

ACOSS (2011) observed that pay for CSO staff is lower than in comparable industries and is inequitable within the community services sector. Unsurprisingly, it has been shown that the workforce is unhappy with this inequity. In their profile of the Australian Community Services sector, Martin and Healy (2010) demonstrated that across four social services subsectors (child protection, juvenile justice, disability services, and general community services) low satisfaction with pay was observed among the respondents to their survey⁴. Beyond the low financial remuneration for employees in the

⁴In their study, participants from child protection, juvenile justice, disability services, and general community services provided an average rating of their satisfaction with their pay of 5.1, 6.0, 5.5 and

sector, the paid CSO workforce also contributes a high number of unpaid hours (ACOSS, 2011).

According to CSOs, the principal barriers for attracting and retaining staff are the low salaries and low job security in the sector (ACOSS, 2011; Cortis & Blaxland, 2017).⁵ In the 2011 ACSS CSOs were asked to identify whether a set of factors helped, hindered or had no impact on staff attraction or retention. A higher proportion of organisations reported that pay (68%) and job security (44%) negatively impacted the attraction and retention of staff rather than having a positive impact (10% and 20%, respectively) or no impact on staffing (22% and 36%, respectively: ACOSS, 2011).

Although it is not the only source of work devaluation in the Australian community services sector, low pay has been shown to be primarily attributable to the highly feminised nature of the sector. An inquiry conducted by the Queensland Industrial Relations Committee (2009) established that a gendered devaluation of care work was present in the Social and Community Services (SACS) sector in Queensland (Allebone, 2011; Cortis & Meagher, 2012). It also identified other factors that contributed to the devaluation of community services work including: the historical basis of the sector in charities and voluntary organisations; specific industry features such as low unionisation rates; industrial issues such as overall low over-award payments; and the funding structure which focuses on cost-effectiveness through governments contracting out services (Allebone, 2011). As a result, community service workers in Queensland were awarded a wage increase (Cortis & Meagher, 2012). This inquiry is an example of just one of a number of state-based wage equality inquiries and reviews conducted in Australia since the 1990s which have resulted in the development of equal remuneration

5.3 (respectively) on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 indicated that they were “totally dissatisfied” with their pay and 10 indicated that they were “totally satisfied” with their pay (Martin & Healy, 2010).

⁵ A recent Productivity Commission report (2017) recommends that the default length of government contracts for the provision of family and community services should be extended to seven years to improve continuity of service as well as service planning, service provider collaboration, innovation and staff retention.

principles (Cortis & Meagher, 2012).

The burden of lower pay was expected to ease somewhat for some CSO workers as a result of the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) enacted in 2012 under the 2009 Fair Work Act (FWA, 2012). Based on the findings from the state-based wage equality inquiries, a national wage equality case was presented to the Fair Work Commission in 2011 by the SACS industry arguing the need for wage increases on the basis that there has been a historic devaluation of community services work due to its feminised nature (FWA, 2011). The Fair Work Agency (2011) found that “gender has been important in creating the gap between pay in the SACS industry and pay in comparable state and local government employment” (p. 87). As a result, an Equal Remuneration Order was enacted. This order resulted in changes to the award rates for employees covered by Schedule B (social and community employees) and Schedule C (crisis accommodation employees) under the Social, Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Award 2010. For these employees, the minimum wage will rise between 23% and 45% in a series of wage rises over a period between 2012 and 2020 (AIHW, 2015; FWA, 2012). For example, a Social and Community Services Employee Level 2 at pay point one would be eligible for a 23% increase, from \$809.10 to \$995.19 per week to be delivered in increments across the eight year period (FWC, 2012).

However, while the ERO increases the minimum wage for some community services employees, it does not cover all employees in the industry. For example, family day care employees and home care employees, who are also covered under the award, are not eligible for these basic wage increases (FWC, 2012). At the same time the ERO also places more pressure on organisations to meet the costs of staffing and this has the potential to lead to higher workloads for staff if the organisation elects to manage their costs by reducing staff numbers. Although the wage increases introduced by the ERO are well under

way and are now only two years from the final increment rise, little information is available on the impact of these measures. Some concerns have been raised about the ability of organisations to finance the wage increases for staff (ACOSS, 2013; Gilchrist & Knight, 2017).⁶ In relation to the impact of the ERO on staff, concerns persist about pay levels in the community services sector. VCOSS (2018) acknowledged that even after the ERO wage increases, for CSO employees their pay is “still less than similar services run by public services” (p.5). Similarly, Cortis and Blaxland (2017) identified that despite the ERO, pay was still a concern for CSOs in relation to recruiting and retaining staff. Additional concerns have been raised about pay levels for those community services staff not covered by the ERO. For example, recent concerns about pay in CSOs have focused on staff delivering disability services under the NDIS (Cortis, McDonald, Davidson & Bentham, 2017; VCOSS, 2018).

A number of explanations have been offered for how the characteristics of CSO employees affect the pay that they receive.

One explanation is that pay in the sector is lower because the CSO workforce gains non-pecuniary benefits from their work through engaging in social mission work and working towards a mission shared with the organisation. Economic researchers refer to this as the “warm glow” (Rutherford, 2015; p.124) gained from engaging in work that has social benefit. For example, England (2005) identified that one explanation for the low pay in care work fields, such as CSOs, is that, because workers receive gains from satisfying their intrinsic need for caring, this allows organisations to pay workers less. Meanwhile, Besley and Ghatak (2005) suggested that not for profit workers are “mission-oriented” (p.617). As such, these workers gain utility from the type of social mission within which they do their work and the sense of having a shared mission between themselves and the organisation, and they are willing

⁶ A survey of CSOs in the early phases of implementing the ERO demonstrated that for 9% of CSOs surveyed, the most significant issue they faced was implementing new equal pay arrangements. However, 90% of CSOs thought the equal pay decision was a good thing for the sector, and 73% thought that implementing the Equal Remuneration Order over 8 years was too slow (ACOSS, 2013).

to sacrifice financial rewards to gain this utility (Besley & Ghatak, 2005).

Another explanation for the wage differential between not for profit and work in other sectors is that organisations choose to provide lower wages because it ensures that the workers that they do attract are more committed because of their connection to the organisation mission. England (2005) identified that paying care workers more is thought to decrease the amount of caring provided by workers because the monetary motivations of workers will start to supersede their altruistic motivations as the monetary rewards increase. Handy and Katz (1998) proposed that not for profit organisations pay their managers less to encourage self-selection of managers who are committed to the work and the cause. They developed a model based on the findings of other researchers in the field that demonstrates that despite lower wages in the sector, commitment to the cause ensures that not for profit managers are no less productive than their counterparts in other sectors. Similarly, Ghatak and Mueller (2011) showed that managers of not for profit organisations adopted a non-profit model of operation because their workers were more committed to the work and less inclined to shirk because of their commitment to the organisation mission.

A final explanation for how the characteristics of the CSO workforce influence the lack of pay in the sector focuses on the gender bias of the workforce. The high proportion of females in care work, such as community services work, is thought to devalue the work (England, 2005). According to Baird, Williamson and Heron (2012) “[w]orking norms and workplaces, where more and more women now work, are still designed for a previous social era that preferenced men’s lives, and are thus critical sites of gender production and reproduction.” (p.328). The 2011 Equal Remuneration Case found that work in the Australian community services sector has a “female characterisation” and as such they were entitled to an increase in the award rate (FWA, 2011). In doing so, the Fair Work Commission recognised the devaluation of community services work in Australia.

1.3.2.4 Access to training and opportunities for career progression

Other factors have been shown to act as barriers to staff attraction and retention in the sector. The Productivity Commission (2010) acknowledged that lack of access to training and fewer opportunities for career progression play a role in contributing to difficulties attracting and retaining staff. In the 2011 ACSS, CSOs felt that a number of organisation characteristics beyond pay and job security were barriers to attracting and retaining staff. These factors, including career path (44%) and training and development opportunities (20%), were viewed by a proportion of CSOs as impeding staffing (ACOSS, 2011).⁷ However, for both factors a higher proportion of CSOs surveyed felt that they either had no impact on or helped the attraction and retention of staff, rather than acting as barriers (ACOSS, 2011). More recently, in separate studies of CSOs in New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory, Cortis and Blaxland (2017; 2016) showed that CSOs reported that training and development opportunities facilitated the attraction and retention of staff, while constrained opportunities for advancement were a hindrance.⁸ Meanwhile, VCOSS (2018) identified that the lack of career paths and opportunities for promotion in the community services sector has led to workers moving across to the public sector or to other industries.

1.3.3 Summary

Despite often being overlooked in research, the community services workforce is an important part of the Australian workforce. It is important because it provides crucial services to the most vulnerable cohorts within Australian society. Even though the sector is expanding, the demand for services in Australia is increasing and this, coupled with constrained funding, means that CSOs are not able to meet the service needs of the community. As a result, one of the primary operational concerns for CSOs is staffing (ACOSS, 2013; AIHW,

⁷ Other barriers to recruitment and retention identified in the 2011 ACSS (ACOSS, 2011) were: working hours (21%), location (19%) and working conditions (18%).

⁸ Although in the NSW study, more CSOs felt that opportunities for advancement had no impact on staff recruitment and retention (Cortis & Blaxland, 2017).

2015).

The high demand for services and constrained funding in the community services sector has created challenging work conditions for staff (ACOSS, 2011). Challenges for CSO employees extend beyond the funding constraints to high workloads, the emotionally taxing nature of the work, low salaries and job security, and a lack of access to professional development and constrained opportunities for career progression.

Despite these challenges, CSO employees continue to demonstrate a high level of passion and commitment to their work. In their study of Australian CSO employees, Martin and Healy (2010) observed that the community services workforce was “highly committed in providing care and assistance to its clients” and that employees remained in their work “despite the pay rather than because of it” (p.203).

Thus, it is important to understand how CSO employees experience their work, in particular those aspects of work such as social mission and meaningful work, which purport to explain why workers accept the unfavourable employment characteristics outlined above. Gaining this understanding will help knowledge around attracting and retaining staff to ensure that CSOs can maintain their workforce into the future.

1.4 Chapter outline

Chapter 2 is a literature review outlining theories of meaningful work. The chapter defines meaningful work as work that has significance and purpose because it enriches the self and contributes beyond the self. I argue that, as such, meaningful work could account for the way that social mission influences the behaviour of employees in CSOs.

There are two aspects of meaningful work where social mission is most likely to contribute. Firstly, as an organisational characteristic of CSOs, it is expected that social mission will act as an antecedent and influence meaningful work.

As the socially beneficial purpose of the organisation, social mission provides two potential pathways into meaningful work: it may allow employees to feel that through their work they contribute to the greater good, linking them to a broader, transcendent purpose; or it may allow employees to engage in work with a particular set of values, which they feel match their personal values, thereby providing employees with a sense of coherence between their self and their work and allowing employees to express or develop their sense of self at work. Secondly, social mission, as a key feature of work in CSOs, is likely to contribute to the way that CSO employees actively shape their work as meaningful.

Thus I set out to investigate how CSO employees experience their work as meaningful and how social mission contributes to their experiences. In doing so, I take heed of Rosso, Dekas and Wrzesniewski's (2010) observation that researchers need to look at the way employees go beyond the work environment that exists around them to actively shape their understanding of their work context, tangible and psychological, as meaningful through job crafting.

Chapter 3, the methods chapter, will set up both the ontological and methodological approaches for this study, which moves beyond the pragmatic, post-positivist ontology that dominates psychological research to employ an interpretative phenomenological approach informed by Smith (2011; Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999), known as interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), which is more frequently associated with health psychology research but has also been used in the field of organisational psychology (Smith, 2001). This research uses qualitative data to examine individuals' views of a phenomenon while simultaneously recognising that research can never gain direct access to a person's cognitions. The strength of this approach is its ability to explore the lived experience of a phenomenon (Smith et al., 1999). In this study it is used to investigate the lived experience of meaningful work in CSOs. Data for analysis were collected through semi-

structured qualitative interviews with 36 workers from South Australian CSOs.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 will discuss the findings pertaining to the experience of meaningful work in CSOs. The first results chapter (Chapter 4) will begin by investigating the ways in which CSO employees experience their work as meaningful. This chapter demonstrates that meaningful work is a feature of both expectations about work, which inform experiences, and experiences of work in CSOs. Findings presented in this chapter indicate that social mission plays a role in meaningful work for CSO participants. However, participants' experiences of meaningful work in CSOs need to be explored in greater depth to gain a better understanding of the contribution of social mission.

The remainder of the chapter focuses on outcomes of meaningful work. It shows that meaningful work resulted in both self-related and work-related outcomes for CSO employees. These outcomes were predominantly viewed as positive by participants. However there was some evidence that organisations exploited work-related outcomes to their own benefit, often at the expense of the employee.

The contribution of social mission to experiences of meaningful work by CSO participants is further explored in Chapters 5, which focuses on the two aspects of meaningful work where social mission is anticipated to have the most influence. That is, factors that influence meaningful work and the ways participants craft their jobs to alter the meaningfulness of their work. It is shown that CSO participants identified three factors that they felt contributed to their experience of their work as meaningful: social mission activity and the impact of the work on others; building relationships and social interaction within the workplace; and the quality of the work itself and working conditions. Each of these factors is influenced by the organisation through the organisational culture and the work environment provided.

As anticipated, evidence from Chapter 5 shows that social mission contributes

to meaningful work by providing participants with a sense of coherence between self and work and a sense of contribution to the greater good. In addition, social mission further contributed to meaningful work by promoting a sense of belonging for participants by providing a shared purpose. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrates that while these factors contributed to meaningful work for CSO participants, the presence or absence of these characteristics of work alone do not explain meaningful work. Instead, findings indicate that the individual is integral in shaping their understandings of work as meaningful.

The second half of Chapter 5 explores the way in which participants actively construct their work as meaningful by shaping the psychological boundaries and the tangible elements of their work, what Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) describe as job crafting. I demonstrate that, in their accounts of their experience of work, participants shaped the psychological boundaries of their work to alter its meaning. To do so, they focused on positive elements and de-emphasized negative aspects of work in the sector. They did so in order to maintain a positive or coherent narrative around their experience of work in CSOs and thus foster their sense of self, or self-concept, in the context of work. I also examine how participants reinterpreted challenges to their narrative about their experience of work. In doing so I borrow from Ashforth and Kreiner (1999), who identified that workers engaged in “dirty work”, work that is socially constructed as “tainted” (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999, p. 414), actively shape a positive work identity by reframing, recalibrating and refocusing their accounts of their work (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Although not suggesting that CSO work is “dirty”, their concepts have some utility in explaining broader constructions of the experience of work.

In this chapter I also explore the ways that participants manipulated the tangible boundaries of their work practices, in particular around their job tasks, their work environment, their work-life balance and their social interactions, to emphasise the positive elements of their work and de-

emphasise elements of their work that challenge a positive or at least coherent view of their experience of work.

The findings presented in this chapter demonstrate that the presence of social mission or social mission activity within an organisation was not necessarily indicative of how employees experienced their connection with social mission. Participants who wanted to perceive their work as meaningful crafted their experience of work to support this perception and participants who did not perceive their work as meaningful crafted their work such that it was not. In addition, while engagement in social mission activity formed part of how participants crafted their work to be meaningful, other factors (social interactions and the quality of the job) were crafted to alter the meaningfulness of work. The presence of social mission therefore only partially explains experiences of meaningful work for CSO participants.

In Chapter 6 I draw together the findings of the two results chapters and discuss the implications for understanding meaningful work in CSOs. I then use these findings to develop an integrated framework of meaningful work in CSOs that incorporates both antecedents (such as social mission) and outcomes into a sense-making model. Using this Integrated Framework of Meaningful Work in CSOs, four patterns were identified in how meaningful work was constructed by participants and the role of social mission in this. Direct service employees constructed their work as meaningful based on the social mission of the organisation, a perception that was bolstered by other organisational antecedents such as the work itself and the working conditions. Indirect service employees, who did not immediately experience social mission activity, either made sense of their work as meaningful using other organisational antecedents and the impact of work on the self, job crafted their work to include elements of social mission activity, or they made sense of their work as non-meaningful and job crafted to reinforce this and create a coherent self-concept.

Finally in Chapter 7, the conclusion chapter, I argue that although social mission was a principal factor in experiences of meaningful work for participants, the CSO literature is too simplistic in relying on the assumption of social mission as driving meaningful work, and therefore behaviour, in CSOs. I show that while the CSO literature sets up social mission as an organisational characteristic that provides meaning to employees through the fit between the employee and their work, this study demonstrates that employees actively shape both the tangible and psychological elements of their work environment to create a positive self-identity and meaningful work. Furthermore, this experience of meaningful work goes beyond the idea that the presence of social mission alone provides workers with an intrinsically rewarding work experience.

To conclude I discuss avenues for future research.

2 Meaningful work: linking social mission and individual experiences of work

As shown in the previous chapter, the social mission of a CSO is associated with workers having a more positive experience of work leading to increased productivity, and to the attraction and retention of staff. Existing literature on social mission focuses on establishing a link between the worker and the purpose of the organisation based on the congruence between personal values and organisational values. However, this does not accurately capture this underlying link between social mission and individual experiences of work because it does not account for the deeper connection with the core self, i.e. the tie with the spiritual self, which is associated with engaging in social mission work. Using the concept of meaningful work to explain the link between social mission and individual experiences of work can provide such insight. In this study, based on definitions provided in the existing literature, meaningful work is understood to be work that has significance and purpose because it enriches the self and contributes beyond the self (Bailey, Madden, Alfes, Shantz & Soane, 2017; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003).

One difficulty with defining meaningful work is that the term has been used to encompass a range of related concepts that have been acknowledged to be confounded in much of the literature (e.g. Bailey, Madden, Alfes, Shantz & Soane, 2017; Rosso et al., 2010; Schnell, Hoge & Pollet, 2013). *Meaningful work* is “the subjective experience of meaningfulness in a particular work context” (Schnell et al., 2013, p. 543). Meanwhile, *meaning of work* describes how work is interpreted and relates to the meaning that is given to work (Schnell et al., 2013, p.543). This study is interested in the lived experiences of *meaningful work* in CSOs, and how social mission, as a source of *meaning of work*, contributes to these experiences.

Approaching the impact of social mission on the experience of work for individual workers with a meaningful work lens incorporates a deep connection between the worker and their work. Under this approach, the

social mission of a CSO provides workers both with a means of contributing to a socially-beneficial cause and it establishes a shared organisational identity and purpose, thereby creating a sense of belonging. In doing so, social mission can alter the experience of work for the worker by providing them with a personal sense of purpose either by locating them in a broader context through shared goals and a self-transcendent purpose, or by allowing them to be genuine or to pursue a better version of themselves while at work through engaging in work that fits with their personal values and goals. When this sense of purpose fits with the individual's values and self-concept, it provides a positive self-concept in the work context resulting in the types of outcomes associated with work that has a social mission, e.g. increased job satisfaction, work engagement and work commitment. However, while meaningful work may provide an explanation for the way that social mission contributes to individual experiences of work in CSOs, social mission is insufficient to explain the experience of meaningful work in CSOs. As Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2013) observe, “[j]ust because an organisation has a focus on service, this alone does not make work meaningful” (p.230). Thus, the aim of this research is to understand the role of social mission in experiences of meaningful work in CSOs.

In this chapter the ability of meaningful work to provide insight into the role of social mission in constructions of the experience of work in CSOs is explored. Models of meaningful work in the existing literature are reviewed. It is shown that existing literature in this field approaches meaningful work in two ways: as a *cognitive judgement* based on the presence or absence of certain conditions; or as a means of *sense-making* about the experience of work. The former approach, while easier to test quantitatively, treats meaningful work as relatively static and does not easily account for differences in experiences of meaningful work that occur between workers experiencing a particular condition, such as the presence of social mission. The latter approach better accounts for these differences between workers and the continuous nature of

meaningful work, however while existing models acknowledge the role of purpose and both antecedents and outcomes of meaningful work, these aspects of meaningful work are not a focus of the models. The second part of this chapter investigates what is known about these aspects of meaningful work in greater depth so that they can be incorporated into a sense-making framework for understanding how meaningful work is experienced in CSOs and the role of social mission in these experiences.

2.1 Existing frameworks of meaningful work: An incomplete picture

Meaningful work has been identified as a potential framework for understanding how social mission, as an organisational condition, affects the individual experience of work for CSO employees. However, to use meaningful work in this way, it is important to understand how work is perceived as meaningful and how this experience affects the worker and their work.

Meaningful work is work that is perceived by the worker as having meaning, i.e. having significance and purpose. This has been demonstrated in the applied context. Fourie and Deacon (2015) in a qualitative study of meaning in work amongst 20 South African secondary school teachers found that participants conceptualised meaningful work in two ways: either as work which is perceived as having significance or which has a sense of purpose.

Meaningful work involves the attribution of *significance* to work. This sense of significance is derived when work is perceived to serve a *purpose* in one's life (e.g. Berg, Dutton & Wrzesniewski, 2013; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012; May, Gilson & Hartner, 2004; Rosso et al., 2010). It is "that which gives essence to what we do and what brings a sense of fulfilment to our lives" (Chalofsky, 2003, p.74). According to Isaksen (2000), when work serves a purpose in one's life this purpose can involve a clear and unambiguous sense of the reason that work is significant or it can manifest as "a vague physical sense of what feels good or bad and of how to act in any given situation" (p.87). The social mission

of a CSO can provide this sense of significance for employees when it gives them a sense of purpose in their life or when it provides work that they see as important. If the organisation's mission is, for example, to provide services to women experiencing domestic violence this mission might provide the employee with a purpose that they adopt as a broader purpose in their life. Furthermore, it might give the worker a sense that what they do at work is important.

Meaningful work is often premised on the assumption that people inherently seek meaning, or purpose, in life and that work provides them with a means to do so (Frankl, 2006). Nussbaum (2011) viewed meaningful work as a basic human capability, i.e. a core element of what a person is "able to do and to be" (p.20), arising both from their abilities and the freedoms offered to them through their political, social and economic context. Conceptualisations of how purpose influences meaningful work differ. The existing literature often conceives of meaningful work as being about the pursuit of an existential purpose through work (e.g. Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003), i.e. answering the question "why am I here?" (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003, p.311). The issue with an existential take on meaningful work is that it implies that it is achieved only by a rarefied, select few. Another approach in the literature takes a milder view, opening up the experience of meaningful work to become more achievable for workers. This approach focuses on the significance attributed to the purpose of the work rather than establishing an existential purpose. In this approach work provides a source of meaning *in* one's life, rather than a source of meaning *for* one's life. Meaningful work is thus a worker's "beliefs about the function work serves in life" (Wrzesniewski, Dutton & Debebe, 2003, p.99) and "the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards" (May et al., 2004, p.14).

Given these differences in how purpose is conceptualised, within the literature there is a range in what the experience of meaningful work is considered to entail. The literature that treats meaningful work as deriving from an

existential purpose views the experience of meaningful work as transcendent. This experience, which is not achieved by all who experience meaningful work, comprises interconnection, i.e. linking of the worker with a cause beyond themselves, and self-abnegation, i.e. involvement of the worker in work that extends beyond their own interests and welfare (Rosso et al., 2013). Transcendence is described as an intense, deep experience that is akin to spirituality or calling (eg. Fox, 1994; Steger & Dik, 2010; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin & Schwartz, 1997). This experience occurs at a “deep personal level” (Steger & Dik, 2010, p. 132) and is fulfilling to the inner self (Fox, 1994).

However, the literature that takes a milder approach to the type of purpose through which meaningful work is attained, views the resulting experience as more achievable. Pratt and Ashforth (2003) describe meaningful work as occurring when “work and/or its context are perceived by its practitioners to be, at a minimum, purposeful and significant” (p.311). At the minimum level, meaningful work occurs as an experience akin to job satisfaction, work engagement, or a sense of enjoyment from work that arises from the sense that work has significance (e.g. Shamir, 1991). This is the approach to meaningful work that will be adopted in this study. Given the assumed prevalence of meaningful work in CSOs described in the CSO literature (see 1.2.3), this approach is more suited to this study because it is a more achievable form of meaningful work.

Experiences of meaningless work, meanwhile, are often ignored or minimised in the meaningful work literature (e.g. May et al., 2004; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010). However, Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) identified the need to study meaningless work alongside meaningful work and to understand the factors that contribute to both experiences. They describe meaningless work as occurring when the “subjective experience of the purposefulness or existential significance of one’s life [is] diminished” (p.492). While the relationship between meaningful and non-meaningful work is not

often explicitly discussed in the literature, there is an implicit suggestion that they exist as opposite extremities along a continuum of experiences of meaningfulness. Isaksen (2000) described that individuals can concurrently experience elements of both meaningful and meaningless work, and that overall a judgement is made about whether work is broadly meaningful or meaningless. Similarly, Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) dichotomised experiences of meaningful and meaningless work.

Although there are a number of related concepts that could be used as a lens to explore the link between social mission and individual experiences of work, meaningful work was chosen for this study because it captures the depth of the relationship between self and work that is assumed emerges as a result of social mission. Although not a new concept, for example work by Frankl dates back to the 1940s (2006, originally published 1946), research into the relationship between meaning and work has been undertaken in a “siloeed” (Rosso et al., 2010, p. 115) manner across a number of academic fields rather than as an integrated research stream. As a result a number of concepts that overlap with meaningful work are present in the existing literature. While this adds breadth and richness to the understanding of meaningful work through the consideration of different aspects of the phenomenon and the use of a variety of ontological lenses, it also adds complexity. A series of concepts that interrelate with the idea of meaningful work to varying degrees have been developed in related fields across a number of academic disciplines. While the literature around some of these concepts contributes to understandings of the antecedents and consequences of meaningful work, there are distinctions between them and meaningful work. The following outlines the most prevalent of these related concepts and how they overlap with meaningful work in order to further consolidate the concept of meaningful work and identify why these approaches were not as relevant as meaningful work to this study.

- Job satisfaction: Job satisfaction research emerged from the field of

psychology. Early job satisfaction research focused on meaningful work as work that is both interesting and in which the worker can become invested. This field explored the ways in which employers can enrich the jobs they provide for workers, therefore providing workers with more meaningful work and increasing their motivation and productivity (Hackman, Oldham, Janson & Purdy, 1975). Later job satisfaction research explored meaningful work as a psychological state emerging as a result of person-job fit. This field is concerned with the provision of work that aligns with the worker's identity and ideal self, their interests and passions, and their values (Imel, 2002; Morin, 2004; Scroggins, 2008). Job satisfaction, like meaningful work, is about work through which one's needs are met. However, job satisfaction does not necessarily involve the deeper emotional engagement with work that is sometimes associated with meaningful work. It thus forms part of what is considered to be meaningful work, but does not necessarily comprise the whole concept of what is meaningful work. Given that social mission has been flagged as having a spiritual impact on the individual (Bonewits Feldner, 2006), job satisfaction therefore does not capture the depth of the impact that social mission might have, by creating a deep emotional connection, on the experience of work and was not adopted in this research.

- Intrinsic motivation: Research into intrinsic motivation again overlaps with meaningful work literature. Adopting the psychological principles of intrinsic motivation, human resources researchers Chalofsky and Krishna (2009) described meaningful work as an intrinsic source of motivation. In doing so they illustrated meaningful work as occurring at a deeper level than traditional intrinsic motivators and having a positive impact on employee engagement and commitment. Intrinsic motivation

captures the depth of the connection between work and self that social mission might create, and it focusses on the connection between purpose and self by looking at motivation (or purpose) as an outcome of the satisfaction of the deep needs of the self. However, it extends beyond the concept of meaningful work and can occur for reasons outside of meaningful work, e.g. accomplishment, pride, satisfaction and praise. Intrinsic motivation therefore overlaps with the concept of meaningful work but has a broader reach than does the concept of meaningful work. While some of these other sources of intrinsic motivation fit with social mission and how it impacts the experience of work (e.g. accomplishment and pride), others (e.g. praise) are at best only tenuously associated with social mission. Thus, meaningful work remains a more robust approach to investigating the relationship between social mission and individual experiences of work in CSOs.

- Workplace spirituality: Emerging primarily in the management literature, research into spirituality at work is concerned with nourishing the soul at work by expressing inner life needs at work and forming a connection to others (Ashforth & Vaidyanath, 2002; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Fox, 1994; Mirvis, 1997; Neck & Milliman, 1994). Duchon and Ashmos Plowman (2005) demonstrated that organisations can increase performance by nurturing spirit at work by attending to workers' needs for community, meaning at work (what is important, joyful and energising about work) and an inner life, their "heart and soul" (p. 811). This concept is very similar to meaningful work. It too is concerned with "meaning, purpose and being connected to others" (Duchon & Ashmos Plowman, 2005, p. 810), however spirituality at work has a stronger emphasis on religion and the presence of an external compulsion than does meaningful work (Milliman, Gatling & Bradley-Geist, 2017). In

CSOs, the social mission of the organisation can provide a source of workplace spirituality by providing work that allows workers to connect with others, given that social missions primarily involve helping vulnerable people, or enact their inner values (including their religious values). Therefore workplace spirituality would also provide a plausible explanation for how social mission in CSOs affects the experience of work for individuals. However, workplace spirituality is more broadly concerned with nourishing the soul at work. Therefore meaningful work is a more appropriate lens to adopt in this study because it is more focused, concentrating on the connection between purpose and self.

- Vocation or calling: Another field of psychological research that overlaps with meaningful work is that which explores the notion of work as a “calling”. Historically, the notion of work as a “calling” derives from the Protestant work ethic and the idea that one is “called” to work by God (Weber, 2005). More recent conceptualisations of work as “calling” focus on a more secular interpretation around work being perceived as a source of fulfilment due to the ability to engage in activity that is socially useful (Steger & Dik, 2009, 2010; Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997). Like meaningful work, work as calling is concerned with purposeful work from which one derives a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment. However, unlike meaningful work, work as calling is driven by external forces that compel the worker to engage with their work rather than the internal pursuit of meaning. Approaching the relationship between social mission and individual experiences of work through a lens of vocation or calling would be appropriate. However, while social mission could be viewed as providing the socially useful purpose that fulfils workers and leads them to view their work as a calling or vocation, under this approach the agency

of the individual is diminished. Instead the relationship between the self and work is driven by external forces. Meaningful work has been adopted in this study because it captures the relationship between purpose and self without diminishing the agency of the individual worker.

- Work engagement: Finally, psychological research into work engagement also considers meaningful work. Work engagement is “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption characterised by high levels of energy and involvement” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, p. 295). Literature in this field considers meaningful work to be an antecedent of work engagement (e.g. Ahmed, Majin & Zin, 2016; Hoole & Bonnema, 2015; May et al., 2004; Shuck & Rose, 2013). However, given that outcomes of meaningful work extend beyond just work engagement, while the two concepts are linked, the work engagement literature focuses on a specific sub-construct of meaningful work rather than considering the concept as a whole. As such, in this study work engagement will be investigated as an outcome of meaningful work that arises through the presence of social mission, rather than as the overall lens for exploring the relationship between social mission and individual experiences of work.

Consideration of these concepts that are related to but distinct from meaningful work not only clarifies why they were not adopted in this study, it also helps to clarify three aspects of meaningful work that make it the best lens to explore the link between social mission and individual experiences of work. These are the deep connection with sense of self, the role of purpose in meaningful work, and the role of agency in meaningful work. Meaningful work involves a *greater emotional involvement* than does job satisfaction and while it involves intrinsic motivation, it occurs at a deeper level than

traditional sources of intrinsic motivation, suggesting that sense of self plays a more integral role than it does in these other concepts. The overlap between meaningful work and both spirituality in work and vocation or calling in work occurs through the shared focus on purposeful work. This highlights the centrality of the *pursuit of purpose* to the concept of meaningful work. Finally, unlike job satisfaction, which posits that fulfilling certain job characteristics ensures a certain experience of work, and vocation or calling, which both rely on an external drive to pursue work, meaningful work involves the *active interpretation* of work as having significance.

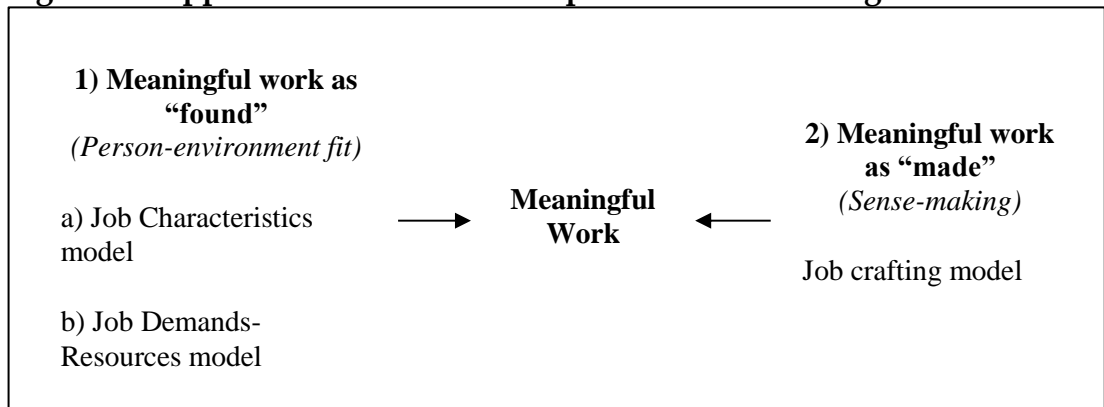
The concept of meaningful work, based on these understandings, is well matched to provide an avenue for explaining how social mission affects the experience of work. Both social mission and meaningful work place a strong emphasis on purpose in work. The link between sense of self and purpose in meaningful work provides an explanation for how social mission (the values-based purpose of the organisation) results in changes to the experience of work for the individual. Social mission is an avenue through which individuals can contribute to the greater good, thus providing them with either a way of pursuing the meaning of their life, or it a source of meaning in their life.

Agency plays a primary role in meaningful work. This further supports its use as a lens for exploring how social mission affects the experience of work in CSOs. Despite the presence of the same social mission for everyone within an organisation, it is probable that this would not have the same effect on everyone's experience of work. Using the concept of meaningful work helps explain how meaning is actively sought and is interpreted differently based on the individual's own perceptions, expectations and experiences. Thus, rather than considering meaningful work as just a cognitive perception based on the characteristics of work and the context of work, it must also be considered as an understanding of work constructed by the individual.

2.1.1 Perceiving work as meaningful: finding meaning or making meaning?

In order to understand the role of social mission in experiences of meaningful work in CSOs, it is first necessary to understand how work is perceived as meaningful.

Figure 2.1 Approaches to how work is perceived as meaningful



As is illustrated in Figure 2.1, within the meaningful work literature there are two primary approaches to how meaningful work is attained, as either being found or being made (Fourie & Deacon, 2015). In 1) (above), the first approach, where work meaningfulness is found, a psychological state (Bailey, Madden, Yeoman, Thompson & Kerridge, 2018) that emerges when work fits with or is compatible with the individual (Vuori, San & Kira, 2012). This approach primarily emerged in psychological research around meaningful work. Research using this approach takes a “components lens” (Mitra & Buzzanell, 2017, p. 596), focussing on those factors that result in work being meaningful or not. The assumption is that the presence of these factors or components results in a person-environment fit that translates into work being perceived as meaningful (Milliman, et al., 2017) by workers. As such meaningful work can be conceptualised using a “realization perspective” (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017, p.104), whereby meaningful work is achieved or realised when work fulfils the needs, motivations or desires of the worker. These approaches view meaningful work as relatively static as long as these factors do not change

(Bailey & Madden, 2017). Two models predominate in this approach to meaningful work.

The first model (a) used to describe the factors that contribute to meaningful work is the Job Characteristics model (e.g. Allan, Duffy & Collisson, 2017, 2018; Arnoux Nicolas, Sovet, Lhotellier, Di Fabbo & Bernaud, 2016; Jiang & Johnson, 2018; Raub & Blunski, 2014). This model was proposed by Hackman et al. (1975). It considers both antecedents to meaningful work and outcomes, suggesting that meaningful work leads to increased motivation and satisfaction. These authors investigated meaningful work within a framework of job enrichment. They viewed “experienced meaningfulness” (Hackman, et al., 1975, p. 60), the perception that work is worthwhile or important according to a system of values accepted by the person, as one of three psychological states influencing the relationship between characteristics of the work and positive work outcomes.⁹ Three core job dimensions or characteristics that elicit experienced meaningfulness (Hackman et al., 1975) were identified: skill variety, the degree to which work challenges skills and abilities; task identity, the degree to which the job involves completing a whole piece of work rather than a fragment of the task; and task significance, the degree to which the work is perceived to impact the lives of others (Hackman et al., 1975). However, the Job Characteristics model was developed to provide an understanding of the components of job enrichment for the development of a framework for identifying what types of jobs are enriched. As such, while the framework of job enrichment was empirically tested, the model of how meaningful work fits with its components and outcomes was not. More recent research into meaningful work continues to apply the Job Characteristics approach. For example, Allan et al. (2017) conducted three studies into the impact of task significance, which they manipulated by giving participants tasks that helped

⁹ The other two psychological states that contribute to motivation and job satisfaction are “experienced responsibility,” the belief that the individual is accountable for the work that they produce, and “knowledge of results,” the ability to establish whether one’s work is satisfactory (Hackman et al., 1975).

others or themselves, to demonstrate that increased tasks significance (i.e. helping others) increases meaningful work.

Meanwhile, the model of meaningful work presented by psychological researchers Steger and Dik (2010) treats meaningful work as a multifaceted eudaimonic psychological state (Bailey et al., 2018). This model focused on the combination of work comprehension, whether a person is able to make sense of their experience of work, and work purpose, the pursuit of broader life goals through work, as providing workers with “a sense that their work is a source and expression of meaning in their lives” (p.135). These characteristics of the experience of work were understood to act both separately and together to contribute to meaningful work. Work comprehension, which is comprised of a worker’s understanding of self, their understanding of the organisation, and their understanding of their fit within the organisation, was thought to shape the pursuit of work purpose. Reciprocally, when a worker realises their work purpose, which is comprised of personal purpose, organisational purpose and leadership, this was understood to provide information that reinforces and expands work comprehension. Steger and Dik (2010) propose that experiencing work as meaningful leads to workers moving beyond their own interests to engage in work towards a greater good. Engaging in work towards a greater good in turn results in workers being more easily able to experience meaningful work. One of the strengths of this model is that it includes these feedback loops between work comprehension and work purpose and between experiencing work as meaning and work that serves the greater good. In doing so it is able to incorporate the continuous nature of meaningful work. However the weakness of this model is that it focuses specifically on work comprehension and work purpose, and as such it only considers a sub-construct of meaningful work and it only looks at a single outcome of meaningful work, i.e. transcendence. A further weakness is that this outcome can be viewed as not necessarily an outcome but as a more involved level of the experience of meaningful work.

The second model (b) used to describe the components of meaningful work is the Job Demands Resources model (e.g. Janik & Rothmann, 2015; Shuck & Rose, 2013; Steger, Littman-Ovadia, Miller, Menger & Rothmann, 2012). This model, proposed by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), is often used in literature investigating meaningful work in a work engagement framework. Researchers approaching meaningful work from this perspective view it as a psychological condition (Janik & Rothman, 2015) that emerges through “experiences of work that add purpose and significance to the lives of individual employees” (Clausen & Borg, 2011, p. 667). Under this model, job resources, those factors that aid the individual both in carrying out their work and to grow, learn and develop, promote work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Meanwhile, job demands, those elements of the job that are physically or psychologically demanding, foster exhaustion and burnout (Alfes et al., 2013; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, Steger et al., 2012). When job resources are greater than job demands, work engagement occurs, which in turn elicits positive outcomes such as decreased turnover intention, increased task performance, increased knowledge creation, improved organisational citizenship behaviour, improved job climate, affective commitment and proactive personality traits, proactive behaviour, and improved well-being (Alfes et al., 2013; Buruck et al., 2016; Shuck & Rose, 2013). Clausen and Borg (2011) demonstrated that, as with job engagement, there is a relationship between the experience of meaningful work and the presence of increased job resources and decreased job demands.

While person-environment fit models of meaningful work account for how social mission, as an organisational characteristic, affects the experience of work as meaningful, the weakness of this type of approach is that, given that social mission is constant within an organisation, the ability of these models to account for differences in meaningful work within an organisation is reduced. In addition, these models generally treat meaningful work as relatively static and therefore do not account for the continuous, agentic and retrospective

nature of meaningful work (Bailey & Madden, 2017).

The second approach to how work is perceived as meaningful, see 2) in Figure 2.1, posits that work meaningfulness is made. This approach emerges from a range of fields, including both the psychology and management literature around meaningful work and treats the search for meaningfulness as an inherent part of human nature (Bailey et al., 2018). It views meaningful work as emerging through sense-making, i.e. the understanding that workers have of their work based on environmental and contextual cues (Asik Dizdar & Esen, 2016; Burger, Crous & Roodt, 2013; Humle, 2014; Vuori et al., 2012). Thus, meaningful work cannot be simply supplied by external sources such as the organisation, leaders, or job design (Bailey et al., 2018). Studies looking at how individuals internally construct meaningfulness focus on meaningful work as having a “subjective and agentic nature” (Schnell et al., 2013, p. 545). Under this approach, the generation of meaning is a dynamic and continuous process of understanding that is actively constructed by the individual as they satisfy, or fail to satisfy, their needs, and that changes as the individual’s needs alter over time (Baumeister, 1991). Similarly, the experience of meaningful work is a dynamic process of sense-making where conscious choices are made by the worker to integrate different aspects of their experience of work into a coherent whole to create a positive identity, or self-concept (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Isaksen (2000) views meaningful work as “an individual state of mind that occurs when an individual regards the relationship between him- or herself and his or her context as satisfactory in some individually important way” (p.93). This approach views meaningful work through a “justification perspective” (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017, p.106), such that it arises as a way of describing the worthiness of work.

While threats to meaning are described as being mitigated through workers increasing the perceived meaning in their work (van Tongeren & Green, 2010), not all employees perceive their work as meaningful. Non-meaningful work, based on these accounts of meaningful work, occurs when the individual

constructs their work as failing to satisfy their needs and thus being not significant or worthy.

Under this approach to meaningful work social mission provides a sense of purpose, by providing a clear, socially-beneficial cause for CSO employees to contribute to. Additionally, it provides a sense of belonging for CSO employees, by providing a shared organisational identity and a shared purpose. In this way social mission can be used to shape the significance or worthiness of work and as such the perception that work is meaningful, or not. Meaningful work is dependent on how the individual shapes their own experience of work and what they themselves bring to the experience (Connelly, 1985). It is informed by internal cues gained from a worker's individual experiences of work, identity and life context (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). It is also informed by external cues including interpersonal interactions (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003), and the cultural, societal and historical context in which these interpretations are made (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010). As Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker and Garbinsky (2013) note:

...meaning itself is not personal but rather cultural. It is like a large map or web, gradually filled in by the cooperative work of countless generations. An individual's meaningfulness may be a personally relevant section of that giant, culturally created and culturally transmitted map. (p. 4)

According to Rosso et al. (2010), "individuals are the ultimate arbiters of the meaning of their own work, as shaped through the lens of their unique perceptions and experiences" (p.115). The way that individuals shape their work changes over time. Not only do changes to the meaning assigned to current work occur as the individual's perceptions and experiences develop over time, meaning can be retrospectively assigned to work to fit with the individual's current situation (Isaksen, 2000).

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), however, go beyond this and propose that

workers not only demonstrate agency in their interpretation of work as meaningful, but that workers actively change the parameters of their work to emphasise meaning by engaging in what they term “job crafting” (p.179). This is a process of changing the “cognitive, task, and/or relational boundaries to shape interactions and relationships with others at work” (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p. 179) to alter the design and the social environment of work. The purpose of which is to alter work identity and the meaningfulness of work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Different types of job crafters have been identified. According to Wrzesniewski, LoBuglio, Dutton and Berg (2013) alignment crafters shape their work to fit the meaning they believe work should have, aspirational crafters shape their work to fit the meaning they want their work to have, and accidental crafters unintentionally shape their work and discover a positive meaning. Understanding how CSO employees engage in job crafting to shape the meaningfulness of their work is therefore important in understanding how meaningful work is experienced in CSOs.

Two sense-making models of meaningful work examine the drives underpinning the experience of work and how sense-making around meaningful work occurs on the basis of the satisfaction of these drives. These models focus on how aspects of work are attributed meaning because they satisfy these drives. There are strong similarities between the models because Rosso et al. (2010) draw on the findings from Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) in developing their model (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012).

Figure 2.2 The Map of Meaning (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009)

[Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Source: Lips-Wiersma, M., & Morris, L. (2009). Discriminating between 'meaningful work' and the 'management of meaning'. Journal of Business Ethics, 88, 491-511. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-009-0118-9>]

The first of these models was introduced by Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009). They developed a framework of what comprises meaningful work based on empirical findings from an action research study involving 214 participants (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). As illustrated in Figure 2.2, this framework is centred on four drives, or needs, underpinning the experience of work: self, others, being, and doing (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). Meaningful work was viewed as emerging through sense-making such that workers construct their understanding of their experience of work to find a balance between four aspects of work (developing the inner self, gaining unity with others, providing service to others, and expressing one's full potential: Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). In this model workers are engaged in a quest to achieve balance between these four inner elements of work, which accounts for two aspects of meaningful work. Firstly, the inability to achieve balance between these dimensions is proposed to result in the experience of meaninglessness (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). Secondly, because a perfect balance between the dimensions is ultimately unattainable, the continuous pursuit of balance through constructing and reconstructing what is meaningful for the individual and how work contributes to this allows the model to describe the continuous nature of meaningful work (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). The ability of this model to account for the dynamic and continuous nature of meaningful work and its basis in empirical evidence are the strengths of this approach to meaningful work. A gap in the model, however, is the lack of focus on the outcomes of meaningful work.

Figure 2.3 The Pathways to Meaning (Rosso et al., 2010)

[Figure has been removed due to copyright restrictions. Source: Rosso, B. D., Dekas, K. H., & Wrzesniewski, A. (2010). On the Meaning of Work: A Theoretical Integration and Review. Research in Organizational Behavior, 30, 91-127. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.riob.2010.09.001>]

Similarly, Rosso et al. (2010) presented a sense-making model of meaningful work concerned with the drives underpinning the experience of work. This model, however, concentrates on how these drives translate into meaning being assigned to actions undertaken through work (see Figure 2.3). They propose that the experience of work is underpinned by two forms of tension: tension between whether work helps the self or helps others; and tension between the need to distinguish one's self from others (agency) and the need to connect with others (communion). Based on the interrelationship between these two types of tension, Rosso et al. (2013) identified four types of actions that act as antecedents to the experience of meaningful work. Firstly, individuation, actions that shape a positive sense of self, satisfies the drives for serving the self and agency. Secondly, contribution, actions that involve participating in a task or a cause beyond the self, satisfies the drives for serving others and agency. Thirdly, self-connection, actions that create coherence with self-concept, satisfies the drives for serving the self and communion. Finally, unification, actions that connect the self with others, satisfies the drives for serving others and communion (Rosso et al., 2010). When there are opportunities to engage in one or more of these types of actions, work is perceived to be meaningful. Again, this model accounts for the dynamic nature of meaningful work by assuming that workers need to find a balance between the competing drives underpinning work. The benefit of this model is that it focuses not just on the underlying needs being satisfied by work but on the pathways by which meaningful work can be achieved. Like the model provided by Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009), however, this model pays little

attention to the outcomes of meaningful work for the individual.

As outlined above, existing models of meaningful work as a form of sense-making focus on the tensions between self and others, the need to differentiate the self and to connect with others through work. They consider multiple sources of meaningful work and capture the complexity within the phenomenon. Furthermore, they effectively capture the dynamic and continuous nature of meaningful work by treating it as an ongoing quest to find balance between the different drives underpinning the experience of work. A drawback of these models is that they allude to the purpose that work serves for individuals but they do not specifically capture it. Purpose is important for both social mission and for meaningful work and thus is important in a framework of meaningful work designed to explore the relationship between social mission and the experience of work.

A further weakness with these sense-making models of meaningful work is that although they acknowledge organisational antecedents such as social mission, they primarily focus on individual antecedents. In addition, these models give little attention to the outcomes of meaningful work, focussing instead on how meaningful work is achieved rather than taking a holistic view.

In this study, meaningful work is viewed as a form of sense-making about work that occurs both retrospectively and in a dynamic, continuous manner. It involves the justification of work as worthy and significant. In order to explore the role of social mission in this sense-making, the organisational antecedents of meaningful work need to be considered as well as individual antecedents. Sense-making is based on how work was experienced at the time, although at the time of sense-making this experience may be considered through a different lens. As such, while the presence or absence of organisational antecedents, like social mission, is not sufficient to explain meaningful work, these factors contribute to perceptions of work as meaningful. In CSOs, where the organisation's mission is clearly linked to the

provision of a broader, social benefit, it is anticipated that this social mission will be key in sense-making about the significance of work and perceptions of work as meaningful. Given that social mission is promoted in CSOs as a means of improving the experiences of work in the sector to enhance attraction and retention of staff, improve organisational performance, and provide a competitive advantage (see 1.2), understanding the outcomes of meaningful work is also integral to this study and the understanding of the role of social mission in CSOs.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to gaining a greater understanding of these three aspects of meaningful work that, while important to this study, are not sufficiently addressed in existing sense-making models of meaningful work. That is, deriving meaning from purpose, the antecedents of meaningful work, and the outcomes of meaningful work.

2.1.2 Meaning-making: deriving meaning from two types of purpose

Understanding how purpose contributes to meaningful work is integral to the use of meaningful work as a lens for investigating how social mission affects individual experiences of work in CSOs. As described above (see 2.1), the experience of meaningful work is based upon the significance attributed to work based on the purpose that work serves in one's life. Lepisto and Pratt (2017) observed that there may be multiple types of meaningfulness that arise from work. They identified two types of meaningfulness: realisation and justification (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017), which were discussed in section 2.1.1. However, within the literature another distinction between types of meaningfulness has long been discussed. Two types of broad, overarching purpose feature in the literature around meaningful work. Both are ultimately concerned with achieving a positive sense of self, but achieve this differently: either by locating the self in a broader context of meaning; or by allowing expression of one's authentic self or the pursuit of an ideal self in the work context. Bailey, Madden, Alfes, Shantz and Soane (2017) describe meaningful

work as “work that is personally enriching and that makes a positive contribution” (p.416).

Applied research has identified two types of purpose (contribution to a broader context of meaning, and self-expression) that were present within accounts of how work is perceived as meaningful. In a qualitative study of meaningful work amongst nurses, Pavlish and Hunt (2013) identified three themes in relation to what elicited meaningful work. These themes were: connections (i.e. relationships with patients and their family); contributions (i.e. impact on clients and the work); and recognition (i.e. being appreciated for their work: Pavlish & Hunt, 2013). Meanwhile, Fourie and Deacon (2015) identified that for South African teachers, meaningful work emerged primarily through exerting effort and being conscientious about their work, which contribute to authenticity, self-efficacy and self-esteem, and a sense of purpose. To a lesser extent, the teachers in this study described their work as gaining meaning through building relationships with their students, and by practicing spirituality and helping others through their teaching (Fourie & Deacon, 2015). These themes relating to what meaningful work comprises can be categorised according to whether they act to locate the self in a broader context of meaning (i.e. altruism, contribution, connections and building relationships) or whether they allow the individual to express who they are or pursue an ideal self (i.e. gaining recognition, being conscientious, and practicing spirituality).

The first type of purpose that contributes to meaningful work is the ability to locate oneself within a broader context of meaning through work. Work can be perceived as meaningful when it provides the worker with a sense of purpose by allowing them to take part in something that *transcends their self*. Frankl (2006) described meaning as occurring through experiencing value in life, doing a deed or suffering. Each of these sources of meaning place the individual within a broader context of purpose that then gives the individual a sense of significance. In the meaningful work literature, work is thought to

become meaningful when it links the individual to something bigger than the self. Pratt and Ashforth (2003) divide the purpose of work into two questions: “what am I doing” (p. 312) and “where do I belong?” (p. 312). According to these authors, answering these questions leads to an understanding of what makes work meaningful by answering the existential question “why am I here?” (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003, p.312). Meanwhile, Rosso et al. (2013) divide the purpose driving meaningful work into self-abnegation, “deliberately subordinating oneself to something external to and/or larger than the self (e.g., an organization’s vision, one’s family, a social collective, a spiritual entity)” (p.112) and interconnection, “the extent that a person’s work provides her with opportunities to perceive that she is positively impacting broader social or the world” (p. 112). Purpose derived through the ability to locate oneself within a broader context of meaning is the obvious type of purpose that social mission contributes towards. The social mission of the organisation explicitly identifies how the work of the organisation contributes to a greater good, allowing the individual to perceive that they are doing something significant through their work.

The second type of purpose that contributes to meaningful work is the ability to express who one is or to pursue an ideal self through work. This occurs through self-actualisation, fit with and expression of self-concept, and self-development through work. In broader understandings of meaning in life, the pursuit of meaning involves not just the quest for purpose gained by contributing to the greater good and locating the self in a broader context but also purpose gained through the quest for *self-actualisation*. A person will “strive for a balance between pursuit of his own needs and dedication to self-transcending contributions” (Bühler & Allen, 1972, p. 49). According to Frankl (2006), meaning can be found not only contributing to something beyond their self but in experiencing something (i.e. art, culture, nature) or someone (i.e. through love) beyond the self and in doing so pursuing a better version of their self:

By the spiritual act of love he is enabled to see the essential traits and features on the beloved person; and even more, he sees that which is potential in him; which is not yet actualized but yet ought to be actualized. Furthermore, by his love, the loving person enables the beloved person to actualize these potentialities. (p.114)

A similar understanding of the pursuit of meaning was described by Maslow and the Humanistic psychologists. Maslow (1962) suggests that humans are ultimately motivated by the need for self-actualisation: “the full use and exploitations of talents, capacities, potentialities, etc.” (p. 151). Self-actualisation is the “intrinsic growth of what is already in the organism, or more accurately of what is the organism itself” (Maslow, 1949, p. 263). According to Maslow (1971), self-actualising people are:

... involved in a case outside their own skin, in something outside of themselves. They are devoted, working at something, something which is very precious to them-some calling or vocation in the old sense, the priestly sense. They are working at something which fate has called them to somehow and which they work at and which they love, so that the work-joy dichotomy in them disappears. (p. 43-44)

Maslow (1971) describes this type of meaning as resulting from the search for intrinsic “being” values which act like needs and although they may not be consciously held by the individual, form the “meaning of life for most people” (p.44).

