ALIGNMENT AND CONTRADICTION IN SOCIAL JUSTICE NON-PROFIT WORK

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki,
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.
We are all Treaty people.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates social justice non-profit employees' experiences of alignment and contradiction in their work. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 20 people who work in Canada for non-profits with a social justice mission, I show that employees' experiences of their work – whether they feel it is good or bad – depend in part on whether they experience alignment between their social justice values, their treatment at work, and the content of their work. Employees tend to expect alignment, and a lack of alignment or contradictions between an organization's values and practices can pose significant problems for employees, leading some to question whether good social justice non-profit work is even possible. A social justice mission sets up expectations about work content and working conditions, and the disappointment of these expectations constitutes a problem in and of itself, beyond the substantive issues to do with working conditions or work content that employees encounter.

List of Abbreviations Used

COVID	COVID-19 global pandemic that began in late 2019
E.D.	Executive Director
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPM	New Public Management
ONN	Ontario Non-Profit Network

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2015 the Ontario Nonprofit Network published a report outlining the need for a decent work movement in the non-profit sector (Van Ymeren & Lalande, 2015). The ONN's vision of decent work includes contractual elements of good working conditions such as fair wages and benefits, and it attends to relational and interpersonal elements of work, emphasizing the need for a "culture of equality and inclusion at work" in which "everyone's voices are valued and heard" (Ontario Nonprofit Network, n.d.). The need for a decent work movement suggests, of course, that many non-profit employees in Ontario are not compensated fairly and not treated with respect at work. This problem extends well beyond Ontario, as evidenced by a number of news articles from 2020 describing verbal abuse by managers (Green, 2020), emotional abuse and extreme overwork (Klostermann, 2020), work intensification leading to burnout and staff turnover (Buckner, 2020), and a general tendency toward "toxic" work environments (Habib, 2020) in Canadian non-profits.

On one level, this should not be surprising; issues with work can occur wherever work occurs, and the problems listed above are not unique to the non-profit sector. However, something about the sector leads to these problems being experienced and perceived in unique ways. As the ONN report states, there is an "inherent contradiction in the sector – mission-based organizations focused on creating better lives and outcomes for clients . . . may not be providing elements of those same outcomes for their own employees" (Van Ymeren & Lalande, 2015, p. 8). While mistreatment of employees and poor working conditions may be seen as issues wherever they occur, in the non-profit

sector these problems are not only an issue, but also often directly contradict the values and principles driving an organization's work. This thesis addresses that contradiction.

It also addresses another contradiction. The ONN report takes for granted that the content of an organization's work, the kinds of programs it runs and how it delivers them, is aligned with the organization's stated values and mission. As this thesis will demonstrate, this is not always the case, at least from an employee perspective. Issues ranging from funding constraints to differing interpretations of an organizational mission can lead to disconnects between actual practices and the values and ideals driving an organization's work. In this thesis, I examine how non-profit employees make sense of and respond to these contradictions between an organization's mission and values and its practices.

This research is motivated by a desire to address issues of exploitation and abuse and impediments to doing values-aligned work experienced by non-profit employees in Canada. On a personal level, having experienced poor treatment in a non-profit and having heard stories of poor treatment from others, I am interested in understanding what causes exploitation and abuse of non-profit employees and what might prevent it. More broadly, I believe that a non-profit's ability to carry out its mission is negatively impacted when those doing the work feel mistreated and/or prevented from working in line with their values and ideals. While non-profits are varied and have varying impacts, many provide critical social services and do important work for social justice. How effective they are in their work can have real effects on people's lives and the broader society. I thus believe that understanding non-profit workers' experiences of their work is an important step toward building a more just and joyful world.

The core concern underlying this research is therefore what constitutes a good place to work for non-profit employees, and what might make a particular organization a good or bad place to work. There are many facets to this broad question, and this thesis does not address or even try to enumerate them all. Instead, it focuses on one element, workers' experiences of alignment and contradiction in their work. I argue that part of what makes a non-profit a good workplace is alignment between the organization's values/mission and its practices in terms of the content of its work and the treatment of employees. In contrast, experiences of contradiction are often a cause of difficulty for workers. This thesis analyses the ways in which non-profit workers experience alignment and contradiction, and it looks at how they make sense of these experiences. While alignment can often be taken for granted (note, for example, the lack of news articles about non-profits acting in line with their missions and treating employees well), contradictions often prompt a need for some sort of explanation. They need to be made sense of. How people make sense of the situations in which they find themselves shapes their responses to those situations. By looking at whether and how non-profit employees experience contradictions, and when they do, how they make sense of them, I contribute to an understanding of some of the elements shaping non-profit work.

Before outlining the structure of the thesis, I want to clarify some key terms, including non-profit. Non-profits are "third sector" organizations, that is, they are neither private businesses nor part of government (Lewis, 2008, 2014). Some scholars, instead of using this negative definition that defines a sector by what it is not, refer to non-profits as part of the "social economy," thereby highlighting the fact that organizations in this sector are guided by social objectives (Quarter et al., 2018, p. 5). The word "nonprofit"

has a legal meaning which can vary across jurisdictions, and can differ from its meaning in academic and everyday use. I adopt the definition of scholars Quarter et al. (2018), who describe non-profits as "self-governing organization[s]. . . formed not for private gain but for public or mutual benefit purposes" (p. 5). This is a very broad category; it includes everything from small organizations with no paid staff to major research universities, it includes charities and amateur sports leagues.

This thesis focuses specifically on non-profits with a social justice mission. While the ONN describes an "inherent contradiction in the sector" between organizational missions and internal practices (Van Ymeren & Lalande, 2015, p. 8), given the diversity of non-profit organizations, the potential for this contradiction is not equally present throughout the entire sector. Issues with how employees are treated are not an inherent contradiction of every non-profit organization's mission, vision, and values. These issues do tend to be a contradiction of the mission, vision, or values of non-profit organizations doing social justice work, as I explain in the next paragraph. Further, alignment between a non-profit organization's mission and values and the work it does is more difficult to achieve when the organization is focused on addressing entrenched social issues and creating social change than when its mission is more modest. By focusing on non-profits with a social justice mission, this research addresses cases where issues with how workers are treated and what work an organization does are more likely to be understood as a contradiction of an organization's mission. Additionally, many of the organizations referenced in the news reports cited in the opening paragraph fall broadly under the umbrella of social justice. The problem of working conditions and poor treatment, while

it may exist in many non-profits, seems to be a particularly salient issue in social justice non-profit organizations.

Non-profits with a social justice mission is a much more meaningful grouping than the entire category of non-profits, yet this approach to defining the organizations of interest immediately raises the question of how to define social justice, or what criteria to use to determine whether a non-profit has a social justice mission. Social justice is referenced throughout the literature on non-profits and 'third sector' or 'social sector' organizations, yet its meaning seems to be taken for granted. In a book on sociology and social justice, Margaret Abraham (2018) writes that "while an exact definition is elusive . . . social justice, as a concept, draws our attention to embedded issues of wealth and resource distribution, oppression, representation, recognition, access, and safety" (p. 1). Based on this description of social justice, it is clear that many of the issues non-profit employees might face in their work are related to elements of social justice, for example low pay is an issue of resource distribution and harassment is an issue of oppression and/or safety. Given the difficulty of defining social justice and the goals of the research, I took an interpretive approach to the question of what counts as a social justice mission. I am interested in situations where a non-profit worker might see a contradiction between their organization's internal or external practices and its mission. What matters, therefore, is whether the worker sees the mission as a social justice one. As I explain in chapter three, I recruited participants who self-identified as working for a non-profit with a social justice mission, thereby leaving open the question of what social justice means, but ensuring that I was speaking to people who saw a connection between social justice and their organization's work.

The thesis is organized as follows: chapter two lays out key concepts and situates the research in relation to academic literature on work and non-profits. Chapter three describes the methods. Chapter four sets the context for the findings by introducing the reader to some of the comments participants made about contradictions between organizational missions and practices in their workplaces. I lay out a typology of contradiction, showing that participants spoke about contradictions occurring in two domains: the content of their work and their treatment at work. Chapter five addresses the issue of alignment in terms of the content of people's work. I describe ways in which participants felt their work did or did not align with social justice and their organizations' missions, and detail how they made sense of cases of contradiction. Participants explained a lack of alignment as resulting from structural forces, such as the funding, regulatory, and policy contexts within which non-profits operate, and they described how other people within organizations prevent or facilitate social justice work. Chapter six looks at contradictions in terms of people's treatment at work. In this chapter I discuss contradictions related to working conditions, and contradictions related to interpersonal interactions. Again, participants spoke about both elements external to the organization and internal to it as causes of contradiction. Chapter seven looks more closely at how participants made sense of contradiction by showing the pattern of sense-making present in three interviews. This chapter highlights the problem that contradiction posed for some participants. Chapter eight concludes the thesis by drawing together insights from the previous chapters.

Overall, the thesis show that social justice non-profit employees expect alignment between organizational missions and values, work content, and the treatment of staff.

When this alignment occurs, employees tend to be very happy in their work. They find it meaningful and fulfilling. Experiences of contradiction, by contrast, cause frustration and distress and can be difficult for workers to make sense of. A social justice mission generates an expectation on the part of many workers that social justice non-profit work will be good work, both in the sense of doing good in the world, and being a good place to work. When this expectation is disappointed, if the disappointment cannot be explained away, it can throw the entire sector into question, leaving workers wondering whether good work in a social justice non-profit is even possible. Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates that social justice non-profit work can be rewarding, fulfilling, and contribute to workers' well-being, or it can be harmful – subjecting workers to abuse and leaving them feeling at best that their work is ineffectual and at worst that it harms those it is meant to serve. In relation to social science literature on work, the thesis thus raises an important question: how can we theorize wage labour in a way that accounts for both its positive and negative effects on workers? It also highlights the need to centre the employment relation alongside or instead of the profit motive when studying and theorizing waged work, as workers in non-profit and for-profit enterprises face similar issues in terms of working conditions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Questions about the experiences of non-profit workers sit at the intersection of scholarship on work and research in the interdisciplinary field of third sector studies. In this chapter I draw on the sociology and anthropology of work to set up key concepts related to work and the social relations that structure it. I then review some of the third sector literature on non-profit work and working conditions to provide context for the research findings. I end by explaining why experiences of contradiction matter from the standpoint of social theory.

2.1 Thinking About Work

Work has a dual character. It is both an "essential source for human flourishing" and a potential site of suffering and discrimination (Bolton & Laaser, 2013, p. 508). While work can take many forms, some paid and others unpaid, in this thesis I leave to the side questions about what types of activities get classified as work and are considered worthy of remuneration, and focus solely on paid work and employment. I begin by addressing the relationship between work and suffering, or, to put it in more general terms, the ways work can negatively impact people. I then turn to a consideration of the positive dimensions of work.

In a basic sense, paid work is part of an economic exchange. One party sells their time and labour power to another party in exchange for a wage. Questions about pay and the ways in which inequality is reproduced through employment centre on this aspect of work. For example, the Marxist concept of exploitation is concerned with this exchange relation. For Marx (1887/1974), exploitation is the extraction of surplus-labour and therefore surplus-value in the labour process. Essentially, Marx argues that workers are

not paid for all the work they do. Through working, they create value that is worth more than the wages they are paid. The difference between what they are paid, and the value they create, is what enables the survival of those who own the means of production and are not engaged in the direct production of value, and it is how capitalists generate profit. As Marx (1887/1974) explains it, "the rate of surplus-value is therefore an exact expression for the degree of exploitation of labour-power by capital, or of the labourer by the capitalist" (p. 209). In a capitalist economy where there is a drive to continually increase profit, this leads to attempts to extract ever more surplus-labour from workers, which can generate problems such as increased work intensity and duration, and low pay.

As a concept, exploitation primarily addresses the fairness of an economic exchange. Yet work is more than an economic transaction of one type of commodity for another. It also involves social relations between people. An important way in which work can harm workers comes from the interpersonal as opposed to purely economic aspect of work. As Kathi Weeks (2011) argues, the economic problem of exploitation is actually a secondary issue. The precondition for exploitation, and the heart of the problem with work, is the relationship of domination and subordination between those who purchase labour power and those who sell it. While material inequality generates a situation in which some have the means to purchase labour power and others have no choice but to sell their labour power, the fact that the employer has a right to direct the activities of his or her employees is a more fundamental problem (Weeks, 2011, p. 21). In other words, the problem with work is not just that people are forced to sell their labour power, or that they are unfairly remunerated, but that they are controlled in the exercise of their labour power. Employment involves a power relation, and this power relation

restricts the freedom of employees. While this unfreedom is a fundamental problem, that is, while it can be understood as a problem apart from any particular employee's good or bad experiences at work, it is also part of what makes specific bad experiences like abuse and overwork possible.

Work clearly includes perils. Workers can be exploited and they can be subject to domination. Yet while exploitation and domination may be inherent features of wage labour, not every worker feels exploited and dominated at work. In fact, many workers find meaning and even joy in their work. It is important here to distinguish between analyses such as those above which deal with phenomena at a structural and societal level, and analyses of the quotidian experiences of actual employees. Both levels of analysis are important for understanding work, and for thinking about ways to support human flourishing. That is, I want to suggest that we can critique the way productive labour is organized, and yet still recognize that work under conditions of wage labour may be an overall positive experience, or at least have many positive elements, for some workers.

Randy Hodson uses the concept of dignity to examine how work can be a positive and/or negative experience for workers. Hodson (2001) sees workers as actively engaged in pursuing dignity through their work. He defines dignity as "the ability to establish a sense of self-worth and self-respect and to appreciate the respect of others" (Hodson, 2001, p. 3). Dignity thus has both inherent and earned aspects. It is considered something that people have by virtue of being human, but also something that they earn through their actions. People deserve to be treated with respect because of their inherent human

dignity, but they also earn dignity through their actions and behaviour, such as doing work in which they can take pride.

Hodson (2001) describes four ways in which dignity at work is established and maintained. Dignity is sought through acts of resistance to abuse, through attempts to increase the effectiveness, efficiency, or quality of one's work, through the creation of meaning systems tangential to the actual content of the work, and through the development of supportive relationships with coworkers (Hodson, 2001, p. 17). Threats to dignity include abuse, chaotic workplaces, mismanagement, overwork, and a lack of autonomy (Hodson, 2001, p. 17). This understanding of work and dignity focuses on how dignity is fostered or undermined through processes that occur inside a workplace. It does not address important social aspects of the way work intersects with dignity, for example, through the ways wage labour is "upheld as a source of social ties [and] dignity" while other non-waged forms of work, such as collecting and selling recyclables, often confer a low social status (Millar, 2018, pp. 9, 10). Although Hodson's theory ignores this contextual element, its emphasis on earned aspects of dignity prompts attention to how people ascribe meaning to their work, which is important as workers may take pride in activities that are not valued by the wider society (Hodson, 2001, p. 4; Millar, 2018). Overall, a focus on dignity makes it possible to think about how work can both contribute to, and detract from, people's well-being.

Recent scholarship on work identifies a trend towards work becoming more engaging. The Taylorized work processes of the first half of the 20th century that treated people like machines have been replaced (at least in some cases) with processes meant to make work meaningful and fulfilling and give workers more autonomy, but only insofar

as this contributes to the creation of profit (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007). Since the late 20th century workers themselves have also increasingly sought fulfilment and constructed a sense of self and identity through work (Ezzy, 1997). For Marxist scholars, this increased engagement and involvement of the self in work is a problem because it facilitates "an instrumentalization of human beings in their most specifically human dimensions" (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2007, p. 98). The problem here seems to be that people are formed and shaped to serve the demands of capital.

Weeks (2011), in discussing the concepts of the work society and the work ethic, puts this engagement and desire to seek fulfilment in work in a broader social context. She argues that people's relationships to work are shaped by a societal view of work as "an individual moral practice and collective ethical obligation" (Weeks, 2011, p. 11). The proclivity for finding meaning and fulfilment in work is related to a social context in which paid work is highly valued ethically and morally, and in which people derive a sense of worth and identity from their employment (Ezzy, 1997; Weeks, 2011). The fact that paid employment plays such a significant role in people's lives and self-understandings is neither natural nor inevitable, it is historically and culturally specific.

A recognition of the social overvaluation of work, and the potential downsides to the promotion of engagement and fulfilment in work, should not obscure the fact that doing engaging and meaningful work can be a positive experience for workers. In this thesis I try to attend to workers' own accounts of their experiences of work. As the following chapters will show, for non-profit workers, work can be meaningful, fulfilling and an important element of well-being. Yet, as will become evident from the discussion of the third sector literature below and from later chapters of the thesis, seeking meaning

and fulfilment in work can also make employees vulnerable to harm. Engaging and meaningful work, or in Marxist vocabulary, work that may be experienced as unalienated, has the potential both to promote well-being and to cause harm.

2.2 Work in the Third Sector

Third sector research is concerned with the role and functioning of non-profits and non-governmental organizations. The field is largely divided in two with some scholars studying the third sector in rich Western nations (sometimes referred to as the minority world) and others focusing on the sector in less wealthy nations (also called the majority world) (Lewis, 2014). As my research focuses on Canada, I draw on the literature dealing with non-profits in the minority world. Much of this literature looks at organizations providing social services, and is concerned with changes to working conditions and services resulting from the introduction of managerialism, changes in government policy, and reduced funding.

Managerialism in the non-profit sector has largely taken the form of New Public Management (NPM) which focuses on cutting costs, measuring performance, and increasing efficiency (Baines & Cunningham, 2017; Rasmussen, 2004). This has intensified the pace and volume of work in social services non-profits, degraded/deskilled the work, and reduced employees' pay (Baines, 2004, 2010; Baines & Cunningham, 2011; Cunningham, 2010; Venter et al., 2019). It has left employees demoralized and increased incidence of burnout and workplace illness and injury (Baines, 2010). This has negatively impacted the clients social service non-profits serve, as the new forms of management and demands from funders shifts the focus from the relational, qualitative work involved in supporting people, to meeting quantitative measures of success that

may have little or no relation to what is actually needed to properly help or care for clients (Cunningham, 2010; A. Kosny & MacEachen, 2009; Wright, 2013). Overall, this literature describes a situation in which non-profit employees face poor working conditions and may experience a disconnect between organizational values/mission and practices as a result of inadequate funding and changes to how non-profits are managed. The literature focuses primarily on people in frontline roles; it is less concerned with the impact of managerialism on those in management positions, although a few studies describe increased workloads, stress and dissatisfaction, especially for lower level managers, resulting from pressure to focus on targets instead of delivering quality services (Baines & Cunningham, 2017; Cunningham & James, 2009). The experiences and beliefs of those responsible for initiating and implementing managerialism within organizations is understudied.

It is unclear from the articles dealing with working conditions why social service non-profits in Canada have adopted NPM. This is an important question, given that the adoption of NPM has made it difficult for organizations to do their work in ways that best align with their missions and values. However, Baines (2004) describes how NPM was adopted by different Canadian provinces at different times, and she discusses the changed expectations for government-funded non-profits that followed the adoption of NPM by provincial governments (p. 274). It seems, therefore, that the adoption of NPM principles has been motivated or demanded by governments as part of their funding agreements with non-profits. Whether or to what degree NPM has been adopted in non-profits not receiving significant government funding, and if it has been adopted what prompted this adoption, is not addressed by the above-cited research.

