Why meaningful work is influenced by motivational and social work characteristics

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<u>Abstract</u>

It has been stated in the academic literature that work design in terms of work characteristics do influence employees' experience of meaningful work positively. However, it is still unclear in the academic literature why the work characteristics positively influence employees' experience of meaningful work. This study aims to gain a richer and better understanding of why the different motivational and social work characteristics, provided by Hackman and Oldham (1975;1976) and supplemented by Humphrey et al. (2007), influence employees' experience of meaningful work. This study is therefore theory-oriented because it tries to make a contribution to the identified gap in the literature. The following research question is defined to investigate the influence of work characteristics on the experience of meaningful work: '*Why do the motivational and social work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work?*'. A qualitative research method, a deductive research approach with a pattern matching strategy, and a single case study strategy with holistic unit of analysis have been chosen to investigate this research question. The case of this study is Enexis Group, and participants of this study hold the function title 'Employees Consumer' and work at the department of Customer and Market. Data is collected by means of document collection to inform this study about the context in which it conducts research, and by means of conducting twelve interviews as to discover why the motivational and social work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work. Template analysis is used to analyse the collected data. Using the strategy of pattern matching, two predicted patterns are developed, derived from self-determination theory and identity theory, and are compared with an observed pattern, derived from the analysis of this study's data, as to test whether the two predicted patterns could explain why the work characteristics positively influence employees' experience of meaningful work. It has been found that the predicted patterns of self-determination theory and social identity theory (one path of identity theory) did not seem to be able to match the observed pattern, while the predicted pattern of role identity theory (the other path of identity theory) did seem to be able to match the observed pattern. To conclude, it has been found in this study that role identity theory seems to be the most suitable lens to explain why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work. More research is needed to support the findings and to develop theory further.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

In this chapter, the research topic is introduced, a problem statement is formulated, a research question is formulated in response to the problem statement, the methods used are introduced, the study's relevance is explained, and the layout of the paper is outlined.

1.1 Introduction of research topic

In our society, work is unavoidable and necessary, and work should be meaningful to contribute to an important societal value for citizens, that is, living a meaningful life (Michaelson et al., 2014). Meaningfulness is the ultimate goal in life, in work but also in nonwork activities (Humphrey et al., 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Since a lot of adults spend much of their time working, work could be considered as one of the most important domains in life from which to extract meaning (Dik & Duffy, 2009). "Meaningful work could serve an essential function for many or most at the intersection of economic well-being and general well-being—particularly today" (Michaelson et al., 2014, p. 88). People want their work to mean something nowadays, instead of solely perceiving it as a way to earn money (Steger et al., 2012). Furthermore, money cannot explain how much one's work is worth, and therefore, meaning should not be traded for money (Haque, 2012). Also, work should be meaningful because it provides (1) individual benefits, e.g., well-being (Allan, 2017), job satisfaction (Steger et al., 2012), or personal fulfilment (Rosso et al., 2010), (2) organizational benefits, e.g., less turnover (May et al., 2004), or higher productivity (Steger & Dik, 2010), and (3) societal benefits, e.g., positively influencing others (Rosso et al., 2010), or positively contributing to society as a whole (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Steger & Dik, 2010). Meaningful work is therefore considered to be an important societal value that provides individual, organizational and societal benefits.

Meaningful work is "the degree to which the individual experiences the job as one which is generally meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile" (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, p. 256). When work is experienced as meaningful, it is significant or purposeful for an individual (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Meaningful work is an individual-level phenomenon and is positively related to an individual's work (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017), which means, the more work is experienced as meaningful, the more positively work is viewed.

Sources of meaningful work are the self, other people, the work context, and spiritual life (Rosso et al., 2010). Organizations can influence the experienced meaningfulness of work of employees by changing the work context (Rosso et al., 2010). Research on the context in

which work is conducted as a source of meaningfulness has focused mainly on the design of job tasks, organizational mission, financial circumstances, non-work domains and the national culture (Rosso et al., 2010). Thus, one source that determines the meaningfulness of work is job design (Rosso et al., 2010; Berg et al., 2013). "A job design is comprised of the tasks and relationships assigned to one person in an organization" (Berg et al., 2013, p. 81; Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991). Humphrey et al. (2007) differentiate job design from work design, in which work design encompasses a broader view. Work design also takes, next to job or task attributes in job design, the attributes of the social and/or organizational environment into account, and thus links the job and/or a task with the broader social and organizational environment (Humphrey et al., 2007). From here onwards, this paper also uses the concept 'work design', since attributes of the social and/or organizational work environment, next to specific job/task attributes, may also be of influence on the experience of meaningful work.

Designing work in good job attributes is a prominent strategy of improving the experience and quality of work (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) and has a large impact on the attitudes and behaviours of workers (Humphrey et al., 2007). Managers should foster the meaningfulness of work through designing work effectively (May et al., 2004), since meaningful work is a critical psychological state to take into account when designing work (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). This study agrees with the perspective of management studies, which regard meaningful work as something that is amenable to management or external influence (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009).

To assess how well work is designed as to promote meaningful work, work characteristics could be taken into account. One work characteristics model that holds a central place in work design theory is Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Theory (JCT) (Humphrey et al., 2007). Hackman and Oldham (1976) stated that skill variety, task identity and task significance positively influence employees' experience of meaningful work. Later on, other work characteristics were identified that would also promote the experience of meaningful work (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Humphrey et al., 2007). The work characteristics identified in the literature (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Humphrey et al., 2007) that promote the experience of meaningful work reflect the motivational and social aspects of work, and are therefore called motivational and social work characteristics (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006).

1.2 Problem statement

Meaningful work is considered an important societal value and contributes to personal, organizational and societal benefits. Furthermore, a demand for meaningful work could replace the demand of high salaries in this era. Organizations can influence the experienced meaningfulness of work in how they design work. To assess how well work is designed by organizations as to facilitate meaningfulness, work characteristics can be taken into account. It is known from the literature that the motivational and social work characteristics promote meaningful work (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Humphrey et al., 2007), but why these work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work has not much been elaborated upon in the literature. The literature review of Rosso et al. (2010) about meaningful work and of Oldham and Friend (2016) about work design both do not indicate any other study that elaborated further upon why the motivational and social work characteristics influence meaningful work other than the already described studies of Humphrey et al. (2007) and Hackman and Oldham (1976). Furthermore, the researcher searched in 30 pages of Google Scholar, a website that displays other academic articles, through articles who cited Humphrey et al. (2007) and also searched in 10 pages of Google Scholar with the terms "work characteristics and meaningful work" on 11 June 2018, but did not find any other study that described why the experience of meaningful work of employees is influenced by these different work characteristics. The problem statement of this study is thus the following: it is currently not well known, in the academic literature, why the motivational and social work characteristics promote meaningful work. 'Why' is defined is this study as 'because of what reason'. The aim of this study is to get a better and richer understanding of why the motivational and social work characteristics promote meaningful work. Two theoretical lenses have been found in the academic literature that may explain why the motivational and social work characteristics positively influence the experience of meaningful work, which are self-determination theory (Beadle & Knight, 2012) and identity theory (Michaelson et al., 2014). In order to achieve the aim of this study, this study will empirically measure why the work characteristics influence the participating employees' experience of meaningful work, and will examine afterwards whether self-determination theory and identity theory are possible explanations for the positive relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work. Because this study aims to contribute to the identified gap in the literature, it is theory-oriented.

1.3 Research question

To respond to the problem statement and to achieve the aim of this study identified above, the following research question is developed: *Why do the motivational and social work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work?*

1.4 Methods

To best capture the influence of work characteristics on employees' experience of meaningful work, a qualitative research methodology will be applied in this study to get an in-depth understanding about this phenomenon. The research strategy used is a case study, where the influence of work characteristics on employees' experience of meaningful work is studied in one particular organization. This organization is called Enexis Group, where 12 employees will be interviewed from one department, which is called 'Customer & Market'. Multiple data collection methods are used, which are documents to acquire contextual information, and interviews to acquire data about meaningful work, work characteristics and the influence of work characteristics on meaningful work in this specific organization. A deductive research approach is taken, since this study will test whether the two theories, self-determination theory and identity theory, can explain why the motivational and social work characteristics positively influence the experience of meaningful work. Pattern matching (Yin, 2018) is chosen as an analytic technique, which is a technique to test whether the empirically based pattern (the observed reasoning of participants) matches the predicted patterns (the reasoning of self-determination theory and identity theory) identified before data collection.

1.5 Relevance

This study is theory-oriented and the theoretical relevance is explained below. Next to theoretical relevance, this study could also be of practical and societal relevance, which are elaborated afterwards.

1.5.1 Theoretical relevance

First, the study is of theoretical relevance because it studies why the motivational and social work characteristics influence employees' meaningful work experience, which is still unclear in the literature. This study will describe what reasons employees have for why the work characteristics influence their experience of meaningful work.

Second, this study is theoretically relevant because it tests whether self-determination theory (Beadle & Knight, 2012) and identity theory (Michaelson et al., 2014) are suitable lenses to explain why the motivational and social work characteristics influence the experience of meaningful work.

Third, most research that measures work characteristics uses quantitative measures (Oldham & Fried, 2016). The Job Characteristics Theory of Hackman and Oldham (1976), which is still the most prominent and widely researched model (Humphrey et al., 2007; Michaelson et al., 2014; Oldham & Fried, 2016; Rosso et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), also quantitatively measures the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work. Because of the quantitative studies (Hackman & Oldham, 1975,1976; Humphrey et al., 2007), it is known that there is a relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work, but it is not well known why this is. By using a qualitative research method instead, this study could identify why this relationship exists because a qualitative research method enables this study to have an in-depth discussion about this relationship with employees in a specific organization. This study is therefore of theoretical relevance because with a qualitative research method a richer and better understanding could be gained about why the motivational and social work characteristics positively influence the experience of meaningful work.

Fourth, by taking the social work characteristics into account, this study honours the call of different academics (Grant & Parker, 2009; Oldham & Hackman, 2010) for including the social aspect of work in work design studies, which makes this study theoretically more relevant.

Fifth, empirical research about the experienced meaningfulness linked with management practices like work design is relatively rare in organizational studies (Michaelson et al., 2014), which also causes this study to be theoretically relevant.

Lastly, there is interest for more research about work design in general, which also makes this study theoretically relevant. Even though work design research has slowed in the last past years, work design should be further investigated since it has a profound effect on the behaviours, attitudes and well-being of employees (Humphrey et al., 2007).

Thus, this study is of theoretical relevance by 1) contributing to the existing literature by studying why the motivational and social work influence employees' experience of meaningful work, by 2) testing whether self-determination theory and identity theory are suitable lenses to explain why this relationship exists, by 3) shedding a new light on the topic by using a qualitative research method, by 4) including the social aspect of work, by 5)

contributing to the rare amount of studies that link management practices with meaningful work, and by 6) responding to the more general call for more research about work design.

1.5.2 Practical and societal relevance

Even though this study is theory-oriented, it is also practically relevant for the participating organization for multiple reasons. First, this study could help the participating organization in identifying if the participating employees experience their work as something meaningful. Second, this study could help the participating organization in identifying which of the motivational and social work characteristics are present in employees' work. Third, this study could also help the participating organization in identifying why the current design of work (in terms of work characteristics) influences participants' experience of meaningful work. And fourth, perhaps advice could be given as to improve the way work is designed so as to make it more meaningful for the participating employees.

This study may also be relevant for society. Meaningful work enables people to experience a meaningful life (Steger et al., 2012) in which they, for example, experience life satisfaction (Steger et al., 2012), a purpose in life (Steger & Dik, 2010) or growth or development in life (Steger et al., 2012). Society can thus benefit from meaningful work, as meaningful work is one way through which people are able to live a meaningful life in society. This study is therefore of societal relevance, because by gaining a better and richer understanding of why the work characteristics influence meaningful work, meaningful work may be better provided for and could enable a meaningful life experience for more people in society.

1.6 Layout

In the following chapter of this paper, chapter 2, a literature study about meaningful work, work characteristics, and the two lenses (self-determination theory and identity theory) that may explain the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work will be discussed. After the literature study, the methodology applied in this research will be elaborated upon in chapter 3. After the methodology chapter, the results from the data collection will be discussed in chapter 4. After the discussion of the data collected, an answer will be given to the research question in chapter 5, while the findings of this research will be discussed in chapter 6.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

In this chapter, literature about meaningful work and work characteristics will be reviewed. First, literature about meaningful work will be discussed. Second, literature about work characteristics will be discussed and related to meaningful work. Third, two theoretical lenses are introduced and explained that may explain why the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work exists. And fourth, a conceptual model that illustrates the issue investigated will be displayed.

2.1 Meaningful work

Meaningful work is considered an important societal value since people want to live a meaningful life (Michaelson et al., 2014). To understand meaningful work, the concept will be defined in this section. 'Meaningful' is the adjective that modifies the noun 'work' (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017), where first the noun 'work' is defined (section 2.1.1), followed by a definition of the adjective 'meaningful' (section 2.1.2), which is then followed by a definition of the whole concept, meaningful work, and by an explanation of the three facets through which meaningful work is experienced and measured (section 2.1.3).

2.1.1 Defining work

Even though meaningful work has often been discussed in the literature, the noun 'work' has not often been defined in the meaningful work literature (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017). Brief & Nord (1990) referred to work as "paid labour". The Oxford Dictionary defines work as "activity involving mental or physical effort done in order to achieve a purpose or result" ("Work", n.d.). In this study, by combing both definitions, work is defined as 'an activity for which people are paid and where people want to achieve a purpose or result by means of mental or physical efforts done'.

2.1.2 Defining meaningful

To define meaningful, a clarification has to be given about the difference between meaningfulness and meaning since both signify different things but are both used interchangeably in the literature (Rosso et al., 2010). When work is meaningful, work is experienced as purposeful and significant which is derived from qualities intrinsic to the work itself, e.g., goals, values or beliefs that work stands for (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). When work is significant, it means it is worthy of someone's attention or is believed to be important

("Significance", n.d.). When work is purposeful, it means people work because there is a purpose in work or they have a reason for why they work ("Purpose", n.d.). Furthermore, meaningfulness cannot be seen as a property which is fixed to a job but is based on subjective experiences of people that conduct these jobs (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Meaningfulness of work is an individual-level phenomenon (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017). Furthermore, Pratt and Ashforth (2003) note that meaningfulness of work does not only differ at an individual level, but also differs across historical and physical/social contexts. Thus, when work is believed to be meaningful, every individual has different reasons for why they think that their work is purposeful or significant for themselves, which is also influenced by the era or physical environment they live or work in. Meaning on the other hand, is a sensemaking activity (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Meaning making is about making sense of what work signifies or what role work plays in life, e.g., work means getting a pay check or contributing to a higher calling (Rosso et al., 2010). What work means for a person is also influenced by the person's social environment (Rosso et al., 2010). Meaning can be positive, negative or neutral, whereas meaningfulness has a positive valence which means that greater amounts of experienced meaningfulness are more positive (Rosso et al., 2010). Thus, where meaningfulness refers to the amount of significance or how purposefully a person thinks his/her work is, meaning refers to the type of meaning (positive/negative/neutral) a person accounts to his/her work.

2.1.3 Defining meaningful work

The definition of meaningful work that has been used most often in the literature and in almost every instrument of meaningful work is that of Hackman and Oldham (1975;1976) (Steger et al., 2012). Hackman and Oldham (1975;1976) defined meaningful work as: "The degree to which the employee experiences the job as one which is generally meaningful, valuable, and worthwhile". (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, p. 162; 1976, p. 256). Next to Pratt & Ashforth (2003) who defined meaningfulness in terms of purposefulness and significance, Hackman & Oldham (1975;1976) add valuableness and worthwhileness to their definition of meaningful work, and therefore enrich the understanding of what is to be considered under meaningfulness. When work is valuable, it means that work is useful or important ("Valuable", n.d.). When work is worthwhile, it means that work is worth the time, money or effort spent ("Worthwhile", n.d.). Thus, four aspects of meaningfulness are identified which need to be present for work to become meaningful. Lepisto and Pratt (2017) made an overview of fourteen definitions of meaningful work drawing upon organizational studies, psychology, sociology, and to a lesser extent philosophy and business ethics. It can be concluded from their analysis that work can

also be regarded as meaningful when only a few of the four elements of meaningfulness are present, since not all definitions listed by Lepisto and Pratt (2017) include all the four elements of meaningfulness. Therefore, this study defines meaningful work as: 'the degree to which an employee experiences work as personally purposeful, significant, valuable or worthwhile', where the elements are combined with 'or' to indicate their independence.

Furthermore, meaningful work consists of three facets that need to be represented in future research about meaningful work (Steger et al., 2012), which are positive meaning in work, meaning making through work, and greater good motivations. Earlier studies about meaningful work only take the first facet, positive meaning in work, into account while all three facets are necessary in measuring meaningful work (Steger et al., 2012). That is why this study takes all three facets into account when it measures meaningful work. Positive meaning in work is about employees who experience what they are doing in work as personally meaningful (Steger et al., 2012). The positive meaning in work facet of meaningful work describes why employees consider their work to be meaningful by looking at the work activities that employees carry out. This facet also relates to the psychological meaningfulness of a person (Steger et al., 2012), where the psychological meaningfulness of a person relates to how an individual values the purpose or goal of his/her work related to his/her own ideals or standards (May et al., 2004). Thus, the positive meaning in work facet describes why the work activities itself are personally purposeful, significant, valuable or worthwhile.

Meaning making through work captures that meaning in life as a whole is in part derived from work as one source of meaning in life (Steger et al., 2012). An overlap exists between one's work and one's life work (Michaelson, 2005; Steger et al., 2012), where building meaning into life with work that is experienced as meaningful in itself would be logical (Steger & Dik, 2009). This facet takes the broader life context of people's work into account (Steger et al., 2012) and corresponds with Steger and Dik (2010) who state that: "To understand meaning in work, it may be useful to have a thorough understanding of the broader issue of meaning in life" (p. 5). Meaning in life means that people perceive that their lives matter, make sense and that an overarching purpose is lived for (Steger & Dik, 2010). Furthermore, meaningful work makes people understand themselves and the world around them, which result in personal growth (Steger et al., 2012). Thus, this facet describes that work is experienced as personally purposeful, significant, valuable or worthwhile when it contributes to giving meaning to life.

The third facet is about greater good motivations. This facet describes that meaningful work is related to a bigger goal, having a positive or broader impact on others (Steger et al.,

2012). Work is thus experienced as meaningful because it contributes to a larger good beyond the self (Tilmans & Gunderman, 2017).

All three facets together capture the full span of meaningful work, while positive meaning in work is considered a flagship indicator of the overall construct of meaningful work (Steger et al., 2012). For employees to experience their work as meaningful, it is expected that all facets vary in presence (Steger et al., 2012), and therefore, it is believed in this paper that they do not need to be all present at the same time or in the same amount for someone to experience meaningful work.

Furthermore, this study believes that the first facet is incomplete. In the experience of meaningful work, it has to be noted that it can be experienced in or at work (Michaelson et al., 2014; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Steger & Dik, 2010). Meaningfulness in work relates to employees experiencing their work as meaningful because the actual work they are doing is significant or purposeful (Michaelson et al., 2014; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Steger & Dik, 2010). This is actually what the first facet, positive meaning in work, of Steger et al. (2012) only emphasizes. Meaningfulness at work, on the other hand, relates to employees experiencing work as meaningful because of the relational needs they meet through their work, because of a sense of belonging they have with other co-workers and/or the organization, or because employees identify themselves with the goals, values and beliefs of the organization (Michaelson et al., 2014; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Steger & Dik, 2010). Meaningfulness at work could also enhance the experienced meaningfulness in work (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). It is believed that meaningfulness at work should be added to the positive meaning in work facet, to better measure why people experience positive meaning in work.

To conclude, meaningful work is an individual-level phenomenon in which an individual perceives their work as personally purposeful, valuable, worthwhile or significant, while it can be influenced by the social and organizational context of the individual. Meaningful work consists of three facets, positive meaning in work, meaning making through work and greater good motivations. In the first facet of meaningful work, positive meaning in work, a distinction has been added, which is meaningfulness *in* and meaningfulness *at* work.

2.2 Work characteristics and meaningful work

One source that influences the experience of meaningful work is how work is designed (Rosso et al., 2010). Work design is about the attributes of a job, and the broader social and organizational environment of the job (Humphrey et al., 2007). Work design is of great practical

significance to organizations, since it may result in increased well-being of employees and may enable people to develop themselves (Tims & Bakker, 2010). More generally, work design is important for individual, group and organizational outcomes (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). Furthermore, work design enhances the experience of meaningful work (Amelsvoort & Metsemakers, 2011; Berg et al., 2013; Fried & Ferris, 1987; Humphrey et al., 2007; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; May et al., 2004; Michaelson et al., 2014; Oldham & Fried, 2016; Oldham & Hackman, 2010; Rosso et al., 2010; Tims, Derks & Bakker, 2016; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). To study why meaningful work is influenced by work design, work characteristics models are used which hold a central place in the literature of work design (Humphrey et al., 2007).

One influential work characteristics model is the Job Characteristics Theory (JCT) of Hackman and Oldham (1976) (Steger et al., 2012). The JCT is "the most widely-researched and debated approach to job design from the late 1970s until the present day" (Oldham & Fried, 2016, p. 21) and "remains a dominant frame for understanding how employees experience their jobs" (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001, p. 187), and is therefore also taken into account in this study. The JCT states that three work characteristics positively influence meaningful work, which are, skill variety, task identity and task significance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Skill variety is "the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work, which involve the use of a number of different skills and talents of the person (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, p. 257). Task identity is "the degree to which the job requires completion of a "whole" and identifiable piece of work; that is, doing a job from beginning to end with a visible outcome" (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, p. 257). Task significance is "the degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives or work of other people, whether in the immediate organization or in the external environment" (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, p. 257). The relationship between these three work characteristics and meaningful work is positive, the more these characteristics are present, the more employees experience their work as meaningful (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Later on, two other work characteristics of the JCT are also related to the experienced meaningfulness of work (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Humphrey et al., 2007; Michaelson et al., 2014; Rosso et al., 2010), while Hackman and Oldham (1976) initially did not relate these characteristics to meaningful work when they specified and empirically tested the theory. These other two characteristics are autonomy and feedback. Autonomy is "the degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out" (Hackman & Oldham,

1976, p. 258). Feedback is "the degree to which carrying out the work activities required by the job results in the individual obtaining direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance" (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, p. 258). These two work characteristics are expected to positively influence meaningful work (Humphrey et al., 2007).

Thus, skill variety, task identity, and task significance positively influence meaningful work (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), while autonomy and feedback are expected to positively influence meaningful work (Humphrey et al., 2007). All five work characteristics of the JCT are called motivational work characteristics (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). Motivational work characteristics are the work characteristics that make work more motivating and satisfying (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). But these motivational work characteristics identified in the JCT are not exhaustive in their influence on meaningful work, because other motivational and social work characteristics exist that can also influence employees' experience of meaningful work (Humphrey et al., 2007). Social work characteristics are the work characteristics that reflect the broader social work environment, the social and interpersonal aspects of work (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). This study supplements the five work characteristics of the JCT by the additional work characteristics identified by Humphrey et al. (2007) to get a comprehensive idea of what work characteristics influence meaningful work, which are then also taken into account when gathering data about why these work characteristics influence meaningful work.

Additional motivational work characteristics that supplement the work characteristics of the JCT are task variety, information processing, job complexity, specialization and problem solving (Humphrey et al., 2007). Task variety is "the extent to which an individual performs different tasks at his or her job" (Humphrey et al., 2007, p. 1335). Information processing is "the extent to which a job necessitates an incumbent to focus on and manage information" (Humphrey et al., 2007, p. 1335). Job complexity is "the extent to which a job is multifaceted and difficult to perform" (Humphrey et al., 2007, p. 1335). Specialization is "the extent to which a job involves the performance of tasks requiring specific knowledge and skill" (Humphrey et al., 2007, p. 1335). Lastly, problem solving is "the extent to which a job requires the production of unique solutions or ideas" (Humphrey et al., 2007, p. 1335). All the additional motivational work characteristics are expected to promote meaningful work (Humphrey et al., 2007).