Rogers (1961) again emphasised the role of the self in the purpose that underpins the pursuit of meaning, describing the quest for meaning or purpose as “the good life” (p.263), a process of moving towards a purpose that one would choose if they have the freedom to do so. This account of meaning incorporates not only a sense of purpose but also a sense of self such that meaning leads to a more actualised version of self: “[h]e is becoming a more fully functioning organism, and because of the awareness of himself which

flows freely in and through his experience, he is becoming a more fully functioning person” (Rogers, 1961, p. 274).

Like the Humanist approach to meaning in life, some theories of meaningful work incorporate a sense of self. While Humanist approaches focus on gaining meaning through self-actualisation, meaningful work literature focuses on the fit between self and work, and the ability to express who one is and to develop through work. For example, Shamir (1991) included self in the concept of meaningful work by arguing that theories of behaviour at work should incorporate a sense of self. This argument is based on the premise that people are not only motivated by goals, they are also motivated to express and develop their self, i.e. to maintain and increase their self-esteem, their self-worth, and their sense of self-consistency (Shamir, 1991).

Other researchers have focused on meaningful work as emerging when there is a fit between work and self-concept. Imel (2002) explored the relationship between achieving a meaningful life work through the alignment of work and one’s “true essence or core self” (p. 5). This process is, according to the author, “an ongoing process that involves self-reflection to discover the deep passions within and then exploring how to bring those passions or interests to bear in meaningful ways in work” (Imel, 2002, p. 5). Meanwhile, for Scroggins (2008), meaningful work occurs when work is consistent with either the current self or the ideal self, i.e. who a person wants to become. Similarly, Morin (2004) argues that:

When an individual does meaningful work, he actually develops a sense of identity, worth, and dignity. By achieving meaningful results, he actually achieves himself, grows, and even actualizes his full potential. Somehow, he has an opportunity to become who he is and to contribute to the improvement of his life conditions and of his community. Work becomes problematic when an individual cannot relate to it. Some would say that this experience is ‘alienation’. (p. 3)

The relationship between self and work therefore provides another form of purpose by which meaningful work can be derived through self-actualisation, fit with and expression of self-concept, and self-development. Social mission also contributes to this form of purpose. It outlines a socially-beneficial purpose for work that is ascribed with certain forms of value, e.g. it is seen as “doing good.” When this value allows a worker to express or pursue certain self-related values or goals through their work, social mission contributes to meaningfulness via self-related purpose. Thus social mission provides two avenues to meaningful work: it helps to locate an individual within a broader context of work, and it allows them to express and develop who they are as a person.

2.1.3 Antecedents to meaningful work

Social mission is proposed to influence the experience of meaningful work, thus acting as an antecedent. However, while existing sense-making models of meaningful work describe how the quest to balance the inner needs and tensions within an individual influence meaningful work, less consideration is given to how organisational characteristics such as social mission affect meaningful work. In order to examine how social mission affects experiences of meaningful work in CSOs, it is necessary to understand the range of antecedents of meaningful work. This section outlines what is known about antecedents to meaningful work in the existing literature.

The highly individual and subjective nature of meaningful work makes identifying antecedent factors complex because what is meaningful work for one person will not necessarily be meaningful for another. However at an overarching level there are broad themes in what makes work meaningful for people and these can be identified (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010).

There are two types of antecedents to meaningful work that have been considered in the existing literature: *organisational factors* that are external to the employee; and *individual factors* that relate to the internal world of the employee. These are often not considered separately in the literature, however

Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) stressed the importance of separating the two types of antecedents because they contribute to meaningful work differently. Organisational antecedents (including social mission) can only indirectly influence the experience of meaningful work while individual antecedents are able to directly influence meaningful work. There is some overlap between these antecedents because they have not always been considered separately, for example job enrichment is discussed both as an organisational practice and as the sense of whether work is sufficiently challenging and varied for an individual. Therefore, when allocating these antecedents as either organisational or individual in the discussion below, the subject of the antecedent (i.e. the organisation or the individual) was considered and antecedents were allocated as organisational or individual based on whether they occur within the organisation or within the inner world of the individual.

In this study, a further type of antecedent to meaningful work, is also included. This type of antecedent operates at the broader level of occupation and industry and helps shape the way that the meaningfulness of work is interpreted by the individual.

2.1.3.1 Industrial and occupational antecedents

Industrial and occupational antecedents provide the background and contextual conditions by which perceptions of work as meaningful are shaped. As was discussed earlier in relation to the gendered nature of work in CSOs, perceptions of care work and community services work are couched in layers of cultural expectations that shape the value, significance and worth (i.e. the meaningfulness) attributed to this type of work (see 1.3.2.3). In addition, the mission of the community services industry as a whole is to provide services to vulnerable people within the community (see 1.2). This broad industrial level purpose contributes not only to the way that social mission is established at the organisational level, it also sets out expectations around work in the sector that it should focus on helping others rather than profit generation (Carson et al., 2007; Mirivis, 1992). In doing so it provides the context in which

individuals interpret their experience of both organisational and individual antecedents of meaningful work.

Similarly, occupations within the sector, such as social work, are also couched within certain cultural perceptions about the work that shape how workers attach meaning to their work. Carpenter and Platt (1997), for example, identified that the professional mission of social work encompasses four core values: service, social justice, the dignity and worth of a person, and the importance of human relationships, integrity and competence. Again, occupation level purpose not only contributes to the social mission of the organisation but also establishes the expectation that the work of the individual will be focused on enacting values-driven work. In a quantitative study of 127 social workers, Carpenter and Platt (1997) demonstrated that occupational values influence individual antecedents of meaningful work. They found that the most salient values in social work in practice were compassion and caring, respect for humanity, empowerment and self-determination, and moral values. These values, when they fit with the individual's personal values, established their professional identity, an individual antecedent of meaningful work.

These industrial and occupational antecedents influence the relationship between social mission and meaningful work in two ways. Firstly, both industrial and occupational missions are deeply intertwined with organisational mission. They inform organisational mission and the values-driven work espoused by these three levels of mission overlap to a large extent. Secondly, industrial and occupational antecedents of meaningful work set out the expectations and context that influence how organisational and individual antecedents (see 2.1.3.2 & 2.1.3.3) of meaningful work are interpreted.

Thus, while social mission might contribute to meaningful work, its ability to do so is likely to be influenced by both broader industrial and occupational

missions and by pre-existing cultural expectations about the work that influence individual and occupational antecedents of meaningful work.

2.1.3.2 Organisational antecedents

Organisational antecedents to meaningful work provide conditions that are conducive to meaningful work but are not directly involved in the perception that work is meaningful (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Social mission is an organisational antecedent: an organisational characteristic that informs perceptions of work meaningfulness. The ability of organisational practices to contribute to the meaningfulness of work is determined by the presence of an underlying need that organisational conditions satisfy (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). It is further mediated by the individual themselves and the sense-making they undertake around their experience of work and their desire to perceive their work as meaningful (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012).

Pratt and Ashforth (2003) identified three types of organisational practices that are conducive to meaningful work. These were practices that enhance tasks and role for employees, practices that enhance affiliation and belonging within the organisation, and practices that enhance both. While Pratt and Ashforth (2003) focused on providing a theoretical understanding of the application of meaningful work to create positive organisations and did not empirically test them, their categories are useful for organising other research that is concerned with organisational antecedents of meaningful work.

Firstly, organisational practices that *enhance tasks and roles* identified by Pratt and Ashforth (2003) included job redesign, utilising employee involvement practices, implementing path-goal leadership, and fostering callings. Similarly, other researchers have demonstrated the association between task and role enhancing organisational practices and meaningful work. As discussed above (see 2.1.1), Hackman et al. (1975) identified three core job dimensions or characteristics that elicit experienced meaningfulness in their Job Characteristics model of work enrichment. These were: skill variety, the degree to which work challenges skills and abilities; task identity, the degree

to which the job involves completing a whole piece of work rather than a fragment of the task; and task significance, the degree to which the work is perceived to impact the lives of others (Hackman et al., 1975). Each of these elements, which are aspects of job enrichment, were thought to act as antecedents to meaningful work.

Empirical evidence for the association between job enrichment and meaningful work was provided by May et al. (2004). This study explored meaningful work in a model of the engagement of spirit at work, that is, the expression of self within the work context. Under this model, meaningfulness, along with psychological safety (the feeling that one can show their self without fear) and psychological availability (the feeling that one has the resources to show the self), contributes to the engagement of spirit at work. May et al. (2004) proposed that meaningfulness was comprised of three constructs: work-role fit, co-worker relations, and job enrichment. However, based on survey responses from 213 employees of a US insurance firm they only found significant associations between meaningfulness and work-role fit and between meaningfulness and job enrichment. The relationship between co-worker relations and meaningfulness was identified but was not significant. The study therefore considered meaningful work as emerging through organisational practices that enhance tasks and roles.

More recently, Bailey, Madden, Alfes and Fletcher (2017) identified that job design, leadership, organisational and team factors, and organisational interventions were associated with increased work engagement. Meanwhile Munn (2013), in a regression analysis of US workforce data, demonstrated that work-life fit increases meaningful work.

Furthermore, the type of activity undertaken by the organisation has been shown to play an important role in enhancing the meaningfulness of work. In a study of UK hotel workers, the experience of meaningful work was shown to increase when the organisation is involved in corporate social responsibility

activities (Raub & Blunschi, 2014). Meanwhile, Allan, et al. (2017) demonstrated that task significance, in the form of helping others, increased meaningful work across three studies into the relationship between task significance and meaningful work. In addition, a qualitative study of meaningful work amongst South African teachers conducted by Fourie and Deacon (2015) identified that the transfer of knowledge (which forms a central part of teaching roles) and making a positive difference on others through work were key antecedents to the experience of meaningful work.

Secondly, organisational practices that *enhance a sense of belonging within the organisation* were thought to include: building cultures, ideologies, and identities; using visionary, charismatic or transformational leadership; and building charismatic or leadership communities (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). In addition to the role enhancing practices identified by Fourie and Deacon (2015) discussed above, other antecedents to meaningful work identified in this study were positive relationships, trust, tangible results and feedback, providing empirical support that organisational practices that increase belonging facilitate meaningful work. Similarly, evidence from a qualitative study of meaningful work amongst nurses showed that meaningful work was promoted through the provision of a learning-focused environment, teamwork and constructive management, all of which promote belongingness, as well as increased time with patients (Pavlish & Hunt, 2012).

The study by May et al. (2004) discussed above also considered the relationship between psychological safety, which Pratt and Ashforth (2003) identified as an organisational practice that enhances both job tasks and roles and the sense of belonging in the workplace, and the engagement of spirit at work. Psychological safety was linked to three antecedents in their study. These were supportive supervisor relations, rewarding co-worker relations and adherence to co-worker norms (May et al., 2004). It was shown that all three were significant predictors of psychological safety, and that there was a significant positive relationship between psychological safety and the

engagement of spirit at work (May et al., 2004). The strength of this study is that it considers both antecedents and outcomes of meaningful work. However, by placing meaningful work in a framework of the engagement of spirit at work, the focus of this model was not on meaningful work but on spirituality at work.

Finally, organisational practices that act to *enhance both tasks/roles and a sense of belonging within the organisation* as identified by Pratt and Ashforth (2003) were: providing a cosmology; promoting psychological safety; and enacting with integrity.

Organisational mission is an example of an organisation practice that enhances both work tasks/roles and the sense of belonging within the organisation. Rosso et al. (2010) proposed that by setting out the purpose and ideology of the organisation, organisation mission is able to influence the significance that is perceived in work. It does so by enabling the worker to perceive that there is congruence between their own values and goals and those of the organisation. However, the relationship between organisation mission and meaningful work was not empirically tested by Rosso et al. (2010). Social mission additionally provides a means of establishing a shared identity and purpose that can provide workers with a sense of belonging within an organisation.

When organisations attempt to manage the meaningfulness of work in a way that individuals perceive to be for the organisation's benefit rather than their own, Bailey, Madden, Alfes, Shantz et al. (2017) propose that individuals perform existential labour, i.e. inauthentic performance of actions, behaviours and espoused attitudes in relation to the meaning of their work. Drawing on the antecedents associated with emotional labour and meaningful work, these authors identified that existential labour would be influenced by individual antecedents such as personality traits (including neuroticism, conscientiousness, collectivist orientation and self-monitoring) and

organisational antecedents such as job design, HRM policies and practices, leadership style, and cultural and values-based management (Bailey, Madden, Alfes, Shantz et al., 2017). These authors attribute the less than positive outcomes associated with non-meaningful work (see 2.1.4.3), such as increased stress and burnout, to the demands involved in the deep and surface acting involved in performing existential labour (Bailey, Madden, Alfes, Shantz et al., 2017).

Existing research therefore identifies a range of organisational characteristics that influence experiences of meaningful work. These characteristics inform whether work is perceived as meaningful and do so by influencing whether work is able to satisfy the underlying needs of the individual. Social mission is but one of these characteristics. It both enhances the tasks or roles filled by the individual by linking them a broad purpose, and it promotes a sense of belonging within the organization.

2.1.3.3 Individual antecedents

Individual antecedents to meaningful work are the internal factors that influence the perception that work is meaningful. The ability of social mission to influence the meaningfulness of work for individuals is thus determined by its ability to satisfy these individual antecedents. Like research into organisational antecedents of meaningful work, the primary aim of research in this area is to identify ways by which organisations can increase meaningfulness of work for employees resulting in positive consequences for the organisation (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012).

As such, much of the existing literature focused on individual antecedents is concerned with how the internal world of the individual fits with either the work context or the work itself. Individual antecedents of work were described by Isaksen (2000) in a study of Danish catering workers. In this study, which focused on constructions of meaning in work as a means by which workers reduced the negative impact of repetition in their work, three sources of meaning were identified in the accounts provided by workers.

These were: connection to the work and the workplace, connection to others through social interactions, and connection to a broader purpose through work (Isaksen, 2000). At the same time, workers in this study constructed their work as meaningless, and often did so concurrently with constructing their work as meaningful (Isaksen, 2000). Isaksen (2000) argued that it is important to recognise that workers can simultaneously have both positive and negative feelings about their work. Given that all of the workers in his study experienced the same hindrance to meaning in the form of repetitive work, Isaksen (2000) highlighted the differences in how his participants constructed meaning and the need to consider both organisational and individual influences:

The degree of fit between person and workplace does not only depend on the proposed degree of facilitation/hindrance for the construction of meaning in work, it also depends on what type of hindrances are present at the workplace, combined with what type of aspirations for meaning the worker brings to the job. (p. 102)

Other researchers focused more specifically on the fit between the individual and the work itself, in particular in relation to providing a means of achieving a sense of purpose and meaning in life. In their model of meaningful work described above (2.1.1), Steger and Dik (2010) identified work comprehension and work purpose as antecedents to meaningful work. The fit between the individual worker and their work was a primary focus for Scroggins (2008) who located meaningful work within a person-job fit model. According to Scroggins (2008):

...work may be said to be experienced as meaningful when it is consistent with an individual's perceptions of who they are. Individuals also experience work as meaningful when it confirms their perceptions of the ideal self, or what they want to become. Work will also be experienced as meaningful when the performance of job tasks enhances the individual's

self-esteem. (p. 70)

In this study self-concept job fit, which was conceived of being comprised of the perceived fit between current self (who we are) and ideal self (who we want to become) and work, was shown to be a significant predictor of meaningful work. Empirical evidence for the relationship between self-concept job fit and the experience of meaningful work is provided by this study. However, the study focuses only on this specific antecedent and thus does not provide a comprehensive view of the individual antecedents of meaningful work.

Personality has been shown to be an individual antecedent of meaningful work. Recently, in a study of Turkish hotel workers, Akgunduz, Alkan and Goz (2018) found that having a proactive personality, i.e. being someone who takes initiative and seizes opportunities, is associated with increased experiences of meaningful work. Britt, Adler and Bartone (2001) also focused on the fit between personality and the work as an individual antecedent of meaningful work. This study looked at meaningfulness as a sub-construct of personality hardiness in order to investigate the impact of personality hardiness on whether an individual derives long-term benefits from stressful events. The authors proposed that personality hardiness would be related to the ability to find meaning in work, which in turn would be related to the ability to derive benefits (such as personal strength and growth) from a stressful situation. Under this model, meaningful work was comprised of three factors related to the connection between the worker and their role: soldier engagement, job importance, and adoption of a peacekeeper identity. Based on the responses of 161 US soldiers serving as peacekeepers in Bosnia, findings from their study supported this model showing positive associations between meaningful work and each of the contributing factors. In this study meaningful work was additionally demonstrated to be positively associated with personality hardiness and with deriving benefits from the deployment. Their study provides empirical support for the influence of the fit between the

self and work on the experience of meaningful work. A further strength of this study is that it provides a more holistic framework for meaningful work in that it describes both antecedents and outcomes, showing that meaningful work results in the derivation of benefits from stressful situations. However, the study considers meaningful work as a sub-construct of personality hardiness rather than focusing specifically on meaningful work.

Meanwhile, Schnell et al. (2013) identified a set of internal characteristics around the fit between the individual and their work. They derived these characteristics based on their ability to satisfy the underlying need for coherence, direction, significance and belonging. These predictors of meaningful work are task significance, work-role fit, self-transcendent corporate orientation, and socio-moral climate (Schnell et al., 2013). The final of these predictors, socio-moral climate, is an organisational antecedent of meaningful work rather than an individual antecedent. Further to this, Schnell et al. (2013) explored the drives that underpin the attribution of meaning to work. The approach taken in this model was based on Baumeister's (1991) description of meaning in life as occurring when life is perceived as having coherence, direction and significance and it satisfies the need for belonging. According to Schnell et al. (2013), meaningful work emerges when these criteria are present in relation to one of four work contexts. These contexts are the person, work-role fit, work tasks, and the organisation. A strength of the way that these authors envision the antecedents for meaningful work is that they consider multiple antecedents rather than focusing on a specific antecedent. However, they do not differentiate between organisational and individual antecedents. In addition, these antecedents were theoretically derived rather than being empirically determined. Another strength of this model is that it considers that the underlying needs driving the meaningfulness of work. However, in doing so it treats meaningful work as a somewhat static perception rather than capturing its dynamic and continuous nature.

Individual antecedents contribute to sense-making around work as meaningful and the role that social mission plays in this. Individual factors such as the desire for meaningful work, the significance attributed to undertaking work that helps others, and the coherence between the individual's self-concept and work that helps others influence whether work is understood to be meaningful because the organisation has a social mission.

In summary, three types of antecedents influence perceptions of work as meaningful: industrial and occupational; organisational; and individual. These levels of antecedents operate differently. Industrial and occupational antecedents form the background and context in which meaningful work is shaped, indirectly influencing meaningful work in this manner. Organisational antecedents form work-related conditions that indirectly promote meaningfulness among employees. Meanwhile, individual antecedents form the internal factors that directly influence perceptions of meaningfulness. Given the number and complexity of antecedents influencing meaningful work and the interaction between these levels of antecedents, it is unlikely that social mission alone influences experiences of meaningful work for CSO employees. Instead, it can be assumed that social mission form part of a range of antecedents that shape experiences of meaningful work.

2.1.4 Outcomes of meaningful work and non-meaningful work

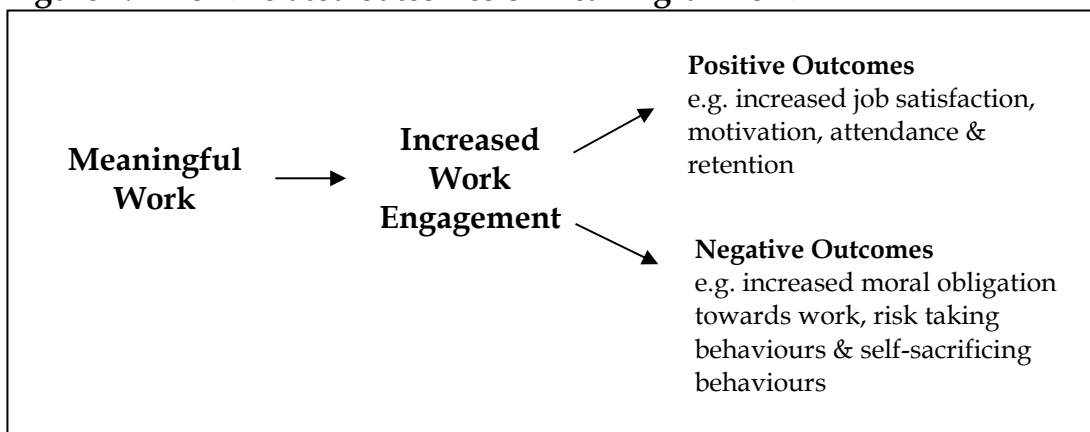
The final aspect of meaningful work that is important for understanding how social mission affects experiences of meaningful work amongst CSO employees but which is under-emphasised in existing sense-making models of meaningful work is the outcomes of meaningful work. As described earlier (see 1.2), the experience of work as meaningful is viewed by the CSO literature as beneficial. It helps to attract and retain workers, as well as driving workers to produce a better quality and quantity of work. Literature looking at the outcomes of meaningful work for the individual worker is less clear cut, describing meaningful work as having both beneficial and detrimental effects for the worker. The outcomes of meaningful work for the individual can be

divided according to whether they affect the self and the individual's well-being, or the experience of work and the quality or quantity of work produced. Non-meaningful work similarly results in both work-related and self-related outcomes however its effect is viewed as negative. The following reviews the literature around the outcomes of meaningful and non-meaningful work.

2.1.4.1 Work-related outcomes

The experience of work as meaningful is associated with a number of improved work outcomes including both increased quantity and increased quality of work (Drucker, 1999). According to Steger and Dik (2010), meaningful work “may provide richer, more satisfying, and more productive employment” (p. 132). It is considered to encourage work engagement and flow (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; May et al., 2004) and decrease employee cynicism (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006). As a result, meaningful work has been attributed with work outcomes such as greater enjoyment in work, fulfilment, and job satisfaction (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Fourie & Deacon, 2015; Imel, 2002; Lee, 2015; Lieff, 2009; Petchsawang & Duchon, 2012; Sayer, 2009; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997).

Figure 2.4 Work-related outcomes of meaningful work



In particular, meaningful work is associated with the establishment of a greater connection between the worker and their work (see Figure 2.4). It has

been demonstrated that meaningful work increases work engagement (Ahmed et al., 2015; May et al., 2004; Olivier & Rothmann, 2007; Shuck & Rose, 2013; Steger et al., 2012). May et al. (2004), as described earlier (see 2.1.3.1), investigated meaningful work, along with psychological safety and psychological availability, as contributing to the engagement of human spirit at work. Human spirit, in their study, is understood as the need for self-expression. Their model posits that meaningful work affects the worker by establishing an increased connection between self and work as a result of the significance that work has for the individual. Empirical data from 213 insurance employees demonstrated a significant positive association between perceived meaningfulness and the engagement of the human spirit at work (May et al., 2004). Meanwhile, in a web-based survey of 574 American employees, Fairlie (2011) demonstrated that meaningful work was the strongest predictor of work engagement amongst a range of work characteristics including, amongst others, intrinsic rewards, extrinsic rewards, supervisory relationships, co-worker relationships, and organisational support. While these studies provide empirical support for work engagement as an outcome of meaningful work, by constraining their focus to work engagement they only examine part of how meaningful work affects the experience of work for an individual.

In addition to work engagement, a number of other positive outcomes of meaningful work have been identified in the existing literature. These include increased work commitment, improved job performance, enhanced work motivation, and improved staff attendance and retention.

Firstly, meaningful work increases work commitment. In a survey of South African employees, Geldenhuys, Lamber and Venter (2014) demonstrated that meaningful work was associated with increased work commitment, and that this relationship was at least partially mediated by work engagement. Earlier studies similarly showed that meaningful work is related to increases in organisational commitment (Markow & Klenke, 2005) and affective

commitment (Jiang & Johnson, 2018).

Furthermore, meaningful work has been linked to improved job performance (Allan, et al., 2017). In their study of meaningful work amongst South African teachers, Fourie and Deacon (2015) demonstrated that meaningful work results in workers being more motivated and more willing to invest effort and energy into their work, as well as experiencing increased enjoyment in their work. Meanwhile, in a study of Chinese students, Kosfeld, Neckermann and Yang (2017) found that meaningful work provided a greater incentive in determining performance than did financial rewards.

In addition, meaningful work is associated with increased work motivation. Meaning in life as it was originally conceived by the likes of Maslow (1943; 1962) and Frankl (2006) was viewed as a source of motivation. These authors proposed that engaging in activities to satisfy the need for meaning provides an impetus or motivation for behaviour. When work becomes a source of meaning, work motivation increases. As observed earlier (see 2.1.1), Hackman et al. (1975) identified experienced meaningfulness, the perception that work is worthwhile, positively influences “person’s motivation and satisfaction on the job” (p. 60). However, as with Frankl (2006), they did not empirically test this assertion.

Meaningful work also positively impacts staff attendance and retention and has been shown to decrease absenteeism and long-term sickness absence amongst staff (Clausen, Burr & Borg, 2014; Soane, Shantz, Alfes, Truss, Rees & Gatenby, 2013; Steger, et al., 2012). According to Lief (2009), meaningful work is important for ensuring both professional fulfilment and staff retention. The importance of meaningful work in staff retention was demonstrated by Scroggins (2008), who investigated the impact of meaningful work on workers’ intention to leave. In this study it was assumed that the significance that meaningful work has for the individual will decrease the likelihood that workers will leave their organisation. Empirical data from 208 employees

across a range of industries demonstrated that meaningful work was negatively related to intent to leave the organisation. It was additionally shown that this negative correlation was stronger than that for either job satisfaction or organisational commitment, which are other job attitudes typically associated with employee retention (Scroggins, 2008). Subsequent studies have similarly demonstrated that meaningful work is associated with increased staff retention (eg. Janik & Rothmann, 2015; Suadicani, Bonde, Olesen & Gyntelberg, 2013) and mediates the relationship between working conditions and retention (Arnoux-Nicolas et al., 2016).

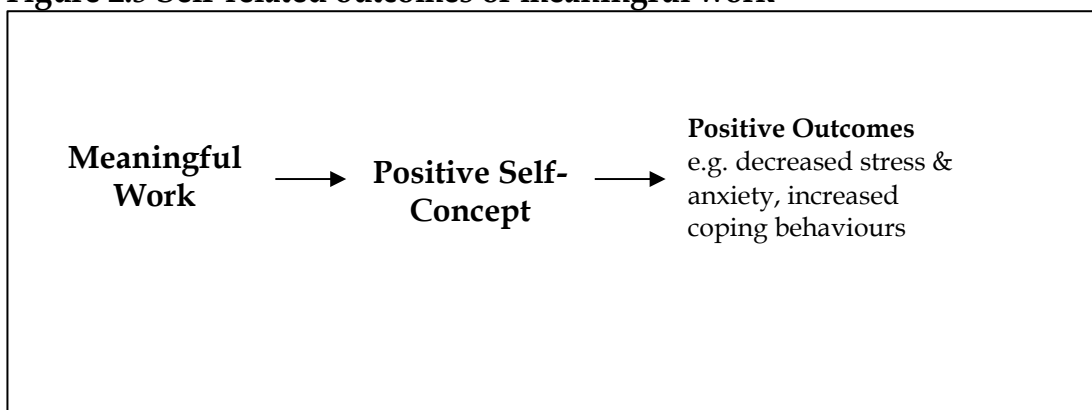
However, the relationship between these work-related outcomes and meaningful work may be mediated by work engagement. Each of the outcomes that have been linked with the experience of meaningful work discussed above have been shown to be associated with work engagement. In a meta-analysis of 214 studies of the antecedents and outcomes of work engagement, Bailey et al. (2017) demonstrated that work engagement increases job performance, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment, and it decreases turnover intentions. Based on this, outcomes of meaningful work can be conceptualised as stemming from an increase in work engagement, as shown in Figure 2.4.

In addition to positive work-related outcomes from meaningful work, negative outcomes must also be considered. Within the literature it is often assumed that meaningful work is positive for the individual. Rosso et al. (2010) observe that “the construct of meaningfulness has a positive valence in the literature, whereby greater amounts of experienced meaningfulness are more positive” (p.95). However, this is not always the case (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Increased work engagement increases the perceived moral obligation towards work (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). This increased moral obligation arising from increased work engagement provides an example of a work-related outcome from meaningful work that is not necessarily positive for the worker. Clinton, Conway and Sturges (2017) have described this as the “dark side”

(p.35) of callings. Increased moral obligation towards work leads to increased risk taking such that workers will go to greater lengths in order to achieve their mandate including potentially placing their personal safety at risk (Kosny & Eakin, 2008). It can additionally lead to self-sacrificing behaviours such as workaholism, work-life imbalance, and engaging in underpaid or unpaid work and decreased detachment from work during non-work hours (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Clinton et al., 2017; Dempsey & Saunders, 2010; Kosny & Eakin, 2008). While these outcomes may be negative for the individual worker, they can, however, be seen as desirable for both the organisation- which reaps the rewards of staff willing to work over and above their work hours and responsibilities for minimal pay; and for workers- who use their self-sacrifice to affirm their work identity (Dempsey & Saunders, 2010; Kosny & Eakin, 2008). Thus, when investigating the impact of meaningfulness on the experience of work, both positive and negative work-related outcomes must be considered.

2.1.4.2 Self-related outcomes

Figure 2.5 Self-related outcomes of meaningful work



Experiencing work as meaningful has also been identified as having a number of self-related outcomes (see Figure 2.5). Meaningful work, as with meaningfulness in other areas of life, has been associated with improved

health and well-being (Allan et al., 2017; Lips-Wiersma, Wright & Dik, 2016; Reker, Peacock & Wong, 1987; Zika & Chamberlain, 1992), increasing both psychological and physical health (Baumeister, 1991; Janik & Rothmann, 2015; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Ryff & Singer, 1998; Treadgold, 1999). Experiencing work as meaningful was demonstrated by Fourie and Deacon (2015) to promote happiness and intrapersonal satisfaction amongst South African teachers. Constructing work as meaningful can help to avoid alienation, create a positive self-image and fulfil the need for connection with others (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

At a general level, the experience of meaning has been shown to decrease stress and anxiety. In a study looking at the emotional responses of Israeli students to stress as a result of being evacuated from their homes, Antonovsky and Sagy (1986) demonstrated the link between the experience of meaning, which they described as a sense of coherence, and decreased levels of anxiety.

Meaningful work has been shown to have a similar effect on stress. Isaksen (2000), in a study of Danish catering workers, found that the experience of meaning in work diminishes the degree of stressful symptoms from work. In Isaksen's study, workers' accounts of their work included four themes around the meaningfulness of work: work that was meaningful because of the work tasks, work that was meaningful because of the social environment, work that was meaningful because of its role in a broader context, and work that was meaningless (Isaksen, 2000). Often these themes were concurrently present within their accounts of their work (Isaksen, 2000). Comparison of those who constructed their work as meaningless with those who did not demonstrated that workers who constructed their work as meaningless more frequently described pain, depression and hopelessness, and negative attitudes towards work (Isaksen, 2000). Isaksen (2000) assumed that the presence of meaningful work decreases importance of stress symptoms to the worker as a result diminishes their impact on the worker. Unlike the other research into the outcomes of meaningful work discussed, this model takes a broader view of

meaningful work by considering multiple sources of meaning. It does, however, still focus on providing empirical evidence around the impact of meaningful work on a single outcome, i.e. the diminished presence of stressful symptoms in workers accounts of their work.

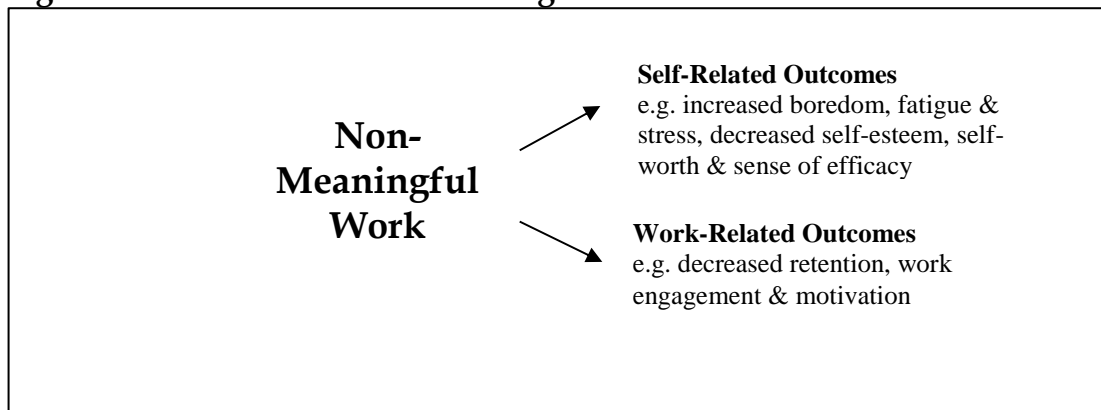
Meaningful work not only decreases stress, it promotes healthy coping behaviours as well. Treadgold (1999), in a study investigating transcendent vocations (work that individuals feel a “calling” towards), showed that experiencing meaningful work decreased stress and depression. He demonstrated based on questionnaire responses of 127 participants that meaningful work enhanced the clarity of self-concept (Treadgold, 1999). Additionally, Treadgold (1999) provided empirical evidence that meaningful work increased the use of problem-focused (adaptive) coping and decreased the use of emotion-focused (non-adaptive) coping. Treadgold (1999) described meaningful work as being experienced by those who have a stronger sense of self. This sense of self helps to promote healthy coping behaviours and decrease the impact of stress on the individual.

The relationship between meaningful work and coping was further demonstrated in a study by Britt et al. (2001). Their study looked at meaningfulness within a model of personality hardiness in order to investigate the impact of personality hardiness on whether an individual derives long-term benefits from stressful events. Based on the responses of 161 US soldiers serving as peacekeepers in Bosnia, findings demonstrated that meaningful work was positively associated with personality hardiness and with deriving benefits from the deployment. Their study provides further evidence that meaningful work results in improved coping behaviours in stressful work situations by enabling workers to understand their work in a broader context, allowing them to derive benefits from stressful events. However, by placing meaningful work in a broader framework of personality hardiness, their model focuses on personality related elements of meaningful work and loses the complexity of the impact of meaningful work on the individual worker.

As was shown in 1.2.2, existing research into the impact of social mission on individual workers focuses on work-related outcomes. However, literature around meaningful work shows that meaningful work has been associated with a positive self-concept leading to a range of self-related outcomes such as increased health, decreased stress and anxiety, and increased coping behaviours. Therefore, in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of social mission on the experience of meaningful work in CSOs, both work-related and self-related outcomes of meaningful work must be considered.

2.1.4.3 Non-meaningful work

Figure 2.6 Outcomes of non-meaningful work



In the existing literature a number of outcomes were also identified in relation to experiences of non-meaningful work. These outcomes were less positive than those associated with meaningful work. Yeoman (2014) identified that "...non-meaningful work visits extensive harms upon those who have to do it, which for most people cannot be offset by compensations in other spheres of action." (p.237). Again, these outcomes of non-meaningful work can be categorized according to whether they impact the individual at the level of their self and well-being or their experience of and contribution to work (see Figure 2.6).

Self-related outcomes of non-meaningful work identified in the existing literature include reductions in the capacity of the individual. For example, meaningless work has been associated with diminished capacity to think and act creatively and autonomously (Spencer, 2015; Yeoman, 2014) and decreased intelligence (Spencer, 2015). In addition, non-meaningful work has been associated with negative impacts on the individual's sense of self, decreasing a worker's self-esteem, self-worth and sense of efficacy being diminished (Spencer, 2015; Yeoman, 2014). Other self-related outcomes of non-meaningful work identified in the literature affect the well-being of the individual. For example, meaningful work has been linked to boredom (May et al., 2004; Spencer, 2015), fatigue (Spencer, 2015), and stress (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2013), as well as increased experiences of pain, depression and hopelessness (Isaksen, 2000).

Work-related outcomes of non-meaningful work identified in the existing literature primarily focus on the diminished engagement that individuals have with their work. Meaningless work has been associated with workers being less concerned about their work and having decreased motivation (May et al., 2004), expressing negative attitudes towards work (Isaksen, 2000), and shifting their energy to non-work activities (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2013). In addition, meaningless work has been linked to diminished staff retention and workers changing jobs (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2013).

Borrowing from Isaksen (2000), this study considers that elements of both meaningful and non-meaningful work can be experienced concurrently however an overall judgement about the meaningfulness of work can also be made. In addition, it is unrealistic to expect that all CSO employees will experience their work as meaningful. Given this, outcomes relating to both meaningful and non-meaningful work must be considered when investigating the relationship between experiences of the meaningfulness of work in CSOs and social mission.

2.2 Conclusion

Based on the review of literature conducted in this chapter, meaningful work is understood to be work that has significance and purpose because it enriches the self and contributes beyond the self. Individuals actively construct an understanding of (make sense of) their work as meaningful to develop a positive self-concept, resulting in both positive and negative outcomes for the individual in terms of their self and their work. The construction of these understandings of work as meaningful is individual and subjective and based on the ability of work to satisfy individual needs and fit with sense of self and personal context (or individual antecedents). However, they can be influenced by a range of antecedents, including organisational characteristics (such as social mission that enhance tasks and roles, enhance belonging, or both), as well as industrial and occupational characteristics (such as cultural expectations around and the purpose of this type of work).

There are two aspects of meaningful work where social mission is likely to have the most contribution. Firstly, as an organisational characteristic of CSOs, social mission may *passively* foster meaningful work by providing a source of meaning. As the socially beneficial purpose of the organisation, social mission potentially provides meaning for workers in two ways:

- 1) by allowing employees to feel that through their work they contribute to the greater good, linking them to a broader, transcendent purpose and providing them with the perception that their work is meaningful;
or
- 2) by allowing employees to engage in work with a particular set of values, which they feel match their personal values, thereby providing employees with a sense of coherence between their self and their work. This would allow employees to express or develop them self at work and provide them with the perception that their work is meaningful.

Secondly, social mission, as a key feature of meaningful work, may contribute

to the way that CSO employees *actively* shape their work as meaningful through job crafting. Rosso et al. (2010) asserted that “individuals are the ultimate arbiters of the meaning of their own work, as shaped through the lens of their unique perceptions and experiences (p.115)”. These researchers identified the need for research to look at the way that employees go beyond the work environment that exists around them to actively shape their understanding of the work context- both tangible and psychological- as meaningful work (Rosso et al., 2010).

The aim of this study is therefore to understand the way that participants experience their work in the community services sector as meaningful. Taking heed of Lips-Wiersma and Morris’ (2009) observation that when exploring meaningful work, non-meaningful work should be considered, this research will investigate CSO employee experiences of both meaningful and non-meaningful work. Existing sense-making models, which best capture the continuous nature of meaningful work will be adapted in this research to explore how meaningful work is experienced in CSOs by including: a greater focus on purpose; consideration of antecedents beyond individual antecedents; and consideration of the impacts or outcomes of meaningful work for the individual. In particular, the impact of individual, organisational, and industrial and occupational antecedents on the experience of meaningful work will be considered. In addition, these findings will be considered in light of the self-related and work-related outcomes of both meaningful and non-meaningful work.

A further aim of this study is to explain the role that social mission has in the experience of meaningful work in CSOs. In doing so, consideration will be paid to how social mission contributes to organisational antecedents and how this is influenced by industrial and occupational, and individual antecedents, the different types of purpose that social mission contributes towards, and the role that social mission plays in light of other sources of meaningful work for CSO employees.

3 Method

This study explored the role of social mission in the experience of work in CSOs by investigating workers' perceptions of their work as meaningful. A qualitative interpretative phenomenological research approach was adopted in the study to gain insight into participants' inner thinking around their experience of work. In order to do so, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with employees of South Australian CSOs. These verbal accounts of participants' experience of work were then thematically analysed.

In this chapter I provide a more detailed discussion of the methodology adopted in this study. Firstly, the research aims and objectives will be outlined. This is followed by a description of the research design, including sample selection, and descriptions of participant characteristics, the data collection process and the data analysis approach. Finally, bias considerations associated with the study are discussed.

3.1 Research aims and questions

The aim of this research was to better understand how CSO employees construct their experience of work, with a focus on their experiences of meaningful work. Social mission and the role it plays in the way that employees experience work in the community services sector was of particular interest. The objectives of the study were to:

1. Understand the way that participants experience their work in the community services sector as meaningful; and
2. Explain the role that social mission has in experiences of meaningful work in CSOs.

3.2 Research Design

Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.

(Creswell, 2007, p. 37).

This research was primarily concerned with investigating experiences of meaningful work. This is a topic that is highly subjective and is deeply embedded in the individual worker's historical, cultural and situational context. Blaikie (2000) distinguishes between two types of research aims in the social sciences: "explanations," which identify the causes behind events; and "understandings," which identify the reasons for and meanings attributed to an event. The aim of this study was to engage with the subject matter not just at a descriptive level but to delve deeper to gain an understanding of meaningful work in CSOs by identifying the reasons why work is experienced in CSOs in the way it is and the meanings that participants attributed to their experiences of work.

The methodological approach for this study therefore required the ability to facilitate the depth of detail and complexity to describe the way that work is experienced in CSOs and the way that these experiences are contextually situated. It also required the ability to hear the participants' voice and to acknowledge the role of the researcher both in collecting and interpreting data in order to cater for the subjective nature of the topic. A qualitative approach is best able to achieve this.

3.2.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Given that the aim of the research was to investigate CSO employees' experiences and perceptions of work and meaningful work, an interpretative phenomenological approach was adopted. Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), which was developed by Jonathan Smith, is a means of investigating subjective experiences through participants' accounts of a phenomenon (Smith et al., 1999). It derives from phenomenology, hermeneutics and symbolic-interactionism and as such combines the move to a philosophical science of consciousness with the idea that the meanings a person ascribes to a phenomenon are accessible through the process of interpretation (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008).

Since the 1990s, the use of qualitative methodologies in psychology has dramatically increased and IPA was introduced as part of this interest in new and different epistemological approaches (Smith, 2004). It has since become “one of the best known and most commonly used qualitative methodologies in psychology” (Smith, 2011, p.9). Although this approach is used most often in health psychology, mental health/clinical and counselling psychology, a literature review conducted by Smith (2011) demonstrated that IPA has also been applied in the field of organisational psychology. This is the field into which the current research loosely fits although there are overlaps with other fields, most particularly with the sociology of work and Third Sector research. This multi-disciplinarity is partly due to the research topic itself which falls into a grey area between academic fields and partly because, while my own background is in organisational psychology, I am located within a multi-disciplinary research centre and supervisory team.

The challenge presented by the current research was that it aimed to understand a phenomenon that is, as stated earlier, highly subjective and steeped in the individual worker’s historical, cultural and situational context. The difficulty emerges in finding an epistemological approach that allows the researcher to access the personal lived experience of another individual. IPA is able to facilitate this. It acknowledges that one cannot directly or completely access the inner thinking of someone else but maintains that there is a link between verbal report, cognition and cognitive state (Smith et al., 1999). This approach posits that the researcher can gain access to a participant’s inner cognitive world through careful analysis and interpretation of their account of a phenomenon (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Smith et al., 1999). Unlike discourse analysis, IPA treats verbal reports not as behaviours but as a way of accessing a person’s inner cognitive world (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008).

The drawback of using IPA is that, as with all qualitative psychology methodologies, it has been subject to “lively debate” (Smith, 2011, p.15) around the quality and validity of research using this approach. IPA has been

criticised for its application of phenomenology. Van Manen (2017), for example, argued that IPA is more psychological than phenomenological in its analysis: focussing on the particular experiences of an individual and their cognitive and affective response to a phenomenon rather than on the primal, inceptual meaning of that phenomenon. Thus, while IPA is effective in examining lived experiences it is not as successful in achieving phenomenological insights. In response to these concerns, in this study IPA is adopted in a pragmatic manner, focussing on the strength of this approach which is its ability to explore the lived experiences of a phenomenon rather than its application of phenomenology.

Smith (2011) proposes four criteria around ensuring the quality of IPA research. In this study, efforts were made to adhere to these criteria to ensure the quality and validity of the research.

Firstly, Smith (2011) identifies that good IPA research is that which “[c]learly subscribes to the theoretical principles of IPA: it is phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic” (p.17). The current study is phenomenological, to the extent that it can be using this approach, in that it focuses on the lived experience of meaningful work for CSO employees and what this experience means to them. It is hermeneutic, focussing on interpreting how CSO employees make sense of their experience of the meaningfulness of their work. Finally, the current research is idiographic. The experience of meaningful work for each CSO participant was first analysed on an individual basis before exploring the shared themes that are presented in the subsequent chapters (see Chapters 4 & 5).

The second requirement for research to be considered to be quality IPA research, according to Smith (2011), is that “[i]t is sufficiently transparent so reader can see what was done” (p.17). Transparency was maintained in this study through the description of the methodology provided in this chapter. This is important for the validity of the research, especially given that

qualitative research such as IPA is still becoming established in organisational psychology. In this study, participants' experiences of meaningful work were investigated using personal accounts of CSO employees gained through qualitative interviews (see 3.4.1 for more detail). This is the most common form of data collection used in IPA research (Smith, 2011). The accounts collected were then analysed and interpreted to gain insight into the meanings that participants attach to their experiences of meaningful work (see 3.5).

Detailed descriptions of the themes derived in the analysis of the data are provided in the subsequent results chapters (see Chapters 4 & 5) to further maintain transparency within the current study. These descriptions include both congruencies and shared themes and divergences from these shared themes to fully outline how meaningful work was experienced by CSO participants as well as detailing the density of participants contributing to each theme. Furthermore, presenting the findings in this way ensures that the third criteria of quality IPA research identified by Smith (2011) is achieved. This is that research has a "[c]oherent, plausible and interesting analysis" (Smith, 2011, p.17). Analysis of this sort consists of both sufficient detail to present a nuanced and interpretative account of each theme including convergences and divergences, and sufficient focus to consider and elaborate the breadth and depth of each theme (Smith, 2011). In this study this is achieved firstly through providing detailed accounts of each theme that are both descriptive and interpretative, including the nuances between those who contribute to the theme. Secondly, it is achieved by dividing themes according to those aspects of meaningful work to which they relate. This will provide the space to sufficiently elaborate on each theme in a coherent manner.

Finally, Smith (2011) proposed that to ensure the quality of IPA research, it must contain "[s]ufficient sampling from corpus to show density of evidence for each theme" (Smith, 2011, p.17). As shown above, descriptions of the themes identified in the analysis of experiences of the meaningful work by CSO employees in the subsequent results chapters (see Chapters 4 & 5) include

information about the number of participants contributing to each theme. Smith (2011) quantifies the number of extracts needed to support each theme, proposing that for a study including more than 8 participants, three extracts and a measure of density per theme or extracts from half of the participants contributing to the theme are needed to provide sufficient sampling. In the current study, the number of extracts used for each theme was determined by the degree of evidence needed to sufficiently illustrate that theme, rather than strictly adhering to a predetermined number of extracts. Smith (2011) acknowledges that interest as well as density of evidence should be considered when evidencing themes. Thus, in the current study, not only the density of evidence but the pertinence of evidence was considered when establishing themes.

As such, a counting approach has thus been applied in reporting themes in this study to maintain the transparency in the IPA approach demanded by Smith (2011). This involves reporting the number of participants who contributed to a particular theme. It is acknowledged that counting is a contentious issue in qualitative research. Some researchers value this practice both in terms of the transparency around the reliability and generalisability of data and as an analytical tool (Hannah & Lautsch, 2011; Sandelowski, 2001). Meanwhile, others resist the practice to avoid readers applying a quantitative, positivist perspective when engaging with their work (Hannah & Lautsch, 2011). In this study, the use of counting is intended as a means of being open and transparent about the quantity of evidence contributing the themes described, what Hannah and Lautsch (2011) refer to as 'credentialing counting.' Given that the importance of the data elicited was also considered when establishing a theme, counts of the quantity of evidence should not be interpreted through a positivist lens.

3.2.2 Sample Selection

For the current study, a sample frame was developed through collaboration with the South Australian Council of Social Service (SACOSS). As a peak body,

SACOSS has a unique expertise and knowledge of service providers in South Australia and assisted in the identifying a list of organisations that fit the requirements of this study.

This sample frame was developed not to ensure the generalisability of findings from this research, as this is not the aim of IPA, but to identify a sample that would best describe the nuances of the experience of work in the community services sector. Given the level of complexity associated with IPA, low sample sizes are often used in this research approach. The concern is that large sample sizes will negatively impact the ability of analysis to identify nuances in meaning (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Instead, it is “important to find levels of analysis which enable us to see patterns across case studies while still recognising the particularities of the individual lives from which those patterns emerge” (Smith, 1999, p. 424). The aim is to “achieve a specific and deep knowledge” (p.96) of the research question by selecting participants to “develop a full and interesting interpretation of the data” (Brocki & Wearden, 2006, p. 95). As such, purposive sampling is most often used for IPA and a representative sample is not necessarily sought (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

To ensure that the sample broadly reflects the nuances of the Australian community services sector, the characteristics of the workforce were considered.

Table 3.1 Proportion of employees working in community service relevant sub-industries of the “Health Care and Social Assistance” industry by sex ^a

	Sub-Industry	N	%
Females	Health Care and Social Assistance, nfd	5479	1.64
	Residential Care Services	108682	32.48
	Social Assistance Services	171063	51.12
	Total	285222	85.23
Males	Health Care and Social Assistance, nfd	1425	0.43
	Residential Care Services	18008	5.38
	Social Assistance Services	29989	8.96
	Total	49424	14.77
Total	Health Care and Social Assistance, nfd	6904	2.06
	Residential Care Services	126690	37.86
	Social Assistance Services	201052	60.08
	Total	334646	100.00

Source. ABS. (2017b). 2016 Census- Employment, Income and Education

^a Note: includes occupations: “Legal, Social and Welfare Professionals”, “Community and Personal Service Workers, nfd”, “Health and Welfare Support Workers” and “Carers and Aides”

Within the Australian CSO workforce there is a high prevalence of older, female workers engaged in part-time work. Based on 2016 ABS Census data (ABS, 2017b), Table 3.1 illustrates that the proportion of female employees in the community services workforce was 85.2% in 2016, while the proportion of male employees was 14.8%.

Table 3.2 Proportion of employees working in community service relevant sub-industries of the “Health Care and Social Assistance” industry by employment status ^a

		Community Service Employees	
		<i>N</i>	%
Employed, worked full-time	Health Care and Social Assistance, nfd	2652	0.84
	Residential Care Services	41921	13.28
	Social Assistance Services	89311	28.29
	Total	133879	42.41
Employed, worked part-time	Health Care and Social Assistance, nfd	3684	1.17
	Residential Care Services	76887	24.36
	Social Assistance Services	101229	32.07
	Total	181797	57.59
Total	Health Care and Social Assistance, nfd	6336	2.01
	Residential Care Services	118808	37.64
	Social Assistance Services	190540	60.36
	Total	315676	100.00

Source. ABS. (2017b). 2016 Census- Employment, Income and Education

^a Note: includes occupations: “Legal, Social and Welfare Professionals”, “Community and Personal Service Workers, nfd”, “Health and Welfare Support Workers” and “Carers and Aides”

Table 3.2 shows that amongst those employed in the community services sector, part-time employment was higher (57.6%) than full-time employment (42.4%) in 2016. This was higher than the incidence of part-time employment for the overall workforce at this time. According to 2016 Census data, 45.9% of employed women and 32.7% of all employees were employed part time (ABS, 2017b).

Table 3.3 Proportion of employees working in community service relevant sub-industries of the “Health Care and Social Assistance” industry by age groups ^a

	Community Service Employees		Employees across all Industries & Occupations	
	N	%	N	%
20-24 years	35449	11.29%	943142	10.27%
25-29 years	37990	12.10%	1130024	12.30%
30-34 years	36693	11.68%	1186714	12.92%
35-39 years	32512	10.35%	1099016	11.96%
40-44 years	35484	11.30%	1129983	12.30%
45-49 years	37719	12.01%	1126481	12.26%
50-54 years	38903	12.39%	1052773	11.46%
55-59 years	35635	11.35%	910840	9.91%
60-64 years	23698	7.55%	608674	6.62%
Total	314083	100.00%	9187647	100.00%

Source. ABS. (2017b). 2016 Census- Employment, Income and Education

^a Note: includes people working in “Health Care and Social Assistance, nfd”, “Residential Care Services” and “Social Assistance Services” sub-industries of the “Health Care and Social Assistance” industry

Meanwhile, Table 3.3 illustrates that the proportion of ‘health care and social assistance’ industry who were aged 45-49 years, 50-54 years, 55-59 years and 60-64 years was higher than the proportion of employees across all industries in these age groups.

These broad workforce characteristics were taken in account when constructing the sample frame. In doing so, the aim was to ensure that the defining features of the community services sector in South Australia were represented in the study. These characteristics were not used as the basis for analysis within the study because, given the sample size, this would impede development of themes with sufficient density for quality IPA research. Those features included in the sample frame were:

- Geographic distribution: primarily metropolitan organisations were included, focusing on organisations servicing the Northern and Southern suburbs and the inner city. These regions include South Australian suburbs with the lowest socio-economic status ranking (ABS, 2013b) and are thus where demand is highest and services are concentrated. At least one organisation servicing regional areas of

South Australia was also included.

- Organisation type (religiosity): Faith-based organisations have made a significant contribution to the provision of community services in Australia, both historically and currently (Crisp, 2013; Knight & Gilchrist, 2014). Thus both religious and non-religious organisations were included in the sample frame.
- Organisation type (mission): As described above (see 2.1), CSOs are by definition not for profit organisations. That is, they are organisations that “impose the non-distribution of profits to the members of the organisation” (Productivity Commission, 2010, p. XVIII). Traditional, not for profit CSOs predominantly receive their income from public and philanthropic sources as well as through market sources such as user fees (Cortis & Blaxland, 2015, 2016, 2016b). However, a different type of organisation is increasingly being recognised within Australia’s community services sector (Cortis & Blaxland, 2016b). This is a social enterprise, i.e. “social (including environmental and cultural) purpose or social benefit organisations that primarily fulfil their mission by trading” (Barraket & Collyer, 2009, p. 1). Social enterprise organisations thus have a different focus in their organisation mission than traditional not for profit organisations, which may impact the way that CSO employees experience their work. Social enterprise organisations were included in the study to capture any such differences and because they are a significant entity in Australia’s Third Sector and in particular the CSO subsector (Barraket & Collyer, 2009). According to the ‘Finding Australia’s Social Enterprise Sector 2016’ report, there are at least 20 000 social enterprises currently operating in Australia (Barraket, Mason & Blain, 2016). Efforts were therefore made to ensure a fairly even spread between organisations operating traditional and/or social enterprise community service ventures.