While poor working conditions and lower quality service is understood to result from external pressures on non-profit organizations such as reductions in funding and the adoption of NPM, workers' responses to these pressures are shaped by the fact that for many their work is central to their identity. Non-profit workers commonly see their jobs as a way to live their values (Baines & Cunningham, 2011; Venter et al., 2019). Indeed, workers at all levels in social service non-profits tend to be drawn to the work because of a belief in, and commitment to, the organization's mission (Cunningham, 2010). Work is thus an important way in which these employees are engaged in developing and enacting a sense of themselves as moral persons. There is also a gendered dimension to non-profit employees' commitment to, and sense of fulfilment from, their work. In Canada, women make up about three quarters of the non-profit workforce (Statistics Canada, 2021). Many of these workers derive meaning and satisfaction from doing work that aligns with and reinforces a gendered understanding of themselves as carers who sacrifice for the good of others (Wright, 2013).

It is clear from the foregoing that social service non-profit employees are highly engaged overall, in part because their work is a key way in which they enact an understanding of themselves as gendered and ethical persons. While this is an important source of meaning for these employees, it also makes them particularly vulnerable to harm in situations where there is pressure to take on extra work, or where giving effective and humane support to clients is not valued or rewarded by those in positions of power, as has occurred with the introduction of NPM. The fact that the majority of frontline staff in social service non-profits are women, and that women are seen to be 'naturally' caring, has led to a view of the work as low-skill, which provides a justification for the low pay

and lack of authority given to these workers (Wright, 2013). Thus although doing work that reinforces their gender identity is valued by many workers, the gender dynamics also lead to a devaluation of the work that makes it difficult to argue for better working conditions. Many employees, especially women, work overtime for free in order to maintain their sense of integrity and moral conviction by limiting the impacts of declining public care on their clients (Aronson & Neysmith, 2006; Baines, 2004). Baines (2004) describes these employees as "compelled" to overwork by an explicit or implied threat to their identity or morality (p.286). While this overwork enables employees to maintain their sense of integrity and benefits clients in the short term, it is unsustainable and ultimately has negative impacts on employees' health and well-being, as well as that of the clients they serve (Aronson & Neysmith, 2006; Baines, 2006; Wright, 2013). Overall, many social service non-profit employees, and especially the female majority of the workforce in this sector, appear to be caught in a situation where working in line with their values is very difficult, and sometimes made possible only through their own self-exploitation (Baines et al., 2012). Finding value and meaning in one's work can be a double-edged sword. It can lead to a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction, but this can also make workers more exploitable.

The analyses developed in the literature presented above address how external factors and workers' identity and engagement generate and sustain poor working conditions and the delivery of lower quality services. Another crucial factor, that receives relatively less attention, is the impact managers and relationships between non-management and management employees can have on service quality and the treatment of workers. Within a shared context of insufficient funding and New Public Management,

some organizations display supportive relationships between management and frontline workers, based in collective commitments to social justice, while frontline employees in other organizations describe abusive managers and a "culture of fear" in their organizations (Baines et al., 2012; Cunningham et al., 2017, p. 383). The point here is that external factors influence what happens in an organization *through* the decisions and actions of employees, particularly those in management positions who are able to exercise more control over the labour process. This is not meant to downplay the effect of contextual factors, but to highlight the importance of the processes through which treatment of staff and work content are influenced, processes which can involve resistance to external pressures.

A consideration of how factors other than managerialism and inadequate funding can create problems for non-profit employees is largely absent from the literature. However, one study looks specifically at experiences of contradiction. While the study is framed within a larger context of conflict between funders' demands for measurable outcomes and organizations' social goals, it addresses contradictions such as demands for workers to make autonomous decisions but also to comply with standardised care delivery plans, and tensions between maintaining professional boundaries while also providing client-centred care (Venter et al., 2019). Venter et al (2019) argue that these contradictions have negative effects on staff, such as causing them to feel anxious, stressed, and frustrated, but these effects can be mitigated (although not eradicated) when there are opportunities to communicate about the contradictions themselves. This communication is dependent on relationships between managers and lower-level workers in which workers feel supported and are involved in decision-making. Despite the

importance of external influences on non-profit working conditions and work content, relations within a non-profit, and particularly relationships between managers and those they manage, are crucial in shaping employees' experiences of work. The power relation inherent in employment matters; the kind of culture managers create and how they do, or do not, support those working for them must be taken into account alongside issues related to funding.

2.3 A Sociological Approach to Contradiction

The foregoing discussion hints at a central theme in sociological theory: the tension between structure and agency. Social structures or forces, for example capitalism, shape social institutions and relations, yet these structures are ultimately created and recreated through the acts of people with agentive capacities. Conceptualizing this relationship between people and the social world, and how they constitute each other, is a major task of social theory. Niklas Luhmann takes on this task by developing a theory of social structure based in expectations. Luhmann's theory relies on the concept of autopoiesis, which "describes the way living organisms function: they literally produce themselves out of their own internal operations" (Guy, 2018, p. 290). Luhmann understands social systems as operating the same way. A social system for Luhmann is composed of operations that exist only as passing events. These operations are temporally delimited. A system is thus not composed of parts, but is rather "a self-sustaining chain or cascade of events" (Guy, 2018, p. 290). The structures of these social systems "consist in expectations" (Luhmann, 1995, p. 293). Through our interactions, we develop expectations of how events will unfold and people will behave. Far from being an individual psychological or emotional experience, expectations and disappointment

structure our social world. When our expectations are disappointed, we can react "by adapting the expectation to the disappointment (learning) or, conversely, by retaining the expectation despite the disappointment and insisting on behaviour conforming to the expectation" (Luhmann, 1995, p. 293). Expectations that are held on to are what we call social norms. Expectations give the social world some stability, they enable the social system to move from one event to the next and not become undifferentiated chaos. Yet expectations can always be disappointed, and this introduces uncertainty and the possibility of change. Through changes in expectations, the structure of the system itself changes.

This thesis deals with non-profit employees' experiences of contradiction. Contradiction, as I employ the concept here, is related to expectations. In order to experience their treatment at work or the content of their work as a contradiction of an organization's mission, employees must first have an expectation of the kinds of treatment and work the mission calls for. A contradiction is experienced only when these expectations are disappointed. In Luhmann's framework, what employees do in these cases of disappointment matters on a social and systemic level. Expectations that are held onto despite disappointment contribute to the formation of a social norm, they reinforce the expectation itself. Expectations that are revised may contribute to the creation of different norms. Studying expectations and disappointment, or in this case a specific subset of disappointment experienced as contradiction, matters for understanding people's experiences of work, and for understanding the structures that shape work.

2.4 Conclusion

Work can be a source of fulfilment and/or of harm for workers. It can be a good experience, a bad experience, or a mix of both. In the 21st century in the minority world, many workers actively seek meaning, fulfilment, and a sense of identity through work. This is especially true of non-profit workers, who tend to be drawn to their work by a belief in the mission and values of the organization for which they work, and who enact a sense of themselves as gendered and ethical persons through work. Yet this involvement and commitment can make workers vulnerable to exploitation, particularly in situations where non-profit organizations are under-resourced and funders' demands shape the labour process in ways which undermine the organization's overarching mission and values.

Managers play a significant role in exacerbating or mitigating the effects of these external factors. Work is shaped by power relations between employer and employee, managers and those they manage. How managers exercise this power can have a significant impact on the work experiences of those they manage. Managers can threaten employees' dignity by overworking and verbally abusing employees.

As I will argue in chapter four, a key element determining whether a non-profit workplace or job is a good one is whether the worker experiences alignment between their interpretation of the organization's mission and values, the content of their work, and their treatment at work. Non-profit workers generally expect alignment, and a lack of alignment, which can be experienced as contradiction, is therefore a case in which the employee's expectations have been disappointed. Luhmann's concept of social norms consisting of expectations that are not disposed towards learning helps explain the

relationship between expectations, experiences of contradiction, and non-profit employees responses to these experiences.

Chapter 3: Methods

3.1 Data Collection

I used semi-structured interviews to learn about non-profit employees' experiences at work, and how they make sense of the relationship between their organization's mission and the experience of working in the organization. I began with basic questions about the interviewee's job and the organization for which they work, and then transitioned into questions about their experiences at work. The interview guide, attached as appendix A, shows the kinds of questions I asked, although in most interviews I found the participant had lots to say and often touched on the themes covered in the interview guide without me directly asking the questions I had prepared.

Interviews were an appropriate method for this study, as they enabled me to elicit participants' narratives about their work. Narratives are how we make sense of the world, our selves and identities, and our lives (Frank, 2002, p. 110). The need to make sense of an experience is particularly pronounced when there "has been a breach between ideal and real", that is, when what happened is not what one expected to happen or thinks should have happened (Riessman, 1993, p. 3). I was particularly interested in instances where research participants had experienced contradictions between an organizational mission and their organization's practices or their personal treatment at work. Interviews, which provide an opportunity for research participants to narrate their experiences, including experiences of contradiction, were thus an ideal method for this research.

In doing this research, I was also conscious that I was asking people to tell me about their work, including things they felt were bad, or policies and actions they disagreed with, in their workplaces. Confidentiality and anonymity were thus essential, in order to prevent any potential negative impacts on participants' employment. This ethical

consideration reinforced the choice of interviews as a research method, as it allowed me to speak to participants at times and in places where they felt it was safe to speak about their work.

I conducted 19 of the interviews over Zoom: 18 of these were done with video and one with my video on but the participant's off due to internet connectivity issues. The other interview I intended to do by Zoom, but switched to using the phone last-minute as Zoom was not working on my computer. I recorded every interview. The choice to use video-conferencing software for the interviews was a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which made it inadvisable to be in close proximity to people who were not part of one's limited "bubble" of regular contacts. I conducted the interviews between late August and mid December 2020. The interviews ranged in length from one hour and 15 minutes to two hours, with most taking an hour and a half or longer.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 Recruitment

I recruited interviewees through my own social network, and through social media, including through posts in groups for people working in the non-profit sector. I also used snowball sampling, although I found this was not very effective, in part as I was trying to recruit participants from a variety of organizations, and therefore discouraged people from referring multiple colleagues. I am indebted to the many friends, family, professors, and acquaintances who shared my recruitment poster and reached out through their own networks to connect potential research participants to me.

Given the importance of anonymity for this research, I have chosen to provide group level information on the demographic characteristics of the research participants

and the organizations for which they work, but not to link these together into descriptions of particular people in specific kinds of workplaces. I have assigned a pseudonym to each participant, and throughout this thesis I provide information about the person, their position, or the type of work they do only as it is relevant to the discussion. In a few cases I have used two or three different pseudonyms for one participant and split the quoted material and examples between these pseudonyms, or created composite participants that combine material from more than one actual participant. This has enabled me to provide important details about a situation where necessary, without risking providing too much information linked to any one person or workplace. I use the term Executive Director to describe the staff role/person at the top of an organizational hierarchy, and the term client to refer to anyone being served by an organization. These were terms commonly used by interviewees, but some organizations use different terms, such as CEO for the top staff person, or community members for people they are serving. I have standardized the language in order to make organizations less distinctive as a way to further protect participants' anonymity. The downside to this approach is that, in relation to language around clients, it obscures important philosophical elements to do with how organizations conceive of those they are serving and the kinds of relations they foster between staff and those served. For some organizations in this sample, how these relationships are framed is central to their work and their understanding of social justice.

I interviewed 20 people who work or worked in Canada for non-profits that they understand as having a social justice mission. As I was interested in workers' perspectives on the relationship between their organization's mission and the experience of working in the organization, what mattered was the participant's own understanding of

the organisation's mission. As a result, I was not concerned with whether an organization's mission matched a pre-determined notion of social justice, or whether it matched my own understanding of social justice, but rather whether the interviewee understood the organizational mission as a social justice one.

3.2.2 Participant Characteristics

At the end of each interview I asked participants some demographic questions. Our experiences in, and interpretations of, the world are shaped by socially salient characteristics such as age and gender. Knowing participants' characteristics in relation to these demographic categories is thus relevant for thinking about participants' experiences and interpretations, and for being able to compare the findings from this research to other case studies. As can be seen in the interview guide attached as appendix A, these demographic questions were mostly open-ended, enabling participants to use whatever language they preferred in describing themselves. Seventeen of the interviewees described their gender as female or woman, two as male or man and one described himself as a trans male. In the Canadian non-profit sector as a whole, about 77% of jobs are held by women, so women are only slightly over-represented in this research in comparison to the sector (Statistics Canada, 2021). Participants ranged in age from 25 to 64: five were between 25 and 29, eight were in their thirties, four were in their forties, one was in her fifties, and two were in their sixties. As a group, they were very well educated; eight had Bachelor's degrees, eight had Master's degrees, one person had a Ph.D., two interviewees did not mention their educational backgrounds, and one had a high school diploma. Nineteen of the participants were Canadian citizens, and one had permanent resident status in Canada.

As this research is about social justice work, I also asked participants about other aspects of their identity that might increase or decrease the likelihood of them experiencing identity-related injustices at work. I did this primarily as I felt it was important to know if there were identity categories that were not captured in my sample. I thought experiences of discrimination on the basis of identity would likely come up in the interviews if they had occurred, but I wanted to be able to explicitly address which voices are not included in this research. I therefore asked about racial/ethnic identity, sexual orientation, and disability.

Sixteen of the participants described themselves as White or White-presenting, two described themselves as Middle Eastern, one as East Asian, and one as Tamil. Notably, no one who identified as Indigenous or Black participated in this research. I began interviews at the end of a summer in which there was a groundswell of support for the Black Lives Matter movement. Increased attention to anti-Black racism and police brutality led many organizations, for-profit and non-profit alike, to make statements condemning anti-Black racism. Despite these condemnations, racism, including anti-Black racism, exists in non-profits as elsewhere in Canadian society (Allen, 2020). Discussions of anti-Black racism and Black Lives Matter came up in the interviews, but I did not speak to any Black employees, and therefore any experiences distinctive to Black people working in non-profits are by default excluded from this research. This exclusion may be particularly salient given the societal context in which the research took place. The absence of Indigenous voices is also noteworthy. Canada is a settler-colonial state, and scholars have documented ways in which non-profits are involved in reproducing colonialism in Canada, in part through their entanglement with the state (Fortier & Hon-

Sing Wong, 2019; Lee, 2011). Given this context, Indigenous non-profit employees may have unique experiences of, and perspectives on, issues of social justice and contradiction which by default are not captured in this research.

Interviewees described their sexual orientation in multiple ways. Ten of the 20 described themselves as something other than straight or heterosexual, although one interviewee pointed out that how she identifies and how she presents at work are not necessarily aligned. I did not ask interviewees how they thought their sexual orientation is perceived by their colleagues, but the participant group was diverse in terms of sexual orientation, and one participant did mention a negative experience related to sexual orientation and work.

Four participants said they identify as having a disability and 16 said they do not identify as having a disability. One of the participants who does not identify as having a disability does have a permanent medical condition which others might describe as a disability, but the participant herself chooses not to identify this way. During the interview, she told me about an experience of being denied accommodations that she requested due to her medical condition. While some people with disabilities participated in the research, someone who saw my recruitment poster on social media questioned the criteria for participation, which included that participants needed to have been in their current social justice non-profit job for at least a year, and needed to work there at least 15 hours per week. The commenter suggested that these criteria excluded many disabled people, who might work fewer hours or not be able to maintain a job for a full year, for reasons related to their disability. I did not ask participants whether their disabilities are usually apparent to others or not, and therefore I do not know whether the group of

participants included anyone who might experience discrimination on the basis of appearing disabled.

As the above discussions of sexual orientation and disability suggest, the relationship between identity and experience can be complex. I spoke to twenty people, and their experiences and views are what I have tried to capture and analyze in this thesis. They are not representative of anyone other than themselves. That said, our experiences are shaped by socially salient identity categories. While incomplete and far from perfect, I hope that the above descriptions give the reader some sense of the characteristics of people who participated in this research, and also what groups of people are not included.

3.3.3 Organizations and Participants' Work

The people I spoke to were spread across seven provinces, 10 worked in Ontario, five in British Columbia, and one each in Nova Scotia, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Thirteen participants were in cities of more than a million people, two worked in cities with a population between 500,000 and one million, four worked in cities with a population between 100,000 and and 499,000 and one participant worked in a city of less than 40,000 people[1]. Together, the interviewees worked for 18 different organizations, although at least 13 of the 20 participants had worked for another non-profit organization previously. The interview data therefore includes reflections on, and discussion of, work at more than 18 non-profits. I found that people who had worked in multiple non-profits engaged in comparative analysis of their working conditions and the challenges of doing social justice non-profit work. This comparative perspective added an important element to some interviewee's sense-making around their work experiences.

[1] All population counts are based on 2016 census data.

The organizations participants worked for spanned multiple sectors, including environment, health (including mental health), international development, immigration, LGBTQ+ rights, disability, poverty, law, animal welfare, food security, community building, religion, and violence against women. Thirteen of the non-profits are engaged in direct service provision, while five are umbrella organizations focused on coalition and capacity building within a sector. The organizations ranged in size from two full-time employees to 400 employees. Eight of the organizations had between two and 13 employees, seven had between 20 and 40 employees, and five organizations had 75 or more employees. There was thus a fairly even distribution between small, medium and large organizations. Some organizations also made extensive use of volunteers. As my primary interest was people's experiences at work, not organizational characteristics, I did not solicit detailed information on employee composition (e.g. full-time versus part-time, contract versus permanent) or the number of volunteers. Nonetheless, the above description gives a general sense of the range in organizational size. The organizations also varied in terms of their funding sources, some relied primarily on government funding, some primarily on funding from foundations and private donors, and others received funding from a mix of these sources.

Participants' length of time in their current workplaces ranged from one year to 10 years. Fifteen interviewees had been at their workplace four years or fewer, and five had been in their current workplace for five or more years. All interviewees were employed full-time in their non-profit jobs. Most had permanent jobs, one had a job that was effectively permanent, but was arranged as a series of one-year contracts, and two were hired on contracts that were tied to funding for specific projects. Three participants

had left their jobs (and, at least for the immediate future, non-profit work) and one was dismissed from her job during the year prior to the recruitment and interview phase of the research. All four participants left roles where they were quite unhappy, due either to feeling personally mistreated at work, and/or to frustrations with the work itself.

Participants occupied a variety of positions within their organizations. Ten were in management positions, and two of these were executive directors. Nine participants were either working directly with people the organization serves, or were supervising those in frontline roles. Participants' roles spanned programs, operations, finance, development/fundraising, communications, and health and safety. As such, the group included experiences and knowledge of most aspects of non-profit work, from funding structures and board relations to the day to day challenges of service delivery. Three participants were in jobs that are part of a union, or in the process of becoming unionized, and one person was a manager in a unionized workplace.

3.4 Analysis

I transcribed all interviews and then coded them using the qualitative research software NVIVO12. I began with a set of 16 codes based on themes I knew had arisen in the interviews, and then added an additional 37 codes as I went along, for a total of 53 codes. A table of the codes is attached as appendix C. When I had finished an initial coding of all the interviews, I returned to the first interviews I coded and re-coded them to include the additional codes I had developed. Once I decided to structure the thesis around the concepts of alignment and contradiction, I developed a spreadsheet using Excel. Each column in the spreadsheet represented one interview, and in the rows I noted whether the participant spoke about alignment and/or contradictions, and if so, in what

elements of their work. I also noted if and how interviewees explained or made sense of contradictions. I included quotes and examples from the interviews. I thus ended up with one (very large) spreadsheet, that summarized each interviewee's comments on alignment and contradiction and allowed me to easily compare reflections across all the interviews for each element of participants' work.

