

**The London School of Economics and Political Science**

*For Better, or For Worse? Making a Career Pivot to Pursue a Calling*

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Management of the London School of Economics and Political Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of PhD in Management.

January 2021

**Declaration**

I certify that the thesis I have presented for examination for the MPhil/PhD degree of the London School of Economics and Political Science is solely my own work other than where I have clearly indicated that it is the work of others (in which case the extent of any work carried out jointly by me and any other person is clearly identified in it).

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**Statement of conjoint work**

I confirm that Study 1 was jointly co-authored with my advisor, Shoshana Dobrow, as well as Daniel Heller and Jennifer Tosti-Kharas. I am second author and contributed 40% of this work.

## ABSTRACT

Management scholarship is rife with accounts of people pivoting from steady jobs and “good” careers into occupations that align with their *callings*. In my dissertation, I investigate callings, and the career pivots that people make to pursue them, through a two-study, mixed-methods investigation. In the first study, a quantitative meta-analysis, my co-authors and I clarify the beneficial and detrimental outcomes associated with viewing work as a calling across 201 studies in the literature. We find that callings, on the whole, are highly beneficial, and suggest that a “calling mindset”—the extent to which people believe work *should* be a calling—can further strengthen these benefits. Given the highly positive view of callings that emerged within the meta-analysis, my second dissertation study, a solo-authored qualitative study, explores how people can leave unfulfilling occupations to pursue their callings—in a role transition that I refer to as a “career pivot.” Drawing on 201 interviews, conducted in three waves over 18-months, as well as archival and observational data gathered over 3.5 years, I find that career pivots are radical, unconventional career transitions—often requiring some degree of “starting over,” and an accompanying loss of status and/or security. Due to these characteristics of career pivots, successful completion of the underlying psychological role movement hinges upon whether an individual can construct a compelling “career pivot self-narrative.” Thus, I use the longitudinal data to examine how self-narratives evolve across the stages of a career pivot, and eventually become enduring, thereby facilitating the pivot’s completion. My examination reveals several elements of the self-narrative, including its exposition, inciting incident, and rising action, evolve between the early and middle stages of a career pivot. Subsequently, in the late stage of a career pivot—when people are working in their new occupations—if their new occupational identity is validated and work is experienced as a calling, the self-narrative becomes enduring, and the career pivot is complete. My dissertation advances research and theory on callings and role transitions.

*Keywords:* callings, career pivots, calling mindset, meta-analysis, qualitative research, longitudinal research, role transitions, self-narratives

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*Hannah Weisman*  
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## THE PHENOMENON

It's the fall of 2011, and a young investment associate is sitting at his desk. On the surface, the associate has everything going for him: a nice apartment, a comfortable lifestyle, and a prestigious position at a top venture-capital firm. Below the surface, however, the associate is unsettled. Just a few months earlier, he made the postgraduate decision to forgo a career in professional squash; yet he now felt called to return to the courts. Over the next three years, this sense of calling continues to grow, until one day when the associate can bear it no longer. "There comes a point," he tells me, "where you have something in your gut that boils up, that is so significant and so haunting that, in a way, you can't ignore it." Thus, in May of 2014, the associate gathers his things and waves goodbye to the corporate world. He goes on to travel the globe, competing in professional squash tournaments and climbing the international rankings.

Hundreds of miles away, a Harvard-educated pulmonary researcher sits in his lab at a major U.S. medical center. For several years now, the researcher has led a double-life. By day, he pursues his medical career—satisfying the desires of his first-generation, immigrant parents. By night, he pursues his personal passion—as a rising hip-hop star in the American "streetdance" community. It is now March of 2016, and the researcher has reached a critical breaking point. "I don't know," he says. "I just felt it. Sure, I was talented in science. I studied it in college and in graduate school. But I wasn't really passionate about it and...I wasn't really serving the communities that I wanted to. So, I felt off. And I could only do that for so long before I was like...What makes me passionate? Dance!" The researcher promptly quits his job and joins a non-profit organization full-time, bringing hip-hop dance to low-income communities.

While these two individuals—the investment associate and the pulmonary researcher—come from different parts of the world and have different professional

backgrounds, a common thread weaves through both their stories: they pivoted from “steady” jobs and “good” careers to pursue work that aligned with their *callings*. In this dissertation, I investigate callings, as well as the career pivots people make to pursue them, in a two-study, mixed-methods investigation.

### OUTLINE OF THE DISSERTATION

Study 1 is a quantitative meta-analysis of 201 studies in the calling literature. Synthesizing two decades of calling research, my co-authors and I find that viewing work as a calling is highly beneficial for people’s work and lives. Further, we suggest that a “calling mindset”—the extent to which people believe work *should* be a calling—can further strengthen the benefits of experiencing a calling.

Given the highly positive view of callings that emerged within the meta-analysis, I conducted a second study, a solo-authored qualitative project, to explore how people who are feeling unfulfilled in their careers can leave unfulfilling occupations to pursue their callings. I refer to this role transition as a “career pivot”—a concept that I introduce simultaneously to the literature on callings and role transitions.

Study 2 is a qualitative study of people making career pivots. Drawing on 201 interviews, conducted in three waves over 18-months, as well as archival and observational data gathered over 3.5 years, I find that career pivots are radical, unconventional career transitions—often requiring some degree of “starting over,” and an accompanying loss of status and/or security. Due to these characteristics of career pivots, I suggest that successful completion of the underlying psychological role movement is likely to depend upon whether an individual can construct a compelling “career pivot self-narrative.” Thus, I use the longitudinal data to examine how self-narratives evolve across the stages of a career pivot, and eventually become enduring, thereby facilitating the pivot’s completion. My examination reveals several elements of the self-narrative, including its exposition, inciting incident, and

rising action, evolved between the early and middle stages of a career pivot. Subsequently, in the late stage of a career pivot—when people are working in their new occupations—if their new occupational identity is validated and work is experienced as a calling, the self-narrative becomes enduring, and the career pivot is complete. My dissertation advances our understanding of callings and role transitions.

## **STUDY 1**

### **Calling Attention to 20 Years of Research: A Meta-Analysis of the Benefits and Detriments of Callings**

#### **ABSTRACT**

Through a meta-analysis of 201 studies, this paper provides the first systematic quantitative review of the benefits and detriments of callings. In both the discipline-spanning calling literature and in taken-for-granted cultural norms, a positive view of calling has become pervasive since its introduction into the literature over two decades ago, even as scholars have begun to question whether callings are both beneficial and detrimental. We thus first examine the extent to which callings are beneficial versus detrimental for important work and life outcomes. We then unpack these relationships through exploring two boundary conditions: (1) when callings are beneficial versus detrimental, by comparing two stages (when people are searching for versus experiencing a calling), and (2) which callings are beneficial versus detrimental, by comparing two types (internally- versus externally-focused callings). Building on our results, we propose that people's "calling mindset"—their beliefs about the extent to which work should be a calling—is key to understanding the outcomes associated with experiencing a calling. We develop a novel theoretical typology of "meta-callings," representing unique configurations of people's calling mindset and calling experiences. We discuss the implications of the new typology of meta-callings, including the calling mindset, for future theory and research.

*Keywords:* calling, meta-analysis, career, meaning of work, work orientation, searching for calling, calling mindset

People are driven to find meaning in their lives (Frankl, 1959)—and one key contributor toward resolving that quest is the meaning derived from work (Michaelson, Pratt, Grant, & Dunn, 2014; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). As a result, the purported pinnacle of deriving meaning from work—viewing work as a *calling* (e.g., Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997)—has captivated both scholars and practitioners alike. Calling was initially defined as an orientation where work is “inseparable from their life,” done “for the fulfillment that doing the work brings to the individual,” and “usually seen as socially valuable—an end in itself—involving activities that may, but need not be, pleasurable” (Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997: 22). Thus, the allure of callings stems from the positive meaning they ostensibly provide, along with the positive outcomes they enable, both at work and in life more generally.

While scholars have begun to question the unequivocal benefits of experiencing a calling (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Lysova, Jansen, Khapova, Plomp, & Tims, 2018), positive connotations nevertheless persist around callings in the academic literature, and even more so, in taken-for-granted cultural norms (Boova, Pratt, & Lepisto, 2019). Mantras like “If you love what you do, you’ll never work a day in your life” dominate the press and popular thinking about careers to the point that “finding one’s calling” is now held up as an ultimate life achievement (Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015; Finney & Dasch, 1998). Indeed, cultural theory, religion, and philosophy scholars have begun expanding the theoretical conversation around callings from not being only about whether callings are good, inherent in most empirical research on calling, to also include the prescription that work should be a calling (e.g., Graeber & Cerutti, 2018; Michaelson, 2019). This shift begs the question: is this unequivocal normative prescription supported by the extant empirical evidence—that is, should people relate to their work as a calling?

Recent theorizing about calling's all-consuming nature and emerging findings revealing detrimental effects of callings (e.g., vulnerability to managerial exploitation in Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; unhealthiness for relationships at work in Cardador & Caza, 2012; or reduced employability due to career inflexibility in Lysova, et al., 2018), suggest callings may be more accurately portrayed as a "double-edged sword." That is, callings may yield both beneficial *and* detrimental outcomes—creating the need for integration and resolution of potentially inconsistent findings in this burgeoning literature. A few recent conceptual reviews have begun integrating definitions and conceptualizations of the various types of calling (e.g., internally- and externally-focused), but to-date none have undertaken a comprehensive quantitative review focused on understanding calling's effects on important outcomes<sup>1</sup> (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019; Wang & Dai, 2017). Thus, for the first time, we meta-analytically test *the extent to which* callings are beneficial versus detrimental for outcomes in work and life (Research Question 1).

Further, to provide a nuanced understanding of calling's effects on key outcomes, we develop theory and investigate two boundary conditions. Drawing from recent developments in our understanding of the ways in which callings manifest themselves over time, we first test *when* callings are beneficial versus detrimental (Research Question 2) by comparing two key stages of calling, namely whether people reap the benefits of calling from its early stage, when they are searching for it, or instead only in its later stage, when they are already experiencing the calling (e.g., Bloom, Colbert, & Nielsen, Forthcoming). Based on the aforementioned classifications of the various types of callings (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019; Wang & Dai, 2017), we also test *which* callings are more

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<sup>1</sup> The exception to this is Dalla Rosa et al.'s (2017) book chapter, which used meta-analytic statistical techniques to synthesize results across a select group of studies (i.e., key studies in the field, as opposed to those derived via systematic search).

beneficial versus detrimental, and for which outcomes (Research Question 3), by comparing two qualitatively different types of calling—those that are internally-focused (e.g., driven by intrinsic interest, passion, enjoyment, and personal meaning) with those that are externally-focused (e.g., driven by a desire to fill a need in society, to fulfill one’s destiny, or to make the world a better place; Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Shimizu, Dik, & Conner, 2019; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019).

To address these questions, we conducted a meta-analysis of calling’s outcomes that synthesizes findings across 201 studies in the calling literature and provides the basis for subsequent inductive theorizing. Specifically, drawing on unexpected findings and integrating with the mindset literature (e.g., Ben-Avi, Toker, & Heller, 2018; Dweck, 2006; Miron-Spektor, Ingram, Keller, Smith, & Lewis, 2018; Rucker & Galinsky, 2016), we introduce the concept of a *calling mindset*—people’s belief that work *should* be a calling—to enable a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the extent to which callings are beneficial versus detrimental. We further develop a theoretical typology of *meta-callings*, comprised of the four unique combinations of people’s calling mindset (i.e., “weak” vs. “strong”) and their calling toward their current work (i.e., “weak” vs. “strong”), and build theory about the important role of calling mindsets in qualifying the effect of callings on important work and life outcomes. We address how this novel theory around calling mindsets, and the higher-order meta-callings, broadens our understanding of the nature of callings and elucidates findings regarding their effects on various outcomes, as well as how it shapes the trajectory of future calling research.

### **BENEFITS AND DETRIMENTS OF CALLING**

Scholars have long sought to address profound societal-level questions about the significance and purpose of the work people do in their daily lives. Dating back several centuries, religious thinking has addressed this topic by asserting that a calling, which comes

from God, is “that place in the world of productive work that one was created, designed, or destined to fill by virtue of God-given gifts and talents and the opportunities presented by one’s station in life” (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009: 33; see also for a history of the “classical” origins of the construct). More recently, sociologists began to examine similar questions through a more modern, secular lens, again offering calling as a key notion for understanding the role of work in society (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985, 1996).

Building on this work, Wrzesniewski and colleagues (1997) shifted these questions—for the first time—to the individual, psychological level to understand how people derive meaning from their work. In an empirical study of university workers, they thus introduced calling to the psychology literature as one of three stable orientations people might have toward their work (Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997). These orientations describe how people relate to their work, in terms of the type of meaning they seek from their work. Those with *calling* orientations view work as an enjoyable, fulfilling, and potentially socially useful end unto itself, while those with *job* and *career* orientations view work as a means to a financial end or as an opportunity to advance in an organizational or occupational hierarchy, respectively. The three orientations can be well-represented in any occupation. This research argued for the importance of these three orientations by highlighting their differential impact on outcomes (e.g., calling was associated with better health), and moreover, by suggesting that satisfaction both at work and in life may be more dependent on one’s orientation toward work than on objective characteristics of work, such as income or occupational prestige, as previously thought (Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997).

In the two decades since Wrzesniewski and colleagues’ (1997) seminal work, research on calling has burgeoned—indeed, growing exponentially in the last few years—as scholars across academic disciplines ranging from psychology to management, organizational

behavior, education, and medicine, have fleshed out what it means to experience a calling, including introducing scales to test its effects on outcomes (see Figure 1). The effects of calling on significant categories of outcomes have been examined, namely people's *work* experiences (e.g., job satisfaction, job performance, work engagement, organizational commitment), including in their broader careers (e.g., career self-efficacy and decision-making, career development), as well as, to a more limited extent, their *lives* in general (e.g., life satisfaction, psychological well-being, subjective well-being; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Kim, Shin, Vough, Hewlin, & Vandenberghe, 2018; Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997). Within the categories of work and life, studies have predominantly examined psychological outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, psychological well-being, subjective well-being), and to a more limited extent, behavioral outcomes (e.g., pursuing one's calling professionally in Dobrow Riza & Heller, 2015)—generally revealing that calling yields beneficial outcomes (e.g., Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Douglass, 2014; Duffy, Douglass, Autin, & Allan, 2014; Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997; Xie, Xia, Xin, & Zhou, 2016).

Yet, there is also a growing set of negative outcomes that have been linked to callings. At work, the all-consuming way that people with stronger callings engage with their tasks, colleagues, and management may lead them to experience detrimental outcomes. For instance, people with stronger callings may crave challenging work (Steger, Pickering, Shin, & Dik, 2010), which, by its very nature, could enhance their stress levels. Further, people with strong callings may become workaholics in competitive work environments (Keller, Spurk, Baumeler, & Hirschi, 2016), while their high degree of focus on work can yield unhealthy personal and professional relationships (Cardador & Caza, 2012). As such, workers with strong callings, and, more generally passion, may be more vulnerable to managerial exploitation (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Kim, Campbell, Shepherd, & Kay, 2020). In the broader context of people's careers, those with strong callings may be more

inflexible in their thinking about their careers, as evidenced by ignoring discouraging, but potentially valuable, career advice (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2012), which then fosters worse employability (Lysova, et al., 2018). People with strong callings may experience detrimental life outcomes, as well, including having trouble psychologically detaching from work at night, thereby reducing their sleep quality and energy in the morning (Clinton, Conway, & Sturges, 2017), and being more likely to work more for less or even barely livable pay (Cinque, Nyberg, & Starkey, Forthcoming; Tosti-Kharas, Dobrow, & Kappes, 2020). Taken together, calling research has predominantly found positive effects on both work and life outcomes along with a more recent and growing body of findings suggesting a dark side to calling may exist.

The long-term temporal dynamics of callings and their impact on people's careers and lives have begun to draw the attention of scholars (e.g., Bloom, et al., Forthcoming; Dobrow, 2013), guided by questions, such as how callings emerge and are enacted over time. Although people may differ in the paths they take, there is typically a period of searching for a calling, identifying the calling, and then "living into" the calling (Bloom, et al., Forthcoming). Accordingly, scholars have studied people at these different stages of calling discernment, primarily those still actively searching for a calling in contrast to those already experiencing their calling (Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy, 2012; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007). People may be in the searching stage, when they have a general sense of unanswered calling in their careers, such that they feel they are not pursuing an occupation toward which they experience a calling and so are in the process of searching for which occupation to pursue (Weisman, 2020). Bloom and colleagues (Forthcoming) further distinguish between two paths people tend to take to identify their callings: discerners search for their one true calling, while explorers use a process of trial and error to find work that feels like a calling. The possibility also exists that people have identified their callings, but are not currently

pursuing or working in them (Tosti-Kharas & Dobrow, 2020), and so are searching for a way to “answer” these callings (Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010; Gazica & Spector, 2015; Weisman, 2020). Thus, it is important to examine “stages” of calling—for example, whether callings are sought versus experienced—as critical for understanding calling’s impact on work and life.

Scholars have also paid considerable attention to conceptualizing the definition, types, and nature of callings. For instance, viewed by some scholars as the highest level of subjective career success, calling can be defined primarily in terms of factors inside oneself, such as the work one views as one’s purpose in life (Hall & Chandler, 2005) or as an individual-level psychological experience defined as a “consuming, meaningful passion people experience toward a domain” (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011: 1003). In contrast, calling can also be defined primarily in terms of factors outside the self, including the “neoclassical” view of calling, defined as the occupational place in society’s division of labor people feel destined to fill in light of their unique gifts, talents, and/or life opportunities (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), or as an external pull or “transcendent summons” to pursue a particular line of work (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007). Highlighting this internal-external dichotomy, Lepisto and Pratt (2017) distinguished between two perspectives on meaningful work: the more self-oriented “realization” perspective, exemplified by Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas’s (2011) psychological view of calling, and the more other-oriented “justification” perspective, exemplified by Bunderson and Thompson’s (2009) neoclassical view of calling. These diverse definitions have yielded a similarly diverse array of scales to measure people’s callings (see Tables 1a and 1b).

In light of the proliferation of calling research just described, scholars have recently sought to synthesize the calling literature. To date, these reviews have been qualitative in nature (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019; Wang & Dai, 2017) and calling

has also been included in conceptual reviews of the broader topic area of meaningful work (e.g., Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Rosso, et al., 2010). These recent reviews have advanced calling research conceptually by offering suggestions for categorizing callings into different types, so as to integrate scholars' varied perspectives regarding the nature of the calling phenomenon (Dik & Shimizu, 2019), as well as drawing attention to the diverse definitions of calling used in the literature (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). However, as theory and research on calling's outcomes has suggested mixed results, we lack an understanding of the extent to which callings are beneficial versus detrimental, and whether these effects depend on the type of calling, stage of calling, or outcome. To guide future calling research and theory, we use meta-analysis to clarify and synthesize extant empirical findings, and point to the best direction for new theoretical developments to broaden our understanding of the nature and effects of callings.

### **CENTRAL THEORETICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT CALLINGS**

Based on our current review of gaps and tensions in the literature, we organize our meta-analytic investigation into the outcomes of calling around three central theoretical questions. The first question concerns the positivity of the relationship between calling and outcomes, while the second and third concern the boundary conditions of these relationships.

#### **Calling's Beneficial and Detrimental Outcomes**

The extent to which callings are beneficial versus detrimental represents a fundamental theoretical tension in the calling literature. Research has frequently found positive results, which we theorize occurs because callings provide people with a sense of meaningfulness, self-actualization, connection, and contribution to society. However, callings can also yield more detrimental outcomes, for instance, when the pursuit of these callings becomes so all-consuming that, in order to enact their calling, people may suffer losses—even to the point of sacrifice—to their financial, psychological, or physical well-being

(Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Ranganathan, 2017; Schabram & Maitlis, 2017; Tosti-Kharas, et al., 2020; Zhu et al., Forthcoming). These fragmented, inconsistent findings need to be resolved and integrated to facilitate our understanding of the overall beneficial versus detrimental impact of callings. Thus, the first question we address in this meta-analysis relates to the main effects of calling on important work and life outcomes:

*Research Question 1: To what extent are callings beneficial versus detrimental—and for which outcomes?*

### **Boundary Conditions of Calling's Outcomes**

While scholars have spent considerable energy identifying the outcomes of experiencing a calling, relatively little theorizing and research has explored the boundary conditions of these effects. To provide deeper insight into calling's beneficial versus detrimental effects, it is thus both theoretically useful to theorize, and empirically test, boundary conditions around calling's outcomes (Busse, Kach, & Wagner, 2016). Drawing on reviews and research about calling's evolution over time, we theorize about two potential boundary conditions, respectively, (1) calling stage and (2) calling type.