- Organisation size: Martin and Healy (2010) demonstrated that community service organisations in Australia were diverse in size, ranging from small to large, although small organisations featured highly in the sector particularly in the provision of general community services. Therefore, both small to mid-sized organisations, employing up to 200 people, and large organisations, employing 200 or more people (ABS, 2016e) were included in the sampling frame.
- Occupation level: the sample was designed to contain an even spread of (paid) workers and managers, including both middle level managers and senior managers, from each of the participating organisations. To achieve this, interviews with four workers, three middle managers and one senior manager were sought from each organisation. The sample thus captures both elements of the CSO workforce according to Martin and Moskos (2006), i.e. employees involved in direct service provision and those not involved in direct service provision.
- Demographic characteristics: the age and gender distribution of the sample was intended to be determined by the distribution within the participating organisations, as such these were not specified by the sampling frame. However, in doing so, the broad characteristics of the Australian CSO workforce described above were considered to identify whether the sample reflects the general traits of the sector or whether it was idiosyncratic.

It was a requirement that participants were *employed* by the organisation rather than acting as a volunteer, because it was anticipated that volunteers experience both the organisation and meaningful work differently to paid employees. Although the differences between the experiences of paid and volunteer staff is an interesting question, it is not the focus of this study.

Table 3.4 Characteristics of participating organisations

Organisation Characteristics	Number of Organisations (N=6)
Geographic Location	
Metropolitan	4
Regional	2
Organisation Type	
Religious	3
Non-religious	3
Traditional not for profit only	2
Social enterprise only	1
Social enterprise & not for profit	3
Organisation Size	
Small to medium	3
Large	3

Table 3.5 Characteristics of participating organisations

Organisation	Location		Type				Size	
	Metropolitan	Rural	Religious	Non-religious	Traditional Not for Profit	Social Enterprise	Small to Medium	Large
A		✓	✓		✓		✓	
B	✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
C	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
D	✓		✓		✓			✓
E		✓		✓		✓	✓	
F	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	

Six organisations that provided services to disadvantaged groups in the community were strategically selected to provide a sample that reflected the nuances of the sector. The prevalence of each of the organisational characteristics sought within those organisations participating in the study is presented in Tables 3.4 and 3.5. These tables show that overall the final sample reflects the nuances sought by the sampling frame devised.

3.2.3 Recruitment

Recruitment occurred through a multi-pronged approach that began with an advert placed in a newsletter disseminated by SACOSS, the peak body for not for profit organisations in South Australia. This advert provided information

about the study to potential case organisations, with the instruction to contact me should they be interested in participating (see Appendix A).

This approach was adopted for several reasons. Firstly, accessing organisations through a third party in this manner minimised the potential that organisations would feel coerced to participate. It ensured that organisations were given time and space to consider their participation by asking them to contact me to opt in to the study. Secondly, this approach increased the number of organisations that could be reached because of the broad reach of the peak body within the South Australian community services sector. However, there were drawbacks to the approach. The association with SACOSS may have had a negative impact on an organisations' choice to participate in the research if the peak body was perceived negatively either by CSOs or employees. It was hoped that the large number of organisations contacted through this method would balance out those organisations that were disinclined to participate in the study due to the link with SACOSS. Furthermore it was anticipated that any sense of obligation to participate due to the link with SACOSS would be discouraged by directing interested organisations to contact myself for further information about the study. Additionally, SACOSS had a policy of only running an advert for participating in research on one occasion. It was hoped that this would not only help to prevent organisations from feeling obligated to participate in the research, it would also mitigate any negative perceptions that might arise from an association with the peak body. However, despite the anticipated reach of the peak body into the sector, only one organisation accepted the invitation to participate in the research based on the SACOSS newsletter advert. Therefore, further recruitment was needed.

To engage more organisations in the study, a second phase of recruitment was undertaken. This involved sending a series of emails to targeted organisations (see Appendix B). These organisations were identified through a number of avenues: industry contacts; the Social Ventures Australia website, which

includes a list of operating social enterprise ventures; and the South Australian Government website, which includes a list of community services organisations. Four organisations accepted this invitation to participate.

Finally, a snowballing technique was used to further bolster numbers within the study. Organisations that were involved in the study were asked to suggest other organisations and contacts that might be interested in participating in the research. Many of the organisations identified in this way had either previously been approached to take part in the research or, once invited, declined to participate. However, one more organisation was recruited through this method.

Interested organisations were provided with an information sheet outlining the purpose of the study and detailing what participation would entail (see Appendix C), as well as a letter of introduction which introduced myself, the study, and outlined what would be required from participating organisations (see Appendix D). These organisations were then emailed a letter of permission for employees to be recruited for the study (see Appendix E), an information sheet to be disseminated to employees (see Appendix C), and a letter of introduction from my PhD supervisor introducing myself and outlining what would be required from individual participants in the study (see Appendix F). Interested individuals were instructed to contact me to arrange an interview at a mutually convenient time and location.

3.2.4 Recruitment difficulties and a change in focus: Social enterprise to meaningful work

The course of this study changed as a result of difficulties in recruiting organisations and participants. Initially, the study began as an investigation into differences in the experience of work for staff working in traditional not for profit organisations and in social enterprise organisations. Of particular interest was the impact of the dual missions, social and profit generation, on the experience of meaningful work for social enterprise employees.

This topic was chosen because social enterprise was particularly relevant at the time that this PhD study commenced. Within Third Sector literature, social enterprise was being heralded as a means of overcoming the funding constraints inherent to not for profit organisations through “the use of nongovernmental, market-based approaches to address social issues” (Kerlin, 2006, p. 247). Changes in policy, increased competition for funding, and an increased demand for services in Australia, which placed further pressure on the resources of not for profit organisations, resulted in an increase in popularity of social entrepreneurship activity such as social enterprise (Paulsen & McDonald, 2010). Although the organisational impact of undertaking dual missions had been considered in the literature (e.g. Defourny & Nyssens, 2010; Spear, Cornforth & Aitken, 2007), no research was identified that investigated how the multiple missions undertaken by social enterprise organisations affected individual employees and their experience of work.

During the recruitment phase it became apparent that while this topic remains of academic interest, this was not viable at this point in time within the context of the South Australian community services sector. There were two principle factors that influenced this realisation.

Firstly, the research topic was not a high priority for CSOs who were concerned with dealing with other issues within the sector at this point in time. As described earlier, demand for community services was increasing while the funding context was changing for CSOs with the introduction of funding cuts, the NDIS, and the ERO (see 1.3.1.3). Thus, the recruitment of social enterprise organisations was difficult. The organisations that initially responded to the invitation to participate in the study were either traditional not for profit organisations or organisations that undertook both traditional not for profit and social enterprise. The sole organisation in the sample that was purely operating as a social enterprise was the last to be recruited. Those social enterprise organisations that elected not to participate in the study but that

took the time to respond to the invitation cited high workloads and a lack of available time to participate in the research.

Secondly, those social enterprise employees who participated in the study did not perceive themselves as different to traditional not for profit employees. Preliminary analyses of interview data demonstrated that employees of social enterprise organisations considered themselves to be not for profit workers, and did not construct their work identity differently to traditional not for profit workers. This could be because social enterprise is an established practice within the Australian Third Sector that has only relatively recently been differentiated as an area of particular interest. Although the language of social enterprise within Australia is relatively new, the practice of social enterprise is well established (Barraket, Collyer, O'Connor & Anderson, 2010). The inaugural "Finding Australia's Social Enterprise Sector (FASES)" project conducted in 2010 demonstrated that 62% of the 365 social enterprises that took part in the study had been operating for in excess of 10 years, and 73% had been operating for at least five years (Barraket et al., 2010). Another explanation is that most of the social enterprises in the sample operated as part of a larger, traditional not for profit organisation. Therefore, the social enterprise employees in this sample may have drawn their identity from the traditional not for profit nature of the broader organisation, rather than the social enterprise that was their immediate work unit.

As a result of these factors, the focus of the study was adapted to focus more specifically on the relationship between social mission and meaningful work in CSOs based on the data collected. Conducting a comparison of social enterprise and traditional not for profit employee's experiences of work would have required overcoming these challenges. This would involve a more extensive and tenacious recruitment strategy with a group of workers who already experience high demands due to their workload. It would additionally necessitate overcoming the lack of identification as social enterprise employees observed in the accounts provided. This in itself may have required

changing the focus of the study to better understand this lack of identification. Instead, the existing data were re-examined in light of what could be learned from the experiences of these CSO employees. It was decided that the study would instead focus on investigating experiences of meaningful work in the sector with particular emphasis on the role that social mission plays in these experiences.

3.3 Participant characteristics

A total of 36 participants (22 female, 14 male), with a mean age of 46.37 years (ranging from 66 to 22 years) were recruited for this study (see Table 3.6). Eight senior managers, 10 middle level managers, and 18 paid workers from six case organisations engaged in social enterprise and or traditional not for profit activities completed both the demographic questionnaire and the interview.

In order to fully describe the participants and to identify patterns in the data based on the characteristics of participants, key descriptive information and information about the experience of work was collected using a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix H). The questions were modelled after those asked in the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey (Melbourne Institute, 2014) and the ABS Census (ABS, 2011), so that data could be used to locate the sample within the broader population.

Participants in this study were predominantly female. The sample included 22 female and 14 male CSO employees. However despite this, based on the profile of the CSO workforce established earlier (see 3.2.2), male employees were somewhat overrepresented in this sample compared with estimates of the overall CSO workforce. Previous research has shown that males working in community services are concentrated in indirect service provision roles (Meagher & Cortis, 2010). The higher proportion of males in this study can be attributable both to the focus on managerial staff in the study and to the focus on social enterprise staff. Of the 14 male CSO employees in the study, 8 were managers and 11 were employed in social enterprise organisations.

Table 3.6 Participant characteristics

ID	Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Organisation Type	Service Type	Role	Job Title
A01	Joanne	Female	31	Traditional Not for Profit	Direct	Worker	Counsellor
A02	Sarah	Female	36	Traditional Not for Profit	Indirect	Manager	Social Worker
A03	Melanie	Female	25	Traditional Not for Profit	Direct	Worker	Manager- New Developments
A04	James	Male	60	Traditional Not for Profit	Indirect	Senior Manager	CEO
A05	Melissa	Female	31	Traditional Not for Profit	Indirect	Manager	Regional Program Coordinator- Financial Counselling
B01	Josh	Male	27	Social Enterprise	Indirect	Senior Manager	General Manager
B02	Kate	Female	43	Traditional Not for Profit	Indirect	Worker	Team Leader- Homelessness Services
B03	Dana	Female	48	Traditional Not for Profit	Indirect	Senior Manager	General Manager
B04	Aaron	Male	42	Social Enterprise	Indirect	Manager	Manager
B05	Joel	Male	44	Traditional Not for Profit	Indirect	Manager	Portfolio Manager
B06	Robert	Male	56	Social Enterprise	Direct	Worker	Team Leader/ Trainer
B07	Linda	Female	42	Traditional Not for Profit	Direct	Worker	Coordinator- Youth Services
B08	Karen	Female	55	Traditional Not for Profit	Indirect	Worker	Project Worker
C01	Greg	Male	50	Both	Indirect	Senior Manager	Manager
C02	Bradley	Male	37	Social Enterprise	Indirect	Manager	Manager
C03	Kaye	Female	48	Traditional Not for Profit	Indirect	Manager	Manager
C04	Dianne	Female	44	Social Enterprise	Direct	Worker	Co-ordinator- Property & Maintenance
C05	Jill	Female	40	Social Enterprise	Indirect	Worker	Administration
C06	Alison	Female	47	Social Enterprise	Indirect	Manager	Manager
C07	Ann	Female	60	Traditional Not for Profit	Indirect	Worker	Site Administrator
C08	Michael	Male	48	Social Enterprise	Direct	Worker	Team Leader
C09	Nick	Male	41	Social Enterprise	Direct	Worker	Team Leader
C10	Stacey	Female	59	Traditional Not for Profit	Direct	Worker	Coordinator- Shop
D01	Luke	Male	63	Traditional Not for Profit	Indirect	Senior Manager	Senior Records, Library and Privacy Officer
D02	Sandra	Female	62	Traditional Not for Profit	Direct	Worker	Social Worker
D03	Tracey	Female	43	Traditional Not for Profit	Direct	Worker	Mediator
D04	Janet	Female	66	Traditional Not for Profit	Indirect	Manager	Manager/ Registered Nurse
E01	Anthony	Male	53	Social Enterprise	Indirect	Manager	Site Manager
E02	Adam	Male	22	Social Enterprise	Direct	Worker	Disability Supervisor
E03	Helen	Female	53	Social Enterprise	Indirect	Manager	Compliance Manager
E04	Kylie	Female	31	Social Enterprise	Direct	Worker	Site Supervisor
E05	Emma	Female	51	Social Enterprise	Indirect	Senior Manager	Manager
E06	Angela	Female	49	Social Enterprise	Indirect	Senior Manager	Operations Manager
E07	Keith	Male	64	Social Enterprise	Direct	Worker	Supervisor
E08	Matthew	Male	.	Social Enterprise	Direct	Worker	Site Manager
F01	Carol	Female	52	Both	Indirect	Senior Manager	CEO

Participants in this sample were predominantly older employees. They reported a mean age of 46.37 (SD = 9.31), ranging from 66 to 22 years. This is higher than the mean age of the Australian workforce, which is 39.4 years (ABS, 2017b). However the mean age of the sample fit with the age categories identified as being most prevalently employed within the CSO workforce according to the 2016 Census data (ABS, 2017b).

The sample in this study was highly educated. Sixteen participants had achieved university qualifications, 11 had achieved a diploma or certificate, 1 had achieved other vocational education qualifications, and 8 participants had achieved year 12 or less. This fits the profile of the CSO workforce established earlier (see 3.2.2).

Participants had spent an average of 39.06 months (ranging from 316 to 2 months) in their current position and 56.96 months (ranging from 316 to 4 months) in their current organisation. Sixteen participants had intentions to remain in their current position for at least another three years, 14 were undecided about their intent to remain in their current position, and 6 intended to leave their current position within the next three years. In regards to intent to remain in the current organisation, 22 participants had intentions to remain in their current organisation for at least another three years, 10 were undecided, and 4 intended to leave the organisation. These demographic statistics are not indicative of the high turnover rates in the community services sector described by the AIHW (2015). This bias suggests that the perspectives of work in CSOs gained from this sample will reflect those of highly engaged employees who are more likely to experience their work as meaningful. This may be beneficial as this sample is likely to have greater insights into experiences of meaningful work. However, they may be less useful in eliciting information about challenging aspects of CSO work such as turnover and burnout.

Table 3.7 Mean Ratings of Satisfaction with Work

	Sample		Social Assistance Services Industry*	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pay	6.47	1.53	6.7	2.2
Job Security	7.25	1.56	8.1	1.9
Work Itself	8.53	1.25	8.1	1.6
Hours	8.03	1.42	7.4	1.9
Flexibility	7.92	1.84	7.8	1.9
Overall	8.33	1.11	7.9	1.6

*Source: Users calculation using the Survey of Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (Release 9)¹⁰

Participants described their satisfaction with various aspects of work by rating them out of 10, where 10 was the most satisfied and 1 was not at all satisfied. The results, summarised in Table 3.7, demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of work with the exception of pay and job security which, on average, still achieved a mildly satisfied rating but did not achieve the high ratings of satisfaction achieved by other aspects of work. This is consistent with Martin and Healy's (2010) finding that the 'general community services' workforce was less satisfied with their pay and job security than other aspects of the job.

In order to locate the sample for this study within the broader population of the community service workforce comparison was made with the job satisfaction ratings provided by 'Social assistance services' employees in the Survey of Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia. CSO employees in this study were less satisfied with their pay and job security but were more satisfied with all other aspects of their work than were the broader community service workforce.

3.4 Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used as the primary means of collecting data about CSO employees' experiences of their work. Prior to undertaking data collection, participants were provided information about the study and asked

¹⁰ Given that HILDA only collects 2 digit ANZSIC information, it is not possible to distinguish direct service from indirect service employees

to provide written consent using a standard form used by the University (see Appendix G). At this time questions about the research were encouraged. Most of the questions raised by participants related to concerns about the confidentiality of their responses. These concerns were allayed by re-explaining the confidentiality measures undertaken in this study (see 3.4.2 & 3.4.4) and ensuring that the participant was comfortable that these measures would maintain their confidentiality.

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at Flinders University: Project No. 5188 (see Appendix K).

3.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

According to an evaluation of IPA in health psychology conducted by Brocki and Wearden (2006), face to face interviews were most often used in eliciting data for IPA. However other methods including telephone interviews, email interviews and written narratives as well as focus groups, observational notes and participant diaries had also been used in IPA (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Of the 36 interviews in the current study, 34 were held face to face, and two were conducted by telephone.

Semi-structured rather than unstructured or fully structured interviews were used in the current study because this technique allows flexibility to probe further where necessary, and to allow the participant to describe their experiences in their own way and emphasise what they find important about the topic thus providing more in-depth data collection (Knox & Burkard, 2009). Furthermore, it provides a framework of questions for the researcher to initiate the conversation with the participant, to ensure a certain level of detail is covered in the conversation, to provide prompts when the conversation falters, and to shape the general direction of the conversation.

An interview schedule was designed to explore the way that work was experienced by employees (see Appendix I). The questions were aimed at

eliciting information about participants' experiences of working in CSOs, how these organisations work, how they experience meaningful work, and how the organisation manages meaningful work. Interviews with high level managers included further questions aimed at gathering information about the case organisations, and what management practices were used in these organisations.

The interviews were structured so that they began with a discussion about the interviewee's role in the organisation and how they came to be in that role. In my previous experience in qualitative interviewing about people's experiences of their work I have found that starting with this type of information helps to ease participants in to a conversation and begin establishing rapport. This is because this type of information is a story that people are often quite experienced at reciting, both in a work context and in a social context.

Given that the objectives of this research were exploratory, although a set of broad interview questions were decided prior to the interviews, the interviews themselves were largely driven by the accounts provided by participants and findings from the analysis of prior interviews conducted by the researcher. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview approach was an asset when collecting data for this study because of the range of ease in eliciting information from participants. Having a clear interview schedule with pre-determined areas for probing was particularly useful in interviews with several of the male workers in the study. These participants presented as somewhat uncomfortable with being interviewed, in particular with expressing their thoughts and feelings about their experience of work. The interview schedule provided a prescriptive set of questions that ensured that the interview progressed despite the sometimes stilted responses of the interviewee and the probes helped to ensure that a depth of information was gathered. In most of these situations the interviewee relaxed into the interview process after a few questions. The semi-structured interview approach

additionally provided the freedom to allow more eloquent participants, often but not always female social workers and counsellors, to direct the conversation themselves. Using the interview schedule in this way created a better flow within these interviews as well as allowing participants to bring their own emphases to the interview, within the remit of the broad topics being covered.

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative researchers collect data “in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study” (p.37). As such, interviews were conducted in a location and mode (face to face, or telephone) that best suited the individual interviewee. Face to face interviews were primarily conducted within the participant’s workplace, either in their office or in a quiet space reserved for meetings or client appointments. One participant elected to undertake their interview in my office at the university rather than at their workplace, citing that it was more convenient for him to travel from the job site to the university than to his office. Two participants from regional areas opted for telephone interviews given the geographical constraints of organising a face to face interview. The length of each interview was determined by the interviewee (and how much they had to say on the topic), with most interviews having a duration of 30-60 minutes.

Participants were informed of the progress of the research via my PhD webpage. Further thoughts, feedback and clarification about what was discussed in the interviews were encouraged in follow up emails and thankyou letters sent to participants (see Appendix J) but no further information was requested.

Informal conversations related to topics raised in the interview often continued after the interview officially ended. These conversations frequently provided information that helped in interpreting what was said in the interviews. As such, notes were made immediately following the interview. Further notes were made during the transcription process. These notes

covered thoughts about themes, interesting concepts, and areas to probe further as well as a critique of the interview describing thoughts on what could have been probed further or discussed in more detail. This aided in both data analysis and in refining the material covered in subsequent interviews.

3.4.2 Recording and Transcription

Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed either by myself or through a professional transcription service. The transcription service, aware of confidentiality issues and bound by a code of ethics, assured confidentiality when entering into a service agreement. This information was provided to participants both via the Letter of Introduction disseminated by their employer (see Appendix F) and verbally prior to the commencement of their interview. Participants were required to provide written consent for their interview to be recorded and transcribed via a standard consent form provided by the university (see Appendix G).

3.4.3 Managing Data

Verbatim interview transcripts and interviewer notes were entered into NVivo 8 software, which was used to manage and code data. The use of QSR NVivo software for managing qualitative data analysis is an accepted method of managing data in qualitative research (Chudzikowski et al., 2009; Connelly, Zweig, Webster & Trougakos, 2012; Fenton-O’Creevy, Soane, Nicholson & Willman, 2011; Fisher & Hutchings, 2013; Lips-Wiersma & Hall, 2007). I found that this software was beneficial in storing material and creating codes, however using a computer for analysis did prevent me from becoming immersed in the data. For this reason I combined the use of NVivo software with pen and paper coding (see 3.5).

3.4.4 Ethical Considerations

There are ethical considerations that needed to be addressed in the research methodology. The first consideration was that of consent. It was important to ensure that participants did not feel coerced to take part in the study, that they consented to take participate and that they did so in a free and informed

manner. In order to achieve this information about the study was distributed by peak bodies and employers rather than directly approaching participants, and it was clearly stated participation in the study was voluntary in both the letter of introduction and the consent form. Moreover, the consent form emphasised the right of participants to refrain from answering questions and to discontinue participation if they should desire, and this was again reiterated in person at the initiation of the interview. The second ethical consideration for this study was maintaining confidentiality. Confidentiality was addressed by de-identifying transcripts and assigning participants a unique ID number to link interview data with data collected in the demographic questionnaire and raw data was stored under password protection. Pseudonyms were adopted in writing up this research.

Participants were encouraged to amend their contribution to the research. While participants did not have an opportunity to view either their interview transcripts or the final report for comment or amendment, the follow up Thankyou Letter did encourage them to contact me should they have anything further that they would like to add to the research. This allowed participants to add to or to alter their contribution to the research subsequent to their interview.

3.5 Data Analysis

Figure 3.1 Excerpt of transcript and mapped themes

Themes	Interview Transcript: Stacey (C10)
<p>Perception of work as meaningful: yes</p>	<p><i>I: Okay, and would you say that your work is meaningful?</i></p> <p>P: Oh yeah. yeah, yeah, yeah.</p>
<p>What is MFW?* -seeing generosity of others</p> <p>Perception of work as meaningful: -despite work itself (menial, repetitive)</p>	<p><i>I: Yeah, in what way?</i></p>
<p>What is MFW? -help others (raise money) [job crafting]</p> <p>-help others (clothing)</p>	<p>P: When you see the generosity of what people donate to us, and whilst it is menial, and repetitive work sorting through clothes etc. etc., to think that of rags or whatever or stuff that nobody else wants, that we can actually manage to raise quite a substantial amount of money, which stays here, on site, and it might come out as a slab of baked beans in the end. And we're also able to give people clothes for nothing, it's, and I guess the recycling part of it brings great joy to my heart. To think that somebody valued something enough to think "okay, we'll find it another home". That is very rewarding and it's also when our clients etc. will say thank you, thank you to me.</p>
<p>Outcome of MFW: positive emotion (joy to my heart)</p> <p>What is MFW? -help others (recycling valued items)</p> <p>Outcome of MFW: -rewarding -acknowledgement</p>	

* Note: MFW refers to meaningful work

This study adopted a process for analysing data based on the interpretative phenomenological approach which involves three stages of analysis (Smith et al., 1999; Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). The first stage of this data analysis approach is the thorough thematic summation of individual transcripts (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Smith et al., 1999). In the current study, data analysis began with a thorough reading and rereading of hardcopies of each individual transcript. A broad set of themes was identified during this reading including, for example, themes such as "perceptions of meaningful work", "what is meaningful work?", and "outcomes of meaningful work". These broad themes were then mapped against the text in the margin of the

transcript (see Figure 3.1). During this process, additional broad level themes and sub themes were identified.

The next phase of analysis in IPA research involves collating themes across all transcripts into concepts (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Smith et al., 1999). In the current study, this was achieved by developing an initial coding framework by collating these thematic summaries. The data were then coded in NVIVO. This coding was iteratively amended by refining and elaborating the themes and subthemes throughout the analysis. The result was a coding framework that covered the following broad level themes:

- Background and contextualising factors
- Experience of work in CSOs
- Impact of work on the individual
- Job crafting
 - social mission activities
 - social interactions at work
 - the quality of work

The final stage of IPA data analysis is a process of super-ordination, the interpretative analysis of these collated themes (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Smith et al., 1999). In the current study, super-ordination was undertaken by reconsidering the coded data in light of the broad, transcendent themes outlined above and interpreting them in relation understandings of meaningful work as described in the previous chapter (see Chapter 2). Mind mapping was used at this point to collate and organise themes into broad, super-ordinated themes.

Three super-ordinated themes were identified. The first of these themes is concerned with broad understandings and experiences of meaningful work

amongst the participating CSO employees. These findings are presented in Chapter 4. The remaining two super-ordinated themes focused on more specific elements of the phenomenon of meaningful work. These are both elements of meaningful work where social mission is anticipated to have a particular influence on meaningful work. Antecedents to meaningful work, both organisational and individual, form the second super-ordinated theme (see Chapter 5). Meanwhile, the active ways through which experiences of meaningful work are shaped through job crafting form the final super-ordinated theme (see Chapter 5). These three super-ordinated themes are presented in the following two chapters. They subsequently informed the development of an integrated framework of meaningful work in CSOs (see Chapter 6).

3.6 Limitations of the Study

The profile of participants in this study demonstrates that this sample predominantly experienced their work in a positive manner (see 3.3). It indicates that, because the sample was self-selected, CSO employees who did not experience their work positively may have been less likely to take the time to participate. As a result, perspectives of the experience of meaningful work from CSO employees who experience their work in a less positive manner may be under-represented in this study. In addition, if participants perceived meaningfulness as being a desirable trait it is possible that they would be less likely to have identified themselves as not having meaningful work. Participants who did not experience their work as meaningful therefore may be under-represented in the sample, and the extent of meaningfulness of work in this study may be somewhat exaggerated. However, measuring the extent of meaningful work in CSOs was not the goal of this study. The aim was to understand how meaningful work was constructed by employees and the role that social mission plays in these constructions. As such, an overrepresentation of participants who experience their work as meaningful was beneficial rather than detrimental to achieving the purpose of this study.

A number of other biases apply to the sample. A high proportion of male CSO employees participated in the study. Their experiences of meaningful work in the community services sector differed from those of female participants in that they were couched within the context of their role as breadwinner and expression of masculinity within a sector that is associated with feminised work. In addition, this study had a focus on indirect service employees, with over 50 per cent of the sample being employed in managerial, social enterprise or administrative roles that constrained their participation in service provision activities. These participants experienced and made sense of the meaningfulness of their work differently to the direct service employees in the study, as will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters (see Chapters 4 & 5). In addition, the sample for this study was exclusively drawn from the South Australian community services sector. Their experience of the meaningfulness of their work was, therefore, couched within this context. The purpose of this study, however, was to undertake qualitative and exploratory research into experiences of meaningful work and social mission within CSOs. Analyses were aimed at concept development and understanding experiences of meaningful work in the sector, not at measuring or quantifying meaningful work. Therefore the biases contained within the sample did not negatively affect analyses for this study. As this is a qualitative study, caution is required if applying these findings beyond the sample.

3.7 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to better understand the relationship between social mission and CSO employees' experiences of meaningful work. The objectives of the current study were to: 1) understand the way that participants experience meaningful work in the community services sector; and 2) explain the role that social mission has in experiences of work and meaningful work in CSOs.

This chapter provided an overview of the qualitative interpretative phenomenological approach, which was taken to explore meaningful work as

it manifests within CSOs. In summary, semi structured interview data about the experience of work in CSOs was collected from 36 participants working in direct and indirect service roles across six South Australian CSOs. This data was analysed thematically, identifying the passive and active ways in which participants experienced their work as meaningful.

The following chapters will provide an account of the findings that were identified through the analysis.

4 Social Mission, Experiences and Outcomes of Meaningful Work

Previous chapters argued that there is an implicit assumption in the literature that meaningful work is a feature of work in CSOs. However little is known about the experience of meaningful work in CSOs from the perspective of employees themselves.

This chapter examines experiences of meaningful and non-meaningful work in CSOs. The aim is to address the first objective of this research: to understand the way that participants experience their work in the community services sector as meaningful. It draws on accounts of meaningful work in the sector provided by the CSO employees¹¹ in this study to focus on understanding if and how they experience their work as meaningful and what the impacts, or outcomes, of these experiences are for individual workers.

As was acknowledged in 3.2.2, Martin & Moskos (2006) differentiated between two types of community service employees: direct and indirect workers. This distinction is also adopted in this study to provide richer information about differences in how meaningful work is experienced by the two types of employee. However, in doing so, it is also acknowledged that in practice the distinction between direct and indirect service employees is rarely as discrete as this dichotomy infers. For example, managers might take on some direct service tasks such as counselling. As a result of dichotomising participants into the categories of direct and indirect employees, some nuances in the data may therefore be lost. To capture as much information as possible, careful consideration was taken when categorising employees, which was undertaken using the role as described by the participant rather than simply based on the job title of the individual. In addition, any relevant, nuanced role information was provided in the discussion of the data presented in this and the following

¹¹ In this and subsequent chapters I use the term “CSO employees” to refer collectively to all paid employees of a CSO and the term “CSO workers” to distinguish non-managerial CSO staff from “senior managers” and “middle managers.”

chapter.

The findings in this chapter show that meaningful work is a key component of how work in CSOs is characterised and of how participants experienced their work, even those who did not initially seek meaningful work when they began working in CSOs. Meaningful work led to participants experiencing both positive and negative outcomes in relation to the way they viewed themselves and the way that they experienced their work.

Participants indicated that engaging in work that is socially beneficial and that helps others contributes to their experiences of work as meaningful and to the outcomes of experiencing work as meaningful. Social mission sets out this purpose for the work in CSOs and thus influences meaningful work. In order to further understand the role of social mission in meaningful work, subsequent chapters will investigate in greater depth those aspects of the experience of meaningful work to which it is anticipated that social mission will be most relevant.

This chapter is structured such that it first outlines findings relating to how CSO employees experience their work as meaningful, including what attracted participants to their work, how participants perceived their work to be meaningful, and the outcomes of these experiences. Then it discusses findings in relation to how CSO employees experience their work as non-meaningful. The contribution of social mission to meaningful work will be considered throughout.

Although the relationship between meaningful work and non-meaningful work is not often explicitly discussed, in the literature it is implicitly suggested that they exist as the two extremes of a continuum of experienced meaningfulness (e.g. May et al., 2004; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010). Participants may concurrently experience elements of both meaningful and non-meaningful work within their role (Isaksen, 2000). The overall meaningfulness of work is such that an individual makes a broad, aggregate

judgement of their work as being either meaningful or non-meaningful at a certain point in time. Most often, researchers focus only on one of the two concepts, thereby overcoming the complexity of exploring a range of nuanced data around the different levels of meaningfulness that can be experienced. Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) however identified the need to study the two concepts together and in doing so dichotomised experiences into meaningful work and non-meaningful work. This is the approach adopted in this study. In order to make a highly complex concept sufficiently manageable to understand, participants have been categorised as perceiving their work as meaningful or non-meaningful based on their own overall judgements about their experience of work. To mitigate the loss of nuance in the data created by dichotomising experiences of the meaningfulness of work in this way, any relevant data about the degree of meaningfulness experienced by an individual was presented in the discussion of the data in both this and the following chapter.

4.1 Experiences of meaningful work in CSOs

Within the literature, work in CSOs is often characterised as being meaningful as a result of the socially beneficial purpose of the work being undertaken. We can therefore expect that meaningful work will feature in the way that participants understand their work. Findings about participant experiences of the meaningfulness of their work in CSOs fall into three areas. These are: what participants were seeking in their work; how participants experience meaningful work; and how participants experience non-meaningful work. In discussing these findings, the role of social mission is considered.

4.1.1 What participants were seeking in their work

One way to gain insight into whether meaningful work is fundamental to the experience of work in CSOs is to understand what attracted participants to their work. Anuradha, Srinivas, Singhal and Ramnarayan (2014) demonstrated that the meaning that is ascribed to work begins to be constructed even before a worker starts working, through social norms such

as expectations about work in the community services industry and individual occupations within the sector and the personal motivations of the worker. This provides insight both into participants' expectations about the presence of meaningful work in CSOs and into the centrality or importance of meaningful work for participants.

In the CSO literature, meaningful work resulting from the social mission related activity of the organisation was demonstrated to play a principal role in attracting employees to the community services sector (Earles & Lynne, 2009; Martin & Healy, 2010). Consistent with this, participants also emphasised the role of meaningful work in what attracted them to their work. CSO participants can be divided into two groups according to what they were seeking in their work. Firstly, there were those who entered the sector explicitly seeking work that was meaningful because of the social mission activity undertaken by the organisation. Secondly, there were those who entered the community services sector for other reasons, many of whom subsequently found their work to be meaningful. These are outlined in more detail below.

4.1.1.1 Actively seeking meaning in work via social mission activity

Half of the participants, regardless of whether they were direct or indirect service employees, actively sought meaningful work via the social mission activity of the organisation (n=18). They were drawn to their work by the social justice values and the opportunity to help others in their work. However, the CSO employees in this study rarely referred directly to *the* social mission of the organisation. Those who did were managers describing how they used the social mission of the organisation to compensate for the less appealing working conditions in the sector (n=4). Instead, participants were interested in the opportunity provided by work in the sector to undertake work that contributes to a broad social purpose, i.e. work that contributes to "social justice", "helping others" or "giving back to the community". I refer to this as social mission activity. This purpose is set out by the social mission of

the organisation as well as purpose derived from the community service industry and individual occupations within the industry, such as social work (see 2.1.3.1). Thus, social mission contributes to the experience of work and meaningful work for individual CSO employees through social mission activity but it is not the sole source of meaning behind social mission activity.

Most of this group of participants (n=10) described their occupation as linking them in with this form of social value-based activity, rather than the organisation or sector. These were primarily participants who identified as counsellors or social workers, even if their current role was managerial. For these participants, meaningful work was sought through the activities associated with their occupation; and their choice of organisation and sector was based on their ability to undertake work over which they had autonomy and in which they could express and develop who they are as a person. They saw their employment options as a choice between working in the highly bureaucratic government sector or the more flexible community services sector:

It's not so much a not for profit but because of the way that I work...I like to just get on and do it, and if you've got a problem with it then they'll catch up, is sort of my, it's, you can't do that in a bureaucracy, I couldn't do that at [government agency], because they have protocols and procedures and policies for absolutely everything...I couldn't work like that because it doesn't allow for any innovation, it doesn't allow for any creativity, it doesn't give you any room to manoeuvre. It doesn't give you any, yeah, it doesn't give you any room, so that's why I couldn't work there. [Kaye- C03, Indirect service employee]

However their choice of occupation within the sector was underpinned by their desire for the type of values-based work characterised by the social mission activity of organisations in the community services sector:

I: So what does drive you to be a social worker?

R: I think it's just making a contribution to people. And like I said, watching people grow, that is, it's fantastic to watch. [Melanie- A03, Direct service employee]

Another common theme within participants who were actively seeking meaningful work was a narrative around moving into the community services sector from other industries with the specific goal of achieving more meaningful work (n=8). Primarily, these were employees who were engaged in managerial roles and were not directly involved in social mission activity (n=6). However the remaining two of these participants were CSO workers, both of whom retrained to pursue work through which they could do something socially beneficial.

A small number of participants who changed sector in pursuit of meaningful work could pinpoint the moment that they decided that they needed to pursue more meaningful work, linking this moment of insight to a significant event (n=3). They described having planned and prepared for their transition into the community services sector. For example, Bradley (C02, Indirect service employee) described how his involvement in relief efforts in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina led to his decision to seek more meaningful work. This then led to a long-term plan to transition from a managerial position in the commercial sector to a managerial position in the community services sector:

I guess the wakeup call for me again was, I was in New Orleans actually I was not in New Orleans when the Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans but I was very close...I was based there as a part of the team that were having to assist people with accommodation, with their basic needs...I remember sitting and talking to my girlfriend at the time, wife today, and I said "there's got to be more to our life than sitting and chasing, you know," six figure salary", you know, had a lot of nice shiny things, they just didn't fulfil me at all. I didn't resign there and then, even though I would like to say "yep, I just wake up one morning and you know, well if I'm going to

do something that will try to make a little change if I can, I obviously have to set myself and my wife up for me to be able to, you know, take a massive salary drop and you know actually go and do something that will fulfil me as human being. And yeah, it took couple of years but we managed to, obviously, save enough money to set ourselves up so we are not financially disadvantaged and yeah, then I was sort of on a lookout for the job, and [organisation name] came on, came for an interview, and was offered a job. [Bradley- C02, Indirect service employee]

Meanwhile Linda (B07, Direct service employee) chose to pursue more meaningful work after observing the collaborative nature of community services work when her brother experienced some difficulties. In order to do so she chose to move away from a finance position in the commercial sector and retrain to be a counsellor.

However, participants who moved into the community services sector from different types of work more often described a gradual realisation in which they came to understand that they needed more meaningful work over a period of time (n=5). For example, Greg (C01, Indirect service employee) described how he had become increasingly dissatisfied with the roles that he was taking in the commercial sector and eventually decided that he needed to pursue more meaningful work. However even after this realisation, it was not until an appropriate role in the community sector was advertised that he considered making the transition:

...there was no trigger, there was no sort of one event or one moment that, when I went "aha, I think I'll take a pay cut and work in community services", no it was just a matter of an awareness that I would enjoy more doing something where the end result was helping people. And then an opportunity came along and then I didn't sort of, I wasn't ready to walk out on my employment at that stage, but an opportunity came along and I took it, and that was to work at [organisation] and it appealed to me, so I

took it. [Greg- C01, Indirect service employee]

For those who were actively seeking it via the social mission activity of the organisation, not finding meaningful work in this manner negatively impacted on the experience of work, according to two participants. Joel (B05, Indirect service employee) who was working in a middle management position felt that his position as a manager meant that he was removed from the values-based activity of the organisation. He experienced a disconnect between the paperwork and reporting requirements that formed the principal part of his workload and the hands-on, direct interaction with people in need that he desired:

I have been well and truly overloaded with paperwork, reports, you know, all that kind of stuff, which has actually meant my ability to retain that proximity to the actual service I've become detached from it, even more...And so that's kind of changed my perception of the job [Joel- B05, Indirect service employee]

This desire underpinned his choice both to enter work in the sector early in his career and more recently to seek a demotion from being the CEO of another organisation to working in his current middle management position:

And spent a few years there, actually as their CEO before I thought "hang on a minute, I'm not doing the stuff that I want to do, how do I get back into that?" and there were lots of other personal reasons why I actually wanted to just kind of take a step back and get involved in a sort of a lower management role as well..... So, I wanted to achieve that sort of level of balance as well as get back into an area that I was principally motivated, principally motivated me to get into the not for profit sector in the first place. [Joel- B05, Indirect service employee]

Given that Joel had sacrificed a more lucrative and more powerful position in order to reinstate the direct, hands-on interaction with people in need into his

work, not being able to achieve this desire compounded with other issues such as his struggle to provide for his family on a lower income to add to his sense that his work lacked meaning. This in turn resulted in him questioning the ability of the work to make a difference in the first place.

Similarly, although not describing his own experience of work, Luke (D01, Indirect service employee) understood that, for those who sought meaningful work via the social mission of the organisation, not experiencing meaningful work had a particularly negative impact. While Luke (D01, Indirect service employee) described his own work as meaningful, he observed the disenchantment of a colleague who pursued but did not find meaningful work through the social mission activity of the organisation. This colleague had made a dramatic change in career to pursue more meaningful work by engaging in work that focuses on helping others only to discover that her work in the sector was not as she expected. Eventually this colleague resigned from her position in the community services sector:

I had a colleague and I digress slightly, she's no longer with us, and when she came in to us, she had come from [organisation] from a very high profile background and came here for a whole lot of reasons and one of them was that she thought coming to an organisation like this, she could make a difference. She thought she was going to be really making a difference and you know putting back into the community... [name] had a whole lot of altruistic ideas and within six, and I didn't say anything to her because by that stage I'd been here six months and I already knew that that was not part of the deal here at all...It didn't work for [name] because she, and it was worse for her than it was for me, because for [name], she had these lofty ideals and they were gradually just, there's a word for it, atrophied. And it, about six months later she sort of worked it all out and it was like, it was quite devastating for her, from that moment on she just couldn't bear to be here and it took her a long time, a lot of frustration to finally leave [Luke- D01, Indirect service employee]

4.1.1.2 Seeking something other than meaningfulness in work

The remaining 18 participants reported that when they started working in the community services sector they did so for reasons other than meaningful work. Many of these participants had been unemployed or were out of the labour force prior to their work in the community services sector (n=15). One participant observed that this was his first employment after completing school. Other participants reported that they were out of the labour force because they were raising children, had a workplace injury, or had been retrenched. For them, simply having an opportunity to be employed was their primary consideration when accepting their current position.

A few other participants identified that in choosing their current work, they sought work that fit them better (n=3). This was either because their position in the community services sector was more conveniently located, requiring a shorter commute than their previous work, allowing them to balance their work with their family responsibilities or because it provided them with work that fit with their interests or did not clash with their values. For example, Ann (C07, Indirect service employee) previously worked in debt collection and described finding this distressing, so she chose to move into the community services sector to seek less emotionally confronting work:

...yeah, it was almost soul destroying for me. I'd think "I'd rather be unemployed", you know, "than do this", but I couldn't afford to be unemployed. I mean, I had kids and a mortgage and, you know, you need to work.

... when I came for the interview for this job, that, one of the first things they asked me was "why do you want to leave the job that you're in?" and I said "I just don't want to make anyone cry anymore". I said "I'm sick of people, I'm saying "I'm from such and such collection agent's management agency", or whatever, and they just burst into tears. I just want a job where, you know, you sort of are helping people rather than not helping them".
[Ann- C07, Indirect service employee]

Although they did not begin working in the community services sector because they sought meaning via the social mission activity of the organisation, most of these participants observed that they had come to view their work as meaningful because of the type of values-based work they were engaged in (n=16). For example, Nick (C09, Direct service employee) began working in the community services sector as part of a work hardening program after a workplace injury. Initially he started working for his organisation “to get out of the house”. However, what he now enjoys most about his work is the ability to help others through his work:

So, we don't get to see the people we sell our products to, very rarely we get to speak to them, but I think everyone's had a setback in their life here and there...it's nice to be able to help someone else out [Nick- C09, Direct service employee]

Often, working in the community services sector provided these participants with the opportunity to use their skills and at the same time help others and contribute to the greater good:

...when I was a kid, or, or a young person starting out in the trade, it's, everybody was cracking whips in those days, it was, you know, you've got to have eighty bricks out in a wheel barrow at a building site, muddy wet days, slipping, at sixteen years of age, frail...But they're contractors and time is, etc., every dollar is a cent, they don't look at the social side of it. Here, the social side is still about thirty percent of our work, which is the interest for me. [Robert- B06, Direct service employee]

Only two participants reported that they neither entered the community services sector in search of gaining meaning in their work via the social mission activity of the organisation, nor did they later find their work meaningful on this basis. One of these participants, Luke (D01, Indirect service employee), was simply looking for employment having retrained as a librarian. He described later perceiving that his work in the community

services sector was meaningful, however for him the meaning that he derived came not from the social mission activity of the organisation but from gaining a sense of purpose in his role in maintaining the organisation's records and the social interactions he had at work. The other of these participants, Jill (C05, Indirect service employee), sought employment having been out of the labour force, in her case due to raising children. She initially described her work as meaningful in terms of her contribution to the operation of the organisation. Jill indicated that she took pride in and gained enjoyment from her work and the knowledge that she contributed to the functioning of the social enterprise. However, she revised her judgement of her work being meaningful when she considered what she understood meaningful work to be and decided that despite her enjoyment in her work this would not be enough to convince her to stay in her job if she were offered a better position and therefore decided that her work was not especially meaningful:

Yeah, no I don't think it's meaningful, really. Not in, in that aspect. I mean, like I said, I enjoy what I do, I enjoy the paperwork, I enjoy, you know, my record keeping and doing a good job. You know, but if another job come along I'd certainly leave, so it can't be that meaningful. Where, is that enough meaningful to stay? [Jill- C05, Indirect service employee]

In summary, social mission activity, which is influenced by organisational, industrial and occupational purpose formed the basis for both decisions to enter work in CSOs, and for how work is characterised once working in CSOs. When the desire for social mission activity has already been fulfilled by industrial or occupational purpose, organisational purpose decreases in salience for the individual and other organisational characteristics, such as the lack of bureaucracy, increase in importance. In this way, industrial and occupational antecedents influence perceptions of meaningful work.

Additionally, these findings show the emergence of different patterns in the way that the meaningfulness of work is experienced in CSOs. Most

participants, both direct and indirect service employees, experienced their work as meaningful due to their contribution to a social purpose. However other participants, all indirect service employees who were not connected to the social purpose of the organisation, either experienced their work as meaningful for their contributions to other aspects of work (e.g. the operation of the organisation), or they experienced their work as non-meaningful.

4.1.2 Perceiving work as meaningful

Meaningfulness was a feature of the way that participants perceived their experience of work. Almost all of the participants in the current study emphatically described their current work as meaningful (34 of the 36 participants). This is consistent with previous research, which has shown that socially-beneficial work is highly valued by not for profit workers (Castel, Lemoine & Durand-Delvigne, 2011; De Cooman et al., 2011). The accounts of experiences of meaningful work provided by these participants provide information both about how these perceptions are made, and the types of meaning that lead to their understanding that their work is meaningful. This informs understandings of the role of meaningful work in the experience of work in CSOs.

Accounts of how perceptions about the meaningfulness of work are made show that the conceptualisation of meaningful work is a form of continuous sense-making about the experience of work as was described by a number of researchers including Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009). A few participants (n=10) described their thinking process around how they arrived at their perception of work as meaningful work. Three participants identified that their perceptions of work as meaningful occurred in an on-going manner. They observed that the feeling that work is meaningful can change from day to day or across time, given their changing work environment and the context in which the decision is being made. For example, Greg (C01, Indirect service employee) observed how his perception of his previous work as meaningful had changed over time:

...for many years I did find it very meaningful, fulfilling and reasonably well paid. But the balance, as maybe you get older, and as maybe you start to ask questions of yourself, and things change, you know, you're financially maybe a little bit more comfortable than in your earlier part of your working career...it was easy to come to the conclusion that, it's not that I'm not enjoying what I do now, but I want something more... [Greg-C01, Indirect service employee]

This is consistent with Ryff and Singer (1998), who observed that meaningfulness is "an ongoing, day-by-day, constantly unfolding phenomenon, not an end state that is once-and-for-all resolved" (p.8).

At the same time, perceptions of the meaningfulness of work were described as aggregate understandings of meaningfulness across different aspects of work, similar to the way that Isaksen (2000) conceived meaningful work. Participants made sense of their work as meaningful by balancing the different justifications of the worthiness or significance of their work. According to seven participants, while their work lacked meaningfulness in one area, e.g. paperwork, it was still meaningful in other areas, e.g. relationships with clients and colleagues. As a result, they perceived their work to be meaningful overall despite having some elements that were perceived as non-meaningful. The only exception to this was Dianne (C04, Direct service employee) who reported that every aspect of her work had meaning, including aspects that others perceived lacked meaning (such as paperwork, training and even reprimanding staff that she manages):

Yeah, everything's meaningful to me, I love my job. I love it. Yeah, I do, it's weird, it's weird, yeah, but I don't think there's a day that, even when I get angry with someone, I still enjoy it. Well, you know what I mean, but when I get angry I laugh, and I go "well what are you doing, you're not supposed to that?" "Okay, now I've told you off, now go", that's me, I can't get angry. It's even meaningful to get up to like yell at someone, you know what I

mean. [Dianne- C04, Direct service employee]

One explanation is that Dianne disclosed that she had experienced trauma in her life and as a result took a very mindful approach to her experience of all elements of her life, including her work where she viewed each element of her work as necessary and therefore meaningful “[b]ecause if you don’t actually do it, it’s not going to flow, is it? (Dianne- C04, Direct service employee)”. Generally, however, the CSO employees in this study experienced both some meaningful and some non-meaningful elements within their work. Participants noted that while a lack of meaning in a few areas of work might not affect their overall perception that their work had meaning, there was a tipping point at which the lack of meaning overwhelmed the presence of meaning and work was perceived to be un-meaningful. Dana, a senior manager, described how her overall experience of work could change over time:

And that doesn’t mean that it’s not stressful at times, and that there’s points where you don’t go “why am I doing this?” But that’s, it’s all swings and roundabouts stuff, there’s things that outweigh that and I guess it’s always a tipping point, you’ll have incidents where you will feel really down about what’s happened and it will get on top of you, but something little will happen that will bring you out of that. When it starts to go the other way that you spend more time on the down side of the cycle than the upside, then that’s when, that’s when I know I need to start looking for a new job.

[Dana- B03, Indirect service employee]

The ongoing nature of these perceptions of work as meaningful, combined with the way they occur as contextualised (in the personal circumstances of the individual and expectations about work in the broader community services sector and individual occupations within the sector) and as an aggregate across multiple elements of work, is consistent with a sense-making approach that treats meaningful work as a justification of the worthiness of

work (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017). A person-environment fit model of meaningful work, which treats meaningful work as being realised through the presence of certain characteristics of work (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017), assumes a more static judgement of meaningful work.

Participants identified two types of meaning in their work that formed the basis of their sense-making around their experience of work and contributed to their understanding of their work as meaningful. Work was perceived to be meaningful both as a result of the *contribution of work to others* and as a result of the *contribution of work to the self*. Understandings of work as meaningful based on the employee's ability to impact others through their work were derived through perceptions of helping others and making a difference through their work. Meanwhile, understandings of work as meaningful based on the impact of work on the self were derived through the participants' ability to engage in what they felt was quality work that satisfied their needs and provided them with a sense of purpose. Many participants reported that they experienced their work as meaningful because it provided them with *both forms of meaning*, impacting both others and themselves (n=14). Thus these understandings of work as meaningful are not mutually exclusive, instead participants drew on multiple justifications when constructing an understanding of the meaningfulness of their work.

The CSO employees in the current study predominantly described their work as meaningful because of how their work affected others. Twenty seven participants felt that their work was meaningful due to its impact on their clients. Their accounts focused upon the way they were able to improve the lives of others and help the clients they work with:

I think what I'm doing is definitely meaningful, it definitely provides change for lots of people, whether it's, you know, as a glimmering bit of hope, at one point in time, or whether it's long term assistance, where they don't need to access anymore... [Melissa- A05, Indirect service employee]

For these participants, who were both direct and direct service employees, their work gained meaning through the social mission related work of the organisation. In doing so they located the meaningfulness of their work externally such that their work gained meaning when they were engaged in a purpose beyond themselves, a transcendent purpose, via the social mission activities of their organisation. Engaging in a purpose beyond one's self is a primary feature within the literature around meaningful work. It is suggested that work becomes meaningful when one is 'serving others' through their work (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009); or engaging in work that benefits the greater good (Rosso et al., 2010; Steger, 2009).

Another way that participants perceived their work to be meaningful was when it positively contributed to their sense of self. Twenty six participants described their work as meaningful because it satisfied their needs and/or provided them with a sense of purpose.

Nearly all participants who understood their work to be meaningful because of its impact on their sense of self felt that this occurred because they gained a sense of purpose and/or a sense of contribution through their work (n=21). Five participants identified that their work was meaningful because it provided them with purpose in their lives and something to do. Nick (C09, Direct service employee), for example, felt that his work was meaningful because it gave him "something worth getting out of bed for." Beyond this, eighteen participants emphasised the value and impact of their work in relation to the experience of work as meaningful and their sense that they had contributed through their work. This value was often derived from the socially beneficial nature of the work, as set out by the social mission of the organisation. Ann described meaningful work as occurring when:

...you feel that what you do is valuable, and it's not about the money, it's not about your surroundings...it's about waking up every morning thinking "yeah, I can actually go to work today and make a difference,"

you know, even if it is paying the bills [Ann- C07, Indirect service employee]

Kate (B02, Indirect service employee) also felt that her work was meaningful because it was “really important”. She highlighted this importance in light of how her work impacted her clients:

So I truly think that our work is meaningful, that we are doing everything that we can in our power, in our abilities, to support the people who are the most disadvantaged, the most disenfranchised to be part of our social, and to be part of our community, and that’s not going to happen without some support because so many people are isolated these days. [Kate- B02, Indirect service employee]

Meanwhile, just over half of the participants who perceived their work to be meaningful because it impacted their sense of self reported that their work was meaningful because it went beyond simply providing employment and enabled them to satisfy their own needs (n=14). Participants identified that these needs incorporated those related to ethics, morals and values and those related to the need for knowledge and learning. When describing their work as meaningful, these participants often used terms such as “fulfilling” (Kaye- C03, Indirect service employee) and “rewarding” (Alison- C06, Indirect service employee) and they felt that their work left them “feeling pretty satisfied” (Melissa- A05, Indirect service employee). Ann articulated that this element of meaningful work was unrelated to the type of work being undertaken, stating “...I think you can sweep the streets and it can be meaningful if you’re getting out of it what satisfies your needs, as well as what your boss is looking for” (Ann- C07, Indirect service employee).

Overall, participants were either reluctant to consider or had not considered how their work gained meaningfulness by impacting them at a personal level. Evidence from several participants suggests that this reluctance to describe work as meaningful because of its impact on the self might result from a social

desirability bias:

It's a fairly selfish reason, it makes me feel good [Nick- C09, Direct service employee]

...I just wanted to be compassionate, I just wanted to ensure that other people who were disadvantaged in some way were given a few options. You know, I never continued that connection to say "and that's because I want to feel good about myself" [Joel- B05, Indirect service employee]

These narratives around meaningful work provided by participants describe the experience of meaningful work as work that is both satisfying and provides a sense of purpose. As such, they are consistent with the base requirement for what is understood as meaningful work in the literature, that is the idea that meaningful work is work that is "at minimum, purposeful and significant" (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003, p.311).