3.5 Reflections on the Interviews

Interviews are a conversation between researcher and research participant. As Portelli explains, "An inter/view is an exchange between *two* subjects: literally a mutual sighting" (1991, p. 31). Just as the interviewer is trying to understand the interviewee and make sense of what she says, the interviewee is also responding to the interviewer, trying to understand who the interviewer is, what she believes, and what she might want to hear. The data I draw on in this thesis are shaped, therefore, not only by my choice of method (semi-structured interviews) and who I spoke to, but also by my own participation in the research process, and the ideas and experiences that have shaped my relationship to the subject matter.

This research was prompted by my own experiences working in a non-profit organization in Canada. The overall experience of working in that organization was both wonderful and awful. The good parts were incredible, and the bad parts, which mainly had to do with how workers were treated, were quite bad. As I spoke to others involved in non-profit work, both while I was in that job and during the job I held subsequently (before beginning my M.A.), I discovered that many people had had similar bad experiences. This left me feeling surprised and disappointed, in part because I felt that, in the organization I worked for, many of the bad things could have been prevented. I

therefore entered this research with a couple of assumptions: one, that many non-profit employees in Canada experience mistreatment at work, and two, that this mistreatment is not a necessary part of non-profit work. The conversations I had with interviewees were informed by these initial assumptions.

I intentionally positioned myself as somewhat of an insider to non-profit work, by stating on my recruitment poster that my interest in the topic came from my own non-profit work experience. I am not sure how many participants read or remembered this by the time of their interview. Many people asked me at the end of the interview how I had come to this research topic or why I was interested in it.

In general I felt it was easy for me to develop good rapport with the people I interviewed. Sometimes, the interviews felt more like a conversation about a topic of mutual interest than an interview. Of course, these were interviews, and I was generally the one asking questions, but in many cases the interviewees had been thinking about non-profit work in depth for a long time. Their engagement in the research was therefore shaped by the fact that they had been asking many of the same questions I was, often for at least as long as I had been. I was often struck by the thoughtfulness of participants' responses and the complexity of their analyses. One person even mentioned a scholarly article on the interview topic during the interview! I shared both a background in non-profit work and a set of mutual interests with many participants and this shaped the kinds of conversations we had.

Participants seemed to enjoy the opportunity to talk about their work and their experiences. I suspect, due to social conventions of politeness, no one would have told me directly if they had disliked the experience. That said, some specifically mentioned

enjoying it, saying “it was great” and “it was really nice” and in one case a participant suggested doing another interview if I wanted. Two participants described their interviews as “cathartic”. For some people, who had had difficult experiences at work, the interview seemed to present an opportunity to have their experiences recognized and acknowledged. Others seemed to appreciate the opportunity to tell me about their work and why it mattered, in the process reinforcing an understanding of themselves as good people doing important work.

Chapter 4: Introducing Alignment and Contradiction

The people I spoke to for this research worked in a range of sectors and occupied various positions in non-profit organizations. They also varied in terms of their experiences of their work. Some people were very happy in their workplaces and told me about how much they loved their jobs. Others were quite unhappy, indeed, some had left their non-profit jobs recently due to how unhappy they were. These interviewees told me about the frustrations and mistreatment they had experienced at work. Some participants fell between these two poles; they told me about the elements that made their work good, as well as things they found frustrating or difficult. Throughout these conversations about their work, and what made it good and/or bad, participants spoke about alignment and/or contradictions between their organizations' social justice missions and its actions. In this chapter, I introduce the concepts of alignment and contradiction as an important element shaping social justice non-profit employees' experiences of work.

All the people I spoke to were motivated to do the work they did by some notion of social justice or a desire to help others. Tamara explained that she "wanted to engage in helping people in some way," Jennifer "wanted to be of service to people who were experiencing poverty in Canada" through "creat[ing] spaces of belonging" and Kelly was drawn to her organization by "the social justice piece" of its mission. As is the case for many non-profit employees, the participants in this research were not just doing a job, they were trying to live their values through their work. As a result, the degree to which their work actually aligned with these values was an important factor shaping their experiences of work.

Participants did not frame every positive experience at work in terms of alignment, nor every negative experience in terms of contradiction. Chapters five and six

explore in more detail how alignment and contradiction relate to participants' work experiences, and what kinds of experiences were not framed in this way. However, the concepts of alignment and contradiction, which I develop further below, captured many of the experiences participants recounted. They are useful conceptually because they can address positive and negative experiences of non-profit work, related to both an organization's internal and external practices. A focus on contradiction especially helps explain potential harms that may be specific to non-profit work.

4.1 Alignment, Contradiction, and Work Content

Those who were very happy in their jobs talked about alignment between their values and their organization's activities when discussing what made their work good. Shirley mentioned that she was "making a contribution that aligned very well with my core values" and Kayla said her work,

> feels fulfilling . . . in that there's space to explore my personal values and I think that our team really aligns in terms of all of our collective values and what the values of [organization name] are. . . . I feel like it's fulfilling work and I feel like we are making a difference for folks and that is rewarding.

For Kayla and for Shirley, their jobs provided an opportunity to do work in line with their values, and this is part of what made these jobs good. For them, as for others who participated in this research, alignment between their values and the content of their work mattered. This fits with Hodson's (2001) insight that workers try to establish a sense of dignity in their working lives, and that being able to take pride in their work fosters dignity. Work that is aligned with their values is work in which employees can take pride (Reynolds, 2011). The importance of this alignment for workers' satisfaction likely also

stems from the tendency since the late 20th century for workers to seek meaning, fulfilment, and self-realization through work (Ezzy, 1997).

As I discuss in detail in chapter five, however, alignment between the work an organization does, the organization's mission and values, and the values of an employee can be difficult to achieve. Many participants talked about lack of alignment and experiences of contradiction. Anna told me,

> the non-profit sector has also been facing a lot of introspection and critiques from within over the past several months . . . And I think that's something that the non-profit sector is going to have to grapple with, is how do you actually, how do you reconcile the desire to match your vision and your mission with what you do and how you do it, when you are constrained by policies, procedures, etc., power.

Anna then went on to describe in more detail some of the elements that impact a non-profit's ability to act in line with its mission. Anna's comments demonstrate that having a mission is not the same thing as acting in line with that mission. Moreover, Anna frames this as a general issue within the non-profit sector at large. In other words, alignment cannot be taken for granted; it is an issue, to some extent, throughout much of the sector. Anna's perception that this is a broad issue matches the findings from my research: 14 of the 20 people I interviewed spoke about lack of alignment or contradictions between the mission of an organization for which they worked, and the organization's practices.

Anna framed alignment as a general issue in the non-profit sector, not a specific or personal problem she encountered in her work. Later in the interview, when discussing social justice, she told me "I think there is a base and then there's always more that you can do. I think it's a journey as well. So it's never gonna be perfect, because the

perfection on it doesn't really exist." Anna views alignment as a continual process; there is always the possibility of an organization's practices becoming more aligned with its mission and values. Anna was generally happy in her work, and although she felt there were areas where her organization could, and in some cases actively was, working towards greater alignment, she did not seem to feel a sense of strong contradiction between the mission, her values, and organizational practices at her work.

In contrast, other participants discussed concrete examples of what they saw as outright contradictions between an organization's mission and its actions. Tara told me about ways her organization "devalue[s] the same people that we're advocating for", and provided examples that included issues with how an advisory committee was set up, and a manager making light of a problem some clients were facing that they had brought up in a focus group run by the organization. Reflecting on these incidents, Tara said "like are we [meaning she and managers in the organization] in the same sector? Are we like talking about the same things when we talk about social justice?" Later in the interview when I asked Tara if she saw a contradiction between the organization's values and the way it engages in its work, she told me "I would say there is a strong contradiction. It's not really aligned." Tara experienced a number of problems at her work, one of which was this contradiction between the organization's stated mission and its actions, and she ultimately left as a result. Taken together, Anna's and Tara's comments show that a lack of alignment can occur in degrees. Alignment, as I employ the concept, is not a binary variable, something that is present or absent, but rather something with multiple gradations. Its conceptual counterpoint in my analysis is contradiction. A sense of contradiction increases as alignment decreases.

As the quote from Tara above and the two quotes that opened this section demonstrate, participants themselves used the word "alignment" when speaking about their work. This concept is therefore grounded in participants own articulations of their experience. In other cases, participants did not use the language of alignment, but as in the quote from Anna, they talked about the "match" between an organization's mission and actions, or they articulated this same idea in other ways. I have thus taken the language of alignment that some interviewees used, and applied it to other interview material where it seemed to capture what the participant was speaking about. In contrast to alignment, participants rarely used the word "contradiction". Instead, they spoke of "dissonance," or stated that there was "harmony missing" in their work. They also spoke of values and actions "not being aligned" and "non-profits preaching one thing and then practising another". Contradiction is the word I have chosen to name these experiences participants described.

The examples I have discussed so far all deal with questions of alignment and contradiction in terms of the content of an organization's work, that is, in relation to elements such as the kinds of programs it runs or how clients are treated. Many non-profit employees, including those who participated in this research, do the work they do because of a belief in their organizations' missions and values. Whether or not the organization's work actually aligns with it's mission and values is thus an important element that shapes non-profit employee's experiences of their work.

4.2 Alignment, Contradiction, and Personal Treatment

Beyond the content of the work, participants also spoke about alignment and contradictions in relation to an organization's internal operations and the way staff are

treated. All the participants in this research identified their workplaces as social justice non-profits. They understood their organizations as doing social justice work or upholding social justice values. Many participants considered poor treatment, either in terms of working conditions, or through interpersonal interactions, a contradiction of a social justice non-profit's mission and values. The element of contradiction made poor treatment a larger or different kind of problem for participants than ill treatment at workplaces in general.

The following exchange from my interview with Kelly demonstrates that she saw poor treatment in her workplace as a contradiction of the organization's social justice mission, and that this element of contradiction was experienced as a problem in itself.

Kelly: I knew that [organization name] is known as a little bit of, like with some counter-culture sector-wise, in some of the more radical work that they do within the field. So the social justice piece was something that really drew me to the agency.

Brenna: And how have you found that being there? Like coming in with those ideas about what the organization would be like and how has it, how has it turned out?

Kelly: Um, not great.

Brenna: Okay.

Kelly: Yeah. It's been a challenge for sure. So I still 100% believe in the social justice approach that the centre takes and I still very much stand by [recording cuts out briefly] but there's many other ways that the centre does not act within that lens. . . . So I still believe

that the social justice approaches and the advocacy and the pushing against systems from a client lens is still very strong and I still think that the work that is happening is very, very necessary. From an intra-agency approach and seeing how we have incredibly top-down systems and oppression within our agency it has been very, very challenging as a place to work. Just because it's a very different outward expression versus what's actually happening within the agency.

Brenna: And do you find that it's, like, does it feel worse, or is the experience harder because they have all of these values, or they profess to have all of these values, and then that's not what's happening?

Kelly: Yes. Exactly. Yeah.

This exchange with Kelly reveals not only that she experienced contradictions in terms of internal operations in her workplace, but also that these contradictions constituted a problem for her. I was struck that Kelly described her organization as a very challenging place to work "just because it's a very different outward expression versus what's actually happening within the agency." Later in the interview Kelly described callous management practices at the organization, including negative repercussions for staff who brought issues forward to their managers. Based on Kelly's description of these management practices, it seems this would be a challenging place to work regardless of what values the organization purported to uphold, but the fact that the organization presents itself, and is widely seen by outsiders, as a champion of social justice added

another layer of difficulty to the situation. Kelly implies that being treated poorly by an organization whose raison d'être has something to do with treating people well constitutes a different kind of harm and different kind of experience than being treated poorly in any other workplace.

The view that the treatment of staff is a social justice issue, and that poor treatment such as being overworked or having one's suggestions dismissed as a result of one's social location, constitutes a lack of alignment with, or contradiction of, a social justice non-profit organization's values and mission was not unique to Kelly. Other participants who had experienced poor treatment at work also discussed this as a contradiction, and participants who felt they had good working conditions and were treated respectfully saw this as an enactment in the internal operations of their organizations' social justice missions. Poor treatment, when it was experienced as a contradiction of an organization's values and mission, constituted a problem for workers that went beyond the issue of the treatment itself. Workers' expectations are shaped by a non-profit's values and mission, and the disappointment of these expectations is itself an issue. While being treated poorly can, and does, happen in all kinds of workplaces, issues of alignment and contradiction add a dimension to this problem that shapes social justice non-profit employees' experiences of their work.

4.3 The Prevalence of Contradiction

Taken together, the interviews I conducted for this research paint a varied picture of experiences of social justice non-profit work. Some of the people I spoke to absolutely loved their jobs; they felt they were able to do work in line with their values, and that they were treated very well by the organizations for which they worked. Others shared

stories of significant mistreatment and a few raised questions about whether the work they were doing actually served those it was meant to serve. Many interviewees mentioned a mix of good and bad elements, alignment and contradiction, in their work. Despite this range, a number of participants who had negative experiences, as well those who had positive experiences, expressed a view that contradiction, in terms of the content of work and/or treatment of workers, is widespread in social justice non-profit work.

Kayla told me that her experience, where she and her colleagues "have a lot of capacity to work by [their] values and those are pretty aligned with the values of social justice" was "maybe more idealistic than the reality for a lot of people." She suggests that many people in non-profits experience less alignment between social justice values and the content of their work than she does. Jennifer has a similar perspective. When I thanked her at the end of our interview, I told her it made me feel hopeful as she had described being able to do work that aligns with her values, in an environment where she feels she and her colleagues are treated quite well. She replied that part of why she wanted to participate in the research was "to be like, 'It's possible,'" suggesting her very positive experiences are not the norm, and that people might not even believe the alignment she experiences is a possibility. When I asked Amber if she thought "social justice non-profits should be good places to work that support the well-being of their employees," she replied,

> They really ought to be. And I think that we need to be really mindful and thoughtful about the language around that because we treat is as an intrinsic 'of course they are' and that's why I was so excited to see that you were doing this [research], because I was like this to me is something that's really important,

because there is this intrinsic belief. And it took me so, so long to understand that it wasn't. And that it wasn't for so many other people I know.

Amber currently works for an organization where she feels all the staff are well supported and social justice drives all the decisions made in her workplace. However, she also has previous work experience in a non-profit where this was not the case. In the above quote, Amber identifies both a widespread assumption or expectation that social justice non-profits will treat their staff well, and she suggests that this is often not the reality experienced by employees. Tara alluded to what she sees as the widespread nature of problems of contradiction in social justice non-profit work by mentioning the existence of "an army of . . . people" who had experienced severe contradictions in their work that had negatively impacted their personal well-being.

My conversations with social justice non-profit employees revealed that alignment/contradiction is a key element shaping their experiences of work. Alignment matters in both the content of an organization's work, and in how staff are treated. Many participants experienced a lack of alignment in at least some aspect of their work. This lack of alignment or contradiction posed a problem for them. It represented "a breach between ideal and real"; it was not the way things should be, and therefore it needed to be explained or made sense of (Riessman, 1993, p. 3). Many participants seemed to hold two opposing expectations of social justice non-profit work. On the one hand they expressed a belief that non-profits should be good places to work that enact social justice in the content of their work and the treatment of employees. They expect this of social justice non-profits. Yet, many of these same people also expressed a belief that non-profits frequently do not do this. They have an expectation, that they kind of expect to be

disappointed, yet they hold on to this expectation nonetheless. This is, in Luhmann's terms, a normative expectation, it is an expectation "not disposed toward learning," it relates to what ought to be, as opposed to what is (Luhmann, 1995, p. 321). The very nature of social justice as a normative expectation for many makes it difficult for these non-profit employees to revise their expectations, and this leaves some of those who have been disappointed struggling with the reality they experience.

Overall, this chapter demonstrates that:

- Participants framed many of their experiences at work in terms of alignment, or lack of alignment, with their organization's mission, vision, and values
- In cases where lack of alignment was particularly severe, participants experienced a contradiction between their organization's mission and its actions
- Alignment and contradiction can occur in relation to a non-profit's external practices, for example the kinds of services it delivers, and/or in relation to internal practices, such as how employees are compensated or whether they have a voice in organizational decisions
- Alignment is associated with feeling good about one's work, enjoying it, and feeling that it is fulfilling
- Contradiction is associated with feelings of frustration, dissatisfaction, and sometimes doubting the value of one's work. The experience of contradiction is itself a problem, over and above the particular experiences that generate the sense of contradiction.

- Participants hold opposing expectations of social justice non-profit work – they expect alignment, yet they also see a lack of alignment as commonplace in the sector. In general, however, they do not accept this lack of alignment, but rather frame it as a problem and hold on to the normative expectation that organizations should enact their social justice missions in their external and internal practices.

In the next two chapters I explore alignment and contradiction in detail in the content of people's work (chapter five), and in their treatment at work (chapter six). I look at the kinds of contradictions they experienced, and the explanations they gave for these contradictions. In chapter seven I detail the process of sense-making some participants engaged in during the interview as they grappled with their experiences of contradiction.

Chapter 5: Alignment, Contradiction, and Work Content

In this chapter I discuss some of the contradictions people experienced between their ideas of social justice work and the activities of their organizations, and I look at how people made sense of or explained these contradictions. I describe contradictions produced by the people working in a non-profit, and contradictions related to funding. I then discuss how people responded to experiences of contradiction. I end with a section on elements that contribute to experiences of alignment. I begin, however, with a brief discussion of the complexity of social justice, as this provides important context for what follows.

Speaking about doing work aligned with a social justice mission, values, or principles immediately raises the question of what social justice is. As discussed in chapter one, social justice is an expansive concept. The range of sectors from which participants in this research came, which included areas as diverse as animal rights, immigration, and mental health, evidences this breadth. Social justice also involves striving for something that does not yet exist; it is about trying to create a more just world, yet what this means and how to do it may not always be clear. To do work in line with social justice is, therefore, by its very nature complex. People can have differing visions of what social justice is, or what it demands, and there can even be claims for competing actions that are all based in the concept of social justice.

Centering the voices and needs of the population an organization aims to serve was a key element of what it meant to do social justice work for many participants. While this guiding principle may seem clear and simple, interviewees' comments revealed the complexity that can lie behind it. In a discussion with Benjamin, who is in a senior

leadership role, about advocacy and the relationship between ideals and what an organization can actually achieve, he said,

> part of being in a not-for-profit, especially a community-based, social justice focused one, is that do you make the right call all the time? And not even like me individually but like does the community make the right call? No. . . . I feel like a lot of my time is spent coaching people on not being essentialist about what people should sort of like think is the outcome. . . . we have to figure out how not to fall down a pit of relativism where we're just like 'Oh, everything is good.' But at the same time understanding that different people are going to value different outcomes and different ends and that that's not wrong.

Benjamin's explanation makes it clear that "the community" his organization serves, as with all communities, is comprised of multiple people, and they can have differing ideas about what is right and good. Centering the voices of the people an organization serves does not necessarily lead to clarity for decision makers in a non-profit around what actions they should, or should not, take. Tamara, who works for an organization with a mission of ending poverty and homelessness, made a similar point in a discussion about what kinds of services her organization offers and whether they really meet the needs of the people accessing them. She said,

> I think one of the challenges is even that grouping or phrasing 'people experiencing homelessness and poverty' there's so many differences and different stories and different needs in that. And so I don't even know if a one size solution fits all really.

These two interview excerpts demonstrate that even a seemingly clear, obvious, and simple principle, such as making sure you are listening to and serving the needs of the people you are trying to support, can be quite complex in reality. While sometimes it is evident what action should be taken, other times it is not. In some situations, the question is not only whether an organization is acting in line with its social justice mission, but also what acting in line with the mission even means.