Additional social work characteristics that supplement the work characteristics of the JCT are interdependence, feedback from others, social support, and interaction outside the organization (Humphrey et al., 2007). Interdependence is "the extent to which a job is contingent on others' work and other jobs are dependent on the work of the focal job"

(Humphrey et al., 2007, p. 1336). Feedback from others "is the extent to which other organizational members provide performance information" (Humphrey et al., 2007, p. 1336). Social support is "the extent to which a job provides opportunities for getting assistance and advice from either supervisors or co-workers and includes friendship opportunities on the job" (Humphrey et al., 2007, p. 1336). Interaction outside the organization is "the extent to which a job requires an incumbent to communicate with people (e.g., suppliers or customers) external to the organization (Humphrey et al., 2007, p. 1336). All the social work characteristics are expected to influence meaningful work (Humphrey et al., 2007).

2.3 Why do work characteristics influence meaningful work?

'Why' is relates in this study to 'because of what reason', and aims at discovering what the reason is for why the social and motivational work characteristics influence the different facets of meaningful work. Hackman & Oldham (1976) provided some ideas in why skill variety, task identity and task significance influence meaningful work, e.g. when a job draws upon different skills of an employee (skill variety), the employee find the job to be of enormous personal meaning, but what the reason is that this conclusion has been reached has not been explained. The same holds for all the other motivational and social work characteristics. Furthermore, no consistent relationship between work characteristics and experienced meaningfulness of work has been found (Beadle & Knight, 2012). Therefore, it is important to get a better understanding of why the different work characteristics influence the experience of meaningful work of employees. Two lenses have been found in the literature through which this relationship could be viewed, which are self-determination theory and identity theory.

2.3.1 Self-determination theory

To understand why the motivational and social work characteristics promote meaningful work, self-determination theory could be a lens that may explain this relationship. While self-determination theory in its original form focuses on promoting employees' autonomous or intrinsic motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005), Beadle and Knight (2012) propose that self-determination theory could also be focused on promoting employees' experience of meaningful work. In the lens of self-determination theory, work is considered to be meaningful when it fulfils the inherent psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence (Beadle & Knight, 2012). Competence is defined as "the ability to do something successfully or efficiently" ("Competence", n.d.). Autonomy is already defined in section 2.2. Relatedness is

defined as "belonging to the same family, group, or type; connected" ("Related", n.d.). Autonomy is considered to be the most important psychological need (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Why the motivational and social work characteristics positively influence employees' experience of meaningful work could therefore be explained through the lens of self-determination theory: when the motivational and social work characteristics promote and satisfy the basic psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness and competence, employees may come to experience their work as something meaningful. Thus, self-determination theory could be a lens that may explain why (because of what reason) the work characteristics positively influence the experience of meaningful work. It should be noted that external sources of approval may come to act as surrogates in experiencing meaningful work, e.g., power, attractiveness and financial success (Beadle & Knight, 2012). That external sources of approval may come to act as surrogates relates to the central distinction made in self-determination theory between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Where intrinsic motivation reflects that employees engage in certain activities because they find the activities themselves interesting and because the activities yield intrinsic consequences (the three psychological needs), extrinsic motivation reflects that employees engage in certain activities not because the activities themselves are interesting or satisfying but because they yield extrinsic consequences (rewards such as higher pay and promotions) (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Thus, work can be considered meaningful for the intrinsically motivated or oriented employees when they yield intrinsic rewards (autonomy, relatedness and competence), and for the extrinsically motivated or oriented employees when they yield extrinsic rewards (e.g. financial success, prestige). The focus of self-determination theory in assessing meaningful work lies however in the inherent psychological needs of people, an intrinsic orientation, in contrast to the external sources of approval, an extrinsic orientation.

2.3.2 Identity theory

It has also been suggested in the literature that organizational practices can influence the experienced meaningfulness of work when it taps into workers' identity (Michaelson et al., 2014). Identity is built by two paths (Michaelson et al., 2014), which are 1) the social identity approach, where the 'who I am' is determined by the group someone belongs to, and 2) the role identity theory, where identity is formed by the role someone has in society or work. When work appeals to someone's identity, work may be perceived as (more) meaningful. By applying identity theory to this study, one possible reason as to why the work characteristics influence the experienced meaningfulness of work is when they tap into employees' identity.

Motivational work characteristics enable people to reflect upon what motivates them, and therefore brings them closer to identifying their own identity, who they really are and/or what role they would like to have in work or society. Social work characteristics also enable people to reflect upon their identity, since the 'who I am' question and/or the role someone has in his/her work or society becomes more clearly defined through greater contact with others (Humphrey et al., 2007). Thus, identity could be seen as one lens or possible reason that may explain why the work characteristics influence meaningful work.

To conclude section 2.3, two lenses have been found in the literature that could explain why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work. These two lenses will be tested in this study to find out whether they can explain why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work.

2.4 Conceptual model

In this study, two main themes are identified, which are work characteristics and meaningful work. To study why work comes to be experienced as meaningful, work characteristics are introduced as a cause for meaningfulness. Meaningful work is therefore the dependent variable, whereas work characteristics is the independent variable. It is known from the literature that the motivational and social work characteristics lead to the experience of meaningful work, but why this is (because of what reason) is still unclear in the literature. Furthermore, this study takes into account all three facets of meaningful work, while most studies only take the first facet (positive meaning in work) into account when measuring meaningful work. The issue investigated, why the different work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work, is illustrated via the developed conceptual model below (see next page). To visualize the missing knowledge of why the work characteristics influence meaningful work, a question mark is added to the arrow in the conceptual model. The question mark will be investigated by testing two theoretical lenses that may explain why the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work exists, which are self-determination theory and identity theory.
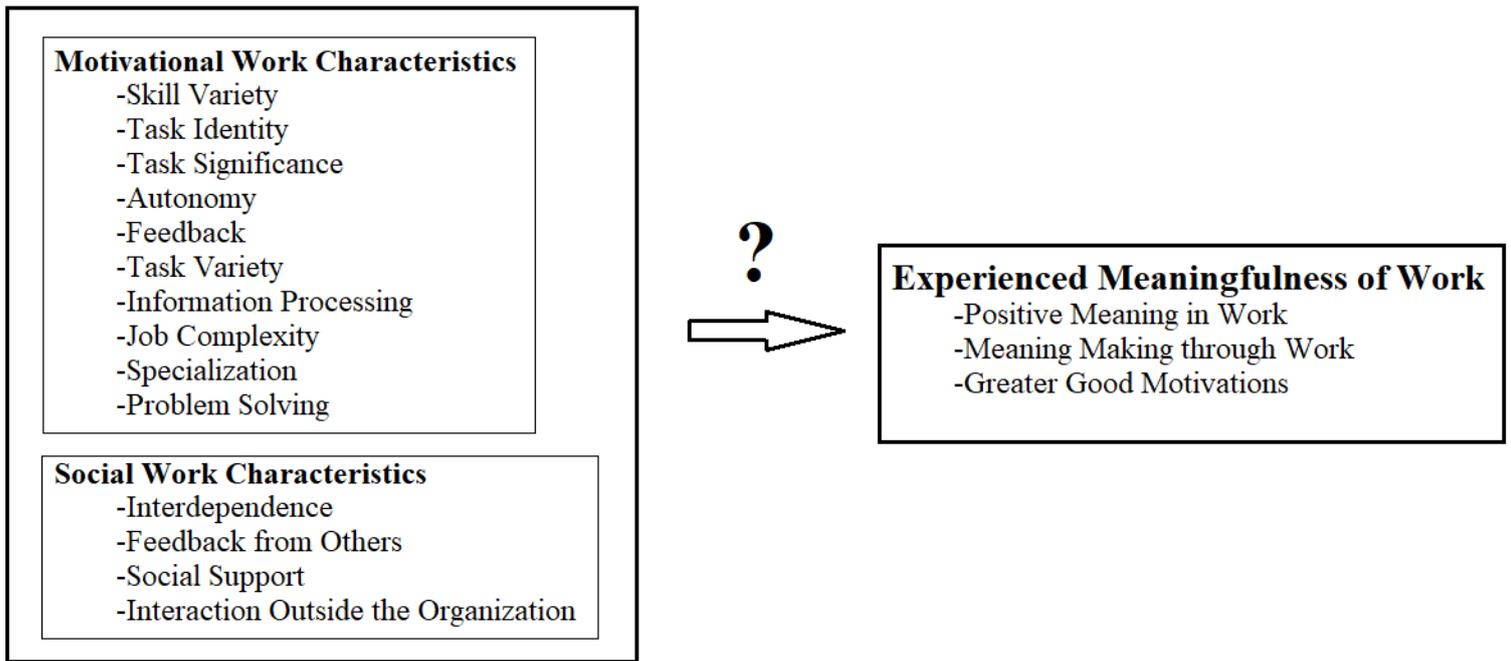
Figure 1. Conceptual model.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

In this chapter, the method (3.1) used is first explained, followed by an explanation of the research strategy (3.2), the plan of data collection (3.3) and analysis (3.4), this study's quality criteria (3.5), and ends with ethical research considerations (3.6).

3.1 Method

To gain a richer and better understanding of why the experience of meaningful work is influenced by motivational and social work characteristics, a qualitative research method is chosen. Qualitative research is about gathering and interpreting linguistic material to form statements or conclusions about the social phenomenon studied (Bleijenbergh, 2013) and generates non-numerical data (Saunders et al., 2009). A qualitative research method sheds a new light on work characteristics and its influence on meaningful work, since the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work has mostly been quantitatively tested (Hackman & Oldham, 1975,1976; Humphrey et al., 2007; Oldham & Fried, 2016).

A deductive research approach is taken, which is an approach in which a theoretical or conceptual framework is developed which is subsequently tested by the data collected in this study (Saunders et al., 2009). Furthermore, a deductive research approach characterizes a search to explain causal relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2009). This study has developed a theoretical framework which enables this study to make an effort in explaining why the causal relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work exists by testing whether the two theoretical lenses, explained in the developed theoretical framework, are possible reasons for this relationship. The theoretical knowledge developed in this study's theoretical framework forms the basis for the way in which things (meaningful work and work characteristics) will be measured in empirical reality (Bleijenbergh, 2013, p. 41). While a deductive research approach characterizes the use of quantitative data, this study uses qualitative data, which may also be used in a deductive research approach (Saunders et al., 2009).

The analytic strategy used in this study is pattern matching (Trochim, 1989; Yin, 2018). "Such a logic compares an empirically based pattern – that is, one based on the findings from your case study – with a predicted one (or with several alternative predictions, including rivals) made before you collected your data" (Yin, 2018, p. 175). In pattern matching, when a theoretical (predicted) pattern matches the observed pattern, the theory may receive support, but when the theoretical and observed pattern do not match, the theory may be incorrect or

poorly formulated, or the observations may be inappropriate or inaccurate (Trochim, 1989). This study explained two possible theories (self-determination theory and identity theory, section 2.3) that may explain why the motivational and social work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work. Viewed from the perspective of these two theories, predictions have been made in section 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 about why the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work may exists and serve in this study as the predicted patterns. To compare these predicted patterns with the observed pattern, this study will have to collect data to describe an observed pattern. The following sections (3.2, 3.3, 3.4) explain in detail how this study will get to an observed pattern.

3.2 Research strategy

The research strategy used in this study is a case study. A case is selected, a specific organization, to study why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work. A case study is "'a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources of evidence" (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 145-146). A case study strategy is chosen because with this strategy, why the different work characteristics influence the different facets of meaningful work can be qualitatively examined within its real-life context. The real-life context is important since this also influences employees' experience of meaningful work (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). A case study as a research strategy also enables this study to discover how the world is seen by insiders (Swanborn, 2013), which is important because the work characteristics that make work meaningful can only be described by insiders. Additionally, a case study is believed to be an appropriate strategy for answering this study's research question that begins with 'why' (Saunders et al., 2009).

A single case study with holistic unit of analysis is chosen in this study because research will be conducted in one organization at one department. A single case study with one unit of analysis facilitates comparison between all participating employees since they all conduct the same working activities. This way, statements can be made as to why certain work characteristics influence meaningful work for this specific type of job.

The case presented in this study is the organization called Enexis Group. Enexis Group has more than 4300 employees employed who work to ensure a stable and trustworthy energy network and to make energy future proof. Enexis Group consist of four main companies, which are Enexis Netbeheer B.V., Enexis Holding N.V., Enpuls B.V. and Fudura B.V (Enexis Group,

n.d.). Furthermore, Enexis Personeel B.V. and Enexis Vastgoed B.V. support the different companies in Enexis Group on personnel or labour and (register)goods (movable or immovable goods) topics (Enexis Group, n.d.). Next to these main companies, Enexis Group holds three main departments, which are Asset Management, INFRA, and Customer & Market (Enexis Holding, 2009). A sketch of the three departments is included in Appendix A. For additional information about the four companies and the three different departments of Enexis Group, consult appendix B.

The employees participating in this study belong to the department of Customer and Market. More specifically, the participants are called "Employees Consumer" and they conduct administrative activities, e.g., tracking, managing and mutating the connection- and meterregister of the energy network (Functie- en competentieprofiel medewerker consument, personal communication, February 2015). The connection register keeps record of who is connected to what (gas/electricity) and with what measuring device, whereas the meterregister records meter reading of energy meters of customers to check for malfunctions or dangerous situations, limit energy loss, update the software, or to check the battery status of the meter (Enexis Netbeheer, n.d.). The Employees Consumer fall under hierarchical guidance, a senior employee and a team manager (Functie- en competentieprofiel medewerker consument, personal communication, February 2015). The employees with the function 'employee consumer' at Enexis Group are chosen for this study because of multiple reasons. First, the interest of managers in Enexis Group for studying work characteristics and meaningful work lies with employees lower in the hierarchy, and not with employees in management functions higher in the hierarchy. Second, other type of departments could not have been included in this study because of practical reasons on the part of the organization (time, illness). Third, Enexis Group is the only organization found to be willing to participate in this study, while many other contacted organizations all declined, which is another practical reason on the side of the researcher for why Enexis Group and Employees Consumer of the department Customer and Market are chosen for this study's case. However, it is for this study not believed to be of importance to choose a specific type of place of employees within the hierarchy of an organization, a specific type of department, or a specific type of organization, since the gap in the literature is about why the work characteristics influence meaningful work in general, and therefore, studying why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work is believed to be relevant or of interest for all types of employee functions, departments, or organizations.

3.3 Plan of data collection

In this section, the plan of data collection is elaborated by first explaining the data collection methods (3.3.1) used, followed up by an explanation of the approach used for conducting interviews (3.3.2), an operationalization of the central concepts in this study (3.3.3), and an explanation of the interview guide (3.3.4).

3.3.1 Data collection methods

In case studies, typical data collection methods to be used are interviews, document analysis and observations (Bleijenbergh, 2013; Saunders et al., 2009). This study examines why the work characteristics influence meaningful work by conducting interviews and collecting organizational documents. Interviews are held to gather information from the employees themselves about how they think or feel about this subject. Interviews as a method is appropriate to understand what reasons people have for their attitudes and opinions, or to understand the meanings ascribed to certain phenomena (Saunders et al., 2009), such as work. As pointed out by Oldham and Fried (2016), employees' personal dispositions and external conditions slightly shape self-reports about how certain work characteristics are perceived, but self-reporting measurements are generally accurate. Therefore, this study uses interviews as one data collection method for studying the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work.

Next to interviews, organizational documents are collected to understand the context in which this study participates (Saunders et al., 2009). The documents contain information about what the Enexis Group company is, what departments and companies it consists of, and what participants' job is about. The organizational documents suited to obtain this information are annual reports, the organisation's website, and a job description of the participating employees. Annual reports and the organizational website are studied to get relevant information about the Enexis Group company, its associated companies, and its three main departments. The job description of participants' job is collected so it is known during the interviews what the participants' job mean in terms of content.

3.3.2 Approach to conducting interviews

A semi-structured approach is taken to conduct the interviews. A semi-structured interview approach is chosen because it is the most effective and convenient way of gathering information (Qu & Dumay, 2011), provides the researcher with the information he/she needs (Bleijenbergh,

2013), enables the researcher to ask additional questions not thought about upfront (Saunders et al., 2009), enables interviewees to respond in how they think is appropriate and in their own language (Qu & Dumay, 2011), and enables the interviewer to understand the way interviewees perceive the social world that is studied (Qu & Dumay, 2011).

Every interview is recorded after approval by the interviewee. Also, during every interview, notes are made as to facilitate the discussion or to summarize key points made by the interviewee. After every interview, contextual data is written down to self-reflect what went well or bad in the interview. The contextual data written down after every interview is about: the location of the interview, date and time, setting of the interview (e.g., what kind of room or could the interview be overheard), background information about the participant, and an impression of how well the interview went (Saunders et al., 2009). These reflections of every interview can be found in Appendix I.

The number of interviewees participating in this study has been kept limited due to restrictions on the scope of this study and are 12 people. The 12 employees are selected by their own senior colleague on a voluntary basis. The 12 selected employees are geographically spread and work in the office of Den Bosch, Eindhoven, Groningen and Zwolle, but all hold the same function called 'Employee Consumer'. It is not sure whether the saturation point with regard to retrieving new information has been reached, but, the researcher did not notice very different or new insights in the last two interviews. Normally, an interview takes about one to two hours (Saunders et al., 2009) whereas for this study it was expected that each interview would take one hour, but in reality, the duration of the interviews varied from 30 to 56 minutes (overview in Table 1). The participants received a participant information sheet up front which states basic information about this research, e.g., nature of the research, requirements of taking part, implications of taking part and participants' rights, use of data collected and the way it will be reported, and contact information of the researcher (Saunders et al., 2009). The information sheet is in Dutch so that all participants can clearly understand the purpose and nature of this study in their own native language. The information sheet is submitted in Appendix E.

Table 1.

Respondents' interview duration (anonymized)

Respondent	Duration of the interview
Respondent 1	42 minutes
Respondent 2	56 minutes
Respondent 3	39 minutes
Respondent 4	55 minutes

Respondent 5	53 minutes
Respondent 6	32 minutes
Respondent 7	34 minutes
Respondent 8	45 minutes
Respondent 9	43 minutes
Respondent 10	45 minutes
Respondent 11	30 minutes
Respondent 12	55 minutes

3.3.3 Operationalizing meaningful work and work characteristics

Operationalization is about making an abstract concept measurable (Bleijenbergh, 2013). In this section, meaningful work and work characteristics are operationalized and items to measure these concepts are introduced. The operationalization is based on a deductive approach, which means that this study's theoretical framework (chapter 2) forms the basis for the way in which meaningful work and work characteristics are operationalized and empirically measured. Also, two existing measures are taken into account which help to operationalize meaningful work and work characteristics, which are the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) (Steger et al., 2012) for meaningful work and the Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ) (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006) for work characteristics. The WAMI of Steger et al. (2012) is taken into account because the three facets of meaningful work identified in the literature review earlier, positive meaning in work, meaning making through work, and greater good motivations, are already operationalized in this instrument. Next to the WAMI, the WDQ of Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) is taken into account because it is a common questionnaire used in studying work characteristics (Oldham & Fried, 2016), because the WDQ uses the same motivational and social work characteristics as in the study of Humphrey et al. (2007), and because the motivational and social work characteristics are already operationalized in this instrument. Even though both measures are quantitative, they are useful as an orientation point to operationalize meaningful work and work characteristics and to develop open questions about meaningful work and work characteristics. Operationalizations are often displayed in a tree structure, where the abstract concept, the underlying dimensions, and the indicators to measure these dimensions are shown (Bleijenbergh, 2013). The tree-structures are shown in Appendix C. Items are not included in the tree structures because they make the tree-structures unreadable, but are explained in the subsequent sections (3.3.3.1 & 3.3.3.2) or can be consulted in Appendix D (interview guide).

The two theoretical lenses (self-determination theory and identity theory) discussed in the literature review are not operationalized and are not empirically measured because of multiple reasons. First, as to prevent bias in respondents' answers. Asking specific questions to participants about whether the two lenses may or may not explain why they think that the work characteristics influence their experience of meaningful work could provide the participants with answers they normally would not have thought about. When testing these two lenses specifically in the interviews, participants could just simply agree or disagree with the reasons given by the two theories when the participants, for example, do not know what to answer, or when the participants are inclined to give socially desirable answers. Second, it is believed that the burden of proof, of whether the two lenses may explain why the motivational and social work characteristics promote employees' experience of meaningful work, lies with the researcher himself and not with the participants of the study. The researcher should proof himself whether the answers of the participants, the pattern found, matches the predicted patterns derived from the two theories and should not leave this to be determined by the participants themselves. Third, both theoretical lenses have not been confirmed yet in the literature to explain why the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work exists, and are therefore not operationalized nor measured because it is possible that they may not be suitable reasons to explain why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work.

3.3.3.1 Operationalization of meaningful work

Meaningful work is a concept that needs operationalization to make it measurable. Operationalized, meaningful work is 'the degree to which an employee experiences work as personally purposeful, significant, valuable or worthwhile' (same as concluded in section 2.1.3 of this study). When work is significant, it means it is worthy of someone's attention or is believed to be important ("Significance", n.d.). When work is purposeful, it means people work because there is a purpose in work or they have a reason for why they work ("Purpose", n.d.). When work is valuable, it means that work is useful or important ("Valuable", n.d.). When work is worthwhile, it means that work is worth the time, money or effort spent ("Worthwhile", n.d.). To start the discussion in the interview about the subject meaningful work, two more general items are identified: 1) When is work generally meaningful for you?, 2) What made it interesting for you to come work here (Enexis Group)? The concept meaningful work can be unravelled into three dimensions, as introduced by Steger et al. (2012), which are positive meaning in work, meaning making through work and greater good motivations.

Positive meaning in work relates to what activities employees are actually doing in their work which they find personally significant or purposeful (Steger et al., 2012). Next to meaningfulness *in* work, this study also relates meaningfulness *at* work to this facet, as explained in section 2.1.3. Indicators to measure positive meaning in work identified are: 1) activities in work are personally significant, valuable, worthwhile or purposeful, 2) relational needs are met through work, 3) sense of belonging to co-workers and/or the organization is felt, or 4) an identification with organizational goals, values and beliefs is made. The item to measure these four indicators is: How meaningful do you find your work and the activities you carry out?

Meaning making through work captures work as one source of meaning in life (Steger et al., 2012). In this facet, work contributes to meaning in life, which means that, work enables people to perceive that their lives matter and that an overarching purpose is lived for (Steger & Dik, 2010). Work also enables personal growth and development and contributes to an understanding of the self and the world around the self (Steger et al., 2012). Indicators to measure this facet are therefore: 1) work makes life matter or important, 2) work gives life purpose, 3) work contributes to understanding the self and the world around the self, or 4) work enables personal growth or development in life. The item to measure these four indicators is: does your work contribute to a meaningful life?

Greater good motivations relate to work having a positive or broader impact on others (Steger et al., 2012). Indicators to measure this dimension are: 1) positively impacting others (customers/colleagues/family), 2) positively impacting society, 3) positively impacting the broader world, or 4) serving a greater purpose. The item to measure these indicators is: Does your work also serve others (customers / colleagues / family) in your area or the general interest?

3.3.3.2 Operationalization of work characteristics

There are two types of work characteristics identified to influence meaningful work, which are motivational work characteristics and social work characteristics. The motivational work characteristics motivate employees, while the social work characteristics make work more interpersonal and social.