Participants' expectations of how meaningful work should be experienced in CSOs are consistent with more intense experiences of meaningful work presented in the literature. As outlined in 2.1, the way that the experience of meaningful work is understood varies. More involved understandings of meaningful work describe experiences of work such that the individual invests more of their self and has a greater engagement with their work than they would if their work was less meaningful. These understandings of meaningful work focus on ideas such as spirituality, passion and engagement within the experience of work (e.g. Steger & Dik, 2010; Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Participants frequently used terms such as "calling" or "passion" in their accounts of what they believed meaningful work in CSOs to be, suggesting that their understandings of and expectations about meaningful work in CSOs focus on work through which they experience a higher engagement of self.

However, very few participants described their own experiences of

meaningful work in ways that aligned with the higher level of experience associated with meaningful work in the literature, i.e. a deeper personal engagement with work and experiencing work spirituality. Those who did describe a higher level of experience focused on meaningful work as eliciting a deep, personal engagement with their work as described by researchers such as Fox (1994) and Steger and Dik (2010). Four participants reflected on the profound connection between their work and their identity (i.e. Kate (B02, Indirect service employee) who observed that “this field is who I am”) or they described the feeling that they were somehow driven to do their work. Bradley (C02, Indirect service employee) felt that he was motivated by his desire to “do something that will fulfil me as human being,” and Joanne was motivated by the desire to do her job well to help others:

I think when you're in that helping role, you do, you want to make sure that you're doing a good job, and so you spend a lot of time outside of hours just sort of reflecting on the day and, you know, possibly researching into stuff if you've discovered that you don't have time during the days here. [Joanne- A01, Direct service employee]

The CSO employees in this study did not describe a spiritual connection or drive such that they felt that this work was their reason for being as is described in some understandings of meaningful work in the literature (e.g. Ashforth & Vaidyanath, 2002; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Fox, 1999; Mirvis, 1997; Neck & Milliman, 1994). Instead, their experiences of meaningful work were more mundane. For example, Stacey described how her experience of work aligned more with work where she felt comfortable rather than feeling a sense of calling:

I think it's where I feel most comfortable with people...Did I feel drawn in this direction? No, there's nothing really powerful like that or a calling or. I have a sense of, I thought it was somewhere I could belong and feel comfortable so I guess was I meeting my own needs first? Well perhaps I

need to meet my own needs first for me to feel comfortable or perhaps recognition as a human being that I will have needs. [Stacey- C10, Direct service employee]

Stacey's religious values featured in her experience of work however they did not form a spiritual drive or calling to engage in this type of work. Instead, they formed a match between her personal values and those of her organisation:

I grew up as a Catholic, went to church... I guess the community spirit around going to church and being part of the community, and also my own personal beliefs and morals and values. I thought "yeah it can really work for me and hopefully work for the centre", so. [Stacey- C10, Direct service employee]

4.1.3 Outcomes of meaningful work for participants

Although 34 participants perceived their work to be meaningful, only 33 of these participants described the outcomes of this experience of work as meaningful. These participants felt that engaging in meaningful work affected their sense of self and their experience of work. This is consistent with existing understandings of meaningful work in the literature, which identify two types of outcomes of meaningful work: self-related outcomes and work-related outcomes (see 2.1.4).

Indications from the accounts of the outcomes of meaningful work as experienced by the CSO employees in this study suggest that social mission contributes to both work- and self-related outcomes of meaningful work.

4.1.3.1 Work-related outcomes

A number of work-related outcomes of meaningful work have been identified in the existing literature. As described in further detail previously (see 2.1.4.1), these include a heightened connection with the work (i.e. increased work engagement and work responsibility), and increased motivation, as well as increased retention of staff.

Consistent with this, participants described work-related outcomes of meaningful work centred themes of enhanced work engagement and responsibility, increased motivation, and increased retention. Although participants focused on positive outcomes of meaningful work, their accounts revealed that these outcomes had both positive and negative impacts for participants.

4.1.3.1.1 Work engagement and responsibility

Meaningful work was predominantly described by participants as having a positive impact on the way that they experienced their work. Nineteen participants identified that meaningful work increased their enjoyment of work. They experienced meaningful work in such a way that it made them “feel good” (Angela- E06, Indirect service employee). Sarah (A02, Indirect service employee) noted “I actually feel happy and settled and enjoying me job.” These participants identified that work that was meaningful was work that gave them a “warm glow” (Kate- B02, Indirect service employee), a “warming feeling” (Robert- B06, Direct service employee) and a “warm fuzzy” (Ann- C07, Indirect service employee). For them, meaningful work was a source of positive energy. In addition, 12 participants gained a sense of personal gratification from undertaking meaningful work. However, not everyone had the opportunity to reflect on how meaningfulness impacted their experience of work beyond that they enjoyed their work:

I don't know if I get much time to reflect on how it makes me feel, because like I said, I'm just working so many hours, plus I'm leaving my family at home, we've got an 8 week old and a 1 year old, so it's all a bit, and a 5 year old, so it's all a bit hectic. So having time to reflect on how it makes me feel is, not a luxury I'm afforded much of, but no I do, I do enjoy what I'm doing. [Aaron- B04, Indirect service employee]

Experiencing work as meaningful also increased the connection between the CSO employees in the study and their work. Nine participants identified that they were more engaged in their work and felt a greater responsibility towards

their work because it was meaningful. Primarily, this was viewed as a positive outcome. According to these participants, meaningful work inspired them to “think bigger and broader” (Linda- B07, Direct service employee) about their work, made them more “scared to screw up” (Kaye- C03, Indirect service employee), and encouraged them to have more “creativity” (Kylie- E04, Direct service employee) in order to achieve their goals.

However, this increased work engagement and responsibility also had negative outcomes for some participants. Only one participant directly described meaningful work as having a negative effect on the experience of work. This negative effect was a lack of work/life balance resulting from the increased work responsibility felt due to the type of socially beneficial work being undertaken. As Angela (E06, Indirect service employee) noted about people who do not have meaningful work: “[m]aybe they’ve got a bit of work/life balance because they just go home and forget about it. Oh hell no, that’s not me.”

However, four participants, primarily from the larger CSOs in the study, described the outcomes of meaningful work as positive but at the same time identified that their organisations were able to take advantage of employees and their caring, less confrontational nature. In particular, they felt that organisations used the heightened work responsibility that CSO employees felt towards their work as a result of the socially beneficial nature of the work being undertaken to allow them pay their staff less or for them to get staff to put up with inadequate working conditions, e.g. no air conditioning (Helen- E03, Indirect service employee) or no space or administration staff (Sandra- D02, Direct service employee). This negatively impacted the way that these employees viewed their organisation and their place within it:

...you compare that to other people who’ve got those qualifications who are doing similar kind of work and we’re getting paid about twenty, twenty-five thousand dollars a year less...I find it curious and weird that

that's possible...I do get resentful and I think they do that because they can get away with it...it's almost like a sacrilege if you ask for more money in a helping profession. Like you don't really care about all the homeless people or all the sad people or whatever, but I don't want to be homeless either [Tracey- D03, Direct service employee]

4.1.3.1.2 Motivation

Another work-related outcome of meaningful work described by the CSO employees in this study was an increase in motivation.¹² Because participants found meaningful work to be intrinsically rewarding, it provided them with a source of motivation. Ten participants felt that meaningful work provided them with a sense of enthusiasm or energy and made them “strive to be better” (Alison- C06, Indirect service employee). Another theme within participants' accounts (n=8) was that because their work was meaningful work it provided them with the impetus to “get out of bed in the morning” (Luke- D01, Indirect service employee).

Not all participants described meaningful work as affecting the way that they carried out their work. Two participants claimed that despite experiencing their work as meaningful, this had no impact on the way they worked:

I: So, you were saying that enjoying your work and having a laugh helps you to work better, what about meaningful work, does that help you to work better as well, or does that not really affect your ability to do your work?

P: Nup, nup, nup. [Stacey- C10, Direct service employee]

P: I honestly don't think I do work differently. I believe in a fair day's work for a fair day's pay... [Keith-E07, Direct service employee]

However, Keith (E07) later contradicted this by observing that “being

¹² Motivation could also be considered a self-related outcome because it occurs within the self however it has been included as a work-related outcome because the end result affects work.

passionate about your work means you will contribute all that you can contribute to that job and therefore it becomes meaningful.” This indicates that his suggestion that meaningful work did not affect his work was a defence against the idea that experiencing meaningful work negatively impacted how he carried out his work.

Primarily, the increased motivation associated with experiencing work as meaningful was viewed as beneficial for participants (n=6), with meaningful work acting to inspire participants and providing them with “energy” (Emma- E05, Indirect service employee). Meaningful work inspired participants to “go the extra mile” (Janet- D04, Indirect service employee) and put more effort into their work, as well as encouraging people to “go out of [their] way to do things” (Alison- C06, Indirect service employee). Four participants described meaningful work as improving the quality of work that they produced. For example, Melanie observed:

...if work is meaningful for us, then our work is going to be more effective, more productive, and we’re actually going to be more happy people [Melanie- A03, Direct service employee].

Six participants identified that experiencing meaningful work affected the effort put into work. These CSO employees devoted more time to working:

...you get up at one o’clock in the morning and write an application because it’s what drives you [Emma- E05, Indirect service employee]

Heightened motivation was not necessarily an outcome of meaningful work that was beneficial for participants. In these cases, meaningful work often provided a means for participants to justify the longer hours associated with their job (n=7):

...it gives meaning to the, you know, long hours I put in, it encourages me to keep going, and it probably helps keep me sane [Josh- B01, Indirect service employee].

In doing so they defined themselves as employees who did more to contribute to the work of the organisation and cared more about their clients, thus using meaningful work to construct a positive self-concept around work, even when this may have less than beneficial outcomes for them. Kate (B02, Indirect service employee) for example noted that she often worked from home even when on sick leave and undertook additional un-paid hours due to her commitment to the work. She took pride from this commitment to the work and her clients and used it to establish herself as a good worker:

You know, even when I was off sick I was still emailing people and making phone calls from home. Although I sound like (makes croaking sound).

...Some staff have a better work-life balance than others. Some staff are able to turn it off, however I think it might be a bit cultural, organisationally-wise. Because those staff who do switch off and leave at 5 or 5 past 5, it's like "hmm you're leaving at 5, it doesn't finish until 5 past 5 and look, you could have helped do this, or you could have done that, or" you know, it's like "God, why didn't you do this, why didn't you do that?" There's always, there's always more. You know, there's always more to do... [Kate-B02, Indirect service employee]

Some CSOs were viewed as exploiting this increased work responsibility and encouraging their employees to work beyond their set work hours. Two participants described how organisations established a work culture in which employees who adhered to their set hours were perceived to lack in enthusiasm for the job or not properly care for their clients. Kaye, a manager, described the way in which her organisation subtly encouraged employees to work beyond their set work hours despite an official stance of discouraging employees from working at home:

I think that the culture of [organisation name] is a bit different from places I've worked before, there is very much a, I feel, and I might be wrong... there is a very clear expectation that you will come and you will work seven

point six hours there's actually policies around it so they tell you that you can, at manager's level, you can't work from home...but then they give you very explicit instructions on how to access your computer from home. So with the, so what I read from that is "you can't work from home during the day, but if you need to work at night from home, that's okay." And there's a number of those sorts of policies. [Kaye- C03, Indirect service employee]

4.1.3.1.3 Retention

A final work-related outcome identified by participants was an increase in job retention. Sixteen participants described their experience of meaningfulness in their work as having affected their decision to remain in their work.

Most of these participants described meaningful work as having positively impact them in relation to their choice to stay in their position (n=12). The enjoyment they gained from engaging in meaningful work created a desire to continue in their current work. Sarah (A02, Indirect service employee), who described herself as changing jobs every few years, noted "I could probably hang around here."

However, for other participants meaningful work had a less positive effect on their choice to remain in their position. Two participants described meaningful work as having prevented them from leaving when they would otherwise have left due to the conditions. The socially beneficial purpose of the work in CSOs was acknowledged as driving this less positive impact by establishing an increased work responsibility for these participants. This was the case for Aaron (B04, Indirect service employee), who observed "if this wasn't for a social cause...I wouldn't be there anymore."

The remaining two participants who described the effect of meaningful work on their retention did not fit these categories. Neither participant experienced their work as meaningful. As such, their retention intentions are discussed in more detail below (see 4.2).

4.1.3.2 Self-related outcomes

Existing research has identified a number of self-related outcomes of meaningful work. These outcomes focus on improved physical and psychological health, in particular decreased stress and anxiety and improved coping behaviours (see 2.1.4.2 for more detail).

Participants also described self-related outcomes of meaningful work. However, unlike the self-related outcomes of meaningful work identified in the existing literature, which focused on physical and mental health benefits, those described by participants focused more closely on how meaningful work furnished their self-concept by providing them with a sense of accomplishment and opportunities for self-development.

Self-related outcomes were less frequently discussed by participants than were work-related outcomes. This lack of attention to self-related outcomes might result from the lower incidence of this type of outcome. However, as noted earlier, participants identified a reluctance to focus on personal rewards of work because they contradicted the client focus of work in CSOs (see 4.1.2). This provides a more fitting explanation for the lack of emphasis on self-related outcomes in the experiences of meaningful work by participants.

4.1.3.2.1 Sense of accomplishment

Primarily, participants identified self-related outcomes of meaningful work that involved the establishment of a positive self-concept through achieving a sense of accomplishment. This was achieved in one of two ways: through the knowledge that the job had been done well, and through the sense of value that is gained from work. This is related to the theme of motivation described above, however while motivation relates to the energy and effort invested in work as a result of it being meaningful, sense of accomplishment relates to the internal reward gained from completing work that is viewed to be meaningful.

Eighteen participants felt that because their work was meaningful it provided them with the knowledge that they had done their job well. In doing so,

experiencing their work as meaningful fostered a positive sense of self via the sense of accomplishment they gained from their work.

Social mission played an indirect role in this sense of accomplishment. It was the ability to help others, an objective for their work set out by the social mission of the organisation as well as the broader missions of the community services industry and some occupations within the sector, that not only provided meaning to what they do but also from which they derived a sense of accomplishment. Just over half of this group of participants (n=11) felt that this sense of accomplishment was gained from seeing the impact of their work on their clients:

...I'm very fortunate because my role allows that sense of achievement out of a tangible output...being able to hear their stories and see them grow and develop and gain confidence provides meaning to what I do... [Josh-B01, Indirect service employee]

However, not all participants who derived a sense of accomplishment from their work did so as a result of the social mission-related work they undertook. Seven participants observed that they gained a sense of accomplishment through other elements of their work. Again, they predominantly achieved this through the satisfaction in doing their job well. These participants were primarily in managerial roles and not engaged with work directly related to social mission activity. For example, Carol described how she had gained meaning from reorganising policy documents for the organisation:

So I spent a day on a weekend in here so that nobody else was in the system and hyperlinked everything together on the shared drive. And that was a huge achievement and hugely satisfying and I know that it's made a huge difference to the workers...and I've had huge feedback about how great that was, and I still find that satisfying doing that administration task. [Carol- F01, Indirect service employee]

Further to this, nine participants described their experience of meaningful work as providing them with a sense of pride or satisfaction, which again contributed to their sense of accomplishment. In doing so, their experience of their work as meaningful gave them a positive sense of who they are as a person and of how they contributed to the work of the organisation:

Oh, look, it made me feel very proud. It made me feel a real sense of achievement about what we had done....I felt it validated the hard work that we put in. It was that connection back to “well, you know, we did it, it may have nearly killed me”, but it was enough to sort of recharge and say “well now let’s go on to the next one.” [Josh- B01, Indirect service employee]

4.1.3.2.2 Self-development

Other self-related outcomes of meaningful work identified by participants involved self-development. These outcomes were less prevalently described by participants than were outcomes relating to establishing a positive self-concept through gaining a sense of accomplishment. For three participants, engaging in meaningful work allowed them to develop as a person. For example, Kate described her experience of meaningful work as having made her stronger and better:

...my work has made me a different person, and a better person, and a stronger person [Kate- B02, Indirect service employee]

In summary, findings demonstrate that experiencing work as meaningful affects the individual both in relation to their experience of work and their experience of self. In relation to the experience of work, meaningful work was shown to increase work engagement and responsibility, which in turn resulted in increased motivation and retention. Meanwhile, experiences of meaningful work affected their sense of self by promoting a sense of achievement and providing opportunities for self-development.

4.2 Experiences of non-meaningful work in CSOs

Not all participants, however, experienced their work in CSOs as meaningful. As such, the experience of non-meaningful work is also important to understanding how work is experienced in CSOs, and the influence of social mission on this. Meaningless work is thought to occur when the need for meaning is not satisfied through work, resulting in an “existential vacuum” (Frankl, 2006, p.106) that leads to negative outcomes including boredom, indifference, apathy, detachment from work, reduced commitment to the organisation, decreased work effort and decreased work to family enrichment (Frankl, 1963; May et al., 2004; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990; Tummers & den Dulk, 2011). As was observed earlier (2.1), according to Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009), “[w]hen someone experiences his or her life as meaningless, this is a subjective experience of the purposefulness or existential significance of one’s life being diminished” (p.492). Bailey and Madden (2016) identified that while meaningful work is sought and constructed by the individual rather than the organisation, meaningless work can be created by the organisation. They identified seven deadly sins that organisations can commit in relation to creating meaninglessness: disconnect people from their values; take your employees for granted; give people pointless work to do; treat people unfairly; override people's better judgement; disconnect people from supportive relationships; and put people at risk of physical or emotional harm (Bailey & Madden, 2016).

As indicated earlier, only two participants felt that overall their current work was not meaningful. This shows a bias in the research toward constructing work as meaningful rather than non-meaningful. For both of these participants this realisation was reached during their description of their experience of work, and for at least one of these participants it was an unexpected conclusion: “I feel like I’ve been really cynical, I didn’t know I was going to be. There you go” (Joel- B05, Indirect service employee). As will be discussed in more detail later (see 5.1), in both cases these participants attributed this perception to a lack of connection between their own work and the values-

based, social mission activity of the organisation. They made sense of their experience of work as non-meaningful due to the lack of ability to impact others through their work.

These participants did not experience their work entirely negatively, viewing some *elements* of their work as positive and even meaningful (see Chapter 5 for more detail). For example, Joel (B05, Indirect service employee) reported that his organisation provided good opportunities for sharing both learning and knowledge and it was an excellent place to work despite not having meaningful work. He was clear that the lack of meaningfulness in his work was an artefact of his position as a manager and the challenges of the not for profit sector rather than his organisation.

I don't think there's anything else, anything that I've said should be a comment about [organisation name] as such, it's my perception of it, and my involvement in it, and my experience...[organisation name] is a good organisation, and it is a good not for profit, and it's becoming a better one... and in terms of offering meaningful work to people who are employed by [organisation name], I think it does a really good job through its induction processes, through its training processes, and training and development and so on, to make sure that people are continually connected to that kind of core purpose... I'm a manager, and so I feel the distance, I'm of a certain age and have had a lot of experience and therefore feel slightly jaded...[Joel- B05, Indirect service employee]

Similarly, as was observed above (see 4.1.2), participants who experienced their work as meaningful experienced elements of their work that were non-meaningful. Importantly, this suggests that constructions of the meaningfulness or non-meaningfulness of work by participants occurred in a manner that not only balanced multiple sources of meaning, but additionally balanced both meaning and non-meaning.

For the two participants who experienced their work as non-meaningful, the

outcome of their perception that their work was not meaningful was not a decrease in effort or motivation towards their work. This could result from a social bias such that being perceived as a good worker is positively valued in our society, discouraging these participants from acknowledging the negative impact of non-meaningful work on their motivation and effort. However, in their accounts both participants described themselves as hard-working and committed to executing their work well, working additional hours to ensure that they completed their tasks, and taking pride in the quality of their skills.

Both participants who felt that their work was not meaningful did, however, describe a lack of attachment to their organisation and a willingness to leave should a better paying position become available. Joel (B05, Indirect service employee) observed that because of the long hours and low pay in CSOs he was not able to commit to remaining with the organisation, given that he did not experience his work as meaningful. However, Jill (C05, Indirect service employee) felt that her intention to remain with the organisation was not affected by her lack of meaningful work. Jill did note that because she enjoys her work, she is happy to remain with the organisation until a better opportunity arises.

These findings thus support existing literature that identifies decreased commitment to the organisation as an outcome of meaningless work (Tummers & den Dulk, 2011), as well as indicating that non-meaningful work leads to decreased staff retention. However, it contradicts those who posit that non-meaningful work results in extensive harms against the individual (e.g. Spencer, 2015; Yeoman, 2014)

Further insight into non-meaningful work was provided through participants' expectations around work in CSOs. Although it was not the focus of the interviews conducted, some participants (n=12) described what they thought work in CSOs would be like if it was not meaningful. In doing so they provided insight that work that is not meaningful is perceived as lacking a

deep engagement of the self. Five participants felt that non-meaningful work resulted from employees not having a sense of passion or engagement with the work and the social mission of the organisation. As a result, it was perceived that employees who did not find their work meaningful “really couldn’t care less” (Greg- C01, Indirect service employee) about the work. Non-meaningful work was thought to occur when an employee never found passion in their work and viewed it as a “means to an end” (Dana- B03, Indirect service employee), or when they had “lost their passion” (Dana- B03, Indirect service employee). They felt that employees who did not find their work meaningful interacted with their work as though they were “drones” (Melissa- A05, Indirect service employee) or “robot[s]” (Linda- B07, Direct service employee). This reinforces the idea that meaningful work involves a deeper engagement with work.

A lack of meaningfulness in work was perceived by these CSO employees to have negative effects in relation to the sector and the quality of service provided, demonstrating that meaningful work is considered not only desirable but necessary within the sector. Eight participants identified that a lack of meaningful work would negatively impact the enjoyment and reward gained from work and a further three participants felt that a lack of meaningful work would increase stress and reduce their ability to cope with the demands of work. Five participants identified that employees who found their work non-meaningful would negatively affect other staff because they were “not a joy to be around” (Joanne- A01, Direct service employee), they were “toxic” (Melanie- A03, Direct service employee) for the organisation because they engaged in “gossiping” (James- A04, Indirect service employee) and were “focused on stirring up trouble within a team” (Kate- B02, Indirect service employee). Furthermore, non-meaningful work was thought to impact the effort people put into work such that work “wouldn’t be done anywhere near to the best of my ability” (Luke- D01, Indirect service employee) thus decreasing the quality of work produced (n=3). Similarly, participants

identified that a lack of meaningful work would affect employee retention (n=4) as these employees would be “ousted” (Matthew- E08, Direct service employee) from the organisation or they themselves would look for other work and “move on” (Greg- C01, Indirect service employee). In addition, it was believed that the lack of engagement with work resulting from non-meaningful work would translate into an inadequate quality of service provision to clients (n=4), who were acknowledged to be a vulnerable group of people:

...how does that translate into your work with your client, and just, you know, so uninvolved or disconnected with the work that you do, because you just don't care, what does that look like when you work with the client?
[Dana- B03, Indirect service employee]

These findings about expectations around experiences of non-meaningful work demonstrate a social desirability bias towards experiencing work in CSOs as meaningful. They clearly demonstrate the negative associations that participants have around non-meaningful work in the community services sector.

4.3 Conclusion

For the CSO employees in this study, meaningful work was a key feature of work in CSOs. Meaningful work was viewed as a valued, even essential, element of what attracted participants to work in the sector and how they experienced their work in CSOs. It was used by participants to justify their work as worthy because of its contribution to two types of purpose: participants viewed their work as worthy because of its impact on *others*, allowing them to help others and make a difference, and because of its impact on the *self* through the provision of quality work that satisfies their needs and gives them a purpose.

In this chapter two experiences of the meaningfulness of work amongst CSO participants were identified, meaningful work and non-meaningful work, and

within this four patterns of work meaningfulness emerged. Most participants viewed their work as meaningful and for many this was associated with the social mission of the work that they undertook. Direct service participants viewed their work as meaningful because of the opportunity to undertake social mission activity (Pattern 1). Indirect participants that viewed their work as meaningful did so either because of other aspects of work such as their contribution to the operation of the organisation (Pattern 2), or due to their contribution to social mission activity, which was not a focus of their work (Pattern 3). Meanwhile, two participants perceived their work to be non-meaningful, again this was associated with social mission (Pattern 4). They were found to have a disconnection between themselves and the social mission of the organisation. As discussed above, evidence from the findings presented in this chapter indicates that social mission contributes to participant experiences of meaningful work. Despite this, the accounts of work in CSOs provided by employees rarely referred directly to the social mission of the specific organisation. Instead, participants were concerned with the opportunity provided by work in their organisation, the sector, or their occupation to undertake work that contributes to a social purpose, i.e. work that contributes to social justice, helping others or giving back to the community. This purpose is set out, at least in part, by the social mission of the organisation, and thus it is in this way that social mission activity contributes to the experience of work and meaningful work for individual employees.

For participants, the opportunity to engage in social mission activity (i.e. contribute towards work with a social purpose) played a significant role in their experience of meaningful work, even for those employees not directly involved in this aspect of an organisation's functioning. These findings are consistent with the assumption in the CSO literature that the socially beneficial nature of work in the sector is associated with experiences of meaningful work (e.g. De Cooman et al., 2011; Earles & Lynn, 2009; McCambridge, 2001). They

also align with previous research that has shown that even managers, who are less involved in undertaking the social mission related work of the organisation, value that their work is concerned with undertaking meaningful work and socially beneficial work (Onyx, 1998).

Similarly, many participants observed that social mission activity formed at least part of the reason that they had chosen to work in the sector. Even for a number of indirect service employees who had chosen their work for other reasons, the social purpose of the work was the primary factor that contributed to the perception that work in the community services sector was meaningful. These findings are consistent with previous research that has shown that meaningful work resulting from the social mission related activity of the organisation is fundamental in attracting employees to the community services sector (Earles & Lynne, 2009; Martin & Healy, 2010).

A lack of connection with the social mission of the organisation however was shown to be linked to perceptions of work as non-meaningful. For participants, experiencing their work as non-meaningful was associated with decreased commitment to the organisation and intention to leave the organisation. However, contrary to the literature, decreased work effort and motivation were not evident in the accounts provided by those participants who perceived their work to be non-meaningful. Given the emphasis on social mission as a means of counterbalancing the challenges to staffing in CSOs, these findings around the relationship between social mission and non-meaningful work are important in establishing that providing opportunities to engage in social mission activity and clearly establishing how individual employees contribute to the social mission work of the organisation can promote staff retention and commitment in CSOs through counteracting aspects of the work that are non-meaningful.

Consistent with the outcomes of meaningful work described in the existing literature around meaningful work, this chapter also showed that meaningful

work produces both self-related and work-related outcomes. These outcomes were predominantly viewed by CSO employees in the study as positive. However, in addition to this, the findings highlighted that organisations exploited work-related outcomes to their own benefit, often at the expense of the individual CSO employee. Findings from this chapter in relation to non-meaningful work identified that experiencing non-meaningful work was associated with some negative outcomes relating to the participants' relationship with their organisation such as decreased commitment to the organisation and decreased intention to remain. However, although participants expected that meaningless work would be associated with further negative outcomes relating to the employees' connection with their work, i.e. decreased motivation, effort and engagement, these outcomes were not shown amongst those who perceived their work as meaningless.

In this chapter, meaningful work has been shown to explain how social mission, as organisational characteristic, affects individual experiences of work in CSOs. In addition, social mission, or at least social mission related activity, emerged as a contributor to both perceptions of meaningful work and outcomes of meaningful work. This indicates that social mission plays a key role in the experience of meaningful work for the CSO employees in the study. However, a more in-depth investigation is needed to address the second objective of this research by gaining a better understanding of the contribution of social mission to meaningful work in CSOs. Chapter 5 will address this by focusing on areas of meaningful work where social mission is expected to be most relevant.

As described earlier (see 2.2), there are two aspects of meaningful work where it is anticipated that social mission will contribute the most. Firstly, as an organisational characteristic of CSOs, it is expected that social mission will act as an antecedent to meaningful work. As the socially beneficial purpose of the organisation, social mission provides meaning for workers in two ways:

- 1) It may allow employees to feel that through their work they contribute to the greater good, linking them to a broader, transcendent purpose and providing them with the perception that their work is meaningful;
or
- 2) It may allow employees to engage in work with a particular set of values, which they feel match their personal values, thereby providing employees with a sense of coherence between their self and their work. This would allow employees to express or develop them self at work and provide them with the perception that their work is meaningful.

Secondly, social mission, as a key feature of meaningful work, is expected to contribute to the way that CSO employees actively shape their work as meaningful. Rosso et al. (2010) asserted that “individuals are the ultimate arbiters of the meaning of their own work, as shaped through the lens of their unique perceptions and experiences (p.115)”. These researchers identified the need for research to look at the way that employees go beyond the work environment that exists around them to actively shape their understanding of the work context- both tangible and psychological- as meaningful work (Rosso et al., 2010).

Chapter 5 further investigates those factors that influence meaningful work for CSO employees and explores the role of social mission in experiences of meaningful work by looking at the way that participants engage in sense making and job crafting in constructing their work as meaningful.

5 Factors Influencing Experiences of Meaningful Work, Social Mission and Job Crafting

The previous chapter demonstrated that meaningful work is a feature of the way that work is experienced in CSOs, and showed that this has both positive and negative impacts on the individual employee. It also provided some indication that social mission plays a role in what attracts staff to the sector and how work is experienced as meaningful. However, in order to better understand the role of social mission in experiences of meaningful work in CSOs, thereby fulfilling the second objective of this research, a more in-depth investigation of how meaningful work is passively shaped by organisational characteristics, as well as actively shaped by individuals through job crafting is needed. The aim in this chapter is to gain this understanding.

Firstly, factors that influenced experiences of meaningful work in CSOs are examined. In particular, the contribution of social mission to meaningful work is considered. It is shown that participants identified three factors that they felt contributed to their experience of their work as meaningful: 1) social mission activity and the ability to help others; 2) social interactions and building relationships within the workplace; and 3) the work itself and working conditions. Each of these factors is influenced by the organisation through the organisational culture and the work environment provided. Secondly, the ways that participants themselves engaged in job crafting (see 2.1.1) around each of these factors to actively shape their work as meaningful, or not, through altering both the tangible and cognitive boundaries of their work are examined. Again, the contribution of social mission to this is considered.

This chapter begins by outlining the three factors that influence experiences of meaningful work. A discussion of the approach taken to understanding how job crafting shapes experiences of meaningful work follows. Finally, findings relating to job crafting undertaken by participants around each of these three factors influencing experiences of meaningful work are presented.

5.1 Social mission activity and ability to help others

A strong theme in participants' accounts of what contributed to their experience of meaningful work centred on the social mission activity of the organisation (n=20). As discussed above (see 4.1.1.1), these participants rarely explicitly discussed *the* social mission of their organisation. Instead, participants were concerned with social mission activity, i.e. work through which they help others or make a difference. This is determined by the social mission of the organisation as well as the broader purpose set out by the community services sector and some individual occupations within the sector such as social work. In this way social mission activity contributes to the experience of work and meaningful work for individual employees. Untangling the contribution of each of these sources of purpose to social mission activity and the experience of meaningful work is not always possible due to the overlapping way in which they exist. However, where possible, the three sources of purpose are differentiated in the discussion of the themes below.

Social mission was described by participants as leading to their perception of work as meaningful in two ways. Firstly, in providing work aimed at helping others social mission allows individuals to engage in work that fits their self-concept and their personal values (e.g. social justice, and helping others, and fairness) and to feel that they made a contribution to the work of the organisation. Twenty six participants described their ability to impact the lives of individual clients through their work and therefore engage in work that fit their values and their need to help others. Of these participants, 13 were direct service participants and thus social mission activity comprised the majority of their work. However, a further 13 of these participants were indirect service participants who constructed their work in such a way that they perceived it as being about helping others and making a difference (see 5.5.1).

Secondly, by providing a transcendent cause for CSO employees to engage in through the broad social benefit motivating the organisation, social mission

allowed employees to contribute towards the greater good. Participants felt that their work was meaningful because they were able to broadly contribute to the community and make a difference.

Seventeen participants discussed the broader impact of their work resulting from their contribution to the social mission activity of their organisation. Of these participants, five were directly involved in service provision and 12 were not directly involved in service provision. They focussed on their work as “making a difference” (James- A04, Indirect service employee), “contributing to society generally” (Dana- B03, Indirect service employee), “helping people and changing society, and meeting people’s unmet needs” (C01, Indirect service employee). Work was valued by these participants because of their involvement in positively impacting the broader community as a result of the social mission activity of the organisation. In this way, they drew value from engaging in a transcendent purpose as a result of the social mission activity undertaken by their organisation.

Social mission activity also affected meaningful work by providing an opportunity to engage in work that is consistent with one’s personal values. As shown in 4.1.2, work that has explicit social benefit plays an important role in experiences of meaningful work for participants. These findings provide insight into the way that social mission, as an organisational characteristic, affects the fit between self and work, and ultimately the experience of meaningful work for participants.

In their accounts, ten participants associated the work of their organisation with altruistic values resulting from the social mission activity it undertook. They described their work as being about “helping people” (Alison- C06, Indirect service employee), or “helping put something back into the community” (Robert- B06, Direct service employee). As Sandra (D02, Direct service employee) observed: “I like working for an organisation that helps people and helps the disadvantaged; that appeals to my sense of social

justice.”

These altruistic pursuits were highly valued by participants with 13 indicating that they felt that these altruistic, social goals were more important than monetary gain for CSO employees. They emphasised their lack of interest in the financial rewards of their work and instead focused on their work as being about “knowing we do good things” (Greg- C01, Indirect service employee); Kate also took this view:

We’re not in it for the money, we’re in it for the passion, the clients, to support people [Kate- B02, Indirect service employee]

The fit between CSO employees’ personal values and the altruistic, social mission activity undertaken in the sector was important for participants. Over one third of participants described their work as being meaningful because it aligned with their values (n=15). For all but one, their work was meaningful because it allowed them to express their social values and their desire to help others through the social mission activity of the organisation, the sector, or their occupation. The remaining participant, Luke (D01, Indirect service employee), felt that his work was meaningful because he was able to execute it in a way that fit with his personal work ethic, rather than because it involved helping others:

That, just being paid for it, is not enough. It helps, but first and foremost it has to fit in with my core values. And, that is for me really important and yep, that’s probably the best way I can explain it, it has to fit in with my core values and I would then have to elaborate on all my core values, and that’s a bit hard, but I guess you could say giving value for money, being efficient, quality as I see quality, quality is a very you know, it’s a subjective term at times, there are other times where you’ve got a standard measure for quality. So it has to fit in with all those sorts of things, and the work that I do by and large does, it doesn’t conflict with my core values at all, in fact most of the time it’s in, in conjunction with them, it supports them and

quite often I make sure that the work and the ideas and the way that we do it obviously going to, they come in from my core values. [Luke- D01, Indirect service employee]

This interest in values associated with his work ethic rather than the altruistic, socially beneficial mission of the organisation might be attributable to the different way that Luke (D01, Indirect service employee) made sense of his work as meaningful. As described earlier (see 4.1.1.2), Luke said that although he felt that his work was meaningful, this perception was not based on social mission but on his contribution to the operation of the organisation. Thus, although he experienced congruence between his personal goals and his work, social mission activity was not important to this.

Some participants indicated that employees who were primarily motivated by money were not a good fit for the sector because they did not fit the values of the sector (n=3). Working for the financial rewards of work rather than the desire to help others was viewed as negatively impacting both other staff and clients:

...it's the type of, social, this type of not for profit work is the type of work that you need to enjoy, it's not just a job, I've always said it's more than a job, and that's the type of work that you need to want to do, you can't just do it for the dollar, and we all work for the dollar, don't get me wrong, you need to, you know what I mean but you, I've in my, you know, in my past have seen people that should not be in this field, it's dangerous. It one creates a crappy ripple on effect because they are not a joy to be around usually, in the, as a colleague, and two they're dangerous to their clients. So yeah, get out. [Sarah- A02, Indirect service employee]

Organisations influenced how social mission activity affected meaningful work both in relation to how it affected the impact that participants perceived they had through their work, and in relation to the values associated with this type of work. Two participants described their work in CSOs as allowing them

to have more of an impact because of the type of clients that they serviced through their social mission activity. In doing so, these participants derived a positive work identity through their ability to contribute to helping these clients. Joanne (A01, Direct service employee) felt that in the not for profit community services sector her clients' circumstances were less extreme than those she had observed when working for a government organisation. As such, she observed that her work had a greater impact upon her clients and she was able to make a difference in their lives while decreasing the toll on her emotional resources:

I think that's the difficulty between like I said if you're actually looking at pure human service, welfare work, you're looking at "let's get to that grass level of, you know, really marginalised groups, very disadvantaged, disempowered people." They are very, very hard to work with, and it's very draining and so, I like the mix here that we currently have, that we are able to see those people, but given the fact that we are one of the main counselling services here...we get the whole gamut of people that are generally well functioning people that just need a bit of help every now and again, through to the really disadvantaged that are in chronic, chronic stress, chronic crisis. So it's, I get my sense of here's a measurable outcome, here's something that I, yep, that person's fixed or they've got what they needed and they can go away and that's great, to help me recharge my batteries, but I certainly think that the work we do is meaningful here.

[Joanne- A01, Direct service employee]

In contrast, Carol (F01, Indirect service employee) described clients in the community services sector as being highly complex due to the nature of their circumstances thus enabling her to make a greater impact through her work because she was working with those who most need help:

...they're not simple, they're really very complex and very dynamic in terms of what we're dealing with. Always co-morbidity issues involved

and drugs and mental health and abuse... [Carol- F01, Indirect service employee]

Although not a major theme, there was some evidence that organisations actively fostered the connection between employees and the social mission activity of the organisation to encourage meaningful work (n=4). For example, Greg (C01, Indirect service employee) acknowledged that as a manager in the community services sector he needed to foster a shared vision in order to motivate his staff. He described the prominence of social mission in community service organisations and the reliance on connecting staff to the vision and purpose communicated through the mission statement in getting employees to engage with the work:

Yeah, because I'm working in a sector where people's motivations are different, to when I worked in the private sector, there certainly is a definite change in management style required in this sector...essentially motivating people, getting them to work together in this sector is very much about a shared vision. They understand what they're doing, and why they're doing it, and how it fits into that broader picture and that's very much about inclusiveness, it's very much about communication with people, at all levels, it's about being able to paint the picture, create the vision... every organisation has vision statements and mission statements and all that stuff, so it, it, here it is about "we're going to do this because", "this is how it will benefit the people we work for, our clients". And people need to buy into that, because that's why they're in these jobs, it's about helping clients, helping out people, the customers, so, so certainly now I've changed in terms of needing to help people understand where they fit in, and where we're going, and what the end results of our combined efforts will be. [Greg- C01, Indirect service employee]

Meanwhile, the impact of social mission activity on the fit between personal and organisational values was described by a few participants as being

influenced by two traits of the community services sector. These were the lack of focus on profit-generation activity within the sector and the type of clients serviced by the community services sector.

Two participants described the fit between their own personal values and those of their organisation as being based not only on the presence of social mission activity but on the lack of emphasis on profit-generation activity within the community services sector as well. Kate (B02, Indirect service employee), for example, felt that the not for profit nature of her organisation drove the social mission activity at the heart of her job; however changes in the community services sector threatened this. She described the increasing adoption of business-like practices in the not for profit community services sector as a result of increased competition in the tendering process for funding and maintaining quality accreditation. For her it was important that, even in the face of the increasing adoption of business-like practices in the not for profit sector, she saw her organisation as having maintained their “charitable background” and their non-fee for service approach to service delivery in order to continue to perceive a fit between work and her personal values. Kate maintained her sense of fit with the organisation’s values despite their increasing focus on business by choosing to highlight how she retains her own focus on the clients. She stated that “organisationally we may have changed somewhat to be more business oriented” but went on to emphasise her focus on helping clients, saying that “I really have that, that approach about going above and beyond”.

Similarly, for Dana (B03, Indirect service employee) the lack of focus on profit generation activity and the focus on social mission activity in the community services sector created what she felt was a better fit between her work and her personal values. In her account this distinction between values in the community services sector and those in other sectors emerged in her narrative around her why she chose to work in the community services sector. Dana (B03, Indirect service employee) reported that it was the social mission-based

values behind the work rather than its commercial nature that affected her choice of employer. She stated that although she could work in retail, she could not work in the area of fee-for-service counselling because to do so would conflict with her values by placing vulnerable people at risk:

I could work in a shop, that wouldn't bother me, that's a commercial enterprise, but I couldn't work a fee-for-service social service...I guess because it's the very antithesis of everything I believe in. If people are coming to an organisation for help then to charge them means that the most vulnerable in the community will be without services. [Dana- B03, Indirect service employee]

In both of these accounts, the participants emphasised social mission activity and its role in their perception that their work fit with their personal values. In doing so they were able to reinforce a positive work identity by demonstrating that their work fit with their sense of self. These findings show that participants engaged in sense-making to understand their work as meaningful by establishing that their work is coherent with their self.

Another participant identified that the fit between her personal values and those determined by the social mission of the organisation was influenced by the type of client they serviced. Joanne (A01, Direct service employee) felt that her current work in a CSO was more cohesive with her personal values because she was able to work with clients who sought her help, where previously she had worked for a Government agency in which clients were compelled to participate in the service she provided and as such did not want her help. The result for Joanne was that her work in the community services sector better fit her values:

...I really actually wanted to try something different, and I want to come in rather than your knocking on the door saying "you have to do this, and you have to work with us," and getting abuse and all that sort of stuff. so I was really interested in being, like I said that voluntary, that supportive,

that I guess that social justice side of things, with, not that you can sort of go ahead and raise your placards...I was looking at more that side of things because I felt like [organisation name] was very much a social control, rather than an actual, you know, trying to help people to, you know, live their best lives. [Joanne- A01, Direct service employee]

The importance of social mission activity in experiences of meaningful work was further reinforced in the accounts provided by the two CSO employees in the study who did not identify their work as being particularly meaningful. These participants shared one trait, this was the perception that there was distance between the work that they did and the social mission activity of the organisation. Both of these participants attributed this distance to the fact that they were working in roles that were not directly involved in the social mission activity of the organisation. Joel, a middle manager, felt that his managerial tasks prevented him from engaging in the social mission activity of the organisation:

And I kind of got detached from because I was selling myself on my ability to sit behind a desk and do the boring stuff rather than actually do the job that I wanted to do. [Joel- B05, Indirect service employee]

Meanwhile Jill, an administrator in a social enterprise housed within a larger traditional not for profit organisation, felt that although the work of the broader organisation was meaningful, the work within the social enterprise was a business and did not help people in need in the same way that work in the rest of the organisation would:

I think it's this, that this site is different to [organisation name] sites, you know, for example we might have the guys down the back who go cleaning house, clean the house, but, is that meaningful? You know, I mean I do paperwork and I invoice people, I charge people, you know, they pay me money, is that meaningful?...No. You know, I think it really, you know, it depends on your role within [organisation name] as to whether it's a

meaningful position, or not. So, I mean over at [other site in organisation], where a lot of the programs are based that are there to help people, I suppose that reception would be different because you're helping people and directing people to what programs they need and their assistance and all that sort of stuff, whereas here people ring up and order a skip and then I do the paperwork and then I bill them. Or people ring up and book in a donation for someone to pick up the furniture, then I book it in and do the paperwork, I suppose it's different. It's not real meaningful. [Jill- C05, Indirect service employee]

Thus, for Jill the reduced focus on social mission activity with the introduction of profit generation activity in the social enterprise negatively impacted the meaningfulness of her work.

To summarise, these findings show that generally when describing the influence of social mission on their experiences of meaningful work participants were concerned with their ability to engage in the social mission *activity* of the organisation rather than the social mission itself. This was determined not only by the social mission of the organisation, but also the mission of both the broader community services sector and individual occupations within the sector. For both direct and indirect service participants, it was the ability to do work that aimed to help others and make a difference to the broader community that was perceived to be important for meaningful work. In addition, it was shown that participants were interested in being able to engage with the altruistic purpose espoused by this type of work because it fit with their personal values. This is consistent with previous research conducted by Allan et al. (2017) who found that work tasks that have greater significance because they involve helping others are associated with higher levels of meaningful work.

Organisations influenced the ability of participants to derive value from the social mission activity they engaged in. Participants indicated that within

organisations the social mission was used to motivate staff by providing them with a shared purpose or cause to work towards and setting out organisational conditions. For example, participants identified that the type of client they provided services to and the lack of focus on profit generation activities, which helped participants to engage with work that contributes to this socially-beneficial cause. These findings echo the existing literature, which identifies that financial concerns negatively impact the experience of work in CSOs (Postle, 2002), and that organisations can foster meaningfulness amongst workers by fostering the workers' connection to something greater than the self (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003).

5.2 Social interactions and building relationships in the workplace

Social interaction forms a large part of work in the community services sector and similarly in perceptions of work as meaningful amongst the CSO employees in this study. These social interactions, to a large extent, are set out by the remit of a CSO employees' job tasks, and the structure and culture of the organisation, and thus can be considered to be an organisational characteristic. Participants identified that their jobs gained meaning from the relationships they established through their work. It was important to them that they had opportunities for collaboration and that they were able to meet and interact with a broad range of people.

Three types of relationship were identified as being particularly important to participants. Firstly, participants valued the relationships that they established with their *clients* (n=23). That is, they enjoyed interacting with clients and felt that they were able to impact their clients through these relationships. While there are similarities with the findings presented above in relation to social mission activity and helping others, the focus here is on the bonds built between the participant and the client, rather than enacting a set of values such as helping others or making a difference:

I actually get motivated and energy off from my clients, from actually

working with them, and I get a great satisfaction. [Sarah- A02, Indirect service employee]

Going on skate tours with them, going down the beach with them, that's the cool bits, actually interacting with young people and hearing their voice...when you actually get to work with them they're intelligent young people, you know, they've got their own views of the world, you know, their own ideas...And I think that's what fires me up about my job, is getting them to say "well this is what I want" and then once I've been able to provide that for them, that's what makes them think "yeah, it was really worth doing". So that's what excites me about this job. [Linda- B07, Direct service employee]

Secondly, participants valued their relationships with their *colleagues and co-workers* (n=24). The relationships that participants established within the workplace contributed to the meaningfulness of work both by providing them with a sense that they belong both to the organisation and to a shared cause. According to 16 participants, having a sense of belonging within the workplace and the strong relationships they had with their colleagues not only satisfied their need to belong, it also established an enjoyable working environment.

The sense of belonging had a further benefit for participants by improving their ability to undertake their work. Twenty participants observed that having a sense of belonging encouraged the feeling that they were supported by their colleagues. This encouraged collaboration between employees and provided them with support networks that helped with resources and avenues for getting a job done. Furthermore, it provided opportunities for debriefing when the emotional nature of the work became too much for participants:

It is very casual, it's like a big family, yeah, you know if someone needs help, yeah we'll go and help them. It's happy, hectic sometimes, but you know, yeah, it's casual, it's cool. [Dianne- C04, Direct service employee]

You do a lot of debriefing amongst our team. We very much have a, and my staff all know, that there's a safe place that they can vent if they've had a bad day or something's upsetting them or sometimes it's something even from home. [Karen - B08, Indirect service employee]

Social interactions with colleagues also provided participants with a shared sense of purpose. Eight CSO employees in this study identified that they viewed their work as meaningful because they were involved in a shared purpose with their colleagues. This was established through the social mission of the organisation. Again, this had positive impacts on the collaboration between employees and the willingness of staff to provide assistance to each other:

I think that there's sort of unity in our purpose at work, so we're all coming from the same place. [Linda- B07, Direct service employee]

I guess it's a very, to me it's a very, the culture is that we're here to help people. And that affects our, my work, I guess meaningfulness is that they are all happy to help me, to help clients if I don't have the capacity to do it. So, you know, it's a real hands on approach to make sure that a client receives an outcome...That they have just as much respect and as much willingness to help the community as what I do. [Melissa- A05, Indirect service employee]

Finally, participants valued the *inter-agency relationships* within the community service sector (n=3). For example, Linda (B07, Direct service employee), found her work meaningful because she was able to cooperate with staff from other organisations rather than compete with them:

And I think also, with this community as such, in the work, in the work-life, they actually pull together a lot. In big companies, they're out there to make money, you know, they do deliver some fantastic products, but this is more about working collaboratively, if I can get the word out, and with

other sectors that just want to do the same as you want to do. You know, and that's what I like about this job. [Linda- B07, Direct service employee]

CSOs influenced the social interactions of their staff, particularly those amongst colleagues. As described above (see 5.1), four participants described how their organisation influenced a sense of belonging amongst staff by communicating and promoting a shared purpose through the social mission of the organisation. Organisations further influenced the meaningfulness of work for participants through social interactions with staff in which they established participants as being valued within the organisation. In this way they promoted a sense of belonging amongst employees. Twelve participants identified that, within their organisation, they felt that they were valued and treated as a person rather than as a "work number" (Janet- D04, Indirect service employee). It was important to participants that their contribution to the organisation was appreciated by their colleagues and the organisation trusted them to do their job and to fully participate in decision making regarding their clients.

In summary, evidence from participants demonstrates that meaningful work is derived from the social interactions undertaken at work. As with previous research into meaningful work in related care-work fields (e.g. teaching, Fourie & Deacon, 2015, and nursing, Pavlish & Hunt, 2012), participants identified that their relationships with clients and colleagues were particularly important to them. Findings show that although the organisation's social mission mainly contributes to meaningful work by providing participants with a socially-beneficial cause to work towards, it also influences the social interactions that provide meaning to participants.

It was shown that participants valued their relationships with their clients. This was partly because they were able to see that they had had a positive impact on the lives of others, and partly because they simply enjoyed interacting with their clients. There is some overlap between these findings

and those from the previous section given that social mission sets out the type of work undertaken by participants and thus the type of relationship that participants had with their clients. However, in this section the focus was on the perception that they contributed to the work of the organisation through the relationships and social interactions that participants had with their clients, rather than desire to engage in work that fit with their personal values. By establishing a clear purpose to work towards, social mission provided the basis for participants to perceive their work as meaningful because of the impact they had on their clients and the sense of contribution that they gained from this.

Meanwhile, the relationships that participants established with their colleagues were similarly important to them. These relationships affected participants in two ways: they provided a sense of belonging; and they created a shared sense of purpose via the social mission of the organisation. This finding resonates with the existing literature, which has proposed that work gains meaning when it offers opportunities for the employee to satisfy their need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and that organisations can foster meaningful work by providing shared goals, values and beliefs that align with staff identities (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). In this study, the relationship between participants and their colleagues established a positive working environment, which helped participants to cope with stressful and emotionally draining situations, as well as encouraging staff to work collaboratively and share resources, ideas and workload. These findings are consistent with Isaksen (2000) who found that workers who experienced meaningful work reported less stress symptoms resulting from work.

5.3 The work itself

The final theme that emerged in the accounts provided by participants around the factors influencing experiences of meaningful work in CSOs related to the work itself (n=32). A number of factors relating to this theme were identified by participants. These were: 1) quality work; 2) working conditions; 3) work-

life balance; and 4) work culture. CSO participants described their experiences of meaningful work and their ability to perceive their work as meaningful as being influenced by the way they experience their work. Thus, there is a strong association between the conditions that lead to meaningful work and participants' experiences of work in CSOs.

Unlike the previous themes, "the work itself" is not associated with social mission. Elements of work directly linked to social mission or social mission activity were categorised separately and discussed earlier in 5.1. This theme describes those remaining aspects of work in CSOs that contribute to experiences of meaningful or non-meaningful work.

5.3.1 Quality work

The provision of quality work was one factor that participants identified as being important to the way that they experienced their work and therefore the meaningfulness of their work. Eight participants felt that for their work to be perceived as meaningful it was important that it challenged and extended them as workers. They valued work that stimulated them and provided them and the opportunity to expand their skills, knowledge and experience. In addition, the ability of the participant to have autonomy and ownership over their work contributed to the quality of their work and the perceived meaningfulness of their work.