I begin with this point about complexity because it provides important context for the following discussion about contradictions. While much of the subsequent discussion addresses situations where what constitutes alignment or contradiction is clear (at least from the perspective of the interviewee), somehow removing the barriers to alignment that participants identify would not lead to a situation where alignment between an organization's social justice mission and its activities was a clear and simple matter. Doing social justice work is complex, in part because social justice itself is a multi-faceted concept.

5.1 People and Contradiction

While figuring out what actions an organization's social justice mission calls for can sometimes be complicated, doing social justice work in a non-profit context is also complicated by differing perspectives, knowledge, and concerns among the staff of an organization. Kayla captured this issue well when she said, "especially in the social justice world, I think there's degrees of social justice approach, and so sometimes people can be at odds in terms of what they think social justice means, and how to implement that in the work." We speak about organizations doing things, but an organization itself cannot act; people, who can have varying views on, and experiences with, social justice,

act within an organizational structure. All the people I interviewed worked in organizations with a hierarchical structure, although some organizations had much flatter hierarchies than others. In each organization, therefore, some people had more power than others to determine the non-profit's policies and activities. Many interviewees spoke about social justice actions they would like to take, or would like the organization to take, that were prevented or made difficult by other staff. I describe three of these cases of contradiction below, and then draw out some of the dynamics at play in these conflicts in the subsequent discussion.

Case 1: Kayla, who works for a community-based non-profit, told me that under a previous executive director, "it felt like there was a real dissonance between social justice values and how certain things were managed," and described being frustrated with the organization's crisis management policy that she felt replicated policies common in more institutionalized settings, and that the organization's clients might experience as disempowering and perhaps even coercive. Kayla argued the policy could lead to outcomes that are "really traumatizing to a lot of people" and instead suggested an approach that emphasized collaboratively working with clients in distress to find solutions. The previous E.D. of the organization was not receptive to Kayla's suggestion. Kayla felt the difference in her approach and that of the previous E.D. stemmed from the E.D. having formerly worked in large, institutional settings, while Kayla's background is in community-based social justice work. The organization hired a new E.D. before I interviewed Kayla, and she told me the new person came in with many "years of experience working in a community-based . . . setting. And so I think it feels that that

background of experience aligns a lot more with what we're doing and what our values are."

Case 2: Jessica also told me about a situation where she saw a contradiction in her organization's work related to something over which the executive director had power. The organization sits on a council that represents people who engage in practices that the organization is advocating against. The non-profit joined the council in order to try and influence policy and make changes, as Jessica explained "we said we have to have a seat at the table with the [group] to be able to discuss with them and not like take such a radical view." The issue for Jessica is that the organization has been on this council for decades and the practices they are advocating against have not changed in that time. While Jessica does not have a problem with the strategy of joining the council as such, she sees it as ineffective at this point, and worries that it may be counterproductive as the organization's presence on the council may make it appear they are endorsing a group whose practices run counter to the organization's mission. Jessica described her reaction to discovering the E.D. was responsible for the decision to sit on the council:

> I'm like why aren't there more people involved in this decision? It shouldn't, I don't think decisions like that should be made by one person. And so [I'd] like to see more involvement from boards on non-profits to guide . . . to make sure that decisions that are so closely related to the mission are actually being followed through.

Jessica feels that more people need to be involved in decision-making at the organization in order to ensure its activities align with its mission. Although she thinks the E.D. has done incredible work and did not identify significant areas where she and the E.D. differ

in their views on social justice and the organization's mission, she feels that these decisions should not depend on the judgment of only one person.

Case 3: Oliver works for an organization that has two main programs, each run out of a different site. The site Oliver works at runs a smaller program that specifically serves the needs of people with lower incomes. Oliver and his colleagues at the smaller site have a lot of autonomy to design their programming however they want, and Oliver feels that his day to day work aligns quite well with social justice. However, the majority of the organization's programs and services, which occur at the larger site, are not designed with the needs of lower income residents of the city in mind. Oliver and his colleagues at the smaller site, along with some people they have connected with in the larger part of the organization, have been pushing the organization to make the rest of its programming more accessible to lower income residents, and to become more actively engaged around issues that affect these residents. When I asked what kind of reactions Oliver and his colleagues have gotten to their internal advocacy efforts he told me "some of it's been not awesome" but then went on to explain that "there have definitely been small movements, like I think they're definitely thinking about these things, I think they're just trying not to rock the boat." The organization is undergoing a potential transition to being more inclusive, and the leadership seem to be trying to work through this, which gives Oliver hope, despite his frustrations with some of the responses he has received.

These three stories of contradictions and participants' accompanying sense-making around why these contradictions exist demonstrate that one of the challenges involved in doing social justice non-profit work is that the staff (including the E.D.)

within an organization can have different ideas of what social justice entails and different opinions on how best to approach an issue. In an organization with a hierarchical structure, some employees have more power than others to determine what an organization does. However, even those near the top of an organizational hierarchy can experience these differences among staff as an impediment. In a discussion about constraints on doing social justice work, Anna, who is in a senior management role, told me that one of the challenges is "managing a diversity of opinions" among staff. She explained further,

> you can't move [the] staff or organization at a rate [at] which the person who is just satisfied with the status quo is going to be so alienated with the rapid change or rapid progress, but you also can't just accept that, at the same time

Anna's role includes managing operations for the organization, so she is likely more sensitive to the internal dynamics than those in other positions might be. Of course, not all decisions require agreement and commitment from other staff, and organizations vary in how collaborative their approaches to decision making are. Nonetheless, Anna's statement makes it clear that it is not only lower-level staff who face challenges due to differences in opinion. While those with more decision making power may be less likely to encounter situations where they feel there is a lack of alignment as a result of different views inside the organization, they too are faced with the challenge of working across varied ideas and viewpoints.

Beyond simply the presence of varied opinions, the stories from Kayla (case 1) and Oliver (case 3) also speak to changes in organizations over time as the staff changes. Kayla experienced a difference when her organization hired a new executive director, and

Oliver told me that the larger part of his organization has been hiring a lot of people recently, many of whom share his views on social justice, which he thinks may shift the organization's activities to align better with his vision and concerns. Another participant, Rose, also spoke about changing alignment, although in her case the organization she worked for merged with a larger organization doing similar work, but with a different philosophy behind it. Rose accepted a transfer to become the supervisor at a site that had been run by the larger organization because she "wanted to bring some of the vision from [the original organization] over." She was largely successful in doing this, yet still experienced lack of alignment on a number of fronts with the philosophy of the non-profit her organization had merged into.

People are often drawn to work for a non-profit because of its mission or the sector of which it is a part. Almost everyone I spoke with mentioned that having (at least some) colleagues with shared values and concerns was a positive element of their jobs. Yet finding alignment across all members of an organization on all issues is rare. We tend to think and speak of organizations as unitary entities, yet an organization is not so much a thing (even though it exists as a legal entity) as it is a set of relationships, procedures, and policies (that may or may not be followed) that change with time, as the staff and broader context shift. Experiences of alignment, or lack thereof, occur in this dynamic context. The views and beliefs of the people in an organization, and how much they agree with each other, are an important component generating experiences of alignment and/or contradiction for social justice non-profit employees. Much of the literature on non-profits describes impediments to doing mission-aligned work related to ideas and demands from those outside an organization, such as funders. Yet this research shows

that lack of alignment can also come from differing views held by those within an organization. These differences sometimes stem from differences in educational backgrounds and previous work experiences among employees.

5.2 Funding and Contradiction

Every non-profit is simultaneously engaged in two activities: carrying out its mission (the content of the work) and securing funding to enable it to carry out its mission. Funding is therefore a major element shaping non-profit work. Participants in this research spoke about the ways issues to do with funding prevented their organizations from doing work more aligned with their social justice missions, but some also questioned this narrative that funding and funders stand in the way of social justice.

Participants spoke about three broad issues to do with funding: the amount of funding, the processes through which funding is distributed, and the effects funders and relationships with funders have on the content of the work. Issues to do with the amount of funding are not directly related to questions of alignment, but they form the backdrop against which the issues around processes for securing funding and effects of funders emerge.

The fact that funders control the resources which make non-profit work possible puts them in a position of power relative to non-profits. Funders, whether governments, foundations, or private donors, have the power to determine how much funding to give, to whom, under what conditions, and through what processes. This power relation is exacerbated by the fact that for most non-profits there is more work to do than resources with which to do it. As Benjamin put it “we’re stretched thin by the fact that in the framework that we’re working within the issues that we’re advocating on are generally

under-resourced issues, and if they weren't government would be doing them." The degree of under-resourcing ranges in severity and varies between organizations, locations, and sectors, but nonetheless it is a fact with which most non-profits contend. As a result of insufficient resources overall, non-profits are further disempowered in relation to funders because they cannot easily make up the shortfall elsewhere if they think there are issues with a particular funder.

Above I discussed centering the needs of clients as a key element of what it meant to do social justice for many participants. Anna, who works for an umbrella organization funded largely through government grants, explained how the process through which funding is distributed impedes this focus on clients' needs:

> Nonprofits are constrained. They're constrained in terms of what they are allowed to apply for for funding. And that comes from the fact that the government writes what the call for proposals is and then you reply to that, rather than what would work well for the organization, or the needs that that organization has identified in the communities that they work in, or what their partners have told them.

Emily, who also works for an umbrella organization funded largely by government, said something similar:

> there's always a program cycle of what you propose, or what has been promised in your proposal, versus on the ground what was the immediate need, or not even on the ground, but let's say every year there are different members' needs, and for us not being able to do something at the moment, because it wasn't something that we proposed, or we just don't have a budget line to do that, for me was, you

know, it was a reality check of there are just a lot of constraints. Money is one. Time is one. Having to meet a promise with your donor is one.

Emily and Anna both identify that, aside from challenges arising due to the quantity of funding, the process through which funding is disbursed is also an issue. Governments decide on their priorities, and fund programs in relation to these. While this enables the government to meet its objectives, it may not enable a non-profit to do the work it deems most important.

Angela highlighted another problem related to the processes for acquiring funding. Like many non-profits, her organization does work that is not quantifiable. The impact of its work is largely felt through the potential issues and harms it *prevents* from occurring. In most cases, it is impossible to know how many people are positively impacted through the non-profit's work. Angela summed up the issue this causes for securing funding, saying funders want "a concrete number of how many people you've helped. Dude, I've got no idea." This makes it difficult for Angela to apply for funding because the assumptions underlying the way funding application forms are designed do not match the reality of the work the non-profit does. Angela's experience reflects a broader trend in the non-profit sector of funders seeking measurable outcomes, despite these measures not effectively capturing the actual impact of the work (Baines, 2004; Wright, 2013).

Who is providing the funding can make a significant difference in regard to these kinds of issues. Jennifer, who works for a non-profit focused on solidarity-based community building, told me that her organization is funded largely through individuals and other charitable organizations "who give because they believe in us and what we're

doing." As a result, the organization is able to do whatever it identifies as most important and is not beholden to anyone else's priorities. While the non-profit Jennifer works for is not constrained in its use of resources the way those that receive more government funding are, it has very limited funding, which presents its own challenges in terms of running the organization.

Beyond issues to do with applying for funding and what kinds of things are funded, participants also described a disciplining or chilling effect which the imbalanced power relation with funders had on their work, and that existed apart from any particular funder demands. Benjamin identified this chilling effect very clearly in a description of how his organization tried to avoid it. He explained that having diverse revenue streams,

> means that we can kick back at people without worrying about losing everything. So that if we want to point out the fact that minimum wage is too low, we don't have to worry about employers pulling their funding, you know, we've got government. And if government is dicking around the population because they're not making [certain type of] benefits accessible, then we can call it out.

By having diverse funding streams, the organization Benjamin works for has reduced the power imbalance between itself and any one funder slightly, which makes it easier for them to do advocacy work that is central to their mission.

While Benjamin described a potential chilling effect on advocacy, Deepa described how the relationship with funders informed decisions on what kinds of things money could be spent on at her organization. She recounted the response she got after asking managers if she could spend a small amount of the funding allocated for a project she was running on food to have at workshops and honoraria, transit tickets, and

childcare for the workshop attendees: “they were like ‘Oh, wow, we’ve never thought about that.’ And I’m like, ‘Yes, because we are trained and brainwashed to think that this money isn’t already ours. This money shouldn’t belong to the people that deserve it.’” Deepa said that in this particular situation the organization had to spend the money within a few months, so her request was approved, but other similar requests had not been. From Deepa’s description, what the organization did with its grant money was determined not only by the stipulations of the grant, but also by managers’ beliefs about what could or could not be justified to a funder. The power of the funder loomed large, and this indirectly determined how money was spent in ways that, from Deepa’s perspective, were not best aligned with the organization’s mission. Antonio Gramsci’s concept of hegemony can be useful for understanding this situation. Gramsci uses the concept of hegemony to help explain how and why people participate in their own subjugation, arguing that the narratives of the ruling class which present existing power relations as inevitable become accepted as commonsense and go unquestioned (Crehan, 2016, pp. 51–52; Scheper-Hughes, 1993, p. 171). Power thus operates through shaping what and how people think as much as through coercion. In this case it has shaped ideas about who money can be given to and what it can be spent on, without this being explicitly stated or enforced by the funding body.

Many participants saw issues to do with funding as a cause of contradictions in their organizations’ work. Their analyses are similar to those of third sector scholars who note the negative impact on service delivery brought about by decreased government funding, and an increase in conditions attached to that funding (Cain & Todd, 2008; Cunningham, 2010), as well as of granting agencies’ demand for quantitative measures of

the impact of qualitative work (Wright, 2013). In contrast to this emphasis on funders' power, Amber drew on a comparison of her experience working in two different non-profits to suggest that the issue is as much the narrative surrounding the power of funders as it is the actual power they hold. Amber works for an organization that she feels lives it's social justice values and mission in all its work. Her analysis of the impact of the narrative around funding came out in response to me asking what she thought enabled the organization to really work in line with its values. She replied:

> I think it's fundamentally leadership. And I wouldn't have necessarily realized that or thought that five years ago [when Amber worked for a different organization]. But when I look, like, you know, five years ago I think I would have said 'Oh, well it's about funding.' Or it's about, you know, stakeholder relations or this kind of thing. Because that's what I was told.

Amber went on to explain that her current organization has a budget that is a small fraction of the previous non-profit's budget,

> [b]ut yet the tail doesn't wag the dog. It's not about the money. Even though . . . [i]t has been lean times. But at the same time, it doesn't affect our decision-making. And it doesn't tell us how we do the work with our clients. It doesn't tell us how we do the work of the advocacy or the organization. . . . and I think that this does come down to the way that the leadership approaches these questions. The way that leadership analyzes the situation. Cause before I came from an organization where, you know, it was very much designed with this sort of very hierarchical, if this, then that, and how does this affect the funding. At the very end of the day, how does this affect the funding.

Reflecting on the difference between these two organizations, Amber said "I think the narrative of the funding is so prolific in our society that it's just, you can't, nobody questions it." She finished her analysis saying,

> And that's the thing that I think it is with funding. Is the idea, the narrative that funders don't want us to do good work. That funders don't want us to call into question things. And it's true, there are some funders that don't want us to do certain things, but the idea that they should be able to dictate our services, or the way that we approach the work, and especially where we have expertise, I think that we have to have a more generous perspective on the people that do the funding, and believe in their desire for us to do good work.

Amber has worked in the non-profit sector for over a decade, providing direct support and engaging in advocacy on behalf of a subset of the population that experiences significant oppression. She is certainly not naïve when it comes to injustice and issues of power. Her story is interesting in part because her analysis of what prevented her and other non-profit employees from doing work aligned with social justice changed as a result of her experiences working at the second non-profit. Only after being in an organization where people related to funders differently was Amber able to see this as a possibility, and question the narrative that funders prevent organizations from doing work better aligned with social justice. The narratives we tell about funders do not determine the material reality that non-profits need to secure money from others in order to do their work. However, whether non-profit employees believe funders want them to do good work, and are, or might be, willing to respect the expertise employees bring, does impact how non-profit organizations respond to the structural reality in which they operate.

Tamara alluded to this tension around the power funders have to determine what work an organization does versus the power non-profits give funders in a discussion of harm reduction. She described her discomfort with,

> some of [the organization's] philosophical approaches where, you know, we're saying we want to end poverty and homelessness, but are we actually interested in that, or are we just putting a band-aid on these things. Or are we doing it in a way that sounds nice and shiny, but are we willing to actually, yeah, I don't know, put ourselves on the line a little bit I guess, and say things that might be less accepted. I think part of it comes from our donor base as well. Because as a Christian non-profit, a lot of our donors are churches. So not all of them are okay with things like harm reduction . . . So my hope would be that we could say that this is what science and our public health experts are saying is working, so we should do this because this is how we love people, but there's a bit, yeah, there's some change but it's slow.

There is a power relation between funders and non-profits that puts constraints on what non-profits can do. Funders are, understandably, pursuing their own priorities through what they fund, and these can align more or less well with the needs various non-profits have identified. The contradictions non-profit workers experience in the content of their work can result from these funding issues. In some cases, however, the contradictions also stem from beliefs about what funders will or will not agree to, and a centering of the desires or perceived desires of funders, in organizational decisions that are not directly controlled through funding. There are two ways to read this, one is to say that power works not just through direct control, but also in indirect ways through shaping the

beliefs people hold. In other words, as Gramsci describes, it works on a cultural level through securing people's consent to their own subjugation (Crehan, 2016). Yet beliefs can be questioned, and this analysis points to a limited, but nonetheless important, way in which non-profits may sometimes be able to better align their work with their missions, despite depending on others for resources.

5.3 Responding to Contradiction

Participants experienced various contradictions in the content of their work and explained reasons for these contradictions in a few ways; the two most common explanations were differences in belief and opinion among staff, and issues to do with funding. These contradictions constituted a problem for many participants, at the very least they were something worth remarking on, and at worst they left participants wondering if their work had value. Tara expressed this feeling when, after explaining that there was no mechanism to hold the organization she had worked for accountable to living its social justice values, she said, "who benefits is my question. The thing I left with, the thing that hurt me the most is like who benefits from all this?"

People responded to this problem of contradiction in their work in different ways. A number of participants advocated for actions they felt aligned better with their organization's mission and their own understanding of social justice. For example Kayla, whom I wrote about near the beginning of the section on people and contradiction, tried to explain to her executive director why the organization's crisis management policy was problematic, and Oliver worked with his colleagues to advocate for better access to his organization's programs for low-income people. While impediments to doing social justice and the resultant lack of alignment participants experienced could be frustrating,

participants actively pushed back against these impediments by engaging in conversations, sometimes difficult ones, with other colleagues, managers, and funders to advocate for policies and actions that they saw as upholding social justice.

Staff are usually thought of as carrying out an organization's social justice mission through its externally-focused activities, such as providing services to clients, or advocating for changes to government policies. Yet part of doing social justice work for many participants involved teaching about and advocating for social justice issues with those they work with and for, suggesting that the work of social justice happens at multiple scales. In looking at the processes through which people try to build a more socially just world, we need to look not only at encounters between an organization and actors outside it, but also at the dynamics and changes that happen within organizations.

Aside from advocating for actions they felt were better aligned with social justice, some participants also responded to experiences of contradiction by leaving the organizations they worked for. In two cases, participants left after a number of years. It seemed they were able to withstand experiences of contradiction and their limited power to make changes for a while, but this eventually wore them out. Amber said, "What ended up leading to me leaving was just because I got sick of that balance. I got sick of not being able to effect that change. And so I did, I left." Katrina described that "by the end I got very frustrated again with the pace, like the slow pace of change. And it was part of why I chose to go." The choice to leave, like internal advocacy, can be read as a form of resistance. Sometimes, like in Amber's case, people find organizations that support them to do work more fully aligned with their social justice values. Others may

continue to engage with social justice struggles, but outside a non-profit context, such as through activism.