The motivational work characteristics dimension can be measured through ten indicators, which are, 1) skill variety, 2) task identity, 3) task significance, 4) autonomy, 5) feedback from the job, 6) task variety, 7) information processing, 8) job complexity, 9) specialization and 10) problem solving. These work characteristics, as described in the literature

review (section 2.2), are believed to be sufficiently explicit and therefore measurable. General items are developed to measure these work characteristics as to leave it open to the respondent which motivational work characteristics he/she identifies in his/her work, which are, 1) what motivational work characteristics are present in your work?, or 2) What motivates you in your work?. To measure the influence of these work characteristics on the experience of meaningful work, the next item is developed: 3) How do these identified motivational work characteristics influence the experienced meaningfulness of work?.

The social work characteristics dimension can be measured through four indicators, which are, 1) interdependence, 2) feedback from others, 3) social support, and 4) interaction outside the organization. These work characteristics, described in the literature review (section 2.2), are also believed to be sufficiently explicit and therefore measurable. General items are developed to measure these work characteristics as to leave it open to the respondent which social work characteristics he/she identifies in his/her work, which are, 1) what social work characteristics are present in your work?, or 2) What makes your work social or anti-social?. To measure the influence of these work characteristics on the experience of meaningful work, the next item is developed: 3) How do these identified social work characteristics influence the experienced meaningfulness of work?.

3.3.4 Interview guide

An interview guide is used to guide the interview and to obtain sufficient information from the participants (Saunders et al., 2009). An interview guide consists of topics to be covered, questions to investigate these topics, and probes that may be used to obtain greater detail of participants' answers (Saunders et al., 2009). The semi-structured interview guide is relatively structured and can be found in Appendix D. The interview guide consists of several elements. First, the opening of the interview has been described which is guided by the structure of Saunders et al. (2009) for opening an interview. Followed by the introduction, general questions about the interviewee are stated, e.g., age or how the long employees are working for Enexis Group. After some general questions, the two main themes (meaningful work and work characteristics) added with self-developed questions are described and probes are added to ensure enough information is given by participants. Probes in the interview guide are written in between brackets and italics. Furthermore, the operationalization of section 3.3.3 is used as a guideline for possible answers to be given by participants and are shown in bullet points and italics. After participants have described how meaningful they perceive their work and what work characteristics they identify, the link is made between the two themes by asking how each

work characteristic identified in the interview contributes to the experience of meaningful work. The questions developed are open questions where participants can describe themselves what characteristics are present in their work and why these characteristics influence their experience of meaningful work. When some work characteristics are not covered by the participants themselves, more specific questions will be asked later on as to still cover all the different work characteristics. These specific follow-up questions about work characteristics can be found at the work characteristics items list in the end of Appendix D. The interview guide is closed by an ending paragraph. Furthermore, one and a half page of definitions is added to make sure that the interviewer is knowledgeable about all the concepts during the interview. The interview will be conducted in participants' native language, Dutch, to facilitate participants' understanding of the questions asked and to enable participants to answer in their own language and words so that they can easily and fully express themselves as to facilitate an in-depth discussion about meaningful work. The interview guide is therefore also made in Dutch.

3.4 Plan of data analysis

The collected documents, organizational website, annual reports and job descriptions, have all been analysed by reading through them and resulted in section 3.2 in a description of the company and its departments, and the participating employees.

The interviews held result in data that is represented in interview transcripts, which is made of all the interviews (can be found in Appendix M). These interview transcripts need to be analysed to answer this study's research question. Before the actual analysis begins, the transcripts are sent to the participants so that they can check what has been said and approve that the transcripts may be used for this study. Analysing qualitative material is a process of interpreting collected material by coding the material with concepts as to assign meaning to the texts (Bleijenbergh, 2013). A template analysis technique is chosen to study and code the gathered material. Template analysis is a style of thematic analysis where a relatively high degree of structure is used when data is analysed but which is also a technique that is flexible enough to be adapted to the needs of this particular study (Symon & Cassel, 2012). Template analysis is not bound to a specific methodological or theoretical position (Symon & Cassel, 2012). There are three features that best describe what template analysis is about. First, template analysis is characterized by its flexibility of the coding structure (Symon & Cassel, 2012). No fixed number of levels of coding hierarchy need to be adhered to and no explicit distinction between descriptive and interpretive themes has to be made (Symon & Cassel, 2012). Also,

parallel coding is allowed, which means that two or more different codes at the same level can be assigned to one segment of text (Symon & Cassel, 2012). In template analysis, codes remain hierarchically organized, where a group of similar codes together produce more general higher order codes (Symon & Cassel, 2012). In this study, four levels of coding hierarchy are maintained during analysis, which are called open, subaxial, axial and selective codes in this study, and range from concrete to more abstract type of codes. This study also applies parallel coding.

Second, template analysis has its own style of analysis (Symon & Cassel, 2012). Between top down and bottom up styles of analysis, template analysis is positioned in the middle between these two styles (Symon & Cassel, 2012). Template analysis allows the researcher to define themes and codes in advance from theory (a priori), while at the same time, enables the researcher to redefine or discard the a priori themes and codes, and enables the researcher to add new themes and codes from studying the data collected in his own study (Symon & Cassel, 2012). This study also develops themes and codes a priori and supplements these a priori themes and codes with new themes and codes derived from the interview data.

Third, it is central in template analysis to develop a coding template (Symon & Cassel, 2012). In the process of template analysis, the analysis starts with making an initial template consisting of themes and codes developed a priori, and continues with "an iterative process of applying, modifying and re-applying the initial template" (Symon & Cassel, 2012, p. 430) which should eventually result in the final template (Symon & Cassel, 2012). The production of a template enables the researcher to handle the data systematically and well-structured (Symon & Cassel, 2012). This study also developed an initial template (Appendix F), which resulted into a final template (Appendix G), by supplementing the initial template with new themes and codes from the data analysis. Notes of adding and/or deleting themes or codes in the template are recorded in Appendix H. While Symon & Cassel (2012) introduce different ways to present the template, this study displays both templates in a list form, with levels indicated by a numbering system.

3.5 Quality criteria

The research philosophy followed in this study is social constructivism. Social constructivism views reality as constructed by people, and negotiated with other people, and therefore, what is real, depends on the people who consider it (Bleijenbergh, 2015). Social constructivism applied to this study means that the effort of trying to explain why the motivational and social work

characteristics promote meaningful work is dependent upon the people who consider it, since they socially construct what meaningful work is and why it is influenced by the motivational and social work characteristics. Therefore, a qualitative research methodology with a case study strategy is chosen to get an idea about what the socially constructed reasons are of employees for why the work characteristics promote meaningful work. Associated with social constructivism philosophy, the following quality criteria are taken into account in this study to asses this study's quality, which are internal validity, usability, analytical generalisability, controllability, inter-coder reliability, intersubjectivity, and self-reflection of the researcher (Bleijenbergh, 2015). These quality criteria and what can be done up-front before data collection to comply with these criteria are explained below.

First, internal validity is about measuring what you actually want to measure (Bleijenbergh, 2013). The internal validity is high in interviews as a data collection method, since questions can be clarified when they are unclear to the participant, meanings of the responses can be probed, and topics can be discussed in various angles (Saunders et al., 2009). Furthermore, good preparation, good level of knowledge about the research topic and the organization in which you study the topic, providing sufficient information to participants, asking the right type of questions (introducing, specific, probing), holding a neutral stance as an interviewer, and having good listening capabilities are all key for a proper interview (Saunders et al., 2009), and are therefore also believed to be important for ensuring internal validity. In this study, the interviewer is prepared, and therefore also tries to ensure internal validity, since sufficient knowledge about the research topic and organization are developed, participants will be provided with sufficient information by means of the participant information sheet (Appendix E), different types of questions will be asked during the interviews (see interview guide, Appendix D), the interviewer will response neutrally to the responses given by interviewees to avoid bias, and since the interviewee will be given enough time to think about and to respond to the questions asked. This criterion will also be reflected upon in section 6.2.

Second, usability refers to the importance of the results being understandable for those who make use of it and that all relevant aspects of the social phenomena studied are taken into account (Bleijenbergh, 2013). This research tries to comply to this criterion in making the results understandable by trying to describe the results in as much detail as possible. Furthermore, all relevant aspects of the phenomena studied, meaningful work and work characteristics, are taken into account with help of the literature study described in chapter 2. No work characteristics described by Humphrey et al. (2007) will be excluded from the analyses

because all work characteristics could be relevant for participants in assigning meaningfulness to their work. Excluding certain aspects may result in creating bias in the interviewees' responses. This criterion will also be reflected upon in section 6.2.

Third, analytical generalisability is aimed for. Analytical generalisability is based on: "(a) corroborating, modifying, rejecting, or otherwise advancing theoretical concepts that you referenced in designing your case study or (b) new concepts that arose upon the completion of your case study" (Yin, 2018, p. 38). Analytical generalisability is especially focused on developing theory (Yin, 2018) and is therefore different from statistical generalization, in which "an inference is made about a population (or universe) on the basis of empirical data collected from a sample from that universe" (Yin, 2018, p. 37). Statistical generalization is not the aim of this study, since the number of participants in this study is too few to be considered as an adequate sample size to represent a larger population (Yin, 2018). This study therefore aims for analytical generalisability by taking into account what influence the results found in this study have on the already existing theory about meaningful work and the influence of work characteristics on meaningful work, as to develop theory further. This criterion will also be reflected upon in section 6.2.

Fourth, controllability refers to making visible what choices have been made in conducting the research (Bleijenbergh, 2013), by explaining why a certain research design, strategy or methods have been chosen (Saunders et al., 2009) or by recording collected data (e.g., interview transcripts) carefully (Bleijenbergh, 2013). Controllability enables other researchers to understand and follow the processes this study went through so that they could reanalyse the collected data themselves to see if the same conclusions are reached (Saunders et al., 2009). This study tries to comply with this criteria by giving explanations for the methodological choices (e.g. research method and strategy, and data collection methods) in chapter 3, by explaining the context this research is conducted in (chapter 3 and Appendix B), by making the interview guide available (Appendix D), by recording the interview data in written transcripts (Appendix M), by recording interview evaluations after every interview (Appendix I), and by recording the coding memos (Appendix H).

Fifth, inter-coder reliability is about checking if several other researchers assign the same codes to the same material as the researcher in his own study did as to test if the researcher made a reliable interpretation of the collected material (Bleijenbergh, 2013). This quality criteria cannot be met, since the objective of this study is to test whether the researcher is capable of conducting his own research, and therefore, the researcher interprets the gathered material himself.

Sixth, inter-subjectivity is about checking whether the researcher's interpretation of participants' answers is the same as participants' interpretation of their answers (Bleijenbergh, 2013). This practically means that the participants will be included in the analytical process of assigning meaning and generating knowledge and will therefore also become researchers in this study (Bleijenbergh, 2013). This quality criteria cannot be met, since the researcher conducts the analysis by himself and does not include participants in the analytical process of assigning meaning to texts and generating knowledge. Only if reasonable doubt is present about interpreting a particular answer of a participant, contact with the participant will be made to clarify any doubts present.

Lastly, self-reflection of the researcher is about the researcher's reflection of his own role as a researcher in his study and if the researcher's own views, wishes and fears have played a role in the research process (Bleijenbergh, 2013). This will only be reflected upon in the discussion section of this thesis (section 6.2).

3.6 Ethical research considerations

Ethical research considerations relate to the "the appropriateness of your (researcher's) behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work, or are affected by it" (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 183-184). Participants should not be embarrassed, harmed or disadvantaged in any way (Saunders et al., 2009). Based Saunders et al. (2009) who discuss general ethical issues, this study is ethically aware by respecting participants' privacy by 1) not asking them questions which are invasive to their privacy or by respecting participants' choice when they do not want to answer a question, 2) by ensuring participants that participation is voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw from taking part in this study when it is requested, 3) by treating the collected data confidentially which means that it will not be distributed to or shared with anyone else except the participants themselves or the researcher's supervisors, 4) by using the data collected only for this master thesis, 5) by anonymizing all participants through not naming names and shuffling the order number of participants so that they are not linked to the specific quotes used in the results section, 6) by making the aim of the research clear to all participants (information sheet and is explained at the start of an interview), 7) by asking permission if the interview may be recorded at the start of each interview, 8) by being sensitive to interviewees their responses during the interview and offering participants to check and approve usage of interview transcripts as to avoid any embarrassment, stress, discomfort, pain or harm done to participants, and by 9) behaving

appropriately, honestly and neutrally with all participants of this study. Furthermore, the contact person (HR manager) who provided access to the organization will be informed throughout the thesis trajectory about the progress of the thesis and also checked the case description (section 3.2, Appendix B), the interview guide (Appendix D), and the participant information sheet (Appendix E). All participants and managers of the different departments (Customer & Market, HR) will be provided with the whole thesis or a short summary of the findings when interested. It should be noted that the interview transcripts will not be shared with anyone, expect with the researcher's supervisors for grading purposes. Lastly, permission is asked and granted for this study to be included in the Radboud Repository with the company name present.

Chapter 4 – Results

In this chapter, the results of the data collection and analysis is discussed. The first three sections of this chapter (section 4.1 up to and including section 4.3) will be descriptive of nature, and describes what tasks the employees consumer in the department Customer & Market conduct (section 4.1), how meaningful employees generally perceive their job (section 4.2), and describes what work characteristics are present in employees' work and whether the present work characteristics are also of influence on employees' experience of meaningful work in this study (section 4.3). The last section (section 4.4) will cover the actual deductive analysis and will, first, explain the observed pattern found, and second, compare the observed pattern with the two theoretical patterns derived from self-determination theory and identity theory as to see whether the predicted patterns are able to match the observed pattern, as to find out whether self-determination theory and/or identity theory can explain why the motivational and social work characteristics promote meaningful work.

4.1 Work description

First, a short description of the activities Employees Consumer carry out in their work will be given as to facilitate the understanding of what their work is about. The Employees Consumer conduct administrative activities. The overall goal of the work of Employees Consumer is to deliver a correct connection- and meterregister (R1, R4, R5, R7, R9, R11, R12). To realize a correct connection- and meterregister, the Employees Consumer track, manage and mutate the connection- and meterregister of the energy network (Functie- en competentieprofiel medewerker consument, personal communication, February 2015).

The Employees Consumer track and manage the connection- and meterregister of the energy network by processing all kinds of information with regard to these registers (Functie- en competentieprofiel medewerker consument, personal communication, February 2015) or by checking the register entries made for errors (audit) (R8).

The Employees Consumer also make mutations in the connection- and meterregister of the energy network (Functie- en competentieprofiel medewerker consument, personal communication, February 2015). In the connection register, mutations are made regarding the responsible parties of a customer's connection, or regarding the connection or technical data of the measuring device of a customer (e.g. type of connection, connection value, technical codes, active/inactive connection) (Jansen, personal communication, 29 May 2018). In the meter register, mutations are made with regard to the specifications of customers' meters (Jansen,

personal communication, 29 May 2018). The mutations are derived from different parties: from mechanics communicated by phone (Functie- en competentieprofiel medewerker consument, personal communication, February 2015; R1, R3, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R11), from mechanics communicated digitally (Functie- en competentieprofiel medewerker consument, personal communication, February 2015; R1, R4, R7, R8, R9, R11, R12) or from customers communicated by phone (R7, R9). The mutations coming from mechanics communicated digitally relate to a workflow called 'dropouts', which is a workflow that handles unprocessed mutations related to the connection or meter specifications of customers (Functie- en competentieprofiel medewerker consument, personal communication, February 2015; R1, R7, R8, R9). In dropouts, changes are made in reality to the connection or meter specifications of customers by mechanics, but these changes are for some reason not processed by the main system, and therefore need to be manually processed by the Employees Consumer to become correctly registered in the connection- and meterregister (R1, R7, R8, R9). Furthermore, mutations are made with respect to a matchingslist, which is a list of orders that have not been processed properly and therefore stay open but need to be closed (R1). Next to the matchingslist, mutations are made with respect to correcting invoices (Jansen, personal communication, 29 May 2018; R5), where wrongly applied connection prices are adjusted for the right connection prices and where consumers of the energy network are compensated for the overpaid amount.

In addition, there are three more general mutation processes in the work of Employees Consumer (Functie- en competentieprofiel medewerker consument, personal communication, February 2015), which are (1) vacancy (R3, R5, R7, R8, R10, R11), (2) control (R7, R10), and (3) connecting, disconnecting or reconnecting customers to the energy network (R1-R12). Vacancy is about figuring out why a consumer of the energy network does not own a supplier contract (Jansen, personal communication, 29 May 2018; R3, R7, R8, R10, R11). Control is about controlling disconnected buildings whether they are still disconnected (Jansen, personal communication, 29 May 2018; R7, R10). The connecting, disconnecting or reconnecting process is about determining whether customers may be (re)connected or disconnected to the energy network (R1-R12). Enexis Group is obligated to disconnect customers when they do not have an active energy contract with an energy supplier (R1-R12). In the connection process, EAN-codes are made which is an administrative code for making a connection to the grid for a customer so that it is known what connection it is and for whom (R2, R8, R9). Furthermore, in the (re)connection or disconnection process "lucie-files" are used, which are files that contain information about every customer, e.g. whether they have an energy contract or whether they

still have payments pending (R3, R5). Lastly, in the (re)connection or disconnection process the Employees Consumer deal with "end of delivery" (R1, R2, R4, R5, R7, R9), where the energy supplier ends the contract with a specific customer and thus stops with the delivery of energy to that customer on their behalf (R1, R5, R7, R9). The Employees Consumer need to contact that customer who faces end of delivery to prevent disconnection.

Next to tracking, managing and mutating the connection- and meterregister of the energy network, Employees Consumer participate in projects when a lot of administrative adjustments with regard to meter types, readings and prices need to be processed in a small amount of time (Functie- en competentieprofiel medewerker consument, personal communication, February 2015; R4, R5, R12). Furthermore, employees often have to make telephone calls with customers and colleagues (mostly mechanics) to conduct their work activities (R1-R12).

4.2 The perception of meaningful work

In this section, how meaningful the participating employees generally perceive their work is discussed. Generally, all participating employees think that their work is meaningful, but differ in their reasons why. Also, a few also mentioned that they work because it brings (financial) resources (R1, R6, R8, R11), enables better living conditions (R1, R5), or just because it is an obligation to work (R1, R6), next to work being experienced meaningfully. So not all participants work at Enexis Group only because it is meaningful to do so, which relates to the difference made by Rosso et al. (2010) between meaning and meaningful, where meaning relates to making sense of what work means for someone, while meaningfulness relates to work being experienced as purposeful, significant, worthwhile or valuable. Thus, the employees relate different meanings to their work, one in which work is experienced as an obligation, or as beneficial to life because it brings (financial) resources, while at the same time work is also experienced as meaningful.

All participating employees experience positive meaning in work or have greater good motivations which make the experience of work meaningful, while most but not all employees make meaning through work. In the following subsections, each level of meaningful work is discussed, positive meaning in work in section 4.2.1, meaning making through work in section 4.2.2, and greater good motivations in section 4.2.3.

4.2.1 Positive meaning in work

This facet, positive meaning in work, is about employees who experience what they are doing in work as personally meaningful (Steger et al., 2012). Positive meaning in work is experienced by all participants (R1-R12). Especially, meaningfulness *in* work is experienced through meaningful work activities. The experience of meaningfulness in work is not necessarily attributed to conducting the work activities themselves, but is more attributed to the reasons why these work activities are conducted. All employees tend to experience their work as meaningful because the activities result in something meaningful (the consequences were looked at). Helping others (R1-R12) or solving problems (R1, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R11) were often mentioned: *"But uhm, when work is really meaningful, literally, then I say, it is meaningful when I can help a customer well. So, when something is wrong with your connection, and I can restore that in a good way so that you are happy and we are happy, then I say, I really did meaningful work"* (R8). This quote is one example in which an employee experiences positive meaning in work where he/she can help and satisfy a customer by solving a problem for that customer. Furthermore, work is experienced as meaningful when the employees correctly execute their tasks so that there are good consequences for the organization (R1, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R10, R11, R12) or customers (R1, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R10, R11, R12):

"[…], if I do not handle it [the work] correctly, then it has financial consequences, plus it has consequences for the consumer of a connection when I do not do my job properly. So, I always try to do my work as good as possible, to make the damage on the side of Enexis as little as possible, and to make the benefits for the customer as high as possible. If you are in a situation like that yourself [getting disconnected from the net as a customer from the energy network], you also want your problem to be neatly solved by that organization, without thinking as an employee like, 'I do not feel like working today, let's leave it at that, I think it's okay the way it is right now'" (R5).

Also, work is experienced as meaningful when the employees correctly executing work so that there are good consequences for their colleagues (R1, R4, R10, R11, R12):

"Imagine, I do nothing today, then the colleague that needs to do the same work stream tomorrow as I did today gets a whole bunch of work on top of the normal working activities. So, I think it is nice when colleagues finish their work so that the next colleague won't have to

deal with the work of yesterday. And it happens regularly that the work of one day has not been finished that day which is not so pleasant for the other employee the next day" (R6).

So, participants experience meaningfulness *in* work in the positive meaning in work facet especially because they are able to help other people or the organization, to just solve problems, or to correctly execute work so that the consequences are good. In the last two quotes (R5, R6), it can be seen that meaningful work is experienced because they judge what they do in relation to their own standards. Respondent 5 wants to help customers the same way he/she wants to be helped if it were him/her, and respondent 6 makes it clear that he/she would not like to have work of yesterday on top of the work of today and therefore makes sure that he/she correctly executes his/her work so that his/her colleagues will not experience the same problem. This corresponds to what May et al. (2004) said about psychological meaningfulness which is reflected in the positive meaning in work facet (Steger et al., 2012), where an individual values the purpose or goal of his/her work judged in relation to his/her own ideals or standards.

Next, meaningfulness *at* work is experienced by participants but to a lesser extent than meaningfulness *in* work. Where meaningfulness *in* work is about the meaningful work activities themselves, meaningfulness *at* work focuses on the contextual characteristics of work (relational needs, sense of belonging and/or identification with organizational goals, values and beliefs) (Michaelson et al., 2014; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Steger & Dik, 2010). A lot of the participants feel that their relational needs are satisfied in their work (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R11, R12), where also a lot employees think that it is important to have social contacts (R2, R4, R5, R7, R8, R12), but only a few do really state that it makes their work experience meaningful (R1, R4, R6, R8), for example:

"Having social contacts in work makes my work meaningful, because you are dependent on other colleagues, and you cannot do without social contacts, without colleagues or without a social bond with others because then it [work] is not real. For me, it depends on the social things here actually..." (R8).

Next, a sense of belonging is felt by the employees to other colleagues (R1, R2, R3, R4, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12) or the organization (R1, R2, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R12), but only a few mentioned that it makes their work experience meaningful (R4, R6) or that it is important for their work (R1, R3, R4). Lastly, most participants can identify themselves with the goals, values and beliefs of the organization (R1, R2, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R11, R12), but

only a few find it important for their work (R2, R4, R12) or of influence on their experienced meaningfulness of work (R2, R12), for example:

"We just had a short meeting about those goals and one very important goal that stands out is collaboration. I think, if there is no collaboration, you cannot get anywhere. So yeah, we need those goals. One goal is maybe less important than the other, but I do think that they are all important. They are called pillars, and without pillars a building or bridge cannot stand. So, the goals, values and beliefs of the organization definitely influence the meaningfulness of my work experience" (R2).

Some other participants do not think that the goals, values and beliefs of the organization is important for their work (R9, R10) or of influence on their experienced meaningfulness of work (R6, R7, R8): *"I think that my work is meaningful anyways, that is the way I experience it, and what Enexis has planned or what goals, values or beliefs they express, does not make my work any more meaningful than it already is"* (R7).