Accounts of work in the community services sector provided by employees emphasised that the work was both interesting and varied and that this provided them with a sense that their work had meaning (n=14). Participants described their work as diverse and unpredictable, such that "anything could happen, at any moment of the day" (James- A04, Indirect service employee). This variety contributed to the meaning that they gained from their work:

I would describe meaningful work as, so it's personal, personally I would like to find my work, personally I like it challenging and rewarding...
[Melanie- A03, Direct service employee]

Several characteristics of CSOs were identified by participants as directly influencing the variety of work undertaken and how interesting this work was for participants. A small number of participants described the variety within their work as deriving from the way that services are funded in the community services sector (n=2). Sarah suggested that variety in the sector was created by the grant-based nature of the work and the relatively short-term nature of programs, which meant that there was churn not only in staff but also in programs:

...because NGOs they get lots of different contracts, and so programs come and go, and so you've got new workers and new programs, so you're revitalising... [Sarah- A02, Indirect service employee]

Similarly, Kate (B02, Indirect service employee) noted that the variety of work undertaken by CSO organisations (and thus by CSO employees) resulted from variety in the work that was outsourced to them by Government agencies. As such she had been involved in different type of work while employed at the same organisation:

So, like I said I've come here but I've worked, done, drug court and I've done youth and I've done that...[Kate- B02, Indirect service employee]

For her it was particularly important that even those without higher qualifications were afforded these opportunities in the community services sector:

...there's all those avenues whereas I don't think there's as much avenue in government unless you've already got your degree....So I think there's more avenues to build your skills, I think non-government is more prepared to take in people who don't have their degree, and help them to, to address that [Kate- B02, Indirect service employee]

Two other participants felt that their work in CSOs was more interesting because it allowed them to engage in the work at a deeper level. For Tracey

(D03, Direct service employee), her current CSO work allowed her the time to make sure that she could really ensure that she could do her job well and help her clients. She described her previous experience of work in the commercial sector as having “no time to do anything” such that she:

...felt like a mouse on one of those little wheels. It was very impersonal. I don't know if you've read George Orwell's '1984' but I got to that point where I'd walk into work and call myself Winston because there's no substance. One of the things I like best about this job is there's an opportunity to be really methodical in my work. If I've got a difficult client I can block out time in my diary to really work out how I'm going to handle this mediation. I wouldn't want to do that for every mediation because then we wouldn't be servicing our clients. I can help people. I can really help people... [Tracey- D03, Direct service employee]

Linda (B07, Direct service employee) also found the work interesting because she was able to focus on doing her job well and getting the best possible result for her clients. For her this was possible in the community services sector because of the degree of collaboration between employees both within and between CSOs, who she felt were interested in ensuring that their clients were helped rather than in the competition between organisations for clients and funding. Linda noted that unlike in the commercial sector where the organisation is “out there to make money,” the not for profit sector is more interested in working collaboratively and promoting communication between organisations:

... we often have network meetings and we talk about, especially in this job, what activities we're going to do...we often communicate to make sure that we're not putting on the same programs...so [name] down there is doing a program for the younger groups so we identified that there was nothing for the older groups, so we're doing something here. And that's what I mean about working together. You know, you're doing the same

things but working together [Linda- B07, Direct service employee]

Another aspect of work in CSOs that led to participants experiencing it as particularly interesting was the ability to broaden their knowledge. Twelve participants said that the provision of opportunities for learning and sharing knowledge contributed to the meaningfulness of their work. In particular, they valued the opportunity for training and professional development provided by their organisations:

...and perhaps opportunities for advancement as far as training goes, that's been important that the organisation is happy for you to say "look I'm, I'd like to do." Like last year I did a diploma in business management [Ann-C07, Indirect service employee]

It's meaningful because I feel like I can impart my learning and my knowledge onto others, and also learn from others and grab their knowledge as well, and try and you know, take parts of who they are and turn it into what I want to be [Melanie- A03, Direct service employee]

I like hearing those different points of view, and trying to understand those, without judging them, and trying to work out what that means and how it all fits together...so I'm broadening my knowledge as well, because I'm hearing those different stories... [Dana- B03, Indirect service employee]

Organisations influenced participants' opportunities to expand their knowledge, with just over one third of participants saying that their organisations were excellent at providing opportunities for and access to training (n=14).

The fact that they paid for my training, that was huge. I mean I'm a sole parent, I would never have been able to pay for that out of pocket, so that was \$7000 so they're very good with training and that sort of support. There's a limit on it but even I'm going - a few times a year I'll go off to a talk at Women's Health state wide or go listen to a lecture or something, so

that's very good. [Tracey- D03, Direct service employee]

...heaps of support for professional development as well, the training budget allocated for each, I think it's about \$1500 or something we get for, which is significantly higher than for other organisations that I've worked in, and if you need more you can, and there is exceptions, they can support additional to that as well. [Sarah- A02, Indirect service employee]

Another aspect of quality work which influenced their perceptions that their work was meaningful that was identified by participants was the autonomy and ownership that they had over their work. One element of this was the perception that the organisation and their managers trusted them to do their work and do it well. Fifteen participants reported that they were given the autonomy to do their job in their own way:

Generally speaking if I put forward something I think that needs to happen and I can show my reasons why I don't get very many hindrances at all or it might be 'yes, but not yet' and you can accept that. I just feel that the working relationships are good. Good trust there. I trust what they're doing, they seem to be trusting what I'm doing and letting me implement whatever I need to do. [Helen- E03, Indirect service employee]

This was not entirely viewed positively by participants. The autonomy and flexibility of work in the community services sector was sometimes perceived as daunting when first encountered (n=2):

However, when I first started I actually had a lot of trouble with that flexibility with my work stuff because I was so used to "this is how you do it boom, boom, boom, boom" to "okay, you can do it any number of ways, you know, as long as the goal is here, we will support you, you have the skills, here are the resources, whatever you, essentially, whatever you need." [Joanne- A01, Direct service employee]

The autonomy and flexibility of work in CSOs was particularly valued by

participants because they perceived Government organisations, which provided similar services to their organisations and thus offered an alternative employment option, to be frustratingly bureaucratic and constraining for staff (n=8):

...it was certainly much more appealing than going into another government job. Because of the whole, like I said, "this is what you do", whereas here you have a little more flexibility. [Joanne- A01, Direct service employee]

However, being trusted to do their work in their own way and to do it autonomously was effective only if participants felt that they had the support of the organisation to back up their decisions:

I think it's the support that they give you in, you say to them "this is what we want to do" and sometimes some of the things that we've tried have been a bit out there, and they, they always back you. And sort of say, you know, if you think it's a good idea and you can explain why it's a good idea, then they'll say "yeah, go for it." [Karen - B08, Indirect service employee]

Participants reported that they had gained support from their organisation in two ways. Firstly, they were supported through their ability to share knowledge and ideas. Several participants felt that they were not only allowed but encouraged to contribute their ideas about the work to their superiors and contribute to decision making within the organisation (n=8). In addition, a few employees observed that their management supported them through the knowledge and wisdom that they were able to pass on to them (n=3).

Secondly, participants observed that they had the backing of their organisation (n=18). This occurred in the form of backup either through their managers being understanding and accommodating of any issues or responsibilities in their private life, or through the provision of backup to support their

professional decisions, even those that were more unconventional, so long as they had acted professionally and ethically on behalf of their client:

No only what I've said before, which is I find it's a very good organisation to work for because you get support. People here understand the problems you have and they certainly give you help if you need it. They listen to any problems you have and they're very supportive and that's basically it in a nutshell; supportive I think is probably the best word. [Keith- E07, Direct service employee]

However, the social mission activity of the organisation also established expectations amongst participants about the way that they would be treated by their organisation. When these expectations were not met, this negatively impacted participants and their experiences of meaningful work. Three participants discussed feeling that their expectation of being valued by their organisation had been violated. Two participants, both from the same organisation, had particularly strong feelings about these perceived violations because in their eyes the organisation had strong caring values in relation to their clients but they felt that these same values were not carried over into the treatment of staff. As a result, their sense that they were valued by the organisation was challenged. Luke, a senior administrator, described regular instances of senior staff bullying colleagues, even at the highest levels in the organisation:

I've seen staff been treated very badly, I've actually seen staff bullied, harassed and, you would have to say verbally assaulted in front of other staff, just on my floor alone. And this is the executive floor. That impacts on me quite strongly, it impacts on other people quite strongly because you then realise that they're expecting us to be loyal and all the rest of it to give that extra drop of blood, but they're not prepared to do it themselves.... But it does, those are cultural and corporate values that I see impacting very negatively on me because they, they are at odd with my own values,

my own core values system of that we're all equal and we're all worth the same. We all have the same worth as people and we should be treated that way, and we don't we get treated, some people get treated far worse than others. [Luke – D01, Indirect service employee]

Meanwhile Sandra, a social worker, had been involved in an incident with a client in which her safety and that of other staff was at risk. She observed that following this incident concerns raised by employees about future safety risks were not resolved by the organisation in a timely manner:

...management said they were very concerned about what had happened and security and all of that but no-one actually contacted me for six weeks after that incident. I didn't feel they were concerned about me...It took them 18 months to put a security door on the office so I didn't feel that the organisation really showed enough care and concern for their staff. In spite of being a caring organisation in terms of the community I don't feel that they necessarily translate that into caring for staff... [Sandra – D02, Direct service employee]

A participant from a different organisation, Joanne (A01, Direct service employee), described a lesser violation by her organisation of her expectation that staff would be valued in CSOs. She noted that during a period of organisational change her CSO had begun referring to high level managerial staff as "key professionals", a term that she felt undervalued frontline staff, such as herself, who worked directly with clients and were in her eyes the key professionals in the organisation. To compound this, ideas and suggestions from a brainstorming session with staff around the future direction of the organisation were lost by management.

Each of these participants continued to view their work as meaningful despite these violations. However, perceptions that their organisation did not value them as workers did reduce their happiness with their organisation and their working environment. In addition, it introduced a conflict between their

personal values and their expectations of organisation values, and what they observed were organisation values in practice. As will be discussed below, these participants engaged in job crafting (see 5.7.4) to decrease the impact of these violations on their experience of the meaningfulness of their work. Had they not undertaken this job crafting, they would have been less likely to perceive their work as meaningful.

Other organisational characteristics also influenced perceptions of autonomy and meaningfulness amongst participants. Fifteen participants felt that it was important that their organisation provided them the “flexibility” (Joanne- A01, Direct service employee) to undertake their tasks in their own way. Participants also felt that it was important that their organisation allowed them to “go the extra mile to deliver something” (Linda- B07, Direct service employee), i.e. go beyond the limitations of either their role or pre-existing systemic processes to get the best outcomes for their clients. In this way participants were able to exert autonomy within their work and thus take ownership over the work that they did for the organisation:

...in NGOs you get that very much, and it’s written in our, in [organisation name]’s mantra almost, creativity and flexibility and looking outside the boundaries, and you know, doing what we, the best we can for our clients. And if that means stretching things and being flexible and a bit different thinking, then that’s what we do. [Kate- B02, Indirect service employee]

...because of the way that I work, and because, I think I said right at the beginning, I like to just get on and do it, and if you’ve got a problem with it then they’ll catch up, is sort of my, it’s, you can’t do that in a bureaucracy, I couldn’t do that in a bureaucracy, I couldn’t do that at [government agency], because they have protocols and procedures and policies for absolutely everything.....I couldn’t work like that because it doesn’t allow for any innovation, it doesn’t allow for any creativity, it doesn’t give you any room to manoeuvre. [Kaye- C03, Indirect service employee]

This emphasis on flexibility and creativity as a positive characteristic of work in the community services sector was particularly evident in the accounts of traditional not for profit participants. As described earlier (see 4.1.1.1), eleven CSO participants set up their choice of work sector as a dichotomy between working in the Government or Not for Profit Sector. They described the Government sector as highly bureaucratic, which they believed would interfere with their ability to do their work well (n=8). Instead participants valued the flexibility and creativity allowed by working in CSOs. In having this freedom to be creative, participants felt that they were able to be the best employee that they could be. Linda (B07, Direct service employee), for example, described how the flexibility and creativity she was afforded improved her ability to carry out her work to the best of her abilities and this contributed to the meaningfulness of her work:

And having the freedom to actually go out there and “can I try this?” not saying everything works, because it doesn’t, but then that’s another learning curve... and because we do have the freedom to think of great stuff, it makes you think bigger and broader. You’re not stuck in this little square box because you know the boundaries. Yeah, we do have boundaries but sometimes you can push them a little bit. If it’s going to prove it’s a really positive and good outcome, you know, that’s what makes it really meaningful. They’ll, they’ll let you do that. [Linda- B07, Direct service employee]

CSOs fostered this sense of ownership over their work amongst employees by creating a supportive leadership environment. Firstly, this was achieved through the accessibility of managerial staff to the staff they were managing. Even in the larger organisations included in the study, participants described their upper management as being easily accessible (n=7). They felt that the ability to take their concerns to the higher levels in the organisation gave them a sense of being valued and supported as an employee:

...I have no doubt that you could walk into head office and say that "I want to see [name] the CEO, I need to talk to him" and they would, he would be available...there needs to be that connection that you can feel connected to them and what decisions are made in the agency. [Ann- C07, Indirect service employee]

Secondly, it was observed that a supportive leadership environment was established through the recognition of staff achievements by management. Where participants felt that their efforts and contributions were recognised by their superiors, this contributed to their sense that the organisation was a good place to work (n=7). Melanie described how even small acknowledgements led to her feeling appreciated by her boss and that this contributed to her perception of being a valued member of the organisation as well:

Also, in regards to feedback, appreciation, the give and take sort of stuff, you know, at four o'clock James [CEO] might come over with a bottle of wine and say "right, happy hour." Those sorts of things I think retains staff...And it makes staff feel like we're appreciated, I guess. [Melanie-A03, Direct service employee]

Melanie also acknowledged that there were moments where her efforts were not recognised by the organisation. However, in doing so she minimised these moments, stating "but there hasn't really been heaps of them, they're really minor, for me anyway."

5.3.2 Working conditions

Several factors relating to the working conditions in CSOs were identified by participants as affecting the way that they experience their work as meaningful. These factors were the pay and funding context present within the community service sector, the presence of job security, and the physical environment at work. While good working conditions did not necessarily influence the presence of meaning for individuals, when working conditions were challenging they hindered the ability of the individual to construct their

work as meaningful (see 5.7.2).

Beyond social mission activity, the lack of money or funding was the primary feature of work in the community services sector that participants described. Many participants acknowledged that work in CSOs was characterised by a low financial return for workers (n=26):

...the wages are minimal. I think they would have to be just about basic pays. [Janet- D04, Indirect service employee]

...there's never enough money [Kaye- C03, Indirect service employee]

However, the lack of money and the reliance on obtaining funding were additionally described as having broader impacts on staff and their work within the sector, which impinged on their experience of their work as meaningful. The limited funding and the constraints applied to the money by the funding bodies affected the ability of workers to help clients in need and for organisations to direct their services where they saw need (n=5). The funding limitations in the sector also affected the time that middle and senior managers had to apply to other aspects of their work, given the workload involved in completing funding applications (n=7). Two non-managerial participants identified that the reporting requirements associated with maintaining their funding interfered with their ability to do their work. Beyond this, the short-term nature of funding limited the capacity of organisations to provide their workers with job security (n=3). Further, the limited funding impacted the resources available for staff including the availability of extra training, extra staffing, access to vehicles, stationary and even auxiliary staff such as gardeners, information technology (IT) and legal professionals, particularly in smaller organisations (n=6):

The physical, the furniture, the access to more up to date equipment, the ability, technologically-wise, you know, there's so many other programs here that we can access, whereas in government there's a process for

obtaining that, there's costing, you know, I guess it really is behind the times, I feel, in terms of its office environment and what they can access at what times. And you know, to get a program put on your computer is quite a lengthy process, within government, because everything has to be approved. Whereas in non-government, you know, if I want something I really need to go and just explain why I want it and it's approved by the CEO or my manager. [Melissa- A05, Indirect service employee]

Not all participants felt that resources in the sector were constrained. Sarah (A02, Indirect service employee), a senior manager with Organisation A reported that her ability to access to some resources such as IT support was excellent. She observed that her organisation provided her with any software that she needed, however given that the organisation was relatively small, access to other resources such as legal advice was limited. She noted that these resources would be more accessible in government organisations or larger CSO organisations. Other participants, however, described the lack of funding in the sector as affecting even basic resources. Linda felt that this created frustration for workers:

...it can be silly things really, we have to be careful about what stationary we order, you know, all right down to, you know, erasers- "how many erasers do we need? Oh we need four. Just buy four then", even down to that. [Linda- B07, Direct service employee]

Job security was another factor that was viewed by participants as affecting the way that they experienced their work and therefore the meaningfulness of their work. Fourteen participants discussed their experiences of job security or insecurity. They described work in the sector as being predominantly short-term contract work and that this resulted in periods during which employees experienced uncertainty around whether their contracts would be renewed. This was a concern for seven CSO employees within the sample, including participants who reported that they had been employed long-term not only

within the community services sector but also within the same organisation.

The uncertainty about job security within the community services sector derived from insecurity around funding. For traditional not for profit CSOs, in particular, ambiguity around job security was tied to a lack of certainty around the renewal of funding for programs. These participants observed that the Government agencies providing funding for their programs had a tendency to leave decisions about the renewal of funding until the last possible minute, increasing uncertainty:

And we also have to worry about the fact that I might not get funded next year for a certain program, so my job is gone [Melanie- A03, Direct service employee].

I guess the, job security is an issue because it's all reliant on funding all the time [Karen- B08, Indirect service employee]

The process I've gone through here is I was employed on a 12 month contract with the understanding that there probably would be permanent work at the end of it. Then I got mixed messages throughout the entire process. One month I would be getting work, next month I wouldn't be getting work...This went on and on and on... [Tracey- D03, Direct service employee]

Similarly, uncertainty around job security in social enterprise CSOs was connected to the continuation of funding for the program. Employees from this form of CSO attributed this uncertainty around funding to the business-style nature of the organisation, which was a new way of operating for all of the social enterprises in the current study because they were embedded in traditional not for profit CSOs:

...we're a business at the same time, so we have to reach certain targets and if we don't meet those targets then the program will fail and we'll lose our jobs and fall by the wayside. [Robert- B06, Direct service employee]

Having to meet budget is always an underlying factor in everything that we do, every time I walk in it it's pretty much, you know, geez we have not a lot of orders this week, a lot of orders this week, and it is a little bit harrowing because there's no clear definition of how bad the project is allowed to go before they can it. So, since I've started here there's been, you know, every time it comes up on budget time "oh they're going to kill [project name] this year" so it's almost three years now, three times I've heard it said. That uncertainty of not knowing, because as you said, you do have to generate a certain amount of cash flow and turnover to make the project worthwhile, but to what end do you cut that off and are happy to just take the overheads as just being the social enterprise side of it, so. It can be a bit stressful. [Nick- C09, Direct service employee]

The impact of this uncertainty around job security for a few CSO managerial staff was the introduction of additional stress and complexity into their work (n=3). Without confirmed income for the organisation, managers were unable to guarantee continued work for staff. This impacted their ability to retain staff whom, in the face of uncertainty around the renewal of contracts, needed to seek other work to maintain their income. As a result these managers observed that job security issues placed them in a position where their loyalties were torn:

It does put a pressure on you when you're getting towards the end of your contract. You can see and like, my crèche coordinator, her contract that's twelve months to twelve months because that's how our funding for this centre operates, and she's a widow with two young children so it does, it's a huge emotional rollercoaster for the staff and so that affects me in that I'm line managing them, I'm responsible for their welfare, I'm then also responsible to someone higher who says to me you can't give them another contract until we know from government that we've got the money, so I'm caught between a rock and a hard place [Karen- B08, Indirect service employee]

For participants affected by job insecurity, the impact of this was a level of concern, worry and anxiety, especially as the end of their current contracts approached (n=5). This anxiety was exacerbated by the inability of management to confirm whether their contract was expected to be renewed, for the reasons described above. Several participants reported that they or their staff had at least investigated alternative employment in the lead up to the end of their contract as a result of their uncertainty around its renewal (n=3):

One month I would be getting work, next month I wouldn't be getting work...This went on and on and on and I'm a sole parent of three children, I'm the only breadwinner. Masses of anxiety and then towards the end of your contract you're desperately trying to look for other work so you're not focusing on your job as much as you could be. [Tracey- D03, Direct service employee]

However, job security was not a concern for all participants. Five participants felt that they had job security due to the type of contract they were employed under. This was either because they had permanent contracts or because the source of their funding was considered reliable despite it being short term. Another two participants felt that they had job security, despite observing that others had lost their positions when contracts ended, because they were confident that their organisation would find them alternate work should their funding discontinue. Meanwhile, two participants acknowledged that their position was not secure but reported that they had accepted that this was part of working in the sector.

The physical work environment was described by four participants as affecting the way that they experienced their work and the meaningfulness of their work in CSOs. Three of these participants described working in less than desirable conditions including a lack of air-conditioning, having not enough office space to fit staff, and using old office furniture. However, Melissa (A05,

Indirect service employee) described her work environment as being more desirable in her CSO than she had experienced in other sectors, with more up to date office furniture.

These findings indicate that when working conditions are poor it reduces the ability of the individual to view their work as significant and worthwhile and to view their self in a positive light. For those who experienced their work as meaningful, this perception went beyond simply the presence or absence of specific organisational conditions. These findings around working conditions demonstrate that most participants actively maintained the meaningfulness of their work and they did so despite experiencing challenges and meaningless aspects to their work. Findings about how they maintained the meaningfulness of their work are discussed below (see 5.7.2).

5.3.3 Work-life balance

Work-life balance was another factor that participants identified as affecting the way that they experienced work and their ability to perceive their work as meaningful. Most CSO employees in the current study described being satisfied with their current work-life balance (n=24). These participants emphasised that satisfaction with their work-life balance was not necessarily a measure of how many hours a week that they worked. Some of these participants worked full time hours or longer (n=15), and some worked less (n=5). What was important for their satisfaction was how that balance worked for them in the context of their life.

Organisations affected the way that the CSO employees in this study experienced work-life balance, thus providing working conditions that were conducive to experiencing meaningful work. Sixteen participants felt that their organisation supported them to balance their work with their other responsibilities. They did so by providing the flexibility for participants to fit their work around their life and a work culture that encouraged participants to do so:

But, for now, and for the last two years it's been fantastic, it's been flexible, there's always someone to cover if you need to take time off for the kids or whatever, both my kids are small, five and two, so it's always nice to be able to go at a minute's notice, you know, "I've got to go, look after the place, close the doors when you go." So that sort of thing is pretty good as well, very flexible. [Nick – C09, Direct service employee]

You know, there's never, and you know, and I must admit even with my own staff, you know, family comes first. So if your children are sick there's no expectation that you need to be at work, you'll either make the time up somewhere else, or you use your sick leave, or whatever. There's never any pressure put on you to make you feel bad. [Karen – B08, Indirect service employee]

In particular, participants experienced their work as meaningful when there was flexibility around their working hours either in terms of their fraction of working or around the way in which they worked these hours. This flexibility allowed them to focus on responsibilities outside of work such as family or other commitments and to help manage the emotional cost of working in this field. For example, Joanne, struggled with mental health issues as a result of the emotionally draining nature of her work as a counsellor. She used the flexibility of her work and her ability to work part-time to mitigate the emotional toll of her work:

You don't have that time to stop and connect with other people in your personal life, because you've been putting yourself out there to people, you know, each and every day. And that to me is absolutely exhausting, and I find that, unless I have other things to do, or currently I work part time in this role, and I honestly don't know if I could do it full time in this role. [Joanne- A01, Direct service employee]

Others felt that it was important that their work blended with their personal life, rather than being a separate entity (n=3). These participants were all male

employees who either had no children or had older children, and therefore less need to balance work with their family responsibilities:

It is a personal choice for me, you know, I think again, this organisation there's a couple of people that work in that way, you know, our chief executive is one of them, he's, you know, also does quite a lot, but it's something that I've chosen to do. Yeah, I guess, you know, if I was unhappy with it, I think I'd make changes. And it happens to fit for me at this point of my life where, you know, people say, I think people have a notion that work-life balance means, you know, getting to a point where you can do your eight hours or nine hours a day or whatever and walk out and that's it. To me it creates an artificial barrier saying that work isn't a part of life, where I think work is a major part of life and that, you know, it's where I get a lot of source of my, you know, my enjoyment of life out of, it's what stimulates me, it's what, I get out of bed on a Monday morning, I look forward to going to work, I don't go "bugger it", you know. [Josh-B01, Indirect service employee]

However, as demonstrated in the previous chapter (see 4.1.3.1), the relationship between meaningful work and work-life balance was not always described as being positive for participants. It was shown that participants used meaningful work to justify working additional unpaid hours or working when unwell. Similarly, organisations were observed to have encouraged these behaviours amongst their employees.

Unlike the previous two organisational characteristics that influence meaningful work, the presence of work-life balance promotes meaningful work rather than its absence creating a challenge for meaningful work. Work-life balance contributes to meaningful work through its ability to allow the individual to fit their work with self by allowing balance between work and family or other needs.

5.3.4 Work culture

Finally, CSO participants identified that their work culture affected their experience of work as meaningful, or not. The organisational culture of four of the six CSOs in this study was predominantly described by participants as one in which the work environment was a fun and light-hearted place to be. It was an organisational culture where participants felt that their organisation was behind them, and where they had flexibility not only in how they achieved their work but also in their work hours and their dress code:

I remember when I got the job at the time I turned around to the senior manager and said “okay, well what’s the dress code like?” and you know, he interviewed me and everything in his shirt and then jeans, and here’s the dress code, he said “don’t come naked”... Then you know, I started working a couple of days and I was at the office, you know, eight o’clock in the morning, sitting at my desk and there was nobody else until nine o’clock and sort of, after a few days I went to my, again, my senior manager and I said “what are my working hours actually?” I couldn’t see them anywhere, and he turned around and said “what are the hours that you need to get the job done?” ...So I sort of found that to be, allows me to, you know, juggle my personal life with a bit of work, you know, that work, work personal balance really, really, you know. [Bradley- C02, Indirect service employee]

Two participants utilised the work culture in their organisation to shape their work identity to create a positive sense of self. Dianne (C04, Direct service employee) used the flexibility in work culture to shape her work identity as a source of fun in the workplace. She wore pyjamas to work and decorated her office to maintain a fun work atmosphere and to make her colleagues smile:

Yeah. I’m just a good person, I like making happy people...Yep. Have you always been like that?...Yeah, yeah, I’m out there. I come to work in pyjamas sometimes. You have to see my office, you’ll be going “oh okay” it’s just full of teddy bears and toys. The only office here that’s like that.

[Dianne- C04, Direct service employee]

Meanwhile, Josh used the informality of the work culture in his organisation and relied on his colleagues to ensure that he stayed grounded. The result of this was that he preserved his identity as a good leader:

I think there's a fairly, there's an informal culture in terms of the way people dress, the way people interact, you know, it's a fairly collegiate environment, I'd like to think at least...It's a fairly supportive environment. You know, and we take the piss out of each other a fair bit, and I think that's important, because I think that helps with stress, you know, it keeps everyone light, it keeps everyone grounded, you know, if I ever get too big for my boots, they chop me down very quickly. You know, so I think those things are positive... [Josh- B01, Indirect service employee]

The work culture in two organisations was not described as positive. One of these organisations was only represented by a single participant, Carol (F01, Indirect service employee), who did not describe the work culture beyond the devotion shown by employees to work towards their social mission. However three participants from the other organisation, which was represented by four CSO employees in this study, described the work culture in their organisation as being less than positive. These participants include Luke (D01, Indirect service employee) and Sandra (D02, Indirect service employee) who identified negative aspects of their work culture that led to the violation of their expectation that they would be valued by their organisation (see 5.3.1) and impinged on their ability to perceive their work as meaningful.¹³ They illustrated their organisation as having a strained work environment in which there were personality clashes and bullying that affected their enjoyment of work and their sense of being valued within the organisation. However this was not a universal view of the organisation. The remaining participant from

¹³ Joanne (A01, Direct service employee), who also described her organisation as having violated her expectation of being valued, overall perceived that the culture of her organisation was positive and therefore was not included in this theme.

this organisation described a happy and positive culture within the organisation, which she enjoyed.

To summarise, working conditions were identified by participants as contributing to the meaningfulness of their work. It was important to participants that their work was interesting, varied and challenging, and that they had autonomy and ownership over their work. They also valued a working environment in which they had adequate pay and job security, a work-life balance that suited their personal situation, and a work culture that was positive and allowed them to be themselves at work. When these conditions were present, CSO participants were more easily able to perceive their work as meaningful. Challenges to these conditions reduced the ability to experience meaningful work. Participants had to engage in job crafting (see 5.4) to maintain the meaningfulness of their work. These findings are consistent with Chalofsky and Krishna (2009) who described meaningful work as being influenced by organisational factors such as autonomy, flexibility, empowerment, continuous learning and creativity as contributing to meaningful work.

Organisations influenced the quality of work for CSO employees in a number of ways. The grant-based nature of work in CSOs positively influenced the work itself by encouraging variety in the work and allowing a focus on servicing clients rather than profit-generation. However, it also negatively affected the quality of work by increasing the workload, funding applications and compliance paperwork, thus detracting from the ability of employees to engage in more interesting work activities. Furthermore, the grant-based nature of work in CSOs resulted in low pay, low job security and constrained resources in the sector. Organisations actively provided more attractive work conditions to counteract the low pay and security in the sector. They did so by fostering a positive work culture, increased managerial support, greater flexibility and autonomy in undertaking work, greater access to training, and greater flexibility in managing work-life balance.

In addition, organisations influenced the quality of the job perceived by participants by treating employees as valued within the organisation. They did so by trusting employees to work autonomously. In addition, organisations supported their staff to work autonomously by encouraging employees to share ideas and contribute to decision making and by backing employees in difficult situations, both at work and in their private lives. Moreover, findings indicated that the social mission of the organisation established certain expectations about the way that CSOs would treat their staff which, when violated, negatively affected participants.

Findings in relation to working conditions indicate that while they do not directly influence the presence of meaning, challenging working conditions hinder the ability of the individual to make sense of their work as meaningful. As such, social mission was not shown to be involved in the influence that working conditions have on meaningful work. While participants acknowledged that challenges to working conditions influenced their perceptions of its meaningfulness, most continued to view their work as positive even in the face of these challenges. In addition, while the two participants who saw their work as non-meaningful acknowledged challenges to the quality of the job, including low pay, work-life imbalance, and work not being interesting, these were described as exacerbating the perception that work was not meaningful, rather than being the cause of their non-meaningful work. Joel, for example, described how the low pay in CSOs added to the challenges affecting his experience of meaning in his work:

...I don't necessarily gain any satisfaction from knowing that we're doing really, really good stuff because I'm disconnected from it, plus I can't afford to keep my family. [Joel- B05, Indirect service employee]

5.4 Understanding how job crafting shapes experiences of meaningful work

It was established earlier (see 2.1.1) that the meaningful work literature describes meaningful work as being both subjective and agentic. It is accepted

that what one individual perceives to be meaningful work might not be considered to be meaningful work by another, and that the individual plays an active role in whether they perceive their work to be meaningful or not. Rosso et al. (2010) note that the literature considering how individuals shape the meaningfulness of their work is beginning to be developed. They propose that individuals can shape the meaningfulness of their work by altering both the cognitive elements (i.e. their psychological understandings of work), and the tangible elements of their work (i.e. their work, their social interactions, their work environment and their work-life balance). Wreszniewski and Dutton (2001) describe this as “job crafting”, a process by which individuals manipulate the cognitive, task, and relational boundaries of their work to find a better person-job fit, thereby creating a more positive work identity.

However, the meaningful work literature offers very little understanding of how individuals actively shape their understanding of work to perceive it as meaningful. In order to gain some insight into how CSO participants in this study actively shape their understandings of work I borrow from two other fields: Markus and Wurf’s (1987) work on self-concept and Ashforth and Kreiner’s (1999) work on dirty work. From Markus and Wurf (1987) I draw upon the idea that individuals will act to maintain their self-concept through self-enhancement, self-consistency, or self-actualisation. As such, participants will shape their work to enable them to view themselves positively, to maintain a consistent narrative around the relationship between themselves and their work, or to perceive themselves as enhancing themselves through their work. I also draw from Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) who considered the ways by which workers shape their identity by reinterpreting their work to describe the processes by which participants shape their psychological understandings of work. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) propose that, in order to preserve a positive sense of identity, workers who undertake “dirty work”, work that is perceived to be tainted, engage in sense-making processes by which they alter the way in which they understand their work to place it in a

more positive light. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) identify three processes by which this is achieved: reframing, recalibrating, and refocussing. Reframing involves changing the meaning attached to the work either by infusing the work with positive value or neutralising the negative stigma associated with the work. Recalibrating occurs by adjusting the standards by which work is understood. Finally, refocusing is a process of selectively focusing on positive rather than negative aspects of work. I use these concepts to understand how participants shape their narratives around their work.

5.4.1 Job crafting around social mission activity and ability to help others

A large number of CSO participants engaged in job crafting around their involvement in social mission activity and the impact of their work on others (n=24). They did so either to increase their perceived involvement in these activities or to decrease this involvement in such a way that it conformed to their perception of how they experienced their work and its meaningfulness.

Many participants were distanced from the ability to contribute to the social mission activity of the organisation because of the tasks that they did (n=22). This distancing occurred in two ways: because of their position in the organisation or as a result of the type of organisation. Managers and administrative staff who spent much of their time involved in paperwork and had much less interaction with clients described a disconnect between their own work and the social mission activity of their organisation. For example, Joel stated: "I'm a manager...I realise that there is a big disconnection between what we do, and, and me" (Joel- B05, Indirect service employee). Similarly, participants working in social enterprise also described a distance between the tasks they were doing and the social mission activity of their organisation. This was because their tasks often focused on commercial tasks rather than being directly engaged in helping work:

Obviously we're here to help people, but, I suppose it depends on, I mean we're, we're a different site to a lot of other [organisation name] sites. You

know, we mainly do like furniture donations and skip, you know, skip bins and you know, we go out and clean people's houses and, but it's all fee for service. [Jill- C05, Indirect service employee]

As will be shown below (see 5.5.1), most of these participants engaged in job crafting to alter the cognitive and tangible boundaries of their work and overcome this distance between their own work and the social mission activity that they valued (n=16). However, the two participants who did not view their work as meaningful emphasised this distance to reinforce this perception that their work is non-meaningful (see 5.5.2).

A number of participants who were directly involved in social mission activity also engaged in job crafting around the social mission activity in their work (n=8). They did so to emphasise and reinforce their involvement in the social mission activity of the organisation.

5.4.1.1 Constructing meaningful work: Job crafting to increase the connection with social mission activities

In general, CSO participants engaged in job crafting to increase their engagement with social mission by altering both the *cognitive boundaries* of their work (i.e. their understanding of their work) and the *tangible elements* of their work (i.e. their tasks, social interactions and the work environment). They achieved this by increasing their involvement in social mission-related activities, and by distancing themselves from non-mission related activities and thus reducing the impact of these activities.

5.4.1.1.1 Increasing involvement in social mission-related activities

One way that participants engaged in job crafting to increase the meaning of their work was by increasing their involvement in social mission-related activities. They achieved this by reinterpreting their involvement in non-mission-related activities, reinterpreting the distance between themselves and social mission-related activities, and expanding the tangible elements of their work (i.e. job tasks and social interactions) to incorporate social mission-related activities.

Participants working in managerial and administration roles shaped their understanding of work to be meaningful through creating a distinction between the “real” work of the organisation and the “paperwork” and administration work that is involved in organisations (n=4). For these participants, the “real” work of the organisation was understood to be the work that directly helped clients. This work corresponded to the social mission activity of the organisation. For some participants the intrusion of paperwork into their “real work” negatively affected their ability to experience their work as meaningful because it interfered with their perceived contribution to the work of the organisation (n=4):

...my ability to retain that proximity to the actual service, I've become detached from it, even more, and so I find myself trying to manage my time so that I can sit in front of a computer and do a report, rather than trying to manage my time to work with my staff to make sure that we are doing really good quality things for young people [Joel- B05, Indirect service employee]

Other participants, particularly those in administration and management roles, reinterpreted their involvement in non-mission-related activities. They constructed their paperwork not as a hindrance to meaningful work but as a way of contributing to the work of the organisation (n=4). These participants include Jill (C05, Indirect service employee) who did not perceive her work as particularly meaningful but did find it enjoyable. The other three of these participants however perceived their work to be meaningful. They imbued this aspect of their work with positive meaning, “reframing” (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999) it such that for them paperwork became a means by which they (indirectly) contributed to the social mission activity of the organisation and thus they achieved a positive view of their experience of work:

I suppose it's doing it with good job satisfaction that I know that I've done it properly, because at the end of every month I have to reconcile you know

MYOB to the [organisation name] accounting system...I think it's job satisfaction knowing that I am responsible for that and nobody else is. [Jill-C05, Indirect service employee]

Another way that managerial and administration participants reinterpreted the distance between their work and that of the helping work of the organisation was by emphasising the ways they supported those direct service employees who were engaged in working with clients to do their job (n=4). One of these participants was Joel (B05, Indirect service employee), who felt that his work was not especially meaningful. He observed that just over a month before his interview, while he was "still in the honeymoon period", he had derived value from supporting his staff in their work to help the community. However he had since lost that connection with his staff due to the increasing paperwork and reporting demands of his role. These participants again emphasised their own contribution, albeit indirect, to the social mission activity of the organisation. They "refocussed" (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999) their construction of their work to highlight the fact that without workers like them, the organisation would not be able to function:

...the satisfaction comes in knowing what I'm doing is important, it really is, and all I have to do to say to anybody about how important records are, even though they're not sexy and they're not upfront and they're generally seen as just something that people have to do, it's a chore. If this organisation were taken to court and it was a pretty serious accusation...if we can't find the records then we're in big, big trouble [Luke- D01, Indirect service employee]

Managers, although frustrated with the amount of paperwork they did and the lack of contact they had with clients, reframed their work such that they took value from their ability to gain a "helicopter view" (Dana- B03, Indirect service employee) of the organisation (n=4). They derived satisfaction from the knowledge that they enabled others to do the helping work of the organisation

and had the ability to determine how and where services were delivered. They maximised their perceived contribution to the organisation in this manner:

I've got a bit of a helicopter view, so I, and I can connect my inputs and I can connect my work and in fact, I think most people's work with the outputs, which is what helps to give it meaning [Josh- B01, Indirect service employee]

Administrators, managers and social enterprise employees also reinterpreted the distance between their work and the helping work that defined work in this sector. They did this by finding and selectively focusing on the helping moments in their work (n=4). Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) describe this as "refocusing". These participants focused on any occasions where they were drawn into the work that the organisation does with clients and in doing so established the connection between themselves and the social mission activity of the organisation, maximising their sense of contribution to the organisation. Primarily, this selective focus on helping moments emerged in the way that participants recounted their experiences of working in CSOs:

We had a runaway, young man who'd run away from home who presented here last week, and we couldn't leave him until we'd sorted...so we had to liaise with Families SA crisis care and find him accommodation for that night, and that sort of thing...it's not really my role...but you're kind of in the middle of it with making phone calls and trying to track people down... [Ann- C07, Indirect service employee]

However, Aaron discussed how he consciously focused on helping moments in his work as a coping strategy. He took time at the end of each working week to reflect on what his team had accomplished and how he had helped others through his work. In doing so, he selectively attended to the helping moments in his work and refocused his account of work to emphasise the meaningful aspects:

And that's what you, that's what you reflect on when the job starts to tick you off, because it does tick you off a fair bit, with their challenges. But then you can, I sort of sit down with my team leaders and have a bit of a debriefing at the end of every week, and we usually talk, at the end of it, we talk about you know, who's, what's improving and how the guys are changing. Kind of puts your focus back on why you're there [Aaron- B04, Indirect service employee]

Another way that participants shaped their work to increase their engagement with social mission activity was by expanding the tangible boundaries of their role. A number of indirect service employees actively broadened their work roles to include extra tasks that enabled them to perceive that their work helped others and contributed to the social mission activity of the organisation (n=8). In doing so, they increased their perception that they contributed to the work of the organisation. The first way that participants did this was by incorporating helping activities into their role when they might not be officially part of their role (n=4). These activities consist of directly working with clients, predominantly by engaging in counselling activities. For example, Carol (F01, Indirect service employee) described how as the senior manager for her organisation she was able to expand her work tasks to include opportunities to personally communicate with clients. Carol observed that she was personally managing the organisations social media presence using Facebook, which allowed her to post information that might be useful or interesting to clients, read posts from clients, and directly communicate with individual clients using the messenger function. In addition, Carol had devised a way to incorporate client counselling activities into this aspect of her work using the (confidential) messenger function on Facebook:

...we've just opened up our own Facebook page, because almost all of our young people through our client group actually use it. And we've discovered that with a couple of them, have them, younger workers here that have Facebooks, they have, clients have actually connected with them

on Facebook. And these were clients that they had real problem engaging with outside of Facebook...so I opened one up, and only I operate it, so it's only me on the other end... I've actually done 14 lots of counselling online, using the messenger, but beautifully it's all there recorded and date stamped...

I'm very careful what I put on the wall, but it's usually advertising or a nice quote, or, you know, the last couple of days it's been "don't forget we've got the Census on" or whatever our programs are, so very much a, just an information sharing platform from our perspective, but I've watched some of those that have connected with us and think "their world's just so sad."
[Carol- F01, Indirect service employee]

Similarly, Sarah incorporated a small but regular amount of client counselling into her role as a manager. She described her reasons for doing this, stating "Why? One, I do enjoy it, and two, I think that, again, it keeps me grounded" (Sarah- A02, Indirect service employee). This was important to her not only because of the opportunity to maintain contact with clients and see how the organisation acted to benefit them, but also because of the opportunity to interact with direct service staff and maintain the connection she needed to properly inform her work in developing systems within the organisation:

I've seen managers and that before that are out of touch with reality, and because I'm developing stuff to meet the client and community needs, I believe, I don't want to lose that reality [Sarah- A02, Indirect service employee]

Meanwhile James, a senior manager, expanded his work tasks to gain a stronger sense of contribution to the social mission of the organisation in his work not by incorporating counselling activities into his managerial tasks but by taking on a special project. He collaborated with a staff member to make a movie telling the story of a vulnerable client group and in doing so increased his connection to the 'helping' work of the organisation. In this project he was

able to directly take part in creating a product that he could see created impact and made a difference within the community:

I worked closely with him on working on that story, trying to put it together, gaining a filming company that would do it on the cheap...and we actually produced an incredibly good outcome that's been highly accepted, that's been spoken about in parliament, and so it's great PR for us, but it will make a difference to people's lives... [James- A04, Indirect service employee]

A second way that indirect service staff, in particular managers and senior managers, expanded their work role to increase its meaningfulness was by incorporating opportunities to spend time with clients and staff (n=5). They used these opportunities to hear stories about the way in which the organisation, and by association how they as an indirect service worker, create social impact and contribute to the work of the organisation:

If somebody's sick and we can't get anybody well then I'll go and operate that business for the day and that's a good thing I think. It keeps you in contact. I know all about - we've got 56 supported employees and I know every one of them and they'd know me so I think that's good. I don't like people to think that you just sit in your office and 'what is it you do all day?' So that's good, I like that interaction. I try to make it that I schedule that sort of stuff but I haven't got enough time. [Angela- E06, Indirect service employee]

I do certainly meet clients, and talk to them, and will see them when I'm travelling around, or having client feedback sessions, or whatever. Or when we're at, holding different seminars, whatever. Certainly interact with them... I think it keeps you real. Yeah. [James- A04, Indirect service employee]

A few direct service workers shaped their job content to increase their sense of

contribution to the social mission work of the organisation by adding extra helping tasks to those described in their role (n=4). For example Janet, a manager in a traditional not for profit CSO, was able to retain the helping tasks associated with nursing as a primary part of her role, and as such considers herself a direct service worker rather than an indirect service worker despite being a manager. Janet noted that she had, over the years, undertaken a range of extra tasks beyond that of her work role to do something nice for her clients and “treat people as flesh and blood and normal people that have got thoughts and feelings” (Janet- D04, Indirect service employee), and in doing so was able to shape her work identity as someone who truly cares about her clients:

I’ve done washing for people that haven’t got family and madly trying to scrub their own clothes and things, for varying reasons. There’s an excellent laundry here but certain circumstances enable people to become very embarrassed so I take their washing home and do that. There’s another little lady who I make jam for and bring in bits and pieces, stew some quinces, and another lady who’s now just gone into the dementia unit, but I used to bring her a little bag of crisps, just because there was all sorts of family estrangements and there wasn’t any nice little things that happened for her. Another one wouldn’t eat so I’d bring her a block of chocolate every day because she loves chocolate and it’s one way of getting a few calories into her. [Janet- D04, Indirect service employee]

5.4.1.1.2 Distancing: reducing the impact of non-mission related activities

Another way that participants engaged in job crafting to increase the meaningfulness of their work involved distancing themselves from non-social mission related activities by reducing the impact of profit generation goals and activities on their experience of work.

Participants, both those in social enterprise and those in traditional not for profit organisations, experienced tension between the social mission activity of their organisation and any profit generation activities (n=16). In social enterprise this tension arose from the dual purposes of this type of

organisation. Similarly, although profit generation activity does not form a primary part of what traditional not for profit organisations do, the organisations in this study had adopted new approaches to funding acquisition to successfully continue operating in a changing world. That is a world where:

...we are now about to see the second collapse, in three years time, of the world economy. You know, it's around the corner...And whether we want it or not, that does affect Australia, and it will affect it. So, I don't think, and I think it affects greatly in average person. Yeah there are you know, what's the percentage of rich people in Adelaide? I don't know, I'm just making it up here, five percent of the Adelaide population is rich. Can all the nineteen hundred charities rely on that five percent? [Bradley- C02, Indirect service employee]

The traditional not for profit CSOs involved in the current study undertook profit generation activities including the provision of Employee Assistance Programs (commercially contracted staff counselling for local businesses), delivery of training programs, and the operation of charity clothing and second-hand stores.

In both social enterprise and traditional not for profit organisations, these profit generation activities created challenges for participants when they were viewed as interfering with the social mission activities to which they were committed. A number of participants described situations in which they had experienced profit generation goals undermining their ability to undertake the social mission of the organisation (n= 10). As such, profit generation activities in traditional not for profit organisations were often viewed by participants with caution:

...we are recognising that we, for survival we need to look at both continue obviously with this type of service delivery, the not for profit stuff, but we need to have the profit stuff for survival...prioritising clients that are under

the contract versus those that aren't paying clients...the answer is no we shouldn't [Sarah- A02, Indirect service employee]

In order to reduce the impact of profit generation activities on their experience of work and their ability to engage with social mission activity, participants reinterpreted the role of profit generation activities in their work.

Some participants de-emphasised any profit generation activities they undertook when describing their work (n=8). Melanie, for example, described the fee that she can charge clients for counselling services as a donation and emphasised that the decision to charge a client is at her discretion:

...because we charge for counselling, \$10 fee, but that's more of a donation, so there are clients that I might charge, but I actually have, as a counsellor, an opportunity to make an assessment to not charge people, so I don't even feel the pressure to make sure we get the \$10 from every client. [Melanie-A03, Direct service employee]

Meanwhile Dianne, who worked in a social enterprise cleaning business, emphasised that her social enterprise did not pursue large profits. She thus minimised the importance of the profit-generation activities that they undertook:

We don't go out for a big profit...we're still making money but don't have to make a big, huge profit [Diane- C04, Direct service employee]

Not all participants prioritised social mission activities over profit generation activities. Anthony (E01, Indirect service employee) valued the sense of achievement that he gained from making the social enterprise business that he ran profitable and, while he enjoyed the social mission activity that he engaged in with the people with disability working for him, this was the primary source of meaningfulness in his work.

These participants "recalibrated" (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999) the importance

of profit generation activity and maximised their perception that there was coherence between their work and their values.

Others infused the profit generation activities that they undertook with a new meaning (n=9). Stacey, who managed a charity shop, reinterpreted the profit generation focus of her work. She described her work as a "fundraising enterprise" and this interpretation helped Stacey to feel more comfortable about the need to make money in her role:

...when I talk to the volunteers and that, that perhaps we need to look at the shop as a "fundraising" enterprise. Not just that we're out there to make the big bucks, get as much as we can... using that term or expression certainly makes me feel more comfortable ...I don't see myself, although it's probably not about me, I don't see myself as a hard, cold businesswoman. Nor do I see my team as supporting that money machine, if you may [Stacey- C10, Direct service employee]

Joanne imbued the profit generating tasks in her work with a different meaning. Instead of focusing on how her profit making activities conflicted with her social mission activities, she focused on the positive impact that these tasks could have on staff. She described how delivering training packages and other profit generation activities could provide an opportunity for staff to replenish their emotional energy and thus improve their effectiveness with clients:

... why can't we also do training packages and you know, other things, be creative, we've got a number of very good people in this organisation who can, you know, we can build things around them, that are actually going to bring business in, but that will allow us to filter money into better projects to assist other people as well... [Joanne- A01, Direct service employee]

Meanwhile, Sarah (A02, Indirect service employee) and Stacey (C10, Direct

service employee) focused on the importance of these profit generation activities for the survival of the organisation, especially given decreases in funding. They described the need to introduce these activities within the organisation in order to maintain their staff and resources and thus continue providing quality services to their clients.

In doing so, these participants altered the importance of the profit generation activities of their organisation by engaging in what Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) describe as “reframing”, changing the meaning of these activities to perceive them in a positive way. They did so to ensure that there was coherence between their work and their values.

Another way that participants crafted their work to reduce the impact of profit generation activities on the ability to engage in social mission activity was by altering the boundaries of their work. Some participants omitted or de-emphasised work tasks that contradicted the way that they felt that clients should be treated (n=13). By doing this they increased their perception of coherence between the work and their personal values. Three participants acknowledged that they omitted tasks that involved charging a fee to vulnerable clients who could not afford it or selling a product when clients could get a better deal elsewhere. A number of these participants minimised tasks that involved placing profit-generation tasks above the social mission activities (n=11). For example, as described earlier (see 5.5.1.2), Melanie observed that she had the flexibility to decide whether to charge clients a fee for counselling services. She emphasised that this decision was at her discretion. Melanie went beyond altering the meaning that she attached to this fee by emphasising her control over this aspect of her work. She was able to change the boundaries of her work tasks by choosing not to charge clients for her services, thus mitigating the effect of profit generation activities on her ability to help people through her work.

One participant who worked in an organisation that engaged in the provision

of employee assistance program counselling, a commercial arrangement whereby they provide staff counselling for local businesses, alongside their traditional counselling services with vulnerable clients outlined her concerns around the temptation to prioritise their paying clients. Although she was not able to omit the employee assistance counselling tasks from her work, she was able to restrict the way that she engaged in these tasks to ensure that they did not dominate her work and exclude the clients that she felt provided the meaningfulness in the work:

We need money to survive and I guess some of the challenges we've come up with is, with the contracts, should we be, for example, prioritising these clients that are under the contract versus those that aren't paying clients, do you know what I mean. And the answer is no, we shouldn't, do you know what I mean. But with some of our contracts, in particular the EAPs that, you know, some of the clauses are that we will respond in x amount of time, which obviously then creates them as a priority, as well. Whereas why should Joe Blow off the street that's, you know, is just as worthy of the service and doesn't work for an organisation that's willing to pay, do you know what I mean...He'll have to wait a few more days, you know, a week or whatever, than what someone else does... So keeping them on the ground, so that we don't become too money driven. Because who wants to be like that, that's not what we're in this game for, at all. [Sarah- A02, Indirect service employee]

Stacey, who managed a charity store, outlined how she altered not only the philosophy behind the way in which they treated vulnerable customers but also the way in which they undertook their work to exclude elements of the work that they felt devalued those customers who bought their merchandise with charity vouchers instead of their own money:

Hence the word, probably about four years ago I started, I wasn't happy that we had customers and we had clients, your clients the other side of the

building and you come through my doors and you have a clothing voucher. You have a voucher that, that you have been given, you are my customer. Right, and I think, because that, we're all even then. And I yeah, that sits more comfortable with myself. And I think if people are going to be a little bit judgemental, and it does happen, we're human, take about the word client, we're talking about an individual here, or a person here who's a customer in the shop. I really don't, I'm not interested in whether you have a yellow piece of paper, or you don't have a yellow piece of paper. You're entitled to the same products in the shop, it's not as though "because you have a clothing voucher well off you go into that corner with the stuff really, we don't care about it, pick from there". Nup "you can buy anything in the whole shop with your money. [Stacey- C10, Direct service employee]

5.4.1.2 Constructing non-meaningful work: Job crafting to decrease the connection with social mission

As demonstrated earlier (see 4.2), not all participants perceived their work as meaningful. Two participants constructed their work as non-meaningful. These participants constructed their work as non-meaningful by emphasising their distance from the social mission activities of their organisation and minimising their perceived involvement in these activities. Shaping understandings of work by selectively focussing on certain elements is consistent with what Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) described as "refocussing." These participants refocused their understanding of their work through their lack of connection to the social mission activity of the organisation and created a self-coherent narrative around how work in the sector should be experienced despite this placing their experience of work in a less than positive light. They emphasised the importance of social mission activity in the fit with their work and highlighted the ways in which their roles were unable to achieve this.

Joel (B05, Indirect service employee) chose to look at the impact of his work on the bigger scale of the greater good rather than focussing on the smaller successes that he achieved. He questioned whether the work he and his

colleagues did actually created change at the broader level and used these doubts as evidence that his work lacked meaning due to an absence of connection between his own work and the broader social purpose to which he wanted to contribute. In doing so he minimised his sense of contribution to the organisation and maximised his sense of conflict between his work and his personal values:

I've more of a jaded view about how much I've actually achieved, or these organisations achieve...it's just a question of how much can you do with the amount of money you've got, you know? How much of an impact are you have on, when the scale, of the issue, that's out there in the real world?
[Joel- B05, Indirect service employee]

Jill (C05, Indirect service employee) who, like Joel, constructed her work as being not particularly meaningful, again emphasised the distance between her work and the social mission activities of the organisation. However, instead of questioning the impact of her work and that of the organisation on a broader scale, Jill emphasised how the work at the level of her team was social enterprise work and thus had little to do with helping people rather than simply selling them a service. In addition, she highlighted how her role in the team as an administrator had little connection with clients beyond billing them. Like Joel, Jill shaped her account of work as non-meaningful work by emphasising the distance between herself and the social mission activities of the organisation. Instead she noted that she enjoyed "dotting the I's and crossing the T's", the administration aspect of her role, and shaped her account of her work in a positive light by emphasising her contribution to the organisation in this way.

To summarise, these findings demonstrate that participants actively shaped their engagement in social mission activity by altering both the tangible work tasks and their cognitive understandings of their work. Participants altered the tangible elements of their work by increasing the helping tasks that they

undertook in their work as well as increasing their interactions with clients to increase their perceived engagement with the social mission activity of their organisation. They altered their cognitive understandings of their work to increase their perceived engagement in social mission activity. Participants did this by reframing their administrative and managerial activities as contributing to social mission by supporting others in their social mission activities or providing a helicopter view that allows them to influence the social mission activity of the organisation. In their accounts they also selectively focused on any helping activities that they were able to incorporate into their work and reframed any profit generation activities to understand them as aiding their social mission activities, or at least not conflicting with these activities. Several participants also shaped their cognitive understandings of their work to align with their perception that their work was not particularly meaningful by focusing their narratives on the distance between their own work and the social mission of the organisation. Again, this was accomplished by recalibrating the impact of social mission activity undertaken by the organisation such that it was understood as not making a significant difference to the wider community.

5.4.2 Job crafting around social interactions and building relationships within the workplace

Many participants engaged in job crafting around the social interactions and relationships that they developed at work (n=21). These participants shaped their work either to increase or decrease their social interactions with both clients and colleagues. They did so to suit their own personal preferences and need for belonging, to establish a professional work identity, and to maximise their perceived contribution to their clients and the work of the organisation.

Participants altered both the cognitive boundaries of their work and the tangible boundaries of their work to enhance their social interactions and increase the meaningfulness of their work. Firstly, they achieved this by altering their understandings of work in relation to how they perceived others

viewed their work. Participants did so by reinterpreting stereotypes of work in CSOs to establish a positive sense of identity. Secondly, participants shaped their understandings of their experiences of work around their relationships with their colleagues. They did so by constructing their relationship with colleagues as being a “family”, constraining relationship with colleagues to a professional interaction, and altering their position within the organisation. Finally, participants engaged in job crafting around their relationships with their clients by maintaining long-term relationships with clients and incorporating opportunities to directly interact with clients if this was not already part of their role.