5.4 Alignment

So far I have discussed the question of alignment and contradiction in terms of people's experiences of contradiction. While these were prevalent, a number of participants felt the content of their work aligned well with their organizations' missions and their own understandings of social justice. In this section I briefly discuss some of the common elements mentioned by many of the people who experienced a high degree of alignment in their work.

The first subsection of this chapter addressed the role of other employees, with an emphasis on those in positions of power, in creating experiences of contradiction. Unsurprisingly, therefore, those who experienced a high degree of alignment also mentioned the impact of the people they work with and for. Participants talked about being able to be honest and share their opinions with those for whom they worked. Kayla said, "I feel comfortable advocating for the programming that I think would make a difference because usually people are willing to hear me out and if they agree that it makes sense, [they say] yes." Similarly, Shirley, who is not in a management position, told me that she and other staff were involved in reviewing her organization's strategic plan and were invited to give input on it. She described the leadership of the organization as being very transparent about their work and their vision, and inviting involvement from lower level employees. Amber, reflecting on the second non-profit she worked for, said her boss is,

> the smartest person I know. . .There is not a single thought that I ever have that she hasn't seemed to have already thought of. But she still comes back to us. And she still talks with us. And we as a group have say.

All these participants, as well as others whom I have not quoted, felt they were able to raise issues at work and that what they had to say was taken seriously. In these non-profits, there were opportunities for the staff to discuss what they were doing and why. A sense of lack of alignment is produced in multiple ways, and these honest and collaborative working relationships did not eradicate issues of contradiction, however they did create a situation in which people generally did not experience contradictions resulting from actions (or lack of action) on the part of other staff. These participants all describe a feeling of empowerment. While as employees they are still "enmeshed in the . . . relations of rulers and ruled" that Kathi Weeks (2011, p. 2) describes as being at the heart of wage labour, their daily experiences include practices that minimize the inequality in this power relation. Their subjective experience is one of collaboration more than domination or rule.

Four participants, including the two executive directors I interviewed, also mentioned good working relationships with their boards as integral to enabling them to do work that centers the needs of clients and is rooted in social justice. Gail, who is an E.D., told me, "my board is really, really supportive. . . . . So having that autonomy. Having their trust and having their support is marvelous. You don't always get that." Jennifer, who is not an E.D. described a,

> culture of trust [among the staff and board members] and having the feeling that the board is this like protective bubble around the staff and the community. And

> so if there are difficult decisions that need to be made, they are comfortable making those decisions for the health of the community, but not independently of the staff.

These participants described boards of directors that were involved in the organization and understood its work. In some cases the boards were explicitly engaged in helping executive directors and other staff figure out how to best uphold the organization's social justice mission in particular, challenging situations. This may sound unremarkable; it may sound like something that should be expected of the board of a social justice non-profit, but it is not necessarily the norm. Angela told me that when she became the executive director of her organization, they had board members who "couldn't tell you what it is we did," and Jessica, reflecting on the boards of two non-profits she has been involved with said, "it seems like . . . it's more like do it for your resume than do it for the organization." In contrast to these situations, many of the people who experienced a high degree of alignment in their work described boards that were actively involved in the organization. As in the discussion of staff above, the relationships with these board members seemed to be characterized by honest dialogue and collaborative decision making.

Aside from these honest and positive working relationships, participants' views on social justice also impacted their experience of alignment or contradiction in some cases. Those who seemed to hold less critical or radical views of social justice mentioned fewer contradictions. This is perhaps to be expected. Those with more critical views mentioned systems like capitalism and colonialism as causes of injustice. They spoke about injustice in a broader framework of relations of power that structure many aspects

of the social world, including aspects of non-profit work. For example, Anna described non-profit funding models in the sector she works in as "inherently. . . colonial, and patriarchal and all the rest" and Katrina described receiving "government funding and city funding and corporate funding" as "fundamentally problematic," but said there was no way around this, non-profits and their funding structures are "one symptom of our capitalist system." Katrina's analysis echoes the arguments of scholars who see social justice non-profits as coopted by the state and owning classes through funding and regulations, a strategy by which the elite "manages and controls dissent" (INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007, p. 8). By contrast, people with less critical views tended to focus more on the needs their organizations were meeting and how they were helping people, and less on the causes of injustice. They did not speak about ways non-profits are entangled in broader power structures that produce injustice, and so also did not identify contradictions relating to this entanglement. Views of social justice were, however, only one factor contributing to employees' experiences of alignment and contradiction. Some participants with more critical views also experienced less contradiction, for reasons to do with elements like their degree of alignment with other staff on social justice issues, and their organization's relationships with funders.

5.5 Conclusion

Experiences of alignment and contradiction relating to the content of people's work, such as what kinds of services their organizations offered, are a key element shaping social justice non-profit employees experiences of their jobs. Experiencing a high degree of alignment between what their organizations did, the organization's mission, and their own understanding of social justice was a necessary condition for people to feel

happy in their jobs. A lack of alignment in relation to things completely outside of their control, such as the government funding process, was a source of frustration, but one participants seemed able to withstand. Contradictions that resulted from the action or inaction of other employees, particularly those in management positions, caused more frustration. When people felt something could, relatively easily, be otherwise, it was harder to deal with the contradiction they experienced.

Participants in a diversity of roles, in both umbrella organizations and non-profits providing direct services, identified their colleagues and issues to do with funding as elements creating contradiction. When they actively responded to instances of contradiction, participants did so by advocating for actions they felt were more aligned with social justice, and, sometimes, by leaving the non-profit altogether. Those who experienced a high degree of alignment highlighted the positive impact of other people, particularly E.D.s and board members, and described an organizational culture where their concerns and ideas were valued and acted upon.

Overall, this chapter demonstrates that:

- Participants experienced alignment and/or contradictions in the content of their organization's work, such as what programs and services it delivers and how it delivers them
- Other staff and board members have a significant influence on an employee's experiences of alignment and contradiction – shared understandings of social justice and honest and collaborative workplace cultures are associated with experiencing a greater degree of alignment between an organization's mission and its actions

- How funding is distributed, what funders will agree to, and in some cases what non-profit staff think funders will agree to, is often a cause of lack of alignment between an organization's mission and its actions

The picture of social justice non-profit work that emerged from the content analyzed for this chapter is a varied one. Some participants struggled with experiences of severe contradictions and left their jobs as a result, some had serious questions about their work, but also saw a lot of good in it, others were unequivocally happy, feeling they were able to make a meaningful, positive impact in the world by doing work aligned with their values. Alignment in the content of one's work is only half the story, however. The next chapter looks at how people are treated in their workplaces, and experiences of alignment and contradiction related to this.

Chapter 6: Alignment, Contradiction, and Treatment of Employees

Many of the stories participants told me had to do with how they and their colleagues are treated at work. Just as, among the group as a whole, general experiences of work ranged from wonderful to awful, personal treatment spanned a range from respectful and supportive to harmful, perhaps even abusive. Participants spoke about two elements of personal treatment: working conditions, and interpersonal interactions, particularly with supervisors/managers. These are not fully separate, distinct elements. Discussions about working conditions are an important element determining those conditions, and these discussions are themselves interpersonal interactions. All participants felt that bad working conditions were a problem, and most characterized them as a social justice issue. Participants generally expressed the view that having a social justice mission should prompt an organization to provide decent working conditions. Poor working conditions were thus often seen as a contradiction of an organization's mission or values. Some participants explicitly framed issues with interpersonal interactions as a contradiction of social justice, and others did not. How people framed interpersonal interactions seemed to depend on the nature of the interaction and how it came up in the interview. Even when negative interpersonal interactions were not framed as a contradiction of an organization's social justice mission, they were talked about as a problem, and one that negatively impacted people's ability to do their work and therefore reduced the organization's overall effectiveness. Thus while these issues were not always framed as a contradiction of a social justice mission as such, they were understood by participants as something that negatively impacted the organization's ability to carry out its mission.

6.1 Description of Working Conditions

Many participants mentioned a general perception that non-profit employees are poorly paid and overworked. When I asked Gail if she had thoughts on how employees are treated in the non-profit sector as as whole, she immediately said, “Oh, well as a general rule we’re paid horribly.” In answer to the same question, Tamara told me “My sense is that non-profits are often working on tight budgets and so staff often either overwork or are underpaid.” Participants echoed a widespread belief that non-profit employees in Canada are underpaid compared to those in the private and public sectors (Quarter et al., 2018). Whether this is actually the case is unclear; to date the results of research on this question are inconclusive (Quarter et al., 2018). There is a dearth of statistical information on the non-profit sector in Canada, which makes it hard to gather reliable sector-wide information (Barr, 2021). In addition, as discussed in chapter one, the non-profit sector is extremely diverse. Although participants frequently made statements (and, indeed, I asked some questions) about the sector as a whole, people are likely imagining some subset of the sector when they make the kinds of statements quoted above. I doubt, for example, that Gail was including the president of a major research university in her categorization of non-profit employees when she said people in the sector are paid horribly. Smaller studies focusing on the social services sector in Canada, which includes many non-profit organizations and may better reflect what people are imagining when they talk about the non-profit sector, document a mix of overwork and low pay (Baines, 2004).

Given this perception of endemic overwork, and my own experiences of overwork in a non-profit, I was surprised when only a few interviewees mentioned this as a significant problem in their workplaces. In fact Shirley told me that part of what she liked

about her job was that it had "given [her] back [her] work-life balance." It should be noted, though, that Shirley needed to get her work-life balance "back" because she was overworked in a previous non-profit job. Overall, however, with only a few exceptions, the people I spoke to did not report significant problems with being pressured to work long hours. This somewhat surprising finding may be due in part to the fact that I interviewed a number of people who worked in umbrella organizations. While they easily could have more work to do than was reasonable, they were not on the front lines of dealing with emergencies such as a lack of shelter space. Not being in a service provision context does not prevent overwork, but it does change the dynamic considerably. It is easier to set boundaries on your work when doing so does not directly mean leaving someone to sleep outside. Further, most participants also reported having a high degree of autonomy in their work. Unlike the social service worker participants whose working conditions are reported in other non-profit research, their decisions and activities were not tightly controlled by standardized care plans and a need to meet targets, and they were therefore less likely to be caught between a desire to provide quality care and a system designed to deliver inadequate services (Baines, 2004). Overwork is by no means limited to frontline roles in organizations that have instituted New Public Management principles such as standardized care, however these factors do seem to increase the likelihood of overwork and may explain why this was a less prevalent issue in this research.

While overwork was a less prevalent issue than I expected, pay was a different matter. Although a couple of interviewees mentioned being paid well, at least compared to people doing similar work in other non-profits, almost half the participants mentioned

low pay as an issue. Two people – one of whom said his job, in terms of the content of his own work, was the best job he had ever had – told me they were not sure how much longer they could stay working for their current organizations because the pay was simply too low for them to meet their needs in the foreseeable future. Aside from the amount of pay, participants also commented on whether there was transparency in how pay was determined, and whether this process was equitable. Julie said she "love[s]" that the non-profit she works for is "very equitable. . . . We're paid the same . . . I feel strongly about that. Like somebody is not paid more because of their gender or something." Julie explained that this was very important to her because she had had previous experiences, including in a non-profit, where the pay was not determined equitably. In one non-profit she worked for, "the executive director brought in family, and students that he had mentored before, and they were all paid more than everybody else" which Julie said created "a toxic environment." Nicole, who is one of the participants who mentioned potentially needing to leave her job because the salary is too low, described "huge, huge issues with salary" at her organization. They have had a wage and raise freeze at the organization for many years, and each new person hired is paid significantly less per year than the previous hiree, even when they come in with higher qualifications. Issues to do with salaries, both in terms of amount, and how they were determined, were widespread amongst the group. Discussions about pay did not come up in every interview, so it is possible that more than half the interviewees experienced issues in this area.

Pay and hours were the the most frequently raised topics to do with working conditions. This was due in part to the fact that I asked most interviewees how many

hours per week they worked on average. Other elements of working conditions that participants raised, either as examples of something good about their work, or something bad about it, were access to benefits and mental health supports, and the ability to work from home (pre-COVID). There were also some issues with working conditions that were brought up by only one participant. One person mentioned problems with contracts, explaining that she would not find out until after her contract had expired if it would be renewed, and Laura mentioned being given so many extra tasks as a result of people quitting at her organization, that she felt "at this point I'm not even doing my job description because everything's being pushed off and I'm just doing like miscellaneous things" Laura described this as "very, very stressful." As with most aspects of social justice non-profit work discussed in this thesis, working conditions varied among participants. The next section demonstrates that participants saw working conditions as a social justice issue, and therefore viewed poor working conditions as a contradiction of their organizations' social justice missions.

6.2 Working Conditions and Organizational Missions

Participants who had experienced good working conditions as well as those who had experienced poor working conditions discussed this aspect of their work in relation to social justice and organizational missions. For example, when I asked Anna how she sees her organization's commitments to social justice reflected, or not, in the way it treats employees, Anna replied that she thinks the commitments are reflected, and mentioned the fact that staff are paid well and given good vacation time as examples. Similarly, Sofia told me about a previous non-profit she had worked at that she felt enacted its

social justice mission in its internal operations and cited flexibility, work-life balance, good pay, and top-ups for parental leaves as part of this.

Those who saw issues with working conditions in their organizations often discussed these as points of contradiction between the organization's mission and its practices. A quote from Charlotte, who works for an organization focused on health and well-being, and that provides mental health services as part of its programming, illustrates this well. After telling me how staff are denied support for their own mental health concerns and for dealing with grief directly related to their work, Charlotte said, "there's so many examples of this incredible discrepancy between what is practised internally and what's practised externally, but I feel like that [example] really names just how ridiculous it is."

Interviewees thought about working conditions not only in terms of their own experiences, but also those of other staff. Nicole, for example, commented on both how working conditions were determined, and the contradictions she saw with her organization's mission in a discussion of whether employees were allowed to work from home pre-COVID. She explained there was a lack of clarity and consistency around who was allowed to work from home. Some colleagues got permission to work from home with little difficulty, while others (whose jobs could easily be done remotely) were not allowed to work from home, or were told they could work from home, and then later forced to work from the office, for no obvious reason. Nicole said,

> there hasn't been a consistent approach of who gets what. And why does someone, like what concern is valid enough. I think that's how they process it. And I think that all of these concerns are valid. . . . if we're really taking an anti-

> oppressive approach, everybody's life experiences are different, so we should honour where people are at. I'm so confused. That's the part that I feel is the disconnect.

In this case, Nicole was happy with this element of her personal working conditions, but she told me the story not as an example of something good about her workplace, but rather as an illustration of something bad, because the process through which the conditions were determined was unjust and the outcomes contradicted the organization's stated commitment to anti-oppression. Stephanie also brought up the working conditions of other staff. She worked at an organization serving people experiencing poverty and homelessness, and mentioned that when she joined the organization frontline staff were not paid a living wage and part-time staff did not have access to benefits. She said "that I feel was a big disconnect. Why are we in the work of poverty alleviation and yet staff couldn't have a living wage?" Participants thought of working conditions as a social justice issue, and experienced poor working conditions as a contradiction of their organizations' social justice missions. In thinking about working conditions, their concern was not only for themselves, but also for their colleagues.

6.3 Factors Affecting Working Conditions

Participants identified three primary factors influencing their working conditions: the material resources an organization has access to; managers' beliefs, expectations, and decisions; and employees' willingness and ability to set boundaries around their work. These three factors can all influence each other. There may be pressure in a non-profit that is under-resourced, and therefore cannot hire enough staff, for people to overwork. If people do overwork, managers may come to expect this of staff and this can affect their

decisions about how much work the organization can take on. The workload and managers expectations can, in turn, make it difficult for employees to set boundaries. Beyond these three factors, a tendency to frame non-profit work as something other than work taking place in the context of an employment relation can make it difficult to address issues with working conditions. While these factors can all interact and exacerbate each other, they do not always do so. I begin this section by addressing issues with resources and the impact of managers. I then contextualize this with a discussion of boundary-setting and the tendency to downplay the presence of an employment relation in some non-profit organizations.

6.3.1 Resources and Managers

I have already described the widespread perception among non-profit employees that people working in the sector are underpaid. Participants connected low pay and overwork to non-profits themselves being under-resourced. Kayla, talking about the non-profit sector in general, not her own workplace, said "sometimes the working conditions can be pretty poor, so really struggling for resources and everyone being extremely overworked and burnt out." She ended her description of working conditions saying, "But I, like I'm not trying to give non-profits a bad name. I think it's just the resource struggle [impacts] a lot of people's working conditions." Oliver, after expressing that non-profit employees are "typically underpaid" said, "I think that that a lot of times has to do with the greater society though in that the non-profit itself is underpaid, underfunded . . . it's hard to get funding a lot of times."

Despite a general belief that non-profits struggle to access the resources they need, participants also used their knowledge of their organizations' finances and the

sectors they worked in to critically evaluate their own salaries. Basically, while many participants expected to be paid less than someone with similar qualifications and skills working in the private or public sector, they engaged in comparative analyses of pay within their subset of the non-profit sector to determine whether their own pay was unjustifiably low. Nicole, who works for the organization that has had a wage freeze in place for a number of years and where every new hiree is paid less than the previous one, told me that managers in her organization say these conditions are caused by inadequate funding. The managers present themselves as essentially powerless and not responsible for the low pay. Nicole questions this explanation, however, because she knows that people doing the same job she does, in similar organizations that are funded through the same system as her organization, have salaries that are many thousands of dollars higher per year than hers and her colleagues. She attributed the high turnover rate at her workplace in part to this fact. Oliver mentioned something similar, describing how postings for jobs like his at other non-profits include higher salaries and better access to benefits, even though he thinks the organizations posting these jobs likely receive less funding than his organization. Laura, who works for an organization where a number of staff had quit recently, told me that she and her colleagues asked for raises, in part because they had (at least temporarily) taken on the work done by the staff who left. Their request was denied. Laura is familiar with the organization's finances, and she told me that on top of the organization not paying the salaries of the staff who left, giving had increased recently, and some work that used to be contracted out was now being done by staff, thereby saving the organization money. Laura therefore concluded the organization has the budget to pay her more and the E.D. (who determines salaries) is choosing not to

do so. Participants believed that non-profits faced issues with securing funding and they generally did not expect to be paid salaries equivalent to those in the private sector, as Oliver said, “nobody expects to get rich working in the non-profit world”. However, they also drew on their knowledge of the organizations and sectors within which they worked to question specific cases of low pay. In so doing, they indirectly suggested that the management of non-profits has significant influence over working conditions, despite the broader context of under-resourcing.

Angela, who is the executive director of a small non-profit with only a few staff, provided insight into the dynamic of management, scarce resources, and pay. She told me,

> that’s something that I decided when I got here, that because we can't afford to pay huge salaries here, we have things like mental health days that are paid days off, days to volunteer where you can go do something like that, personal days. I lobbied for benefits and my board and I got into it over it. Turnover was probably 90% when I got here, people just leaving one after the other. It’s been two years and we haven't lost anyone now.

As Angela describes, there are constraints that impact employee compensation. Yet, the beliefs and actions of those in positions of power (management staff and board members) also have a significant impact. In some cases the pay itself may be low, but there are other ways employees can be compensated and their working conditions improved to try to make up for this. It appears this was a priority for the management of some organizations in this sample, and not for others.