First, beneficial and detrimental effects of calling may vary as a function of the different stages outlined above—sought versus experienced callings—thus reflecting a possible temporal boundary condition. As such, it is possible that calling's benefits may accrue less to those searching for callings relative to those already experiencing strong callings. Specifically, extrapolating from psychological theorizing about resources, whereby people strive to obtain, retain, protect, and foster those things they centrally value for survival purposes (e.g., Taylor & Broffman, 2011), we theorize that the searching stage is likely to be fraught with uncertainty and frustration, as well as depletion of resources (e.g., time, energy, money) from engaging in the potentially taxing search process, which may lead to detrimental outcomes. For example, in a qualitative study across a variety of occupations,

people experienced stress and intermittent feelings of regret as they searched for ways to answer their callings in their work or leisure time (Berg, et al., 2010). Further, there may be such societal pressure on people to “find their callings” that those still in the search stage may view themselves as failing to fulfill a moral obligation, and accordingly experience existential and/or emotional angst (Michaelson, et al., 2014).

In contrast, the later stage of experiencing a calling may serve as a useful resource to people, for instance, by helping them make meaning of their lives, as well as by aiding them in avoiding resource loss (e.g., by predisposing them to reframe negative workplace events in positive ways; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Zhu, et al., Forthcoming). Experiencing a calling may even generate resources for people, such as trust from colleagues who recognize their dutiful orientation (Pratt, Lepisto, & Dane, 2019), monetary funding from investors who observe their passion and devotion (Jachimowicz, To, Agasi, Côté, & Galinsky, 2019), and the energy to persist in challenging career paths (Dobrow Riza & Heller, 2015; LePine, Podsakoff, & LePine, 2005). By serving as a resource, helping to avoid resource loss, and even generating resources (e.g., Hobfoll, Halbesleben, Neveu, & Westman, 2018; Taylor & Broffman, 2011), experiencing a calling is thus likely to yield more beneficial outcomes than the searching stage. The second research question that guides our meta-analytic investigation is therefore:

*Research Question 2: When, or at which stage, are callings beneficial versus detrimental?*

Second, the aforementioned debate within the calling literature concerning the nature and different types of callings—that is, the extent to which callings are inherently internally- versus externally-focused (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019)—underscores the need to understand *which* of the two callings yields superior outcomes. Although studies have yet to evaluate and confirm this distinction empirically, as mentioned earlier, previous reviews have typically distinguished between two types of calling: a

primarily *internally*- or self-focused calling, characterized by passion, enjoyment, and personal meaning, and a primarily *externally*- or other-focused calling, characterized by socially useful work that fulfills an important need in the world (described as modern vs. neoclassical in Dik & Shimizu, 2019; realization vs. justification perspectives in Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; inner vs. outer requiredness in Thompson & Bunderson, 2019).

At their core, we suggest that the essence of internally-focused callings may involve aspects of hedonic well-being (Heller, Watson, & Ilies, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2001), characterized by enjoyment and pleasure. As such, internally-focused callings may be more beneficial for outcomes that are inherently about the hedonic aspects of work and life, such as job and life satisfaction, subjective well-being, and career self-efficacy.

In contrast, at their core, the essence of externally-focused callings may involve aspects of eudemonic well-being, such as self-transcendence and a sense of deep meaning that need not be accompanied by pleasure and joy. Externally-focused callings may thus be more beneficial for outcomes that are inherently about the eudemonic aspects of work and life, such as perceived work and life meaningfulness and psychological well-being, as well as outcomes that are more external, prosocial, or even transcendent. In sum, the third research question that guides our meta-analytic investigation is:

*Research Question 3: Which callings are more beneficial versus detrimental—and for which outcomes?*

## METHODS

### Literature Search

**Exploratory search.** First, we conducted an exploratory scan of the calling literature to determine if enough quantitative calling studies existed to warrant a systematic review that could advance the field. Specifically, we looked for all papers that cited key calling scales (see Table 2) and we made a call for unpublished papers on electronic mailing lists of the

Academy of Management, including those of the Careers, Human Resources, Organizational Behavior, and Management, Spirituality and Religion Divisions, as well as the Emotions Network. We also established a website with our call for papers, and contacted frequent contributors in the calling and meaning of work literatures requesting unpublished papers.

This exploratory search ultimately surfaced 123 papers in which calling was measured. These papers used a variety of calling measures and came from a wide array of disciplines, including organizational behavior, management, psychology, and careers, as well as religious studies, education, and medicine. Given this substantial and diverse body of quantitative calling research, we determined that it would indeed be worthwhile to perform a meta-analysis. Before proceeding to do so, our coauthor team developed a basic coding scheme for the papers surfaced in the exploratory search, which the second author then implemented to collect information such as the calling measures used, the variables measured, the samples studied, and the journals in which they appeared. Our coauthor team used this information to develop a protocol for the subsequent meta-analysis, which included research questions, a literature search strategy, inclusion criteria, and a coding scheme (see details below).

**Systematic search.** Based on the exploratory search, we conducted a systematic literature search to locate all relevant studies, published and unpublished, across two decades of calling research (March 1997 – January 2018; see Figure 2). The start date coincides with the publication of Wrzesniewski and colleagues' (1997) research on work orientations, when the notion of calling entered the psychology literature and thus laid the foundation for the systematic study of calling.

We began our search by using research databases to identify articles that featured phrases and keywords, such as “sense of calling,” “work as a calling,” “occupational calling,” and “calling orientation” (see Table 2 for all search terms and sources). Next, we searched

ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, the Social Science Research Network, the Academy of Management Proceedings, and the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Conference Programs<sup>2</sup> for unpublished papers that contained the word “calling” in their title. We also conducted a “forward search” for articles that cited early key calling scales and/or studies. Further, we regularly scanned articles we reviewed for citations of additional articles.

To mitigate the impact of publication bias on our meta-analysis, we supplemented our search for published articles with efforts to gather unpublished papers and raw data. We welcomed unpublished work that scholars sent us in response to our call for papers.<sup>3</sup> We also collected papers from scholars who had heard about our call through their informal social networks. Lastly, we presented early-stage results of our research at multiple academic conferences, and each time took the opportunity to solicit unpublished work from audience members. Our systematic search, encompassing published and unpublished work identified via multiple sources, surfaced a total of 651 papers, presentations, theses, book chapters, and books to consider for potential inclusion in the meta-analysis.<sup>4,5</sup>

### **Inclusion Criteria**

We included studies in the meta-analysis if they passed five pre-determined screening criteria (see Figure 2). Studies needed to: 1) be empirical and quantitative in nature; 2)

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<sup>2</sup> We searched from 2003 onward, when the first searchable program for this conference became available.

<sup>3</sup> As a result, we continued to receive—and include in the meta-analysis—some unpublished papers through January 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Of these studies, there were 17 published papers and 56 unpublished studies (i.e., conference papers, dissertations, and theses) unavailable to be downloaded online, yet which seemed worthwhile to review for potential inclusion in the meta-analysis based on their titles and/or their abstracts. We sought to obtain the published papers by e-mailing study authors or the editor of the journal in which the papers appeared. For the unpublished studies, we e-mailed the study authors, and in some cases, the author’s PhD advisor or university library, in order to obtain these manuscripts.

<sup>5</sup> We did not conduct a comprehensive search for qualitative or conceptual papers pertaining to calling, yet our search for quantitative studies naturally surfaced over 100 such studies (e.g., Berg, et al., 2010; Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015; Schabram & Maitlis, 2017).

measure individuals' calling (using any measure or scale)<sup>6</sup>; 3) report sufficient information to allow effect size computation; 4) be written (or translated) into English; and 5) be conducted in our study timeframe (March 1997-January 2018).<sup>7</sup> We came across some studies that passed our screening criteria but omitted the full information necessary to compute an effect size ( $n = 23$ ); in these instances, we attempted to obtain the relevant data by contacting the study authors.<sup>8</sup> In some cases, authors provided us with additional information, such as extra results from their dataset not reported in their published work—for example, correlations mentioned in their study's text but not reported in the tables, which were often non-significant.<sup>9</sup> Accessing these types of unpublished results helped to further mitigate concerns over publication bias in the meta-analysis (see Results section and Appendix 1).

Using these criteria, our overall sample consisted of 201 papers and 240 independent samples (total sample size across studies = 185,857; all included studies are listed in Appendix 2). We used this overall sample to glean descriptive characteristics of the calling literature. We noticed that the calling literature has grown exponentially since Wrzesniewski and colleagues' initial 1997 study, with over 80% published just since 2011 (see Figure 1).

## Coding Procedure

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<sup>6</sup> This included excluding studies (or individual effect sizes) that measured respondents' reports about *others'* callings rather than about themselves, such as respondents' perceptions of their parents' callings (e.g., Dekas & Baker, 2014) or respondents' perceptions of the callings of people working in their occupation (e.g., Dinger, Thatcher, Treadway, Stepina, & Breland, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> If authors who we contacted about studies conducted in our timeframe sent us work dated after our timeframe ended (e.g., if a 2017 conference paper we requested was subsequently published in 2018), we included the published study in the meta-analysis to the extent possible.

<sup>8</sup> We further narrowed our sample for the following reasons: First, we excluded studies (or individual effect sizes) that were based on underlying scales comprised of a combination of sought and experienced calling items, such that we could not disentangle them for the purposes of our analyses (e.g., Lee & Yang, 2016). Second, we excluded studies (or individual effect sizes) that only provided the correlations between different calling measures, but not between calling and outcomes. Third, to avoid double counting, we excluded those studies (or individual effect sizes) in which authors separately reported the same correlations from the same datasets (e.g., a doctoral dissertation and a published paper based on this dissertation). In these cases, we prioritized including results from published studies over unpublished studies.

<sup>9</sup> For these reasons, some data included in this meta-analysis are not readily available by consulting the original papers.

We developed a coding scheme through a two-stage process: First, as described above, we used our exploratory search results to develop a preliminary coding scheme of various relevant features of the studies. Our coauthor team discussed, refined, and elaborated this coding scheme before beginning the comprehensive search. This process ensured that we had a shared understanding of the coding scheme we would use when we began coding studies formally for the meta-analysis.

In the second stage of the process, the second author coded all studies, and noted all unclear data and/or coding questions. Including the rows that contained unclear data or coding questions, the first author reviewed approximately two-thirds of the rows present in the dataset. During this review process, there was a very high level of agreement, with only a few disagreements. In these instances, the first author communicated the disagreement to the second author, after which the two researchers discussed the coding and reached a decision, occasionally with additional input from the third and fourth authors. The second author then reviewed the dataset's remaining rows (approximately one-third) to ensure that decisions made about the first two-thirds of the dataset were applied consistently throughout. Through this iterative process, we reached consensus decisions about final codes and produced our final dataset, as follows.

We first recorded statistics, including sample size, correlations, means and standard deviations, *t*-tests, or *F*-tests, depending on the results reported in each particular study. We converted all effect size data (e.g., means and standard deviations) into a common form (i.e., correlations) for the purposes of conducting the meta-analyses (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001). We next coded several features of the studies related to our focal constructs—calling, outcomes of calling, and moderators of calling—as well as characteristics of the studies or samples (see descriptive characteristics in Table 3).

**Calling measures.** Scholars have used a variety of calling scales. Wrzesniewski et al.

(1997) introduced the first two calling measures, which aimed to identify whether people primarily experienced their work as a job, career, or calling. A decade later, additional scale measures began to enter the literature, including Dik, Duffy, and colleagues' Brief Calling Scale (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007), subsequently developed into the longer Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (Dik, et al., 2012); Bunderson and Thompson's (2009) Neoclassical Calling Scale; Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas' (2011) 12-item Calling Scale to assess the strength of calling toward any domain; and several other more recent scales.

These scales differ from one another in several ways, including whether they assess callings toward work in general or a specific domain and whether they are primarily internally- versus externally-focused (see "inner" and "outer requiredness" in Thompson & Bunderson, 2019) (see Table 1a for details of each measure). Even with diverse conceptualizations of calling underlying their associated measures, extant calling scales demonstrate considerable convergent validity, with *rs* between different calling measures—including between internally- and externally-focused—typically ranging from .5 to .8 (as reported in Dik, et al., 2012; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Hagmaier & Abele, 2012; Praskova, Creed, & Hood, 2015). These correlations support both the viability of viewing calling as a coherent construct across studies for meta-analytic purposes, while also suggesting that a meta-analysis might generate useful insight into the differential effects of distinct calling types.<sup>10</sup>

To facilitate such exploration, we coded information about the calling measures used across studies (see Table 1a). We found 14 calling measures that were used in more than one study, along with 19 scales and single-item measures that were used only once. Studies frequently used adapted versions of scales, such as subscales of full-length scales, selected items from full-length scales, adaptations of the wording to fit a different context, or

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<sup>10</sup> We note that other organizational constructs, including root constructs such as organizational identification, are characterized by similar conceptual and methodological variance (Pratt, 1998; Riketta, 2005).

translations of scales. Additionally, regarding sought callings, we found three measures: two related measures—a two-item subscale of the Brief Calling Scale (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007) and a longer version that is part of the Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (Dik, et al., 2012)—and one measure of unanswered calling (Gazica, 2014) (see Table 1b).<sup>11</sup> Less than one-quarter (22%) of studies used more than one measure of calling and/or searching for calling.<sup>12</sup> No single calling scale dominated the literature; in fact, even the most frequent scales were used in only about 20% of studies apiece. Nevertheless, 86% of studies included at least one of the five most frequent scales.

**Outcomes of calling.** Consistent with previous meta-analyses (e.g., Eby et al., 2013) and to enable adequate sample sizes for rigorous and meaningful analyses, we assigned each outcome ( $n = 2,118$ ) into a “variable category,” a grouping of similar individual variables, based on consulting the original studies. In order to avoid the jingle-jangle fallacy (Block, 1995), rather than relying on variable names to do these assignments, we checked the underlying definitions and items of the various measures used in the studies. We carefully grouped together only sufficiently similar outcomes to create categories whose conceptual meaning would be coherent. For instance, we assigned the outcomes “job satisfaction,” “overall job satisfaction,” “satisfaction with domain,” “pleasure at work,” and “work enjoyment” to the category “job and domain satisfaction.” We rank ordered these variable categories by frequency. This process resulted in 42 variable categories, comprised of 1,254 individual variables, for potential inclusion in the meta-analysis.

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<sup>11</sup> In terms of the empirical relationship between calling and searching for calling, the two constructs were slightly positively associated ( $r$ s ranging from .02 to .60) when both were measured within the related Brief Calling and Calling and Vocation scales (Dik, et al., 2012), and negatively related ( $r = -.26$ ) when searching for calling was assessed relative to other calling scales (Praskova, et al., 2015). As expected, unanswered calling was negatively related ( $r = -.49$ ) to calling (specifically, to Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas' (2011) calling scale in Gazica & Spector, 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Across the 201 papers in our dataset and considering calling and/or searching for calling scales, 157 papers used one scale, 34 papers used 2 scales, 5 papers used 3 scales, 1 paper used 4 scales and 4 papers used 5 scales. Combined, this resulted in 264 total instances of calling ( $n = 240$ ) and/or searching for calling scales ( $n = 24$ ) being used.

In our main analyses, we focus on eight theoretically-significant categories, selected because of their capacity to address all three of our research questions—they have been investigated in relation to outcomes, they have been studied in relation to both experienced and sought callings, and they have been studied in relation to both internally- and externally-focused callings; see Table 4 for details).<sup>13</sup> These variable categories are also among the most frequently studied in the calling literature and they are representative of two higher-order variable categories, work and life. We present results for the other 34 variable categories in Appendix 3.<sup>14</sup>

To classify constructs, we followed the primary studies' predominant treatment of the relationship between calling and these constructs. We mention this because most quantitative calling research has relied on cross-sectional correlational methodologies, which cannot *empirically* distinguish calling from outcomes. For example, if studies typically examined whether people with stronger callings ended up with higher job satisfaction, we followed suit in classifying job satisfaction as an “outcome” for meta-analytic purposes. However, we acknowledge that reverse causality, such that job satisfaction leads to calling via such mechanisms as reducing cognitive dissonance (Vroom, 1966) or fostering retrospective rationalization (London, 1983), is also possible, as we elaborate in the Discussion.

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<sup>13</sup> Consistent with our research aim to investigate the extent to which callings are beneficial versus detrimental, our variable categories excluded other calling measures and non-work-related demographic variables. We required that each variable category include a minimum of five studies, which is the minimum number of studies necessary to generate precise prediction intervals (see Table 5). Thus, we excluded variables from the meta-analysis if they could not be grouped together with enough similar variables to produce a variable category ( $n = 864$ ).

<sup>14</sup> Beyond outcomes, the calling literature has also examined calling in relation to antecedents (i.e., constructs treated by studies as precursors of calling), correlates (i.e., constructs for which studies did not provide strong theoretical arguments for causal ordering, often control variables), and moderators of calling's relationship with other constructs, namely characteristics of the studies (study design, sample composition, and type of national culture) that might affect the generalizability of these relationships. These 34 variable categories include outcomes as well as antecedents and correlates; see Appendix 3 for representative citations (Table 1) and meta-analytic results (Tables 2, 3, and 4). We also provide moderator analyses for the relationships between calling and the eight core variable categories as well as with the 34 additional variable categories using the aforementioned three study characteristics in Appendix 4.

**Moderator of calling's effects.** For use in our moderator analyses, we coded whether each measure of calling was predominantly internally- or externally-focused, as well as focused on neither. To do so, we coded each individual item in each measure as being internally-focused, externally-focused, or neither (see Table 1a). We coded items as being internally-focused if they contained words or phrases capturing the experience of a calling as any of the following: passionate, consuming, or obsessive; personally meaningful and important; gratifying and satisfying; intrinsically enjoyable and joyful; or fascinating. Sample items included, “My work is one of the most important things in my life,” “I enjoy talking about my work to others” (Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997), “Playing music gives me immense personal satisfaction” (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011), and “I sometimes get so involved in my work that I lose track of time” (Dreher, Holloway, & Schoenfelder, 2007).

We coded items as being externally-focused if they contained words and phrases characterizing a calling as a duty or obligation that addresses an important need in society, or as something one is destined to do and makes a difference in the world. Sample items included, “My work makes the world a better place” (Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997), “The most important aspect of my career is its role in helping to meet the needs of others” (Dik, et al., 2012), and “It sometimes feels like I was destined to work with animals” (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009).

We coded items as “neither” when they fit neither the internally- nor externally-focused categories, usually because of their reliance on the word “calling” itself. Some of these items aimed to ascertain the extent to which people’s current work domain is their calling (e.g., “For me, the practice of medicine is a calling” in Curlin, Dugdale, Lantos, & Chin, 2007) while others asked general questions about people’s callings, but without any internally- or externally-focused content (e.g., “I have a good understanding of my calling as it applies to my career” in Dik & Duffy, 2009).

After coding each individual item, we counted the number internally-focused, externally-focused, or neither items in each scale. Based on this count, we classified each overall scale based on the majority focus of the items, or if none, as “neither.”<sup>15,16</sup> All scales were classified into one of these three categories (i.e., had at least 50% of items that were internally-focused, externally-focused, or neither). No scales, for example, had an even mix of items across all three categories, or an even mix of internally- and externally-focused items. We noticed that the content of items did not always match a scale’s underlying conceptual definition (e.g., an externally-focused definition of calling might be measured with a scale comprised of a majority internally-focused items).<sup>17</sup> We adopted the empirically-driven approach to classifying scales based on items, rather than definitions, in recognition of the fact that our analyses are driven by the measurement rather than the definitions.

Insert Tables 1a, 1b, 2, 3, and 4 and Figures 1 and 2 about here

### **Meta-analytic Procedures**

We conducted our meta-analyses using Comprehensive Meta-Analysis (CMA) Version 3 software’s random-effects model (Borenstein, Hedges, Higgins, & Rothstein, 2013).<sup>18</sup> Our procedures followed the Hedges and Olkin (1985) approach to meta-analysis, such that we conducted our analyses using correlation coefficients, our chosen summary effect measure,<sup>19</sup> and we computed the mean correlation between calling and each variable

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<sup>15</sup> A scale was *internally-focused* if at least 50% of the scale items were coded as internally-focused and less than 50% of the scale items were coded as externally-focused or neither. A scale was *externally-focused* if at least 50% of the scale items were coded as externally-focused and less than 50% of the scale items were coded as internally-focused or neither. A scale was *neither* if at least 50% of the scale items were coded as neither and less than 50% of the scale items were coded as internally- or externally-focused.

<sup>16</sup> For studies that used adapted scales (e.g., a subset of items from existing scales), we coded each item of the adapted scale and classified the adapted scale accordingly.

<sup>17</sup> When we noticed a significant discrepancy between items and definitions, we contacted the scales’ authors directly to explain our coding approach and confirm their agreement with our interpretation of each item.