To conclude, this study added a distinction in this first facet about experiencing meaningful *in* or *at* work (based on Michaelson et al., 2014; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Steger & Dik, 2010). This facet, in which people experience meaningful work because of positive meaning in work, mostly relates to meaningfulness *in* work and to a lesser extent to meaningfulness *at* work because when participants were asked if and why their work is meaningful for them, they always talked, directly or indirectly, about meaningful work activities. Meaningful work activities is also the only indicator introduced by Steger et al. (2012) for this facet. Nonetheless, relational needs, sense of belonging and identification with organizational goals, values and beliefs (as proposed by Michaelson et al., 2014; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Steger & Dik, 2010) have also been indicated by some participants to influence their experience of meaningful work. It therefore can be concluded that meaningful work activities is the main indicator in which people experience positive meaning in work and therefore meaningful work. So, even though meaningfulness *in* work was clearly experienced and meaningfulness *at* work to a lesser extent in the positive meaning in work facet, the meaningfulness *at* work indicators should still be considered because it did make some participants' work experience (more) meaningful.

4.2.2 Meaning making through work

Meaning making through work describes that work is experienced as personally meaningful when it contributes to giving meaning to life (Steger et al., 2012), in the way that people their lives matter, make sense or that an overarching purpose is lived for (Steger & Dik, 2010). Work can also contribute to knowledge of the self or the world around the self and personal growth or development (Steger et al, 2012). Most employees realize that work contributes to having a meaningful life (R1, R2, R4, R5, R7, R8, R10, R11, R12). Especially, work enables personal growth or development in life (R1, R2, R3 R4, R5, R7, R8, R10, R11, R12), which contributes to the experience of a meaningful life (R2, R10):

"In terms of personal growth and everything, I learn here every day, the work goes very far and every day I learn other things. So, on a personal level, I learn a lot. I have improved from the day I started working here. It [work] also contributes to a meaningful life. I always enjoy going to work, I never go to work reluctantly." (R10).

Personal growth and development also contributes to the experience of meaningful work (R1, R2, R8, R11):

"This work definitely contributes to personal growth and development. For example, when I started here, many years ago, we were still working with typewriters, that slowly turned into a computer, thus you develop your technical skills with this work. Also, with the new smartphones and everything else, you go along in the technical development of the organization. Seeing it this way, it does contribute to experiencing work more meaningfully (R8).

Next to personal growth or development in life, participants experience more happiness in life because of their work (R2, R4, R7, R8, R10), where employees mentioned that it made their life more meaningful (R4, R10) or their work more meaningful (R2) or important (R7). Also, work brings purpose (R1, R2, R4, R5, R8, R12) or order into life (R4, R5, R11), which makes life for one participant meaningful as well (R4):

"I think it is important to still work in life, I cannot imagine my life without work. I think it is still nice to work somewhere and to contribute to something. And without work, a lot of things fall away, also the contacts you have, but also the rhythm in life, then you need to find other

things to do in life. I want to undertake things, so yes, I think it is very meaningful that I still work with pleasure and that it is still nice to work, yeah" (R4).

Furthermore, work contributes to having a social life (R1, R2, R5, R8, R9) in the way that it brings social contacts which is considered to be meaningful in life for one employee (R8). Other ways in which work contributes to life is that it makes people understand the self or the world around the self (R2, R9), enables a higher quality of life (R1, R5), makes life matter (R8), or that it even negatively interferes with private life (R12), but these reasons have not been related by participants whether it makes life or work more or less meaningful. Some participants also explicitly mentioned that work did not make life meaningful (R3, R6, R9), because they value private life more and separate work from private life (R3, R6, R9): *"It [work] is a big part of my life, I mean, I work 36 hours a week, but really meaningful, no, when I am home, I do not think about work anymore"* (R6).

To conclude, most participants realize that work is meaningful because it contributes to living a meaningful life (R1, R2, R4, R5, R7, R8, R10, R11, R12), while a few do not (R3, R6, R9). Especially, work contributes to a meaningful life because it enables personal growth or development in life, brings a purpose in life, brings happiness in life, or contributes to having a social life. Steger et al. (2012) proposed that work would benefit personal growth and development in life, which is also experienced by participants in this study. Furthermore, Steger and Dik (2010) proposed that work enables people to live for an overarching purpose, which is found to be partly true since work does bring a purpose in life by means of giving a purpose to the day or order to the day, but no participant specifically talked about work giving them an overarching purpose in life. Furthermore, work enables, for some employees, to experience a meaningful life because work brings happiness in life or contributes to having a social life, which has not been proposed by Steger et al. (2012) or Steger and Dik (2010). Steger and Dik (2010) also proposed that work makes life matter or enables people to make sense in life in order to experience meaningful work or a meaningful life, but this has not been mentioned by this study's participants who make meaning through work.

4.2.3 Greater good motivations

Another way in which work is experienced as meaningful is when people experience greater good motivations in their work (Steger et al., 2012), that is, when work contributes to a larger good beyond the self (Tilmans & Gunderman, 2017), thus having a positive and broader impact on others (Steger et al., 2012). All participants especially experience greater good motivations

in their work by positively impacting others, like customers, which makes the experience of work (more) meaningful for all participants (R1-R12):

"When a customer experiences payment problems, you take your actions and the further consequences for that customer into account, and when it leads to more negative consequences, I give them a postponement of disconnection from the energy network, because you do not want to immediately disconnect someone. Thus, in that respect, helping a customer in that way is what I think is meaningful" (R6).

In the last quote, the participant positively impacts the customer by not disconnecting that customer from the net while the participant easily could have. Also having a positive influence on colleagues is often mentioned to make the experience of work (more) meaningful (R1, R2, R3, R4, R6, R7, R10, R11, R12), for example:

"When you call a customer who finds himself in a situation where an energy supplier ends the energy contract with him, you call that customer to notify him that he needs to arrange an energy contract or else he will be disconnected from the energy network. When you have customer that freaks out on the line, I think it is important for my next colleague [mechanic] to know how that conversation went. So then I put that information in our system so that our mechanic knows how that consumer will react when he/she approaches that customer when that customer needs to be disconnected from the energy network. Notifying colleagues to be careful is also something that makes my work important" (R2).

The last-mentioned quote displays how notifying colleagues to be careful of how a customer might react because of previous interactions with that customer makes that employee's work meaningful and/or important since he/she can positively impact other colleagues.

Next to positively impacting others, positively impacting the organization has also often been mentioned by the participants (R1, R3, R4, R5, R9, R10, R11, R12) which also makes their work meaningful (R1, R3, R4, R5, R9, R10, R11, R12):

"It is meaningful to contact consumers without an energy contract and warn them that it is possible that they get disconnected from the energy network without a contract, because we prefer not to disconnect them from the energy network. First, that isn't great for the customer, secondly, you do not want to disconnect customers from the outside which results in cutting

into energy cables because that makes the energy network weak. Furthermore, you could get negative news attention as a company when you disconnect a consumer, for example a farm, because without energy, animals could die, which is bad for our customer but also for the organization. So, we do not want to disconnect consumers of the energy network, and that is what we are trying to prevent" (R12).

So, thinking about the consequences of your actions as to positively impact the organization is another way in which the employees think that their work is meaningful. Positively impacting the organization is a new greater good motivation indicator retrieved from the interview data, and is also believed to be a greater good motivation indicator since positively impacting the organization also relates to a bigger goal than or contributes to a larger good beyond the self.

Participants also mentioned to be positively impacting society (R1, R2, R6, R8, R9, R10, R12) with their work, where a few explicitly said that it contributed to the experience of meaningful work (R1, R2, R9, R12)*: "You try to prevent people to get in trouble, I mean, when they are disconnected from the energy network, they often get extra costs for disconnecting them from the energy network, also they do not have power or gas anymore, which ultimately brings those people into more trouble. So, I think it is meaningful to not bring them further into trouble."* (R2). So, preventing people from getting into more trouble enables employees to have a positive impact on society as well. However, the employees do not feel that there is a greater purpose in their work behind positively impacting others, the organization or society. Also, no employee thinks that their work is positively benefiting the broader world. Thus, all employees have greater good motivations as far as their direct customers, colleagues, the organization and/or (indirectly) society concerned.

To conclude this last facet, the greater good motivations, as introduced by Steger et al. (2012), is certainly experienced by this study's participants and it also influences the experience of meaningful work for all employees. Also, a new indicator, positively impacting the organization, has been found to be present in the experience of greater good motivations in work by this study's participants.

To conclude section 4.2, all employees experience meaningful work. First, all participants experience positive meaning in work. Most participants experience positive meaning in work because of meaningful work activities, where helping others, solving problems and yielding good consequences for customers and colleagues were the most apparent reasons. To a lesser extent, positive meaning in work is experienced through relational needs, sense of belonging or identification with organizational goals, values or beliefs. Secondly, most but not

all participants experience meaning making through work in which lives are made more meaningful because of meaningful work. Especially because work enables personal growth or development in life, to have a social and happy life, or to have a purpose or order in life, life or work is experienced as something meaningful. Lastly, greater good motivations are present by all of the participating employees, which also makes the experience of work more meaningful, especially in relation to positively impacting others (colleagues or customers), the organization and/or more indirectly society.

4.3 The work characteristics present and their influence on meaningful work

In this section, it will be described what work characteristics are present in participants' work (section 4.3.1), and afterwards, they are related to meaningful work to see whether participants' experience of meaningful work is influenced by the presence of these work characteristics (section 4.3.2).

4.3.1 The present work characteristics

First the motivational work characteristics present will be discussed (section 4.3.1.1), and will be followed by a discussion of the social work characteristics that are found to be present in participants' work (section 4.3.1.2).

4.3.1.1 Motivational work characteristics

Motivational work characteristics are the work characteristics that motivate and satisfy employees in their work (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). In section 2.2, ten motivational work characteristics were identified based on Hackman and Oldham (1976) and Humphrey et al. (2007). These ten motivational work characteristics are skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, feedback, task variety, information processing, job complexity, specialization and problem solving. It is apparent that skill variety, task significance and task variety are experienced by all participating employees (R1-R12). Some skills mentioned to be needed for this job were analytical capability (R4, R6, R7, R11), technical/system/computer skills (R1, R6, R8, R10), or that you need to stay calm sometimes when you help customers (R3, R5, R8). Also, work needs to be correctly executed because it has significant impact on the customers and the organization (R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R9, R11, R12), especially when a customer needs to be disconnected from the net (end of delivery or vacancy) (R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R8, R12). Furthermore, a lot of different tasks are executed in this job which are also

explained in section 4.1. Task variety is considered important (R5, R7), or does not make the job boring (R7, R8, R9) but fun (R2, R4).

Next to skill variety, task significance and task variety, other motivational work characteristics like problem solving, task identity and autonomy are experienced by most participants. Most employees feel that they have to solve difficult problems which require the production of unique solutions or ideas (R1, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12), e.g. clearing the difference between reality and what has been registered in the connection- and meterregister (R1, R9, R10, R11), or deciding whether to disconnect a farm from the energy network and risking the death of multiple animals (R12). Task identity is also experienced (R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R11, R12), where some employees take a more reserved view by stating that they can mostly finish all tasks but not all the time (R1, R8, R9). However, a few employees state that they cannot finish all tasks since they are too dependent on other departments in their work (R2, R10). The difference between employees about the perceived task identity can be related to how widely people view their tasks, e.g. in connecting a customer, the employee only has to make an EAN-code and pass it on to an other department, where some employees view this as a complete task, others also take the physical construction of that connection executed by the INFRA department into account and therefore do not experience task identity. Also, a lot of employees experience autonomy (R2, R4, R5, R6, R7, R9, R10, R11, R12), which relates to the ability of employees of being free to determine in what order or time they can do their work in their assigned work stream for that day (R2, R4, R6, R7, R9, R11), to the ability of employees to exchange tasks with one another (R4, R5), or relates to the ability of employees of working independently from other colleagues (R4, R5). However, a fixed tasks package exists (R1) and a lot of activities are mandatory each day (R2, R6, R9, R10, R11), which means that the employees are not fully autonomous in their work.

Next, specialization, information processing and job complexity are experienced, but by less employees than the previously mentioned motivational work characteristics. Participants explicitly mentioned that specialization is required because of the multiple different technical systems used in their work (R1, R3, R5, R8, R10). Also, participants feel that a lot of information needs to be processed during their work (R1, R3, R5, R6, R9, R10, R11, R12). Next, participants experience job complexity (R1, R5, R6, R8, R9, R10, R12), where some mention that there are many guidelines but also many exceptions in their work (R5, R10), or that there are sometimes complex mutations (R6, R9) or cases (R10) that need to be taken care off. However, a few employees feel that their work is simple instead of complex (R4, R7, R11).

To a much lesser extent do the participating employees experience the motivational work characteristic feedback (R1, R2, R4, R12), which is, "the degree to which carrying out the work activities required by the job results in the individual obtaining direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance" (Hackman & Oldham, 1976, p. 258). Feedback in participants' work could be seen by reducing a long list of dropouts or orders (matchingslist) (R1, R2, R4, R12), or when an employee's colleagues keep coming back for help which informs that employee that he/she is helping his/her colleagues right (R12). Most participants do not experience feedback as defined in the motivational section (R3, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11), because it has not been discussed (R3, R5, R8, R9, R10), because feedback is hard to see (R11) or because participants assume that they do their work right (R6, R7).

All motivational work characteristics identified out of the literature (Humphrey et al., 2007) are experienced in participants' work, but to a much lesser extent is feedback. Furthermore, three other motivational work characteristics are identified out of the interview data of participants. First, task enjoyment is mentioned to be a motivational work characteristic (R2, R3, R4, R5, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12), e.g. convincing customers to get an energy contract is enjoyable (R2, R8). Second, task urgency is mentioned to be a motivational work characteristic, since some tasks need to be finished in time which is experienced to be motivating (R4, R7, R12). Third, a few employees state that challenging tasks is another motivational work characteristic (R5, R10), because problems are sometimes hard to solve and it is motivating and/or challenging to solve those problems (R5, R10).

To conclude, all motivational work characteristics identified out of the literature (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006; Humphrey et al., 2007) are present in the work of the participating employees, but are not always recognized by all employees. Also, three other motivational work characteristics are introduced. These other motivational work characteristics could be added to the motivational work characteristics list of Humphrey et al. (2007) as other potentially important motivational work characteristics to be considered in future work design literature.

4.3.1.2 Social work characteristics

Social work characteristics reflect the social and interpersonal aspects in work (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). In section 2.2, four social work characteristics were introduced based on Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) and Humphrey et al. (2007). These four work characteristics are interdependence, feedback from others, social support and interaction outside the organization. First, interdependence is experienced by most participants (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5,

R7, R9, R10, R11, R12), where other colleagues are dependent on participants' work and in which participants are dependent on other colleagues their work. For example, the mechanic that needs to connect or disconnect someone from the energy network is dependent on the Employees Consumer because the Employees Consumer make this decision (R1, R2, R4, R5, R10, R12), while in the other way around the Employees Consumer are dependent on other departments or colleagues for information so that the Employees Consumer are able to create EAN-codes (R2, R12).

Second, feedback from others is experienced by all participants (R1-R12), and feedback is received from colleagues (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R9, R10, R11, R12), superiors (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11), or customers (R5). From colleagues, mostly appreciations about how well the participants do their work are given (R3, R5, R6, R9, R10, R11), whereas from superiors/supervisors the feedback is mainly about the mistakes made in work (R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8), which is mostly given during normal working conditions (R1, R2, R3, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9). Also, standard appraisal interviews are given by the employees' superiors (R5, R6, R7 R8, R9, R10, R11). One participant mentioned that he/she gets feedback from customers (R5), for example, when customers have an invoice that needs to be corrected because wrong prices have been charged.

Third, social support is also experienced by all employees (R1-R12). The employees all mentioned to get help from colleagues, whereas help from a superior has also been mentioned by a few (R5, R6, R7). Next to getting help, friendship opportunities are present (R2, R5, R10), but are mostly for only at work (R5, R10) and cannot stand in the way of doing the work properly (R5).

Fourth, interaction outside the organization is experienced by all employees (R1-R12). The main interaction outside the organization is with customers. A few also said to interact with other type of people than only customers (R1, R3, R5, R10), e.g. energy suppliers, estate agents, residential foundations or construction companies.

All four social work characteristics identified out of the literature (Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006; Humphrey et al., 2007) are present by all or most participants. Furthermore, new social work characteristics have been identified out of the interview data. The new social work characteristics identified are helping others, talking with colleagues, working atmosphere and attitude towards other colleagues. First, all participating employees think that helping other people is what is making their work so social, with respect to customers (R1-R12) or colleagues (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12). Employees help customers for example by giving them advice (R2, R5, R6, R12), reassuring them (R1, R3, R10, R12), or by preventing

them from being disconnected from the net (R2, R3, R4, R6). Colleagues were also often helped, mechanics and direct colleagues, for example through collaboration (R2, R4, R7, R8, R9, R11, R12), advice giving (R5, R12), or by complementing each other in work (R2).

Second, talking with colleagues is also a work characteristic that many thought to make their work social (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R9, R11, R12). Talking with colleagues enables the participants to make sure that they stay socially active and do not get isolated (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R9, R12). In addition, talking with colleagues about non-work-related topics is also what makes their work social (R1, R2, R4, R5, R9). Talking with colleagues differs from social support in that talking with colleagues emphasizes that employees have a conversation with another colleague in work, while social support emphasizes that employees get help from other colleagues in work.

Third, a good working atmosphere is also mentioned by some participants as one social characteristic of work (R1, R3, R4, R6, R7, R12). This also relates to how some participants find themselves positioned in their group of employees (R3, R4). Furthermore, some participants find the relationship between different functions too distant or hierarchical, which is disadvantageous for the working atmosphere (R4, R6).

Lastly, the attitude employees have towards other colleagues is another social work characteristic introduced by a few participants (R4, R7, R11), e.g. being open and honest (R4) or being collegial (R7).

To conclude, all social work characteristics identified in the literature by Morgeson and Humphrey (2006) and Humphrey et al. (2007) are present in participant's work, but are not always recognized by all employees. Furthermore, helping others, talking with colleagues, a good working atmosphere and attitude towards other employees are new social work characteristics identified out of the interview conversations. These new social work characteristics may also need to be added to the social work characteristics list of Humphrey et al. (2007) so that these social work characteristics could also be considered in future studies of work design.

4.3.2 The influence of the present work characteristics on the experience of meaningful work

Before an explanation can be given about why the present motivational and social work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work, it has to be analysed whether they do influence employees' experience of meaningful work. An overview of the work characteristics and their influence on meaningful work is given for the motivational work characteristics in Appendix J and for the social work characteristics in Appendix K, where the

influence per work characteristic on each facet of meaningful work is illustrated for the participants concerned. In Appendix J and K, the work characteristics are presented individually and generally (taken together), since the work characteristics are not always discussed individually with every participant but are sometimes taken together in the interviews. The reason why the motivational work characteristics are not always discussed individually, but generally, is because participants sometimes experienced difficulties in explaining why each work characteristic influenced their experience of meaningful work. Some participants experienced that it was easier to talk about the work characteristics in general first, as to find out which work characteristics were present in their work, and to relate these work characteristics in their influence on the experience of meaningful work more generally afterwards. In some interviews, the work characteristics were discussed both generally and individually (R1, R2, R3, R6, R7, R9). As can be seen in Appendix J and K, every motivational and social work characteristic presented does influence employees' experience of meaningful work, but the influence differs per facet of meaningful work and per individual. The motivational work characteristics most often recognized by participants in this study for their influence on the experience of meaningful work are task significance, problem solving, skill variety, task identity and task variety. The social work characteristics most often recognized in their influence on the experience of meaningful work are helping others, interaction outside the organization and talking with colleagues. Furthermore, the motivational and social work characteristics mostly influence the positive meaning in work facet and the greater good motivations facet, and to a lesser extent the meaning making through work facet. A lot of reasons have been given by participants for why the motivational and social work characteristics influence their experience of meaningful work, and this will be further discussed in the following section, section 4.4.

4.4 Why the work characteristics influence meaningful work

In this paragraph, an observed pattern will be sketched in section 4.4.1, which will explain why the motivational and social work characteristics influence participants' experience of meaningful work. Afterwards, the observed pattern will be compared with the predicted patterns derived from self-determination theory (section 4.4.2) and identity theory (section 4.4.3).

4.4.1 The observed pattern

Every work characteristic influences employees' experience of meaningful work in its own way, and per work characteristic the influence on the experience of meaningful work differs per facet and per individual (Appendix J & K). However, even though the influence is different per work characteristic and multiple reasons have been given by participants of why the work characteristics influence their experience of meaningful work, often the same reasons were mentioned as to why the motivational and social work characteristics influence participants' experience of meaningful work, which is also why the motivational and social work characteristics are taken together in the following analysis. An overview of all those reasons and their frequencies can be found in Appendix L. This quantification of the data is only meant to find patterns in the data and to be able to justify these patterns, but does not affect the qualitative assessment of why the participants perceive the work characteristics to be of influence on their experience of meaningful work. This overview of the data (Appendix L) enables a better summary of which reasons are the most abundant in the reasoning of participants when they discuss the influence of work characteristics on their experience of meaningful work.

When studying the reasons given by participants about why the work characteristics influence their experience of meaningful work, it is believed that the participating employees tend to look at the direct consequences or benefits the work activities (enabled by the work characteristics) bring for others or themselves when they explain why their work or why a certain work characteristic enables a meaningful work experience. For example, the most abundant reasons given by participants in explaining why some work characteristics led to a meaningful work experience are because the work characteristics enabled the employees to help other people (R1-R12), to produce good results (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12), to deliver something useful to others (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12), or to solve problems (R1, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R11), and these reasons reflect the good consequences or benefits yield for other people in explaining why they perceive certain characteristics in their work to be experienced as meaningful. Next to the good consequences or benefits yield for others, employees also perceive that the work characteristics enable a meaningful work experience because it yields good consequences or benefits for themselves, e.g. work satisfaction/gratification (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R7, R8, R11, R12), experiencing good feelings (R2, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R11, R12), to be useful (R1, R2, R8, R9, R10, R12) or productive (R1, R2, R4, R7, R8, R9, R12), to have interesting work (R5, R7, R8, R9, R11) or to personally develop (R1, R2, R3, R4, R9). Quotes will be illustrated as to get an impression

of why these reasons have been given for why the different work characteristics enable the experience of meaningful work for this study's participants.

First, helping others has been mentioned by employees (R1-R12) as a reason for why some of the motivational and/or social work characteristics enable the experience of meaningful work. The following quote shows for example why the work characteristics task significance, helping others, task enjoyment, and interaction outside the organization enable the employee to experience meaningful work because he/she can help others or experiences good feelings (positive meaning in work) and can also positively impact his/her customers (greater good motivations):

"I think my work is meaningful when I call a customer and warn them that they may be disconnected from the energy network if they do not arrange a contract, I think that this is meaningful for the customers. And often you also get to hear appreciation from the customer, and that they also tell you that they will arrange a contract right away, that I think like, okay, I have that one in the pocket, I was able to help someone who is now, thanks to me, not going to be disconnected from the energy network. I think that this is meaningful because I satisfy customers by calling them again and warning them what is happening and what they can still do to resolve the issue, to not get further into trouble. Also, it makes me happy. I mean, not all customers appreciate those calls, but most do, and when they do, I am happy. I am happy that I was able to send someone in the right direction. (R2).*

Second, producing good results has been mentioned by employees (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12) as a reason for why some of the motivational and/or social work characteristics enable the experience of meaningful work. For example, the following quote illustrates that task significance, interdependence and interaction outside the organization enables an experience of meaningful work because good results need to be produced (positive meaning in work) which is important for multiple parties (greater good motivations):

"We make sure that the connection register remains correct, for the mechanics, so that certain things are clear, like meter locations, but a correct connection register is also important for the energy suppliers, because they are coupled to us. So, the work that we do is very important for others. It is our main tasks and responsibility to make sure that the connection register is correct and stays correct, but a lot in the connection register is not correct, and when data in the connection register is not correct, then someone else can be wrongly disconnected from the

energy network, or our mechanic goes to the wrong address, that kind of things, or the energy supplier connects someone who is not supposed to be connected. I directly think about the consequences of our work for others. And I get back to that all the time, when you ask, what is meaningful in my work, it is especially that our work is important for the external parties we work for but also for internal parties, like colleagues or other departments" (R10).