The impact of managers was also made clear by participants who told me about *not* being overworked. Jennifer described how taking time away from work is an expectation in her organization. She said the E.D. would be "disappointed" if she "caught" Jennifer doing work outside her regular working hours. While Jennifer talked about the amount of time she works, Julie told me a story about work intensity. Julie has a frontline role that involves supporting people in distress. She told me about one shift where there were more people seeking support than she could help. Not only did Julie want to support these clients in a timely manner, but the organization also has targets for response times, so Julie was under pressure to cycle through clients quickly. As she explained,

> I thought I couldn't let those people sit in the queue and wait . . . I was feeling pressure. . . And then I realized that I wasn't providing my best care to these [clients]. So it was like the bare minimum, right. And they don't deserve that. And so I called my manager and I just said can I just, what do you do? And she's like 'Let them sit.' And the fact that she said that to me was, because I wasn't getting that message from another way. I felt that I had to [respond]. And she's like 'Let them sit.' Do what you can, basically, with what you have, where you are. And it was just like this big rock lifted off of me. It was just like, 'Wow, she has me.'

Julie's story is significant, because it shows the mediating role managers can play in situations where the demands outnumber the resources. A context of high demand can create pressure to overwork, and regardless of what a manager says, it can be mentally and emotionally difficult to set boundaries when faced with people who need support. Managers, however, can exacerbate or reduce this pressure. This anecdote is also

interesting because Julie is working in a context where her work is monitored and evaluated in relation to targets set by the organization. This is reminiscent of the way Baines (2004) describes social service non-profit work being organized under the New Public Management (NPM) model of public sector management. NPM has led to a speed-up in work and lower quality of support for clients, both issues Julie mentions in this quote. Yet despite Julie's organization having these targets, they did not determine Julie's work, and this was in part because her manager intervened, giving Julie permission to slow her work down and provide quality support to clients. The reality of too many clients for one worker to support in a timely manner remained, but how this situation was responded to made a significant difference for Julie's experience of her work.

Participants' stories about the role managers play in shaping their working conditions reflect two different cultural views that are evident in the private sector of the importance of workers for organizations. One view, the "asset model," sees workers as "key generators of profits because of their company-specific expertise and loyalty" (Hatton, 2011, p. 4). This view has supported workplace policies that promote good working conditions. The other view, the "liability model," assumes a "zero-sum relationship between workers and profits. Any dollar spent on employees – in terms of wages, benefits, training, and so on – directly subtracts from the bottom line" (Hatton, 2011, p. 4). This model has undergirded policies promoting poor working conditions. While non-profits have social missions as opposed to a goal of creating private profit, these two different ways of thinking about employees seem to exist in the non-profit sector as well. Supporting workers can be seen as integral to successfully carrying out the mission, or workers can be seen as a resource to be exploited in order to meet

organizational objectives. Understanding why this second model has been adopted in some social justice non-profit organizations poses a challenge, however, because as noted in section 6.2, a social justice mission is seen to be consonant with the asset model and to contradict the liability model. The question, ultimately, which lies beyond the scope of this thesis, is what prompts the adoption of one model or the other. What is clear, however, is that while these two opposing ways of viewing and treating workers may have originated in the private sector and been tied to beliefs about what maximizes profit as outlined by Hatton (2011), both approaches exist in the non-profit sector as well.

6.3.2 Boundaries and Employment Relations

Issues to do with working conditions are not unique to non-profits, but there are some elements of social justice non-profit work that add complexity to dealing with these issues in this sector. Many non-profit employees care deeply about the missions of the organizations for which they work (Cunningham, 2010). As Wright (2013) argues, commitment to an organization's mission and clients can make it difficult for employees to put boundaries around their work and advocate for better conditions, because it may (at least temporarily) put their interests in conflict with those of clients. Research participants identified this dynamic themselves, as exemplified in this quote from Oliver:

> the non-profit sector as a whole has a high percentage [of] people [that] don't always have the greatest boundaries and . . . organizations themselves don't always stress that you need to have the greatest boundaries. So, you know, you're underfunded, you're understaffed, you don't have boundaries, and that all leads to some pretty intense burnout, which is I think a pretty big piece across the board. I think also you don't work in a non-profit if you don't care about the organization

you're working for, like whatever their value is, is clearly one of your values too or you wouldn't be there, right? So when you're more wrapped up in it you're more willing to do things for free, or you're more willing to stay late and not get paid or, you know, to meet a client on your day off.

Katrina related this dynamic of workers having poor boundaries with the actions of those in management positions in the following exchange:

Katrina: I think [exploitation] is culturally kind of engrained in a lot of the non-profit sector. I think a lot of people go in because they're deeply passionate. I think a lot of people go in because they care about making a difference. And that sets people up to start having bad boundaries. And I think it also enables management to take advantage of that. And I don't know that it's always actually thought out in that way. Like I don't think there's people being like 'Ooh, I'm gonna get these' you know, but I just think when you're faced with limited resources and you know that this is standard pay for the sector.

Brenna: It's sort of the path of least resistance.

Katrina: Yep.

Part of the dynamic shaping non-profit work is that for many workers their work is not solely a form of employment and an economic transaction, but also a way to live their values, which can make them vulnerable to exploitation.

I do not want to overemphasize the differences between non-profit work and work in other sectors. There may be people in all sectors for whom work is much more than a job, and who relate to work in ways that make it difficult to advocate for different working

conditions. Indeed, since the late 20th century work is increasingly a way in which workers construct a sense of identity, and as a result they may be less likely to resist the demands work places on their time and lives (Ezzy, 1997). Further, a societal view of work as "an individual moral practice and collective ethical obligation" impacts all workers, not only those in non-profits (Weeks, 2011, p. 11). Nonetheless, this lack of resistance to the encroachments of work is particularly pronounced in the non-profit sector. Further, this is not just an issue of individual workers' relationships to work, but of the way non-profit work is framed more broadly. When I asked her if she had thoughts on how employees are treated in the non-profit sector as a whole, Angela replied that despite the sector employing a significant percentage of the Canadian population,

> it's still being treated like it's all volunteers. And there's the whole concept of the people who work in these places are either students or ladies who lunch, who do it for the goodness of our heart and we don't need to make a living.

Angela echoes scholars Kosny and Eakin (2008), who write that "[a]lthough most non-profit organizations employ paid staff and volunteers, they are rarely viewed as 'workplaces' in the sense typically used by researchers and policy makers" (p. 149). Non-profit staff are, of course, well aware that they are doing work, that they need to make a living, and that their non-profit work is their livelihood. Nonetheless, they carry out this work in a context in which it is often not seen as work, and they themselves often relate to it as something more than a way to generate income. This can create conditions in which overwork and low pay become more accepted than they might otherwise be.

Alongside this societal tendency to not think of non-profits primarily as workplaces, there is a narrative that social justice non-profit work is in some way

fundamentally different from work in for-profit businesses. Benjamin alluded to this by arguing against it, saying,

> let's be honest about what this is, cause it's work. And I think that having that in mind is good. It's not a bad thing. And I think that efforts to sort of cleanse the not-for-profit sector of those capitalist relationships - it's kind of fucked up when you stop and think about it.

Similarly Deepa told me that "we have this idea of the non-for-profit name," but "non-for-profits fall into the loop of the same power dynamics [that] are enacted in many of these [for-profit] organizations." Although these participants are arguing against the idea that non-profits are somehow different than for-profit organizations, the fact that they felt the need to make this argument reveals the existence of a narrative that non-profits are different. Non-profits are sometimes seen less as workplaces that include relations of power between managers and those they manage, and more as a group of freely associating people gathering together to do good. In some non-profits, a culture of caring enacted through practices like check-ins where staff are invited to share how they are feeling and what is going on in their lives, and the fact that staff have close personal friendships with each other (sometimes across levels of a hierarchy), can reinforce this sense of the organization as a place characterized by relations of mutual care and concern and not employer-employee power relations.

As Benjamin and Deepa suggest, there is a danger in this view. Part of the danger is that it can make it difficult to discuss poor working conditions, because managers may not recognize or acknowledge the power they have to shape these conditions. Naming a problem is a necessary precondition to trying to solve it. A refusal or inability to

recognize non-profit work as something shaped by unequal power relations can preclude any possibility of addressing the ways those with power shape working conditions. The following quote from Katrina provides an example of this:

> I found we used a lot of what I call now 'nice non-profit language' to cover up exploitative workplace conditions. Just like being told you've got 40 hours to do this work in, and we have about 60-80 hours of work you actually need to complete this week. But we're going to tell you to do it in 40. And if you ask for overtime to do it, you get like 'Don't ask for overtime, we can't afford it'. But then if you don't get the work done it's like 'Well why aren't you getting this work done?.' . . . So you feel almost bad for taking the overtime, but you weren't the one who created the condition to take it in. And then we would sit around and, you know at our staff meetings we do check-ins, and we'd be like 'Well how are you feeling today?' And you know 'What kind of cookie is your favourite cookie, and what are you doing for self-care because it's stressful right now'. Well it's stressful right now because you haven't hired enough staff and you're not paying people enough and you're giving people too much work, but we want to talk about bubble baths and, you know, stuff like that.

As Katrina makes clear, the problem she experienced was not just one of overwork, but of overwork that was not acknowledged as such, and was then addressed in completely inadequate ways that served to conceal the actual problem. This dynamic is essentially one in which the issue of working conditions is made into a personal problem of stress management. Despite Katrina suggesting this may be particular to non-profits through her use of the phrase "nice non-profit language," framing problems caused by structural

factors as a matter of personal failure is not unique to non-profits (see Fraser and Gordon (1994) for a discussion of this framing in relation to poverty). However, a propensity in some social justice non-profit organizations for fostering personal relationships, and seeing work as a collective effort to achieve a mission and not as employment structured by relations of power, may support this response to issues with working conditions.

I want to caution against a reading of this situation as one in which there are bad people in management positions refusing to acknowledge their (limited, but nonetheless real) power and intentionally taking advantage of employees. Near the beginning of this section, I quoted Katrina saying that she does not think managers intentionally set out to exploit the people they manage. While managers have power, they are also employees, and, like those who work for them, they are often motivated by a commitment to an organizational mission and may themselves have poor boundaries. Their offers of cookies in response to being faced with an overworked staff, which can feel insulting and infuriating, may be a genuine, if utterly misguided, attempt to care for their staff in this context. The point is that the combination of a committed staff, who have trouble setting boundaries around their work because they care, combined with a tendency to downplay the fact that non-profits are workplaces structured by the power relations of employment, can make it easier to take advantage of workers and harder to name and address these issues. Ultimately, this is a problem of not acknowledging the power relation which Weeks (2011) identifies as the heart of the problem with work and the precondition for exploitation.

6.4 Working Conditions and Feeling Valued

Reading what participants had to say about their working conditions in the interview transcripts, it became clear to me that what mattered was not just the conditions themselves, but also the interactions surrounding these conditions and the processes through which the conditions were determined. Ultimately, it seemed that what participants were talking about when they discussed working conditions was whether they felt supported and valued in their workplaces. When interviewees commented on their salaries being unnecessarily low, the problem seemed to be not just that they might be struggling materially, but also that they felt the organizations they worked for did not really care about them. Similarly, in Julie's story about her manager telling her to let clients wait in a queue, her focus is not on having too many people to serve, but on how the response from her manager made her feel supported. Julie ended this story saying that the type of work she does,

> is really difficult . . . And to know that we have each other's backs and our management team has our back, makes the difference. People are what matter. And I get that message from our Executive Director. We matter. People matter. The team matters.

Shirley also talked about feeling that staff at her organization mattered. She told me about how her non-profit had given staff extra paid days off to support them with the stresses of living during a pandemic. As Shirley explained, this just "fell out of the sky." She said, "I'm like, wow. They really do care about the welfare of their staff in a really true and genuine way." Working conditions matter not just in their material aspects, but also because they communicate something about whether an organization values an employee. For this reason, the interactions that surround working conditions, such as whether people

feel pressured to overwork, or supported to put limits on their work, are also significant. Hodson (2001) understands working with dignity as a central element of good work. Dignity, for him, involves being respected by others. Participants' discussions of their working conditions underline the importance of these non-economic aspects of work relations, but they suggest that good work relations go beyond enjoying others' respect to include an element of care.

6.5 Interpersonal Interactions

Work involves interpersonal interactions about more than just working conditions. Participants talked about interpersonal interactions generally as an important element shaping their experiences of work. Some people shared stories of very difficult interpersonal interactions. Two interviewees mentioned they had gone to therapy to help them deal with the interpersonal challenges they encountered at work. I spoke to many people who loved their jobs and felt respected by their colleagues. In this section, however, I focus on the stories of mistreatment. While people told me about being treated well, it was mistreatment that seemed to call for some sort of attempt at explanation. In some cases it was very clear that interviewees saw their personal mistreatment as a contradiction of an organization's social justice mission. In other cases, it was evident that the participant experienced the mistreatment as a problem, but not clear whether they saw this as a contradiction of the organization's mission specifically. Some stories of mistreatment highlighted discrimination based on aspects of social location and others focused on difficulties with managers.

6.5.1 Discrimination

Three participants told me stories of discrimination they experienced on the basis of their race or age. Tara and Farah, who are both in their twenties and worked at the same organization, each mentioned not being taken seriously due to being younger. Tara said "the organization was also very I would say ageist in the sense that they did not value people that were younger." This comment came in the midst of a nearly 15-minute long "monologue" (this is how Tara herself referred to this section of the interview), in which Tara told me about the various problems she encountered in her work, and some of her thoughts on what caused these problems. Farah also talked about age-based discrimination, saying:

> I feel like as a young person, or a young-presenting person, I'm never taken seriously in these spaces. And the sad part about all of this is that many of the people, the women that I work with, they're all women of colour, so I just, yeah, there's a huge disconnect for me, personally. Cause my manager was a woman of colour, yeah, and I just find it so surprising.

Farah is herself a woman of colour, and her comments suggest that the discrimination she experienced was more surprising because it came from people who might have felt a sense of solidarity or wanted to support her on the basis of belonging to the same identity category. Farah speaks of a disconnect, but it seems to be related to who was discriminating against her, not the fact that this discrimination occurred in a social justice organization. I did not ask either Farah or Tara whether they saw this discrimination as a contradiction of the organizations mission; it is possible they did not see it as such, but it is also possible that they simply did not describe it this way.

Both Farah and Tara also mentioned racism in their organization. Tara said,

> I think my manager had some very like anti-Black like racism idioms. I don't know what it is. It's really hard to prove something like that. But I would feel that with people, or people of colour who are specifically darker skin tones. Like not someone like myself. She just had a way, like she was not – and someone who spends so much time, someone who's like 'Anti-racism!' someone whose job, and I'm trying to get to the point that even people, even I think in places where this is part of their mandate is anti-oppression. . . . I feel like even – like she even had more respect for the few number of like White staff that were in the organization. And like, you obviously can never prove something like that, but she just, I don't know.

In the above quote Tara is clear that she witnessed racism, but she then seems to struggle a bit with describing it because it occurred in a place that advocates anti-oppression, and because the racist behaviour came from someone who presented herself as a champion of anti-racism. Tara explicitly names this racism as a contradiction of the organization's mandate.

Sofia, who describes herself as a woman of colour, also talked about experiencing racism as a contradiction of her organization's mission. Reflecting on how the non-profit sector has not responded well to the global movement around anti-racism and decolonization in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, Sofia said,

> I have never felt so brown as I have [at] this moment in time. I'm the only person of colour who is a core staff in the organization. And so even when I want to speak about matters of identity or, just even as somebody, not as a person of colour but as a person in the sector who wants to say 'I have been responsible for

> oppression,' my colour is becoming so a factor in how I'm taken seriously. In how I'm being psychologized. I'm being analyzed in ways that I haven't been before. I'm seen as being combative and things like that.

Sofia described this experience as "bizarre." When I asked her if it was harder or more bizarre because she was working in an organization that ostensibly should care about these things, she replied, "Yes. . . . Definitely it is." Sofia went on to say that this was "funny", because she recognized, from previous experiences at this organization, that it might not meaningfully address the ways racism and colonialism are part of its work, but despite knowing this,

> I kind of hope for it . . . Because that's my expectation is that you don't say you're working towards gender equality, you don't say you're working towards social justice if you don't do it at home. That to me is, and this may be a personal thing, it's a dissonance and it turns into a place of disrespect and disgust even, with who I'm working for. . . . So definitely I expect more, for better or for worse.

In this section of the interview Sofia describes two problems. First, when she tried to raise a concern about how the organization was enacting its mission, she experienced a type of racist attack in which her skin colour was used as an excuse to dismiss what she had to say. This experience, which would have been difficult and unpleasant in any setting, was made worse by the fact that it occurred in a place and with people who claim to care about social justice. Sofia then switches from talking about her personal treatment, to describing a broader problem of contradiction between what the organization says it stands for and what it does. She explicitly reflects on the fact that she knows the organization may not act in line with its mission, and yet she still hopes it will.

Sofia kind of expects to be disappointed, and yet nonetheless she still maintains the expectation that the organization will not disappoint her. It is this expectation that the organization act on its word that made the racism Sofia experienced in the organization worse or harder to deal with.

What this excerpt from Sofia's interview reveals (aside from the fact of contradiction and the presence of racism in places that claim to work for social justice) is that employees of social justice non-profits are in a complicated position. Most are motivated to do their work because of their belief in social justice. To work for an organization, in some way they must believe that its social justice mission is genuine. Yet it is precisely because of this belief that people can experience contradictions and disappointment, and this experience is a mentally and emotionally difficult one.

6.5.2 Unpredictable and Difficult Managers

Aside from experiences of discrimination, participants also mentioned problems at work due to unpredictable and inconsistent responses from their managers. Their experiences in this regard echo widespread problems of mismanagement, abuse, and chaotic workplaces that Hodson (2001) identifies as undermining dignity. For example, Farah said:

> I've never heard if I was doing something right, if I was doing something wrong. Only when I did something, it was later that I was told, it's kind of like after I do something, I get a little slap on my hand, being like 'Oh you weren't supposed to do that'. It's like, 'Oh, but I thought that I was supposed to figure this situation out'. It's a very confusing dynamic I find.

Tara's description of the difficulty working for this manager was somewhat more evocative:

> I think what made her the worst manager of all time was everything had to do with her mood . . . The way we would describe it is like as if we were siblings and we had an abusive parent. And she was not abusive all the time. So there would be waves of like, you know. . . just like awfulness. But then like waves of calm. But you know even in that calm there is always something dark looming in the corner, and it's going to get bad.

In trying to make sense of this experience, Farah and Tara both mentioned that their manager had no management training. Farah also reflected that the managers themselves did not have any support, saying "And I just feel that there's no form of support for these folks that are in management positions. And I think, I highly recommend that there is some form of training or some form of ability to support them." Farah continued,

> I can just pick up on the fact that this person [the manager] is in deep pain, and that this person is not, yeah, there's something going on here, and it's not about me. I've had to reconcile this idea that I'm not a bad worker, I'm not someone who doesn't care. So I think that's something that I've been sitting with and thinking about a lot about my experience at [organization].

Tara also mentioned questioning herself saying,

> For the longest time I would think to myself 'Oh, is it because I can't handle a hard, not cozy space? Or is it because this is honestly toxic?' What's the level between, like not everyone loves their job. People have hard jobs all the time. So

> it took a lot of me thinking this through to be like 'No, this is also toxic. I could do things that are better, but this is also toxic.

This experience of mismanagement led both Farah and Tara to question whether the problem was somehow related to them, a personal failing on their part. This is somewhat remarkable given that there was significant turnover in this organization. The issues Farah and Tara experienced were clearly not unique to them.