<sup>18</sup> This type of model accounts for the fact that the studies included in our analyses were drawn from a universe of possible studies defined by certain inclusion rules (described above; see also Figure 2).

<sup>19</sup> For use in the analyses, we first transformed the original reported effect sizes using a Fisher’s z transformation. We transformed the results back to correlation coefficients. We also corrected for sampling error variance—a major source of error in estimating population-level effects—but not for other statistical artifacts such as measurement error, artificial dichotomization of continuous variables, and range restriction or enhancement (Hedges & Olkin, 1985; Hedges & Vevea, 1996). In this sense, our procedure for making

category using inverse variance weights. Some meta-analytic approaches attempt to estimate effects in a “perfect” world, such that they assume that measures of the focal variable and outcomes have “perfect” reliability and validity (e.g., calling and job satisfaction; see Hunter & Schmidt, 1990, 2004). By contrast, we preferred an approach that estimates effects as they would be observed in the real world, where some types of error are always present (e.g., focusing on finding the relationship between two observable measures or scales, such as calling scales and job satisfaction scales; Borenstein, Hedges, Higgins, & Rothstein, 2009) and which we believe to be true of behavioral research in general and calling research in particular.

Overall, our analyses included one meta-analysis apiece for the effects of calling on each of our eight variable categories. We thus ran separate meta-analyses for each variable category of interest using a subset of the overall sample containing only data from studies that use that specific variable category. Some studies reported multiple correlations between calling and a variable category within the same sample.<sup>20</sup> In these instances, we computed a single composite effect size for each sample (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001). This ensured that only one effect size represented each sample in any given meta-analysis, and that none of our meta-analyses incorporated inflated sample sizes (Borenstein et al., 2009).<sup>21</sup>

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corrections—namely, only correctly for sampling error—is similar to bare-bones meta-analyses in the Hunter and Schmidt (2004) tradition. A consequence of using the Hedges and Olkin (1985) approach is that our calculated mean correlations may be conservative (i.e., slightly underestimate actual values).

<sup>20</sup> For example, using the same sample, a study might have reported the correlation between: (1) calling and a variable at Time 1 and between calling and the same variable at Time 2; (2) calling measured by one calling scale and a variable, as well as calling measured by a different calling scale and the same variable; or (3) calling and a variable belonging to one of our variable categories as well as calling and a different variable in the same variable category.

<sup>21</sup> For conceptual reasons, in terms of assessing the extent to which calling is beneficial versus detrimental in these main effects analyses, we would have liked our meta-analysis to offer insight into the differential effects of the various calling scales in the literature. For our main effect meta-analyses, this particular statistical requirement to not violate the sample independence assumption (Cooper, Hedges, & Valentine, 2009) meant we had to combine different calling scales used in the same sample into a composite and, so, precludes this possibility. However, we used a different approach in our moderator analyses examining whether the relationship between calling and outcomes depends on whether those callings are internally- versus externally-focused, as these analyses required individual calling scales only, not composites. Here, in cases where studies used two or more calling scales in the same sample, we randomly selected one calling scale to use in the

We investigated whether the two stages of calling, experienced versus sought callings, are similarly beneficial or detrimental by comparing our meta-analytic results for calling, as described above, with a parallel set of results for sought callings. That is, we conducted meta-analyses for sought callings, including unanswered callings, in relation to the eight variable categories and compared these results to those for experienced callings.

We investigated which of the two types of calling, internally- versus externally-focused, are more beneficial (detrimental) for which of our eight variable categories by conducting subgroup analyses. These analyses statistically compare meta-analytic results for studies using internally-focused scales versus those using externally-focused scales via the mixed-effects model in CMA, thereby indicating whether the effects of calling on the outcomes differ according to whether the scale is internally- versus externally-focused.

## RESULTS

### **Research Question 1: To What Extent Are Callings Beneficial versus Detrimental?**

Among the work variable categories, calling has strong, significant, and positive relationships with several beneficial outcomes (see Table 5). Calling is positively related to career self-efficacy and decision-making ( $r = .38, p < .001$ ). Calling is also positively related to job and domain satisfaction ( $r = .46, p < .001$ ), our variable category capturing hedonic well-being in the work domain, and most strongly with perceived meaningfulness of work ( $r = .61, p < .001$ ), our variable category capturing eudemonic well-being in the work domain. Similarly, calling has a significant and negative relationship with the detrimental outcome, strain ( $r = -.23, p < .001$ ), meaning that calling is associated with experiencing fewer of the negative physiological, psychological, and behavioral outcomes that comprise strain. Lastly,

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analyses, rather than combining them into composites. Further, as a robustness check, we also ran our full set of analyses using a randomly selected calling scale (in cases where more than one calling scale was used), rather than using composites. This check yielded no substantive differences in the relationship between calling and any variable category (i.e., differences between composite version effect sizes and random version effect sizes ranged from  $-.06$  to  $.01$ ), with no change in the direction or significance of any relationship.

calling is positively, but not significantly, associated with longer tenure in one's job or organization ( $r = .04, p = .07$ ).

Among the life variable categories, calling is again associated with beneficial outcomes. We found a large and positive link between calling and psychological well-being ( $r = .45, p < .001$ ), our variable category capturing eudemonic well-being in the life domain, and a smaller but still positive association with subjective well-being ( $r = .28, p < .001$ ), our variable category capturing hedonic well-being in the life domain. Surprisingly, based on the logic that people experiencing a calling should not need to search for further meaning in their lives, no (negative) link between calling and searching for life meaning exists ( $r = .00, p = .998$ ; a point we return to later in the Discussion section).

We also saw that callings are more positively related to beneficial work (significant correlations range .38-.61) rather than life outcomes (.28-.45). Comparing analogous work versus life outcomes sheds greater light on these findings. The hedonic work variable category, job and domain satisfaction, is more strongly correlated with calling ( $r = .46$ ) than is the hedonic life variable category, subjective well-being ( $r = .28$ ). Similarly, the eudemonic work variable category, perceived meaningfulness, is more strongly correlated with calling ( $r = .61$ ) than is the eudemonic life variable category, psychological well-being ( $r = .45$ ).

Pointing to calling's positive impact, our results indicate that callings are positively related to beneficial outcomes in both work and life, and negatively related to detrimental work outcomes. Moreover, the findings are stronger for work relative to life outcomes, and for eudemonic relative to hedonic outcomes.

### **Research Question 2: When Are Callings Beneficial versus Detrimental?**

To address this research question, we compared meta-analytic results for the relationships between sought callings and all variable categories (see Table 6) with the aforementioned results for the relationships between experienced callings and all variable

categories (see Figure 3). Contrary to the positive links with experienced callings, sought callings has a negative link with job and domain satisfaction ( $r = -.39, p < .001$ ), and nonsignificant links with career self-efficacy and decision-making ( $r = -.15, p = .13$ ), psychological well-being ( $r = -.01, p = .93$ ), and subjective well-being ( $r = -.07, p = .19$ ). Consistent with their negative effect on hedonic work outcomes, sought callings are associated with more strain ( $r = .32, p < .001$ ), whereas experienced callings are associated with less strain ( $r = -.23, p < .001$ ).

Surprisingly, sought callings are positively associated with perceived meaningfulness of work ( $r = .31, p < .01$ ). That is, people who were searching for a calling are more likely to perceive their current work as meaningful. Furthermore, sought callings are linked to greater searching for life meaning ( $r = .37, p < .01$ ) whereas experienced callings are not linked with this variable category ( $r = .00, p = .998$ ). Of note, the variable category “tenure—job or organizational,” the one behavioral outcome with sufficient data for inclusion in our meta-analysis, shows roughly similar and non-significant relationships with experienced versus sought callings ( $r = .04, p = .07$  vs.  $r = -.05, p = .25$ , respectively).

In sum, results indicate that calling stage moderates the beneficial effects of callings on outcomes: experienced callings are indeed linked to beneficial work and life outcomes, whereas sought callings are negatively linked to hedonic work outcomes or not related to outcomes. One key exception is the perceived meaningfulness of work, with which sought callings have an unexpected positive association. As we discuss below in our Discussion, this unexpected finding served as a springboard for our inductive theorizing.

### **Research Question 3: Which Callings Are More Beneficial versus Detrimental—and for Which Outcomes?**

We conducted subgroup analyses to address the question of which callings, internally- versus externally-focused, are beneficial versus detrimental using each variable category with

sufficient data (i.e., four primary studies, with at least two studies in each subgroup; see Table 7). Some analyses involved only a handful of studies, as is common in meta-analyses (e.g., Eby, et al., 2013; Ng & Feldman, 2008).

As expected, we found that the hedonic work category, job and domain satisfaction, is more strongly associated with internally- than externally-focused callings ( $r_s = .47$  vs.  $.38$ , respectively;  $Q_{\text{betw}} = 4.28$ ,  $p = .04$ ). However, the link between the hedonic variable category in the life domain, subjective well-being, with calling does not depend on whether those callings are internally- versus externally-focused ( $r_s = .24$  vs.  $.25$ , respectively;  $Q_{\text{betw}} = .03$ ,  $p = .86$ ).

Consistent with our theorizing, we also found that for the eudemonic work variable categories, perceived meaningfulness of work is more strongly associated with externally- rather than internally-focused callings ( $r_s = .80$  vs.  $.58$ , respectively;  $Q_{\text{betw}} = 7.00$ ,  $p = .01$ ). Similarly, there is marginally significant support for psychological well-being (in the life domain) being more strongly associated with externally- rather than internally-focused callings ( $r_s = .49$  vs.  $.37$ , respectively;  $Q_{\text{betw}} = 3.74$ ,  $p = .053$ ).

We did not find that the relationships between calling and our other variable categories, career self-efficacy and decision-making, strain, tenure—job or organizational, and searching for life meaning, depended on whether those callings are internally- versus externally-focused, although we could not run an analysis for one of the variable categories, searching for life meaning, due to a lack of sufficient data.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> We included analyses of internally- versus externally-focused callings as a moderator of the relationships between calling and the additional 34 variable categories included in Appendix 3's Table 4. Of note, as might be expected, the individual attribute variable category religiosity and spirituality was more strongly related to externally-focused than internally-focused callings ( $r_s = .38$  vs.  $.20$ , respectively;  $Q_{\text{betw}} = 4.14$ ,  $p = .04$ ). The relationships between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were not moderated by internally- versus externally-focused callings, thus indicating that the distinction between internally- and externally-focused callings is about the underlying content (i.e., hedonic vs. eudemonic), rather than being about different types of motivation.

In sum, our results indicate that type of calling matters: internally-focused callings may be linked to more hedonic outcomes at work, but not more broadly in life, while externally-focused callings are more strongly linked to eudemonic outcomes in both work and life.

### **Publication Bias**

We sought to reduce the impact of publication bias on our meta-analytic results by conducting an extensive search for unpublished studies (see Method section). Nonetheless, it is likely some unpublished calling studies remain unfound. Thus, to test the robustness of our findings, our publication bias analysis sought to understand the degree to which bias might be impacting our results, and particularly whether this bias is likely to be substantial enough that it should change how we interpret our findings. We used a technique called “Trim-and-Fill” to look for publication bias (Duval, 2005; Duval & Tweedie, 2000), which involves creating a funnel plot of the effect sizes for a given variable category from all studies in the meta-analysis (see a full description of this technique and our analyses in Appendix 3). Some studies’ effect sizes will be located to the right of the mean (i.e., studies that found relationships between calling and the outcome variable that are more positive than the mean) while other studies will be located to the left of the mean (i.e., studies that found relationships between calling and the outcome variable that are more negative than the mean). If the plot for a particular outcome variable reveals studies missing to the left or to the right of the mean, this indicates publication bias. These analyses serve solely as a sensitivity analysis about missing studies’ potential effect on our results, not as an adjustment to actual results (Duval, 2005). Overall, the Trim-and-Fill analyses highlight our results are relatively robust to missing studies, such that they are unlikely to have systematically biased our results in any other discernible pattern, including in the positive, significant direction, as is a key concern in most meta-analyses.

Insert Tables 5, 6, and 7 and Figure 3 about here

## DISCUSSION

Twenty years since first the empirical investigation of callings (Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997), scholars have examined the relationship between calling and over 40 variable categories, using at least 19 calling scales, across more than 200 quantitative studies, involving nearly 200,000 people. No longer a nascent but rather a more developed literature, calling scholarship has reached a stage in its maturity where scholars have begun to conduct narrative reviews to clarify the nature of callings and its different types, as well as its different stages (e.g., Duffy & Dik, 2013; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). More recently, despite initial findings regarding calling's positive outcomes as well as its powerful cultural imperatives and prescriptions, some findings have emerged indicating that callings can be detrimental (e.g., Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Lysova, et al., 2018). Thus, our knowledge of calling's outcomes remains unconsolidated, in terms of lacking a full understanding of the extent to which callings are beneficial versus detrimental, and whether these effects are qualified. The findings of our meta-analysis clarify this theoretical confusion by quantitatively synthesizing extant findings as to *what extent*, *when*, and *which* callings are beneficial versus detrimental.

### Theoretical Contributions

Through addressing our research questions, we contribute to theory on the nature and outcomes of callings. We further develop new theory by using surprising findings that surfaced in the meta-analysis as the springboard for inductive theorizing.

#### ***To what extent are callings beneficial versus detrimental?***

Regarding our first research question, the extent to which callings are beneficial versus detrimental, across the positive and negative outcomes we investigated, our results highlight the beneficial side of calling. These benefits extend not only to the proximal domain

of work and careers (e.g., variable categories like job and domain satisfaction and career self-efficacy and decision-making) but also spill over to the more distal realm of life as a whole (e.g., variable categories like psychological and subjective well-being; Hirschi, Shockley, & Zacher, 2019). Furthermore, we found that callings were more strongly related to “psychological” or eudemonic well-being (i.e., with self-realization and meaning) than for “subjective” or hedonic well-being (i.e., well-being concerned with happiness and pleasure, in our variable category “subjective well-being”; Heller, et al., 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2001). This finding suggests that callings facilitate the kind of well-being derived from experiencing deep meaningfulness and fulfillment, and, to a lesser extent, the kind of well-being derived from experiencing pleasure (Mogilner & Norton, 2019). The extent to which calling is related to more stable outcomes, such as perceptions of life meaning, versus more temporary outcomes, such as fleeting moments of happiness, is a potentially valuable area for future research.

We also found that people with stronger callings experienced less strain, or fewer of the negative physiological and psychological manifestations of stress. This finding in the quantitative literature is surprising, both given the all-consuming nature of callings (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011), as well as findings in prior qualitative research concerning the stressful challenges and work environments people must often endure to pursue their callings (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Schabram & Maitlis, 2017). One potential interpretation of this finding is that callings serve as a psychological buffer, such that people with stronger callings are inclined to construe work stressors more positively, and thus are better able to navigate stressful work situations. The reverse causal direction is also possible, such that challenging, stressful work could lead people to rationalize their experiences by viewing their work as a calling. We encourage future research examine the effects of callings on perceived stressors, as well as their buffering effects on strain, ideally employing longitudinal and

experimental designs to help disentangle the direction of the effect. We also encourage research that directly explores the detrimental side of calling, particularly for those with strong callings to tolerate stressors in demanding contexts to the point of exploitation by management (e.g., Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Lysova, et al., 2018).<sup>23</sup>

***When are callings beneficial versus detrimental?***

Considering our second research question, *when* callings are beneficial versus detrimental, our findings reveal that people reap numerous benefits when they are in the stage of experiencing a calling. However, they do not reap the same extensive benefits when they are in the stage of searching for a calling. In many cases, searching for a calling was negatively, or not significantly, related to these same beneficial outcomes. For instance, people who were experiencing a calling reported *less* strain, whereas people who were searching for a calling reported *more* strain as well as lower job and domain satisfaction than those who were not searching. Thus, while the ultimate experience of callings is largely positive, the search for these callings that occurs prior is largely *stressful and unpleasant*. Searching for a calling may be driven by an underlying orientation toward life characterized by seekership—namely, experiencing a desire to find meaning, often originating from a sense of discontentment about one’s identity (Pratt, 2000, p. 464)—which can either be resolved in one’s career by developing and enacting one’s calling or else may persist unresolved. Even a “found” calling that one cannot find work in, as with an unanswered calling, may yield suboptimal results (Berg, et al., 2010; Tosti-Kharas & Dobrow, 2020). Nevertheless, we found the more someone was searching for a calling, the more meaningfulness they actually

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<sup>23</sup> We call attention to findings in our supplemental analyses (see Appendix 3): Calling was positively associated with the variable category “challenge stressors,” although that does not translate into burnout; people with stronger callings have higher other-rated performance, yet they do not also garner higher income, suggesting the possibility for managerial exploitation (i.e., managers may recognize people with strong callings as being better performers, but do not see the need to reward them more financially).

derived from their current work. To date, we know little about the finding, or searching, stage of calling, especially when it is prolonged and/or ultimately unsuccessful. Given our results, we strongly encourage future research to examine the process by which people search for their callings, both successfully and unsuccessfully.

More broadly, our findings highlight the importance of examining the temporal aspects of callings, such that we build on our scholarly understanding of callings, which has primarily focused on one career stage, typically early career, to establish a fundamental understanding of calling's evolution over the full adult career and life span (cf. Carstensen, Pasupathi, Mayr, & Nesselrode, 2000). That is, we encourage examination of callings that are not fully experienced yet (i.e., are being searched for, are unanswered, or are in the process of developing), how callings initially develop, how they evolve, sustain, or even decline over time, and then how they can be challenged and even disappear (Dobrow, 2013; Maitlis, 2009). A framework like this would benefit from considering the extent to which the calling is enacted and/or answered via one's activities throughout the "lifespan" of the calling and in a wide range of occupational contexts. Such an approach should also consider the role of one versus many callings in people's lives (Berg, et al., 2010), similar to research on people with multiple career identities (Caza, Moss, & Vough, 2018). In light of these suggested research questions, as well as our findings regarding calling's impact on both work and life outcomes, we particularly encourage longitudinal or other designs that can capture calling's unfolding nature and outcomes over time.

We note that existing studies disproportionately examined people from "WEIRD" samples—that is, Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic (e.g., American college students; Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). Our meta-analysis included limited variance for socioeconomic status (SES) and cultural context, with white collar/high SES (vs. blue collar/low SES) and individualist (vs. collectivist) samples predominating, respectively;

over 60% of the studies had US-only samples.<sup>24</sup> This might matter for the results because people in WEIRD samples may espouse certain work-related values and beliefs that indicate a shared cultural belief that work *should* be a calling (e.g., Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015; Newport, 2012; Tokumitsu, 2015). In contrast, if calling research reflected greater diversity in SES or cultural context, as well as if it were studied in other more diverse, “unconventional” samples (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010), we might see fewer positive relationships as people in these samples may espouse different work-related values and beliefs.

### ***Which callings are beneficial versus detrimental?***

To our third research question, *which* callings are beneficial or detrimental—and for which outcomes—our findings reveal differences based on whether callings are internally- (i.e., primarily concerned with passion and enjoyment) versus externally-focused (i.e., primarily concerned with socially useful work). We found that internally-focused callings matter more for outcomes specific to people’s current work environment (e.g., job and domain satisfaction) and which are self-focused in nature, whereas externally-focused callings matter more for big-picture outcomes like psychological well-being, and which are more temporally distant and other-focused.

The fact that we were able to methodologically differentiate among calling scales in our analyses—specifically, based on whether they were internally- versus externally-focused—begins to speak to which type of calling, and which scale, is “best” for predicting different outcomes. Our analysis thus sheds novel light on one of the most hotly debated issues in the calling literature: whether callings are by their very definition internally- versus externally-focused (e.g., Dik & Shimizu, 2019; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). Some of our non-significant findings are noteworthy in this regard, such as internally- and externally-

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<sup>24</sup> Neither sample composition nor national culture moderated calling’s relationships with outcomes (Appendix 4), which we expect might be attributed to lack of sufficient variance in these characteristics in the samples.

focused callings being similarly related to subjective well-being, countering the assumption that callings “must” be either internally- or externally-focused, by definition, to matter in people’s lives. Importantly, we suggest that scholars need to be aware that the calling lens they use (i.e., internally- vs. externally-focused) may yield different outcomes, while also recognizing the potential for convergence such that callings of either type can be beneficial (e.g., Michaelson, 2019). Moreover, the strongest callings may be both internally- *and* externally-focused, although not all callings will involve both (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). Finally, we note that our findings indicate those searching and pursuing callings should be aware of the differential outcomes of the two types, and if possible, select the appropriate calling in order to maximize their choice of hedonic or eudemonic well-being.