5.4.2.1 Reinterpreting perceptions of how others view work in CSOs

In this section I argue that participants draw on information not only from their own experience but also from the way that they perceive their work is viewed in the eyes of others when engaging in sense-making about their work. This is consistent with Cooley’s (1992) concept of the looking-glass self, the idea that self-concept is developed not only through one’s own perception of themselves but also in their perception of how others perceive themselves. Overall participants viewed others as not having knowledge about the details of their work and what they do, however many perceived that others viewed their work as being values-based and meaningful, although this was not always seen as a positive perception of the work.

A small number of direct service participants (n=6) described their friends and family expressing a highly positive response to their work in the community services sector. They described others as having responded to their work with sentiments of awe and disbelief that they could engage in such work as well as being happy that they have found something they enjoy and being supportive of their work:

People seem to be very much in awe of what I do, so they’ll be that “oh I couldn’t do that”, you know, “I just couldn’t do that, how do you do that?”
[Joanne- A01, Direct service employee]

My family is pretty proud of me doing what I'm doing [Michael- C08, Direct service employee]

These participants responded by humbling their efforts and minimising what they do. Greg, a senior manager, described how he believed that the work others do is more valuable than what he does:

...oddly enough those of my friends who are teachers or policemen don't necessarily see it that way, they kind of think that what I do is of greater value...but I would argue the opposite [Greg- C01, Indirect service employee]

Meanwhile Keith, a social enterprise worker described his work as being like any other work:

Yeah some people do get a bit flowery like that but the reality is it isn't like that, it's just like any other job [Keith- E07, Direct service employee]

Another set of participants however described less positive perceptions of work in the sector (n=6). Joanne (A01, Direct service employee) identified that others viewed the work she did as a counsellor as being difficult and emotionally draining work. Meanwhile, others identified negative perceptions around the clients they worked with. These clients were stigmatised more broadly in society as a result of their circumstances. Participants described being teased or feeling that their work was less valued because they work with clients who are homeless, living with disability, or are long-term unemployed:

They want me to bring home the [local intellectual disability service provider] bus and things like that...They just rib me a bit, tell me I'm a client and stuff... [Matthew- E08, Direct service employee]

When the teachers went on strike....you know it got media attention because all the parents were jumping up and down because they had to be home from work, or they had to find somewhere else for their kids, and so

that was immediate. But if we weren't around for our clients, I don't think people'd care as much about the people on the street and the ones that are disadvantaged and it could take a few weeks before people realised that there were more people on the streets, there were people going hungry, that people were begging more, it's not, it's not as visible to the general population. You know, they like to think that everything's nice and sweet as pie, as long as they don't have to see the people who aren't managing... [Kate- B02, Indirect service employee]

Two participants described this stigma pervading the way in which clients were treated in their own organisations. As described above (see 5.5.1.2), Stacey, a not for profit worker, described previous work practices that arose from the broader social stigma around homelessness that she had been working to eradicate:

And I think if people are going to be a little bit judgemental, and it does happen, we're human, take about the word client, we're talking about an individual here, or a person here who's a customer in the shop...I'm not interested in whether you have a yellow piece of paper, or you don't have a yellow piece of paper. You're entitled to the same products in the shop, it's not as though "because you have a clothing voucher well off you go into that corner with the stuff really, we don't care about it, pick from there" [Stacey- C10, Direct service employee]

A small subset of participants (n=4), predominantly younger to middle aged males, portrayed the broader social concept of work in CSOs as "soft" (Sandra- D02, Direct service employee) and "full of women who are well intentioned" (Josh- B01, Indirect service employee). This reflects the broader cultural devaluation of community services work as a result of the gendered nature of work in the sector (see 1.3.2.3). In their eyes, their friends and family viewed their work with a sense of confusion, being unable to understand why they would choose work in a highly feminised, low paid area when they could gain

more money and success elsewhere. Josh, a male senior manager working for a social enterprise, described taking this as a challenge to convince his friends of the value in his work:

Some of them have struggled with the concept of working for a not for profit, you know, “why would you do that?”, you know, “you could make far more money if you went off and did this” ... but it, you know, you sort of beat them around the head a bit and they have to buy you a drink and everything’s okay. [Josh- B01, Indirect service employee]

In response to perceptions by others that their work might bring their masculinity into question, these participants emphasised the power in their positions. These younger to middle aged male participants responded by focusing their accounts of work on their ability to have an impact at a broader social level. They discussed their ability to take part in history making by engaging in a “once in a generation opportunity” (Josh- B01, Indirect service employee) to be part of “the way forward” (Bradley- C02, Indirect service employee).

Similarly, cultural undervaluation of community services work due to its gendered nature also resulted in concerns that work in the not for profit sector was not viewed as being comparable to work in the corporate sector. Joel constructed his experience of work in the community services sector in a less than positive light by emphasising how work in not for profit CSOs was devalued by those outside the sector:

...the corporate sector doesn’t see the not for profit sector as being of the same, similar type, kind of quality, so they don’t regard that if you work for a charity, for example, that you have the level of skills that somebody who’s been a manager in the corporate sector for the same period of time has. [Joel- B05, Indirect service employee]

He used this to justify why he was still working in the sector despite the low

pay, long hours, and lack of connection with the social mission of the organisation by describing himself as being trapped in the sector by the negative perception of the sector and his social context:

But I believe that in the last 10 to 15 years, because of the types of, the increased requirements, formalities of the not for profit sector to be, to understand proper management processes and systems, to be able to really lift their game because the not for profit sector in the, if you work for a not for profit in order to compete these days, and to survive, you have to be a cut above the competition out there. And so the not for profit sector has upped it's game...So the not for profit world has changed, and I think as a result of that, the level of management ability in the not for profit sector, has improved. And whilst there might still be a little bit of an imbalance between my role in the not for profit sector and a comparable role in the corporate sector, it's not as big as it used to be. But even so, if I wanted to get into the corporate sector, I'd find it hard to get an interview. Because that's, the, that kind of perception exists, I think.

... you get to a point where, you may have burnt your bridges in your ability to go into a different kind of area, a different sector and earn more money. [Joel- B05, Indirect service employee]

Perceptions of the way others viewed their work revealed their perception that broader social constructions of work in the sector were focused on the idea that this type of work is primarily concerned with helping others and making a difference to the community. This was viewed both as a positive, in that work contributed to the greater good and achieved social benefit, and as a negative because the work is viewed as caring work and therefore associated with being emotionally draining "women's work", and less skilled as a result of being in the community services sector enacting the broader cultural devaluation of work in the sector (see 1.3.2.3). As a result, these participants created narratives that reinterpreted these views of their work such that they could maintain their

perception that their experience of work was positive.

5.4.2.2 Job crafting relationships with colleagues

Participants shaped their relationships with their colleagues to increase the meaningfulness of their work. Predominantly, they altered these relationships to increase their connection with their co-workers. A number of participants described their workmates as being like family (n=11). In doing so, they placed particular emphasis on the strength of their relationships with co-workers and imputed meaning into these interpersonal connections such that they maximised the sense of belonging achieved through work. For example, Robert described himself as a father figure within his work group. This provided him with a particular work identity, one through which Robert was able to gain a sense of being valued within the team:

I've got more the grandfather image with the grey beard...[name] is the goer, the mover, the "come on, we've got to pave at this pace, we've got, this is what we're aiming for, we have to achieve these sorts of things", and I'm the daddy, the guiding with the team...as long as I'm working here with these boys it could be twenty years, they'll be my family and I will do for them as much as I would for any sort of close group of family...[Robert-B06, Direct service employee]

Other participants who described their colleagues as their work "family" were able to shape themselves a particular work identity by locating themselves within the team and establishing that their bond with their workmates went beyond that of simply being colleagues. In doing so they viewed their experience of work in a positive light:

...we are a team, we are a family. And it's nice to come to work and be part of that. [Melissa- A05, Indirect service employee]

By establishing this deeper bond with their colleagues, participants promoted friendliness and familiarity in their workplace interactions and this in turn facilitated collaboration. One positive consequence of this was that

participants perceived that they had greater support from their colleagues around the provision of services to clients:

We all strive to do our best. We all want to get the job done, and I see that in particular in my programs, or my people, it's our family, it's our family at work and that's the way we kind of see it. So, we all look out for each other, which is good...You're more inclined to, to go that step further to try and, not only get the job done but get it done, you tend to go out of your way more to help other people. It can hold us up a bit but at the end of the day it's a good feeling, and I think that's, that's what makes it. [Alison- C06, Indirect service employee]

In addition to this, participants felt that they could rely on their workmates for support not only in their work and assisting them to best service their clients but also on a personal level. For example, Karen (B08, Indirect service employee), who at the time of the interview had very recently lost a parent, reported that she knew that felt secure leaving her work to her colleagues and she knew that she would have the emotional support she needed upon returning to the workplace.

Another way that participants crafted the cognitive boundaries of their work to alter their social interactions and build relationships at work was to change the emphasis of their place in the organisation (n=13). They did this several ways: they distinguished their local team from the broader organisation; they connected themselves and their work team more strongly with the broader organisation; and they worked outside the hierarchy of the organisation.

A number of participants in the current study constrained their perceptions of their social interactions within the organisation by creating a distinction between their immediate work team or work site and the larger organisation (n=8). This was particularly the case for those who were working in larger organisations. In doing so participants created a stronger sense of worth in their work identity by locating their self within a smaller team where they

could see the impact of their work on the work of the team and increase their sense of belonging:

I thought, to me meaningful work is that you feel that what you do is valuable, and it's you know, it's not about money, it's not about your surroundings. We work in a very old building, but it's about the team that you work with, and even, I separated it from the organisational thing, because they're kind of remote in some respects to us, they pay our wages and we work with them, but the actual hierarchy of [Organisation C] are fairly remote to us, and so it's about the team here, the people, the colleagues you work with, the clients you work with. And the parish, we have a very strong link with the parish here. And it's about that. I thought it's about waking up every morning thinking "yeah, I can actually go to work today and make a difference", you know, even if it is paying the bills. Because it's, you know, you're sort of a spoke on the wheel, but it, it all works together to help people and benefit the community, hopefully. And I think there's a lot of satisfaction in that. Well there is for me anyway. [Ann- C07, Indirect service employee]

Other participants increased their emphasis on their connection with the broader organisation, again increasingly their sense of belonging (n=3). In particular, they did this in response to recent attempts in two of the organisations involved in the study to enhance the communication between staff and develop a sense of community within the organisation. Janet (D04, Indirect service employee) described the introduction of communication and information sharing practices within her organisation. These practices included news releases and media releases being shared with all staff thus keeping them informed. In addition, there was an internal version of Facebook so that staff could talk amongst themselves, and a system of "sister" facilities that allowed staff and support to be shared between sites when needed. Because of this connection with the broader organisation, Janet felt that "Head office or the whole organisation tries to make everybody a person, not a

number" (Janet- D04, Indirect service employee).

Likewise, Angela described the sense of connection established through technology aimed at creating links between staff. For Angela, something as simple as the addition of pictures to staff pages allowed staff to put a face to a name and created a better sense of connection with the broader organisation:

...I'm not entirely sure what their names are and a lot of people said that, so now we've all got a picture with our name next to it, so you can look and "oh that's who that is". [Angela- E06, Indirect service employee]

A few participants altered the cognitive boundaries around the social interactions at work by altering the way they perceived the power relationships within organisation (n=5). They did this by working outside of the hierarchy in the organisation.

According to the employees (both managerial and non-managerial) in the current study, managers and senior managers in the community services sector often operated an open door policy, encouraging closer relationships with staff. Carol took this a step further. In addition to her senior manager role she had recently taken on directly managing a team of social workers. To increase her connection with this team she had rearranged her office and opened the windows to look out over the open office occupied by her team:

So all of the guys in here are either counsellors, the counsellors, the drug and alcohol focussed social workers, therapists, so, they all live in here, and I get to watch them, which I've only just recently opened my room up so that I can, I only took over management fairly recently, and I thought, yeah, so it's been a very useful tool but I feel like I'm in a fishbowl half the time, it's very interesting. [Carol- F01, Indirect service employee]

Kaye, a middle manager, observed that she opted to operate outside of the organisational hierarchy in terms of her decision making. She observed that she had adopted an "act first, ask permission later" philosophy in her work.

Although she did note that she based these decisions on a vast depth of experience in working in the field. This increased both her sense of ownership of her work and her sense that the work that she did had an impact:

I tend to be fairly independent and just go “we’ll do it”. And they can catch up later.

...I’m very guided by that body of knowledge that I have behind me. I’ve tried to be innovative and creative but all the time consulting, collaborating, wanting more partnerships, wanting to talk to other people, so I make sure, so I’m making sure that I’m travelling in the right area, or travelling in the right direction. And I think that gives it meaning, that makes me, I’m very scared of screwing up, I would hate to be thought of incompetent, or inefficient, or, and so that gets me here at eight o’clock in the morning and at, you know, if I’m still here at eight o’clock at night then that’s what has to happen, but I’m going to do the job. [Kaye- C03, Indirect service employee]

A small number of participants minimised their relationships with co-workers rather than accentuating these relationships (n=3). They did this to construct and maintain a “professional” work identity. Sarah observed that she maintained a distance from her co-workers and discouraged friendships outside of the work environment. She chose to do this to remain distant from the gossip and politics that she felt could arise when colleagues become too friendly outside of work:

...you’re building really strong relationships to the point where they’re like family so you’re, it’s, I’ve found that it’s important not to let yourself go too much. I’ve always sort of tried to keep work and private, like I’m I rarely socialise with work people. And I think that’s, there’s a couple people that I have, I had some good times with, but that’s sort of been one of my rules, probably since I started in this thing. Because I’ve seen so many times where people make buddies and then fall out and fricken then shit

goes down and it impacts on your work and stuff like that, so yeah, I'm trying to, I guess that helps me stay out of that. [Sarah- A02, Indirect service employee]

5.4.2.3 Job crafting relationships with clients

Another element of their social interactions that participants crafted their jobs around to increase the meaningfulness of their work was their relationships with clients. Again, participants predominantly crafted the social interactions they undertook in their work by increasing their opportunities to have more interactions with clients. Participants did this in two ways: they maintained long-term relationships with clients beyond the remit of their work; and indirect service participants incorporated opportunities to directly interact with clients.

One manner by which participants increased their relationships with clients was by maintaining their relationships with clients beyond the remit of their work. A small number of participants noted that they maintained continued contact with some clients after concluding their work with these clients (n=4). This contact provided them with long-term feedback about their impact on the lives of others and in doing so it increased their sense of contribution to the work of the organisation and to the "greater good".

Kaye described her continued contact through letters written by a previous client, which had enabled her to keep up to date with their progress. She felt that this gave her a sense that her role in their life had been significant which she felt gave her work meaning:

That kid is twenty eight now, and she's still... she still writes to me to say, you know, she sees that her life is much, much better... And so that gives my job lots of meaning, at a time when I was taking kids away from their parents and you know, going to court and looking for guardianship orders, and all that sort of stuff, so to have that kind of outcome, you go "yeah, that's really good". [Kaye- C03, Indirect service employee]

Other participants described much shorter continued contact with some clients, although this contact still outlasted the parameters of their work. Kate observed that she had been invited by a previous client to view their new house when they had been able to achieve their goal of getting a new property:

Yeah that was, I think that was meaningful because I really enjoyed it, and we made time in our day to go to see her. And we don't usually do things like that...finding out about what happens to clients down the path. That's, it does give meaning to your job, that you know that they're getting on well, that they're getting ahead. [Kate- B02, Indirect service employee]

Meanwhile, Melanie was contacted by a previous client inviting her for a coffee. She noted that although she had not taken up the invite it was good to be able to build relationships with people and "see her make changes in her life" (Melanie- A03, Direct service employee). In each of these cases participants were able to observe the difference they made in a client's life beyond what they would during the course of their work, and through this they derived a sense of worth from the fact that their previous client had contacted them and from their ability to be a significant other in that client's life.

Another way that participants altered their social interactions to increase their social interactions with clients was by incorporating client contact when the role did not directly include direct service delivery. This provided participants with a sense of contribution to the organisation and to the greater good via the social mission activity in their own work. As was described in more detail earlier in this chapter (see 5.5.1.1), indirect service employees, in particular managers, often incorporated time and opportunities for interactions with clients into their roles. This allowed them to undertake a set of social interactions with clients that these participants valued and that otherwise would not occur in their work:

...even if I'm not actually meeting with them - if I walk into the sewing

room there, "hello Helen, hello Helen", you know, you get that interaction and you get to stop and chat and what are they doing today and so on, so even though it's not a formal interaction and I'm not actually their supervisor you still get that. Because of the type of the people they are they want to interact with you so you're always getting that opportunity wherever we've got a social enterprise. [Helen- E03, Indirect service employee]

Only one participant changed their cognitive boundaries around their social interactions with clients such that they increased the meaning of their work. For Stacey, who ran a charity shop, the altering of relational boundaries in her work was triggered by changes to the cognitive boundaries of the work which in turn triggered changes to the task boundaries of the work. Stacey described how she changed the way that she referred to customers in the shop who used charity vouchers. Originally, these customers were labelled "clients" whereas paying customers were referred to as "customers" (Stacey- C10, Direct service employee). Stacey implemented a change to these labels by introducing a universal terminology of "customers." In doing so, she changed her social interaction with these customers by changing the cognitive boundaries of the job and the way in which she understood both her relationship with the customer and her work. By changing the meaning that Stacey attached to her clients, she "reframed" (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999) this aspect of her work and increased her perception of coherence between her work and her personal values. This in turn triggered a change in the task boundaries of the job through the way Stacey (and her staff) worked with these customers and now allowed them the freedom to select any items in the store rather than limiting their selection to "the stuff really, we don't care about" (Stacey, C10, Direct service employee).

To summarise this section, these findings show that participants crafted both the tangible and cognitive elements of their work to shape their experience of social interactions around their work and alter the meaningfulness of their

work. In relation to the tangible elements of their work, participants increased their interactions with co-workers when they were viewed positively and decreased these interactions when they were viewed as challenging the participants' professionalism or when the work environment was viewed as unhappy. Participants also changed their relationship to their place within the organisation. They did so to increase their connection with the broader organisation when the organisation was perceived to be a positive place to work. Participants also constrained their link to the broader organisation by focusing on team relations when there were issues with the larger organisation. In addition, participants changed their interactions with clients such that they maintained long-term relationships with their clients beyond the remit of their work and indirect service participants incorporated opportunities to directly interact with clients.

Similarly, the cognitive understandings of work were shaped by participants to alter their social interactions. Participants recalibrated the perceptions of their work by others who viewed their work in an overly reverent manner by humbling their work and comparing their work to others that they viewed as contributing to society. They also reframed negative views of their work as being well intentioned, women's work by reframing their work as making history to emphasise the power of their work. Furthermore, participants increased the value in their social interactions with colleagues by reframing them as family, and altered their perceived ownership over their work by reframing the power relationships within the organisation to work outside the hierarchy of the organisation.

5.4.3 Job crafting around the work itself

CSO participants engaged in job crafting around the quality of their job to make it fit with their perception of work as meaningful or not (n=33). Most of these participants emphasised the more positive elements of their experience of work in CSOs and reduced the impact of those challenging aspects of work in the sector to increase their perception that their work was meaningful.

Others reinterpreted the more challenging elements of their work in such a way as to demonstrate the meaningfulness of their work through their willingness to endure these characteristics of work in the pursuit of meaningful work. Meanwhile, the two participants who felt that their work was not particularly meaningful emphasised the challenging aspects of work in CSOs to support their perception of work as less than meaningful.

Participants altered the cognitive and tangible boundaries of their work to craft the quality of their job. They did this by: reinterpreting and mitigating the lack of funding and pay in the sector; reinterpreting the lack of job security in their work; altering their work-life boundaries to improve the fit between work and the self; increasing their perception of their contribution to the organisation; and minimising work tasks that conflict with their personal values.

5.4.3.1 Quality work

Previously, it was identified that for participants the quality of work was related to both the *fit* between work and the individual, in particular their values, and the degree of *autonomy and ownership* that they experienced in their work (see 5.3.1). Participants shaped the tangible elements of their work to minimise those tasks that conflict with their personal values, they also shaped the cognitive elements of their work to craft a sense of feedback about their work and emphasise their ability to have autonomy and ownership over their work and the outcomes of their work, thereby enabling them to perceive their work as more meaningful.

5.4.3.1.1 Fit between work and personal values

One way that participants shaped their work to alter the perceived quality of work and the meaningfulness of their work was by altering their *job tasks* to change the connection between work and their personal values. As discussed above, one way that participants did this was by altering their engagement with the social mission activity of the organisation. Beyond this, a few participants changed their roles to alter the perceived fit between their

personal values and elements of work not related to social mission activity. For example, they reduced the scope of their work roles to exclude tasks that contradicted their values, in particular they omitted tasks that challenged the way they felt their staff should be treated (n=5). For two participants this involved restricting tasks to ensure that the type of work they gave to their staff did not challenge their values. Luke described how he refused to take on students because he felt that the culture of exploiting these workers in his organisation did not fit with his personal values around how to treat others:

...there's a strong tendency here at the moment to use university students and TAFE students to do work, but it's actually to, to get them to do dirty jobs. That conflicts very strongly with my core values, which is that if this is paid work, this is normally paid work then you pay people to do it, sure get university students in, pay them, you are not going to use them as slave labour. And so whenever that comes up I find a myriad of ways of getting out of it, because quite often I've said "I don't believe in this" and I've said "this goes against my belief system that they should be paid" and that's when arguments start, and I figure that's not productive anymore and I've found this other way of doing it, which is I generally come around and say "look, I can be far more effective and I can have this job done with far less trauma and risk of error if I do it myself, because I don't have to train anybody, I don't have to supervise anybody, and if I'm training and supervising, I'm not doing my own stuff", so that's a core value for me about people not being used, not being used. [Luke- D01, Indirect service employee]

Likewise, Robert tried to minimise instances in which he was providing his workers with "jobs that we've had to do for the sake of keeping the boys working, rather than having them standing there with their hands in their pockets" (Robert- B06, Direct service employee).

Other participants described how they refused to place too much pressure on

staff who were low paid (n=3). For example, Nick who led a team of volunteer staff described his preference for keeping “it pretty laid back for the guys” (Nick- C09, Direct service employee). Similarly, Keith and Matthew, who worked with teams comprised of people with disability receiving low wages, emphasised the importance for them in maintaining a work environment that combines work with fun. They did this to avoid feeling as though they were taking advantage of their vulnerable clients, which would clash with personal values:

They’re not pressured to overwork but at the same time they’re expected to, as I say, work within their capabilities. [Keith- E07, Direct service employee]

You’ve got to be a bit wary that, okay, they do have a disability and sometimes they’re not going to get the humour or whatever so you’ve got to step back if they don’t get it. But I try to treat them with a bit of humour, a bit of a joke with them and hopefully they enjoy their life a bit more having me around. I’m not always the most liked person by the guys but – because I do work them hard as well so there’s a bit of a balance there but I like to have a laugh. We also like to make them earn their keep and get better at their jobs. [Matthew- E08, Direct service employee]

5.4.3.1.2 Autonomy, ownership, and contribution to work

Another way that participants shaped their work to alter the perceived quality of the work to increase its meaningfulness was to alter the *cognitive boundaries* of their work to change the degree of autonomy and ownership that they had over their work, in particular the outcomes of their work. Some employees described their perception that feedback about success was minimalised in the community services sector; either because their contact with clients was minimal because they provide emergency relief/services, or because progress in working with clients who were severely disadvantaged often results in either temporary or minimal progress (n=4):

...we were so happy to see each other because it's nice to get that end result, because you don't often find out from clients what's actually happened. You know, they move on and, which is a great thing, but yeah, sometimes it'd be nice to know if they resolved some issues or if they found stable housing or if, what happened with them so, it is nice to know that stuff.
[Kate- B02, Indirect service employee]

In much the same way that the perception of distance between their own work and the social mission activities of the organisation negatively affected participants' perceived contribution to social mission activities, so too did a lack of feedback about work. Eleven participants managed this by selectively focussing on success stories. In doing so they were provided with a stronger connection between what they do and the purpose of the work, thereby increasing its meaningfulness. They emphasised the success stories that they were able to observe. Often these had occurred a long time before the interview and were held up and inspected as examples of success:

I've dealt with a family that was extremely disadvantaged to a point where they thought they couldn't put their children through, you know, education system and everything. We, we try to help them out and I'm hoping that we did something for them and, you know, both of their kids graduated and they are now, one of them is actually in university, the other one went to further, to TAFE and is on the way to get a job. [Bradley- C02, Indirect service employee]

I mean an example of that would be, many years ago I worked with a mum who had four daughters in care and we managed, working together we managed to get three of the girls home. And she thought, she realised she wasn't able to care for the fourth child...worked with her to a point that that she placed the child for adoption and the kid was eight at the time...That kid is twenty eight now, and she's still, this was in England, she still writes to me to say, you know, she sees that her life is much, much

better than her sisters...And so that gives my job lots of meaning. [Kaye-C03, Indirect service employee]

Another way that participants selectively focussed on and thus placed an emphasis on successes in their work thereby gaining a sense that their work had impact and meaning, was to focus on small successes and achievements (n=4). Instead of looking at the broader goals and greater good in the bigger picture participants often focused on little achievements:

We got her to a point where she had her bankcard back, she was dressing a lot better, she was showering. Like little milestones like that are just huge for me, because clients, although small it might look for other people who've got a lot of everything, for her, personal hygiene was a huge obstacle. [Melanie- A03, Direct service employee]

By selectively focusing on positive elements of work to increase their perceived contribution to their organisation, these participants engaged in what Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) referred to as “refocusing” their narratives. Participants did this to create a positive self-concept around their contribution to the work of the organisation.

5.4.3.2 Working conditions

5.4.3.2.1 Pay and funding

As shown earlier (see 5.3.2), participants viewed the lower pay and constrained funding associated with work in CSOs as one of the primary features of work in this sector. Participants mitigated the impact of the constrained funding in the sector by altering their cognitive boundaries to change their perceptions about their experience of work and its meaningfulness. They did this by emphasising that they value other aspects of work more, by comparing their pay with others who earn less, and by focusing on how their organisation supported them to seek better wages through the ERO aimed to alter the Fair Work Act (FWC, 2012). In this way they reduced the conflict between their personal values and sense of self and the work.

Most participants in the current study emphasised that they value the work itself rather than the financial rewards of work (n=27). Given the low pay in the sector, participants identified that this was not work that they did for the money:

For me it's about being happy, I don't care about money. I really don't. and I'm on one wage, my partner doesn't work, so you'd think I'd be like "alright, we need more money" and yeah, I'm sometimes really broke. I don't really care. [Melanie- A03, Direct service employee]

In doing so, these participants "reframed" (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999) their accounts by following complaints about the lack of pay or financial reward with a disclaimer:

...as I said "money's not good, money is not good" ..."but you're not here" as I said "you're here because you love it". Everything about it. And you can't put a price sticker on that. [Stacey- C10, Direct service employee]

The result of which was that CSO participants selectively attended to the more positive construct of work as something they did for the passion and because they love it, rather than for the money. In doing so they not only minimised a negative characteristic of their work but also reinterpreted it in a way that provided evidence for their level of passion and commitment to the cause. However, they often did this by proliferating the gendered devaluation of this type of work (see 1.3.2.3).

As described earlier (see 4.1.3.2), four participants demonstrated an awareness that their organisation capitalised on the commitment that workers in the sector had towards the social mission activity they undertook. Of these participants, three acknowledged that CSOs took advantage of the nature of their staff to get away with paying them less. Each of these participants continued to perceive their work as meaningful and remained willing to accept the level of pay in the sector because they enjoyed their work, despite

feeling that they were being taken advantage of by their organisation and concerns about their ability to support themselves and their families on the income they receive. In doing so, they continued to play into the idea perpetuated in the community services sector that, because it is a feminised form of work, CSO employees should be motivated by the desire to help others and the love of the job rather than monetary rewards. In doing so they show how industrial and occupational antecedents influence experiences of meaningful work and demonstrate the “dark side” (Clinton et al., 2017, p. 35) of meaningful work: how it can be used to exploit individual employees.

Other participants did not demonstrate an awareness of the role of organisations in fostering this willingness to sacrifice pay for the pursuit of meaningful work. Instead, they crafted their understandings of the reasons that they were willing to accept lower wages to work in CSOs in other ways. Eight participants offset the lower pay in the sector for other benefits such as a friendly working environment, less work stress, less bureaucracy, flexible working hours and grace days, and the ethos of the organisation. A further six participants were quick to report that their pay was quite favourable for the sector and that the lower pay was offset by the ability to salary sacrifice and make use of other benefits such as company cars and gym membership subsidies.

Ten participants de-emphasised the impact of the low pay that they received. While they felt that their pay was low, they acknowledged that it was enough to pay the bills and keep them comfortably. Kate highlighted that while she was not paid well, at least she was in a better position than her clients:

We certainly don't have private health cover, but then I see all my clients who will never have private health cover, who don't even have basic dental cover. [Kate- B02, Indirect service employee]

These participants actively “recalibrated”, as Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) describe it, their understanding of work as low paid by changing the standard

by which they judge their pay. They did so either by including the use of salary sacrifice and fringe benefits and other favourable working conditions, or by altering the level of pay that they felt was acceptable for them to earn.

Some participants perceived that their organisation supported them around the low pay, aiding them in their fight for increased pay through the ERO (FWA, 2011) being sought at the time of the interviews or developing generous Enterprising Bargaining Agreements (n=3). This shifted the responsibility for the lower pay away from their organisation and onto the funding body and that enabled these employees to minimise the impact of their pay on their experience of work in the sector:

When the pay equity case was coming through, management were on our sides. A lot of agency managers would be distancing themselves, but our HR manager was on the bus with the staff. And went to the rally at Parliament House, so that was, I think that added meaning because we knew that our managers were on our side for this pay equity. God knows how they're going to pay us, but they were standing up for us, and they were on our side, and that sort of stuff. [Kate- B02, Indirect service employee]

In doing so they focused on the positive elements of this experience of work and the sense of value that they gained from the feeling of being valued by their organisation. Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) refer to this as "reframing" their work. However, in doing so these participants also unconsciously enacted cultural expectations that care work should be done for duty, mission, or altruism rather than money (see 1.3.2.3), which enabled them to accept less than favourable working conditions and inadvertently allow their organisation to exploit them. Meanwhile, two participants explicitly stated that they did not feel supported by their organisation in this manner. These were both participants who acknowledged that they felt their organisation took advantage of their staff in relation to their pay. They described this as

negatively impacting their sense of being valued by their organisation.

Participants not only altered the cognitive boundaries of their work to view the low funding in the community services sector in a more positive light, they changed the tangible boundaries of their work as well.

The low funding in the community services sector was viewed as negatively affecting the ability of participants to engage in the social mission activity of the organisation and to do their work to their best ability. Their sense of contribution both to the organisation and to the greater good was compromised. A number of participants noted that they compensated for the lack of resources in the sector, thereby mitigating its impact of their experience of their work as meaningful, either by multitasking or adopting additional tasks within their role (n=4):

...you know everybody has to wear more than one hat, but in this position you're actually required to wear fifty five and more hats. You know, you have to be a counsellor, a manager, a friend, you know, a trainer, a disciplinarian, you know, a business development, advertising person, an admin person, you know. You name it, it's pretty much all rolled into one.
[Bradley- C02, Indirect service employee]

However Ann applied another tactic and noted that she simply ignored the funding constraints, at least to some extent, around stationary provisions when they prevented staff from doing their work:

Budgetary restraints are probably the biggest frustration in my job because you're constantly being reminded "oh you've overspent this month on stationary" ...I'm too old, I've been in the job a long time, and I say "you know what, people expect that there's toner in the printer, if I have to buy toner, I have to buy toner, if it takes us over budget by fifty bucks, so be it" ... [Ann- C07, Indirect service employee]

Meanwhile, the two participants who perceived that their work was not

particularly meaningful emphasised the inadequacy of their pay in order to establish the lack of meaningfulness in their work. For example, Joel highlighted both his inability to support his family on the income that he received and the lack of value placed on his work because it was paid lower than comparable jobs in the commercial sector:

I don't get paid enough to support myself or to, I, I cannot consider, for example, my children's education.

...Because there isn't, there's not as much money attached to it. There's not as much value placed on it. And so I think they kind of think "well, you know, you work in that sector, you're not paid as much and therefore you're probably not working at that standard, because you don't need to, people don't expect it, and that's why they don't pay you as much." [Joel-B05, Indirect service employee]

In doing so, these two participants selectively focused on those elements of their experience of work that were coherent with their perception of the meaningfulness they derived from their work. As such, they engaged in what Ashforth and Kreiner (1999) described as "refocussing" of their accounts of their experience of work to establish a coherent sense of self at work.

5.4.3.2.2 Job security

It was shown above that participants were often concerned about the low job security in the community services sector (see 5.3.2). However, while this reduced the meaningfulness of their work, these participants continued to perceive their work as meaningful.

Five participants who reported that job security was a concern in their work reinterpreted this concern by diminishing its importance to shape a more positive account of their work in the sector. In doing so, they reduced the conflict between their sense of self and their work. They did this in one of two ways. A small number of participants "recalibrated" (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999) the importance of job security in their experience of work (n=4). They

described how it was more important to them that their work was something that they enjoyed and were passionate about than it was to have job security.

Like, job security and stuff like that, I really don't, it doesn't bother me because I feel that supported here that it doesn't worry me at all. I know that there's a possibility, but what can you do about it? I'd rather be happy for 4 years, than be unhappy for 10. [Melanie- A03, Direct service employee]

Another way that two participants "recalibrated" (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999) the importance of their job security concerns was by placing their trust in their organisation to renew their contract and, if their program should be discontinued, to find them an alternate position. In doing so, these participants emphasised their sense of belonging within the organisation. For example, Jill (C05, Indirect service employee) who constructed her account of her work as not particularly meaningful or linked to the social mission work of the organisation, emphasised her satisfaction with working for her organisation and the conditions they provided, including her job security. Jill described her trust in her organisation to find her some kind of work should things not work out in her current position:

I'm full time and unless I do anything wrong, obviously, my job is secure. You know, even if it's not here it'll be at another site or somewhere else doing something, but I know that my job's secure. So I think that's what keeps me here... [Jill- C05, Indirect service employee]

Three participants however did not reinterpret the importance of their job security concerns. Two of these participants were either currently experiencing or had recently experienced some uncertainty around whether a contract would be renewed. The third participant who did not reinterpret his concerns about job security in the sector was Joel, who used the lack of security in his role to provide further evidence for his less than positive narrative around his experience of work in the community services sector and his lack

of commitment to his organisation:

And, there's a limit to how much you can give, when you're, in that respect, when you're not getting paid for it. And after twenty odd years, I do find myself saying "you know what, I wish I'd worked in the bloody corporate sector." You know, my family would be comfortable, financially, now, you know, I wouldn't be concerned that the contract for this job that I'm doing now expires in eighteen months' time, and I don't know what happens after that...

...it's just not financially viable for me to, to stay here at this organisation, I need to be continually thinking other things that I can be doing. And apart from the fact that my contract expires in June 2013, and so I have nothing anyway. And so, with that level of insecurity, I can't afford to rest on my laurels, I can't afford to commit to this organisation, I've got to be, if something came up out there, which went on until 2015 and paid ten grand more, then I'd jump at it. [Joel- B05, Indirect service employee]

5.4.3.3 Work-life balance

Participants also crafted their experiences of work-life balance to promote greater satisfaction with the way that they are able to combine their work and life and enhance the meaningfulness of their work. As described earlier (see 5.3.3), most participants were satisfied with their current work-life balance. These participants emphasised that this was not a measure of how many hours a week that they work. In fact, some of these participants worked more than average hours per week, and some worked less. What was important for their satisfaction was how that balance worked for them in the context of their life on the whole.

Many participants expanded the role of work in their life by diminishing the distinction between work and life. In this way they maximised their sense of contribution to the organisation:

It is a personal choice for me... I guess, you know, if I was unhappy with

it, I think I'd make changes. And it happens to fit for me at this point of my life ... I think people have a notion that work-life balance means, you know, getting to a point where you can do your eight hours or nine hours a day or whatever and walk out and that's it. To me, it creates an artificial barrier saying that work isn't a part of life, where I think work is a major part of life and that, you know, it's where I get a lot of source of my, you know, my enjoyment of life out of, it's what stimulates me, it's what, I get out of bed on a Monday morning, I look forward to going to work, I don't go "bugger it", you know. [Josh- B01, Indirect service employee]

In removing the perceived barrier between work and life, participants imbued their work with a sense of value by incorporating it more fully into their sense of who they were as a person. To do so, they expanded their work hours beyond those set by the organisation, often working in the evening or on the weekend either in the office or at home. These participants often utilised the flexible nature of their work hours to blur the boundary between work and life (n=11). Emma described how she was willing to work at home even during the late hours if it would aid her to complete her work:

It is but you still need to stop working sometimes. But it becomes part of your life. Like I was up at one o'clock this morning writing a grant submission because I was awake and so I just got up and spent two hours and went back to bed. So the pressure was off today because it's got to be in by tomorrow but I mean that's because I can do that. [Emma- E05, Indirect service employee]

Most often participants compensated their additional work hours using time off in lieu arrangements (n=9), however some participants observed that they simply undertook the additional hours, even to the detriment of their time spent with their family (n=8). These participants did so to demonstrate their work ethic and to gain a positive sense of identity through their commitment to their work:

I simply just put in the hours, it's just all you can do is put in the hours, work weekends if necessary, really conscious of the penalty that places on my family, my three kids in particular, and that's been really hard at times, because I love them to death and frankly I live for them, so, very conscious of the time it takes away from me to spend with my family. [Greg- C01, Indirect service employee]

In contrast, some participants acted to reduce the role of work in their lives either by maintaining strict work hours or engaging in certain work practices to allow their role to be more meaningful (n=9). A number of participants maintained strict boundaries between their work and their life by restricting their work hours, except in exceptional circumstances, to those determined by the organisation (n=7). They did so either to preserve their emotional health or to create a sense of balance between their work responsibilities and their family responsibilities:

... normally I'm out of here at half past three, "see you tomorrow". And I don't, I don't think about it... [Ann- C07, Indirect service employee]

...I don't actually do a great lot of work outside of work. Sometimes, the need may be, but I learnt a long time ago, what's the point in that. Do you know what I mean? Like, when I've got kids, it's just not fair on them, and I think it's probably easier. [Sarah- A02, Indirect service employee]

...it's giving yourself a lot to people, you get home at the end of the day and you're just exhausted...I honestly don't know if I could do it full time in this role. I have one day a week extra on a weekend where that gives me a little bit more time to have a breather, step away from it. [Joanne- A01, Direct service employee]

Participants also contained the role of work in their life by adhering to certain work practices aimed at compartmentalising the two realms (n=10). Kaye (C03, Indirect service employee) described her practice of concentrating purely

on work while she was at work and family life while she was at home:

Well, as I said, I've been really vocal in management meetings and going "you know what, you pay me to be here for thirty, seventy six hours a fortnight, you get more than that out of me, but I will start at eight and I'll finish at four thirty, and I'm really, except for standard appointments, like the partnerships committee, I'm actually not really flexible around that" ...I do, and I set that boundary. And when I'm here, other people go home and they're sending me emails at ten o'clock at night, I don't respond to them, I don't... I'm very good at compartmentalising, so when I'm at work I don't think about home, when I'm at home I don't think about work. [Kaye- C03, Indirect service employee]

Meanwhile Melissa (A05, Indirect service employee) observed that although she was prepared to take work home, she was not prepared to allow work to encroach on her role as a wife and mother and would work accordingly:

I make choices for my work-life balance. I've made it quite, quite clear with work that my role, I'm pretty much doing more than 100% in my role, I'm probably working, doing about 130, 140%...but I make the choice that I only take home work when my husband is on afternoon shift, and if I'm going to do work at home, I do it after the kids are in bed, while he's on arvo's. It doesn't affect my family...And it's just what I like to do, I'm more fulfilled at work than I am being an at-home mum. [Melissa- A05, Indirect service employee]

5.4.3.4 Work culture

The final element contributing to the quality of the job identified above is the work culture established in the organisation (see 5.3.4). Aspects of job crafting related to the work culture in the organisation have already been discussed above around participants' social interactions with their colleagues (see 5.6.2). It was shown that participants predominantly shaped their relationships within their organisation in such a way as to emphasise the strength of these

relationships and establish a friendly and supportive work culture thereby increasing the meaningfulness of their work. In this section the focus is on a few examples of job crafting by participants to alter their work meaningfulness which were more specifically related to the work culture of the organisation rather than the social interactions that comprise this work culture.

A number of participants emphasised their bond with their colleagues and the importance of a strong team environment in establishing their experience of work as positive (n=13). Participants felt that their work environment was one in which, on the whole, staff got along well together. One concern for participants in relation to the work environment in CSOs was the gendered nature of the sector and the high proportion of females working in the sector. Three participants crafted their understandings of the work culture in their organisation as positive because it lacked the negative aspects of working with a large number of women. They highlighted that in their organisation the culture was without “bitchiness” (Melissa- A05, Indirect service employee). Melanie, expressed with some surprise that despite being an almost exclusively female working environment the staff in her organisation worked well together:

All of us are very close, and there’s no bitchiness, and yeah we’re actually, there’s only one boy here, one man who works here, in this office. So we’re predominantly females, and I’m really quite astounded that the bitchiness and all that sort of stuff. You know, from day to day there might be things that we don’t agree with, but that real catty mentality stuff just isn’t present here. So, those sorts of things play a huge part in why I enjoy coming to work. [Melanie- A03, Direct service employee]

As discussed above (see 5.3.1 & 5.3.4), not all participants experienced a positive work culture. Three participants identified that their expectation that they would be valued by their organisation was violated. To preserve a positive self-concept at work and the sense that their work was meaningful,

these participants made a distinction between the broader organisation and their own work group. They did this because they felt that the broader organisation did not care about employees, while in their own work group they felt valued and respected. Sandra (D02, Direct service employee) referred to “management” and “the organisation” as being responsible for her feeling that she was not valued at work. Similarly, Luke (D01, Indirect service employee), despite his experience of not feeling valued at work occurring within his broader team, created a similar distinction by referring to the perpetrators as “they” and “the organisation”. In effect he created a distinction between his immediate work group, where he felt that he was valued, and the broader team, where his expectation of being valued was violated. Joanne also differentiated “this office” from the organisation on the whole to distance herself from challenges to her perception of being valued by her organisation. In addition, she attributed the lack of valuing of frontline staff in her organisation to managerial staff not communicating appropriately, stating:

...I think it comes back to the fact that they're not actually social worker trained, so they might be someone in an admin position or a human resource position, so they don't understand the power of the choice of words [Joanne- A01, Direct service employee]

These participants therefore had to actively craft their understanding of their social interactions to derive a sense of belonging and value from their work and therefore perceive it as meaningful. This demonstrates that, while organisational factors provide a basis for fostering meaningful work, the influence of these is ultimately determined by the individual.

Beyond this, three participants felt that the work culture in their CSO was less than positive. They continued to perceive their work as meaningful, and to do so each of these participants diminished the impact of the work culture on themselves. Janet constrained the negative work culture in her organisation to a specific time period, which was coming to an end:

...when I started here 12 months ago last October it was bright and happy, light hearted, but a place that had lots of value bases but mainly on a personal level I think, or interpersonal level, and there's been a few changes since last September so everyone's still a little bit stressed. Everything's started to equal out now that we've got a new person appointed in one of the positions so there won't be all these people that have been keeping the wolf from the door or keeping the seat warm so I think stability will be revisited, shall we say. [Janet- D04, Indirect service employee]

Sandra (D02, Direct service employee) and Luke (D01, Indirect service employee) however distanced themselves from the negative work culture in the organisation. Sandra did so by focusing on her work with clients and reducing her involvement with her colleagues:

I try not to worry too much about the bigger picture and the organisational culture and I try not to get involved in anything that I don't need to be involved in. Actually my position allows me to do that. I mean I have to interact with other staff, obviously, but I spend a lot more time interacting with clients than I do with staff and that suits me very well. [Sandra- D02, Direct service employee]

Meanwhile Luke distanced himself from the negative work culture by framing himself as an observer rather than a participant in the culture.

So, while Sandra altered the tangible boundaries of her work by reducing her interactions with her co-workers, both she and the remaining two participants also shaped the cognitive boundaries of their work by "recalibrating" and "refocussing" their understanding of their work culture (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). Sandra did this by selectively focusing on her interactions with her clients rather than the negative work culture in her account of her work as meaningful. Janet (D04, Indirect service employee) and Luke (D01, Indirect service employee), however, changed the standards by which they judged the negative work culture in their organisation. Janet achieved this by

constraining the negative culture to a specific timeframe, while Luke constrained it to other people within his immediate workplace rather than himself. In doing so they enhanced their perceptions of their work as meaningful.

Meanwhile, Joel (B05, Indirect service employee) and Jill (C05, Indirect service employee), the two participants who felt that their work was not especially meaningful, emphasised negative elements within the work culture of their organisations despite overall describing their organisations as having positive work cultures. They did so to emphasise the coherence between their experience of work and their perception that it lacked a particular meaningfulness. Joel overall described a good work culture within his organisation, however he emphasised that there was “a culture of talking a lot” within the organisation that affected his ability to keep up with his workload. Jill described her organisation as having a lot of nice people but that these people were not very happy due to changes in the organisation and that this had impacted the work culture because a lot of staff had left.

In summary, these findings show that participants engaged in job crafting both the tangible and cognitive elements of their work to shape their experience of the quality of the job and thus the meaningfulness of their work. Participants altered the tangible elements of their work by reducing those activities that conflicted with values and increasing social mission activities and other activities that fit with values. In addition, they expanded or decreased their work hours and undertook work practices to constrain work to fall within the working day, depending on their individual preferences and needs.

In relation to shaping their cognitive understandings of work, participants were shown to focus their narratives on success stories and small achievements to increase their perceived contribution to work. They altered the impact of the low pay in the sector by reframing their accounts and emphasising that they value other aspects of work more, by recalibrating and

comparing their pay with others who earn less, and by refocusing their narratives on how their organisation supported them to seek better wages. Participants reinterpreted the low job security in the sector by recalibrating their perceptions of their job security such that they viewed having a good job to be more important than having a long term job. They also reframed the lack of job security by trusting the organisation to find them alternative work should their contract end. Another way that participants altered the perceived quality of their job was by reframing their work-life balance to be about blending work and life rather than separating the two realms, or by using their work-life imbalance to demonstrate their commitment to work. Finally, participants engaged in job crafting to alter the way they experienced the work culture by reframing their work culture and understanding it as being “not bitchy” despite the gendered nature of the work environment. Moreover, they refocused their narratives when the work culture was viewed to be negative to concentrate on clients, and recalibrated this negative work culture by constraining the negativity to a particular timeframe or to others. Those participants who viewed their work as not particularly meaningful refocused their accounts to emphasise the negative elements of work culture to support their perceptions of the meaningfulness of their work.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that both organisational and individual factors play a role in how participants constructed their experiences of meaningful and non-meaningful work. It also shows that participants engaged in job crafting around each of these factors to construct their experience of work as meaningful, or not.

Three factors influenced participants’ constructions of their work as meaningful or not: social mission activity and the ability to help others; social interactions and building relationships; and the work itself and working conditions. Social mission activity, social interactions, and the quality of the work itself influenced constructions of meaningful work by providing

meaning to individuals, thus they *enhanced* meaningful work when they were experienced positively. However, working conditions did not necessarily enhance meaning when experienced positively but they *hindered* meaningful work when they were experienced as challenges.

Social mission contributed to these factors in several ways. As anticipated, social mission was shown to play a role in providing participants with meaningful work by providing opportunities to engage in work with a *socially-beneficial purpose*. This was also influenced by industrial and occupational antecedents in the form of expectations around the social purpose pursued in the community services sector broadly, and individual occupations, such as social work, within the sector. Additionally, social mission provided a platform for the social interactions that participants undertook. Social mission gave participants a basis for deriving a sense that they had *contributed to the work of the organisation* through their interactions with and the impact that they had on clients. It also provided a sense of *shared purpose* in their interactions with colleagues which led to more positive, supportive and collaborative working relationships. In doing so, social mission provided participants with a sense of coherence between self and work, a sense of contribution to the greater good, and a shared purpose that gave them a sense of belonging within their organisation.

Findings demonstrated that while organisational factors, including social mission, contributed to meaningful work for participants, the presence or absence of these characteristics of work alone did not explain meaningful work in CSOs. Instead, the individual is integral in shaping their understandings of work and ultimately determines whether work in CSOs is experienced as meaningful. The findings from this chapter demonstrate that individuals engage in *job crafting* around both the *tangible* and *cognitive* elements of work to alter its meaningfulness. Participants constructed their work as *meaningful* by enhancing their connection with factors that provided meaning to their work, i.e. social mission activity and social interactions, and reducing the

impact of aspects of the work that either conflicted with this meaning, e.g. non mission-related activities, or made the experience of the work itself or working conditions challenging, e.g. low pay or job security. Meanwhile, two participants constructed their work as *non-meaningful* by reducing their connection with factors that provided meaning to their work and emphasising challenging aspects of the experience of work, i.e. the work itself or working conditions.

These findings suggest that CSOs are not able to simply provide meaningful work for their employees through having a social mission. Firstly, the provision of social mission activity is not enough to ensure that work is experienced as meaningful. The experience of meaningful work is more nuanced and complex than merely engaging in social mission activity. Not all participants derived the meaningfulness of their work from its social mission and those that did also drew on social interactions and quality of the job in their perceptions of work meaningfulness. Secondly, the experience of meaningful work is subjective and actively shaped by the individual. However, CSOs can foster meaningful work amongst their employees through the provision of these organisational antecedents (social mission activity, social interactions, and quality jobs).

Several challenges to meaningful work are present in CSOs but they do not necessarily result in work being perceived as meaningless. These challenges include funding constraints and the nature of funding in the sector, which prevent CSOs from providing comparative pay with other sectors, increase job insecurity in the sector, and increase non-social mission activity through the attached accountability and reporting requirements. In addition, not all positions in the sector are directly involved in social mission activity (or can be). Finally, because of the nature of staff in the sector and the tension between engaging in work with the aim of helping others and personal concerns such as financial rewards and job security, CSOs do not necessarily need to provide their employees with quality jobs instead relying on the goodwill of

employees.

These findings indicate that the type of CSO employee who is likely to remain working in the sector, even when the work does not entirely fit with their needs and their sense of self, are those who are able to job craft to minimise the less attractive aspects of their work and increase the meaningfulness of their work. Evidence provided in this chapter suggests that organisations can support job crafting amongst their employees by providing flexibility in roles (including, for example, tasks, how work is undertaken, and hours) and providing other beneficial conditions such as training, salary sacrifice, friendly environment, work culture to counteract the low pay and job security. CSOs can further promote job crafting by communicating with staff around their contribution to the work of the organisation through the provision of feedback, acknowledgement, and by locating staff within the context of the mission of the organisation (even when those staff are indirectly involved in social mission activity), having a supportive management or leadership team (both in terms of helping employees with their work and understanding their personal needs), and by providing opportunities for employees to interact with clients and co-workers.

As was shown in the previous chapter, four patterns emerge in how participants experienced the meaningfulness of their work. This chapter has contributed detail around how participants actively shaped their work within each pattern. Direct service participants experienced their work as meaningful because of their ability to engage in social mission activity (Pattern 1). They reinforced this perception by crafting other elements of their work positively and mitigating any challenges to the meaningfulness of their work. Indirect service participants who experienced their work as meaningful did so either because of non-social mission elements of their work such as their contribution to the operation of the organisation and having a sense of belonging (Pattern 2) or because of their connection with the social mission activity of the organisation (Pattern 3). Those who constructed their work as meaningful due

to non-social mission elements engaged in job crafting to diminish their connection with the social mission of the organisation and to emphasise other aspects of their work, such as their contribution to the organisation. Meanwhile those indirect service participants who constructed their work as meaningful due to their engagement in social mission activity had to job craft in order to create their connection with this aspect of work. Finally, several indirect service participants constructed their work as non-meaningful due to their lack of connection with the social mission activity of the organisation (Pattern 4). They engaged in job crafting to emphasise their decreased connection to the social mission activity of the organisation, and the decreased connection between their self and work to support this perception.

6 Understanding social mission and meaningful work in CSOs

Findings from this study provide insight into experiences of meaningful work in CSOs, and the role that social mission plays in this, and thus are able to contribute to theory in this area. Based on the data presented in Chapters 4 and 5, the aim of this chapter is to consider what is known about meaningful work and how the findings from this study can build on existing understandings of meaningful work in CSOs.

This chapter is structured such that it discusses the different aspects of meaningful work: sense-making, antecedents, outcomes, and job crafting. In particular, how these aspects of meaningful work are understood in the existing literature and what the findings of this study contribute to these understandings are considered. Based on this, an integrated conceptual framework of meaningful work in CSOs is developed drawing on the sense-making models of meaningful work developed by Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) and Rosso et al. (2013). This framework incorporates organisational antecedents (including social mission) and individual antecedents and outcomes of meaningful work into a sense-making model of meaningful work.

6.1 Sense-making and meaningful work

As described earlier (see 2.1.1), in the literature two approaches to meaningful work predominate: person-environment fit models and sense-making models. Person-environment fit models explain antecedents to meaningful work such as social mission well, but are less successful at capturing the continuous, subjective and agentic nature of meaningful work. The strength of sense-making models is that by considering meaningful work as an ongoing process they are able to capture the complexity of meaningful work and the continuous, dynamic nature of constructing meaning. However, these models lack a focus on the pursuit of purpose in meaningful work and the influence of other sources of information beyond internal antecedents. Furthermore, they do not consider the outcomes of meaningful work. Both of these elements

are needed to capture the role that social mission plays in lived experiences of meaningful work in CSOs.

Existing literature using a sense-making perspective characterises meaningful work as a dynamic and continuous process of integrating different aspects of the experience of work into a coherent experience (Baumeister, 1991; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Work gains meaning when it locates the self in a broader context of purpose (Frankl, 2006; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010) or when it allows expression of the self and the pursuit of an ideal self (Imel, 2002; Morin, 2004; Rogers, 1961; Scroggins, 2008; Shamir, 1991). However, existing models of meaningful work either place little importance on the sense of purpose derived from work, or fail to distinguish between these two types of purpose.