Third, delivering something useful for others has been mentioned by employees (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12) as a reason for why some of the motivational and/or social work characteristics enable the experience of meaningful work. The following quote shows that helping others, interaction outside the organization and task significance enables the employee to experience positive meaning in work because he/she is able to deliver something useful for a customer, but also because it enables the employee to experience good feelings and to be involved in the connection or disconnection process. Furthermore, it enables the employee to experience greater good motivations, because the just mentioned work characteristics enable the employee to positively impact others (customers, colleagues):

"*I really come from the time of, customer is.., you do it for the customers and you want to help the customer as soon as possible and in the right way.. it does not matter if it is an internal or external customer, so we also see a colleague of an other department as a customer, so yeah, you do it for the customers.. and I personally like it when I was able to help other people further.. Look, especially in the cases where people are going to be disconnected. At one time, I have taken care of a female who was at home with small children in the winter and was about to be disconnected, then I did my extra best to enable them to make a payment arrangement with our debt collection department.. I said, guys, look at this case for a second because I have a very poignant case here.. to see if we could mean something for her. I didn't want to disconnect her as to be done with it and pull my hands off it, no, because I think you that you should be able to think as a human and try to reconnect that customer to the energy network as soon as possible. You know that people who are in debt help are taking care of their debts, and then you try to inform them the best possible in what they are able to do. I always think for our customers and want to help them the best way possible and do not want to be cruel*" (R12).

Fourth, solving problems has been mentioned by employees (R1, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R11) as a reason for why some of the motivational and/or social work characteristics enable the experience of meaningful work. The following quote shows that the work

characteristics task significance, problem solving, helping others and interaction outside the organization enable the participant to experience positive meaning in work because he/she is able to solve problems and because work satisfaction/gratification is experienced. Also, the previously mentioned work characteristics enable the experience of greater good motivations, because he/she wants to positively impact the customer and the organization with his/her work:

"The motivational work characteristics enable a meaningful work experience because work gives me gratification. Aside from the fact that work enables me to feel gratification or satisfaction in my work, good solutions need to be given by myself, and that is where the organization or the customer should also get gratification from, that I think like, that is solved. And that is the most important part, that processes or the end results are good. I cannot have a good feeling when I handled something badly. So, every solution needs to deliver something useful for both sides, for the organization and the customer" (R5).

Fifth, work satisfaction/gratification has been mentioned by employees (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R7, R8, R11, R12) as a reason for why some of the motivational and/or social work characteristics enable the experience of meaningful work, as is also already been illustrated in the last used quote (R5). The following quote illustrates that the work characteristics task significance, interaction outside the organization, and helping others enables the employee to experience positive meaning in work, because he/she experiences work satisfaction/gratification when he/she is able to help others or to deliver something useful to others, but also enables the employee to experience greater good motivations since he/she can positively impact customers and the organization:

"I think my work is meaningful when I can mean something for the customers of Enexis, so that something can go on smoothly. Look, it is an administrative job so I did think about this subject [meaningful work] for a while, but in this job, it is less tangible in comparison with a nursing job. So visually, it is not really visible. You do things on the background for people and of course it is important that everything goes well for our customer, whether customers want a new connection or whether it is about smart meters or whatever... I intend to help customers in a good, effective and in a friendly way, which gives me gratification, when I can make sure that everything leads in the right direction, administratively. So that is why it is meaningful for me. And I try to do everything right the first time, which is not always possible of course, but that is very important, because it also positively influences the image of our organization" (R4).

Sixth, since having a good feeling (R2, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R11, R12) has already been discussed in some of the previous quotes (R2, p. 49; R12, p. 50), being useful (R1, R2, R8, R9, R10, R12) or productive (R1, R2, R4, R7, R8, R9, R12) is illustrated next which have also been mentioned by employees as a reason for why some of the motivational and/or social work characteristics enable the experience of meaningful work. For example, feedback from others enables an experience of meaningful work because he/she knows that he/she has been useful (positive meaning in work), but also enables the person to personally develop him/herself (meaning making through work): *"Feedback from my superiors informs me that I am useful, meaningful and that I do my work well. Also, all feedback is meaningful, because positive feedback flatters your ego, and negative feedback is something you can learn from. I am never too old to learn"* (R1). Also, feedback enables a positive meaning in work experience because it enables the employee to see that he/she has been productive or useful that day:

"We have lists with customers that need to be called in the short term because they are going to be disconnected. So, you have a certain time to call those customers because otherwise the date of disconnection is elapsed and then the customers will be disconnected. When I have processed all the customers before their disconnection date, then I do think that I did my job well. And in that way, I do have feedback in my work, because when I see one hundred people in my list, and at the end of my shift I have still 80 customers left to process, then I need to think for myself, what have I done all day? Because those 100 customers actually needed to be processed that shift. So, in that way, I think it is important for me that I do enough each day. That I can say, okay, I have finished my list today. Seeing it this way, it does make my work meaningful" (R2).

Seventh, having interesting work has been mentioned by employees (R5, R7, R8, R9, R11) as a reason for why some of the motivational and/or social work characteristics enable the experience of meaningful work. For example, challenging tasks and task enjoyment enable a positive meaning in work experience because it leads to interesting work, especially when problems need to be solved, as can be seen in the following quote:

"Look, we also have tasks where I think of, well, for example the dossiers, customers can also give us the data we need through the website, and that data or information that comes from the customer needs to be linked to their dossier, the only thing I do then is copying and pasting

their information to those associated dossiers, so, that is also one task I do. This task is not the most wonderful task there is, but that's part of my job. Look, that information is important for Enexis as a corporation, but, the trick in itself gives me little gratification or something like that, that I think, this is wonderful work, because I don't think it is. But this task is part of the job, so not all my work is meaningful that I do here. But I think that is present in every company, that there are tasks which just need to be done. It does contribute to a bigger goal, but it isn't the most challenging tasks I would say... I think that, if you have interesting work, that gives you a good feeling, especially when you can find a solution for a problem, that is the best thing. That enables me to experience satisfaction and gratification. I think that if you execute your work the right way and also get feedback about that, or that you say for yourself, I have solved that the right way, then it definitely brings me gratification, definitely. More gratification than when I only have to do control-c, control v, 40 hours in a week. It is almost the same as assembly line work, but then behind a computer. I wouldn't experience any gratification out of that, if I had to do that 40 hours a week, then I would search for other work" (R5).

Eighth, personal development has been mentioned by employees (R1, R2, R3, R4, R9) as a reason for why some of the motivational and/or social work characteristics enable the experience of meaningful work. The following quote illustrates that information processing enables a meaningful work experience because it leads to personal development (meaning making through work) next to producing good results (positive meaning in work):

"In general, I think it [information processing] is always of influence on meaningful work, because processing all the information is why you can do your job well, because without that information you may not do your work well. So, you always pick the most important things out of all the information you get so that you can do your work properly, so it has meaning for my work. Furthermore, the more often you process all that information, the better you get in processing the information. And you develop yourself daily, I think, every day you learn something new. Not one day is the same as the last." (R3).

To conclude section 4.4.1, not all reasons (Appendix L) given by participants for why the work characteristics promote a meaningful work experience could be illustrated with quotes because that would make this section too lengthy. As can also be seen in the quotes used in this section (4.4.1), the work characteristics task significance, problem solving, interaction outside the organization and helping others are mostly present in the illustration of why the work

characteristics influence participants' experience of meaningful work because they yielded the richest quotes, but as can be seen in Appendix J and K, the other work characteristics do also influence participants' experience of meaningful work. Nonetheless, a dichotomy is discovered in the reasons given by participants for why the work characteristics promote a meaningful work experience, that is because it leads to good consequences or benefits for other people (customers, colleagues) or the organization, or because it leads to good consequences or benefits for themselves. As can be seen in Appendix L via the frequencies column, the participants' reasoning of why the work characteristics enable a meaningful work experience relate mostly to yielding good consequences for or benefitting other people, while it is less related to yielding good consequences for or benefitting the self. The observed pattern for why the work characteristics promote the experience of meaningful can thus be described as follows: because participants are able to yield good consequences or benefits for others or themselves. This observed pattern will be compared with the predicted patterns, derived from self-determination theory and identity theory, to test whether they are suitable lenses to explain why the work characteristics positively influence the experience of meaningful work.

4.4.2 Matching self-determination theory's predicted pattern with the observed pattern.

In this section, the predicted pattern extracted from self-determination theory will be compared with the observed pattern described previously (section 4.4.1). Through the lens of self-determination theory, the pattern that is predicted is the following: "when the motivational and social work characteristics promote and satisfy the basic psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness and competence, employees may come to experience their work as something meaningful" (p. 14). In the following paragraphs, first, every basic psychological need will be discussed whether they are provided for by the work characteristics and enable a meaningful work experience for this study's participants, as to see whether the predicted pattern is supported by this study's data. Afterwards, it will be discussed whether the predicted pattern of self-determination theory matches the observed pattern.

First, the basic psychological need of autonomy will be discussed. To see whether the fulfilment of the psychological need of autonomy enables a meaningful work experience, the work characteristic autonomy is taken into account. The work characteristic autonomy does influence employees' experience of meaningful work (R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R12), and therefore, this work characteristic does enable a meaningful work experience for some participants because they got their psychological need of autonomy fulfilled. For example, the following quote illustrates this:

"I like it when I can undertake action myself, being autonomous, I think that it is very important, maybe not for all persons, but for me, I think it is very important for me. I think it is motivating for me that I am able to do things myself and not to be dependent on other parties to decide for me what I have to do, that is something I would not like. So, I am able to act on own insight which is for me important and meaningful." (R4).

However, autonomy has not been discussed with some participants in whether it influences their experience of meaningful work (R7, R10, R11) or does not enable a meaningful work experience for other participants (R1, R8, R9), and therefore, autonomy as a psychological need cannot account for every participant who has a meaningful work experience. Thus, autonomy partly explains why the employees of this study experience meaningful work

Second, it has been proposed that when the work characteristics enable employees to experience the psychological need of relatedness, they will also experience meaningful work. Relatedness, in the sense of belonging to the same family, group or type of people, is not really experienced by this study's participants. While looking at the indicator 'sense of belonging' under the positive meaning in work facet, a sense of belonging is present for all participants (R1-R12), but only a few participants found it to be of positive influence on their experience of meaningful work (R4, R6). This is however an indicator of positive meaning in work, and no work characteristic is taken into account that enabled the experience of relatedness and/or meaningful work for these participants (R4, R6). Therefore, for relatedness to be able to explain the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work, work characteristics need to be taken into account. The social work characteristic talking with colleagues did enable employees to build bonds with other employees (R1, R4) or to be involved with other colleagues (R4), and the work characteristics task identity, task significance, interaction outside the organization and helping others did enable a meaningful work experience for one employee because he/she wanted to be involved with his/her customers (R2), but being involved or building bonds with other people is not believed to be the same as actually feeling related to the same family, group or type of people. Also, no participant specifically mentioned that any work characteristic enabled the fulfilment of his/her psychological need of relatedness, and therefore, the psychological need of relatedness does not seem to be able to explain the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work.

Third, competence, the ability to do something successfully or efficiently, is a psychological need that is recognized by this study's participants to be fulfilled by the present

work characteristics and enables a meaningful work experience (R1-R12). Some of the reasons participants give for why the work characteristics influence their experience of meaningful work (Appendix L) reflect participants' fulfilment of the psychological need of competence. Competence is for example reflected in participants' reasoning of being able to successfully deliver something useful to others, to successfully help others, to successfully produce good results and to successfully solve problems, which is enabled by the different work characteristics such as task significance, task identity, problem solving, interaction outside the organization, and helping others, and which is also already illustrated by many quotes in section 4.4.1. To illustrate competence as a reason for why the work characteristics enable a meaningful work experience in this section as well, the following quote shows that job complexity, problem solving, information processing and interdependence enables a meaningful work experience when the participant is able to solve some difficult dropouts successfully:

"My work becomes more and more difficult, especially because of automatization in the data entry systems, it results in a lot of dropouts, where dropouts are the difference between what has been done at the customers home and what has been processed administratively in our system. Those dropouts need to be analysed, and it becomes more difficult, every time, to find out what has been done at the customer's home when this has not been registered properly in the connection register. These dropouts also occur more often. Furthermore, you need to think back further and further about where to get your information from and if it is still available. Often, when a mechanic conducts his/her activities in the field, and enters what he/she has done digitally in the system, he/she loses that data after it has been entered in the system, which makes it very difficult to solve some dropouts. I think this makes my work challenging, to understand for yourself that you can solve some difficult dropouts. And I think my work is meaningful when I am able to solve these difficult tasks so that everyone is happy again" (R8).

However, not all reasons given by participants for why the work characteristics influence their experience of meaningful work (Appendix L) can be attributed to the psychological need of competence, since not all reasons reflect employees' ability of doing something successfully or efficiently. For example, work satisfaction/gratification, interesting work, being involved, and/or being socially active, are not reasons that reflect people their competence, but are reasons that reflect people' feelings and/or experienced benefits from work. Thus, the psychological need of competence can explain some of the reasons for why the work characteristics enable a meaningful work experience, but cannot account for all the reasons given by participants.

According to the predicted pattern derived from self-determination theory, all three psychological needs (autonomy, relatedness and competence) need to be fulfilled by the work characteristics in order for employees to experience meaningful work. However, the predicted pattern derived from self-determination theory does not seem to be supported in this study for multiple reasons. First, the work characteristics do not fulfil all three psychological needs for all employees in this study, because only competence is fulfilled for all employees, while autonomy is not fulfilled for half of the employees, and while relatedness does not seem to be fulfilled for any employee in this study. All participants do however experience meaningful work because of the present work characteristics without having all three of the psychological needs fulfilled, and therefore, it can be concluded self-determination theory's notion that the work characteristics need to fulfil all three psychological needs in order to experience meaningful work does not seem to be valid or applicable in this study. Second, three points can be made against the basic psychological need of autonomy for why it does not seem to be a good reason to explain why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work in this study. 1) While some employees experience autonomy and do think that autonomy affects their meaningful work experience positively, it is actually believed (researcher's own opinion) that participants do not act completely autonomous. The participants do not act completely autonomous in their work because they still have to do mandatory activities each day, have a fixed task package to perform, and need to listen to their superiors, which should not be the case when they were completely autonomous. Self-determination theory claims however that employees should be completely autonomous in order to experience meaningful work. The most important psychological need of self-determination theory is not believed to be completely fulfilled for the participants that do experience autonomy in their work, while they do experience meaningful work, and is one another reason for why self-determination theory's predicted pattern does not seem to be supported in this study. 2) A second point against the psychological need of autonomy can be made with regard to the claim that autonomy is the most important psychological need in the original form of self-determination theory as to integrate extrinsic motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005), however, in the context of meaningful work, it can be argued that competence is the most important psychological need, since this is the only psychological need that is fulfilled by all participants in this study when they experience meaningful work, while autonomy is not. This is contradictory with the predicted pattern of self-determination theory. 3) The psychological need of autonomy has already been included in the measured motivational work characteristic, and therefore, does not really bring new insights or a suitable explanation for why the work

characteristics positively influence meaningful work, since it is already a work characteristic. Autonomy can therefore not really be considered as a suitable reason for why the work characteristics influence the experience of meaningful work, which is one another reason for why self-determination theory's predicted pattern does not seem to be supported in this study. To conclude, while Beadle & Knight (2012) propose self-determination theory as one lens through which people experience meaningful work, it is questionable whether the three basic psychological needs are really necessary to be fulfilled in order to experience meaningful work, since the participants in this study do experience meaningful work without the fulfilment of all three of the psychological needs. Because the predicted pattern does not seem to be supported by this study's data, self-determination theory does not seem to be a suitable theory in order to explain the influence of work characteristics on employees' experience of meaningful work.

When comparing the observed pattern with the predicted pattern derived from self-determination theory, it can be concluded that the predicted pattern of self-determination theory also does not match the observed pattern found because the focus of the two patterns is different. Self-determination theory's pattern only emphasizes the benefits or good consequences for the self, which is the fulfilment of one's own psychological needs, while the observed pattern described participants' ability to yield good consequences or benefits for others or themselves, where benefitting others is more emphasized than benefitting the self. Even though the fulfilment of one's psychological need of competence may indirectly benefit other people, self-determination theory focuses more on fulfilling one's own needs in order to experience meaningful work, while the observed pattern emphasizes benefitting others or yielding good consequences for others in order to experience meaningful work. Thus, where the focus on self-determination theory is inwards, on the self, the focus of the observed pattern is outwards, towards other people.

To conclude section 4.4.2, self-determination theory does not seem to deliver the right pattern to explain why the motivational and social work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work because of two main reasons, first, because the predicted pattern has not been supported by this study's data, and second, because the emphasis of the predicted pattern differs from the observed pattern.

4.4.3 Matching identity theory's predicted pattern with the observed pattern

In this section, the predicted pattern derived from (social and role) identity theory will be compared with the observed pattern described in section 4.4.1. Through the lens of identity theory, the pattern that is predicted is the following: when the motivational and social work

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characteristics tap into the employees' identity, social identity or role identity, work comes to be experienced as meaningful. In the following paragraphs, social identity theory and role identity theory will be discussed individually, whether the work characteristics tap into both type of identities as to enable a meaningful work experience for this study's participants, as to see whether the predicted pattern of identity theory is supported by this study's data. Afterwards, it will be discussed whether the predicted pattern of identity theory fits the observed pattern.

First, in the predicted pattern of social identity theory, work is experienced as meaningful when the work characteristics enable the employee to discover who he/she is when he/she can relate him/herself to the group he/she belongs to. A few participants do feel a sense of belonging to the organization or his/her colleagues (R4, R6) or can identify themselves with the organizational goals, values and beliefs (R2, R12) that make their work meaningful, which is believed to help the participants to better understand their identity about who they are by relating themselves to the organization or their colleagues, but these reasons have been given without taking any work characteristic into account. In this study, it has not been found that any work characteristic did tap into employees' social identity that would enable a meaningful work experience because participants did not attribute the influence of work characteristics on their meaningful work experience to their social identity. Therefore, the predicted pattern derived from social identity theory does not seem to be supported in this study in order to explain the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work.

Second, in the predicted pattern of role identity theory, work is experienced as meaningful when the work characteristics enable the employee to perform a role in work that fits with their identity. It has to be noted that when the participants gave their reasons about why the work characteristics enable a meaningful work experience, no participant specifically talked about or linked this influence to their identity. However, after careful consideration and interpretation of the answers given by participants for why the work characteristics influence their experience of meaningful work (section 4.4.1, Appendix L) in light of role identity theory, the pattern of role identity could explain why the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work exists. The interpretation is as follows: participants answered that the work characteristics influenced their experience of meaningful work especially because they were able to help other people, to produce good results, to deliver something useful to others, or to solve problems, and these reasons could be seen as a role the participants want to perform in their work or have developed out of their work which corresponds to their identity. It could be that the role of helping other people and producing something useful or good for others is part

of participants' identity which enables them to experience the work that they do as something meaningful. The following quote shows that the social work characteristics in general enabled the participant to experience positive meaning in work because it enabled him/her to help other people and to experience good feelings, which also affected his/her greater good motivations by positively impacting others:

"My work is meaningful when I can, for example, help a colleague, that is what I do think is meaningful. The same holds for the customer, when their problems are solved again, for now, that is very nice for them. Then I have the feeling that my work has been important. Helping other people is important for me because it gives me a good feeling. I think it has always been important for me to help other people, it maybe is a little bit in my character" (R11).

The last quote shows that helping other people fits that person's character, which could also be recognized in the quote used on page 50 in this thesis where the respondent (R12) personally liked it to help other people, which could be an indication that people do relate the influence of work characteristics on their experience of meaningful work unconsciously to their role identity. Furthermore, other reasons given by participants for why the work characteristics influence participants' experience of meaningful work that are more directed towards themselves, e.g. work satisfaction/gratification, experiencing good feelings, to be useful or productive, to have interesting work or to personally develop, could also be attributed to the correspondence of participants' work role to their own (role) identity. The quotes shown in section 4.4.1 which illustrate why the work characteristics enable a meaningful work experience for participants could also be interpreted from the perspective of role identity theory as the underlying reason for why the work characteristics enable a meaningful work experience.

Next, the observed pattern will be compared with the predicted pattern of identity theory. Again, the observed pattern describes participants' ability to yield good consequences or benefits for others or themselves. The predicted pattern derived from social identity theory does not match the observed pattern, since the focus is totally different, where the observed pattern focuses on the benefits or good consequences yield, the predicted pattern derived from social identity theory describes that employees need to belong to a certain group, and these patterns therefore do not match in this study. The predicted pattern derived from role identity theory does seem to be able to match the observed pattern, where the observed pattern describes the reasons for why the work characteristics promote the experience of meaningful work, the predicted pattern derived from role identity theory describes more the underlying reason

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through which these reasons (Appendix L) could be interpreted. Yielding good consequences or benefits as an employee for others or yourself could then be interpreted as a role people want to fulfil in work, and when the work characteristics enable people to fulfil such a role, then the employees experience meaningful work because the role fits with their identity. The predicted pattern derived from role identity theory is therefore able to match the observed pattern because the predicted pattern does not contradict but can support the observed pattern. However, it should be noted that participants did not explicitly state that the work characteristics enabled a meaningful work experience because they tapped into their identity, and therefore, this is mere an interpretation from the side of the researcher. More research is needed to support that role identity theory could explain why the work characteristics enable a meaningful work experience.

To conclude section 4.4, an observed pattern has been sketched of the reasons given by participants for why the work characteristics influence their experience of meaningful work. The observed pattern is compared afterwards with the predicted patterns derived from self-determination theory and identity theory to test whether they are suitable lenses to explain why the work characteristics positively influence employees' experience of meaningful work. The predicted pattern derived from self-determination theory did not seem to be supported by this study's data and also did not seem to match with the observed pattern, and is therefore not considered to be a suitable lens to explain why the work characteristics positively influence the experience of meaningful work in this study. The predicted pattern derived from identity theory includes two ways, one through social identity, and the other through role identity. The predicted pattern derived from social identity theory did not seem to be supported by this study's data and also did not match with the observed pattern, and is therefore also not considered to be a suitable lens to explain why the work characteristics positively influence the experience of meaningful work in this study. The predicted pattern from role identity theory did seem to be supported, after further interpretation, by this study's data and also did seem to match the observed pattern. Role identity theory could therefore be considered as a suitable lens to explain why the work characteristics positively influence employees' experience of meaningful work in this study. However, no data directly supports role identity theory as a reason for why the work characteristics influence meaningful work, since it is not brought up specifically by the participants, and since it is mere an interpretation on the researcher's side, more research is needed to support this claim.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

This research aims to discover why the different work characteristics influence the experience of meaningful work. The research question of this study is defined as: "*Why do the motivational and social work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work?*". To find out why the motivational and social work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work, an observed pattern is sketched, which is compared with two predicted patterns afterwards. In the observed pattern, multiple reasons have been described that illustrate why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work. In the positive meaning in work facet, the work characteristics influence the experience of meaningful work in the way that they enable the employees to help others, produce good results, deliver something useful to others, to solve others' problems, or to be productive or useful. Furthermore, it has been mentioned by the employees that the work characteristics influence the positive meaning in work facet because they enable them to experience work satisfaction/gratification or positive feelings. In the meaning making through work facet, the work characteristics influence the experience of meaningful work because they enable the employees to personally develop in life, to be happy or socially active in life, or to be proud of their own personal capability. In the greater good motivations facet, the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work because they enable them to positively impact others or the organization for which they work. All these different reasons led to the following observed pattern: when the work characteristics enable employees to yield good consequences or benefits for others or themselves, meaningful work is experienced. Two predicted patterns have been proposed that could explain why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work, which are derived from self-determination theory and social identity theory. These two predicted patterns have been tested as to see whether they are supported by this study's data and whether they match the observed pattern found. First, the predicted pattern derived from self-determination theory did not seem to be supported by this study's data and did not seem to match the observed pattern found, and therefore, self-determination theory is not considered to be a suitable theory to explain why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work in this study. Second, only role identity as one path of the predicted pattern derived from identity theory seems to be supported by this study's data and matches the observed pattern while social identity did not. Social identity did not seem to explain why the work characteristics lead to the experience of meaningful work, because participants did not attribute the influence of the work characteristics

on their experience of meaningful work to their social identity. Also, social identity's predicted pattern did not seem to match the observed pattern. Social identity theory is therefore not considered to be a suitable theory to explain why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work in this study. On the other hand, role identity did seem to be able to explain why the work characteristics lead to the experience of meaningful work, even though the data did not directly support role identity as a reason for why the work characteristics enable the experience of meaningful work. While the multiple reasons given by participants about why the work characteristics influence their experience of meaningful work are the more practical reasons for why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work, role identity can be interpreted as an underlying and more theoretical reason for why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work and to which all the practical reasons could be attributed to. By applying this logic to the matching of the observed pattern with the predicted pattern of role identity theory, yielding good consequences or benefits as an employee for other people or themselves could therefore be interpreted as a role the employees would like to perform in their work because it fits with their identity, and when the work characteristics do enable the employees to perform such a role, the employees experience meaningful work. The predicted pattern derived from role identity theory seems to be the pattern that matches the observed pattern best, and is therefore the best answer to this study's research question. However, more research is needed to support this claim.