### **Theory Development**

In the course of investigating our research questions, we were surprised by three key findings that significantly deviated from our expectations. The first surprising finding concerns the highly-positive view of calling that emerged in our meta-analysis. This may reflect the influence of a pervasive cultural norm and prescription that work should be a calling. Our second surprising finding concerns the outcomes associated with sought callings. That is, we unexpectedly found that searching for calling was positively linked to the perceived meaningfulness of work. One possible interpretation of this finding is that the act of searching for a calling reflects an underlying belief that work should be a calling, so even if searchers have not yet reached their ideal levels of meaningfulness by experiencing a calling, this underlying belief may still make their search and work they do more meaningful, compared to non-searchers. Moreover, it maybe that the discrepancy between holding this belief that work should be a calling, while simultaneously experiencing a less than desired calling toward one’s current work, is what leads searchers to experience the other negative outcomes we found (see Figure 3).

The third surprising finding concerns the distinction between internally- and externally-focused callings. As noted above, whereas conceptual work might have suggested otherwise—namely that externally-focused callings, premised on social significance, would be more strongly associated with beneficial outcomes than internally-focused callings—we found that they had very similar relationships to outcomes across the board. The lack of major differences in the outcomes associated with internally- versus externally-focused callings suggest an underlying commonality between the two calling types, and perhaps suggests that there can be multiple ways to experience a calling.

### **The Calling Mindset**

Taken together, we propose that the three surprising findings of our meta-analytic results may point to the existence of an important, but previously unrecognized, factor relevant to understanding callings. We suggest that the way to understand the effects of callings is to go up to a more abstract level of construal than that typically considered in calling research. To truly understand people's experience of callings, scholars must thus consider what overall beliefs guide these callings—what people actually think about callings, in terms of how they fit into work and life goals. Prior research has commonly conceptualized calling in terms of how much people feel they are experiencing a calling—that is, the *strength* of this calling. However, people may be regularly assessing whether they are experiencing their desired levels of callings and are guided by whether they have met this expectation in their lives. Thus, we argue for a higher-level construct influencing people as they navigate the initial search for, subsequent experience of, and ultimate behavioral enactment of their callings. Our findings uniquely point to this possibility and, accordingly, we propose incorporating the notion of mindsets to enhance our understanding of callings and their effects.

A mindset is a mental framework or cognitive lens that helps people organize and encode information around belief systems, which then shape and guide cognition, motivation, affect, and action in their environment (Dweck, 2006). Applied to the workplace, mindsets also serve to “drive evaluations, actions and responses” to experiences in organizations (Rucker & Galinsky, 2016, p. 1057). Previous research suggests mindsets are useful for explaining a host of organizational and work outcomes. For example, a “paradox mindset” can help explain why organizational members differentially experience competing demands as either energizing or uncomfortable (Miron-Spektor, et al., 2018). Similarly, an understanding of the “growth” versus “fixed” mindset dichotomy can help explain why individuals see potential, or a lack thereof, for development and change in others and themselves (Dweck, 2006).

In line with the theorizing and evidence linking mindsets to various psychological and behavioral outcomes, and based on the three surprising findings in our meta-analysis, we suggest the mindset concept can help us deepen our understanding of the nature and outcomes of callings. Specifically, we introduce the concept of a *calling mindset*, defined as people’s beliefs about the extent to which work *should* be a calling. The calling mindset is fundamentally about the way people make sense of callings and organize the meanings they assign to callings. Thus, this calling mindset has broad implications for how employees process information, react to their work experiences, and ultimately make career decisions.

Moreover, we posit that it is important to consider callings alongside people’s experiences of calling as people can have (or not) a strong calling mindset regardless of whether they pursue callings at work or are even able to identify their specific callings (Tosti-Kharas & Dobrow, 2020; Weisman, 2020). Further, our theorizing suggests that it is the combination of the psychological experience of calling, which is how calling has typically been treated in the extant calling literature, and calling mindset that will further our

understanding of callings' nature and effects on important work and life outcomes. This combination—what we term one's *meta-calling*—will predict outcomes better than just the psychological experience of calling alone. That is, we predict that calling mindsets will strongly condition and qualify the effects of calling experiences on the various outcomes. Put simply, a strong (vs. weak) calling mindset may enhance the positive effects of experiencing a calling, and on the flip side exasperate the negative effects of not having one or searching for one (e.g., Besharov, 2014). Notably, this proposition importantly challenges implicit extant assumptions in the calling literature that all those with a strong (weak) calling mindset are all alike as well as reap similar benefits (detriments) from their callings.

Consistent with this notion, one piece of evidence for the existence of the calling mindset is the strong positive relationship between both experienced and sought callings with the perceived meaningfulness of work. People with strong calling mindsets may be more likely to both search for and ultimately experience a calling. Thus, it is likely that this strong calling mindset, in conjunction with either experiencing or searching for that calling, drives the link with higher levels of work meaningfulness found in our meta-analysis.<sup>25</sup>

### **A Typology of Meta-Callings**

We propose a novel theoretical typology of meta-callings to help develop future research around how the positivity of callings' effects may vary as a function of the strength of both the calling people experience toward their current work (“calling;” weak vs. strong) and their calling mindset (weak vs. strong; see Figure 4). We outline four “ideal types” (Doty & Glick, 1994) resulting from this two-by-two typology that we expect to be associated with

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<sup>25</sup> We also see evidence supporting the calling mindset in some analyses in Appendix 3. For example, the positive association we found between the variable category “religiosity/spirituality” and calling suggests that being more religious or spiritual could pave the way for people to develop a calling mindset, as religions often frame work that serves others and/or utilizes natural gifts as important. Religious and/or spiritual people may thus be more likely to possess a strong calling mindset and to pursue work that aligns with their calling mindset, leading them to report stronger callings toward their work.

unique work and life outcomes. This 2 X 2 typology structure highlights the contrast between those meta-callings in which calling and calling mindset are aligned (i.e., both are weak, or both are strong) versus misaligned (i.e., one is weak and the other is strong). Whereas we acknowledge that the strength of a calling and calling mindset are continuous, rather than dichotomous dimensions, for the purpose of theory development we treat them as dichotomous. By juxtaposing the calling mindset with calling, a new, richer view of calling emerges—one that not only deepens and broadens our understanding of calling and its implications for people’s work and lives, but also challenges prevailing assumptions in the literature about how we should think about callings.

We now turn to delineate the properties of each of the four ideal types of meta-calling, indicating potential cognitions and outcomes associated with each type, with the intent of guiding future theorizing and research on meta-callings. As “proof of existence” and to bring the typology to life we use select quotes from Studs Terkel’s classic book *Working* (Terkel, 1989), for which he interviewed a wide range of people about their work. His book provides a backdrop for the notion of a calling mindset because a key finding was that many people believed work, not only could be, but *should be* meaningful. For example, one worker he interviewed stated, “I think most of us are looking for a calling, not a job. Most of us, like the assembly line worker, have jobs that are too small for our spirit. Jobs are not big enough for people” (Terkel, 1989).

**Fully Realized Meta-Calling: Strong Calling and Strong Calling Mindset.** This type of meta-calling represents the “holy grail” for people in terms of the alignment between experiencing a strong calling toward one’s current work while also having a strong calling mindset. These are the “discerners” (Bloom, et al., Forthcoming), the “destined” zookeepers (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), and those with “answered” callings (Berg, et al., 2010). People with this meta-calling have the highest potential for positive outcomes because they

have already sought and found their callings. These people are likely to be deeply fulfilled in their work, and so, we would expect very positive work outcomes, such as high levels of job satisfaction, as well as very positive life outcomes. For instance, one interviewee in *Working* who exemplifies this meta-calling articulated both the strong sense of calling he experiences toward his current work as well as the belief that this is how work should be (Terkel, 1989, p. 467):

I work all the way from two in the morning until two the next morning seven days a week. (Laughs.) I'm not a martyr. I'm one of the few people I know who was lucky enough to find out what he really wanted to do. I'm just havin' a ball, the time of my life. I feel sorry for all these people I run across all the time who aren't doing what they want to do. Their lives are hell. I think everybody ought to quit their job and do what they want to do. You've got one life. You've got, say, sixty-five years. How on earth can you blow forty-five years of that doing something you hate?

Due to the powerful combination of calling and calling mindset, people with this meta-calling may also be the most likely to experience the more detrimental outcomes of calling as well. For example, these people may be more likely to sacrifice their leisure time for no additional pay (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Tosti-Kharas & Dobrow, 2020). They may also evangelize about callings, as well as judge other individuals and their organizations, if they do not feel these entities live up to their personal standards (Besharov, 2014; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), which could contribute to damaging personal relationships at work (Cardador & Caza, 2012).

**Frustrated Meta-Calling: Weak Calling and Strong Calling Mindset.** These people represent what scholars have typically thought of when considering people who are actively searching for callings or have unanswered callings (Berg, et al., 2010; Weisman, 2020). They experience a weak (or no) calling toward their current work, but they strongly hold the mindset that work should be a calling, perhaps because they have internalized a cultural message that presents calling as a surefire means to material and spiritual fulfillment (e.g., Sinetar, 1989; Tokumitsu, 2015). This mismatch between experience and mindset

represents what self-discrepancy theory would refer to as a discrepancy between people's actual and ideal (i.e., called) work selves (Higgins, 1987). These people are thus likely to experience negative emotions and attitudes, such as regret, stress, frustration, and dissatisfaction (Berg, et al., 2010). As a fashion model interviewed in *Working* described, "I feel guilty because I think people should do something they really like to do in life. I should do something else, but there is nothing I can do really well" (Terkel, 1989, p. 88). We suggest such emotions, in turn, drive the search for a calling.

While the Frustrated Meta-Calling may be linked to numerous negative emotions, there may also be a positive side for people with this meta-calling. Namely, due to having a strong calling mindset, these people are inclined to make positive meaning from their work (e.g., to reimagine the purpose of work in a meaningful way) so as to reduce the discrepancy between their actual and ideal work selves. We suggest that these people may reap some of the positive benefits of a calling mindset, in terms of perceiving their work as meaningful. This notion is supported by evidence from our meta-analysis that people who report searching for a calling also tend to perceive greater work meaningfulness. People with this meta-calling may also utilize job crafting techniques to either reshape their experience of their current work (Berg, et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) or make actual career changes (Weisman, 2020) to thereby shift from the Frustrated to Fully Realized Meta-Calling. It is also possible people with Frustrated Meta-Callings will resolve this tension by leisure crafting, in which they experience their callings not through their vocations but their avocations, such as hobbies (Berg, et al., 2010).

**Serendipitous Meta-Calling: Strong Calling and Weak Calling Mindset.** These people are in the intriguing position of experiencing a strong calling toward their current work, but their belief that work should be a calling is weak. These are the "explorers" (Bloom, et al., Forthcoming) who find their callings through fortuitous events as well as

through searching for work they love, and who may end up with multiple callings over time. These people might stumble into a calling and feel lucky, but not fully appreciate their situation because it was not something they always needed to have, or thought was necessary (as would people with a Fully Realized Meta-Calling). A government worker in *Working* illustrates this meta-calling (Terkel, 1989, p. 456):

My dad worked in a factory. I was taught work is something you have to do. You do that to get money. It's not your life, but you must do it. Now I believe—I'm getting around to it (laughs)—you should get paid for doing what you want to do. I know it's happening to me. But I still have this conditioning: it's too good to be true.

This presents an alternative to the classical conception that people feel that their calling was their destiny (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Like a Frustrated Meta-Calling, people with a Serendipitous Meta-Calling may experience dissonance, in this case resulting from the mismatch between the strong calling that they may feel compelled to enact combined with only a weak feeling that work should be a calling. This contrast brings up the intriguing possibility that these people may experience “lesser” callings than those with Fully Realized Meta-Callings, experiencing fewer of both the beneficial and detrimental outcomes because they might be less “extreme.” We might expect them to be less dogmatic about the virtues of experiencing a calling and less judgmental of those who do not share their views on calling. Thus, one unique advantage for people with this meta-calling is that they might be better able to take the perspective of others who make different meaning of their work (e.g., have a job or career orientation; Grant & Berry, 2011; Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997). Thus, whereas past research on calling would not have distinguished between the people with Serendipitous and Fully Realized Meta-Callings, there may be substantive differences in the outcomes for these two types of meta-callings due to differences in calling mindset.

**Irrelevant Meta-Calling: Weak Calling and Weak Calling Mindset.** People with this meta-calling experience a weak calling toward their current work and their belief that

work should be a calling is also weak. For them, calling is just not on their radar, likely because they derive meaning from work in a different way altogether (i.e., a job or career orientation). Although an initial conjecture about this meta-calling might be that they would suffer poor outcomes, these outcomes may be mitigated to some extent by the alignment they feel between what they experience and what they believe. A steelworker interviewed in *Working* exemplifies this meta-calling: “My attitude is that I don’t get excited about my job. I do my work but I don’t say whoopee-doo. The day I get excited about my job is the day I go to a head shrinker. How are you gonna get excited about pullin’ steel?” (Terkel, 1989, p. xxxii). A washroom attendant echoed this sentiment: “Truthfully, I don’t carry my feeling of menial work quite that deeply that it hurts me” (Terkel, 1989, p. 157). These quotes reflect that people with Irrelevant Meta-Callings do not view work as something that should be a major source of positive meaning in one’s life. Rather, people with this meta-calling are likely to believe that positive meaning in life comes from aspects outside of work, such as family, friends, and hobbies. In fact, it may be in these non-work domains that they might experience a calling. In terms of work outcomes, we expect that their job satisfaction would reflect the extent to which work meets their needs.

Insert Figure 4 about here

### **Synthesis: Implications of the Meta-Callings**

Our discussion of the novel typology of meta-callings highlights that, to understand the nature of calling and its impact on work and life outcomes, research must consider both calling itself and the newly introduced calling mindset, rather than looking at calling alone.

In particular, this typology offers insights into some of the more surprising findings of our meta-analysis. It considers that there is more nuance to people’s callings than simply how strongly they are currently experiencing them, adding the lens of whether work *should* be a calling. Calling mindsets set up the possibility that one’s current experience of calling may

not match what they think their work should be like, which sheds light on novel ways in which the search for a calling can be beneficial and/or detrimental. For example, calling mindsets can help explain how, despite being a frustrating process, searching for a calling can also be deeply meaningful for people because it gets them closer to an ideal. The concept of meta-callings also helps unpack the heterogeneity in experiencing callings, which differ in their paths into the calling and their internal- versus external-focus (e.g., Bloom, et al., Forthcoming; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). Better understanding the various ways people's callings differ gets us closer to how people navigate relationships at work (Cardador & Caza, 2012), deal with challenges to their callings (Schabram & Maitlis, 2017), and pursue their callings over time (Dobrow Riza & Heller, 2015). While our analysis of meta-callings and calling mindsets was theoretical, we encourage future empirical research to explore the extent to which these types are present in the population and how each one relates to both beneficial and detrimental outcomes for the people experiencing them.

The types of meta-callings have significant implications for a wide array of individual and organizational outcomes. People "carry" their calling mindset with them wherever they go, such that it transcends any particular organizational context. For instance, people with a stronger calling mindset might be able to job craft more effectively than people with a weaker calling mindset (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), as the mindset is the lens through which they see their role. The calling mindset could also affect how much people persevere in a given job, for instance by being less likely to quit.

Our introduction of the notion of a meta-calling, a higher-level, more abstract view of calling, suggests that callings not only operate at the individual level, as is usual in most psychologically-based research, but also at the less-frequently examined philosophical level. As people's attempts to find meaning in work are challenged by recent changes in the way work and careers are organized in the current economy (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom,

2005; Petriglieri, Ashford, & Wrzesniewski, 2018; Sennett, 1998), we argue that an imperative to understand the complicated nature of callings exists. For instance, moral philosophy has deep implications for a consideration of meaningful work and calling by considering the question of what constitutes the “good life” (e.g., Michaelson, Pratt, Grant & Dunn, 2012); however, its role in calling scholarship has been under-developed to date. Our approach draws attention to the prescriptive, or what philosophers refer to as normative, side of callings—that is, what work “should” be within the context of a life well-lived (e.g., Michaelson, 2019; Michaelson & Tosti-Kharas, 2019). When it comes to callings, the cultural message to “do what you love” and “find your calling” can help to seed such pressure that work needs to be a calling for one’s life to have meaning, even as the actual outcomes of calling often fall short of its allure (e.g., Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015; Tokumitsu, 2015). We hope that through studying meta-callings, scholars can continue to integrate the disciplines of psychology, sociology, cultural and communication studies, and philosophy to get a richer picture of how callings are enacted. In sum, the typology of meta-callings inspired by our meta-analytic results highlights that a full and accurate picture of calling is actually much more complicated than current calling research has represented. With the introduction of the calling mindset, it becomes clear that a plurality of meta-calling types is possible—and thus all are worthy of future research attention.

### **Limitations**

Our meta-analysis is subject to several limitations. First, the studies providing data for our meta-analysis predominantly used cross-sectional and single-source, usually self-report, methodologies. As such, we note potential concerns about common-method bias inherent in these studies (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003) and our limited ability to draw causal inferences about calling’s effects. To address these concerns, we suggest that

future research use stronger, more rigorous, more diverse research methodologies (e.g., experiments, longitudinal studies, multi-source data).

Second, while we were able to explore the relationship between calling and numerous outcomes, there were additional outcomes that we could not explore due to a lack of previous research. For example, despite the passion and devotion to work of employees with strong callings, relatively little research has examined the relationship between calling and rewards, such as salary increases, promotions, public recognition (e.g., company awards), opportunities for professional development, and assignment on high-profile projects (Allen & Rush, 1998). We encourage future research that explores these outcomes to understand whether and when employees are recognized, or by contrast exploited (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), for demonstrating strong callings. Further, despite the detrimental outcomes associated with sought callings, little research has examined the relationship between sought callings and negative behavioral outcomes, such as absenteeism, deviance, and counterproductive work behaviors. We recommend future research to examine these outcomes to better understand the potential costs to organizations if they fail to provide the conditions necessary for employees with a calling mindset to discern and experience a calling at work. Finally, given the many positive attitudes associated with experiencing work as a calling, we were surprised to find few investigations of the relationship between calling and extra-role behaviors (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002), such as those geared toward helping co-workers (e.g., interpersonal helping behaviors) and those geared toward improving the organization (e.g., proactive behaviors). We encourage future research to examine these outcomes to understand the extent to which the benefits of calling extend beyond the employee, to co-workers and the organization.

Third, our meta-analysis also points to the need for a clearer understanding of antecedents of both calling and the calling mindset. Empirically-speaking, antecedents of

calling have generally been treated similarly to correlates in the extant literature, such that we grouped them together in our supplemental analyses (Appendix 3). Further, calling's relationship to many of these variables is also theoretically underdeveloped. This may occur in part because calling is sometimes thought to be a relatively stable cognition, almost like an individual difference, and as such should be studied more as a predictor (e.g., Wrzesniewski, et al., 1997). Nonetheless, a growing body of research has explored the changing nature of callings, thereby highlighting the utility of studying its antecedents to understand what might trigger "developing," "finding" or even "losing" a calling (Creed, Kjoelaas, & Hood, 2016; Dobrow, 2013; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; O'Keefe, Dweck, & Walton, 2018; Schabram & Maitlis, 2017). Given the promising but limited number of studies about antecedents, we encourage future research to examine predictors of callings, as well as the factors leading to the development of a calling mindset. For instance, popular culture often conveys the message to leave behind unfulfilling work and instead go pursue one's calling. Yet, we know very little about the process involved in taking such a leap (Weisman, 2020). Understanding broader contextual factors that facilitate the pursuit of callings, such as the gig economy (e.g., people might rent out a bedroom in their home to earn extra money that enables pursuing a music career; Petriglieri, et al., 2018), would also advance research in this area.

Fourth, people are frequently unable to pursue their callings in a formal work role (Berg et al., 2010), but most research has examined the outcomes associated with experiencing a calling toward one's work. Future research could explore the benefits, and detriments, of pursuing a calling outside of paid employment, such as through a non-work hobby. For example, research could examine whether the benefits of pursuing a calling in a hobby spill over to influence positive outcomes at work (Jachimowicz, He, & Arango, 2019). This research would have implications for organizations, and the extent to which they encourage and make accommodations for employees to pursue callings outside of work.

A final limitation of our meta-analysis is the unexplored role of the calling mindset in the underlying research. For example, while our meta-analysis found that experiencing a calling is largely positive, we suspect the benefits may be stronger for people who believe work should be a calling, as opposed to those who appreciate, but do not necessarily feel work should be experienced that way. We strongly encourage future research to examine whether the interaction between people's mindset and experience influences the nature of calling outcomes. Similarly, while our meta-analysis found that searching for a calling is largely negative, we suspect that this may be characteristic of individuals who possess a calling mindset. Future research is required to understand whether individuals who do not believe that work should be a calling will also search for a calling, and whether these people might actually have an easier calling journey. For instance, if people who lack a calling mindset do not engage in a deliberate search, and rather discover their callings fortuitously (as in our Serendipitous type), they may experience fewer negative outcomes along the way to experiencing a calling. On the other hand, if people possess a strong calling mindset and engage in a calling search (yielding negative hedonic outcomes), they may find and experience a calling eventually, but at a significant near-term cost.