Ultimately, both participants explained their experiences with this manager as a problem of bad management, but they also connected this to larger issues at the organization, questioning why no action was taken when there was such a high turnover rate. They identified this as a failure of leadership on the part of the E.D., and explained that this was impossible to address because, as Farah put it, "the board members . . . are all BFFs with [the] E.D." Even when the organization's ability to carry out its mission was negatively impacted by management issues, there was no way to address this. The question Farah and Tara raise, which was also raised by other participants in this research, is ultimately one about accountability and how to deal with power in a non-profit setting. While they did not speak of their poor personal treatment as a direct contradiction of the organization's mission, Farah and Tara did connect it to the mission indirectly through the repercussions mismanagement had on people's ability to do their work effectively. Farah and Tara therefore felt that even if the E.D. and/or board members were not concerned about whether the workplace was a respectful one that upheld people's dignity, they should be interested in addressing the issue of mismanagement because it negatively impacted the organization's work.

Kayla also told me about difficulties with a manager that she saw negatively impacting her organization as a whole. In her case however the manager, who was also the E.D., left and a new E.D. was hired. Kayla said,

> I had some pretty uncomfortable experiences with the previous executive director that I don't think were productive and that I think were inappropriate in terms of the way that they reacted to me and their like, their tone and approach to communicating with me felt very inappropriate. As someone who manages other people I would never speak to someone that I manage the way that I was spoken to by that person on several occasions. . . . I think it definitely negatively affected my experience with the organization. I don't know what the longevity of my being here would have been if they had continued to work here, but, and there were many people that left the organization because of interpersonal challenges with this person. Like the entire staff turned over because of interpersonal challenges with this person. So I know I wasn't alone in that. So I think their approach to managing folks was harmful to the organization cause we lost a lot of good people, but overall I think the organization is fantastic and I feel, I think things have changed a lot.

Kayla did not tell me, and I am not sure if she knew, why or under what circumstances the previous E.D. left. Kayla did not describe these negative interpersonal interactions as a contradiction of the organization's social justice mission as such, but she did see them as something that harmed the organization.

Katrina also told me about some difficult interactions with her manager. She described how when she raised concerns about staff being told to work from the office

(instead of from home) a few months into the COVID-19 pandemic, instead of taking her concerns seriously, the manager responded by framing the problem as one of Katrina being unnecessarily worried. When Katrina pushed back, the manager got upset, and started telling other staff to be gentle with Katrina because Katrina was having mental health struggles due to COVID, all while not addressing the actual health and safety concerns Katrina raised. Essentially, in response to raising a health and safety issue, Katrina was personally attacked by her manager, who started spreading lies about Katrina, but under a guise of concern for Katrina's well-being. Katrina said she thought the manager wanted people to work from the office because the manager wanted the feeling of connection from being in the same place as other staff. Earlier in the interview Katrina described this manager as someone who made decisions based on feelings. Katrina did not frame this experience as a contradiction, but she did frame it as related to what she sees as a larger problem in non-profits saying, "And to me it was almost all the non-profit problems boiled down into this situation where we were putting feelings of connection over people's actual health." This situation may be related to the issue I described in the section on employment relations, where non-profits foster close connections between staff, and frame what they do not as work involving employment and its associated rules and regulations, but as a friendly group of people gathering to do good.

Stories of very difficult interpersonal interactions with managers were not widespread; about a quarter of participants mentioned these sorts of incidents. I have not included some of these stories as they are difficult to anonymize. However, despite being rarer, these kinds of interactions are important as they constituted a significant problem

for interviewees. Discrimination and negative interpersonal interactions are not issues unique to the non-profit sector, but the experience of contradiction that accompanied some of these interactions, and made them harder to withstand, may be specific to this sector. These experiences also demonstrate that when thinking about how to improve workplaces, we need to look not only at tangible elements of working conditions, but also interpersonal interactions across relations of power. This is an issue that may be more difficult to address, as unlike working hours, respectful treatment cannot be legislated into existence. Ultimately, these issues go to the heart of employment as a relation between "rulers and ruled" (Weeks, 2011, p. 2). Abuse is made possible by unequal power relations.

6.6 Conclusion

In discussing their experiences of alignment and contradiction, participants talked about how they and their colleagues are treated at work. Their comments focused on their working conditions and on interpersonal interactions. Some people had good working conditions and felt well supported, others experienced poor conditions and negative interpersonal interactions.

Participants saw the non-profit sector as one that is under-resourced, and connected poor working conditions to this, yet they also highlighted the role of managers in determining working conditions. Participants also reflected on how commitment to a mission can lead people to accept poor working conditions more readily than they might in an organization with a mission they did not care about, and they described how a tendency to downplay the employment relation can make it difficult to address issues to do with working conditions in some social justice non-profits.

The people I spoke to felt that having a social justice mission should prompt the organizations they worked for to provide decent working conditions. When these organizations did not do this, participants saw it as a problem. In many cases they advocated for better conditions. For example, Stephanie advocated for frontline staff at her organization to get better pay and access to benefits. While recognizing the general under-resourcing of the non-profit sector in comparison to the needs it tries to meet, participants critically evaluated their own working conditions and those of their colleagues, and resisted poor working conditions in situations where they felt conditions could be better. By upholding and acting on an expectation of better working conditions, they in some cases made them a reality.

Beyond working conditions, participants also talked about their interpersonal interactions at work. They framed some negative interpersonal interactions, particularly experiences of racism, as a contradiction of their organization's mission. Other bad interactions they saw as a problem, but not necessarily a contradiction. When these interactions led to high rates of turnover, however, participants did talk about them as harming the organization in general.

Overall, this chapter demonstrates that:

- Participants spoke about alignment with an organizational mission in relation to how workers are treated in terms of both working conditions and interpersonal interactions with colleagues
- Participants framed working conditions as a social justice issue and expressed a belief that having a social justice mission should prompt a non-profit to provide

decent working conditions. Poor working conditions were thus seen to be a contradiction of an organization's mission

- Participants saw poor working conditions resulting from non-profits themselves being under-resourced, managers not treating decent working conditions as a priority, and employees struggling to set boundaries around their work as a result of their commitment to the organization's mission
- Working conditions matter not simply in a practical sense (e.g. whether one has enough time away from work), but also because they communicate something about whether an organization cares about and values an employee
- Some negative interpersonal interactions, such as discrimination on the basis of race, were framed as a contradiction of an organization's mission, while other negative interactions were not discussed in relation to the mission. Participants spoke of unpredictable and difficult managers who caused high turnover rates as harming an organization's ability to carry out its mission, but they usually did not frame this as a contradiction of the mission as such.
- A tendency in some non-profits to frame their activities not as work structured by the power relations of employment, but rather as a group of people coming together to do good, can make it difficult to address issues with working conditions and interpersonal interactions in social justice non-profits

Chapter 7: Making Sense of Contradiction

In the previous two chapters I discussed alignment and contradiction in terms of the content of people's work and their treatment at work. I also discussed what people saw as causing their experiences of contradiction. The causes they identified had to do with factors external to the organization such as funding, and internal factors such as the beliefs and decisions of managers. In this chapter, I shift focus from *what* people spoke about when explaining contradiction, to look at *how* some participants made sense of their experiences throughout the interview. While the previous chapters address themes that cross-cut the interviews, presenting the data by theme in this way makes it impossible to see the process of sense-making interviewees were engaging in as they spoke to me.

This chapter deals with people's process of figuring out what to think and do as they live their lives. This self-referential process, the self reflecting back on itself as part of "mak[ing its] way through the world" is what sociologists term reflexivity (Archer, 2007). This is an increasingly important element of life in late modernity, as tradition has decreased in importance and people must figure out who they are and how to live amid "a puzzling diversity of options and possibilities" (Giddens, 1991, p. 3). For Archer, reflexivity matters because it is through this process that "objective structural or cultural powers . . . influence[] social action" (p. 5). Reflexivity is the process through which the external world and people's subjective concerns and experiences interact. To connect this to Luhmann's (1995) theory of social systems, disappointment may prompt reflexivity. When an expectation is disappointed, one often engages in an internal dialogue about what happened and what to make of it. As Luhmann (1995) explains, "[o]ne is almost forced to react to disappointment" (p. 293).

All participants were, at some level, making sense of their work experiences during their interview. As Frank (2002) explains, telling stories and narrating experience are fundamentally a way of making sense of the world and ourselves. Yet, although they can all be described as making sense of their experiences, the character of this sense-making varied among participants. In particular, many of those who had more difficult experiences at work, who emphasized contradictions more than alignment, and who spoke about poor personal treatment at work, seemed to be struggling to make sense of their experiences, or questioning the sense they did make. In this chapter, I profile some of these participants and their attempts at explaining and making sense of what happened in their workplaces. I have chosen to focus on these participants as their experiences highlight that contradiction constituted a problem for many participants; it was something that required explanation and yet was difficult to explain. For each participant, I pull together statements from a few points in their interview, and present them in succession to show part of the narrative the participant told about their work.

7.1 Katrina

Katrina had mixed experiences at work. There were ways in which she felt her work aligned with social justice, and other ways in which she experienced contradiction. She told me about poor working conditions and she mentioned positive and negative interactions with other staff, including her manager. In the following excerpts, Katrina tries to make sense of whether issues she experienced are unique to her workplace, or are an issue of non-profits in general. She also compares the non-profit and private sectors, and discusses whether some of the good elements she sees in other sectors could be integrated into non-profits, without losing some of the the elements she values in non-

profit work. In these excerpts it is clear that Katrina is engaged in a process of making sense of her experiences and of non-profit work in general.

The following excerpt comes from a section of the interview where I was asking Katrina about whether she felt she could raise issues at her work. She told me she felt very empowered to raise issues related to the content of her work, but not to bring up issues around working conditions. When I asked her more about this, she said:

> You're doing your research in this area so I'm sure you're very familiar with the pattern of non-profit burnout and people being asked to take on too much work cause they care and all of that kind of stuff. . . . So, you know, just [laugh], realizing, I don't know, I think maybe it's just where I was working, I think [in] non-profits it's easy to be just exploitable. People care a lot. You don't make enough money. And I felt that we had a culture of being super like 'We're all friends and family here and we're all super close'. And I actually do think that is good. But I think it also erased a lot of problems.

In this excerpt, Katrina switches back and forth between explaining the issue of poor working conditions as a problem of the non-profit sector as a whole, and then explaining it as a problem specific to her workplace. She also suggests that some of the elements that cause problems are also what make her workplace good. At many points in the interview Katrina presented a well-developed analysis of many of the problems she experienced, yet at some points, as above, she still seems to be trying to figure out how to frame the issues in her workplace.

Later in the interview, when I asked Katrina whether she sees some of the things she had told me about as contradictions, and if so, how she makes sense of them, she said:

> I really didn't understand before what people talked about when they said the non-profit industrial complex, and was kind of like 'No, people care about their work and they're doing it'. And now I'm like 'Nope. This is an industry, like any other. And it has fallible human beings, like any other.' And sometimes I think it even makes it easier to hide problems in workplaces because there is that like 'We're here for a purpose and we're here because we care'. And I think it almost in some ways, like, I used to be like 'Oh I'd never want to work in a corporate environment.' But to be honest, at this point I'm kind of like 'Yeah, I want to work somewhere with a very clear code of conduct that is like 'Yep, we're here to do this thing. And at the end of the day you can go home and have your values be your own.'

Towards the end of the interview, however, Katrina modified her position on what kind of place she would like to work in, saying:

> I think in some ways [non-profit] is so great, like I love the passion of it. And I wouldn't want to go, like sometimes I joke like 'Oh my god I just want a job that I don't care about, so I can mentally check out'. Like I can work my 9-5 and then come home and then have my own values on my own time. But I like being in a place that feels in alignment generally with my values. I like being able to work for a place that I think is putting good out into the world. But I worry that if putting good in the world is tied to your job, what ethical shifts will you, like what

> things will you allow to happen because it's tied to your work, number one, and two, that it enables that exploitative passion, like I'm just gonna work too hard kind of thing. And what would it mean to have maybe more like the private sector, something that is a little more formalized and professional in the good- I don't know if professional is the right word. Um, like mechanisms for dealing with this. I don't know if I have the language for this. I just think that sometimes, like, when I hear people who are working in other sectors talk about like 'That wouldn't fly because we have an ability to address it'. I'm like 'Oh man, non-profit could use a little bit of that. A little bit of like 'that wouldn't fly'. But I don't know how you do that without also, you know, like when our office got more professional there was suddenly a more strict dress code instituted.

In the above two segments, Katrina shifts back and forth between identifying positive elements of a culture that she associates with the private sector, and positive elements of a culture that she associates with the non-profit sector. She also switches between saying she wants to work in the private sector and saying she wants to work in the non-profit sector. Almost as soon as she proposes a solution (adopting more rules and regulations) to the problem she has identified in the culture of non-profit work, she questions whether this solution would bring its own issues. These oscillations between different explanations of, and possible solutions to, the problems she encountered I see as evidence of Katrina trying to make sense of her experiences, and trying to figure out how to act in the future in light of these experiences. She is reflexively engaging with her experience as she tries to figure out what to do. Ultimately, it seems Katrina is trying to figure out

whether the kind of workplace she would like, one where she can do values-aligned work and not be exploited, can even exist.

7.2 Deepa

While Katrina engaged in a comparative analysis of (her views of) the non-profit and private sectors in making sense of her experiences, Deepa dealt with a tension between the structures non-profits are operating in, and the power people have to influence what happens in non-profits. The following paragraph comes from a section about two-thirds of the way through the interview. I had asked Deepa about whether the workplace culture she had described, where social justice values were promoted but not enacted, impacted her ability to do her job. After answering this question, Deepa started to tell me about what she had done at her work to try to address problems, and how her perspective on non-profit work had been shaped by her experiences:

> There were many times I had low morale, and I was like there has to be something we can possibly do where we can feel like we've gained some form of control or some form of power. And I think that we tried in so many ways, like addressing it at staff meetings, or talking to our managers one-on-one. And when I noticed that wasn't the way to go, or that wasn't working for me, I realized that either I have to leave, I have to leave this organization, because it's not working for me and I don't think I can stay here anymore, but I also had to accept that it might not be better at another organization. That's what I had to accept. I think that was my own self work though, because I had to realize that it's not just about these agencies. We're operating under [a] really interesting time, like in terms of government structures. It's so much bigger. It's so much bigger. And I think that

> for me, when I started really recognizing that oh, wow, this is so much bigger than management. It's bigger than the non-for-profit industrial complex. It's bigger than all of this. I started having to accept so oh wow, so even if I go to another agency, it might not be better. Maybe I might have a good manager. And it's so sad that that was the form of expectation that I was setting up for myself. Like I thought . . . that's so interesting how I'm already sitting here and thinking how it might not be better somewhere else, because this problem of these structural issues is larger than all of us. It's larger than the non-for-profit sector. . . . So I think for me I've had to accept that it may be better and it may not be better, but that is also up to us. Like I don't know. I feel like that is up to the people that are constantly making noise in these organizations, whether that's unionizing, whether that's not unionizing and trying to figure out another alternative. I have not figured out the other alternative yet [laughter] but I'm hoping that something, yeah, I don't know.

In this long section, Deepa says that the problems she was experiencing were, ultimately, not about her workplace, they were caused by much larger systems. She therefore sets up an expectation for herself that her experiences might not be any better in a different organization, because the issues are not caused at the organizational level. Revising her expectations in this way is sad for Deepa; she accepts a certain amount of powerlessness. Deepa ends, however, by suggesting that the situation could be better, and that it is up to people in organizations to make it better. Deepa suggests that she and other workers are not so powerless after all. Shortly thereafter, however, Deepa told me:

> And ultimately I think the fact that as an employee though, outside of all these structures, I can't help but think about the sense of guilt that gets put on workers to be like 'Oh yeah, at the end of the day maybe it is about an individual process of like maybe I have to figure it out. Or maybe we have to be better.'. . . And I think that's what I personally struggle with.

Throughout the interview Deepa was grappling with a question about the level at which issues are caused. She is trying to make sense of her experiences, and figure out what expectations she can or should hold of the non-profit sector as a whole, and what expectations are reasonable to hold of herself and of other workers. She simultaneously feels that it is wrong for workers to blame themselves for the issues they encounter, yet she also wants to believe in the possibility that workers can improve their conditions and the capacity of the organizations they work for to do work aligned with social justice. She struggles, in part, because the possibility of social justice matters deeply to her, as such, it is a normative expectation, not the kind of expectation that can be easily revised (Luhmann, 1995, p. 321). Ultimately, Deepa is trying to figure out what to think, and her interview reflects this. The first excerpt from her interview above includes her reporting on her "internal conversation"; these conversations are reflexivity in action (Archer, 2007, p. 2). These excerpts from Deepa's interview also demonstrate the personal impact that experiencing contradictions in non-profit work can have on people. Workers may feel guilty or feel a sense of powerlessness. For many people, contradictions are not just something they recognize intellectually, but also something they experience emotionally. Making sense of their experiences is important for dealing with the emotional impact of contradiction.

7.3 Kelly

Kelly's process of sense-making was somewhat similar to Deepa's. She identified a few different causes of the issues she experienced and some solutions, but also expressed feelings of despair about whether better non-profit work is possible, and hope that it is. In contrast to Deepa, who experienced issues in both the content of her organization's work and the treatment of employees, Kelly works for an organization where she feels the work itself is rooted in social justice, but the treatment of staff does not reflect this. Kelly described how this impacted her experience working in the organization:

> It's been very discouraging. It's been really, really challenging in a way of, I think, you know, having this view of this organization and having it as like a dream organization to work with as I was going through my [university degree], and something that I really wanted to be working towards for so long. And then having those first few months and feeling so passionate, and I still feel so passionate about the work that is done on a frontline level, but incredibly discouraged that if a place like this and the radical work that we can be doing with clients can't be translated on a larger level . . . I just continually have second thoughts about the sector, and I have second thoughts about, like [profession] in general because of these experiences. And, yeah, and non-profits specifically working within [sector] with[in] a capitalist world. Yeah, I just, yeah it's been tough. There's been some cloudy experiences, that's for sure.

Kelly's experiences at work led her to question her entire profession and the sector she works in. For Kelly, if one organization that purports to uphold social justice values can blatantly not enact them in its treatment of employees, then there is no guarantee that any

other social justice non-profit organization will uphold its social justice values. The meaning and value of having a social justice mission is thrown into question for Kelly in a profound way. Contradiction, for Kelly as for Deepa, could not be explained away as an issue of one bad workplace, but rather led her to question the very possibility of doing social justice work in a non-profit. The very thing that motivated Kelly to do her work in the first place was thrown into question by her experiences.

Despite this profound doubt about the social justice non-profit sector as a whole, Kelly did identify a few specific causes of the problems she experienced. She told me that many of the problems had begun or gotten much worse after the organization hired a new executive director. When I asked Kelly whether there were elements beyond this E.D. that made things bad at her organization and what, if anything, she thought could make it better, she mentioned the size of the organization, it's structure, and governance, saying:

> specifically I think size-wise, I think for the social justice values of an agency to feel as authentic, I think I'd like to see what a smaller agency, how that would be different . . . So that's something that I've been kind of tossing around in my head is would that be different, or [whether changing the ratio of frontline to management staff might make a difference]. More interaction with boards is also something that I've been thinking about a lot. We are incredibly disconnected. We have specific policies about employees not interacting with board members at any point. So that's been something that I've been thinking about as well is that board integration with agencies. Yeah, I don't know if it's possible. I really hope it is.