Accounts from those participants who explicitly described how they arrived at the perception that their work is meaningful are consistent with the way that meaningful work is conceived as a form of sense-making. Participant accounts highlight that meaningful work is an ongoing construction of work that changes across time and is aggregated across the overall experience of work. The findings presented in Chapters 4 and 5 provide insight into the way that sense-making around meaningful work manifested within this study, these are discussed below.

Findings from 4.1.2 indicate that sense-making around work and whether it is meaningful occurs in a continuous manner. Although this aspect of meaningful work was not often discussed by participants, what evidence there was showed that the views participants held about whether their work was meaningful changed over time as the individuals' needs and circumstances changed.

In addition, the narratives provided by participants about their experiences of meaningful work demonstrated that sense-making and justifications of work as meaningful, or not, were undertaken in a manner that was both subjective

and agentic. As will be described in more detail below (see 6.2), the presence or absence of antecedents to meaningful work alone did not determine whether work was viewed as meaningful. Furthermore, participants engaged in job crafting to tailor the meaningfulness of their work to suit their needs (see 6.4).

Findings from this study also show that sense-making around meaningful work occurs through creating narratives that balance different elements of the experience of work to perceive it as worthy. In their accounts, participants balanced narratives about whether their work had meaning for themselves or for others, or both, to justify their work as being worthwhile (see 4.1.2). Findings show that participants who constructed their work as being meaningful due to its contribution to the self, did so on the basis of the quality of the work and working conditions, and the ability of their work to satisfy their needs and provide them with a sense of purpose. Participants who constructed their work as meaningful for others, however, did so based on their ability to help others and make a difference through their work. In addition, a number of participants drew on both sources of meaning.

The idea that sense-making around whether work is meaningful involves creating narratives around work that balance elements of both meaning and non-meaning is one of the primary contributions that findings from this study make to understandings of meaningful work. While much of the literature around meaningful work focuses on meaningful-ness, findings from this study echo those of Isaksen (2000), which show that participants simultaneously construct their work as meaningful and non-meaningful. In this study, participants identified that their view of their work as meaningful emerged as an overall perspective of their work and that they simultaneously experienced both meaningful and non-meaningful elements within their work. This occurred both for participants who viewed their work as meaningful, and for participants who viewed their work as non-meaningful.

Throughout this study, social mission was shown to form the basis for perceptions that work was meaningful due to its contribution to others and it played a role in judgements that work was meaningful due to its contribution to the self. In addition, the two participants who experienced their work as non-meaningful described these perceptions as being based on their lack of connection with the social mission activity of the organisation. These findings therefore indicate that non-meaningful work in CSOs derives from a lack of impact on others through work.

6.2 Antecedents to meaningful work

Sense-making models generally have a diminished emphasis on antecedents, in particular organisational antecedents. However, in order to understand the role of social mission in meaningful work as it is experienced in CSOs, antecedents to meaningful work need to be understood. In the literature, two types of antecedents to meaningful work have been identified: organisational and individual (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). In this study a further type of antecedent, industrial and occupational antecedents, was introduced. This consists of the broader cultural understandings and expectations about work in the community services sector and occupations within it (including the purpose they serve). Under a sense-making approach, antecedents (both organisational and individual) can be conceptualised as factors that influence the narratives that individuals retrospectively create about their experiences of work to make sense of them as meaningful, or not. Organisational antecedents are external to the individual and influence sense-making about the experiences of work as meaningful. Social mission is an example of an organisational antecedent to meaningful work. As a key feature of what makes an organisation a CSO, it was demonstrated that social mission influences the way that CSO employees make sense of their work. Meanwhile, individual antecedents are internal factors that influence the way that work is understood to be meaningful. They include factors such as the desire for meaningful work and the fit between work and self-concept (including values, personality). As such, they too were important in understanding the role of social mission in

how work is understood as meaningful within CSOs. Similarly, industrial and occupational antecedents (i.e. expectations about work in the sector or specific community service occupations, including social purpose derived from these sources) influence how both organisational and individual antecedents are interpreted by the individual.

In Chapter 5 it was shown that three factors influenced experiences of work as meaningful for participants. These are the social mission activity undertaken by the organisation, social interactions within the workplace, and the aspects of the work itself. These factors acted as organisational antecedents to meaningful work, being conditions set out by the organisation that lead to work being viewed as meaningful by individual employees. However, social mission activity is influenced not only by organisational purpose, but also by purpose derived from the broader sector and from occupations within the sector. Social mission underpins the first two of these antecedents, not only setting out social mission activity as the type of work conducted by the organisation but also creating a shared mission that strengthens social interactions, in particular between staff.

Findings indicated that social mission activity and social interactions provide a source of meaning in work for participants, thus their presence enhances meaningful work. It was shown that participants predominantly drew on both their ability to help others through their work and the value they gained from social interactions and the quality of the work itself when they constructed their work as meaningful. Meanwhile, working conditions hindered constructions of meaningful work when they were experienced as challenging by individuals. For those participants who viewed their work as non-meaningful, challenging working conditions in the sector (e.g. low pay and job security) exacerbated their view that their work was not meaningful.

In addition to describing three organisational antecedents of meaningful work, participants described individual antecedents of meaningful work that acted

alongside organisational antecedents. These individual antecedents were: the fit between self and work; the valence or desire for meaningful work; and the personal context of the individual. Because participants described these individual antecedents in a way that way was embedded within their discussion of organisational antecedents, individual and organisational antecedents were not discussed separately in this study as researchers such as Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) have recommended. Instead, findings from this study highlight the interrelated nature of organisational and individual antecedents to meaningful work, and how these were influenced by industrial and occupational antecedents.

In the accounts of meaningful work provided by participants there was no indication that the contribution of organisational antecedents to the pathways of meaningful work was entirely mediated by individual antecedents, as was suggested by (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). However, it was shown that individual antecedents (person-job fit, family and non-work context) influenced sense-making about organisational antecedents and their contribution to meaningful work, and vice versa. Organisational and individual antecedents influenced each other in order to enhance the connection between self and work in three ways: by expressing self through work; by transcending self through work; and by integrating self and work.

Sense-making around both organisational and individual antecedents was informed by industrial and occupational antecedents, i.e. the gendered, broad cultural expectations around what work in the not for profit and community service sectors, and in individual occupations within the sector, should be. Specifically, that this type of work is about pursuing value-driven work such as helping others and social justice rather than making money.

Findings from Chapter 5 demonstrated that engaging in social mission activity allowed participants to express their values through work. This, in turn, increased the perceived fit between self and work for participants, which fed

into their sense-making about whether work was meaningful (see 5.1). In this way, an organisational antecedent (social mission activity) influenced an individual antecedent (perceived fit between self and work) by facilitating the *expression of self* through work.

It was also shown that both engaging in social mission activity and the social interactions participants had with clients and colleagues facilitated the connection between the individual and their work by allowing the *transcendence of self* through work (see 5.1 and 5.2). This was influenced by participants' desire for meaningful work, an individual antecedent, which then influenced the perceived fit between self and work.

Findings from Chapter 5 additionally demonstrated the interrelationship between organisational and individual antecedents as occurring to facilitate the *integration of self and work* (see 5.3). Working conditions, an organisational antecedent, were interpreted by participants in light of their individual needs and their personal context, which are individual antecedents. When it was perceived that working conditions fit the needs and personal context of the individual, this influenced the perceived fit between self and work.

Thus, the accounts provided by participants extend research into antecedents of meaningful work through these insights into the ways that organisational and individual antecedents influence each other as well as sense-making about work, and how they are influenced by industrial and occupational antecedents. The relationship between industrial and occupational, organisational and individual antecedents provides an interesting avenue for future research.

6.2.1 Pathways to meaningful work

In the literature, antecedents of meaningful work feed into four pathways to meaningful work: contribution to the work of the organisation, contribution to the greater good, coherence between self and work, and gaining a sense of belonging. These pathways provide the individual with a sense that their work

is meaningful either because of its impact on others, thus locating the self in a broader context, or because of its impact of the self, allowing the individual either to authentically express their self at work or to pursue a better version of their self through work. The two pathways are:

1) Workers who view themselves as contributing to the work of the organisation are able to perceive that they are involved in a purpose beyond themselves. This occurs when individuals are able to undertake work that is both self-serving and distinguishes the self from others. Within the meaningful work literature two elements that determine whether an individual perceives that they contribute to the organisation were identified: “comprehension”, understanding what one is doing, and “efficacy”, perceiving that what one does contributes to this purpose. Steger and Dik (2010) umbrella both of these concepts within the term “work comprehension”. This is the idea that one understands themselves, their organisation, and the way that they fit within the organisation. Steger and Dik (2010) propose that work comprehension acts alongside work purpose in fostering perceptions of meaningful work. However in an earlier conceptualisation of the theory Steger (2009) more explicitly described both of these elements as contributing to the experience of work as meaningful. Steger (2009) proposed that for meaningful work to occur work must “make sense” (para. 3) and be perceived to “have a point” (para. 3). That is, the individual must be able to understand what is required of them and how to carry it out, and understand how their role contributes to what it is that the organisation does. The idea of efficacy as a source of meaningful work was also included in Schnell et al.’s (2013) concept of “significance”, the perceived efficacy of one’s actions on an organisational, societal or global level, as a criterion for meaningful work.

2) Individuals also locate themselves in a broader context of purpose when they can contribute to the greater good, i.e. their work enables them to engage in a purpose beyond themselves. This occurs when individuals are able to undertake work that is both other-serving and distinguishes the self from

others. Steger and Dik (2010) describe meaningful work as that which is perceived as contributing to the “greater good” by helping others either at the micro-level (e.g. making a co-worker’s job easier) or at the macro-level (e.g. solving global warming). The first element of this pathway to meaningful work is that the work allows the individual to engage in helping others at the micro-level. Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) include “serving others” a construct which incorporates both making a difference and meeting the needs of others in their set of sources of meaningful work. The second element of this pathway to meaningful work is that it involves helping others at the macro-level. Rosso et al. (2010) propose that doing something significant or something for the “greater good”, which they term “contribution,” provides a pathway to meaningful work. Similarly, Pratt and Ashforth (2003) highlight transcendence, engaging in work that goes beyond their own interests, in their concept of meaningful work.

Two more pathways to meaningful work result in workers perceiving their work as significant because it allows them to express their authentic self at work or pursue an ideal self through work. These pathways occur when work provides the individual with the sense that there is coherence between their self and their work or when it provides the worker with a sense of belonging. These two pathways are:

- 1) The sense that there is coherence between one’s sense of self (their values, identity, skills and knowledge), and one’s work, provides a pathway to meaningful work. It does so by demonstrating that work aligns with identity and sense of self, allowing the individual to express their sense of self through work and to pursue an ideal self. This occurs when individuals are able to undertake work that is both self-serving and connects them with others. Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) describe this as “expressing one’s full potential”, that is the ability to create, achieve, and express one’s full potential as a source of meaningful work. Alignment between one’s sense of self and their work provides the basis for this theme of coherence between self and work. Schnell

et al. (2013) identify “coherence” as contributing to the perception of meaningful work. This is the perception that one’s work matches their identity and their life purpose. Meanwhile Rosso et al. (2010) suggest that when work creates a distinct and valued identity for the worker, which they describe as “individuation,” it can be perceived as meaningful.

Coherence between self and work also involves the ability to express one’s sense of self through work. Pratt and Ashforth (2003) proposed that one means of fostering meaningfulness in work is to enable workers to “more fully engage who they are in what they do” (p. 320). They suggest that organisations do this through activities such as job redesign and employee involvement. These activities break down the barrier between self and work thereby promoting experiences of “flow” and work as “calling.” Chalofsky and Krishna (2009) also viewed that the dissolution of the barrier between work and self was necessary for the perception of work as meaningful. They described “sense of self”, one’s ability to bring mind, body, emotion and spirit to their work, as contributing to the experience of work as meaningful. Meanwhile, Schnell et al. (2013) describe “direction” as a means of gaining meaningful work. This encompasses both goal pursuit and personality development.

A sense of coherence between work and self not only involves the coherence between the current self and work, but also includes the pursuit of an ideal-self through work. Rosso et al. (2010) view “self-connection”, actions that bring individuals closer into alignment with the way they see themselves, as contributing to assigning meaning to work. Similarly, Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) view meaningful work as occurring through growth and development of self rather than just expressing the current self. They propose that “developing the inner self” involves moral development, personal growth and staying true to oneself can be a source of meaningful work.

2) Meaningful work occurs when workers perceive that their work provides

them with a sense of belonging. This occurs when individuals are able to undertake work that is both other-serving and connects the self with others. One of the criteria for meaningful work put forth by Schnell et al. (2013) is that of “belonging”, the perception of connectedness, companionship and belonging in the work context. Pratt and Ashforth (2003) also propose that meaningful work can be achieved by satisfying the need for belonging through work. They suggest that meaning at work can be fostered by creating a sense of community and by providing a sense of mission by creating shared goals, values and beliefs that go beyond profit generation and by doing so resonate with workers’ identities.

Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2009) move beyond a sense of belonging as simply companionship and connectedness to others to incorporate shared values in their construct of “unity with others” as a source of meaningful work. Similarly Rosso et al. (2010) describe “unification” as a pathway to meaningful work. This they describe as work that brings self into harmony with other beings and principles. Sense of belonging might also be considered to be a pathway to purpose gained through locating self in a broader context of purpose by locating the individual within the broader context of the organisation. However, because it is the satisfaction of the individual’s underlying need for belonging that influences this pathway to meaningful work it has been allocated as contributing to purpose through allowing the expression of the authentic self and the pursuit of an ideal self.

For participants, the three organisational antecedents (social mission activity, social interactions, and quality of the work itself and working conditions) influenced one or more of these pathways to meaningful work.

Social mission activity influenced meaningful work for participants by providing them with a way to *contribute to the greater good* by helping others both at the individual level and at the broader community level. In doing so they gained a positive sense of self through their connection to this purpose.

Social mission activity further influenced meaningful work by allowing CSO participants to engage with the altruistic values espoused by this type of work. As a result they felt that their *work fit with their personal values*. These findings provide evidence that social mission activity contributes to two pathways to meaningful work. Social mission activity, as an organisational antecedent of meaningful work, provided participants with a sense that their work contributes to the greater good and it provided them with a sense of coherence between their self and their organisation.

Meanwhile, social interactions influenced meaningful work for participants by allowing them to satisfy their *need for belonging*. This need was satisfied through both the relationships that they established with their clients and through the relationships established with co-workers. The social interactions that participants established with their colleagues also influenced meaningful work through the *shared sense of purpose* that they derived. This provided participants with a collective goal to which they contributed. Social interactions were shown to contribute to meaningful work by providing participants with a sense of belonging and a sense of contribution to the work of the organisation.

The work itself also influenced participants' experiences of meaningful work. Work that was interesting, varied and challenging contributed to perceptions that work was meaningful whereas the lack of pay and job security reduced the meaningfulness of work. This contributed to the sense that work fit with the individual, their context and their skills or talents. Similarly, the quality of working conditions, in particular work-life balance and a positive working culture, helped participants to feel that their work fit with their needs. Finally, work over which participants had autonomy and ownership contributed to perceptions of work as meaningful as well. Participants gained the sense that they were valued by the organisation and that their work was effective because of this autonomy and ownership. These findings provide evidence that the quality of the work itself and working conditions contributes to two

pathways to meaningful work. The quality of the work itself and working conditions contributed to meaningful work by providing participants with a sense of *coherence between their self and their work* and by providing a sense of *contribution to the work of the organisation*.

Finally, the findings from this chapter show that while organisational antecedents contributed to meaningful work, they alone did not account for participants' perceptions that work in CSOs was meaningful. The presence or absence of these three antecedents was described by participants as influencing their experiences of work and their perceptions that work was meaningful. However, participants continued to experience their work as meaningful even when these antecedents were perceived as being absent from their work. For example, indirect service employees continued to view their work as meaningful even though social mission was not a significant part of their role. In addition, even when working conditions were challenging, e.g. low pay and job security, most participants continued to view their work as meaningful. Similarly, the two participants who described their work as not being particularly meaningful reported that a number of organisational antecedents were present in their experience of work. For example, Joel (B05, Indirect service employee) identified that despite viewing his work as not meaningful, his organisation provided good opportunities for sharing learning and knowledge and it was an excellent place to work (see 4.2).

6.2.2 The role of social mission as an antecedent to meaningful work in CSOs

As previously stated (see 5.1), it was anticipated that social mission would act as an organisational antecedent and contribute to meaningful work in two ways.

Firstly, social mission was expected to allow participants to contribute to the greater good, thus linking them to a broader, transcendent purpose and providing them with the perception that their work is meaningful. Secondly, social mission was expected to allow employees to engage in work that fit with

their personal values and gave them a sense of coherence between their self and their work. Thus, social mission would provide CSO employees with the perception that their work was meaningful because it allowed them to express or develop their self at work.

The findings from this study supported the role of social mission in these two pathways. It was shown that engaging with social mission activity provided participants with the sense that their work was significant because of their ability to help others and make a difference to the community (see 5.1). Thus, through their work CSO employees were able to contribute to a *transcendent purpose*, i.e. the greater good. Engaging in social mission activity was demonstrated to provide participants with work that helped others and contributed to social justice, and as such aligned with their personal values. In doing so, it provided participants with *a sense of coherence between their self and their work*. However, it was demonstrated that social mission contributed to a further pathway to meaningful work. Findings from this chapter showed that social mission provided participants with a *shared sense of purpose* that contributed to their relationships with their colleagues and established a sense of belonging for participants (see 5.2).

The two participants who experienced their work as not meaningful acknowledged that this was primarily a response to challenges to their ability to engage in the purpose outlined by social mission or the social interactions with clients that demonstrated their contribution to this work. They also indicated that their sense of belonging within the organisation had been diminished by their lack of engagement with the social mission activity of the organisation. Although, it was not as strongly linked to their perception of work as not meaningful, these participants acknowledged the influence of challenging working conditions in exacerbating their view that their work was non-meaningful. This, and the persistence of meaningful work despite challenges to the quality of the work itself and working conditions for participants who considered their work to be meaningful, indicates that while

this is an antecedent of meaningful work, it is not as strongly associated with meaningful work as antecedents linked to the social mission of the organisation (i.e. social mission activity and social interactions).

6.3 Outcomes of meaningful work

A number of outcomes of meaningful work were identified in the literature. These can be divided into two forms: self-related outcomes (including improved health and well-being, reduced stress and anxiety, and improved coping strategies); and work-related outcomes (including increased motivation, job satisfaction). The assumption in these outcomes is that meaningful work creates an increased connection between the individual worker and their work at a core level. In the literature, non-meaningful work is viewed as having negative outcomes. Again these can be divided into self-related outcomes (including increased boredom, fatigue and stress, and decreased self-esteem, self-worth and self-efficacy), and work-related outcomes (including decreased retention, work engagement and motivation).

However, in the existing literature the link between meaningful work and its outcomes is not well understood. Most commonly, outcomes of meaningful work were incorporated into models that considered meaningful work within the framework of another concept rather than treating it as a distinct concept. As a result, how meaningful work produces these outcomes was not explicitly described and was instead assumed to arise from either an increased connection between the individual and their work or through the ability of the individual to understand their work in relation to a broader context.

CSO literature has predominantly viewed meaningful work as positive for employees. It is seen as desirable, motivating, satisfying and promotes staff retention (Earles & Lynn, 2009; Flanigan, 2010; Light, 2002; Martin & Healy, 2010; Onyx, 1998). Consistent with this view of meaningful work, expectations about and experiences of meaningful work by participants also reflected this positive slant. Findings from this study showed that participants' expected that meaningful work would ensure that CSO employees were sufficiently

passionate and motivated in their work, thus being essential in *maintaining the quality of services* provided by employees. Experiences of meaningful work, while more mundane than passionate, were similarly viewed as resulting in both *beneficial outcomes both for the self and the experience of work*. Participants' accounts of what work would be like if it was not meaningful again demonstrate the desirability of meaningful work within the community services sector. It is clear that for the CSO employees in this study, the experience of non-meaningful work was undesirable. The impact of participants not experiencing their work as meaningful was described as having an adverse effect both on the individual and more broadly on the organisation and on the client and the community that they serve.

Consistent with outcomes of meaningful work described in the literature, participants identified that the outcomes of meaningful work affected two areas: the experience of work and the self.

Meaningful work was believed to affect the experience of work for participants by making the work more enjoyable. This resulted in increased employee motivation and staff retention. However, it was also observed that organisations took advantage of the meaningfulness experienced by staff in the sector to discourage them to ask for better pay and to promote unpaid work practices. These work-related outcomes of meaningful work are consistent with those identified in the literature. Previously, it was shown that meaningful work is associated with increased work engagement and responsibility (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; May et al., 2004), and increased motivation (Frankl, 2006; Hackman et al., 1975). In addition, it has been associated with less beneficial work-related outcomes, increasing self-sacrificing behaviours such as risk-taking in the workplace, workaholism, work-life imbalance, and engagement in underpaid or unpaid work (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dempsey & Saunders, 2010; Kosny & Eakin, 2008).

Existing research has demonstrated that meaningful work positively affects the self, improving both physical and mental health by decreasing stress and anxiety (Isaksen, 2000; Treadgold, 1999) promoting healthy coping behaviours (Britt et al., 2001; Treadgold, 1999). Accounts from participants in this study also identified that meaningful work impacts the self. Participants identified several self-related benefits from engaging in meaningful work. However, they focused on the ways in which meaningful work contributed to *self-concept* by providing them with a sense of achievement and opportunities for self-development. These findings show that there is a connection between the experience of meaningful work and the establishment of self-concept. The bias towards positive self-related outcomes in this study may be an artefact of the perceived social desirability of meaningful work (see 4.1.2), however it is more likely that it is a result of the underlying motivation for sense-making work as meaningful, which is the preservation of a positive self-concept.

Literature around self-concept indicates that individuals are motivated to maintain a positive view of the self, what they term 'self-regulation' (Markus & Wurf, 1987). Findings from this study indicate that meaningful work affected self-concept for participants. Based on the evidence provided in this chapter, participants predominantly derived a positive sense of identity, or self-concept from constructing their experience of work as meaningful.

Markus and Wurf (1987) identified that behaviour is motivated by the need for self-enhancement, the need for self-coherence, and the need for self-actualisation. Examples of each of these needs were present in the accounts of meaningful work provided by CSO employees in the study thus establishing that meaningful work affects self-concept. On the most part, participants constructed their work as positive due to its impact on others, both clients and co-workers, or because it had a positive effect on them personally. In doing so, they placed themselves in a positive light and engaged in *self-enhancement*. Further evidence showed that experiencing meaningful work led to *self-actualisation*, with several references having been made by participants to their

work having made them a better person, or to the benefits of training and learning on their self-development. Finally, in the case of Joel (B05, Indirect service employee), the lack of meaningful work was a means of achieving *self-coherence* by maintaining his negative perception of his work as undervalued and underpaid.

Evidence from the discussion of work-related outcomes of meaningful work meanwhile demonstrated the impact of meaningful work on sense of self. It was shown that, while not always positive for the individual, meaningful work was used as a means of justifying or coping with less positive work-related outcomes of meaningful work. In order to do so they drew on industrial and occupational antecedents of work through their expectations of what work in community services should be, perpetuating the broad cultural devaluation of community services work. By doing this they demonstrated the “dark side” (Clinton et al., 2017, p.35) of meaningful work, by constructing their experience of work as meaningful in a way that enabled their own exploitation within their work. However, constructing their work as meaningful in this way also enabled them to maintain a positive sense of self at work, despite challenging conditions.

Non-meaningful work was only experienced by two participants in this study. Perceptions of what work would be like if it was not meaningful from participants who experienced their work as meaningful highlighted negative outcomes that reflected perceptions of meaningless work in the literature (e.g. Isaksen, 2000; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2013; May et al., 2004). That is, they focused on the negative effect of non-meaningful work on the quality and quantity of work produced and the impact this has both on clients and co-workers. However, the narratives provided by those who perceived their work as non-meaningful identified less impact on the work produced by these workers, instead focusing on impacts related to retention and organisational commitment.

6.4 Job crafting

In the existing literature, it is understood that individuals can actively shape the boundaries of their work to increase its meaning (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). This is known as “job crafting” (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p.179). This occurs through changing the “cognitive, task, and/or relational boundaries to shape interactions and relationships with others at work” (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p. 179) to alter the design and the social environment of work.

This research has shown that CSO participants engaged in job crafting to actively shape their experiences of social mission activity, social interactions, and the work itself. They did so to create their experience of work and whether it is meaningful in such a way that it was viewed positively and either enhanced or actualised their sense of self, or was viewed negatively and in this way was coherent with their sense of self.

The findings from this study highlight the *agency* of the individual in determining whether they experience their work as meaningful. Chapter 5 detailed the ways in which participants actively shaped their experiences of meaningful work in the sector. It demonstrated that participants altered both the *tangible elements* of work (e.g. their tasks and work hours) and their *cognitive understandings* of work (e.g. whether pay or helping others was important to them). In doing so they were able to craft their perceptions of the meaningfulness of their work by highlighting those elements of their work that were consistent and minimising those aspects that were inconsistent with how they perceived their work. They did so to align their experience of work with their self-concept. As such, the individual participant was responsible for the way they constructed their experience of work and the meaningfulness that they attribute to their work.

Participants altered the tangible elements of their work by changing their work tasks, their social interactions, the work environment, and their work-life balance. Evidence presented in Chapter 5 shows that they did so to fit their

experience of work with their own preferences and sense of self. This builds on Wresniewski and Dutton's (2001) model of job crafting which only identified two tangible elements of work by which individuals craft their jobs: job tasks and social interactions.

To understand how participants crafted the cognitive boundaries of work to shape work as meaningful, the findings provided in this research were interpreted through the application of Ashforth and Kreiner's (1999) sense-making processes. Each of the three sense-making processes were present in the accounts of meaningful work provided by participants, although refocussing was the most commonly used process. Understanding job crafting around the cognitive boundaries of work through these processes provides insight into how and why participants changed their cognitive understandings of work.

Primarily, participants engaged in job-crafting about their work such that they emphasised the positive elements of their work and de-emphasized negative aspects of their work. They did so to construct their work in such a way that it best fit who they were as a person and showed them in a positive light. For example, participants engaged in job crafting when a) their job did not fit their expectations about work in the organisation, the community service sector or their occupation, b) it did not entirely fit with their sense of self or satisfy their needs, c) they felt that others viewed their work poorly, and d) to justify their commitment to their work despite difficult working conditions such as low pay and job security. This was accomplished by changing the perceived coherence or fit between their self and the work, their sense of belonging, their perceived contribution to the organisation, and their perceived contribution to the greater good.

In doing so, they created a narrative around their work in CSOs in which they either enhanced their self-concept or pursued an ideal self. They did this by demonstrating that their experience of work fit with broader social concepts

of work in the sector as work that is focused on social mission activity and values-based work, and by demonstrating the fit between themselves and their work such that their experience of work was enjoyable and they could be the best worker they could be and contribute meaningfully to the work of the organisation.

However, not all participants crafted their jobs to increase the meaningfulness of their work. Instead two participants de-emphasised the connection between themselves and the social mission activity of the organisation, their sense of belonging within the organisation and emphasised challenges to the meaningfulness of their work that arose in the quality of the job. Joel (B05, Indirect service employee), for whom work was not meaningful, shaped his narrative around work in another way. Instead of creating a narrative aimed at self-enhancement or self-actualisation, he created a narrative that was consistent or coherent with his perception of how work in the sector *should* be experienced despite the fact that it placed his experience of work in a less than positive light. In doing so, he emphasised the importance of social mission activity for his fit with work and highlighted the ways in which his current role was unable to achieve this. In addition, he focussed on other aspects of his work that were less than positive, such as the lack of money, his inability to support his family, the lack of job security in the sector, and the perception that work in the community services sector was less skilled than work in the commercial sector.

Meanwhile Jill (C05, Indirect service employee), who also perceived that her work was not particularly meaningful, crafted a narrative around her work such that she enjoyed her work, she gained a sense of achievement from doing her work well and saw her role as contributing to the operation of the organisation. However, Jill felt that her work was not meaningful because of her lack of engagement with the social mission of the organisation and her willingness to leave if a better paying job came along. She emphasised the lack of pay working in CSOs and the unhappy work culture due to changes in the

organisation to align her experience of work with her perception that it was not particularly meaningful. In doing so, she too presented a narrative around her experience of work in which she gained self-coherence.

These findings demonstrate that participants shaped the meaningfulness of their work such that they maintained their self-concept. They did so in ways that fit with Markus and Wurf's (1987) idea that individuals are motivated by the need to maintain their self-concept through self-enhancement, self-consistency, or self-actualisation. Furthermore, the findings from Chapter 5 indicate that not only does the experience of meaningful work result in the establishment of a positive self-concept through self-enhancement and self-actualisation, maintaining self-concept provides a motivation for job crafting activities to fit the perceived meaningfulness of work with the experience of work in CSOs.

Furthermore, self-concept was not only shaped by the experience of work as meaningful but it also informed the way that participants craft their experience work. Self-concept thus informed their *experience* of meaningfulness in work. This provides empirical support for Pratt and Ashforth's (2003) conceptualisation of meaningful work as a continuous form of sense-making about self-concept within the context of work. Whether work is constructed as meaningful or not is determined by the individual's need to maintain their self-concept. Participants engaged in job crafting predominantly to enhance their self-concept or to pursue an ideal version of their self. However there was further evidence that job crafting was used to maintain a coherent self-concept by crafting work as meaningless even though this did not create a particularly positive self-concept within the work context.

6.5 The role of social mission in job crafting

The findings presented in this research demonstrated that the presence of social mission or social mission activity within an organisation was not necessarily indicative of how employees experience their connection with social mission. Those participants who wanted to perceive their work as

meaningful crafted their experience of work to support this perception, those who did not perceive their work as meaningful crafted their work such that it was not. In both cases they did so to maintain their self-concept. In addition, while engagement in social mission activity formed part of how participants crafted their work to be meaningful other factors, namely social interactions (which were influenced by the social mission of the organisation) and the work itself were crafted to alter the meaningfulness of work. These findings provide further evidence that assumptions about the role of social mission in experiences of work as meaningful in the CSO literature are only partially correct. The presence of social mission plays a role in meaningful work, but individual employees and the way that they shape their work play an equally important role.

Most participants crafted the tangible elements of their work to increase their engagement in social mission activity. They did so by expanding their job tasks to include more helping tasks and by increasing their social interactions with the staff that they managed and clients. In addition, they altered their cognitive understandings of their work to increase their perceived involvement in social mission activities by reinterpreting their distance from social mission activity, and by reinterpreting challenges to their perceived contribution to the organisation.

However, two participants engaged in job crafting to decrease their perceived involvement in social mission activity, thus aligning their experience of their work with their perception that their work was not particularly meaningful. These participants crafted their cognitive understandings of their work to selectively focus on the distance between the tasks that they undertook and the social mission activity of the organisation. One of these participants additionally altered the standards by which they judged their work to diminish the perceived impact of their organisation on the greater good. This participant did so by highlighting the small number of people that they were able to service within the context of the high level of need for services.

Findings from this research have therefore shown that participants' engagement in social mission activity was crafted through tangible factors: tasks and social interactions. In addition, participants engaged in refocusing, reframing and recalibrating their cognitive understandings of their work to alter how participants perceived their engagement in social mission activity.

6.6 Developing a framework of meaningful work

Drawing on the findings from the research a conceptual framework of meaningful work in CSOs has been developed that integrates both antecedents and outcomes (Figure 6.1). Although largely based on the competing drive based models of meaningful work presented by Rosso et al. (2013) and Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012), this framework additionally addresses some of the elements missing in existing sense-making models of meaningful work.

Existing sense-making models of meaningful work focus on the tensions between self and others, the need to differentiate the self and to connect with others through work. In doing so they consider multiple sources of meaningfulness and capture the complexity within meaningful work. Another strength of these models is that they effectively capture the dynamic and continuous nature of meaningful work by treating it as an ongoing quest to find balance between the different drives underpinning the experience of work. As such, a sense-making model of meaningful work was considered the best approach to use in this study.

However, in light of the purpose of this study (which is to understand the way that participants experience their work in the community services sector as meaningful and to explain the role of social mission in this) existing sense-making models have several drawbacks.

Firstly, these models allude to the purpose that work serves for individuals but they do not specifically capture it. Purpose is important for both social mission and for meaningful work. Therefore, a framework of meaningful work designed to explore the relationship between social mission and the

experience of work needs to have a strong focus on purpose.

Secondly, these sense-making models of meaningful work acknowledge organisational antecedents such as social mission, however, they primarily focus on individual antecedents. Given that social mission is a form of organisational antecedent, to explore the role of social mission in this sense-making, organisational antecedents of meaningful work need to be considered as well as individual antecedents.

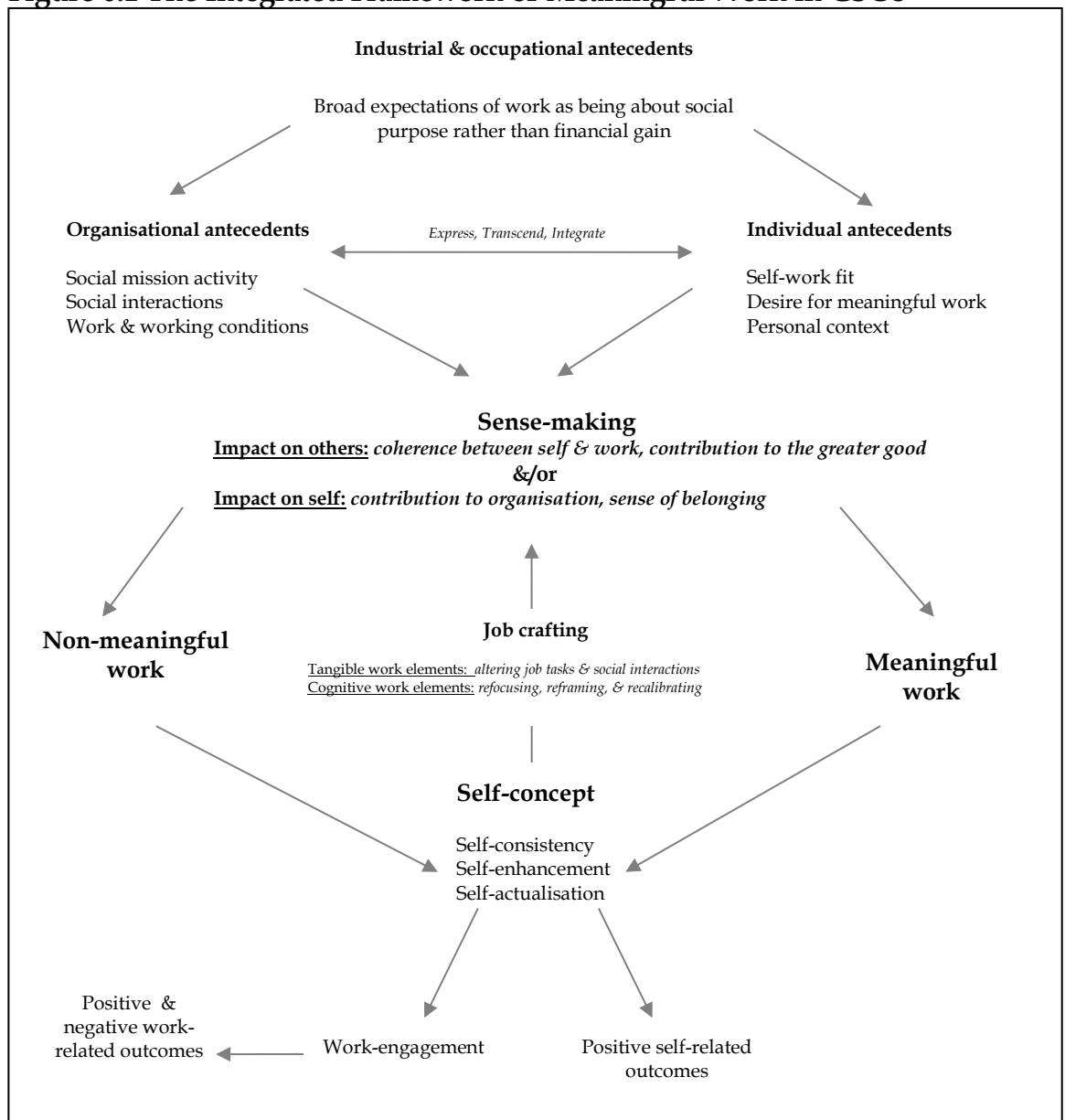
Finally, sense-making models give little attention to the outcomes of meaningful work, focussing instead on how meaningful work is achieved rather than taking a holistic view. Given that social mission is promoted in CSOs as a means of improving the experiences of work in the sector to enhance attraction and retention of staff, improve organisational performance, and provide a competitive advantage, understanding the outcomes of meaningful work is also integral to this study and the understanding of the role of social mission in CSOs.

Therefore, the existing sense-making models of meaningful work have been used as the basis for a new integrated framework of meaningful work in CSOs. This framework addresses some of the gaps in existing sense-making models of meaningful work identified in the discussion from the first half of this chapter:

- it recognises the influence of both organisational and individual antecedents when undertaking sense-making about work;
- it emphasises two forms of purpose pursued through work: locating the self in a broader context of purpose; and allowing the expression of authentic self or the pursuit of an ideal self;
- it includes non-meaningful work, which is understood as occurring when work is perceived as not providing a personal sense of purpose;

- it highlights the role of job crafting in shaping meaningful work; and
- it acknowledges the role of self-concept and work engagement in motivating behaviour, resulting in both self-related outcomes and work-related outcomes.

Figure 6.1 The Integrated Framework of Meaningful Work in CSOs



As illustrated in Figure 6.1, the Integrated Framework of Meaningful Work in

CSOs, borrows from Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012), who differentiate between organisational and individual antecedents. Three *organisational antecedents*, based on the findings from Chapter 5, have been included in the framework, these are: the ability to engage in social mission activity or work that helps others, opportunities for social interaction and building relationship; and the quality of the work itself and working conditions. Social mission influences both the ability to engage in social mission activity or work that helps others and opportunities for social interaction. Additionally, three *individual antecedents* have also been included in the framework. Again, these were based on the findings from Chapter 5. These are the desire for meaningful work, the fit between self and work, and the personal context of the individual worker. These two forms of antecedents, while different are interrelated and influence each other to facilitate the connection between self and work through *expression of self, transcendence of self, and integration of self and work*. Antecedents to meaningful work inform the sense-making that individuals make to justify their work as worthy.

These organisational and individual antecedents are influenced by industrial and occupational antecedents in the form of broad cultural expectations about the type of work that is undertaken in the community sector, and in individual occupations (e.g. social work) operating within these sectors. Organisational and individual antecedents are interpreted in light of the gendered expectations that this type of work will be concerned with helping others and social justice rather than making money.

Sense-making about work as meaningful, or not, occurs such that work is perceived as being significant or worthwhile based on *two types of purpose*: the impact of work on others; and its impact on the self. In this framework, sense-making is conceptualised as balancing between different information about the ability of different aspects of their work to serve a purpose and thus be understood as meaningful, or not, because of the impact of work on the self-concept. Underpinning whether work is viewed as meaningful because of its

impact on others is the perception that the individual contributes to the greater good, that there is coherence or fit between the self and work. Similarly, underpinning whether work is viewed as meaningful because of its *impact on the self* is the perception that the individual contributes to the work of the organisation, and that work provides the individual with a sense of belonging.

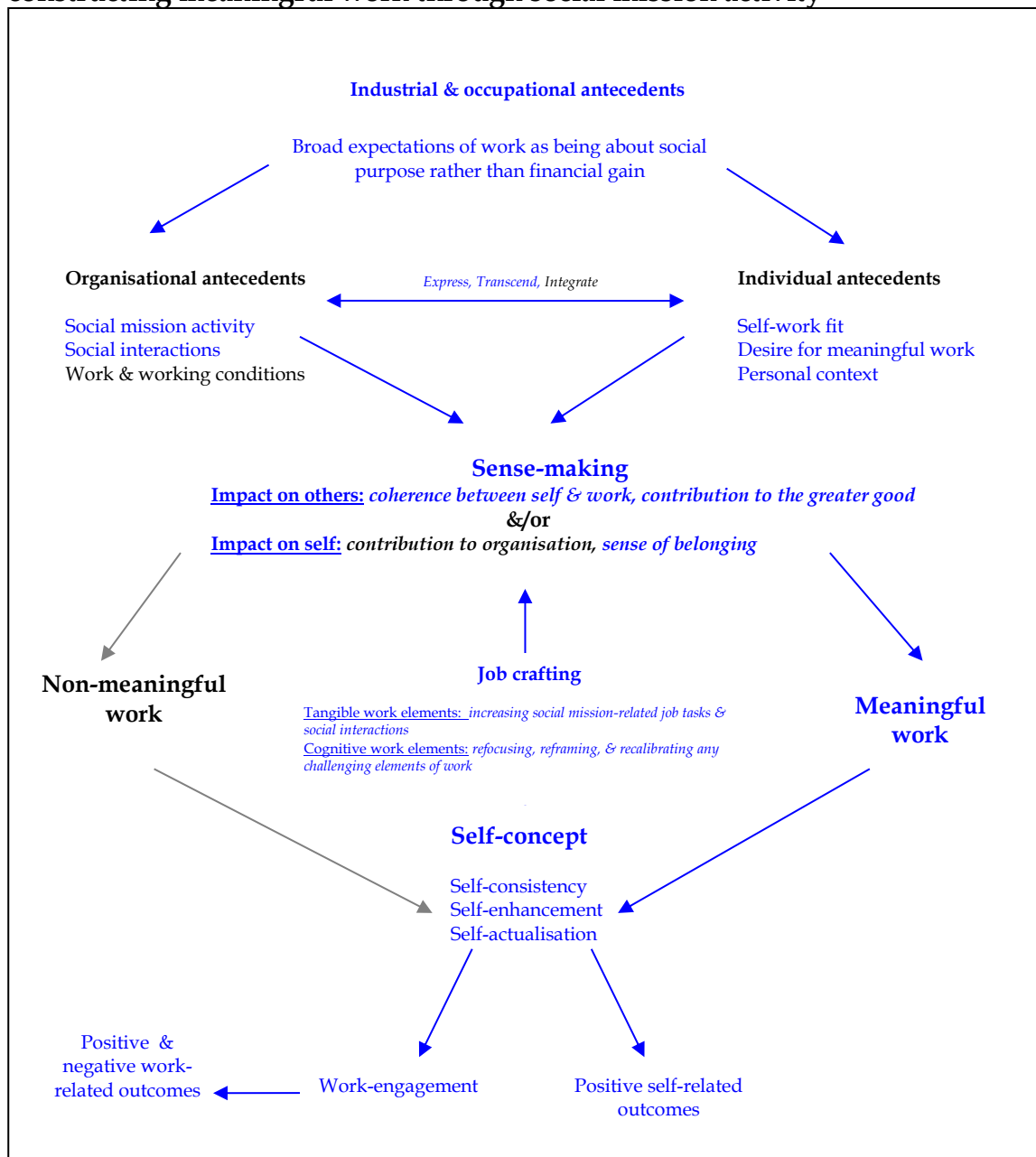
Sense-making involves creating a narrative about the experience of work that balances these two types of purpose as well as different elements of work that are perceived as meaningful and non-meaningful to derive an overall sense that work is meaningful, or not. Individuals derive a sense of identity, or *self-concept*, in the context of work based on this construction of work as meaningful or not. They are motivated to derive a positive self-concept through self-consistency, self-enhancement, and self-actualisation. If individuals do not derive a positive self-concept through their construction of their work as meaningful, or non-meaningful, then they engage in *job crafting* the tangible elements and cognitive boundaries of their work. They shape the *tangible elements* of their work by altering their job tasks, social interactions, and their work-life balance to change the meaning of their work. In addition, they shape the *cognitive boundaries* of their work by refocusing, reframing, and recalibrating their understandings around work to change its meaning. If individuals do derive a positive self-concept through their construction of their work as meaningful or non-meaningful, then they engage in similar job crafting activities to reinforce this view.

When individuals derive a positive self-concept they derive *positive self-related outcomes* (such as increased self-esteem, increased coping and decreased stress) and increased work engagement, which leads to *positive work-related outcomes* (such as increased motivation) and *negative work-related outcomes* (such as increased risk taking and unpaid work).

Using the Integrated Framework of Meaningful Work in CSOs, the four patterns in how meaningful work was constructed by participants and the role

of social mission in this identified in the previous two chapters (see 4.3 & 5.5) were mapped. These patterns focused on the way that meaningful work in CSOs was interpreted differently by direct and indirect service participants.

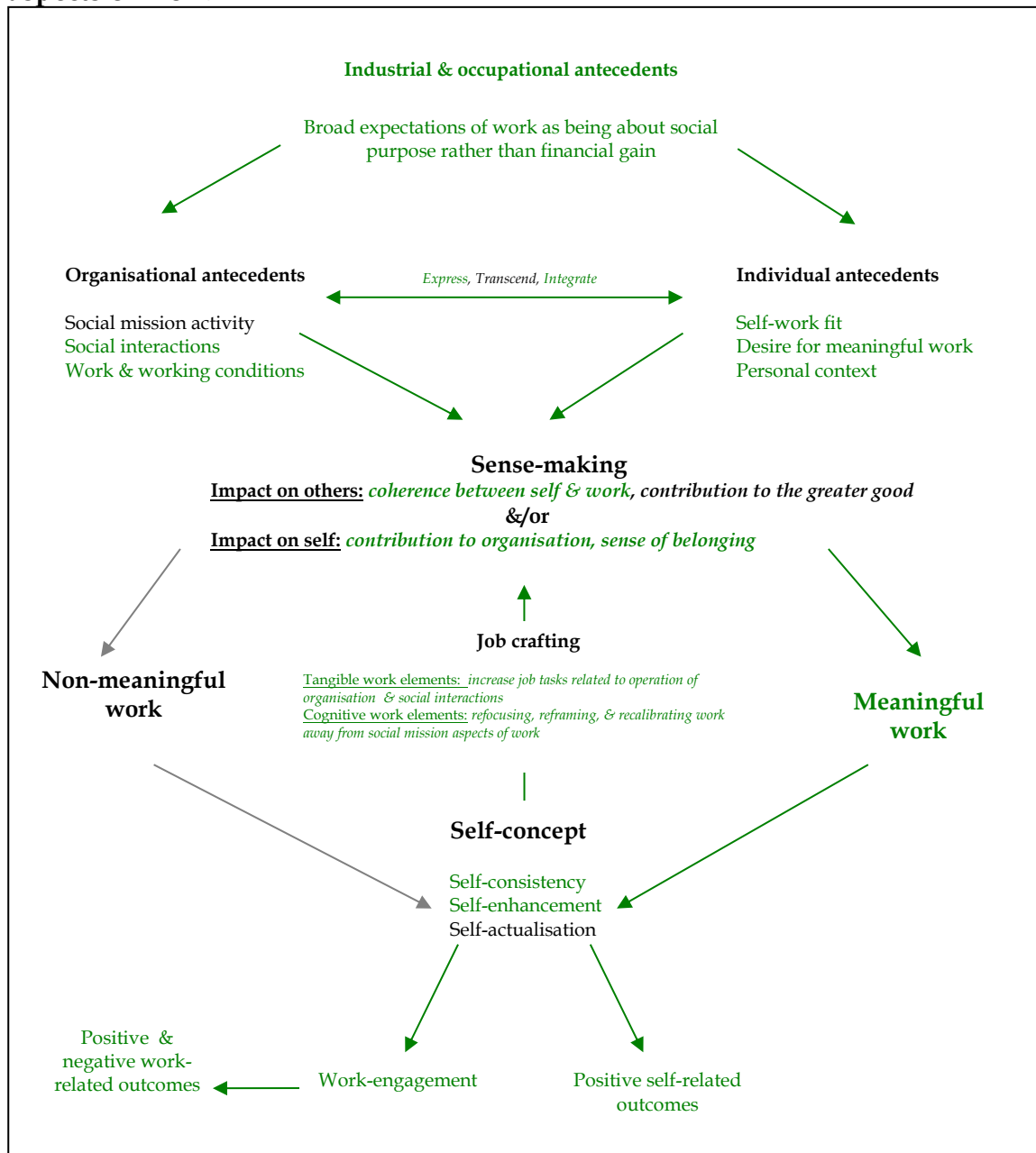
Figure 6.2 Pattern of Meaningful Work in CSOs: Direct service employees constructing meaningful work through social mission activity



The first pattern (Figure 6.2) focuses on *direct service participants who construct*

their work as meaningful through social mission activity. Direct service participants held expectations that their work as a social worker or similar within the community services sector would be concerned with helping others and social justice. As highlighted in blue, these participants experienced social mission activity in their work. This allowed them to express and transcend their self, thus facilitating a greater connection between self and work. This informed the sense-making that they undertook about their work such that they made sense of their work as being coherent with their sense of self and allowing them to contribute to the greater good. As a result they constructed their work as meaningful and gained a positive self-concept. They also made sense of their work through their perceived contribution to the work of the organisation and the sense of belonging they gained. Information about social interactions and the quality of the job was primarily used to bolster their perception of work as meaningful. This in turn resulted in these employees enjoying their work, being more engaged with their work and gaining self-worth. However, they also worked additional unpaid hours because of this engagement. Direct-service workers engaged in job crafting to increase the meaningfulness of their work and to mitigate any challenging conditions, such as low pay and job security.

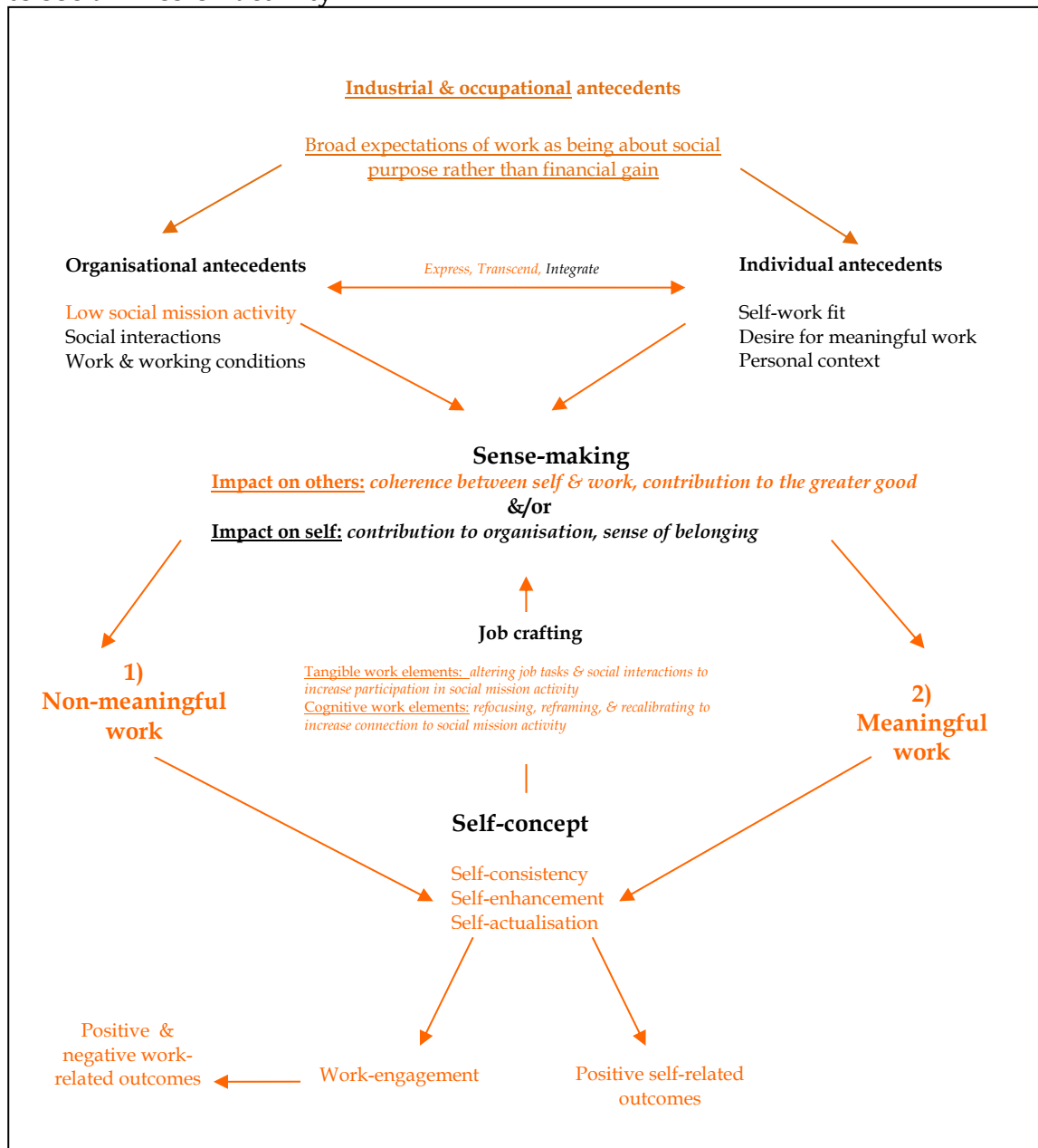
Figure 6.3 Pattern of Meaningful Work in CSOs: Indirect service employees constructing meaningful work through non-social mission aspects of work



Indirect service employees also had expectations about work in the community service sector being about helping others and social justice. However, these participants rarely experienced social mission activity as part of their everyday work that enabled them to fulfil these expectations. These workers made sense of their work in different ways. The second pattern as

shown in Figure 6.3 focuses on *indirect service participants who construct their work as meaningful through non-social mission elements of work*. As highlighted in green, a few participants made sense of their work as meaningful because of their contribution to the operation of the organisation and the sense of belonging they gained from their work. These participants used their social interactions, the work itself and working conditions to express their values and to integrate and connect the self and work. They also derived a positive self-concept through the meaningfulness of their work. As a result, these participants engaged in job crafting to diminish their connection with the social mission activity of the organisation and to emphasise their contribution to the organisation.