In conclusion, should employees pursue a calling at work? Our findings and theorizing indicate a positive answer, especially for those with a calling mindset and those who are trying to maximize their eudemonic well-being. Nevertheless, to more fully understand the outcomes associated with calling, we encourage future research consider the strength of people's callings toward work, in combination with the strength of their calling mindsets. We hope our typology and meta-analytic findings inform future research and theory.

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Table 1a. Calling Scale Characteristics

Name	Primary Source	# of Items	Taps into Lay Notions of Calling? <sup>a</sup>	Original Wording: General or Specific <sup>b</sup>	Primary Focus of Calling <sup>c</sup>	Sample Items Demonstrating Primary Focus <sup>d</sup>	Frequency <sup>e</sup>	% of Papers
1. Brief Calling Scale - Presence of Calling Subscale	Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy (2012); Steger & Dik (2006)	2	Yes	General	Neither	I have a calling to a particular kind of work. I have a good understanding of my calling as it applies to my career.	45	22.4%
2. Work Orientations (including Calling Orientation)	Wrzesniewski et al., (1997)	18	No	General	Internal	I enjoy talking about my work to others. My work is one of the most important things in my life.	45	22.4%
3. Calling and Vocation Questionnaire--Presence of Calling Subscales	Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy (2012)	12	Yes	General	External	The most important aspect of my career is its role in helping to meet the needs of others. I was drawn by something beyond myself to pursue my current line of work.	40	19.9%
4. Calling Scale	Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas (2011)	12	No	Specific	Internal	My existence would be much less meaningful without my involvement in music. I am passionate about playing my instrument.	22	10.9%
5. Living Calling Scale	Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik (2012)	6	Yes	General	Neither	I am currently engaging in activities that align with my calling. I have regular opportunities to live out my calling.	21	10.4%
6. Multidimensional Calling Measure	Hagmaier & Abele (2012)	9	Yes	General	External	My job helps to make the world a better place. I am destined to do exactly the job I do.	12	6.0%
7. Neoclassical Calling	Bunderson & Thompson (2009)	6	Yes	Specific	Internal	My passion for animals goes back to my childhood. I am definitely an animal person.	10	5.0%
8. Career Calling Scale for Emerging Adults	Praskova, Creed, & Hood (2015)	15	Yes	General	Internal	I feel a sense of satisfaction because I have chosen a career path that I see as personally meaningful. I am obsessed about the career I am aiming for to the point that sometimes nothing else interests me.	6	3.0%
9. Vocation Identity Questionnaire	Dreher, Holloway, & Schoenfelder (2007)	9	Yes	General	Internal	Most of the time I genuinely enjoy the work I do. I sometimes get so involved in my work that I lose track of time.	6	3.0%
10. Single Item	Curlin, Dugdale, Lantos, & Chin (2007)	1	Yes	Specific	Neither	For me, the practice of medicine is a calling.	4	2.0%
11. Subjective Sense of Calling in Childrearing	Coulson, Oades, & Stoyles (2012)	11	No	Specific	Internal	I am passionate about being a mum/dad. I am always thinking about my children.	2	1.0%
12. Chinese Calling Scale	Zhang, Herrmann, Hirschi, Wei, & Zhang (2015)	11	Yes	General	External	I want to do something beneficial to society via my career. I feel that a kind of intangible power impels me to pursue my career.	2	1.0%
13. Faith at Work Scale (Subset of Items)	Lynn, Naughton, & VanderVeen (2009)	5	Yes	General	External	I view my work as part of God's plan to care for the needs of people. I view my work as a mission from God.	2	1.0%
14. Professionalism Scale--Sense of Calling Subscale	Morrow & Goetz (1988); Snizek (1972); Hall (1968)	4	Yes	Specific	Internal or Neither <sup>f</sup>	Internal: I work in this field because I love what I do. Neither: I have a sense of calling for work in nursing.	2	1.0%

**Table 1b. Sought Calling Scale Characteristics**

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Primary Source</b>	<b># of Items</b>	<b>Taps into Lay Notions of Calling?<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Original Wording: General or Specific<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Sample Items</b>	<b>Frequency<sup>e</sup></b>	<b>% of Papers</b>
1.	Calling and Vocation Questionnaire--Search for Calling Subscales	Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy (2012)	12	Yes	General	I am trying to figure out what my calling is in the context of my career. I am trying to find a career that ultimately makes the world a better place.	13	54.2%
2.	Brief Calling Scale--Search for Calling Subscale	Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy (2012); Steger & Dik (2006)	2	Yes	General	I am trying to figure out my calling in my career. I am searching for my calling as it applies to my career.	9	37.5%
3.	Unanswered Occupational Calling Scale	Gazica (2014)	6	No	General	I am drawn to another occupation because I expect the work to be pleasurable. I am drawn to another occupation because I expect the work to be enjoyable.	2	8.3%

*Notes.*

<sup>a</sup>Scales that tap into lay notions of calling use the word “calling” in at least one item whereas those that do not tap into lay notions of calling do not use the word “calling” in any item(s).

<sup>b</sup>Scales using general wording utilized words like “work” or “my job” whereas scales using specific wording utilized words from specific domains (e.g., “zookeeping,” “medicine,” “music”).

<sup>c</sup>The focus reflected in the content of items does not always align with the scale’s underlying conceptual definition. We coded scales based on the content of actual items to acknowledge that it is the content of scales (not definitions) that might produce variation in calling’s effect sizes.

<sup>d</sup>Two sample items are provided unless only one exists.

<sup>e</sup>Total instances of calling scales = 238. In addition to those listed in Table 1a, there were 19 instances of calling measures used in one study only. Total instances of sought calling scales = 24.

<sup>f</sup>Two studies use adapted versions of this subscale. In one study, the adapted items were primarily internally-focused (Jo et al., 2018). In the other study, the adapted items had neither focus (Cohen & Kol, 2004).

**Table 2. Summary of Search Terms and Sources for the Literature Search****PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, and Business Source Complete**

Search terms appearing in Full Text:

- “calling” AND “work orientation”
- “sense of calling”
- “work as a calling”
- “calling orientation”
- “career calling”
- “living a calling”
- “occupational calling”
- “vocational calling”
- “presence of a calling”
- “effects of calling”
- “role of calling”
- “linking calling”
- “level of calling”

**Academy of Management Proceedings**

Search term appearing in Title or Abstract:

- “calling”

**SIOP Conference Programs (2003 – 2017),<sup>a</sup> ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global<sup>b</sup> and SSRN<sup>b</sup>**

Search term appearing in Title:

- “calling”

**Other Key Searches**

1. Forward searches for articles that cite frequently-used early calling studies/measures:
  - Bunderson & Thompson (2009)
  - Dik & Duffy (2009)
  - Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas (2011)
  - Duffy & Sedlacek (2007)
  - Wrzesniewski et al. (1997)
2. Citations from Wrzesniewski (2015), a book chapter about calling
3. Articles received in response to our solicitation for unpublished papers on the Academy of Management listervs and to an email list of scholars who have attended a specialized conference about work meaning.

*Notes.*

<sup>a</sup> As of our search in January 2018, the 2003 SIOP conference program was the earliest, searchable program available online. It was possible to search Titles; however, there was no option available to search the program Abstracts.

<sup>b</sup> The word “calling” appeared in the title of 396 papers on ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global and 116 papers on the SSRN. Due to the high volume of these results, we did not additionally search for “calling” in Abstracts on these databases.

**Table 3. Descriptive Characteristics of Papers, Studies and Samples, and Constructs Measured in Relation to Calling**

Type of Descriptive Information Coded	Potential Codes	Frequency
<b>About the Paper</b>		
<b>Publication Status</b>		
	Published Journal Article	74%
	Book Chapter, Conference Paper, Dissertation/Thesis, or Unpublished Paper (Working Paper or File-Drawer Paper)	26%
<b>Discipline</b>		
	Organizational Behavior, Management, Human Resources, Psychology or Careers	81%
	Spirituality/Religious, Education, or Health/Medicine	19%
<b>About the Study and/or Sample</b>		
<b>Religiosity (Based on Scale and/or Sample)</b>		
	Secular	89%
	Religious	7%
	Not classifiable <sup>a</sup>	5%
<b>Work Collar (Based on Studies of Working Adults Only)</b>		
	White Collar	33%
	Blue Collar	4%
	Mixed Collars or Unknown	63%
<b>Prosocial Nature of Occupation (or Area of Study in Student Samples)<sup>b</sup></b>		
	Primarily Prosocial	31%
	Not Primarily Prosocial	69%
<b>About the Constructs Measured in Relation to Calling</b>		
<b>General Type of Construct (Based on How Studies Treated Them)</b>		
	Outcomes	23%
	Antecedents	10%
	Correlates (including Control Variables)	45%
	Moderator or Unspecified	22%
<b>Subjectivity vs. Objectivity of Construct</b>		
	Subjective (internally-determined, such as job satisfaction or career-self-efficacy)	70%
	Objective (externally-determined, such as income or performance ratings)	30%

Notes.

<sup>a</sup> Five percent could not be classified, generally because they included a combination of both secular and religious samples or scales.

<sup>b</sup> We coded the prosocial nature of each sample's occupation according to whether it was primarily prosocial, or helping-oriented, versus not. As a first step, we reviewed the O\*net list of social occupations (National Center for O\*NET Development, 2018). The second author then coded all of the samples, after which the first author reviewed 100% of the coding. There was one disagreement that required discussion with the broader coauthor team. Examples of primarily prosocial occupations in our dataset include medical workers, religious workers, teachers and faculty, and public servants/military members.

**Table 4. Operationalization of Variable Categories Included in the Meta-Analysis**

<b>Higher-Order Variable Category</b>	<b>Variable Category</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Sample Studies</b>
<b>WORK</b>	Career self-efficacy and decision-making	Self-efficacy related to career, career decisions, and occupations; career certainty; career confusion (reverse coded); career decidedness and indecisiveness (reverse coded); confidence in making ambiguous career decisions; work hope; work volition (i.e., capacity to make choice in the career despite constraints)	Duffy & Sedlacek (2007); Duffy & Autin (2013)
	Job and domain satisfaction	Pleasure, satisfaction, enjoyment, pride or a sense of personal accomplishment derived from job, work, or engaging in calling domain activities (both work and non-work domains, e.g., music, parenting, or volunteering); quality of work life; academic satisfaction (in students)	Hagmaier, Volmer, & Spurk (2013); Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz (1997)
	Perceived meaningfulness of work	Meaningful work; work meaning; meaningfulness of activities in a non-work calling domain (e.g., volunteering)	Bunderson & Thompson (2009); Shin, Steger, & Lee (2014)
	Strain	Burnout; exhaustion; emotional ill-health; depression; irritation; anxiety; poor health or physical symptoms; sleep quality; PTSD symptoms; disengagement; financial strain	Gazica & Spector (2015); Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz (1997)
	Tenure - job or organizational	Tenure in one's job, current position, organization, or leadership role	Hyland, Caputo, & Reeves (2016); Nielsen, Thompson, Wadsworth, & Vallett (2017)
<b>LIFE</b>	Psychological well-being	Life meaning or purpose; psychological or existential well-being; flourishing; sense of membership (i.e., belonging and community)	Dik, Scholljegerdes, Ahn, & Shim (2015); Yang & Fry (2018)
	Searching for life meaning	Searching for life meaning	Bott & Duffy (2015); Coulson, Oades, & Stoyles (2012)
	Subjective well-being	Life satisfaction; subjective well-being; emotional well-being, positive and negative affect (reverse coded)	Duffy, Manuel, Borges, & Bott (2011); Kim, Praskova, & Lee (2017)

**Table 5. Meta-Analytical Relationships Between Calling and Outcomes**

Higher-Order Variable Category	Variable Category	Mean Effect Size					Heterogeneity			Prediction Interval	
		k	r		Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI	Q-value		I-squared	Lower 95% PI	Upper 95% PI
<b>WORK</b>	Career self-efficacy and decision-making	34	0.38	***	0.33	0.42	257.20	***	87.17	0.12	0.58
	Job and domain satisfaction	64	0.46	***	0.42	0.49	1178.15	***	94.65	0.15	0.68
	Perceived meaningfulness of work	25	0.61	***	0.55	0.67	444.07	***	94.60	0.23	0.83
	Strain	25	-0.23	***	-0.30	-0.16	369.96	***	93.51	-0.54	0.13
	Tenure - job or organizational	24	0.04	<sup>t</sup>	0.00	0.08	106.73	***	78.45	-0.14	0.22
<b>LIFE</b>	Psychological well-being	34	0.45	***	0.41	0.49	224.13	***	85.28	0.22	0.63
	Searching for life meaning	6	0.00		-0.03	0.03	1.55		0.00	-0.04	0.04
	Subjective well-being	50	0.28	***	0.24	0.31	293.81	***	83.32	0.07	0.46

Notes.

<sup>t</sup>  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 6. Meta-Analytical Relationships Between Sought Callings and Outcomes

Higher-Order Variable Category	Variable Category	Mean Effect Size				Heterogeneity			Prediction Interval	
		k	r	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI	Q-value	I-squared	Lower 95% PI	Upper 95% PI	
<b>WORK</b>	Career self-efficacy and decision-making	8	-0.15	-0.34	0.05	372.53 ***	98.12	-0.71	0.52	
	Job and domain satisfaction	2	-0.39 ***	-0.53	-0.22	4.78 *	79.06	.	.	
	Perceived meaningfulness of work	2	0.31 **	0.14	0.47	3.39 <sup>t</sup>	70.48	.	.	
	Strain	2	0.32 ***	0.25	0.39	0.59	0.00	.	.	
	Tenure - job or organizational	2	-0.05	-0.14	0.04	1.24	19.48	.	.	
<b>LIFE</b>	Psychological well-being	4	-0.01	-0.29	0.26	58.50 ***	94.87	-0.88	0.87	
	Searching for life meaning	2	0.37 **	0.16	0.55	6.88 **	85.47	.	.	
	Subjective well-being	7	-0.07	-0.18	0.04	50.11 ***	88.03	-0.42	0.29	

Notes.

<sup>t</sup>  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Table 7. Internally- and Externally-Focused Callings as Moderators of Calling's Relationships

Higher-Order Variable Category	Variable Type	Variable Category	Q	Type of Calling					
				Externally-Focused			Internally-Focused		
				k	r		k	r	
<b>WORK</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	Career self-efficacy and decision-making	0.07	8	0.31 ***		8	0.29 ***	
		Job and domain satisfaction	4.28 *	15	0.38 ***		35	0.47 ***	
		Perceived meaningfulness of work	7.00 **	2	0.80 ***		10	0.58 ***	
		Strain	0.27	5	-0.24 **		9	-0.19 ***	
		Tenure - job or organizational	0.64	6	-0.01		12	0.03 *	
<b>LIFE</b>	<b>Outcome</b>	Psychological well-being	3.74 <sup>t</sup>	10	0.49 ***		6	0.37 ***	
		Searching for life meaning	.	1	.		2	.	
		Subjective well-being	0.03	12	0.25 ***		17	0.24 ***	

Notes.

<sup>t</sup>  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Figure 1. Cumulative number of published quantitative calling studies, 1997-2017**

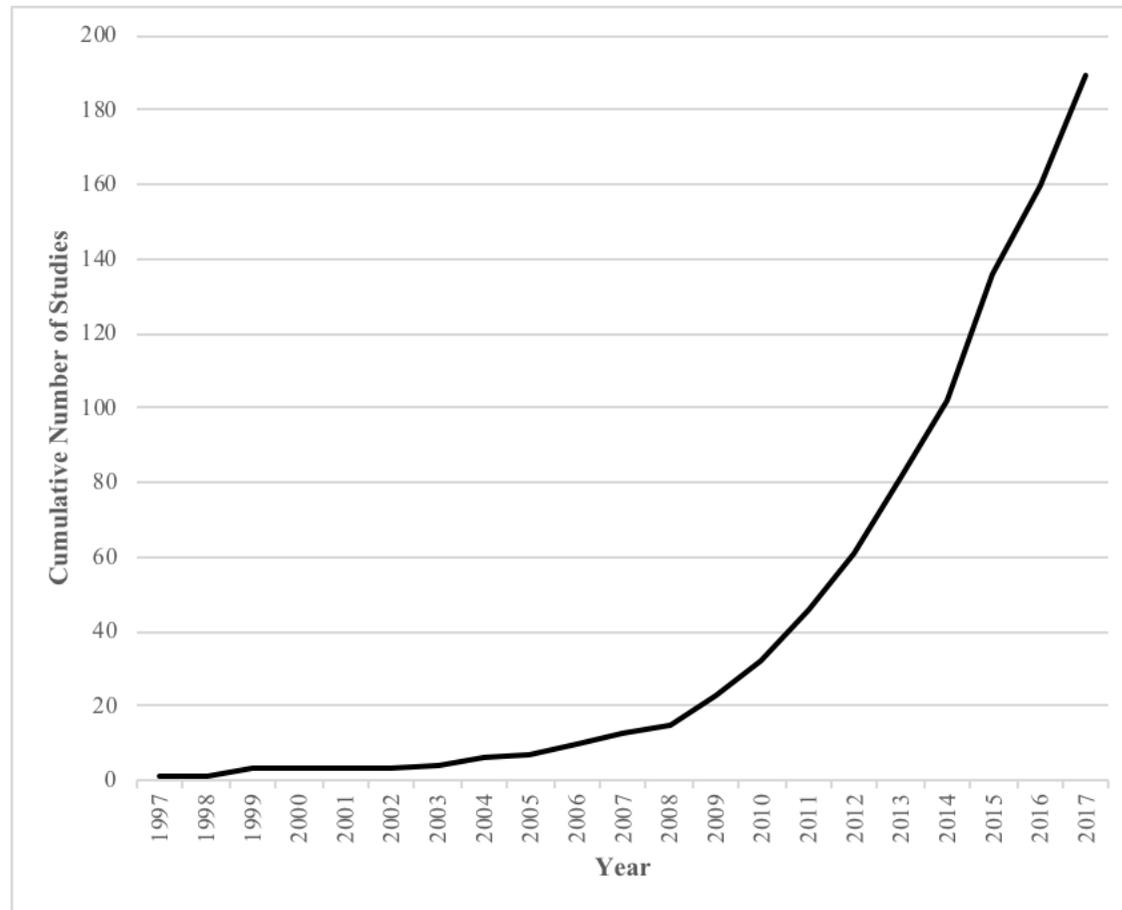
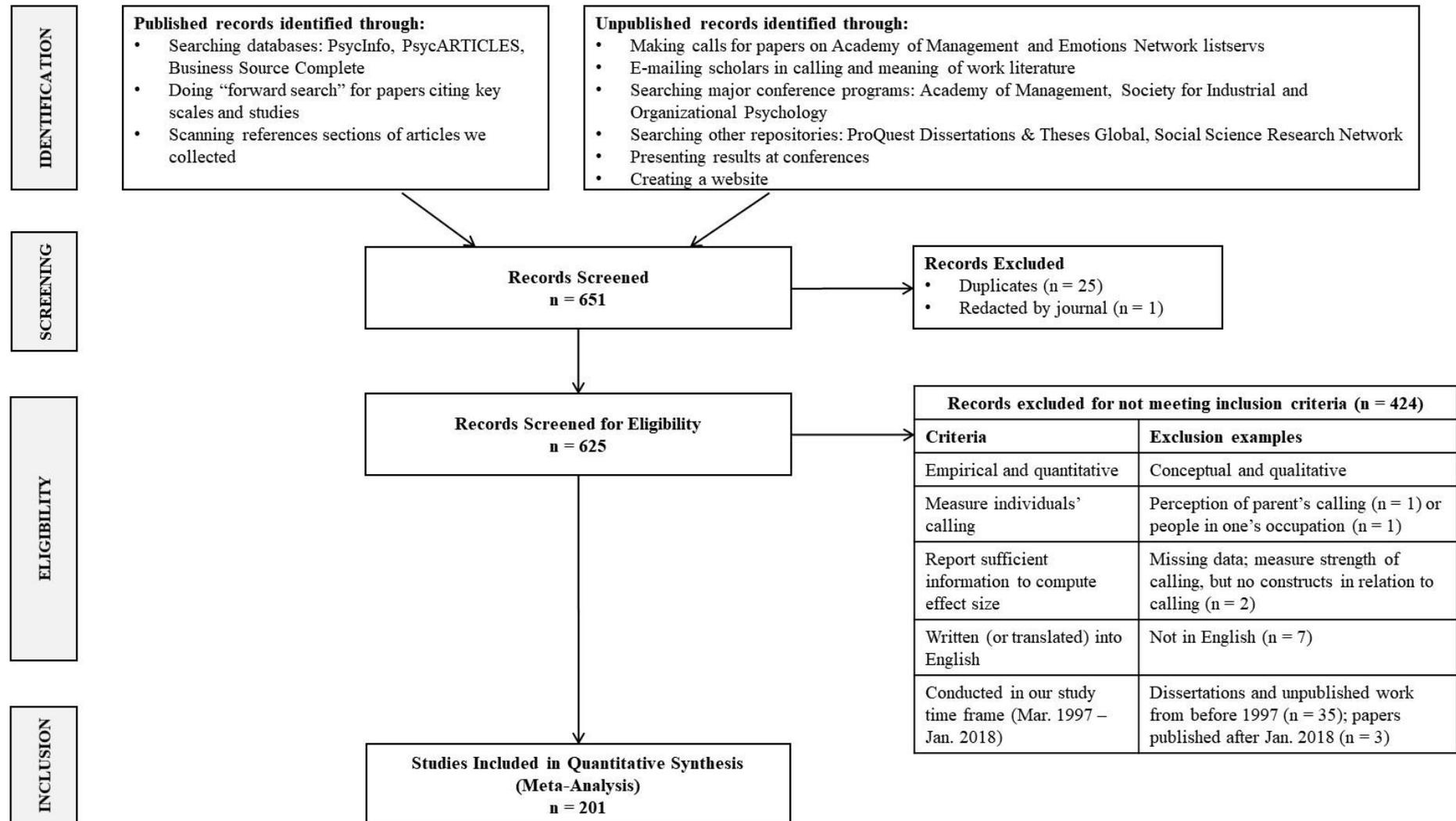
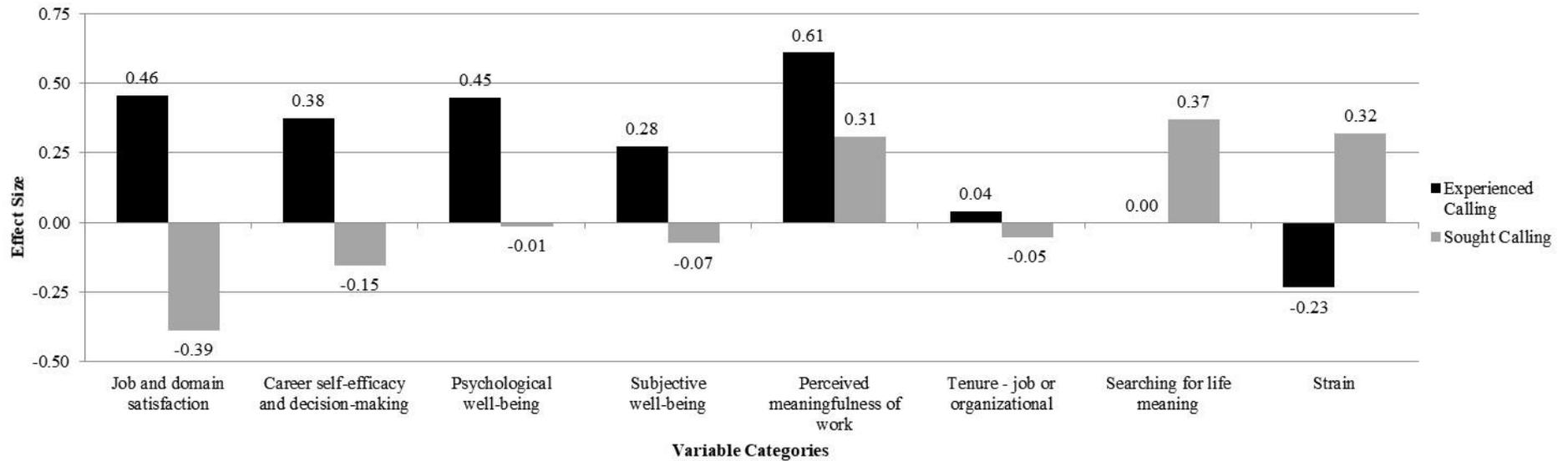