Chapter 6 – Discussion

In this chapter, the following is discussed: whether the aim of this study is achieved (section 6.1), the methodological reflection (section 6.2), the theoretical and practical contribution of this study (section 6.3), and the reflection on the overhaul of the thesis (section 6.4).

6.1 The aim of this research

The aim of this study as formulated in chapter 1 is to get a better and richer understanding of why the motivational and social work characteristics promote meaningful work. 'Why' is defined is this study as 'because of what reason'. The aim of this study is partly achieved. To gain a better and richer understanding of why the motivational and social work characteristics promote meaningful work, an observed pattern is sketched, which is compared with two predicted patterns derived from self-determination theory and identity theory afterwards, as to test whether the two theories could explain the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work. The observed pattern enabled a better and richer understanding of why the work characteristics enabled a meaningful work experience, because the observed pattern made visible what the overarching reason is for why the work characteristics enable a meaningful work experience, which is derived from the multiple reasons given by participants when they explain this experienced relationship. However, self-determination theory and social identity theory did not really contribute to gaining a better and richer understanding of why the work characteristics promote a meaningful work experience. Only role identity theory did provide this study with an underlying reason for why the work characteristics promote meaningful work, but role identity is not well proven for by this study's data, and is therefore more a suggestion than a definite answer to the aim or research question of this study. Doubts remain whether role identity theory truly is the reason for why the work characteristics promote meaningful work because it is solely based on the researcher's interpretation on the participants' answers, and one may wonder whether there are other theories that could better match the observed pattern of this study. Thus, the aim of this study is partly achieved, the observed pattern sketched did enable a better and richer understanding of why the work characteristics promote meaningful work, while the predicted pattern of role identity remains somewhat unsure in its contribution to a better and richer understanding of why the work characteristics promote meaningful work, because it is not directly supported for by the data.

6.1.1 The theory of consequentialism as an alternative reason

From the two predicted patterns derived from self-determination theory and identity theory, role identity theory has been chosen to provide the best pattern since it matched the observed pattern best. However, doubt remains whether role identity theory is the best theory to explain why the work characteristics promote meaningful work, and therefore, an other theory has been found that could match the observed pattern better than role identity theory.

The theory of consequentialism (out of the field of philosophy) could perhaps better explain why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work. Consequentialism is "the view that morality is all about producing the right kinds of overall consequences" (Haines, 2006, p. 1). Morality is defined as: "Principles concerning the distinction between right and wrong or good and bad behaviour" ("Morality", n.d.). The consequences of an action "include the action itself and everything the action causes" (Haines, 2006, p. 3). However, the word 'right' is ambiguous, and therefore, double consequentialism is taken into account since it clarifies what 'right' actually means. Right has a moral and objective sense: "(i) The objectively right action is the action with the best consequences, and (ii) the morally right action is any action one reasonably estimates to be objectively right" (Haines, 2006, p. 13). Double consequentialism thus differs from consequentialism in that the determination of good consequences lies with the individual him/herself who performs the actions instead of with the existing authority (e.g. the government, god, or someone's parent) (Haines, 2006).

Even though double consequentialism is about being a morally good person, it already shows similarities with the observed pattern found in this study for why the work characteristics influence participants' experience of meaningful work. Both the observed pattern and the theory of double consequentialism take the consequences of actions into account, and by both the determination of what the right consequences are is dependent upon the individuals who consider it. However, the focus of the observed pattern and of the theory of double consequentialism is different. Where the observed pattern focuses on meaningful work, the theory of consequentialism focuses on morality, and therefore double consequentialism in its original form cannot explain the relationship between meaningful work and work characteristics. Therefore, it is proposed, next to a focus on moral behaviour, the focus of double consequentialism may need to encompass an additional focus, which is on meaningful work, since the theory could then also explain in this study why the work characteristics influence the experience of meaningful work. So, when the focus of double consequentialism is adjusted to meaningful work, it could mean the following: 'it is the view that meaningful work is all about

producing the right kinds of overall consequences', in which the word 'right' now relates to (i) 'an objectively right action is the action with the best consequences' (same as the original), and (ii) 'the meaningfully right action is any action one reasonable estimates to be objectively right' (focus shifted from morality to meaningful). The predicted pattern that would follow out of the theory of double consequentialism is the following: the work characteristics enable employees to make decisions or take actions that seem to be right in terms of good consequences judged by their own standards, which in turn triggers the experience of meaningful work. Again, the observed pattern was the following: when the work characteristics enable employees to yield good consequences or benefits for others or themselves, meaningful work is experienced. The predicted pattern derived from double consequentialism with a meaningful work focus and the observed pattern derived from this study's data are almost identical, because they both focus on yielding good consequences. Also, the pattern of double consequentialism emphasizes that what the good consequences are is to be judged by the individual who carries out the actions, and this is actually also implicitly included in the observed pattern, because it is based on the participants' own reasoning. Since the observed pattern and the pattern derived from double consequentialism (focused on meaningful work) are very similar, it can be concluded that both patterns do seem to match with each other.

To conclude, double consequentialism with a focus on meaningful work may be an appropriate theory to explain why the work characteristics positively influence employees' experience of meaningful work. More research is needed to support the claim that double consequentialism focused on meaningful work could be a theory or a reason that is able to explain why the work characteristics promote employees' experience of meaningful work.

6.2 Methodological reflection

In this section, the methodology used in this study will be further reflected upon by means of the quality criteria described in section 3.5. The quality criteria internal validity, usability, analytical generalisability, and the self-reflection of the researcher will be further discussed in this section, while the other criteria, controllability, inter-coder reliability, and intersubjectivity are believed to be sufficient explained and reflected upon in section 3.5.

6.2.1 Internal validity

Three remarks are made with respect to the internal validity of this study. First, it is argued in section 3.5 that semi-structured interviews as a data collection method ensures the internal

validity of this study because questions can be clarified or because different kind of questions can be asked (specific or probing). However, remarks have to be made regarding this aspect. Even though these reasons are believed to be true for ensuring internal validity, clarifying questions or asking different types of questions could also negatively affect the internal validity of this study since it could result in bias in the participants' responses. Clarifying questions as a researcher could result in bias in participants' answers because it could facilitate participants to give answers they normally would not have given in other circumstances. Without having the intention to do so, the researcher could therefore bias participants' responses with his explanations given about the topics that were discussed. Furthermore, since every work characteristic is questioned individually (specific questions) in its presence in work or in its influence on the participants' experience of meaningful work, the participants could have had thought that each work characteristic must have had an influence on their experience of meaningful work because otherwise the work characteristics would not have been asked to them. These specifically asked questions could therefore result in bias in participants' answers. Furthermore, responses have been probed to get as much explanations as possible from participants about why the work characteristics influence their experience of meaningful work. However, this probing could have led the participants to believe that there must be some way in which the work characteristics influence their experience of meaningful work, which could also result in bias in participants' answers. But, it must be noted that the researcher did not probe for any further responses when the participant made clear that he/she did not know what to answer or did not think the work characteristics to be of influence on his/her experience of meaningful work as to not to propose possible answers to participants.

Second, in measuring the three facets of meaningful work in general (section 4.2), it was not always sure whether the indicators measured influenced the experienced meaningfulness of work or life for certain employees simply because of missing follow-up questions. Therefore, the assigned meaningfulness to these three facets have only been assigned to the ones who specifically said that the indicators influenced their experience of meaningful work, and not to the ones that did not explicitly mention it to affect their experienced meaningfulness of work. The assigned meaningfulness to these three facets (in section 4.2) could have been higher when it was consistently asked after the discussion of each indicator at each facet if it did influence their perceived meaningfulness of work or not. The internal validity could thus have been higher when the interviewer clearly asked these follow-up questions in the first part of the interview.

Third, the topic meaningful work was hard for participants to talk about since they mentioned not to think about meaningful work or reflect upon their work in a meaningful way

very often. As a result, participants experienced difficulties in describing why the different work characteristics influenced their experience of meaningful work, which negatively affects the internal validity of this study. Because of the experienced difficulties by participants, not all work characteristics are discussed individually in their influence on meaningful work, but are sometimes more generally taken together by some participants in why they influence meaningful work. The coupling of work characteristics in their influence on the experience of meaningful work resulted in less data for each work characteristic in why they individually influence the experience of meaningful work. Furthermore, the difficulties participants experienced in explaining their experienced meaningfulness is also reflected in the answers they gave about the influence of work characteristics on their experience of meaningful work, because the answers mostly remained superficial and close to the everyday experience, which may have affected the richness of the data and therefore the internal validity of this study.

6.2.2 Usability

Usability is not completely complied with. It is believed that the results could have been made better understandable when more reasons for why the work characteristics influence meaningful work could have been discussed in section 4.4.1 and more quotes could have been provided. But to ensure that the number of pages did not become too many, the discussed reasons and their corresponding quotes have been kept limited. Discussing more of the reasons for why the work characteristics influence meaningful work as well as illustrating more quotes could support the reader of this study in gaining a better understanding of why the work characteristic influence participants' experience of meaningful work and therefore support usability. However, it is believed that all relevant aspects of the social phenomena studied (work characteristics and meaningful work) are taken into account beforehand, which facilitates the usability of this study.

6.2.3 Analytical generalisability

Analytical generalisability is aimed for and achieved in this study, which means that existing theory is corroborated, advanced, but also rejected. More about the theoretical contribution in section 6.3. However, this study cannot be generalized to a bigger population, since the number of participants is too small and the context of a single case study with a holistic unit of analysis too narrow for the data to be able to represent a bigger population. Instead, transferability is aimed for. Transferability is about providing enough detail about the research case so that the

reader of this research can judge for him/herself whether the results might also apply to his/her own situation or context (Symon & Cassel, 2012). This study tries to provide enough detail about the research case by sketching the research case in section 3.2, Appendix A and Appendix B, and therefore tries to account for the transferability of this study as much as possible. However, caution of applying the results to other work contexts is proposed since the results of this study apply to this specific work context only, the reader should therefore carefully judge by him/herself whether the findings are applicable to his/her situation.

6.2.4 Self-reflection of the researcher

The researcher tried to minimize his influence on the findings by behaving appropriately, honestly and neutrally with all participants of this study during the interviews. Furthermore, the researcher shared the least possible with participants about his own views, wishes or fears, as to prevent bias in participants' answers. However, the findings are influenced by the researcher because all the decisions made to conduct this research, the way the analyses have been undertaken, and the way the results are discussed are solely conducted by the researcher himself. Especially the method chosen, pattern matching, enables some interpretative discretion on the part of the researcher, which means that the researcher may be overly restrictive or lenient for determining whether the observed and predicted patterns match or mismatch (Yin, 2018). However, in determining whether the observed pattern matched or mismatched the predicted patterns, the researcher tried to be as objective as possible, without any preference for any pattern, and based the claims made solely on the data provided by the interviews. As to try to prove that the claims made are based on the data of the interviews, the researcher also tried to make the data as visible as possible by illustrating multiple quotes in chapter 4. Also, by explaining all the choices made in the methodology chapter (chapter 3), the influence of the researcher on the data is hopefully sufficiently transparent or clear to minimize any negative influence or bias in the retrieved data.

6.3 Theoretical and practical contribution

This study provides new insights about the reason(s) why the work characteristics influence the experience of meaningful work, which have not been given in earlier studies. This study could therefore be of theoretical value because it could help future research to better understand, from the perspective of employees, why the work characteristics positively influence employees' experience of meaningful work. Also, this study could serve as an orientation point for future

research to gather more knowledge about why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work since recommendations for future research will be given in section 6.3.1.2. Furthermore, this study could also be of practical value because it could be helpful for managers to understand why the work characteristics are able to promote employees' experience of meaningful work. More about the theoretical and practical contribution in section 6.3.1 and section 6.3.2.

6.3.1 Theoretical contribution

This study is theory-oriented and therefore aims to make a theoretical contribution by advancing, corroborating and rejecting existing theory. First, this study advances existing theory in multiple ways. 1) This study advances existing theory (Michaelson et al., 2014; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Steger & Dik, 2010; Steger et al., 2012; Tilmans & Gunderman, 2017) about the three facets of meaningful work itself. New indicators have been added in the meaning making through work facet, which are 'happiness in life', 'social life', and 'brings order in life'. Also, one new indicator has been added in the greater good motivations facet, which is 'positively impacting the organization'. These added indicators can also be consulted in Appendix G, the final template. Future research may need to take these new indicators into account. 2) Also, new indicators have been added to the already existing theory (Humphrey et al., 2007; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006) about motivational and social work characteristics which are also found to be of influence on employees' experience of meaningful work. The new indicators added to the motivational work characteristics are 'challenging tasks', 'task enjoyment', and 'task urgency'. New indicators added to the social work characteristics are 'helping others', 'working atmosphere', 'attitude towards other colleagues', and 'talking with colleagues'. Future research may need to take these newly identified work characteristics into account as well. 3) This study advances existing theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Humphrey et al., 2007) by making an attempt to fill the gap in the literature about why the different work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work. An observed pattern has been sketched that reflect participants' reasoning about why the work characteristics influence their experience of meaningful work, and two predicted patterns derived from self-determination theory and identity theory have been tested whether they are able to explain the relationship between the work characteristics and meaningful work. It has been found that only role identity theory seems to best in contributing to a better understanding of why the work characteristics influence meaningful work, while afterwards as has been explained in the start of the discussion, double consequentialism (focused on meaningful work) did also seem to be

able to contribute to a better understanding of why the work characteristics influence meaningful work since it matched the observed pattern well. Both role identity theory and double consequentialism could therefore be suitable lenses or reasons to explain why the work characteristics influence meaningful work.

Second, this study corroborates existing theory about work characteristics and their influence on meaningful work. All motivational and social work characteristics proposed by Humphrey et al. (2007) have been found to influence the experience of meaningful work, but differ with their influence in their presence per participant and the associated facet of meaningful work. Thus, not every work characteristic influences every facet of meaningful work but differ individually in their influence on the different facets of meaningful work (overview in Appendix J & K). Furthermore, the influence of the work characteristics also differs per individual, which is further discussed in the next section (6.3.1.1).

Third, this study rejects existing theory. This study has found that self-determination theory (Beadle & Knight, 2012) and social identity theory (Michaelson et al., 2014) seem to be incorrect or unsuitable to explain why the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work exists, and therefore, this study rejects these two theories as possible lenses or reasons to be able to explain the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work in this study.

6.3.1.1 The individual differences for the influence of work characteristics on the experience of meaningful work

This study contributes to the already existing theory about work characteristics and their influence on meaningful work by viewing this influence as something positive or good for employees. However, some work characteristics have also been mentioned not to be of influence on the experience of meaningful by this study's participants (see Appendix J & K). General reasons given by participants for why some of the work characteristics are not of influence on meaningful work are: 1) the work characteristics only make participants' work more fun or pleasant, 2) the work characteristics do not influence the capability to achieve participants' work goals, 3) the work characteristics are not desired by participants, or 4) the work characteristics are not believed to be regarded as something meaningful by participants. These reasons all relate to the personal preferences of participants for why they think some of the work characteristics are not of influence on their experience of meaningful work. The fact that work characteristics are not always of influence on employees' experience of meaningful

work can be related to the two different streams of literature about meaningful work (Michaelson et al., 2014), where one stream of literature states that the experience of meaningful work is dependent on the individual's values and beliefs regardless of the characteristics in his/her work (the worker-focused group), the other stream of literature states that the experience of meaningful work is dependent on the characteristics of work or design of work (the task-centered group which has a more objective focus). While this study has certainly a task-centered and more objective focus perspective, it is also clear that work characteristics and their influence on employees' meaningful work experience is still individual dependent. So even though work characteristics mostly positively influence employees' experience of meaningful work, it has to be noted that it does not influence all employees' meaningful work experience.

6.3.1.2 Recommendations for future research

This study proposed new indicators for the meaning making through work facet, the greater good motivations facet, the motivational work characteristics and the social work characteristics, and more research is needed to support these new indicators as potentially new indicators to be taken into account in the meaningful work and work characteristics literature. Furthermore, more research is needed to fully understand why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work, which is needed for multiple reasons. First, this study attempted to discover why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work, and did so by sketching an observed pattern, and testing two predicted patterns. More research is needed to corroborate the observed pattern as a reason for why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work. Also, more research is needed to discover whether there are other reasons for why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work. Furthermore, more research is needed to corroborate the suitability of role identity theory as a reason for why the work characteristics influence meaningful work, while this may also be done for the later identified lens of double consequentialism (focused on meaningful work), because double consequentialism can also be regarded as a reason for why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work. Lastly, more research is needed to determine whether self-determination theory and social identity theory truly are unsuitable lenses to explain why the work characteristics influence meaningful work, where the same or different type of research method or observations may be used.

6.3.2 Practical contribution

Meaningful work brings many benefits for multiple parties and is therefore also of practical relevance. First, the individual benefits from experiencing meaningful work, e.g. higher well-being (Steger et al., 2012), higher life satisfaction (Duffy et al., 2014), and/or less stress and anxiety (Allan, 2017). Second, the organization benefits from facilitating meaningful work, e.g. lower turnover (May et al., 2004), greater productivity (Steger & Dik, 2010), and/or lower absenteeism (Rosso et al., 2010). Third, the society benefits from meaningful work, e.g. because citizens are able to live a meaningful life when they have meaningful work (Michaelson et al., 2014), and/or because meaningful work positively influences other people (Rosso et al., 2010). Thus, when organizations facilitate meaningful work for its employees, it is beneficial for its own employees, the surrounding society, and for the organization itself.

This study is of practical relevance because it attempted to gain a better and richer understanding of why meaningful work is influenced by the different work characteristics of work which could also facilitate managers' understanding of why the work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work. When managers better understand why work characteristics influence employees' experience of meaningful work, meaningful work may be better provided for within organizations by means of taking the work characteristics into account. By taking the findings of this study into account, managers could design the work characteristics in such a way so that their employees can yield good consequences or benefits for others or themselves, which could also be interpreted as a role that employees want to perform in their work because it fits with their identity, as to enable for their employees a (better) meaningful work experience. However, it should be noted that the findings of this study are bound to this research case and may not be applicable to other work contexts. The reader of this study should judge for him/herself whether the results of this study might also apply to his/her own situation or context. Furthermore, care should be taken whether to increase the work characteristics for all individuals since individual differences continue to exist.

6.3.2.1 Advice for Enexis Group

For Enexis Group, this study is of relevance because it gives insight in how meaningful participants experience their work and why the work characteristics influence participants' experience of meaningful work. Since this study is theory-oriented, it did not focus on acquiring information to describe a practical intervention as to make the work of the participating employees more meaningful. However, a general advice can be given to Enexis Group what

they should do as to maintain a meaningful work experience for the participating employees. Also, some employees did communicate some suggestions of how their work could be made more meaningful, and which will be presented afterwards.

Based on the actual analysis, the general advice to Enexis Group is that they should continue to design the motivational and social work characteristics of the participants' work in such a way so that employees can continue to yield good consequences or benefits for others or themselves, which could also be perceived as a role the employees of the department of Consumer and Market seem to like to perform in their work, as to experience meaningful work. An overview of the specific consequences or benefits the participants want to yield as to experience meaningful work can be found in Appendix L. However, no advice can be given whether the presence of some of the work characteristics should be increased as to make participants' work more meaningful, since it has only been investigated why the work characteristics promote a meaningful work experience, and not whether a specific increase of some of the work characteristics also leads to an increase in participants' meaningful work experience. Also, it should be noted that simply an increase of all the work characteristics does not lead to an increase in participants' experience of meaningful work, since the experience of meaningful work is highly dependent on the individual, and an increase of specific work characteristics as to facilitate meaningful work can only be effective when it contributes to employees' reasoning for why the work characteristics enable a meaningful work experience. Since the reasoning of the employees of the department of Consumer and Market is known, Enexis Group could do an inquiry themselves of which work characteristics to increase as to facilitate meaningful work for these employees.

Based on the suggestions made by some of the employees themselves, the work characteristics autonomy, feedback from others (more specifically superiors), talking with other colleagues, and task variety could be increased as to facilitate those employees' experience of meaningful work. First, some employees would like to have more autonomy as to experience more meaningful work. Some employees feel that much decisions are now made top-down, while more bottom-up decision making is favoured, e.g. with respect to telephone shifts or changes in their work or tasks. Second, increasing feedback from superiors could also enhance the experience of meaningful work for some of the participating employees, since they could learn from instructive feedback. Third, improving the ability for employees to talk with other colleagues has also been mentioned by some employees to increase the experience of meaningful work. Moments for colleagues to socialize with each other should increase the sense of belonging between employees and should facilitate the creation of good relationships

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between employees. These moments could be structurally implemented, for instance 10 or 15 minutes once every week. Fourth, task variety could be increased as to increase some employees' meaningful work experience. It is now believed that the work capacity is too tight for the willing employees to learn other work flows, while being able to work in multiple work flows does increase the meaningful work experience for some employees.

To conclude, Enexis Group could take the general advice and the suggestions made by their employees into account as to further increase the experience of meaningful work for the participating employees. However, it should be noted again that individual differences continue to exist. Therefore, increasing the presence of some of the work characteristics may impact each employee's meaningful work experience differently, and care should be taken whether to increase specific work characteristics for all individuals.

6.4 Reflection on the overhaul of the thesis

An overhaul has been conducted in this thesis after receiving feedback from both the first and second supervisor on the first version of this thesis. It has been detected that there was an inconsistency with respect to what has been promised and what has actually been done in the thesis, and therefore, multiple aspects have been changed in this thesis. First, the research question has been changed from a 'how' to a 'why' question. While this study initially tried to find out how the work characteristics influence meaningful work, it has been concluded by both supervisors that a how question cannot really be answered without serious qualitative data collection and analysis (which is more than only 12 interviews). Also, the reasons given by participants about the influence of work characteristics on their experience of meaningful work reflected more the 'why' instead of the 'how' of the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work. Therefore, the research question has been changed to a 'why' question. Because the data collection was already completed before the change of the research question, the 'how' question is still visible in this thesis in the operationalization (section 3.3), the interview guide (section 3.4 & Appendix D), the participant information sheet (Appendix E), the final template (Appendix G), and in the overview of the reasons given by participants for the influence of the work characteristics on their experience of meaningful work (Appendix L), since the questions that were asked and the answers that resulted from those questions have not been changed. The why has been added to Appendix G in block 3 and Appendix L, next to the 'how', to reflect the change in the research question. Second, the methods have been changed from an inductive-deductive research approach to solely a deductive research approach. While

there was some confusion on the researcher's side about what an inductive and deductive research approach truly meant, it has been discovered that what has actually been done in this thesis relates to solely a deductive research approach. Because little was known in the literature about why the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work exists, it was belied by the researcher that this study had to be inductive, however, since two theories have been used to test whether they could explain the findings about the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work, the approach of this research is of a deductive nature. Also, a pattern matching strategy has been chosen as an analytic strategy, while this study initially did not really have a specific analytic strategy in the first version. Third, the second half of chapter 4 (section 4.4) has been rewritten to specifically match the analytic strategy of pattern matching. Also, more generally, all the other chapters have been adjusted or rewritten to match the changed research question and methods accordingly.