Kelly identifies a number of elements which might change what is happening in the organization and make it align better with social justice values. She questions, however,

whether these changes would actually make a difference. She is not sure if better non-profit working conditions are possible, but she hopes they are. Ultimately, Kelly found living with this contrast between the content of her work and the treatment of employees very difficult. In many ways, it seemed she was not able to make sense of it. She told me:

> It's this, it's such a strange, it feels like every day I'm being like pulled and pulled and pulled and pulled . . . And so I'm in this space of having the most fulfilling potential days of feeling so enthusiastic and eager about the work that we're doing, and so appreciative for these programs being offered to folks, and then at the same time holding these just like horrific stories of harassment that's happening among staff, and within other departments, and my close colleagues. And so it feels like I'm constantly being pulled between these two places and being like these things don't fit together. Like how can this work be offered and it just be so disregarded on this leadership level. So yeah, yeah, it's really hard. Sorry.

Ultimately, for Kelly, the problem persists. For her, it does not make sense, perhaps it cannot make sense, that an organization could do work rooted in social justice, and yet completely ignore these social justice principles in its internal operations. It seems Kelly is caught in a situation where she either believes in the organization's commitment to social justice and deals with the difficulty of contradiction, or she can accept that organizations may not live their social justice missions, but then she loses the very thing that gives meaning to her work.

7.4 Conclusion

In various ways, Kelly, Deepa, and Katrina all question the very possibility of a social justice non-profit that lives its values in its work and internal operations. They all want to believe in this possibility, and yet their experiences have thrown this belief into question, leaving them trying to make sense of what they have experienced, and trying to figure out how to move forward. The very thing that motivates them to do the work they do, their belief in social justice, is also what generates an experience of contradiction that makes it difficult to continue doing this work. Not every participant had this experience. Some people had not experienced contradictions that led them to question their work. Some people had a framework for making sense of their experiences of contradiction. However for some participants, including those profiled in this chapter, contradictions were something they were not necessarily able to make sense of. They were stuck between accepting a reality of lack of alignment, or in Luhmannian terms learning by revising their expectations, and holding onto their expectations and thereby reasserting a belief that alignment in social justice non-profit work ought to be possible.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Most adults need to work for a living. Work is a prominent activity that takes up a significant amount of people's time and energy. How people feel about their work and whether they feel it contributes to or detracts from their well-being is thus an important question when thinking about what constitutes a good life. In this thesis, I have looked at what makes work good or bad for employees of social justice non-profits in Canada.

Social justice non-profit work has the potential to be a wonderful experience or a terrible experience. Previous research has documented high rates of satisfaction among non-profit employees resulting from the fact that many of them find their work meaningful. Yet research also describes how this satisfaction is threatened by managerialism, low pay, and overwork, stemming in part from inadequate funding and, in the case of frontline social service work, a gendered view of care work as low skill, which provides a justification for low pay in this sector where the majority of workers are women. Further, employees' commitment to the missions of their organizations and a desire to live their values through their work means many are willing, at least for a time, to take on extra work or accept low pay. This willingness can in turn reinforce an expectation that non-profits and their staff make do with insufficient funds, which can lead to increased stress, poorer quality work, and ultimately dissatisfaction.

Some participants in my research absolutely loved their jobs, and were excited to tell me about how happy they were at work. Others had had very negative experiences, and the interview seemed to present an opportunity to unburden themselves of these experiences in some way by seeking recognition and acknowledgement of the harm their work had caused them and/or their organization's clients. Of course, many participants' experiences of social justice non-profit work lay somewhere between these two extremes.

A significant factor determining whether social justice non-profit employees experience their work as good or bad, as something that contributes significantly to their well-being or detracts from it, is the degree of alignment they experience between their social justice values and the actual practices of the non-profit organizations for which they work.

Part of what makes social justice non-profit work so good for some employees is that it is meaningful to them. In contrast to the experiences of alienation Marx describes where work loses meaning because it is a means to an end and not an end in itself (Hodson, 2001, p. 24), for many non-profit employees their work is inherently meaningful. Yet the ability to do values-aligned work which provides this meaning can be impeded by other actors who shape the non-profit labour process, such as funders and other employees. A majority of participants in this research identified ways in which the work their organizations did was not aligned with its mission and values. For some participants, the lack of alignment was minor and something they could easily withstand. Other participants experienced an extreme lack of alignment and felt some of the content of their organizations' work directly contradicted its mission.

Participants also spoke about alignment and contradiction in relation to the ways employees are treated in their workplaces. Participants saw working conditions as a social justice issue, and therefore expected social justice non-profits to treat workers well. Participants actual experiences in this regard were mixed. Some people felt they were treated very well by the organizations for which they worked, and others felt exploited. Similarly, some participants' work was characterized by positive interpersonal interactions with other staff, while others described experiences of discrimination and

personal attacks, sometimes in response to bringing up issues such as a disregard for workers' health and safety.

There is an interesting dynamic in how a number of employees think about alignment in social justice non-profit work. At one and the same time, they think social justice non-profits should be places that enact social justice values in the content of their work and the treatment of staff, and yet they also think these organizations often do not do this. Or, to put it more generally, they think social justice non-profit work should be good work, both in terms of doing good in the world and being a good place to work, yet based on their own or others' experiences, they believe it is often somewhat bad work. They thus hold contradictory expectations of work in this sector. The expectation that non-profit work should be good work is so resistant to change because social justice is a normative expectation - it specifically deals with what ought to be as opposed to what is (Luhmann, 1995, p. 321). When the disconnect between expectation and experience is profound, it can constitute a significant problem for social justice non-profit employees. They are left struggling to make sense of their experiences, struggling to understand how an organization that proclaims social justice values could then not enact these values in its work.

It seems making sense of contradiction was hardest when employees felt the contradictions stemmed from factors within the organization. Participants seemed ready to accept that contradictions might arise as an organization with social justice values and an idealistic mission negotiated an unjust external world, for example, as it dealt with a government funding process that made it difficult to centre clients' needs. Participants saw these scenarios as an issue and they caused frustration, but if they felt the source of

the problem was truly beyond the organization's control, it did not lead them to doubt their work. However contradictions that participants saw as caused by factors internal to an organization, for example, a refusal to examine racism in the organization's hiring practices, presented a much more significant problem. These contradictions could lead participants to question the very possibility of good social justice non-profit work.

Internal causes of contradiction are related to a recognized, but sometimes under-emphasized, aspect of waged work – the domination and subjugation inherent in the employment relation. To be an employee is to be enmeshed in a power relation. It is to have one's freedom and autonomy restricted. It is this power relation, in part, that makes possible some of the more frustrating experiences of contradiction and mistreatment participants recounted in interviews. Yet the presence of this power relation does not lead directly to bad experiences at work. Rather, the employment relation is a problem because it introduces the *potential* for exploitation and abuse. Whether and to what degree this potential is realized is an altogether different matter.

The experiences of social justice non-profit employees recounted in this thesis underscore the need, when developing and applying theory, to grasp the dual character of work as something that can contribute to and/or detract from people's well-being. Scholarship in the Marxist tradition often highlights the problems with work, showing how the employment relation is fundamentally oppressive and workers are exploited economically. Yet, while these analyses are crucial in denaturalizing dominant forms of work under capitalism, they run the risk of removing the subjective experience of working from the analysis. In this thesis I have tried to attend to this subjective experience. I have emphasized experiences of contradiction more than alignment. I chose

to do this as contradiction reveals specific challenges related to non-profit work, highlighting the expectations workers hold, and how these can set them up for disappointment. In concluding, however, I want to highlight that this disappointment is not inevitable. It is important to recognize both that social justice non-profit work can involve specific harms for workers – bad working conditions in this sector can take a mental and emotional toll beyond that which these conditions may exact in another sector, because of the added experience of contradiction – but also that it can be a source of great joy, meaning, and fulfillment.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

1. To start off, can you tell me what kind of organization you work for?

2. What is your role in the organization?
   Where do you fit in the organizational structure?

3. How long have you been in this job?

4. Where is the organization located?

5. How many employees work in the location you typically work from?

6. Do you know everyone there?

7. How many people work for the organization in total?

8. How would you describe your organization's mission or goals and values? I don't need the exact mission statement, I just want to know what you understand the organization to be about. What does it believe in and what is it trying to do?

9. How did you come to work for this organization?
   Did you choose to work here specifically or did you just end up here?
   What other kinds of organizations have you worked for?

10. Did you have ideas about what working in the non-profit sector would be like before you entered the sector?
    What were those ideas?
    Have those ideas changed?

11. Is there a typical week at work for you, or is every week really different?
    If yes, what does a typical week at work look like?
    If no, what are your primary responsibilities and tasks at work?
    How many hours do you work in a week? Does the number of hours vary a lot?
    How do you feel about working this number of hours?

12. How do you feel about your work?
    What do you like about your work?
    What do you find frustrating about your work?

13. Can you tell me about your relationships with your colleagues?
    Probe for: relationships with people you work for/higher up than you in the hierarchy, people on a similar level to you, and people who work for you/on a lower level

14. Thinking specifically about people you report to, your manager(s) or boss(es), what is your relationship with them like?
    Probe for whether the employee feels they have the freedom to make decisions about how they'll do their job
    Probe for whether employee feels supported by their work, and if so, what that support looks like.

15. Have any problems arisen recently in your workplace?
    If interviewee can't think of anything: thinking further back, can you remember a time a problem came up?
    Examples of problems: a program isn't running well, or a new policy is going to create issues, or you notice other staff are getting burnt out or demoralized.

16. How was this problem dealt with?
    Is this usually what happens to address this type of problem?

17. Do you feel you're able to raise issues at work?

18. What responses have you gotten to bringing up issues in the past?

19. Are there some kinds of issues you feel you're able to raise, and others you don't feel you can raise?

20. Can you tell me about a time when you wished you could do something at work that you weren't able to?
    If interviewee can't think of anything, prompt with examples, e.g. provide more in-depth support to a client, tell a funder they're reporting demands are unreasonable
    What stood in the way of you doing the thing you wanted to?

21. Can you tell me about a time you were able to make the kind of change or have the kind of impact you want to through your work?
    If interviewee needs prompting: can you tell me about a time you were really proud of something you did at work?

22. Do you feel you have ever been harmed or treated poorly by your work?
    Are you comfortable providing a specific example?
    Do you feel that harm could have been avoided?
    If so, how?

23. Are there ways in which your work has positively impacted your life? Can you tell me about them?

24. Do you feel staff are valued in your organization?

25. Do you believe social justice non-profits, because of their social justice values, should be good places to work/places that support the well-being of the employees?

26. In your opinion, how are the organization's commitments to social justice reflected, or not reflected, in the way it treats its employees?
    Does the org. live its mission and values in relation to its employees?
    What does social justice mean to you?

27. How does this workplace culture that does/doesn't value social justice impact your ability to do your job? What impact does it have on your mission/clients?

28. How do you reconcile poor treatment you experience at work with the social justice values of your organization?
    (Do you believe social justice non-profits, because of their social justice values, should be good places to work/places that support the well-being of the employees?)

29. If you could change a few things about your work, what would you change?

30. Have you spoken about wanting these changes with any of your colleagues? What do they say?

31. Are you/is your organization starting to implement these changes? What stands in the way of these changes happening?

32. Have you worked for other non-profits that you would describe as having a social justice mission? If so, how did your experiences there compare to your experiences at your current job?

33. Do you have any thoughts about how employees are treated in the non-profit sector as a whole?

34. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your work?

35. We're almost done, I have a few demographic questions, but before I ask them, is there anything you want to ask me about this research?

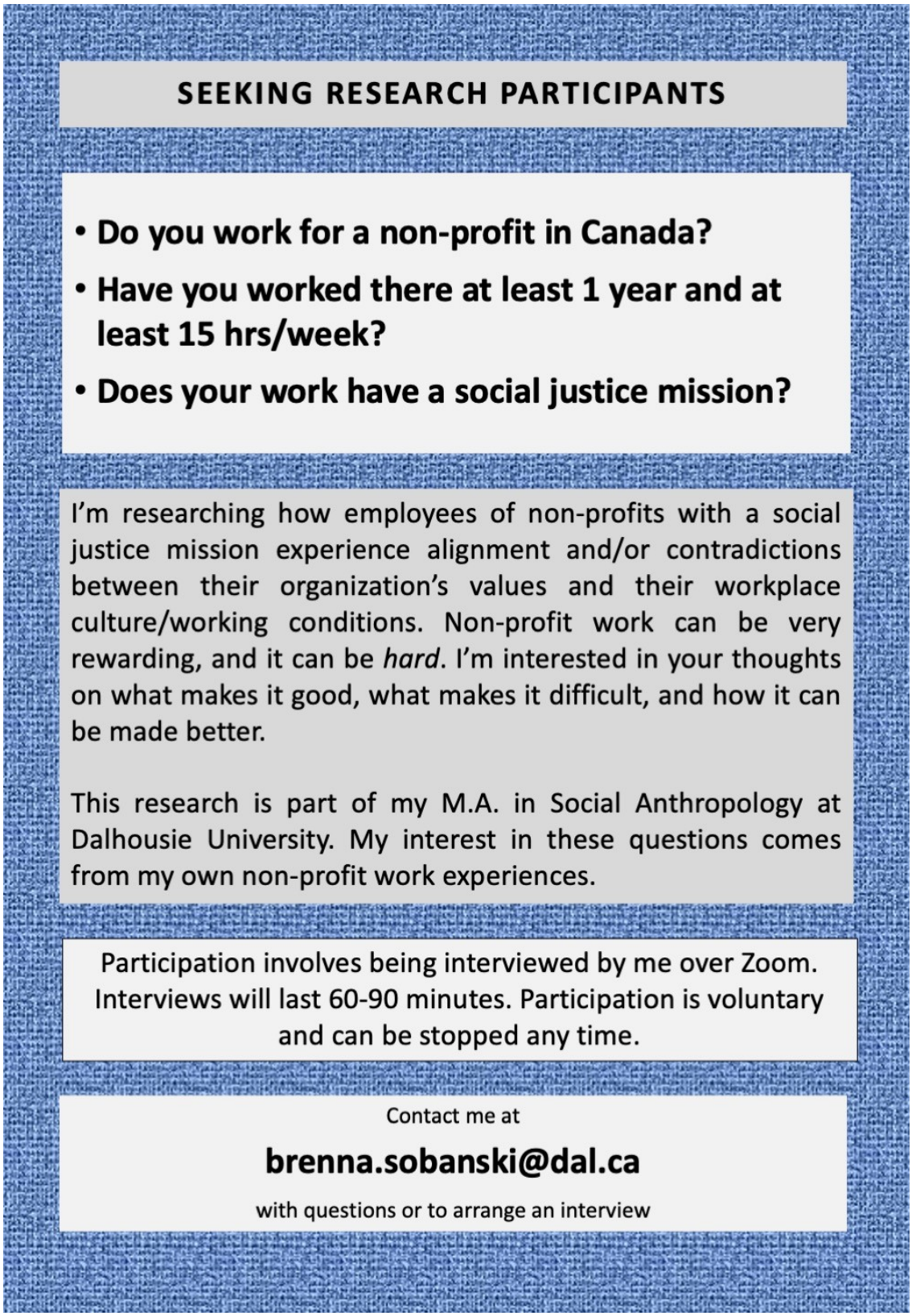
I have some demographic questions that I am asking to make sure I interview as diverse a group of non-profit employees as possible. They're questions about your identity. As always, you can tell me you prefer not to answer any of these questions.

1. What year were you born?
2. Are you a Canadian citizen or Permanent Resident?
3. What is your gender?
4. How do you describe your racial or ethnic identity?

5. Do you identify as having a disability?
6. What is your sexual orientation?

Thank you so much. Do you have any other questions for me? Anything else you want to say?

Appendix B: Recruitment Poster



Appendix C: Codes Table

Name of Code	Description
Accountability	Anything about accountability - holding people accountable, lack of accountability etc.
Agency	Comments about having or not having agency and autonomy at work
Align	Discussion of alignment, or lack thereof, between values and vision on the one hand and actions on the other. Actions meaning things to do with the work itself (e.g. what services the org is offering and how), and the treatment of employees.
Bad	Captures where people talk about what makes their work/workplaces bad
BLM	Mentions of Black Lives Matter and the impact of this moment/movement on people's work.
Board	Any comments about an organization's board of directors
Burnout	Captures any mentions of burnout
Change	Anything about creating change, either externally through the organization's work, or internally within the organization. This is meant to capture intentional change or attempts at change, not things that happen to have changed.
COVID	Mentions of COVID and impacts of COVID
E.D.	Any comments about executive directors
Education	Anything related to the role non-profits do, might, or don't play in educating people (staff, donors, or the public) about issues relevant to the work, especially social justice issues.
Expectation	Anything to do with expectations, including responses when I asked interviewees what they thought working in the NP sector would be like
Compare	For places where people speak comparatively about organizations. I've made this a sub-code of expectation because people's expectations are shaped by their prior experiences, so they're related.
Expertise	mentions of the work and educational backgrounds of other staff (i.e. not the interviewee) and any impact this has
Feel	How the interviewee feels about their work
Fit	Discussions of employees' fit or suitability for a job or an organizational culture
Funding	Comments about funding in the non-profit sector and comments about donor relations
Good	Captures where people talk about what make their work/workplaces good
Hours	Anything to do with hour many hours interviewee works or comments about working hours at org (e.g. if ppl. are generally over-worked, or given lots of time off)
Manage	Comments about management and managing an organization

Clarity	For anything to do with clarity or lack of clarity in instructions/expectations from supervisors/managers
Consistency	For passages about consistency in expectations and supervisor/management behaviour.
Manipulate	For instances where interviewees spoke of being manipulated by others in the organization
Transparency	anything to do with transparency or lack thereof, particularly around how managers make decisions in a workplace
Measurement	Mentions of measurement (measuring things related to the work - outcomes, performance, etc.)
Motivation	Why the interviewee does the work/why they entered the sector they're working in
Nepotism	Comments about nepotism
Non-Profit	Comments about the Non-Profit sector generally
Organization	Any general comments the interviewee has about the organization they work for.
Org – values	Captures places where people talk about their organization's values and/or vision/mission.
Org. Hist.	Information about the organization's history
pol + proc	anything to do with policy, procedure, the sort of technical aspects of running an organization.
Power	For excerpts where people discuss power and the impact of power.
Race	mentions of the impact of race, racism
Research	Interviewee's comments on the research topic itself - many had comments about it being timely, or important, or who would feel it was important
Interview	Interviewees' comments on the experience of doing the interview
Say-Do	Captures discussions about the differences between what a person says and what they actually do
Self + Work	Captures places where people talk about their relationship to work, or what they think the right relationship is between themselves as people and their work (e.g. is it an instrumental relationship, or a way of finding fulfilment etc.)
Sense	Captures excerpts where someone is explicitly 'making sense' of a situation - offering their interpretation of why things happened the way they did.
Sense - leadership	Where people make sense of something on the basis of it having to do with leadership (either good or bad leadership)
Sense - personal	For places where people make sense of things/assign causality on the basis of it being something personal, to do with them and/or another person
Sense - situation	Where people make sense of how or why something happened as being about that specific situation

Sense - societal	Where people assign explanatory power for how or why something happened to the societal/larger structural level (e.g. something being about neoliberalism, or increasing poverty etc.)
Size	comments on the impact of an organization's size
Social Justice	Any mentions of social justice
Supervisor	comments on supervisor(s) as distinct from the E.D.
Support	Things to do with support, or lack thereof, of staff.
Tension	For passages that speak to the tension between agency and structure, having power and yet being constrained
Tenure	comments about how long people (especially those in leadership positions) have been in a role
Trust	For mentions of trust and its importance
Turnover	mentions of the turnover rate in an organization
Union	any comments about unions and unionization
Work Rel	Comments on relationships with other staff members, or between other staff members.