Figure 2. Systematic literature search



**Figure 3. Experienced versus sought calling results<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup>The pairs of bars are sorted in order of the magnitude of difference between experienced and sought callings (from left to right, largest positive differences to largest negative differences).

Figure 4. Typology of meta-callings

		<u>CALLING MINDSET</u>	
		<u>Weak</u>	<u>Strong</u>
<u>CALLING TOWARD CURRENT WORK</u>	<u>Weak</u>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Irrelevant</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>“I don’t experience a calling toward my work, but that doesn’t bother me. I derive meaningfulness from other aspects of life, outside of work.”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with a weak calling toward their current work who do not believe that work needs to be a calling. Calling is just not on their radar. They may have strong job or career orientations.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Frustrated</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>“I believe I should experience my work as a calling, but that’s not how it is for me. I’m frustrated.”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with a weak calling toward their current work but who believe strongly that work should be a calling; thus, they are frustrated. This may include those who are searching for ways to find or answer their callings.</li> </ul>
	<u>Strong</u>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Serendipitous</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>“I was fortunate enough to fall into work that I experience a calling toward, but I don’t necessarily think that work needs to be this way.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with a strong calling toward their current work but who do not believe that work needs to be a calling. They may take for granted that they get to experience work as a calling (leading them to reap fewer benefits versus the Fully Realized Type). However, since these people end up in a calling fortuitously, they may be advantaged in that they may not undergo any deliberate calling search.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Fully Realized</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>“I believe work should be a calling and that’s how I experience it. I feel totally aligned in the work domain.”</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People with a strong calling toward their current work who also believe work should be a calling. These people experience work as they believe it ought to be experienced. There is a total alignment between mindset and experience. People in this cell have the highest potential for positive outcomes when they are experiencing a calling, but they may undergo a preceding search for calling that is associated with negative outcomes.</li> </ul>

## **Appendix 1. Detected Publication Bias Results: Trim-and-Fill Technique**

We conducted trim-and-fill analyses for all significant mean effects in both the main and supplemental analyses. The trim-and-fill technique plots the individual studies for a particular meta-analytic relationship (e.g., the relationship between calling and job and domain satisfaction). The location of each study on the plot is determined based on the magnitude of the effect size estimate in that study (on the x-axis) and the size of the study (on the y-axis). Plotting each of the studies enables us to understand the distribution of individual effects around the combined mean effect.

If the combined mean effect is significant and positive, the studies to the right of the mean are those in which the effect of calling is greater than the mean, while the studies to the left of the mean are those in which the effect of calling is less than the mean (including those studies containing negative or nonsignificant results). The trim-and-fill technique examines the distribution of effects around the mean to identify any asymmetries, which are indicative of missing studies. Since a major source of publication bias is authors' selective reporting of significant effects, combined with journals' tendencies to reject papers with nonsignificant effects, we often expect studies to be missing from the left side of the mean (i.e., where nonsignificant effects are located). However, there are some cases in which we expect studies to be missing to the right of the mean. For example, in the case of a variable category that is negatively related to calling, such as strain, we expect missing studies to the right of the mean, because nonsignificant results are necessarily more positive than the mean.

After looking for asymmetry on the appropriate side of the mean (e.g., on the right side for strain, on the left side for psychological well-being), the trim-and-fill technique infers which studies are likely to be missing from the plot. It then computes a new, combined mean effect, which considers the inferred missing studies. The technique does this by "trimming"

asymmetric studies from one side of the mean, and “filling” in studies on the other side of the mean. Finally, it calculates a new estimate of the combined effect absent of any bias.

Below are results for our variable categories with detected publication bias; we do not display variable categories with no detected publication bias. A “right” theoretical direction of missing studies indicates we predicted that missing studies were those demonstrating more positive relationships between calling and the variable category, while “left” indicates we predicted that missing studies were those demonstrating more negative relationships between calling and the variable category.<sup>26</sup> We expected missing studies would be located to the right of the mean for strain, turnover intention, and objective ability—general, since the combined means for these variables categories were negative, such that studies with nonsignificant results would be located to the right (i.e., closer to 0). We expected missing studies would be located to the left of the mean for psychological well-being and extrinsic motivation, since the combined mean for these variables categories was positive, and studies with nonsignificant results would be located to the left (i.e., closer to 0).

	Higher-Order Variable Category	Variable Type	Variable category	Estimated number of missing	Theoretical direction of missing	Mean correlation	
						Main results	Trim-and-fill results
MAIN ANALYSIS	WORK	Outcome	Strain	10	Right	-0.23	-0.11
	LIFE	Outcome	Psychological well-being	6	Left	0.45	0.41
SUPPLEMENTAL ANALYSIS	WORK	Outcome	Turnover intentions	8	Right	-0.37	-0.20
	INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES	Correlate	Extrinsic motivation	5	Left	0.09	0.00
			Objective ability - general	2	Right	-0.07	-0.04

<sup>26</sup> Some studies assessed participants’ calling via more than one measurement tool (i.e., with the same sample completing more than one calling scale). The publication bias analysis above was conducted on a version of the dataset in which we computed one composite effect size for each sample. As a robustness check, we also ran the publication bias analysis using another version of the dataset in which we randomly selected one calling scale to use in the analysis, rather than combining them into composites. There were no substantive differences in the results.

## Appendix 2. Studies Included in the Meta-Analysis<sup>a</sup>

Author(s)	Year	Publication
Allan & Duffy	2014a	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Allan & Duffy	2014b	<i>Journal of Happiness Studies</i>
Allan, Tebbe, Duffy, & Autin	2015	<i>Career Development Quarterly</i>
Allen	2015	Master's thesis, The University of Texas at Brownsville
Andel, Pindek, & Spector	2016	<i>Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine</i>
Autin, Duffy, & Allan	2017	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Beukes & Botha	2013	<i>South African Journal of Industrial Psychology</i>
Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, & Griffin	2014	<i>Journal of Management, Spirituality &amp; Religion</i>
Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, & Griffin	2015	<i>Psychology of Religion and Spirituality</i>
Bikos, Rodney, Gowen, Yamamoto, & Dykhouse	2015	<i>Journal of Psychology and Christianity</i>
Borges, Manuel, & Duffy	2013	<i>Perspectives on Medical Education</i>
Bott & Duffy	2015	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Bott, Duffy, & Douglass	2015	<i>Journal of Psychology and Christianity</i>
Boyd	2010	Doctoral dissertation, Seattle Pacific University
Bunderson & Thompson	2009	<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>
Cain	2015	Doctoral dissertation, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Cardador, Dane, & Pratt	2011	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Chen, May, & Schwoerer	2016	Paper presented at the 76th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management. Anaheim, CA.
Chen, May, Schwoerer, & Augelli	2016	<i>Journal of Career Development</i>
Choi, Cho, Jung, & Sohn	2017	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Clinton, Conway, & Sturges	2017	<i>Journal of Occupational Health Psychology</i>
Cohen & Kol	2004	<i>Journal of Managerial Psychology</i>
Coulson	2011	Doctoral dissertation, University of Wollongong
Coulson, Oades, & Stoyles	2012	<i>The Journal of Positive Psychology</i>
Cox & Cox	2015	Paper presented at the 30th Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Philadelphia, PA.
Creed, Kjoelaas, & Hood	2016	<i>Journal of Career Development</i>
Creed, Rogers, Praskova, & Searle	2014	<i>Journal of Career Development</i>
Curlin, Dugdale, Lantos, & Chin	2007	<i>Annals of Family Medicine</i>
Dekas & Baker	2014	Paper in book, <i>Research in the sociology of work</i>
Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy	2012	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Dik, Sargent, & Steger	2008	<i>Journal of Career Development</i>
Dik, Scholljegerdes, Ahn, & Shim	2015	<i>Journal of Psychology and Christianity</i>
Dobrow	2006	Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University
Dobrow	2013	<i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i>
Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas	2011	<i>Personnel Psychology</i>
Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas	2012	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Dobrow Riza & Heller	2015	<i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i>
Dobrow Riza & Tosti-Kharas	-	Working paper, <i>London School of Economics</i>
Doenges	2011	Doctoral dissertation, Colorado State University
Domene	2012	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Domene	2015	<i>Journal of Psychology and Christianity</i>
Douglass & Duffy	2015	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Douglass, Duffy, & Autin	2016	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Dreher, Holloway, & Schoenfelder	2007	Paper in book, <i>Research in the social scientific study of religion</i>
Duffy & Autin	2013	<i>Journal of Counseling Psychology</i>
Duffy & Sedlacek	2007	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>

<sup>a</sup>In the case of unpublished studies, some author(s) granted permission to use their data but requested that we not include their citation to protect the blind review process for their study.

## Appendix 2, cont.

Author(s)	Year	Publication
Duffy & Sedlacek	2010	<i>Career Development Quarterly</i>
Duffy, Allan, & Bott	2012	<i>Journal of Happiness Studies</i>
Duffy, Allan, & Dik	2011	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Bott	2013	<i>Journal of Counseling Psychology</i>
Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Douglass	2014	<i>Journal of Counseling Psychology</i>
Duffy, Allan, Bott, & Dik	2014	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Duffy, Autin, & Douglass	2016	<i>The Journal of Positive Psychology</i>
Duffy, Autin, Allan, & Douglass	2015	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Duffy, Bott, Allan, & Autin	2015	<i>The Journal of Positive Psychology</i>
Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik	2012	<i>Journal of Counseling Psychology</i>
Duffy, Dik, & Steger	2011	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Duffy, Douglass, Autin, & Allan	2014	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Duffy, Douglass, Autin, England, & Dik	2016	<i>The Journal of Positive Psychology</i>
Duffy, England, Douglass, Autin, & Allan	2017	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Duffy, Manuel, Borges, & Bott	2011	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Duffy, Torrey, England, & Tebbe	2017	<i>The Journal of Positive Psychology</i>
Dumulescu & Opre	2015	<i>Cognition, Brain, Behavior</i>
Dumulescu, Balazsi, & Opre	2015	<i>Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences</i>
Dumulescu, Opre, & Ramona	2015	<i>Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences</i>
Eldridge	2010	Doctoral dissertation, Colorado State University
Esteves & Lopes	2017	<i>Journal of Career Development</i>
Fealy	2006	Doctoral dissertation, Loyola University Chicago
Feldman & Dreher	2012	<i>Journal of Happiness Studies</i>
Fouche, Rothmann, & Van der Vyver	2017	<i>South African Journal of Industrial Psychology</i>
Freed	2003	<i>The Journal of Applied Management and Entrepreneurship</i>
Fry, Latham, Clinebell, & Krahnke	2017	<i>Journal of Management, Spirituality &amp; Religion</i>
Galles & Lenz	2013	<i>Career Development Quarterly</i>
Gatell, Nguyen, Anderson, McCarthy, & Hardt	2017	<i>Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved</i>
Gazica	2014	Master's thesis, University of South Florida
Gazica & Spector	2015	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Goldfarb	2017	<i>Journal of Career Development</i>
Gong, Zimmerli, & Hoffer	2013	<i>Journal of School Leadership</i>
Goodin, Duffy, Borges, Ulman, D'Brot, & Manuel	2014	<i>Perspectives on Medical Education</i>
Gorjian	2006	Doctoral dissertation, Alliant International University
Gregory	2013	Doctoral dissertation, Kent State University College of Education, Health, and Human Services
Guo, Guan, Yang, Xu, Zhou, She, Jiang, Wang, Pan, Deng, & Pan	2014	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Hagmaier & Abele	2012	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Hagmaier & Abele	2015a	Book chapter in <i>Job satisfaction: Determinants, workplace implications and impacts on psychological well-being</i>
Hagmaier & Abele	2015b	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Hagmaier, Volmer, & Spurk	2013	Book chapter in <i>Psychology of burnout: New Research</i>
Hall, Burkholder, & Sterner	2014	<i>Counseling and Values</i>
Harzer & Ruch	2012	<i>The Journal of Positive Psychology</i>
Harzer & Ruch	2016	<i>Journal of Happiness Studies</i>
Hickory	2017	Doctoral dissertation, Seattle Pacific University
Hirschi	2011	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Hirschi	2012	<i>Journal of Counseling Psychology</i>
Hirschi & Herrmann	2012	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Hirschi & Herrmann	2013	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Hirschi, Keller, & Spurk	2018	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Hocke-Mirzashvili & Hickerson	2014	<i>Public Relations Review</i>

## Appendix 2, cont.

Author(s)	Year	Publication
Horvath	2015	<i>Career Development Quarterly</i>
Hyland, Caputo, & Reeves	2016	Paper presented at the 31st Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Anaheim, CA.
Jachimowicz, To, Menges, & Akinola	-	Working paper, <i>Columbia Business School</i>
Jager, Tutty, & Kao	2017	<i>Mayo Clinic Proceedings</i>
Jaramillo	2011	Master's thesis, Colorado State University
Jo, Lee, Sung, Kim, Lee, Park, & Lee	2018	<i>International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health</i>
Jurcec	2014	Doctoral dissertation, University of Zagreb
Jurcec & Rijavec	2015	The Faculty of Teacher Education University of Zagreb Conference - Researching Paradigms of Childhood and Education. Opatija, Croatia.
Jurica	2014	Master's thesis, Colorado State University
Kaminsky & Behrend	2015	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Kao & Jager	2018	<i>Annals of Family Medicine</i>
Keller, Spurk, Baumeler, & Hirschi	2016	<i>Personality and Individual Differences</i>
Kent, Bradshaw, & Dougherty	2016	<i>Review of Religious Research</i>
Kim & Shin	2013	Paper presented at the 73rd Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management. Orlando, FL.
Kim, Jung, Cheong, Spain, & Yammarino	2016	Paper presented at the 31st Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Anaheim, CA.
Kim, Praskova, & Lee	2017	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Kim, Shin, Vough, Hewlin, & Vandenberghe	2018	<i>Human Relations</i>
Koh & Joseph	2016	ACM SIGMIS Conference on Computers and People Research. Alexandria, VA.
Kolodinsky, Ritchie, & Kuna	2017	<i>Journal of Management &amp; Organization</i>
Lajom, Amarnani, Restubog, Bordia, & Tang	2017	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Lan, Okechuku, Zhang, & Cao	2013	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>
Lazar, Davidovitch, & Coren	2016	<i>Journal of International Education Research</i>
Leana, Appelbaum, & Shevchuk	2009	<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>
Leavell	2013	Doctoral dissertation, The University of Southern Mississippi
Lee	2014	<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>
Lee	2016	<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>
Lee, Chen, & Chang	2016	<i>Journal of Management &amp; Organization</i>
Leffel, Oakes Mueller, Ham, Karches, Curlin & Yoon	2018	<i>Teaching and Learning in Medicine: An International Journal</i>
Littman-Ovadia & Lavy	2016	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Lobene & Meade	2013	<i>Journal of Career Development</i>
Lysova	2016	Paper presented at the 76th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management. Anaheim, CA.
Lysova, Jansen, Khapova, Plomp, & Tims	2018	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Maher	2011	Master's thesis, The University of Georgia
Manuel, Borges, Adcock, & Smith	2017	<i>Medical Science Educator</i>
Markow & Klenke	2005	<i>International Journal of Organizational Analysis</i>
McKevitt, Carbery, & Lyons	2017	<i>International Journal of Project Management</i>
Mesurado, Crespo, & Rodriguez	-	Working paper, <i>Social Science Research Network</i>
Miljkovic	2015	Master's thesis, VERN University of Applied Sciences
Miljkovic, Jurcec, & Rijavec	2016	Paper in book, <i>Individual and environment: International thematic proceedia</i>
Neubert & Halbesleben	2015	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>
Newness	2013	Doctoral dissertation, Florida International University
Newness & Michel	2013	Paper presented at the 28th Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Houston, TX.
Nielsen, Thompson, Wadsworth, & Vallett	2017	Paper presented at the 77th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management. Atlanta, GA.
O'Neal	2017	Doctoral dissertation, Bowling Green State University
Olson	2017	Doctoral dissertation, Baylor University
Park	2009	<i>Career Development International</i>
Park	2009	<i>Journal of European Industrial Training</i>
Park	2010	<i>International Journal of Training &amp; Development</i>
Park & Rothwell	2009	<i>Human Resource Development International</i>
Park, Sohn, & Ha	2016	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>