Reflecting on the overhaul of the thesis, the researcher acknowledges that there was an inconsistency between the research question, the methods chosen, the results and the conclusion, and therefore, to do the overhaul of the thesis was a right choice. The researcher believes that the overhaul did improve this thesis' consistency. Also, the researcher believes that a better analysis of the data has been given because of the overhaul. The data about the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work has been reanalysed, which resulted in a reconsideration of all the claims made in the first version, and a more accurate analysis in chapter 4. However, the overhaul did not really result in new insights or answers for why the relationship between work characteristics and meaningful work exists.

To conclude, all the chapters have been adjusted in accordance with the changed research question and methods chosen in this study, which has improved the consistency throughout the whole thesis.

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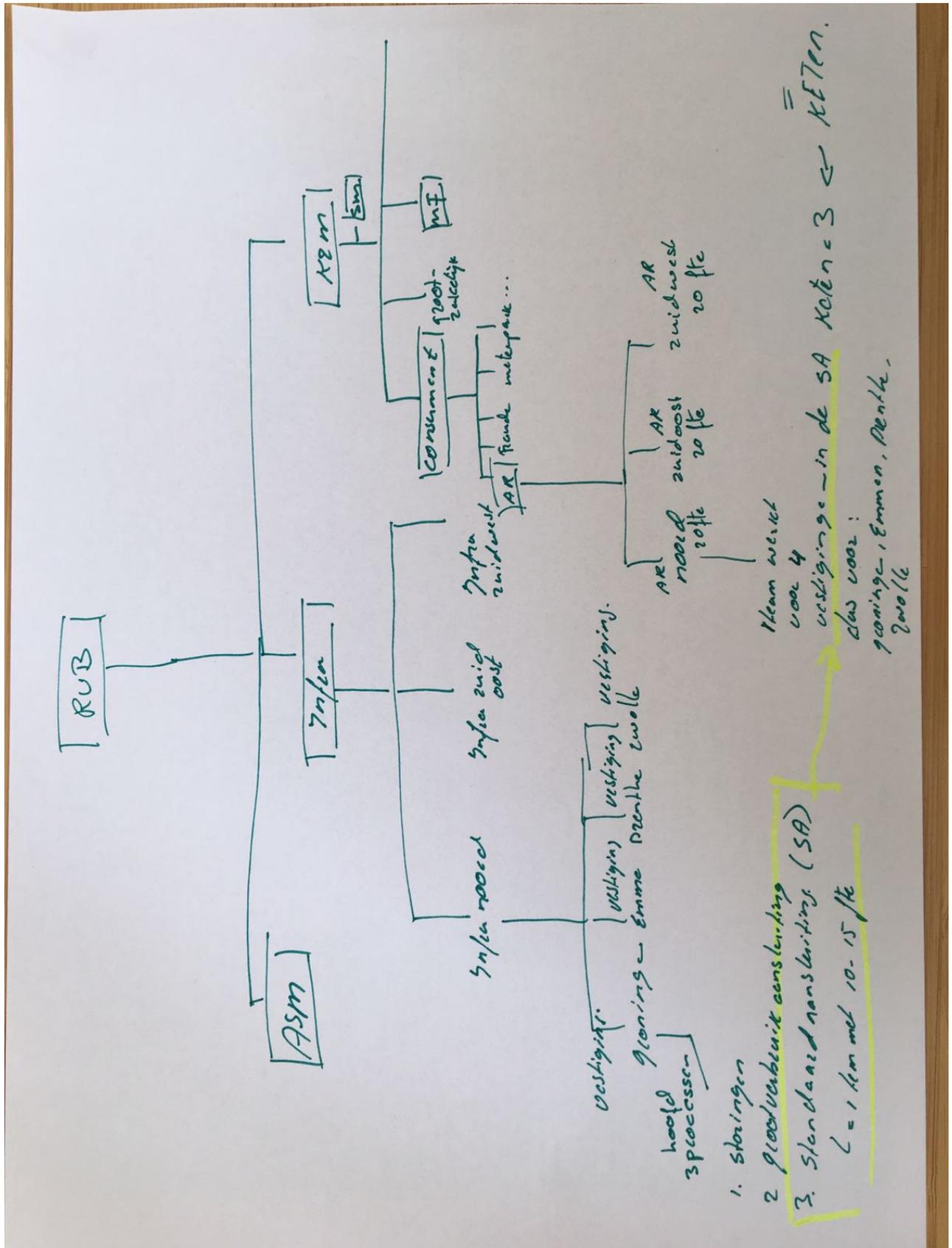
Appendix B – Additional case information

The case presented in this study is the organization called Enexis Group. Enexis Group has more than 4300 employees who work to ensure a stable and trustworthy energy network and make energy future proof. Enexis Group wants to make energy more sustainable by accelerating energy transition and excellent grid management (Enexis Group, n.d.). The mission of Enexis Group is: "We realise a sustainable energy supply by means of state-of-the-art services and grids and by taking the lead in innovative solutions" (Enexis Holding, 2017, p. 9). Enexis Group transports energy and makes energy sustainable and thereby future proof via four other companies, these are Enexis Netbeheer B.V., Enexis Holding N.V., Enpuls B.V. and Fudura B.V (Enexis Group, n.d.). As of January 2016, Enexis Group exchanged the regions Friesland and Noordoostpolder for Eindhoven and Zuidoost-Brabant with Endinet (Enexis Group, n.d.). Endinet almost completely integrated into the Enexis Group companies, but remaining activities of Endinet not yet integrated are included in Endinet Group B.V. Furthermore, Enexis Personeel B.V. and Enexis Vastgoed B.V. support the different companies in Enexis Group on personnel or labour and (register)goods (movable or immovable) topics (Enexis Group, n.d.).

Enexis Netbeheer is a regional network operator Enexis Netbeheer construct, manages, maintains and develops the energy network, installs energy connections, installs and maintains (smart) meters, transports gas and electricity to companies and houses, records meter readings, and solves disruptions in their grid area (Enexis Netbeheer, n.d.). Enexis Netbeheer operates in the regions of Groningen, Drenthe, Overijssel, Noord-Brabant and Limburg (Enexis Holding, 2017). Enexis Holding finances, stimulates, coordinates and facilitates different initiatives, partnerships, innovating capabilities, and knowledge, to boost energy transition (Enexis Group, n.d.). Enexis Holding conducts its activities out of three Enexis Group companies, Enexis Netbeheer, Enpuls B.V., and Fudura B.V. Enpuls B.V. focuses on accelerating energy transitions via sustainable area development, sustainable transport, flexibility, and saving energy (Enexis Group, n.d.). Fudura B.V. offers customized services to companies so that companies can optimize their energy supply (Enexis Group, n.d.).

Next to these main businesses, Enexis Group holds three main departments, which are Asset Management, INFRA, and Customer & Market (Enexis Holding, 2009). Asset Management is about developing an effective policy to reach goals set with the lowest possible costs and determines which infrastructural activities are needed. Asset management is also about renewing or innovating the current energy network to make sure that energy is cleaner and greener. Furthermore, Asset Management tries to estimate the amount of work needed for

keeping the energy network from malfunctioning. Asset management cooperates with all businesses in Enexis Group. INFRA is about building and maintaining the energy network of Enexis Netbeheer and takes policy and decisions set by Asset Management into account when conducting their activities. INFRA is the department where operational activities are carried out, and mainly cooperates with Enexis Netbeheer. Customer & Market is the department which maintains customer relations and is responsible for meter reading, invoicing, complaint handling, pricing based on the guidelines of the Office of Energy Regulation, and connection and shutdown procedures. Customer & Market cooperates with the whole Enexis Group. A sketch of the three departments is included in Appendix A.

Appendix C – Operationalization

Operationalization of meaningful work

Concept	Dimensions	Indicators
Concept	**Dimensions**	**Indicators**

Concept	Dimensions	Indicators
Meaningful work	Positive meaning in work	Work activities are personally significant, valueable, worthwhile or purposeful
		Relational needs are met through work
		Sense of belonging to co-workers and/or organization is felt
		Identification is made with organizational goals, values and beliefs
	Meaning making through work	Work makes life matter or important
		Work gives life purpose
		Work contributes to understanding the self and/or the world around the self
		Work enables personal growth or development in life
	Greater good motivations	Positively impacting others
		Positively impacting society
		Positvely impacting the broader world
		Serving a greater purpose

Operationalization of work characteristics

Concept	Dimensions	Indicators

Indicators:
- Skill Variety
- Task Identity
- Task Significance
- Autonomy
- Feedback
- Task Variety
- Information Processing
- Job Complexity
- Specialization
- Problem Solving
- Interdependence
- Feedback from Others
- Social Support
- Interaction Outside the Organization

Dimensions:
- Motivational work characteristics
- Social work characteristics

Concept:
- Work characteristics

Appendix D – Interview Guide

Datum	
Tijd	
Naam participant	
Email participant	
Telefoonnummer	

Introductie

Hartelijk bedankt dat u deel wilt nemen aan mijn afstudeeronderzoek. Ik ben Leroy Verheij, 23 jaar, en studeer de master Organizational Design & Development (bedrijfskunde) aan de Radboud Universiteit in Nijmegen. Het doel van dit onderzoek is om te bestuderen wat voor invloed werkontwerp heeft op betekenisvol werk zoals deze ervaren wordt door werknemers van Enexis Groep. Er zijn dus twee thema's die aan bod komen, betekenisvol werk en het ontwerp van werk. Bij elk thema zou ik een uitleg geven waar het thema over gaat. Er zal niet naar vertrouwelijke gegevens gevraagd worden en verzamelde gegevens worden geanonimiseerd. Daarnaast is deelname aan het onderzoek vrijwillig, als u een vraag niet wilt beantwoorden of wilt stoppen met het interview, dan wordt dat gerespecteerd. De verzamelde gegevens in dit interview zullen enkel en alleen gebruikt worden voor dit onderzoek om uitspraken te kunnen doen of werknemers van Enexis Groep werk als betekenisvol ervaren en of/hoe dit beïnvloed wordt door het ontwerp van werk. De verzamelde gegevens worden met niemand anders gedeeld, alleen met de begeleider voor beoordelingsdoeleinden. Vindt u het goed als ik het interview opneem? Dan geef ik u eerst nog een **informatieblad** over het onderzoek en dan kan het interview gaan beginnen.

Middenstuk

1. Algemene vragen

-Kunt u zich kort voorstellen? (*Naam, leeftijd, opleiding, woonplaats, jaren werkzaam bij Enexis Groep*).

-Kunt u kort vertellen wat u dagelijks doet aan werk? (Functieomschrijving, w*anneer niet duidelijk uitgelegd, doorvragen)*

2. Vragen betekenisvol werk

Introductie: Betekenisvol werk wordt vaak ervaren wanneer iemand zijn of haar werk aandachtswaardig, belangrijk, doelgericht, waardevol, of de moeite/inspanning waard vindt. Betekenisvol werk kan op drie niveaus ervaren worden. 1) Werk is betekenisvol omdat de specifieke werkzaamheden die u uitvoert persoonlijk aandachtswaardig, belangrijk, doelgericht, waardevol of de moeite waard is. 2) Werk is betekenisvol omdat het werk betekenis geeft aan uw leven als geheel. 3) Werk is betekenisvol omdat uw werk positief bijdraagt aan anderen of het algemeen belang.

Vragen:

-Wanneer is werk voor u betekenisvol? (Betekenisvol = aandachtswaardig, belangrijk, doelgericht, waardevol, moeite waard)

-Wat maakte het voor u interessant om hier te komen werken? (*vraag in hoeverre dat uitgekomen is*)

-Hoe betekenisvol vindt u uw werk en de werkzaamheden die u uitvoert? Kunt u voorbeelden geven van momenten waarop u uw werk betekenisvol vindt/vond? (Betekenisvol = aandachtswaardig, belangrijk, doelgericht, waardevol, moeite waard)

- *Activiteiten zijn betekenisvol,*
- *relationele behoeftes worden vervult,*
- *verbondenheid met collega's en/of organisatie,*
- *identificatie met doelen, waardes en overtuigingen van de organisatie.*

-Draagt uw werk bij aan een betekenisvol leven? (*Zo ja of nee, waarom/hoe wel of niet*)

- *Leven doet ertoe door werk*
- *Werk geeft leven een doel,*
- *Werk zorgt voor zelfbegrip of wereldbegrip*
- *Werk draagt bij aan persoonlijke ontwikkeling/groei*

-Dient uw werk ook anderen in uw omgeving (klanten/collega's/familie) of het algemeen belang? (*Zo ja of nee, waarom/hoe wel of niet*)

- *Positieve beïnvloedding van anderen om u heen (klanten/collega's/familie)*
- *Werk draagt bij aan de samenleving*
- *Werk draagt bij aan een betere wereld*
- *Werk dient een groter doel*

3. Vragen werkontwerp en relatie met betekenisvol werk

Introductie: hoe uw werk ontworpen is kan onder andere beoordeeld worden door te kijken naar motivationele en sociale werkkarakteristieken. (**hoe = op welke manier en met welke onderliggende processen**)

Vragen:

-Kunt u mij vertellen wat voor motiverende kenmerken of karakteristieken in uw baan aanwezig zijn? Wat motiveert u in uw baan? (*zijn de werkkenmerken die uw werk motiverender en bevredigender maken, denk bijvoorbeeld aan dat uw werk verschillende soorten vaardigheden/talenten vereist wat het werk motiverend maakt, of dat uw taken een significante invloed hebben op anderen hun werk of leven waardoor u gemotiveerd raakt, of dat u veel vrijheid heeft in uitvoeren van uw werk waardoor het motiverender is*)

- Vraag hoe de geïdentificeerde kenmerken de betekenisvolheid van hun werk beïnvloedden (*relateer duidelijk aan welk niveau van betekenisvolheid*)

-Kunt u mij vertellen wat voor sociale kenmerken in uw baan aanwezig zijn? Wat maakt uw baan sociaal of juist niet sociaal? (*zijn de werkkenmerken die de sociale en interpersoonlijke kenmerken van het werk benadrukken, denk bijvoorbeeld aan dat u van uw directe collega's feedback krijgt over uw functioneren, of hulp/advies krijgt van leidinggevenden of directe collega's, of de interactie met uw klanten*).

- Vraag hoe de geïdentificeerde kenmerken de betekenisvolheid van hun werk beïnvloedden (*relateer duidelijk aan welk niveau van betekenisvolheid*)

-Wat voor soort kenmerken mist u in uw werk die het werk voor u betekenisvoller kunnen maken? (*Denk daarbij weer aan de verschillende werkkarakteristieken en drie niveaus van betekenisvol werk*)

De werkkarakteristieken:

- ***Motivationeel****: vaardigheden verscheidenheid, taak identiteit, taak significantie, autonomie, feedback van het werk, taak verscheidenheid, informatieverwerking, werk complexiteit, specialisatie in het werk, probleemoplossing.*

- ***Sociaal****: onderlinge afhankelijkheid, feedback van anderen (directe collega's/leidinggevenden), sociale ondersteuning/steun, interactie met mensen buiten de organisatie*

Drie niveaus van betekenisvol werk:

- *Positieve betekenis in werk*
- *Werk geeft betekenis aan uw leven*
- *Werk dient anderen in uw omgeving of algemeen belang*

Afsluiting

- Heeft u nog vragen met betrekking tot het interview of het onderzoek?
- Vraag of contact opgenomen mag worden met geïnterviewde wanneer er vragen zijn over antwoorden, vraag naar email.
- Geef aan dat wanneer er uit hen nog vragen of toevoegingen zijn, contact met mij opgenomen kan worden, zie contactgegevens informatieblad.
- **Vraag of ze de uitgewerkte transcripten willen controleren voordat deze gebruikt zullen worden voor de scriptie. Wanneer dit het geval is, vraag of ze dit binnen een week na ontvangst willen doen. Vraag naar email.**
- Vraag of participanten een samenvatting van de resultaten of de gehele thesis willen ontvangen, vraag naar email.
- Bedank geïnterviewde voor het interview en medewerking aan het onderzoek.

Specifieke items voor werkkarakteristieken:

- **Vaardigheden verscheidenheid:** Heeft u verschillende vaardigheden of talenten nodig om uw werk uit te voeren?

- **Taakidentiteit**: Kunt u een taak in zijn geheel uitvoeren, van begin tot eind, of bent u in staat de activiteiten waarmee u bent begonnen af te maken?

- **Taaksignificantie**: Heeft uw werk een substantiële impact op levens of werk van anderen binnen of buiten de organisatie?

- **Autonomie**: Heeft u de vrijheid en de onafhankelijkheid om zelf te bepalen wat er wanneer en hoe moet gebeuren?

- **Feedback van het werk**: Krijgt u duidelijke informatie over de effectiviteit van uw prestaties vanuit de baan zelf of direct vanuit de activiteiten die u uitvoert waaraan u kunt zien dat u goed functioneert/presteert (kwaliteit/kwantiteit)?

- **Taak verscheidenheid:** Voert u verschillende soorten taken uit in uw werk?

- **Informatieverwerking:** Moet u de dagelijks veel informatie verwerken en/of beheren?

- **Werkcomplexiteit:** In hoeverre is uw werk complex of moeilijk om uit te voeren?

- **Specialisatie in het werk:** Heeft u in uw werk specifieke kennis of vaardigheden nodig om het werk goed uit te kunnen voeren?

- **Probleemoplossing**: Vereist uw werk het oplossen van problemen die niet gemakkelijk op te lossen zijn of eerder tegengekomen bent en die u vereisen creatief te zijn of met unieke oplossingen te komen?

- **Onderlinge afhankelijkheid:** Bent u afhankelijk in de uitvoering van uw werk van uw collega's, of zijn uw collega's afhankelijk van uw werk om hun baan uit te kunnen voeren?

- **Feedback van anderen:** Krijgt u van directe collega's/manager informatie over de effectiviteit van uw prestaties?

- **Sociale ondersteuning:** Krijgt u hulp of advies van uw collega's of leidinggevenden, of, maakt u goede vrienden op uw werk?

- **Interactie met mensen buiten de organisatie:** Werkt u of communiceert u met mensen buiten de organisatie om uw werk uit te kunnen voeren?

Definitieblad:

- **Betekenisvol werk:** de mate waarin een werknemer zijn of haar werk persoonlijk aandachtswaardig, belangrijk, doelgericht, waardevol of de moeite waard acht.

- **Positieve betekenis in werk**: de activiteiten in werk zijn persoonlijk aandachtswaardig, belangrijk, doelgericht, waardevol, of de moeite waard.

- **Werk geeft betekenis aan leven:** werk geeft het leven nut, een doel, en draagt bij aan zelfbegrip, wereldbegrip en persoonlijke ontwikkeling/groei.

- **Werk dient andere in omgeving of algemeen belang:** werk draagt positief bij aan anderen in de directe omgeving, de maatschappij, de bredere wereld of een groter doel.

- **Motiverende werkkenmerken**: zijn de werkkenmerken die werk motiverender en bevredigender maken.

- **Sociale werkkenmerken:** zijn de werkkenmerken die de bredere sociale werkomgeving weerspiegelen, de sociale en interpersoonlijke aspecten van het werk.

- **Vaardigheden verscheidenheid:** de mate waarin het werk verschillende soorten vaardigheden en talenten van de individu vereist bij de uitvoering van zijn of haar taken.

- **Taak identiteit:** de mate waarin een baan een volledig stuk werk beslaat, dat is een klus uitvoeren van begin tot eind met een zichtbare uitkomst.

- **Taak significantie:** de mate waarin het werk een substantiële impact heeft op de levens of het werk van andere mensen in of buiten de organisatie.

- **Autonomie:** de mate waarin een individu de vrijheid en onafhankelijkheid heeft om zelf te bepalen wat wanneer en hoe gedaan wordt.

- **Feedback**
  - Van het werk: de individu krijgt directe en duidelijke informatie over hoe effectief diegene presteert (of de bedoelde resultaten behaald worden) vanuit de baan zelf, direct uit de activiteiten die men uitvoert waaraan men kan zien dat men goed functioneert/presteert (kwaliteit/kwantiteit)
  - Van anderen: de individu krijgt van collega's/manager informatie over zijn of haar presteren.

- **Taak verscheidenheid:** de mate waarin het individu verschillende soorten taken uitvoert bij zijn of haar baan.

- **Informatieverwerking:** de mate waarin het individu zich moet focussen in het werk op het verwerken en beheren van informatie.

- **Werkcomplexiteit:** de mate waarin het werk veelzijdig is (veel verschillende soorten taken) en moeilijk uit te voeren is.

- **Specialisatie in het werk:** de mate waarin specifieke kennis en vaardigheden nodig zijn om het werk goed uit te kunnen voeren.

- **Probleemoplossing:** de mate waarin het werk het produceren van unieke oplossingen of ideeën vereist.

- **Onderlinge afhankelijkheid:** de mate waarin het uitvoeren van het werk afhankelijk is van anderen hun werk. Is ook de mate waarin de uitvoering van anderen hun werk afhankelijk is van de individu zijn of haar werkzaamheden.

- **Sociale ondersteuning:** de mate waarin het werk mogelijkheden biedt voor het krijgen van hulp of advies van zowel leidinggevenden of collega's inclusief vriendschapsmogelijkheden op het werk.

- **Interactie met mensen buiten de organisatie:** de mate waarin het werk de werknemer vereist om te communiceren met mensen buiten de organisatie (leveranciers of klanten)

Betekenisvol werk

De mate waarin u uw werk persoonlijk:

- aandachtswaardig,

- belangrijk,

- doelgericht,

- waardevol,

- of de moeite waard acht.

Appendix E – Participant Information Sheet

<u>Wie is de onderzoeker?</u>

Ik, Leroy Verheij, ben masterstudent aan de Radboud Universiteit in Nijmegen en studeer de master Organizational Design & Development (bedrijfskunde). Ik ben 23 jaar en woon in Zwolle. Dit onderzoek is een afstudeeronderzoek voor mijn master bedrijfskunde.

<u>Aard van het onderzoek</u>

Het onderzoek zal gaan over betekenisvol werk en hoe werkontwerp daar invloed op uitoefent. Werkontwerp wordt via motivationele en sociale werkkarakteristieken gemeten. Dit onderzoek probeert een bijdrage te leveren aan de wetenschappelijke literatuur. In de wetenschappelijke literatuur is bekend dat bepaalde werkkarakteristieken de betekenisvolheid van werk beïnvloedt, maar hoe dit precies gebeurd of wat de ervaringen daarvan zijn bij werknemers is op dit moment niet erg duidelijk beschreven. Op basis van kwalitatief onderzoek probeert dit onderzoek een nieuw licht te werpen op hoe betekenisvol werk wordt beïnvloed door motivationele en sociale werkkarakteristieken. In het interview zal daarom gevraagd worden in hoeverre werknemers hun werk betekenisvol achten. Daarnaast zal gevraagd worden of en hoe de betekenisvolheid van werk wordt beïnvloed door verschillende werkkarakteristieken. Betekenisvol werk is van belang omdat het een positieve invloed zou hebben op o.a. geluk, motivatie, absentie, betrokkenheid, stress en prestatie van de werknemer.

Om deze bijdrage aan de wetenschappelijke literatuur te leveren is de onderzoeksvraag die centraal staat in dit onderzoek als volgt: 'Hoe beïnvloeden verschillende motivationele en sociale werkkarakteristieken de betekenisvolheid van werk zoals deze ervaren wordt door werknemers van Enexis Groep?'. Deze vraag zal aan het eind van het onderzoek beantwoord worden. Het gehele onderzoek zal door mij, Leroy Verheij, geschreven en uitgevoerd worden.