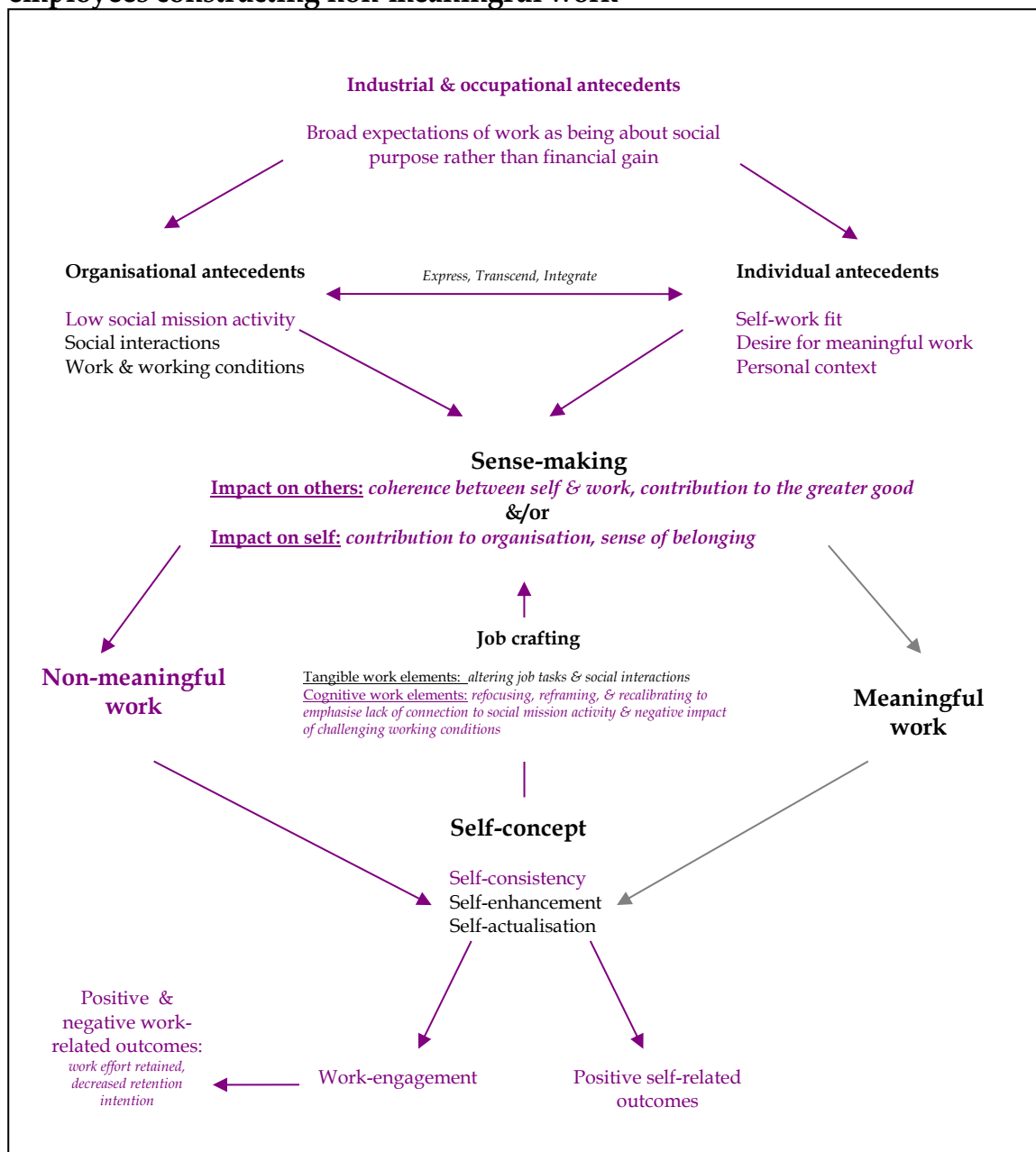
Figure 6.4 Pattern of Meaningful Work in CSOs: Indirect service employees constructing meaningful work through job crafting connection to social mission activity



The third pattern depicted in Figure 6.4 focuses on *indirect service participants who construct their work as meaningful through job crafting connection to social mission activity*. This is the pattern that was observed amongst most indirect service participants. As highlighted in orange, despite having broad understandings of work in the community service industry as being about

helping others and social justice, one pathway for indirect service employees was that they initially made sense of their work as non-meaningful (1). They did so by drawing on information about the low social mission activity in their work, and the low connection between self and work derived because they were unable to express or transcend their self through work. Making sense of their work as non-meaningful diminished their self-concept. This motivated them to engage in job crafting to seek out opportunities to engage in social mission activity. This, in turn, allowed them to make sense of their work as meaningful (2). These participants experienced similar outcomes to direct service employees.

Figure 6.5 Pattern of Meaningful Work in CSOs: Indirect service employees constructing non-meaningful work



The fourth pattern, illustrated in Figure 6.5, focuses on *indirect service participants who construct their work as non-meaningful*. This pattern was observed amongst only a few indirect service participants. Like the other participants, these participants also had expectations about working in the not for profit, community services sectors as being about helping others and social justice. As highlighted in purple, these indirect service participants made

sense of their work as non-meaningful because they did not engage in the social mission activity of the organisation. Again, in making sense of their work in this way, they drew on information about the low social mission activity in their work, and the low connection between self and work derived because they were unable to express or transcend their self through work. These participants initially experienced a diminished self-concept due to the disconnect between their work and their expectations of their work, which motivated them to engage in job crafting to reinforce the perception that their work was not meaningful. The impact of challenges to the experience of work as meaningful, such as pay, were emphasised by these participants rather than mitigated. This allowed these indirect service workers to distance themselves from the work and maintain a coherent self-concept. These participants experienced a decreased enjoyment with work and decreased retention intentions, but they maintained their dedication to doing their work well.

These findings demonstrate that social mission is a key component in the way that CSO employees construct their understanding of their work as meaningful. However, it alone does not entirely account for the way that meaningful work is constructed in CSOs.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the findings from this study inform understandings of meaningful work in CSOs and the role of social mission, not only in terms how they are experienced but also in relation to the concept of meaningful work.

Findings presented earlier were discussed in relation to existing understandings of meaningful work. It was shown that meaningful work in CSOs manifests such that:

- sense-making involves balancing narratives about self and/or others, and aspects of work that have meaning or not to view work as worthy and therefore meaningful;

- organisational and individual antecedents are interrelated and influence each other to facilitate a connection between self and work through expressing self, transcending self, and integrating self and work;
- individuals act to construct a positive self-concept through self-consistency, self-actualising and self-enhancement; and
- individuals act with agency to change the tangible elements (i.e. job tasks, social interactions, and work-life balance) and the cognitive boundaries (through refocusing, reframing, and recalibrating understandings of work) of their work both to increase meaning in their work and to fit their experience of work with their sense-making about whether their work is meaningful.

The concluding chapter, next, will bring together and further discuss the findings of this chapter and this thesis.

7 Conclusion

This study sought to understand the experience of work in the community services sector from the perspective of the employee. It investigated CSO employees' lived experience of their work as meaningful, or not, and the role of social mission in these experiences. The research set out to address two aims: 1) to understand the way that participants experience their work in the community services sector as meaningful; and 2) to explain the role that social mission has in experiences of meaningful work in CSOs. In order to do so, it focused on two areas in the process of perceiving work as meaningful where it was thought that social mission would have the most contribution. These were the organisational antecedents of meaningful work and the active shaping, or job crafting, of the experience of work as meaningful. From the participants' experiences, the study developed an integrated conceptual framework for understanding how work is perceived as meaningful.

Based on the findings of this research I have argued that meaningful work is a feature of work in CSOs and that social mission plays a role in how meaningful work is experienced. Experiences of meaningful work are both influenced by the organisation and actively crafted by the individual. In doing so these experiences are embedded in broad cultural expectations of the industry and their occupation, workers participation in community service work, as well as their individual needs to craft the perceived meaningfulness of their work. In addition, I have argued that while the contribution of social mission to experiences of work in CSOs is explained by meaningful work, the experience meaningful work is only partially explained by the presence of social mission. Instead, social mission forms just part of an array of factors that influence how individuals shape their work as meaningful or not.

I began this thesis by stating that the community services sector is a vital element of Australia's labour market that is notorious for its difficulties attracting and retaining staff. Understandings of what attracts and retains employees in the sector are prefaced on the assumption that one of the most

attractive features of work in the sector is that it is more meaningful than work in other sectors because of the presence of an organisational mission that is values-based and socially beneficial, i.e. a social mission. This creates a values-based purpose in work for the individual worker. The CSO literature therefore treats social mission as though its presence creates a more meaningful work experience for employees, given that CSO employees place a high value on socially useful work (Castel et al., 2011). However, as Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2013) observe, “[j]ust because an organisation has a focus on service, this alone does not make work meaningful” (p.230).

The CSO literature often confounds the concepts of social mission and the resulting values-based purpose in work, and meaningful work. When describing what the reward is that arises from engaging in social mission activity, many researchers have remained vague. They have deemed it to be a form of utility gained from the work or they have assumed that work in the community services sector is rewarding without investigating or describing this reward further. Those researchers who have investigated the reward gained from CSO work in more depth have treated it in different ways: as a form of intrinsic motivation (Hansen et al., 2003; Mirvis & Hackett, 1982; Onyx, 1998); as form of prosocial value or public service motivation (De Cooman et al., 2011; Selander, 2015); or as a form of job satisfaction (Brown & Yoshioka, 2003; Borzaga & Tortia, 2006; Mirvis, 1992). Each of these approaches to understanding what it is that CSO workers gain from their work relates back to the concept of meaningful work- the idea that people seek work that they find worthwhile, purposeful and satisfying. Some of the CSO literature explicitly describes work in the sector as “worthwhile”, having “purpose”, or “meaningful”. The CSO literature assumes that the presence of social mission activity automatically results in more meaningful work for employees. For example, managers (who are often not directly involved in social mission activity) have been treated as though they experience meaningful work as a result of the social mission activity of the organisation in the same way as

workers (who are directly involved in social mission activity) within existing research (e.g. Scott & Pandey, 2005; Onyx, 1998). Similarly, research into meaningful work often assumes that some occupations are inherently more meaningful than others (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016). However, there was a gap in the literature around the role of social mission in how CSO employees experience their work as meaningful. I set out to explore this gap.

While the CSO literature assumes that simply the presence of social mission affects the way that employees experience their work as meaningful, thus viewing the relationship between social mission and meaningful work through the lens of person-environment fit, sense-making literature around meaningful work emphasises that the experience of work as meaningful is individually and subjectively determined. In this body of literature the role of the organisation in the experience of work as meaningful is contested. Some authors describe meaningful work as an entirely individual interpretation of the experience of work (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). However, in this study another approach is taken. Following from authors such as Pratt and Ashforth (2003) and Schnell et al. (2013), it is assumed that although organisations cannot ensure that employees experience meaningful work, they can foster it by providing optimal conditions within the workplace. One stream of thinking within the meaningful work literature that particularly emphasises the role of the individual in determining whether work is experienced as meaningful posits that the worker actively shapes the cognitive and tangible boundaries of their work. This process, known as “job crafting” (Wresniewski & Dutton, 2001) is used by employees to increase the meaningfulness of their work. I took heed of Rosso et al.’s (2010) observation that researchers need to look at the way employees go beyond the work environment that exists around them to shape their understanding of their work context, tangible and psychological, as meaningful work. Thus, the focus of this investigation into how CSO employees experience their work as meaningful was the way that employees *actively* shape the meaningfulness of their work. I sought to broadly

understand how meaningful work is experienced in CSOs, and more specifically to explain the role of social mission in these experiences.

To address these research questions, I needed to capture both the antecedents (in particular the organisational antecedents) and outcomes of meaningful work in CSOs. Capturing the outcomes of meaningful work was necessary to fully understand how participants experienced their work in CSOs. Similarly, capturing the antecedent factors that influence meaningful work was important for understanding the role of social mission in these experiences. When reviewing the literature around meaningful work it was evident that person-environment fit models of meaningful work investigate antecedents, such as social mission, and outcomes. However, existing sense-making models, which better explain meaningful work, de-emphasise these elements. As such, I built on findings from previous research to develop an integrated sense-making framework of meaningful work which incorporated both antecedents and outcomes to better understand experiences of meaningful work in CSOs.

This study was undertaken using semi-structured interviews with South Australian CSO employees. Rich, qualitative data was collected about their lived experiences of meaningful (or non-meaningful) work. An IPA approach was adopted for the analysis of the data collected, based on its ability to access the inner cognitions of participants about their experiences via the verbal reports they provide and thereby capture this highly subjective phenomenon.

7.1 Main Findings and Contribution

There is little research investigating experiences of meaningful work in CSOs, in particular in relation to the social mission of the organisation. Given this, the primary aim of this study was to understand how CSO employees construct their experiences of work as meaningful (or not). Of particular interest was the role of social mission in these narratives. The main findings of the current study and its contribution to the field of research are summarised below.

7.1.1 Experience of work and meaningful work in CSOs

CSO literature assumes that work in the sector is associated with experiences of work as meaningful (e.g. Earles & Lynn, 2009; Light, 2002; Martin & Healy, 2010; Onyx, 1998). This study confirmed this, demonstrating that meaningful work was a feature of the way that participants perceived their experience of work. Most CSO employees in this study viewed their work as meaningful. Participants described their experience of meaningful work in ways that aligned with more mundane descriptions of meaningful work (i.e. as satisfying and worthwhile work) outlined by authors such as Pratt and Ashforth (2003) and Shamir (1991). This was despite having described their expectations that meaningful work is a deeper, more passionate engagement with work that resulted in workers being more motivated when asked what meaningful work was. In describing their expectations in this way, they showed that broader cultural understandings of meaningful work align with more transcendent manifestations described in the literature (e.g. Fox 1994; Steger & Dik, 2010; Wezesniewski et al., 1997). There was, however, likely to be at least some form of social desirability bias in the descriptions of work as meaningful. CSO employees in this study described organisation, occupation, and industry level rhetoric around meaningful and non-meaningful work in which workers who were perceived to be not meaningfully engaged in work were characterised as “toxic” (Melanie- A03, Direct service employee), “stirring up trouble” (Kate- B02, Indirect service employee) and “not working to the best of [their] ability” (Luke- D01, Indirect service employee).

Not all participants, however, experienced their work as meaningful and, even those who did, observed that they experienced some aspects of their work as non-meaningful. This highlighted the importance of considering how participants constructed their work as both meaningful and non-meaningful. These findings corroborate the assertion by Isaksen (2000) that workers concurrently experience both meaningful and non-meaningful elements of work. The two participants who did not view their work as meaningful attributed this lack of meaningfulness to their distance from the social mission

activity of the organisation. Both of these employees were working in indirect service roles, one as a manager and one as an administration assistant in a social enterprise organisation. However, only one of these CSO employees felt that not experiencing meaningful work was an issue. Joel (B05, Indirect service employee) had sought more meaningful work when entering his current role and felt that his distance from the social mission activity exacerbated his concerns about not being able to provide for his family. Jill (C05, Indirect service employee) meanwhile, had merely been seeking employment after having been out of the labour force to raise her children when she sought her position. Although, she did not find her work meaningful because of its lack of connection with social mission activity, Jill enjoyed her work and the flexibility it provided because it enabled her to fit work around parenting responsibilities.

Pratt and Ashforth (2003) identified organisational antecedents to meaningful work as organisational practices that enhance tasks and roles, enhance a sense of belonging for workers, or both. These are loosely substantiated by participant accounts of their experiences of meaningful work in CSOs. In this study, three organisational characteristics were identified as contributing to meaningful work. These are 1) the presence of social mission activity and the ability to help others through work, 2) opportunities for social interactions and building relationships, and 3) the work itself and working conditions. While organised differently to reflect the voice of participants, these characteristics encompass the organisational antecedents identified by Pratt and Ashforth (2003). The interpretation of these forms of information was informed by individual antecedents, such as the desire for meaningful work, the fit between self and work, personal context, and industrial and occupational antecedents in the form of expectations about the purpose of work.

While the CSO literature focuses on the ability of organisations to influence meaningful work via social mission, sense-making approaches to meaningful work such as those developed by Lips-Wiersma & Morris (2009) and Rosso et

al. (2010) emphasise the importance of agency in experiences of meaningful work. Findings from this study confirmed both of these assertions. Organisations were able to foster meaningful work by providing optimal work conditions including providing opportunities to engage in social mission activity, establishing a work culture that promotes social interactions the building of relationships, and provides both quality jobs and quality working conditions. Participants themselves were shown to actively shape both their cognitions around work and the work itself by engaging in job crafting to influence the meaningfulness of their work.

According to Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), job crafting is undertaken to increase the meaningfulness of work and create a more positive work identity. For most CSO employees in this study, job crafting was done in ways that increased their perception that their work fulfilled their underlying needs. Job crafting was done to enhance the coherence between their self and their work, their sense of belonging, their sense of contribution to the work, and their contribution to the 'greater good'. This promoted the perception that their work was meaningful (i.e. worthwhile and significant) because it contributed to their sense of self, either by locating them in a transcendent purpose or by allowing them to be authentic or to pursue a better version of them self. In doing so they were engaging in self-enhancement or self-actualisation to promote a positive self-concept.

Findings from this study build on existing understandings of job crafting by demonstrating that participants did not only engage in job crafting to increase the meaningfulness of their work. In this study, those participants who did not perceive their work as meaningful engaged in job crafting. They did so in ways that maintained this perception that their work was not meaningful. These participants acted to decrease the coherence or fit between them self and their work, they emphasised that they did not belong in their CSO, or that their contribution to the work and the greater good were diminished. They did so to maintain a coherent self-concept and in this way reinforce their sense of who

they are as a worker.

Existing literature around the outcomes of meaningful and non-meaningful work for individuals highlights the positive self and work related impacts of meaningful work and the negative impacts of non-meaningful work. However, there is also some recognition in the literature that meaningful work can have detrimental effects for the individual such as increased risk taking and self-sacrificing behaviours (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Clinton et al., 2017; Dempsey & Saunders, 2010; Kosny & Eakin, 2008). The findings from this study support the literature, showing that CSO employees in this study identified two types of outcomes from experiencing work as meaningful. These related to impacts on the self, and impacts on the experience of work. Engaging in meaningful work impacted CSO employee's sense of self by providing them with both a sense of achievement and a sense of accomplishment. Meaningful work affected the experience of work for participants by increasing their enjoyment of work and as a result promoting motivation and staff retention. Moreover, it was also observed to have been used by organisations to take advantage of the nature of staff in the sector to discourage them to ask for better pay and to promote unpaid work practices, supporting the literature that acknowledges the "dark side" (Clinton et al, 2017, p.35) of meaningful work.

However, findings from this study also indicate that the experience of work as non-meaningful is perhaps not as detrimental to the individual as both the existing literature and the expectations of other participants suggest. Some authors have suggested that experiencing non-meaningful work is highly detrimental, reducing work-related outcomes such as motivation, and self-related outcomes such as intelligence and capacity (Spencer, 2015; Yeoman, 2015). In this study, participants who felt that their work was not meaningful experienced a reduction in their intention to remain and a lack of job satisfaction but did not report the reduced motivation or more severe self-related outcomes that have been associated with non-meaningful work.

Findings from this study shows that there needs to be increased recognition of the more nuanced ways in which meaningfulness affects experiences of work, both in the literature and in applied settings. CSOs that actively work to enhance the meaningfulness of the work they provide for employees need to be aware of their motivations for doing so, how meaningful work can negatively impact individual employees, and the ways that they may inadvertently or advertently exploit staff. In addition, CSOs need to be aware that not experiencing meaningful work might not be as detrimental to staff and their performance as is sometimes described.

7.1.2 Social mission and meaningful work in CSOs

CSO literature assumes that there is an association between social mission and experiences of meaningful work. However, there has been little empirical evidence for this association. Findings from this study contribute to filling this gap, providing evidence in support of the relationship between social mission and individual experiences of meaningful work in CSOs. Although participants rarely referred directly to the social mission of their organisation, they were interested in the opportunity to contribute to a social purpose, i.e. work that contributes to “social justice”, “helping others” or “giving back to the community” via the social mission activity of their organisation, which is influenced by the social mission of the organisation along with industrial and occupational purpose. Social mission activity played a significant role in their experience of meaningful work, even for those who were not directly involved in this aspect of the organisations functioning. For many CSO employees in this study, the social mission activity of the organisation formed at least part of the reason that they had chosen to work in the sector. Even for those who had chosen their work for other reasons, the social purpose of the work was the primary factor that contributed to participants viewing their work in the community services sector as meaningful.

Existing literature around meaningful work presents two types of purpose by which meaningfulness can be derived. Authors such as Pratt and Ashforth

(2003) and Rosso et al. (2013) identified that meaning can be ascribed to work when it gives the worker a broader purpose or greater good to contribute towards. Other authors such as Morin (2004), Scroggins (2008) and Shamir (1991) viewed self-expression and development as a means of gaining meaningfulness from work. In this study engaging in work with a social mission contributed to meaningful work in both of these ways. Engaging with social mission activity enabled participants to transcend their self by contributing to what they viewed to be the greater good. That is, a purpose beyond them self by which they could see them self in a positive light and thus view them self as having value. Similarly, it provided participants with opportunities to express various aspects of their self that corresponded with the types of values espoused by engaging in social mission activity. In doing so, participants were able to integrate these aspects of self with the way that they view their work and the organisation.

Social mission activity formed a large part of what makes work meaningful for CSO employees in this study. As with the other organisational antecedents to meaningful work identified in this study, social mission activity was at least to some extent influenced by the organisation. Fostering meaningful work by promoting a connection between the individual and the social mission activity of the organisation could be a useful tool for CSOs around attraction, retention and motivation of staff. Several examples of organisations fostering the social mission of the organisation in order to enhance meaningful work as part of their management strategies around motivating and retaining staff were elicited through this research.

Findings from this study raise several questions about the focus on social mission as a managerial strategy (Analoui & Karami, 2002) in CSOs. Firstly, this study demonstrated that participants were interested broadly in social mission activity rather than the specific social mission of the organisation. Social mission was shown to be a useful vehicle for communicating the purpose of the organisation and connecting staff with this purpose to attract,

retain and motivate staff. However, given the time and resources that CSOs devote to producing a specific, effective, well-crafted mission statement and vision, these findings indicate that this may be a waste of effort. Instead, they suggest that the presence and connection with any socially beneficial purpose aligned with helping others, making a difference and social justice would be as effective in fostering meaningful work amongst staff.

Secondly, findings from this study demonstrated that participants were attracted to their organisation by the opportunity to engage in social mission activity. However, this could act as a double edged sword. Having a strong desire for meaningful work was indicated to exacerbate the impact on the individual should they not perceive their work as meaningful. Those participants who felt their work was not meaningful associated this lack of meaning with being disconnected from the social mission activity of the organisation because they were indirect service employees. This, in turn, resulted in a reduction in their intention to remain with the organisation. Thus, while social mission may be key in attracting staff, it might concurrently be contributing to retention issues (e.g. shortages) in the sector. Findings from this study indicate that, in general, challenges to meaningful work are mitigated through job crafting. Organisations should therefore focus not only on connecting employees with social mission, but also on encouraging and providing opportunities for job crafting, particularly for indirect service staff.

The experience of meaningful work in the community services sector was not just about the values-based work associated with the social mission activity of the organisation. When constructing their work as meaningful, CSO employees in this study additionally drew upon other industrial, occupational, organisational and individual antecedents of meaningful work. Meaningfulness was influenced by participants' social interactions and the relationships they built through work and the quality of the work, their personal context, and the cultural expectations of work in the community services industry and individual occupations within it. Like, social mission

activity, social interactions were underpinned to some extent by social mission. It sets out shared goals and a shared organisational identity that act to facilitate social interactions. A number of organisationally influenced characteristics of work in the sector were identified as affecting the experience of work as meaningful, including access to flexible work hours, a relaxed and friendly work culture, open communication with management, and recognition of staff efforts and input. These other contributing factors need to be considered by organisations seeking to foster meaningful work for the attraction, retention and motivation of staff.

Perceived engagement with social mission activity was further influenced by the individual. Primarily, participants crafted the tangible elements of their work, specifically their work tasks, to incorporate helping activities and time to interact with clients. They did so either when these tasks were not a feature of their work or to further emphasise their importance even when they were a feature of work for participants. Participants also crafted their cognitive understandings of their work to reframe non-social mission activities such as paperwork, administration and managerial activities to understand them as contributing to the social mission activities of the organisation. In addition, they refocused their narratives around their work to highlight small examples of social mission activity and helping in their work understand their work as contributing to the social mission activity of the organisation.

As was observed earlier in 7.1.1, not all participants crafted their work to increase their involvement in social mission activity. Several participants crafted their jobs to minimise their involvement in social mission activity to align with their perception that their work was not particularly meaningful. These participants refocussed their narratives to focus on paperwork and administration activities to maximise their perception that they were distanced from the social mission activity of the organisation. One participant also recalibrated his understanding of the impact of the organisation on the broader community to show it as not really addressing the level of need in

society in support of his perception that his work was not meaningful. These findings show that while the presence of social mission was used to shape experiences of meaningful work, a lack of connection to social mission was used to shape experiences of non-meaningful work. This further highlights the importance of social mission for experiences of meaningful work in CSOs.

Overall, findings demonstrate that meaningful work described how social mission affects the experience of work for participants. However, social mission contributes to but does not fully describe how meaningful work is experienced in CSOs. These findings support the observation by Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2013) that while an organisation may have a “focus on service”, i.e. a mission that helps others, this is insufficient to ensure that work is meaningful. Instead, Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2013) posit that while social purpose plays a “vital part of what makes work meaningful” (p.230) too much focus on satisfying one individual antecedent of meaningfulness neglects others and the internal balance of the individual is upset, resulting in work becoming non-meaningful. Similarly, findings from this study show that while social mission is an important contributor, it forms just one of an array of antecedents (individual, organisational, and industrial and occupational) that CSO workers draw on when shaping their work as meaningful or not. Furthermore, these findings build on those by Lips-Wiersma and Morris (2013). They do so by showing that the contribution of social mission to meaningful work is determined not only by its ability to contribute to balancing the inner needs of the individual, but also by the way the individual actively engages in job crafting to shape the relationship between social mission, experience of work, and work meaningfulness.

7.1.3 An integrated framework of meaningful work in CSOs

A further contribution of this research is the development of a new framework of meaningful work in CSOs. In the existing literature two approaches to studying meaningful work have emerged. Person-environment fit models consider antecedents and outcomes but treat meaningful work as static and

minimise individual agency in perceiving work as meaningful. Sense-making models better account for the dynamic and agentic nature of meaningful work, but they de-emphasise antecedents, such as social mission, and outcomes. In order to fully understand how meaningful work is experienced in CSOs and to explain the role of social mission in how meaningful work is experienced, a model of meaningful work that includes both antecedents (such as social mission) and the outcomes of meaningful work was needed.

The findings from this study contribute to understandings of how meaningful work in CSOs manifests. They showed that meaningful work occurred such that:

- sense-making involves balancing narratives about self and/or others, and aspects of work that have meaning or not to view work as worthy and therefore meaningful;
- organisational and individual antecedents are interrelated and influence each other to facilitate a connection between self and work through expressing self, transcending self, and integrating self and work;
- individuals act to construct a positive self-concept through self-consistency, self-actualising and self-enhancement; and
- individuals act with agency to change the tangible elements (i.e. job tasks, social interactions, and work-life balance) and the cognitive boundaries (through refocusing, reframing, and recalibrating understandings of work) of their work both to increase meaning in their work and to fit their experience of work with their sense-making about whether their work is meaningful.

On this basis, the Integrated Framework of Meaningful Work in CSOs was developed. This model of meaningful work takes a sense-making approach while incorporating both antecedents and outcomes along with the nuances of how meaningful work was experienced by the CSO employees in this study.

Using this framework, four patterns were identified in how meaningful work was constructed by participants and the role of social mission in this. These were: 1) direct service participants who construct their work as meaningful through social mission activity; 2) indirect service participants who construct their work as meaningful through non-social mission related elements of work; 3) indirect service participants who construct their work as meaningful through job crafting their connection to social mission activity; and 4) indirect service participants who construct their work as non-meaningful. These patterns show the complexity in how meaningful work manifests amongst CSO employees and the various roles that social mission plays in this.

What is exciting about this framework is that it incorporates industrial and occupational antecedents, organisational antecedents, individual antecedents and job crafting. It thus approaches meaningful work in a way that captures the complexity of experiences of meaningful and non-meaningful work in CSOs and explains how both organisations and individuals shape experiences of meaningful work. Therefore, it can be used by organisations to gain insight into how they can influence meaningful work by providing meaning for their employees and reducing working conditions that hinder constructions of work as meaningful, and by facilitating job crafting.

Additionally, CSOs may find it useful to consider the four patterns of how meaningful work was constructed around social mission identified using this model when developing their staff attraction and retention strategies. In doing so they may be able to develop tailored strategies for facilitating sense-making and job crafting to foster meaningful work for each of these patterns of meaningful work construction.

7.2 Limitations

The results of this study should be interpreted in the context of several limitations.

This study focuses on a small number of CSOs in the South Australian context.

This focus was adopted because the research was intended as a foray into exploring the experience of work for paid employees of CSOs and because, having grown up in this region, as a researcher I was more familiar with the CSOs in this space. In keeping with the IPA research approach, the sample size was kept small to compensate for the complexity of this type of analysis (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). Most interviews conducted for this study were an hour in length and gathered rich data on the topic. However, a few of the interviews conducted were shorter than was originally anticipated. These interviews were terminated once it was established that saturation was reached and further inquiry would elicit no further information from participants. This was important in order to be respectful of the time contributed by participants, in particular given that interviews were being conducted during work hours.

A qualitative approach was applied in this study because the aim was to investigate meaningful work, which is complex, highly subjective and nuanced. As in all qualitative research, the trade-off is that the results are less empirically generalisable than they would be had a quantitative approach been applied. However, this is offset by the richly detailed data collected which allows deeper insight into how participants constructed their understandings of their work as meaningful.

In particular, an IPA approach was adopted for this research primarily because of its focus on the meaning of phenomena and relevance of this for exploring the meaningfulness of work. The IPA approach was also chosen because it is an established qualitative approach used in the field of organisational psychology, which is loosely the field in which this research sits. IPA adopts the viewpoint that verbal reports allow access to a person's inner cognitions. While these verbal reports still needed to be interpreted by me as the researcher, using this approach enabled more direct access to participants' personal experiences of meaningful work through their verbal reports than could other approaches such as discourse analysis or a

constructivist approach. Given the complexity of the topic itself, IPA provided a more practical approach to analysing the data than these other approaches, removing at least one layer of complexity by gaining access to the inner cognitive world of the participant through their verbal reports. However, using IPA also had its limitations. Firstly, IPA relies on the verbal reports provided by others and the ability of the researcher to ascertain from these reports the information needed to interpret participants' accounts and the context and biases influencing them. Secondly, this approach relies on the interpretative skills of the researcher. I acknowledge that, as the researcher, my interpretation of the data was influenced by my in-depth reading of the literature around meaningful work and my own tendency to interpret the experiences of participants in a positive light. In order to ensure that I was best able to interpret the data, thus mitigating these two concerns as much as possible, I followed the 3-stage analytic process outlined in the IPA literature. This involves creating thematic summaries of each interview, collating themes across interviews, and finally super-ordination of these collated themes (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Smith et al., 1999). Finally, using IPA contributed a level of complexity through the circularity of considering the meaning of meaningfulness. In order to mitigate this slightly, IPA was used pragmatically as a means of accessing cognition through verbal reports, with lesser focus being given to the phenomenological aspect of this approach. This also addressed some of the concerns raised in the literature about the ability of IPA to provide a truly phenomenological analysis (see 3.2.1).

Given that participants in the current study were self-selected, it is likely that there was a bias in the sample used towards employees who felt that their work was meaningful. This can be attributed to two factors: people who do not find their work meaningful are potentially less likely to take the time to participate; and, because meaningfulness is perceived as being a desirable trait of work, people are less likely to identify themselves as not having meaningful work. Participants who did not experience their work as meaningful are

therefore likely to be under-represented in the sample, and the meaningfulness of work within the case organisations may be somewhat exaggerated.

7.3 Future Research

This study and its findings suggest several areas that could be the focus of future research.

7.3.1 The connection between the CSO workforce, social mission and social mission activity

This study demonstrated that, for CSO employees, social mission activity rather than social mission itself was the salient factor in their experiences of their work as meaningful. As such, very little data was available to explicitly investigate the impact of social mission rather than social mission activity on the experience of work in CSOs. For example, CSO employees' awareness and understanding of the social mission of their organisation and its salience in their everyday working lives were not elicited in the interview data. However, Brown and Yoshioka (2003) demonstrated that social mission itself can affect the way that staff experience their work, finding that mission attachment (which consists of an individual's awareness of and alignment with the mission of the organisation) was associated with job satisfaction and retention. Given that evidence from managers in this study indicated the use of social mission to attract and motivate staff, future research into how CSO employees experience social mission and social mission activity will be beneficial not only for understandings of meaningful work in the sector but also at an applied level for understandings of managerial practices.

7.3.2 Further development of the Integrated Framework of Meaningful Work in CSOs

In this study the Integrated Framework of Meaningful Work in CSOs was introduced. This model of meaningful work, which was developed based on findings from the research, takes a sense-making approach while incorporating both antecedents and outcomes. In addition, four patterns of

how meaningful work was constructed by participants and the role of social mission in this were identified using this model. Future research building on this framework is needed. Potential avenues for building on this research include: testing the model using quantitative approaches to establish whether the framework can be generalised beyond the current sample of CSO workers; qualitative investigation of the framework in other applied settings, perhaps expanding the scope of the framework by adapting it for use with organisation missions beyond social mission; and more detailed consideration of the patterns of how meaningful work is constructed around social mission, in particular exploring the differences in how meaningful and non-meaningful work is experienced across the four patterns.

7.3.3 Indirect service staff experiences of work in CSOs

Existing CSO research either excludes indirect service staff, does not differentiate between direct and indirect service staff, or only includes managerial staff in their categorisation of indirect service staff (e.g. Martin & Healy, 2010). Evidence from this study indicates that the motivations and experiences of indirect service staff in the community service sector differ from those of direct service staff. These differences warrant further investigation. Managerial strategies in the sector are tailored towards emphasising the social mission of the organisation and garnering a shared sense of purpose with the assumption that this is what motivates staff in the sector. Therefore, it is important that future research investigates the work-related experiences of indirect service staff, including those in administration and other auxiliary positions, to create a more nuanced understanding of work in CSOs and better inform attraction, retention and motivation strategies.

7.3.4 Community service workforce in the Australian Labour Market

Previously the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) collected detailed data about the community service workforce in Australia with the Community Services Survey. Since the discontinuation of this survey after 2009, no broad scale information specific to the community services workforce has been

collected. Data from the ABS Labour Force Survey provides some insight into the workforce, however, the ANZSIC categories cannot be broken down on a sectoral basis. Therefore, while this data describes the social services workforce, it does not accurately identify the workforce in the community services sector. Research that collects detailed, broad scale information about the size and characteristics of the community services workforce in Australia would help to locate the current study within the broader population of the community services workforce in Australia and any changes within it over time.

7.4 Conclusion

This study has progressed understandings of social mission and the experience of meaningful work in CSOs. It has shown that meaningful work explains how social mission affects the experience of work for individual CSO employees. However, while social mission played a principal role in meaningful work for the CSO employees in this study, it did not entirely explain how meaningful is constructed in CSOs. Participants' experiences of meaningful work were much more nuanced and complex than simply emerging in the presence of social mission in the organisation as is assumed in the CSO literature. Other organisational antecedents, social interactions and the quality of the job, contributed to experiences of meaningful work as well. Furthermore, individual participants themselves actively crafted both the tangible and cognitive boundaries of their work to align their experiences with their perceived meaningfulness of work. The implication of these findings for CSOs is that fostering meaningful work amongst their employees, which both the literature and findings from this study suggest that CSOs do to counteract less desirable conditions in the sector, requires more than the provision of a socially beneficial organisational mission. It also requires opportunities for social interactions and building relationships and the provision of quality work, as well as the flexibility in both work tasks and work context to allow employees to engage in job crafting. In addition, it is important that CSOs are careful that they do not advertently or inadvertently use the meaningfulness

of work in the sector to take advantage of their staff.

In relation to the attraction and retention of staff, the CSO literature views the relationship between social mission and meaningful work through the lens of person-environment fit. It assumes that the mere presence of social mission affects the way that employees experience their work as meaningful. However, findings from this study demonstrate that meaningful work is individually and subjectively determined and that CSO employees engage in job crafting to actively shape their work as meaningful.

A further contribution of this study is the introduction of a new conceptual framework for understanding meaningful work. This framework considers meaningful work as a stand-alone concept and encompasses a more holistic sense-making approach to meaningful work, including antecedents and outcomes of meaningful work as well as perceptions of meaningfulness. As such, it provides a more comprehensive view of how meaningful work is experienced which will be useful not only for this study but also for future applied research into meaningful work.

Appendix A: SACOSS Advert

Meaningful Work in the Third Sector

Is your organisation either a traditional not-for-profit organisation or a social enterprise?

Does your organisation work towards engaging disadvantaged groups with employment?

We are looking for your organisation to take part in a study about meaningful work in the Third Sector. This study is being conducted by researchers from Flinders University who are interested in what work is like for employees in the Third Sector.

We would like to conduct interviews with (where possible) two senior management employees, two middle level management employees and four (paid) workers from each participating organisation. Each interview is anticipated to take about 1 hour. We want to know about how participants came to be working in the Third Sector, their experiences of work, in particular meaningful work, and how this is affected by objectives of the organisation.

Organisations would be asked to assist in this project by disseminating information about the study to staff and, if possible, by providing a quiet place in which to conduct interviews. If you would like to participate or find out more about the study, please contact Llainey Smith on (08) 8201 2472 or email at llainey.smith@flinders.edu.au.

Appendix B: Email to target organisations

Hi [insert contact name]

I'm a PhD research student from Flinders University, conducting a study into meaningful work in the Third Sector, comparing experiences of workers in social enterprise and traditional not for profit organisations.

I am currently seeking not for profit and social enterprise organisations to take part in my study, which will involve me talking with (where possible) 2 senior managers, 2 middle managers, and 4 workers from each organisation about their experiences of work. More detail about the study is included in the attached information sheet and introduction letter.

If [organisation name] is interested in participating in this research, or if you'd like further information about the study, please feel free to contact me either via email or call 8201 2472 or 0411 809 079.

Cheers,
Llainey

Appendix C: Information Sheet

Meaningful work in Values-Based Welfare Organisations

Information sheet

What is the research about?

Given the strong values-based mission of not for profit organisations, meaningful work has long been associated with this sector. However, with changes in government policies, the not for profit sector in Australia is becoming increasingly marketised, which impacts management strategies and the ways in which organisations operate. This study will explore the impact of profit generation goals on the way in which meaningful work manifests in and is managed by the organisation. It will do so by comparing the case of social enterprise, an emerging form of organisation that places equal emphasis on both profit generation and social mission, with welfare organisations that have a purely social mission. This study will focus on welfare organisations that work towards re-engaging disadvantaged groups with employment.

Who can participate in this research?

We will be speaking with workers, such as yourself, who work in welfare organisations where the mission is to get disadvantaged groups into employment. We want to know about how you came to be working in this type of work, your experiences of working in the values-based organisations, and your experiences of meaningful work and how this is managed by the organisation.

If I participate, what would I have to do? How long will it take and where will it take place?

You will be invited to talk to us about your experiences about working in welfare organisations. We anticipate that each interview will take about 1 hour. Even if you agree to take part in the study you have the right to refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study at any time.

To make the interviews easy for you, we are happy to visit you at your work or, if you would prefer, at another mutually convenient venue. Our main concern is that the venue is friendly and safe and you are comfortable about speaking with us.

What will happen to the information collected?

The information from your interview (with your name and any identifying features removed) will be used in a variety of ways:

- To develop theories of meaningful work and of management in not for profit organisations.
- To write a Doctoral thesis on the topic of the impact of profit goals on meaningful work in values-based organisations.
- To write reports and other publications, to keep other sectors of the community informed about the topics raised in the interviews.

Who is the researcher?

Llaine Smith is a PhD student at the National Institute of Labour Studies at Flinders University. The research will be published as a part of her Doctoral thesis. You can find out more about NILS and updates on Llaine's research on the web at www.flinders.edu.au/nils/

If you would like to participate or find out more about the study

Please contact Llaine Smith on (08) 8201 2472 or email llaine.smith@flinders.edu.au

Please keep this information sheet, as you might want to discuss it with friends or family.

The research has the approval of the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at Flinders University.

Thanks for taking the time to read this and for any help that you are able to give us with this study.

Appendix D: Letter of Introduction

National Institute of Labour Studies

GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001

Tel: 08 8201 2407

Fax: 08 8201 5278

llainey.smith@flinders.edu.au

<http://www.flinders.edu.au/sabs/nils/>

CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

Dear [insert contact name],

This letter is to introduce Llainey Smith who is a PhD candidate in the National Institute of Labour Studies at Flinders University. Llainey is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications on the subject of meaningful work in values-based organisations. She is specifically investigating the impact of profit generation goals on the way that meaningful work manifests in value-based organisations that provide services for disadvantaged groups in the community.

The aim of the research is to better understand the role of meaningful work in values-based organisations and how the introduction of profit generation goals impacts meaningful work in these organisations in order to further understanding of how not for profit organisations operate.

Llainey would like to involve [insert organisation name] as a case study for this research. This would involve Llainey conducting interviews with (where possible) two senior management employees, two middle level management employees and four (paid) workers. She would be most grateful if you would grant permission for participants to be sought from [insert organisation name] and assist in this project by disseminating information about the study to staff in high level management, middle level management, and to (paid) employees and, if possible, by providing a quiet place in which to conduct interviews. Each interview is anticipated to take about 1 hour.

Please be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and participants and participating organisations will not be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis or other publications.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me by telephone on 8201 3164 or e-mail deb.king@flinders.edu.au.

Thank you for your attention and assistance.
Yours sincerely,



Dr Deb King
Senior Research Fellow
National Institute of Labour Studies,
Flinders University

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee. For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

Appendix E: Letter of Permission (organisation)

National Institute of Labour Studies

GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001

Tel: 08 8201 2407

Fax: 08 8201 5278

llainey.smith@flinders.edu.au

<http://www.flinders.edu.au/sabs/nils/>

CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

To whom it may concern

[insert contact name] grants permission for Llainey Smith to recruit employees from [insert organisation name] for the purposes of research into Meaningful work in Values-Based Welfare Organisations. The information collected via interviews with staff from case organisations will be used in a variety of ways:

- To develop theories of meaningful work and of management in not for profit organisations.
- To write a Doctoral thesis on the topic of the impact of profit goals on meaningful work in values-based organisations.
- To write reports and other publications, to keep other sectors of the community informed about the topics raised in the interviews.

The confidentiality of organisations involved in this research will be preserved, and organisations will not be identified in any reports or other publications arising from this research.

Yours sincerely,

[insert signature]

Appendix F: Letter of Introduction (participants)

National Institute of Labour Studies

GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001

Tel: 08 8201 2407
Fax: 08 8201 5278
llainey.smith@flinders.edu.au

<http://www.flinders.edu.au/sabs/nils/>

CRICOS Provider No. 00114A

Dear Sir/Madam,

This letter is to introduce Llainey Smith who is a PhD candidate in the National Institute of Labour Studies at Flinders University. She will produce her student card, which carries a photograph, as proof of identity.

Llainey is undertaking research leading to the production of a thesis or other publications on the subject of meaningful work in values-based organisations. She is specifically investigating the impact of profit generation goals on the way that meaningful work manifests in value-based organisations, and how these organisations manage meaningful work

The aim of the research is to better understand the role of meaningful work in values-based organisations and how the introduction of profit generation goals impacts meaningful work in these organisations in order to further understanding of how not for profit organisations operate.

She would be most grateful if you would assist in this project, by granting an interview which covers certain aspects of this topic. Each interview is expected to take about 1 hour and will take place at either your place of employment, or at another mutually convenient location.

Please be assured that any information provided will be treated in the strictest confidence and you will not be individually identifiable in the resulting thesis or other publications. You are, of course, entirely free to discontinue your participation at any time or to decline to answer particular questions.

Since Llainey intends to make a tape recording of the interview, she will seek your consent, on the attached form, to record the interview, to use the recording or a transcription in preparing the report or other publications, on condition that your name or identity is not revealed. It may be necessary to make the recording available to secretarial assistants for transcription, in which case you may be assured that such persons will be advised of the requirement that your name or identity not be revealed and that the confidentiality of the material is respected and maintained.

Any enquiries you may have concerning this project should be directed to me by telephone on 8201 3164 or e-mail deb.king@flinders.edu.au.

Thank you for your attention and assistance.
Yours sincerely,



Dr Deb King
Senior Research Fellow
National Institute of Labour Studies,
Flinders University

This research project has been approved by the Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee. For more information regarding ethical approval of the project the Executive Officer of the Committee can be contacted by telephone on 8201 3116, by fax on 8201 2035 or by email human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au.

Appendix G: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH (by interview)

I
being over the age of 18 years hereby consent to participate as requested in the
Information Sheet and/or Introductory Letter for the research project on

Meaningful Work in Values-Based Welfare Organisations

1. I have read the information provided.
2. Details of procedures and any risks have been explained to my satisfaction.
3. I agree to audio recording of my information and participation.
4. I am aware that I should retain a copy of the Information Sheet and Consent Form for future reference.
5. I understand that:
 - I may not directly benefit from taking part in this research.
 - I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and am free to decline to answer particular questions.
 - While the information gained in this study will be published as explained, I will not be identified, and individual information will remain confidential.
 - Whether I participate or not, or withdraw after participating, will have no effect on any treatment or service that is being provided to me.
 - I may ask that the recording be stopped at any time, and that I may withdraw at any time from the session or the research without disadvantage.
6. I agree to the tape/transcript being made available to other researchers who are not members of this research team, but who are judged by the research team to be doing related research, on condition that my identity is not revealed.

Participant's signature.....**Date**.....

I certify that I have explained the study to the volunteer and consider that she/he understands what is involved and freely consents to participation.

Researcher's name.....
Researcher's signature.....**Date**.....

Appendix H: Demographic Questionnaire

Participant ID Number

Demographic Questionnaire

Thankyou for taking the time to complete this brief demographic questionnaire. You have been assigned a Participant ID Number to maintain your anonymity, please do not write your name on your questionnaire.

Age _____(years)

Gender

Female

Male

Occupation _____

What is the highest level of training that you have completed?

Less than year 12

Year 12

Degree

Higher Degree

Certificate

Approximately, how long have you worked for this organisation?

_____(years) _____(months)

Approximately, how long have you worked in your current position?

_____(years) _____(months)

Tick the box that best describes your agreement with the following statements:

In 5 years, I will be working in this organisation

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

In 5 years, I will be working in this position

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Pick a number between 0 and 10 to indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied you are with the following aspects of your job. The more satisfied you are, the higher the number you should pick. The less satisfied you are, the lower the number.

Your total pay?

Your job security?

The work itself (what you do)?

The hours you work?

The flexibility available to
balance work and non-work
commitments?

All things considered, how satisfied
are you with your job?

Appendix I: Interview Schedule

Semi-structured Interview - Questions and Probes:

(FOR HIGH LEVEL MANAGEMENT) **Can you describe for me this organisation: what it does, how it does it, who works here?**

Probe:

- Social mission
- Profit generation
- Tension between social and profit goals

(FOR HIGH LEVEL MANAGEMENT) **What are the challenges involved in managing this organisation?**

Probe:

- How being a non profit/social enterprise impacts on this
- Examples
- Management practices i.e. attraction & retention of workers, motivation, performance management
- Success of management practices in overcoming challenges
- Meaning as an objective of management
- Is the way that employees experience their work as meaningful something that management is concerned with?
- Are there any management practices that are focussed on managing meaningful work for workers?

Can you describe for me what your role is within this organisation?

Probe:

- Position
- Responsibilities
- Their experience of working in the organisation
- Role of work within the context of their life, work-life balance

(MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGEMENT & WORKERS) **Can you summarise for me what it is that this organisation does?**

- Social mission
- Profit generation

How did you come to be working in this position?

Probe:

- How they came to be working in this job
- Pathways into job- what they were doing previously, how they found out about the job, their experience of obtaining the job
- Motivating factors for occupation choice
- Role of organisation being non-profit/social enterprise in this
- Length of time in their current position
- Length of time in the organisation
- Intention to stay in position/organisation

What do you find interesting or exciting about working in this organisation?

Probe:

- Co-workers
- Clients
- Specific aspects of the organisation such as social mission, profit generation (or lack of), flexibility, innovative approach, work culture, and perceived status of organisation
- Role of organisation being non-profit/social enterprise in this

Why do you like this about your job?

Probe:

- Is this different from what you liked about the previous work you have done?

What do you find challenging about working in this job?

Probe:

- Co-workers
- Clients
- Specific aspects of the job such as teamwork, autonomy, options for promotion, option for skill development, financial reward, and status of job

Why do you do you find this challenging?

Probe:

- Is this different from the previous work you have done?

(FOR MIDDLE LEVEL & HIGHER MANAGEMENT) Do you think that your work as a manager has different interests and challenges than you would have if you were working at another level within the organisation? If so, how?

Probe:

- Co-workers
- Clients
- Specific aspects of the job such as teamwork, autonomy, options for promotion, option for skill development, financial reward, and status of job

How do you think others view this type of work?

Probe:

- Do you think this view is accurate?
- Does this affect you in any way? How?
- What were the attitudes of your family and friends when you told them you were going to work in this organisation?
- What are other people's reactions about your work? For example, what do people say when you meet them for the first time and you tell them what you do for a living?

(FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISE) Can you describe for me the way in which the combination of the organisation's social and profit goals impact the work that you do?

Probe:

- Work culture
- Work practices
- Management practices
- Meaning
- Values
- Identity
- Work-life balance

(FOR NOT FOR PROFIT) Can you describe for me the way that the organisation being a not for profit impacts the work that you do?

Probe:

- Work culture
- Work practices
- Management practices
- Meaning
- Values
- Identity
- Work-life balance

Would you describe your work as meaningful? Can you describe for me a situation in which your work has taken on a particularly meaningful nature for you?

Probe:

- How was your work meaningful?
- What was it about your work that gave it meaning?
- Role of organisation being non-profit/social enterprise in this
- Values
- Work-life balance, context of work within life
- How did the organisation manage this?

Can you describe a situation for me when the organisation that you work for has done something that changed the way that you experience meaningfulness in your work? What was this?

Probes:

- Increased meaningfulness
- Decreased meaningfulness
- What did they do that changed the meaningfulness of your work?
- Why did this alter/ what was it about this that altered the meaningfulness of your work?
- Role of organisation being non-profit/social enterprise in this
- Social mission, profit-generation, tension between the two

Is there anything else you would like to discuss that you have not yet been able to or is there anything we have talked about that you would like to elaborate on further?

Thank you for sharing your story with us. It is of great importance. Please be assured that anything you have shared will be treated with the strictest confidence and that you will not be identifiable in the research.

Appendix J: Follow up Letter

Dear *****

I am writing to thank you for your recent participation in the research study being conducted by Llainey Smith of the National Institute of Labour Studies, Flinders University.

As you are aware, the research is investigating the impact of profit and values on meaningful work in values-based organisations. The research will generate new insights into the way in which meaningful work manifests within welfare organisations, and how these organisations manage the meaningfulness of work.

We hope that these findings will be used to further theories regarding management practices in the not for profit sector and the role of meaningful work in organisations.

Your contribution to the research has been most valuable. We greatly appreciate the interest you have shown in this research, and the time you have given from your busy schedule, to let us know of your experiences and comments on these issues.

The research will be published as a part of a Doctoral thesis. I will be in touch once the thesis is made publicly available. Updates about the research can be found on the web at www.flinders.edu.au/sabs/nils/.

We thank you again for your participation in the research. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to call me on (08) 8201 2472 or email me at llainey.smith@flinders.edu.au.

Yours faithfully,

Ms Llainey Smith
PhD Student/Research Assistant
National Institute of Labour Studies
Flinders University

Appendix K: Ethics Approval Letter

Flinders University and Southern Area Health Service

SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Research Services Office, Union Building, Flinders University
GPO Box 2100, ADELAIDE SA 5001
Phone: (08) 8201 3116
Email: human_researchethics@flinders.edu.au

FINAL APPROVAL NOTICE

Principal Researcher:	Ms Llaine Smith				
Email:	llaine.smith@flinders.edu.au				
Address:	National Institute for Labour Studies,				
Project Title:	The Management of Meaning in Organisations: A Comparison of Value-based Organisations With and Without Profit-Generation Goals				
Project No.:	5188	Final Approval Date:	9 May 2011	Approval Expiry Date:	1 April 2013

The above proposed project has been **approved** on the basis of the information contained in the application, its attachments and the information subsequently provided.

If you have any outstanding permission letters (item D8), that may have been previously requested, please ensure that they are forwarded to the Committee as soon as possible. Additionally, for projects where approval has also been sought from another Human Research Ethics Committee (item G1), please be reminded that a copy of the ethics approval notice will need to be sent to the Committee on receipt.

In accordance with the undertaking you provided in your application for ethics approval for the project, please inform the Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee, giving reasons, if the research project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

You are also required to report anything which might warrant review of ethical approval of the protocol. Such matters include:

- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants;
- proposed changes in the protocol (modifications);
- any changes to the research team; and
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

To modify/amend a previously approved project please either mail or email a completed copy of the Modification Request Form to the Executive Officer, which is available for download from <http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/ethics/committees/social-and-behavioural-research-ethics-committee/notification-of-committee-decision.cfm>. Please ensure that any new or amended participant documents are attached to the modification request.

In order to comply with monitoring requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (March 2007)* an annual progress and/or final report must be submitted. A copy of the pro forma is available from <http://www.flinders.edu.au/research/info-for-researchers/ethics/committees/social-behavioural.cfm>.

Your first report is due on **9 May 2012** or on completion of the project, whichever is the earliest. *Please retain this notice for reference when completing annual progress or final reports.* If an extension of time is required, please email a request for an extension of time, to a date you specify, to human.researchethics@flinders.edu.au before the expiry date.



for Andrea Mather (formerly Jacobs)
Executive Officer
Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee

cc: Dr Debra King, deb.king@flinders.edu.au
Dr Jo Baulderstone, jo.baulderstone@flinders.edu.au

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