## Appendix 2, cont.

Author(s)	Year	Publication
Peterson, Park, Hall, & Seligman	2009	<i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i>
Phillips	2011	<i>Christian Higher Education</i>
Plake	2016	Book, <i>Missionary expatriate effectiveness: How personality, calling, and learned competencies influence the expatriate transitions of Pentecostal missionaries</i>
Ponton, Brown, McDonnell, Clark, Pepe, & Deykerhoff	2014	<i>The Psychologist-Manager Journal</i>
Praskova, Creed, & Hood	2015a	<i>Journal of Career Development</i>
Praskova, Creed, & Hood	2015b	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Praskova, Creed, & Hood	2015c	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Praskova, Hood, & Creed	2014	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Ravella, Curlin, & Yoon	2015	<i>Teaching and Learning in Medicine: An International Journal</i>
Rawat	2011	Doctoral dissertation, University of Pittsburgh
Rawat & Nadavulakere	2015	<i>Journal of Business &amp; Psychology</i>
Rijavec, Pecjak, Jurcec, & Gradisek	2016	<i>Croatian Journal of Education</i>
Rodriguez	2011	Doctoral dissertation, Florida State University
Rodriguez, Mesurado, & Crespo	2017	<i>Current Psychology</i>
Rothmann & Hamukang'andu	2013	<i>South African Journal of Education</i>
Seco & Lopes	2013a	<i>Open Journal of Leadership</i>
Seco & Lopes	2013b	<i>Journal of Industrial Engineering and Management</i>
Shapira, Vilnai-Yavetz, Rafaeli, & Zemel	2016	<i>Health Policy</i>
Shea-Van Fossen	2010	Doctoral dissertation, The City University of New York
Shea-Van Fossen & Vredenburg	2014	<i>Journal of Behavioral &amp; Applied Management</i>
Shin, Steger, & Lee	2014	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Siler	2010	Doctoral dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
Smith	2011	Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology
Steger, Pickering, Shin, & Dik	2010	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Stephens	2012	Doctoral dissertation, Regent University
Taylor	2012	Doctoral dissertation, Union University
Thompson & Feldman	2010	<i>Journal of Employment Counseling</i>
Torrey & Duffy	2012	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Tosti-Kharas, Dobrow Riza & Kappes	-	Working paper, Babson College
Tracy	2009	Doctoral dissertation, The University of Oklahoma
Treadgold	1999	<i>Journal of Humanistic Psychology</i>
Ugwu & Onyishi	2017	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Van Zyl, Deacon, & Rothmann	2010	<i>South African Journal of Industrial Psychology</i>
Wahid & Mustamil	2017	<i>Journal of Organizational Change Management</i>
Wallace & Kay	2008	<i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i>
Walsh, Burrus, Kabat-Farr, Call, McIntire, & McGonagle	2017	Poster presented at the 32nd Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Orlando, FL.
Wells	2012	Bachelor's thesis, The University of Southern Mississippi
Wiese	2004	<i>Services Marketing Quarterly</i>
Willemse & Deacon	2015	<i>South African Journal of Industrial Psychology</i>
Woitowicz & Domene	2013	<i>Canadian Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy</i>
Wrzesniewski	1999	Doctoral dissertation, The University of Michigan
Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz	1997	<i>Journal of Research in Personality</i>
Wrzesniewski, Tosti-Kharas, Tschopp, & Landman	-	Working paper, Yale University
Xie, Xia, Xin, & Zhou	2016	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Xie, Zhou, Huang, & Xia	2017	<i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>
Xu & Tracey	2017	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Yang & Fry	2018	<i>Journal of Management, Spirituality &amp; Religion</i>
Yim & Fock	2013	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>
Yoon, Daley, & Curlin	2017	<i>Academic Psychiatry</i>
Yoon, Hunt, Ravella, Jun, & Curlin	2017	<i>The American Journal of Hospice &amp; Palliative Care</i>
Yoon, Shin, Nian, & Curlin	2015	<i>Southern Medical Journal</i>
Yugo	2009	Doctoral dissertation, Bowling Green State University
Zhang, Herrmann, Hirschi, Wei, & Zhang	2015	<i>Journal of Career Assessment</i>
Zhang, Hirschi, Herrmann, Wei, & Zhang	2015	<i>Career Development International</i>
Zhang, Hirschi, Herrmann, Wei, & Zhang	2017	<i>Journal of Happiness Studies</i>

### **Appendix 3. Supplemental Analyses of Comprehensive Variable Categories**

We conducted supplemental analyses to complement the meta-analysis of eight outcome variable categories (“core variable categories”) included in our main analysis. These core variable categories were the most theoretically significant and best-suited to theory generation, however there is also value in providing a comprehensive assessment of the calling literature. To do so, we meta-analytically examined the relationship between calling and 34 additional variable categories (“comprehensive variable categories”). These 34 variable categories are not as theoretically useful as the eight core variable categories, but, in conjunction with these eight represent the full range of constructs that have been frequently examined in relation to calling in the literature (i.e., appearing in at least five or more studies).

We conducted an identical set of analyses on these comprehensive variable categories as on our core variable categories. That is, we first created operationalizations of each comprehensive variable category, presented in Table 1 with representative citations for each. We calculated the meta-analytic results for the relationships between calling and each comprehensive variable category, as displayed in Table 2. Next, we examined how these results differed for experienced versus sought callings, shown in Table 3. Finally, we investigated how the results differed based on a moderator analysis of the impact of calling scale (internally- versus externally-focused) on the relationships between calling and each of the 34 comprehensive variable categories.

Appendix 3 Table 1. Operationalization of Comprehensive Variable Categories

Higher-Order Variable Category	Variable Type	Variable Category	Examples	Sample Studies
WORK	Antecedent	Challenge stressors	Workload; job complexity; competitive climate	Boyd (2010); Keller, Spurk, Baumeler, & Hirschi (2016)
		Hindrance stressors	Organizational constraints; role ambiguity; client incivility; relationship conflict among colleagues or interpersonal conflict; work overload; emotional demands; exploitation; concerns about debt accrued by working in the calling (e.g., medicine); job security or employment security (reverse coded); exposure to dying patients (in physicians)	Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, & Griffin (2014); Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, & Griffin (2015)
		Job resources	Supervisor, developer, leader, or organizational support; job discretion; autonomy; interdependence (reverse coded); variety; feedback; task identity, task significance; felt responsibility for constructive change; opportunities to learn or develop through work or career; positive social climate in the organization or profession (e.g., collegiality and a spirit of camaraderie); positive or close relationships; psychological safety; supportive organizational climate for members of minority groups; learning organizational climate; effective communication in the organization; academic resources (in students)	Allan, Tebbe, Duffy, & Autin (2015); Cohen & Kol (2004)
		Objective ability - domain	Objective ability in the calling domain (e.g., others' performance/quality ratings, awards received)	Dobrow Riza & Heller (2015); Kim, Shin, Vough, Hewlin, & Vandenberghe (2018)
		Perceived ability - domain	Self-report measures of job performance, job effectiveness, task performance, contextual performance, work ability, and ability in the calling domain; overestimation of ability in the calling domain; perceived occupational expertise, professional competence and employability	Dobrow Riza & Heller (2015); Newness (2013)
		Correlate	Career orientation	Career orientation; work as a career; career score; meaning of work - career
	Job orientation	Job orientation; work as a job; meaning of work - job	Leana, Appelbaum, & Shevchuk (2009); Shea-Van Fossen & Vredenburg (2014)	
	Career adaptability and flexibility	Career adaptability (including confidence, control, concern, and curiosity subscales); career inflexibility (reverse coded); receptivity to career advice (reflecting willingness to consider career advice and adapt the career accordingly)	Douglass & Duffy (2015); Guo, Guan, Yang, Xu, Zhou, She, Jiang, Wang, Pan, Deng, & Pan (2014)	
	Career commitment	Career commitment	Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik (2012); Gazica & Spector (2015)	
	Career, professional and occupational identification	Career, vocational, occupational and professional identity or identification; clarity of vocational or professional identity	Bunderson & Thompson (2009); Cardador, Dane, & Pratt (2011)	
	Career satisfaction	Career satisfaction	McKevitt, Carbery, & Lyons (2017); Xie, Xia, Xin, & Zhou (2016)	
	Career strategies	Career strategies (e.g., seeking career guidance and creating career opportunities); career insight and planning (e.g., having a strategy to achieve career goals)	Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas (2011); Hirschi & Herrmann (2013)	
	Hours worked	Work hours (e.g., per week, per day); number of lessons taught (per week, for teachers)	Clinton, Conway, & Sturges (2017); Kent, Bradshaw, & Dougherty (2016)	
	Income	Income, salary, wages, or financial rewards for work performed	Leana, Appelbaum, & Shevchuk (2009); Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz (1997)	
	Outcome	Involvement in calling-relevant activities	Involvement in an educational program, educational institution or professional career in the calling domain; involvement in a personal situation relevant to one's calling (e.g., involvement with a violent partner, for employees who work in domestic violence services); involvement in professional associations relevant to the calling domain	Bunderson & Thompson (2009); Dobrow (2013)
	Organizational commitment	Organizational commitment; continuance organizational commitment; affective organizational commitment	Kent, Bradshaw, & Dougherty (2016); Kim, Shin, Vough, Hewlin, & Vandenberghe (2018)	
	Other-oriented psychological and behavioral outcomes - work	Prosocial work motivation; organizational citizenship behaviors; service orientation (toward work); concern for others at work; practicing or intending to practice medicine in medically-underserved communities (for physicians)	Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy (2012); Park, Sohn, & Ha (2016)	
	Tenure - domain or occupational	Years of work experience; years of experience in a specific occupation, profession (e.g., law, hotel services), or non-work domain (e.g., music)	Dobrow Riza & Heller (2015); Wallace & Kay (2008)	
	Turnover intentions	Turnover intentions or desire (to leave job, occupation, or industry); withdrawal intentions; intentions to quit	Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, & Griffin (2014); Cardador, Dane, & Pratt (2011)	
	Work engagement and involvement	General, physical, or emotional work engagement; engagement orientation; vigor; dedication; absorption; emotionally energized in performing work tasks; job involvement; learning engagement (in students)	Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas (2011); Gazica & Spector (2015)	

Appendix 3 Table 1, cont.

Higher-Order Variable Category	Variable Type	Variable Category	Examples	Sample Studies
LIFE	Antecedent	Calling-oriented social influence	Extent to which one has been encouraged, advised or pressured to pursue or consider pursuing the calling domain; extent to which one's parents are involved in the calling domain or perceived to have calling orientations	Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas (2012); Wiese (2004)
	Outcome	Other-oriented psychological and behavioral outcomes - life Work-family conflict	Social justice interest and commitment; service activities Work-family conflict; work-home interference; work-life balance (reverse coded); work-to-family enrichment (reverse coded); work-family conciliation (reverse coded); work-nonwork positive spillover (reverse coded)	Bunderson & Thompson (2009); Phillips (2011) Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, & Griffin (2014); Nielsen, Thompson, Wadsworth, & Vallett (2017)
INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES	Correlate	Big 5 - Agreeableness	Agreeableness Big Five personality factor	Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, & Griffin (2015); Dekas & Baker (2014)
		Big 5 - Conscientiousness	Conscientiousness Big Five personality factor	Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, & Griffin (2015); Dekas & Baker (2014)
		Big 5 - Extraversion	Extraversion Big Five personality factor	Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, & Griffin (2015); Dekas & Baker (2014)
		Big 5 - Neuroticism	Neuroticism or emotional stability (reverse coded) Big Five personality factor	Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, & Griffin (2015); Dekas & Baker (2014)
		Big 5 - Openness to experience	Openness to experience Big Five personality factor	Bickerton, Miner, Dowson, & Griffin (2015); Dekas & Baker (2014)
		Core self-evaluations	Core self-evaluations	Olson (2017); Torrey & Duffy (2012)
		Extrinsic motivation	Extrinsic motivation; extrinsic goals; materialism strivings	Allan & Duffy (2014); Woitowicz & Domene (2013)
		Hope	Dispositional hope; hope (as a character strength); involvement in a hope intervention	Zhang, Herrmann, Hirschi, Wei, & Zhang (2015); Feldman & Dreher (2012)
		Intrinsic motivation	Intrinsic motivation; intrinsic goals; intrinsic reasons for entering one's profession	Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy (2012); Steger & Duffy (2012)
		Objective ability - general	General cognitive ability (e.g., SAT score, numeracy score, GPA/academic achievement in students)	Wallace & Kay (2008); Woitowicz & Domene (2013)
Religiosity and spirituality	Religiosity; intrinsic religiosity, religiousness; strength of religious faith; importance of religion; religious salience, fundamentalism, well-being, or commitment; extrinsic religiosity; religious service attendance, participation, or prayer frequency; spirituality; spiritual well-being, strivings, or resources (e.g., secure intimacy with God); faith	Neubert & Halbesleben (2015); Yoon, Shin, Nian, & Curlin (2015)		

Appendix 3 Table 2. Meta-Analytical Relationships Between Calling and Comprehensive Variable Categories

Higher-Order Variable Category	Variable Type	Variable Category	Mean Effect Size					Heterogeneity		Prediction Interval		
			k	r		Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI	Q-value	I-squared	Lower 95% PI	Upper 95% PI	
WORK	Antecedent	Challenge stressors	2	0.19	***	0.13	0.25	0.02		0.00	.	.
		Hindrance stressors	9	-0.06		-0.16	0.05	90.63	***	91.17	-0.40	0.31
		Job resources	34	0.31	***	0.25	0.37	717.56	***	95.40	-0.07	0.62
		Objective ability - domain	6	0.19	***	0.09	0.28	12.69	*	60.59	-0.11	0.46
		Perceived ability - domain	20	0.29	***	0.14	0.43	1636.88	***	98.84	-0.42	0.78
	Correlate	Career orientation	19	0.11	†	-0.01	0.23	661.98	***	97.28	-0.42	0.59
		Job orientation	11	-0.47	***	-0.56	-0.36	220.48	***	95.46	-0.76	-0.02
	Outcome	Career adaptability and flexibility	9	0.22	†	-0.04	0.44	466.47	***	98.29	-0.63	0.83
		Career commitment	10	0.54	***	0.49	0.59	36.40	***	75.27	0.37	0.68
		Career, professional and occupational identification	15	0.37	***	0.29	0.45	209.91	***	93.33	0.01	0.65
		Career satisfaction	7	0.36	***	0.22	0.48	116.24	***	94.84	-0.18	0.73
		Career strategies	8	0.42	***	0.37	0.48	23.24	**	69.88	0.24	0.58
		Hours worked	10	0.06		-0.03	0.15	65.45	***	86.25	-0.24	0.35
		Income	14	0.03		-0.04	0.10	64.64	***	79.89	-0.23	0.29
		Involvement in calling-relevant activities	13	0.21	**	0.06	0.36	473.70	***	97.47	-0.40	0.69
		Organizational commitment	16	0.44	***	0.37	0.50	212.68	***	92.95	0.14	0.66
		Other-oriented psychological and behavioral outcomes - work	17	0.28	***	0.18	0.38	332.24	***	95.18	-0.18	0.65
LIFE	Antecedent	Calling-oriented social influence	7	0.11	†	0.00	0.21	29.79	***	79.86	-0.24	0.43
		Other-oriented psychological and behavioral outcomes - life	4	0.30	***	0.22	0.37	4.19		28.38	0.04	0.52
	Outcome	Work-family conflict	6	-0.29	***	-0.40	-0.18	87.70	***	94.30	-0.62	0.13
		Big 5 - Agreeableness	7	0.15	*	0.01	0.29	75.05	***	92.01	-0.34	0.58
		Big 5 - Conscientiousness	8	0.18	***	0.12	0.25	21.23	**	67.02	-0.01	0.36
INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES	Correlate	Big 5 - Extraversion	7	0.16	***	0.10	0.22	13.13	*	54.30	0.00	0.31
		Big 5 - Neuroticism	6	-0.18	***	-0.26	-0.11	15.50	**	67.74	-0.40	0.06
		Big 5 - Openness to experience	6	0.04	†	0.00	0.08	4.62		0.00	-0.02	0.09
		Core self-evaluations	8	0.28	***	0.15	0.41	106.78	***	93.45	-0.22	0.67
		Extrinsic motivation	12	0.09	*	0.00	0.17	55.21	***	80.08	-0.21	0.36
		Hope	6	0.35	***	0.23	0.46	19.44	**	74.28	-0.05	0.66
		Intrinsic motivation	14	0.26	***	0.13	0.39	214.10	***	93.93	-0.30	0.69
		Objective ability - general	7	-0.08	†	-0.17	0.01	18.77	**	68.04	-0.34	0.19
		Religiosity and spirituality	37	0.27	**	0.20	0.35	942.292	***	96.18	-0.21	0.65

Notes.

†  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Appendix 3 Table 3. Meta-Analytical Relationships Between Sought Callings and Comprehensive Variable Categories

Higher-Order Variable Category	Variable Type	Variable Category	Mean Effect Size				Heterogeneity		Prediction Interval	
			k	r	Lower 95% CI	Upper 95% CI	Q-value	I-squared	Lower 95% PI	Upper 95% PI
WORK	Antecedent	Challenge stressors	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Hindrance stressors	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Job resources	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Objective ability - domain	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Perceived ability - domain	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	Correlate	Career orientation	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Job orientation	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Career adaptability and flexibility	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	Outcome	Career commitment	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Career, professional and occupational identification	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Career satisfaction	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Career strategies	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Hours worked	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Income	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Involvement in calling-relevant activities	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Organizational commitment	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Other-oriented psychological and behavioral outcomes -	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Tenure - domain or occupational	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Turnover intentions	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Work engagement and involvement	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.		
LIFE	Antecedent	Calling-oriented social influence	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
	Outcome	Other-oriented psychological and behavioral outcomes - life	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Work-family conflict	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES	Correlate	Big 5 - Agreeableness	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Big 5 - Conscientiousness	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Big 5 - Extraversion	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Big 5 - Neuroticism	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Big 5 - Openness to experience	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Core self-evaluations	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Extrinsic motivation	3	0.09 *	0.01	0.17	3.36	40.50	-0.60	0.70
		Hope	0	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Intrinsic motivation	4	0.23 **	0.10	0.36	18.95 ***	84.17	-0.37	0.70
		Objective ability - general	1	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
		Religiosity and spirituality	5	0.20	-0.16	0.50	357.94 ***	98.88	-0.83	0.92

Notes.

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Appendix 3 Table 4. Internally- and Externally-Focused Callings as Moderators of Calling's Relationships with Comprehensive Variable Categories**

Higher-Order Variable Category	Variable Type	Variable Category	Internally- vs. Externally-Focused				
			Externally-Focused		Internally-Focused		
			Q	k	r	k	r
WORK	Antecedent	Challenge stressors	.	.	.	.	.
		Hindrance stressors	0.02	2	-0.03	2	-0.07
		Job resources	0.94	6	0.38 ***	18	0.29 ***
		Objective ability - domain	.	0	.	6	***
	Correlate	Perceived ability - domain	0.20	2	0.36 **	11	0.31 ***
		Career orientation	.	0	.	19	.
	Outcome	Job orientation	.	0	.	10	.
		Career adaptability and flexibility	10.76 **	3	0.51 ***	4	0.04
		Career commitment	.	5	.	1	***
		Career, professional and occupational identification	.	1	.	8	***
		Career satisfaction	0.18	2	0.44 **	2	0.35 ***
		Career strategies	.	0	.	7	***
		Hours worked	2.41	6	0.01	2	0.17
		Income	.	1	.	8	.
		Involvement in calling-relevant activities	.	0	.	9	.
		Organizational commitment	14.05 ***	4	0.28 ***	5	0.47 ***
		Other-oriented psychological and behavioral outcomes - work	0.02	2	0.40 *	7	0.37 ***
Tenure - domain or occupational	.	0	.	8	.		
Turnover intentions	2.19	3	-0.27 *	10	-0.43 ***		
Work engagement and involvement	0.36	9	0.45 ***	19	0.50 ***		
LIFE	Antecedent	Calling-oriented social influence	.	0	.	6	.
	Outcome	Other-oriented psychological and behavioral outcomes - life	.	1	.	2	.
		Work-family conflict	0.03	2	-0.31 **	4	-0.29
INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES	Correlate	Big 5 - Agreeableness	1.95	4	0.22 *	2	-0.02 <sup>t</sup>
		Big 5 - Conscientiousness	0.42	4	0.21 ***	3	0.15 ***
		Big 5 - Extraversion	0.17	4	0.14 ***	2	0.11 ***
		Big 5 - Neuroticism	8.85 **	3	-0.25 ***	2	-0.04 **
		Big 5 - Openness to experience	0.83	3	0.04 <sup>t</sup>	2	0.11 <sup>t</sup>
		Core self-evaluations	.	1	.	2	***
		Extrinsic motivation	0.07	2	0.07	8	0.11 **
		Hope	.	1	.	5	***
		Intrinsic motivation	0.34	4	0.18 *	6	0.24 **
		Religiosity and spirituality	4.14 *	10	0.38 ***	15	0.20 ***

Notes.