De afdeling die deelneemt aan dit onderzoek is Klant & Markt. Er zullen in totaal 12 interviews plaatsvinden op deze afdeling.

Het onderzoek zit nu in de dataverzamelingsfase, wat betekent dat er nu primaire data verzameld gaat worden om een eigen bijdrage te kunnen leveren aan kennis over de relatie tussen werkkarakteristieken en betekenisvol werk. Voor de dataverzamelingsfase is een uitgebreide literatuurstudie aan voorafgegaan. De literatuurstudie begeleidt de dataverzameling, wat betekent dat gerichtere vragen gesteld kunnen gaan worden zodat een bijdrage geleverd kan worden aan de wetenschappelijke literatuur. Na het verzamelen van de

data, zal deze geanalyseerd worden en zullen de bevindingen uiteengezet worden in het onderzoeksverslag. De verwachting is dat de thesis eind Oktober 2018 afgerond is.

De vereisten van deelneming

Dit onderzoek vraagt van elke deelnemer een uur tot anderhalf uur van zijn tijd om de relatie tussen betekenisvol werk en werkkarakteristieken te onderzoeken door middel van een interview. In dit interview komen twee thema's aan bod, betekenisvol werk en werkkarakteristieken. Bij elke deelnemer zullen dezelfde thema's en vragen aan bod komen. Na de interviews zal er, wanneer nodig, verduidelijking gevraagd kunnen worden per e-mail over mogelijke onduidelijkheden die uit het gesprek naar voren kunnen zijn gekomen. Alle interviews zijn uiterlijk voor eind Augustus 2018 afgenomen.

De gevolgen van deelname en de rechten van deelnemers

De deelname aan dit onderzoek is volledig vrijwillig. Deelnemers hebben het recht om vragen niet te beantwoorden wanneer zij dit niet willen. Ook als men afziet van deelname aan dit onderzoek, zal deze wens gehonoreerd worden. Van tevoren zal bij elk interview aangegeven worden dat het interview opgenomen zal worden, wat bevorderend is voor het onderzoek en de uiteindelijke resultaten. Wanneer dit niet gewenst is, zal daar rekening mee gehouden worden en zullen er notities gemaakt worden. Uw deelname helpt bij het ontwikkelen van kennis over betekenisvol werk en hoe betekenisvol werk wordt beïnvloed door verschillende werkkarakteristieken. Daarnaast zorgt uw deelname ervoor dat aanbevelingen gedaan kunnen worden om het werk wellicht betekenisvoller te maken. Wel is dit aan Enexis zelf om te bepalen of deze aanbevelingen in acht genomen zullen worden of niet. Het onderzoek kan na afloop naar u toegezonden worden wanneer daar interesse voor is.

Het gebruik van de verzamelde data

Voordat de verzamelde data (datgene wat u mij verteld heeft in het interview) geanalyseerd gaat worden, wordt er eerst een member check uitgevoerd, wat inhoudt dat u de interviewtranscripten mag controleren, aanpassingen aan de interviewtranscripten mag suggereren wanneer u daar van mening toe bent en mij wel of geen toestemming geeft om de transcripten te mogen gebruiken voor de analyse. De verzamelde data zal vertrouwelijk behandeld worden en zal niet worden gedeeld met anderen of in het onderzoeksverslag geplaatst worden. Enkel mijn begeleider van de universiteit zal de interviewtranscripten ontvangen voor beoordelingsdoeleinden. Daarnaast worden enkel quotes uit de verzamelde data gehaald om

redeneringen in het onderzoeksverslag te ondersteunen. De quotes die gebruikt zullen worden uit de verzamelde data zullen geanonimiseerd worden om ervoor te zorgen dat u niet herkend wordt in dit onderzoek. De data zal alleen voor deze master thesis gebruikt worden en zal na afloop van dit onderzoek niet meer gebruikt worden.

Het onderzoek zal geplaatst worden in het archief van de Radboud Universiteit op internet. Dit onderzoek zal daarom zichtbaar zijn voor iedereen op internet. Nogmaals, de interviewtranscripten komen hier niet in terecht. Het onderzoek zal verder niet gepubliceerd of verspreid worden naar derden.

<u>Wie te benaderen wanneer er vragen zijn over het onderzoek</u>

Wanneer er vragen of onduidelijkheden zijn met betrekking tot dit onderzoek, kunt u mij benaderen. U kunt mij benaderen via e-mail door een e-mail te sturen naar het volgende adres leroy.verheij@student.ru.nl of via telefoon door te bellen naar 06-22137987. Daarnaast kunt u ook met Rikkie Dautzenberg contact opnemen over eventuele vragen over dit onderzoek, zij is senior specialist organisatieontwikkeling binnen Enexis en ze is ook de hoofdcontactpersoon binnen Enexis voor dit onderzoek. Rikkie kunt u bereiken via e-mail op rikkie.dautzenberg@enexis.nl of per telefoon op 06-31997861.

Appendix F – Initial Template

1. Experienced meaningfulness of work

1.1 Positive meaning in work

1.1.1 Meaningful work activities

1.1.2 Relational needs

1.1.3 Sense of belonging

1.1.4 Identifying with organizational goals, values and beliefs

1.2 Meaning making through work

1.2.1 Life matters or is important

1.2.2 Purpose in life

1.2.3 Understanding the self or the world around the self

1.2.4 Personal growth or development in life

1.3 Greater good motivations

1.3.1 Positively impacting others (customers/colleagues/family)

1.3.2 Positively impacting society

1.3.3 Positively impacting the broader world

1.3.4 Serving a greater purpose

2. Work Characteristics

2.1 Motivational work characteristics

2.1.1 Skill variety

2.1.2 Task identity

2.1.3 Task significance

2.1.4 Autonomy

2.1.5 Feedback

2.1.6 Task variety

2.1.7 Information processing

2.1.8 Job complexity

2.1.9 Specialization

2.1.10 Problem solving

2.2 Social work characteristics

2.2.1 Interdependence

2.2.2 Feedback from others

2.2.3 Social support

2.2.4 Interaction outside the organization

Appendix G – Final Template

1. Experienced meaningfulness of work	1.1 Positive meaning in work	1.1.1 Meaningful work activities
		1.1.2 Relational needs
		1.1.3 Sense of belonging
		1.1.4 Identification with organizational goals, values and beliefs
	1.2 Meaning making through work	1.2.1 Life matters or is important
		1.2.2 Purpose in life
		1.2.3 Understanding the self or the world around the self
		1.2.4 Personal growth or development in life
		1.2.5 Happiness in life
		1.2.6 Social life
		1.2.7 Brings order in life
	1.3 Greater good motivations	1.3.1 Positively impacting others
		1.3.2 Positively impacting society
		1.3.3 Positively impacting the broader world
		1.3.4 Serving a greater purpose
		1.3.5 Positively impacting the organization
2. Work Characteristics	2.1 Motivational work characteristics	2.1.1 Skill variety
		2.1.2 Task identity
		2.1.3 Task significance
		2.1.4 Autonomy
		2.1.5 Feedback
		2.1.6 Task variety
		2.1.7 Information processing
		2.1.8 Job complexity
		2.1.9 Specialization
		2.1.10 Problem solving
		2.1.11 Challenging tasks
		2.1.12 Task enjoyment
		2.1.13 Task urgency
	2.2 Social work characteristics	2.2.1 Interdependence
		2.2.2 Feedback from others
		2.2.3 Social support
		2.2.4 Interaction outside the organization
		2.2.5 Helping others
		2.2.6 Working atmosphere
		2.2.7 Attitude towards other colleagues
		2.2.8 Talking with colleagues
3. How/why work characteristics influence meaningful work	3.1 Work satisfaction/ gratification	3.1.1 Good solutions
	3.2 Delivering something useful to others	
	3.3 Helping others	3.3.1 Reassuring people
		3.3.2 Customer satisfaction
		3.3.3 Making colleagues learn

	3.4 Producing good results	3.4.1 Stay alert
	3.5 Being useful	3.5.1 Feeling needed
	3.6 Interesting work	
	3.7 Solving problems	
	3.8 Being involved	
	3.9 Being socially active	
	3.10 Building bonds with others	
	3.11 Being proud of personal capability	
	3.12 Being appreciated	
	3.13 Personal development	
	3.14 Working under pressure	3.14.1 Working more efficient
	3.15 Work-life balance	
	3.16 Being productive	
	3.17 Having a good feeling	3.17.1 Feeling at ease
		3.17.2 Feeling supported
	3.18 Being knowledgeable	
	3.19 Being independent	3.19.1 Act on own insight
		3.19.2 Being autonomous
	3.20 Being informed	
	3.21 Improving work processes	
4. Meaning of work	**4.1 Good salary**	
	4.2 Good organizational accomodations	
	4.3 Better living conditions	
	4.4 Work is an obligation	
	4.5 Work brings (financial) resources	
	4.6 Getting paid	

Appendix H – Memos of the codes made

Memos made during the coding process:

- Code 1.1.4 "identifying with organizational goals, values and beliefs" adjusted to identification with organizational goals, values and beliefs", as to leave it more open because this can be true or false.

- New code 1.3.5 created, "positively impacting the organization", since this is something else than positively impacting others, the society or the broader world.

- New code 2.1.11 created, "executing tasks correctly", since this is explicitly mentioned in the interview by participants to be a motivational aspect in their work.

- New code 2.1.12 created, "challenging tasks", since this explicitly addresses the challenges in tasks, an sich, not yet included in other categories.

- New category/block of codes created, number 3, "how work characteristics influence meaningful work", since this is the inductive part of the research not yet covered by the literature to found out how certain work characteristics contribute to the experienced meaningfulness of work by employees.

- New code 3.1 created, "work satisfaction or gratification", since this has been mentioned by one interviewee for how certain motivational work characteristics contributed to that participant's experienced meaningfulness of work

- New code 3.1.1 created, "good solutions", since good solution contributes to the participant's work satisfaction or gratification.

- New code 3.2 created, "delivering something useful for others", as this is also explicitly mentioned in the interview how certain motivational work characteristics contribute to the experienced meaningfulness of work, since these work characteristics do not only motivate the participant, but also bring about something useful for others which makes the experience of work meaningful.

- New code 2.2.5 created, "helping others", since this is explicitly mentioned by a participant as a social characteristic in his/her work, and this code includes both the employees and the customers.

- New code 3.3 created, "helping others", this code is added again since these different work characteristics enable the employee to help others which in turn makes the experience of work meaningful.

- New code 3.4 created, "producing good results", this code is added as it is identified as one way in how work characteristics influence the experienced meaningfulness of work.

- New code 2.2.6 created, "interaction inside the organization", since this code simply refers to the needs of participants to interact with others inside the organization on not work related topics.

- New code 2.1.13 created, "task uncertainty", since this is also an motivational aspect mentioned by a participant.

- New code 2.1.14 created, "task enjoyment", since this is also mentioned as an motivational characteristic of the participant's work.

- New code 1.2.5 created, "happiness in life", since this is also one reason why people think their lives is more meaningful through work.

- New category of codes added, number 4, which reflects the "meaning of work". This category captures the meanings people give to their work as to capture more than only meaningfulness in the analysis.

- New code 4.1 created, "good salary", as one meaning people give to work

- New code 4.2 created, "good business accommodations", another meaning people give to work.

- New code 3.5 created, "being useful", since these work characteristics enable you to be useful which in turns makes the experience of work more meaningful.

- New code 3.6 created, "interesting work", since work characteristics enable work to be interesting which in turn enables the experience of meaningful work.

- New code 3.7 created, "solving problems", since these work characteristics enable the participant to solve problems which in turn affect the experienced meaningfulness of work.

- New code 3.8 created, "being involved", since these work characteristics can make someone feel more involved in his/her work, which in turn makes work more meaningful.

- New code 4.3 created, "better living conditions", a meaning one gives to work.

- New code 4.4 created, "work is an obligation", a meaning one gives to work.

- New code 1.2.6 created, "social life", since this is also one reason why people think their lives is more meaningful through work.

- New code 4.5 created, "brings (financial) resources", another meaning people give to work.

- New code 3.14 created, "work under pressure", since this pressure enabled by the characteristics of work enables the participant to experience his/her work as meaningful.
- New code 3.14.1 created, "working more efficient", as a result of the pressure in which one works.
- New code 3.5.1 created, "feeling needed", as subcategory of being useful.
- New code 2.1.15 created, "task urgency", since some tasks need to be finished in limited time, which make them more urgent and more meaningful.
- New code 3.9 created, "being socially active", since the work characteristics enable people to be socially active which is perceived to be another way of influence on the meaningful work experience.
- New code 3.10 created, "building bonds with others", also one way in which work characteristics influence the experienced meaningfulness of work.
- New code 3.11 created, "being proud of personal capability", since the work characteristics enabled the participant to do what he/she is doing now which makes the experience of work meaningful.
- New code 3.12 created, "being appreciated", the work characteristics enable one to do work for which he or she is appreciated which contributes to the experience of meaningful work.
- New code 3.4.1 created, "stay alert", since this is one way in which good results are produced which also is one way in which the work characteristics influence the experience of meaningful work.
- New code 3.13 created. "personal development", one way in which the experience of meaningful work is influenced by a work characteristic
- New code 2.1.16 created, "colleagues", also a motivational work characteristic mentioned by a participant.
- New code 3.3.1 created, "reassuring people", one way in how to help people and which is also one way in how the work characteristics influence the meaningful work experience.
- New code 1.1.5 created, "identification with the industry", one way in which people value their work in life.
- New code 3.15 created, "work-life balance", one way in which autonomy influences the perception of meaningful work.

- New code 3.16 created, "being productive", one way in which feedback influences the perception of meaningful work.

- New code 1.2.7 created, "brings order in life", since this is also one reason why people think their lives is more meaningful through work.

- New code 3.17 created, "having a good feeling", because this is one way in which work characteristics make the experience of work more meaningful.

- New code 3.18 created, "being knowledgeable", because being knowledgeable is one way in which job complexity contributes to a meaningful work experience.

- New code 3.3.2 created, "customer satisfaction", as result of helping others which is also often stated as a reason for how certain work characteristics influence the experience of meaningful work.

- New code 3.3.3 created, "making colleagues learn", one way to help others which is also a reason stated for how a work characteristic influences the experience of meaningful work.

- New code 2.2.7 created, "collaboration with colleagues", as one social characteristic of work.

- New code 2.2.8 created, "working atmosphere", since this has often been mentioned as one social work characteristic and piling it under 'interaction inside the organization' has been a little bit too vague.

- New code 2.1.17 created, "work responsibility", since this is one motivational factor mentioned by a participant in someone's work.

- New code 3.17.1 created, "feel at ease", since it is a more detailed description of having a good feeling which is also one way through which the work characteristics influence the experience of meaningful work.

- New code 3.19 created, "being independent", since the work characteristics enables the participant to work independently which make the experience of work meaningful.

- New code 3.19.1 created, "act on own insight", one more detailed way of saying that you can be independently working from others.

- New code 3.19.2 created, "being autonomous", as one other way of saying that you can be independently working from others.

- New code 2.2.9 created, "attitude towards others", as one social work characteristics to determine how socially the work place is.

- New code 2.1.18 created, "amount of work", since this is also one motivational characteristic mentioned by a participant

- New code 4.6 created, "getting paid", another meaning a participant assigned to work.

- New code 1.2.8 created, "quality of life", since this is also mentioned to be one reason through which work contributes to life.

- Code 2.2.7 "collaboration with colleagues" deleted, since this code falls under helping others or getting social support from colleagues and is therefore unnecessary.

- Code 2.2.6 "interaction inside the organization" deleted, since this code is already reflected in most of the other codes and is therefore unnecessary.

- Code 2.2.8 (working atmosphere) and code 2.2.9 (attitude towards others) changed towards number 2.2.6 (working atmosphere) and 2.2.7 (attitude towards others).

- Code 2.2.8 created, "talking with colleagues", as to reflect the specific conversations/interactions employees have with colleagues that make their work social.

- Code 2.2.7 changed, "attitude towards others" has been changed to "attitude towards other colleagues", since the attitudes are only related to other colleagues.

- New code 3.20 created, "being informed", since this is one way in which someone perceives that task identity makes his/her job more meaningful.

- New code 3.21 created, "improving work processes", one way in which the work characteristics influence the experience of meaningful work.

- New code 3.17.2 created, "feeling supported", one way in which a good feeling is experienced.

- Code 1.1.5 "identification with the industry" deleted, since this did not influence the experience of meaningful work for participants.

- Code 1.2.8 "quality of life" deleted, since it was not one way though which work or life was experienced as something meaningful.

- Code 2.1.16 till 2.1.18 (colleagues, work responsibility, amount of work) deleted, since they did not influence the experience of meaningful work.

- Code 2.1.13 "task uncertainty" deleted, since it did not influence the experience of meaningful work.

- Code 2.1.14 "task enjoyment" and code 2.1.15 "task urgency" are changed to codes 2.1.13 (task enjoyment) and 2.1.14 (task urgency).

- Code 2.1.11 "executing tasks correctly" deleted, since this is not really a work characteristic but more a requirement in work. This aspect could also be taken into account under task significance.

- Code 2.2.12 "challenging tasks", code 2.1.13 "task enjoyment", and code 2.1.14 "task urgency" are changed to codes 2.1.11 (challenging tasks), 2.1.12 (task enjoyment) and 2.2.13 (task urgency).

Appendix I – Interview evaluations

Not included in this version.

Appendix J – The influence of motivational work characteristics on the experience of meaningful work

✓ = does influence the experience of meaningful work

✘ = does not influence the experience of meaningful work

	Work characteristics	Influences the experience of meaningful work	Facet of meaningful work		
			Positive meaning in work	Meaning making through work	Greater good motivations
Motivational work characteristics	In general	✓(8) R1,R2, R3, R5, R7, R9, R10, R11 ✘(1) R6	✓ (7) R1, R3, R5, R7, R9, R10, R11	✓ (5) R1,R2, R5, R9, R10	✓(6) R3, R5, R7, R9, R10, R11
	Skill variety	✓(7) R1, R3, R4, R8, R9, R11, R12 ✘(1) R6)	✓ (6) R1, R4, R8, R9, R11, R12	✓(0)	✓(2) R1, R12
	Task identity	✓(7) R1, R2, R3, R4, R7, R8, R9 ✘(0)	✓(6) R1, R2, R3, R4, R7, R9	✓(0)	✓(5) R1, R2, R3, R7, R9
	Task significance	✓(12) R1-R12 ✘(0)	✓(12) R1-R12	✓(0)	✓(12) R1-R12
	Autonomy	✓(6) R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R12 ✘(3) R1, R8, R9	✓(4) R3, R4, R6, R12	✓(1) R2	✓(0)
	Feedback	✓(2) R1, R2 ✘1 (R12)	✓(2) R1, R2	✓(0)	✓(0)
	Task variety	✓(7) R3, R4, R6, R7, R8, R9, R12 ✘(1) (R2)	✓(7) R3, R4, R6, R7, R8, R9, R12	✓(0)	✓(2) R9, R12
	Information processing	✓(2) R3, R8 ✘(1) R9	✓(2) R3, R8	✓(1) R3	✓(0)

	Job complexity	✓(4) R1, R4, R8, R12 ✗(3) R2, R6, R9	✓(3) R4, R8, R12	✓(1) R1	✓(0)
	Specialization	✓(4) R1, R2, R3, R12 ✗(1) R8	✓(2) R2, R12	✓(3) R1, R2, R3	✓(0)
	Problem solving	✓(9) R1, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R11 ✗(2) R2, R9	✓(9) R1, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R11	✓(0)	✓(9) R1, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R11
	Challenging tasks	✓(3) R5, R8, R11 ✗(0)	✓(3) R5, R8, R11	✓(0)	✓(2) R5, R11
	Task enjoyment	✓(4) R5, R8, R10, R11 ✗(3) R2, R6, R9	✓(4) R5, R8, R10, R11	✓(1) R10	✓(0)
	Task urgency	✓(2) R4, R12 ✗(0)	✓(2) R4, R12	✓(0)	✓(2) R4, R12

✓ = does influence the experience of meaningful work

✕ = does not influence the experience of meaningful work

	Work characteristics	Influences the experience of meaningful work	Facet of meaningful work		
			Positive meaning in work	Meaning making through work	Greater good motivations
Social work characteristics	In general	✓(8) R2, R4, R5, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12 ✕(1) R6	✓(8) R2, R4, R5, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12	✓(5) R2, R4, R8, R9, R10	✓(5) R2, R5, R10, R11, R12
	Interdependence	✓(4) R2, R4, R10, R12 ✕(0)	✓(4) R2, R4, R10, R12	✓(0)	✓(4) R2, R4, R10, R12
	Feedback from others	✓(4) R1, R2, R4, R6 ✕(2) R8, R9	✓(4) R1, R2, R4, R6	✓(2) R1, R4	✓(0)
	Social support	✓(5) R1, R2, R3, R4, R12 ✕(3) R2, R5, R7	✓(4) R2, R3, R4, R12	✓(1) R1	✓(0)
	Interaction outside the organization	✓(12) R1-R12 ✕(0)	✓(12) R1-R12	✓(0)	✓(12) R1-R12
	Helping others	✓(12) R1-R12 ✕(0)	✓(12) R1-R12	✓0	✓(12) R1-R12
	Working atmosphere	✓(4) R3, R4, R6, R12 ✕(1) R7	✓(3) R4, R6, R12	✓0	✓(1) R4
	Attitude towards other colleagues	✓(2) R3, R4 ✕(1) R7	✓(2) R3, R4	✓(0)	✓(2) R3, R4
	Talking with colleagues	✓(7) R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R12 ✕(1)	✓(6) R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R12	✓(2) R2, R12	✓(1) R4

Concept	Dimensions	Indicators	Frequencies	Respondent(s)
3. How/why work characteristics influence meaningful work	3.1 Work satisfaction/ gratification		24	(9) 1,2,3,4,5,7,8,11,12
		3.1.1 Good solutions	1	(1) 5
	3.2 Delivering something useful to others		35	(11) 1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10,11,12
	3.3 Helping others		64	(12) 1-12
		3.3.1 Reassuring people	4	(3) 1,3,10
		3.3.2 Customer satisfaction	12	(8) 2,3,4,6,7,8,9,12
		3.3.3 Making colleagues learn	1	(1) 12
	3.4 Producing good results		38	(11) 1,2,3,4,5,7,8,9,10,11,12
		3.4.1 Stay alert	1	(1) 1
	3.5 Being useful		16	(6) 1,2,8,9,10,12
		3.5.1 Feeling needed	2	(1) 1
	3.6 Interesting work		8	(5) 5,7,8,9,11
	3.7 Solving problems		17	(9) 1,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,11
	3.8 Being involved		7	(3) 2,4,12
	3.9 Being socially active		7	(5) 1,4,6,8,12
	3.10 Building bonds with others		8	(4) 1,2,4,8
	3.11 Being proud of personal capability		1	(1) 1
	3.12 Being appreciated		5	(4) 1,4,6,9
	3.13 Personal development		6	(5) 1,2,3,4,9
	3.14 Working under pressure		2	(1) 1
		3.14.1 Working more efficient	1	(1) 1
	3.15 Work-life balance		2	(2) 2,6
	3.16 Being productive		12	(7) 1,2,4,7,8,9,12
			24	(8) 2,4,5,6,7,8,11,12

	3.17 Having a good feeling	3.17.1 Feeling at ease	2	(1) 4
		3.17.2 Feeling supported	1	(1) 2
	3.18 Being knowledgeable		**3**	(3) 4,8,12
	3.19 Being independent		**7**	(4) 1,4,6,7
		3.19.1 Act on own insight	1	(1) 4
	3.20 Being informed		**1**	(1) 2
	3.21 Improving work processes		**1**	(1) 12

Appendix M – Interview transcripts

Not included in this version.