<sup>t</sup>  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

#### Appendix 4. Study Design, Sample Composition, and National Culture as Moderators of Calling's Relationships with Main and Comprehensive Variable Categories

Our meta-analytic results—both for the eight core variable categories as well as the 34 comprehensive variable categories presented in Appendix 3—provided statistical evidence that potential moderators of the relationships between calling and these variable categories exist. Specifically, our results showed considerable heterogeneity (i.e., variance in effect sizes across studies). We found that  $Q$  was highly significant for nearly all of our variable categories, indicating that sampling error alone could not account for this heterogeneity. Additionally, the  $I^2$  statistics for each of our meta-analyses indicated that a high proportion (often greater than 90%) of the heterogeneity was attributable to between-study differences, as opposed to sampling error.<sup>27</sup> Thus, both the  $Q$  and  $I^2$  statistics suggested the existence of moderators, leading us to examine the impact of three moderators on the relationship between calling and each variable category with sufficient data (i.e., three primary studies, with at least one study in each subgroup) via subgroup analyses.

Specifically, we looked at: *study design* (coded as cross-sectional survey studies [84%] vs. all other designs, including two-wave survey, longitudinal survey, diary study or experiment/intervention designs [16%]), *sample composition* (coded as working adults [63%] vs. students [30%]<sup>28</sup>), and *national culture* (coded as individualist [76%] vs. collectivist [19%] for the country where the study was conducted) (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede Insights,

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<sup>27</sup> We also used  $I^2$  to calculate prediction intervals indicating the range in which the effect sizes should fall in 95% of all populations. We calculated these intervals outside the CMA software program for each of our mean correlations (based on formulas in Borenstein, et al., 2009; Borenstein, Higgins, Hedges, & Rothstein, 2017). We drew on a minimum of  $k = 3$  or more (where  $df = k - 2$ ) for completeness' sake. It is not possible to calculate these intervals for two or fewer studies. We note that prediction intervals for  $ks$  less than five may be imprecise and should be interpreted with caution.

<sup>28</sup> The remaining 8% could not be classified because they included samples that were neither working adults nor students (e.g., retired people, unemployed people, etc.).

2018).<sup>29</sup> These moderators, frequently used in meta-analyses of other organizational behavior constructs (e.g., Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007), have been highlighted as variables that might affect the relationship between calling and other constructs (e.g., Duffy & Dik, 2013; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019) and so might explain potential variance we find across primary studies' results. Below we discuss the theoretical basis and results for each moderator analysis (see Appendix 4 Table 1). Some of the analyses involved only a handful of studies, as is common in meta-analyses (e.g., Eby, et al., 2013; Ng & Feldman, 2008).

**Study design.** We examined whether the relationship between calling and other constructs is amplified or attenuated by how the data were collected, namely whether the study used a cross-sectional versus other design (e.g., two-wave, longitudinal, daily diary, or experimental/intervention). We predicted stronger relationships in cross-sectional versus other designs because, as time between measurements decreases, common-method biases may come into play (Podsakoff, et al., 2003), thereby increasing correlations between calling and other constructs (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Nevertheless, when we compared cross-sectional studies with studies that used some other type of design, we found no significant difference in the relationship between calling and most variable categories.

**Sample composition.** We examined possible moderating effects of whether the study sample consisted of working adults or students. The distinction between these two types of samples is potentially important in the calling literature, as one (or both) of these two types have been used in the bulk of studies, with student samples being most common. We predicted that working adults experience stronger effects of calling than students because they have direct experience with work and may already be enacting their callings, whereas students may have limited work experience and little concern with identifying or enacting a

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<sup>29</sup> The remaining 5% could not be classified, typically because they included multiple countries comprised of a mix of both culture types.

calling in the present. We found only limited evidence in support of our prediction among our variable categories.

**National culture.** We assessed whether the national culture in the country where the study was conducted—individualist or collectivist (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede Insights, 2018)—moderated the relationship between calling and other constructs. Cultures may vary in the extent to which they view callings as desirable, and so may place a stronger emphasis on the need to search for and/or enact a calling. Overall, we had mixed predictions about the impact of culture on calling’s relationships with other constructs. On the one hand, relationships could be stronger in individualist cultures, where popular culture frequently glorifies callings (e.g., Jobs, 2005) and the individual fulfillment inherent in callings. On the other hand, relationships could be stronger in collectivist cultures, where people may target their work more toward the good of the group, rather than the individual, which may tap into the prosocial aspects of calling. Comparing studies conducted in individualist versus collectivist cultural contexts, we found no significant difference in the relationship between calling and most variable categories. We further note that these analyses were based on a relatively low number of studies conducted in collectivist countries, which echoes calls for further calling research on more diverse populations across cultures (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Rosso, et al., 2010).

In sum, we found limited evidence of moderation by study design, composition, and national culture.

Appendix 4 Table 1. Study Design, Sample Composition, and National Culture as Moderators of Calling’s Relationships

	Higher-Order Variable Category	Variable Type	Variable Category	Study Design						Sample Composition						National Culture					
				All Others			Cross-Sectional			Students			Working Adults			Collectivist			Individualist		
				Q	k	r	Q	k	r	Q	k	r	Q	k	r	Q	k	r	Q	k	r
MAIN ANALYSIS	WORK	Outcome	Career self-efficacy and decision-making	0.84	3	0.31 ***	30	0.38 ***	4.47 *	25	0.35 ***	8	0.44 ***	0.11	4	0.40 ***	29	0.38 ***			
			Job and domain satisfaction	0.21	9	0.44 ***	55	0.46 ***	7.34 **	9	0.34 ***	50	0.47 ***	0.66	11	0.50 ***	46	0.44 ***			
			Perceived meaningfulness of work	0.10	2	0.64 ***	23	0.61 ***	0.07	3	0.63 ***	20	0.60 ***	5.45 *	5	0.47 ***	16	0.64 ***			
			Strain	6.27 *	3	-0.02	22	-0.26 ***	1.13	2	-0.36 **	20	-0.24 ***	0.31	2	-0.30 *	23	-0.23 ***			
			Tenure - job or organizational	2.27	6	-0.02	18	0.06 *	.	0	.	23	.	2.35	7	0.00	16	0.07 **			
	LIFE	Outcome	Psychological well-being	0.19	6	0.47 ***	27	0.45 ***	0.06	17	0.45 ***	14	0.46 ***	2.16	7	0.39 ***	25	0.46 ***			
			Searching for life meaning	0.98	2	0.05	4	-0.01	0.65	4	0.01	1	-0.03	0.58	1	-0.03	5	0.01			
			Subjective well-being	6.15 *	7	0.17 ***	43	0.29 ***	18.52 ***	17	0.20 ***	27	0.33 ***	0.73	10	0.24 ***	35	0.27 ***			
SUPPLEMENTAL ANALYSIS	WORK	Antecedent	Challenge stressors	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .	. . .		
			Hindrance stressors	0.45	1	-0.16	8	-0.04	.	0	.	9	.	0.23	1	-0.13	8	-0.05			
			Job resources	0.13	3	0.27 *	31	0.32 ***	3.93 *	6	0.17 *	26	0.34 ***	1.29	8	0.38 ***	23	0.27 ***			
			Objective ability - domain	2.28	2	0.10	4	0.24 ***	2.28	2	0.10	4	0.24 ***	.	0	.	5	.			
			Perceived ability - domain	0.24	6	0.24 †	14	0.31 ***	2.97 †	4	0.41 ***	12	0.21 **	0.00	4	0.28	14	0.28 **			
		Correlate	Career orientation	1.14	3	0.27 †	16	0.08	1.41	3	0.29 †	15	0.07	5.77 *	5	-0.08	12	0.18 **			
			Job orientation	.	0	.	11	.	1.73	1	-0.66 ***	10	-0.45 ***	1.87	4	-0.40 ***	5	-0.50 ***			
			Career adaptability and flexibility	0.19	3	0.29	6	0.18	0.01	6	0.18	2	0.21	5.36 *	4	0.43 **	5	0.03			
			Career commitment	0.35	3	0.56 ***	7	0.53 ***	.	0	.	10	.	.	0	.	10	.			
			Career, professional and occupational identification	0.02	5	0.36 ***	10	0.37 ***	0.05	8	0.35 ***	6	0.37 ***	0.57	1	0.25	14	0.38 ***			
		Outcome	Career satisfaction	14.59 ***	2	0.53 ***	5	0.28 ***	.	0	.	7	.	1.27	3	0.43 ***	4	0.30 **			
			Career strategies	0.70	3	0.39 ***	5	0.44 ***	0.47	4	0.36 ***	1	0.44 ***	.	0	.	8	.			
			Hours worked	0.68	3	0.12	7	0.04	.	0	.	10	.	.	0	.	10	.			
			Income	0.28	4	0.00	10	0.05	.	0	.	12	.	.	0	.	14	.			
			Involvement in calling-relevant activities	0.49	6	0.27 *	7	0.16	0.53	6	0.23 *	6	0.14	.	0	.	13	.			
	LIFE	Antecedent	Organizational commitment	0.20	2	0.47 ***	14	0.43 ***	0.96	1	0.56 ***	15	0.43 ***	.	0	.	15	.			
			Other-oriented psychological and behavioral outcomes - work	0.16	3	0.24 †	14	0.29 ***	0.01	4	0.23 **	11	0.22 ***	0.35	2	0.36 *	13	0.26 ***			
			Tenure - domain or occupational	0.14	2	0.01	11	0.04	0.32	1	-0.03	12	0.03	1.47	3	0.08 †	10	0.01			
		Outcome	Turnover intentions	0.32	1	-0.47 *	16	-0.36 ***	.	0	.	17	.	0.52	2	-0.25	14	-0.37 ***			
			Work engagement and involvement	0.78	3	0.37 *	28	0.50 ***	0.27	2	0.38 *	27	0.46 ***	0.02	7	0.46 ***	20	0.47 ***			
			Calling-oriented social influence	0.01	4	0.10	3	0.11	.	6	.	0	.	.	0	.	7	.			
		INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES	Correlate	Other-oriented psychological and behavioral outcomes - life	.	0	.	4	.	3.22 †	3	0.26 ***	1	0.40 ***	.	0	.	4	.		
				Work-family conflict	.	0	.	6	.	.	0	.	6	.	2.54	2	-0.40 ***	3	-0.20 *		
				Big 5 - Agreeableness	0.02	2	0.13	5	0.16 †	1.28	2	0.02	4	0.21 *	.	0	.	6	.		
				Big 5 - Conscientiousness	0.57	2	0.23 **	6	0.17 ***	0.41	2	0.16 *	5	0.21 ***	.	0	.	6	.		
				Big 5 - Extraversion	9.69 **	2	0.26 ***	5	0.13 ***	1.16	2	0.22 ***	4	0.14 ***	.	0	.	6	.		
				Big 5 - Neuroticism	0.10	2	-0.20 **	4	-0.17 **	6.11 *	2	-0.14 **	3	-0.25 ***	.	0	.	5	.		
				Big 5 - Openness to experience	0.23	2	0.02	4	0.05 †	0.56	2	0.01	3	0.04 †	.	0	.	5	.		
	Core self-evaluations			0.30	1	0.18	7	0.30 ***	12.80 ***	4	0.18 **	2	0.48 ***	.	0	.	7	.			
	Extrinsic motivation			3.82 †	5	0.00	7	0.14 **	0.42	6	0.11 †	6	0.06	.	0	.	11	.			
	Hope			0.63	1	0.24	5	0.37 ***	1.42	4	0.30 ***	2	0.47 ***	0.65	1	0.45 **	5	0.32 ***			
	Intrinsic motivation	0.18	3	0.32 *	11	0.25 **	0.06	6	0.28 *	8	0.25 **	.	0	.	12	.					
	Objective ability - general	0.00	1	-0.08	6	-0.08	4.54 *	4	-0.02	3	-0.16 **	.	0	.	6	.					
Religiosity and spirituality	3.41 †	6	0.11	31	0.30 ***	0.32	17	0.26 ***	17	0.31 ***	0.61	1	0.08	35	0.28 ***						

Notes.

†  $p < .10$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## **STUDY 2**

### **Changing Careers to Pursue a Calling: How People Make Career Pivots**

#### **ABSTRACT**

Management scholarship is rife with accounts of people pivoting from steady jobs and “good” careers into occupations they view as more personally and socially significant. However, existing organizational theory cannot explain how people make these career pivots, which entail a major change in both the nature and meaning of their work. Through a longitudinal qualitative study of 69 individuals associated with *When to Jump*, a global community for people making career “jumps” to pursue their passions, this paper explores how people move psychologically toward occupations that align with their callings, while disengaging from behaviorally-anchored occupations that leave their callings unanswered. Drawing on 201 interviews, conducted in three waves over 18-months, as well as archival and observational data gathered over 3.5 years, I find that career pivots are radical, unconventional career transitions—often requiring some degree of “starting over,” and accompanying loss of status and/or security. Considering these unique characteristics of career pivots, successful completion of the underlying psychological role movement is likely to hinge upon whether an individual can construct a compelling “career pivot self-narrative”—a personally and socially acceptable story about the career pivot that accounts for the narrator's discontinuous and unconventional role movement. Adopting this perspective on “how” people pivot, I then use the longitudinal data to examine how self-narratives evolve across the stages of a career pivot, and eventually become enduring, thereby facilitating the pivot’s completion. My examination reveals that several elements of the self-narrative, including its exposition, inciting incident, and rising action, evolve between the early and middle stages of a career pivot. Subsequently, in the late stage of a career pivot—when people are working in their new occupations—if their new occupational identity is validated and work is experienced as a calling, the self-narrative becomes enduring, and the career pivot is complete. This study demonstrates, not only the power of self-narratives in facilitating career pivots, but the real-time evolution of these narratives as they are initially developed, subsequently revised, and eventually maintained as the enduring stories people tell about their career transitions to pursue a calling. I conclude by highlighting contributions to research on role transitions and callings, as well as by discussing a preliminary finding, that could be explored in future research, concerning the potential detriments of career pivot self-narratives in a social context.

*Keywords:* career pivots, callings, role transitions, self-narratives, longitudinal research qualitative research

*As children, most of us had extraordinary dreams and boundless ambition. So how can we bring that back to life, and pursue our true calling rather than a career that doesn't fulfill us?*

– Former Advertising Professional Turned Writer and Coach  
(Da Costa, 2020)

Stories of people leaving unfulfilling occupations to pursue their callings abound in the literature and popular press. Research provides accounts of bankers leaving finance to pursue their passions (Crosina & Pratt, 2019), attorneys leaving the legal profession to pursue more personally meaningful work (Carnahan, Kryscynski, & Olson, 2017), and New Yorkers switching careers to pursue firefighting and teaching in the wake of the 9/11 “mortality shock” (Grant & Wade-Benzoni, 2009; Wrzesniewski, 2002). A similar narrative weaves through the popular press: the consultant who leaves the corporate world to pursue a creative career (Edwards-Brown, 2020), the everyday citizen who retrain as a nurse in the wake of COVID-19 (Kale, 2020), and the football player who trades fame and fortune for the life of a PhD student, studying the brain injuries that plague his former sport (Patra, 2018). Regardless of the source or story in question, the evidence is clear: people are making career pivots to pursue their *callings*.

In the literature, scholars use the term “calling” to refer to those meaningful occupations that people feel passionate about and/or destined to undertake (e.g., by virtue of their natural gifts and/or idiosyncratic life opportunities; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Wrzesniewski, Dutton, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). While the notion of a calling is hardly new, dating back as far as the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformation (for a detailed historical account, see Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), it is top of mind in research and society today. In many cultures around the world, the experience of work as a calling is now often held as the gold standard against which people measure their career success (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). Further, in the academic literature, calling has emerged as a core construct

in “positive organizational scholarship” (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2012; Dutton & Glynn, 2008), as well as the focus of a burgeoning research stream that comprises over 200 quantitative studies (Dobrow Riza, Weisman, Heller, & Tosti-Kharas, 2020). With the common wisdom increasingly becoming that to “live life to the fullest,” and “create an extraordinary life” you must “find your personal calling” (Steib, 2018; Wilson, 2016), philosophers and management scholars have even begun to consider ethical questions around callings, such as whether employers are morally obliged to support employees in their quests to “find” callings, and, by the same token, whether employees, themselves, have a moral duty to pursue them (e.g., to maximize their contribution to the world; DeBrabander, 2019; Michaelson, Pratt, Grant, & Dunn, 2014; Michaelson & Tosti-Kharas, 2020). Capturing this phenomenon, a writer for the *New York Times* recently remarked, “There is a growing expectation, if not insistence, that work is to be your passion, your obsession—a veritable religion” (DeBrabander, 2019).

Nevertheless, even as the importance of pursuing callings takes hold in research and cultural norms, the fact remains that people do not always pursue their callings, particularly as they embark on initial career paths (Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010). For example, fresh graduates may not pursue their callings because they *are unable* to discern them, either due to a lack of self-knowledge or a lack of prior opportunities to experiment with provisional selves at work (Ibarra, 1999). At the same time, even those graduates who *are able* to discern their callings may not pursue them due to financial circumstances (Field, 2009; Rosso et al., 2010), challenging labor markets (Dobrow Riza & Heller, 2015), or pressure to meet perceived parental expectations (Leung, Hou, Gati, & Li, 2011). In sum, regardless of whether a calling is discernable or not, people often reject the idea of pursuing a personally or socially significant occupation, instead pursuing work that affords them stability or status, yet which ultimately

leaves them unfulfilled—that is, with a sense of *unanswered occupational calling* (Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010).

### **When Unanswered Callings Become Unsustainable**

*Unanswered occupational callings* (hereafter, “unanswered callings”) are people’s beliefs that there exist occupations, which they (1) are destined to pursue, (2) would experience as personally and/or socially significant, but (3) are not currently experiencing in a formal work role (Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010; Duffy, Dik, Douglass, England, & Velez, 2018; Gazica & Spector, 2015). Research suggests that unanswered callings can be a major source of stress and anguish in people’s lives. For people’s work and careers, unanswered callings are associated with reduced job satisfaction, job involvement, work engagement and career commitment (Gazica & Spector, 2015). Further, in the broader domain of life, unanswered callings are linked to lower life satisfaction and poorer physical health, as well as a greater incidence of psychological health issues, including depression, irritation, and anxiety (Gazica & Spector, 2015). Previous research has identified several techniques for coping with unanswered callings, including “leisure crafting,” to mimic called work experiences through hobbies, and “job crafting,” to incorporate aspects of a calling within the boundaries of a current job (Berg et al., 2010). Nevertheless, while these techniques may facilitate positive psychological states, such as enjoyment and meaning associated with experiencing a calling, they also often produce negative feelings of regret and stress. For instance, through encouraging ongoing involvement in the calling, these techniques may serve as a constant reminder that one is not pursuing the calling in a formal work role, and thus evoke long-term feelings of regret over past career choices (Berg et al., 2010). These techniques may also induce stress, such as when individuals face frustrating constraints on their ability to craft (e.g., limited time and resources, “red tape” in the

organization), or when crafting efforts become onerous, inducing feelings of overload (Berg et al., 2010). Collectively, these negative consequences call into question the long-term viability of sustaining an unanswered calling, even through the use of job and leisure crafting.

Other areas of research similarly raise doubt concerning people's ability to sustain unanswered callings. For example, research in the systems psychodynamics tradition (e.g., Padavic, Ely, & Reid, 2020; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020, Petriglieri, Petriglieri, & Wood, 2018), suggests that people attempting to pursue their callings "in a more civil guise" (Petriglieri, 2020, p. 172), such as through job and leisure crafting techniques, may be seen as engaging in "adaptive patterns of wish fulfillment—or suppression" (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020, p. 415). Such suppression techniques, while potentially reducing the anxiety associated with having unanswered callings, are prone to elicit, as with all acts of suppression, a host of "secondary or substitute anxieties" (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020, p. 418), such as the feelings of regret and stress that have been linked to these techniques in the previous research (Berg et al., 2010). Findings from research on self-control also call into question the viability of these techniques as sustainable long-term solutions. As Wood (2019) explained, "What we've learned from research on self-control is that whatever we're denying ourselves becomes more and more powerful over time. It's almost like you're controlling your temper and then finally you explode." In sum, previous research across a range of literatures raises doubt concerning people's ability to sustain unanswered callings. The question then becomes, when unanswered callings become unsustainable, how can people move away from the behaviorally-anchored occupations that leave their callings unanswered, and toward occupations that align with their callings?

### **The Present Study**

Through a longitudinal qualitative study of 69 individuals associated with *When to Jump*, a global community for people making career “jumps” to pursue their passions, this paper explores how people simultaneously move toward occupations that align with their callings, while disengaging<sup>30</sup> from behaviorally-anchored occupations that leave their callings unanswered—a physical and psychological movement that I refer to as a “career pivot.” Drawing on 201 interviews, conducted in three waves over 18-months, as well as archival and observational data gathered over 3.5 years, I develop theory to explain how people make career pivots, role transitions that involve both major change in the nature and meaning of people’s work. Recognizing that a career pivot has both physical and psychological components, and that “uncoupling the physical and psychological components of the role change process broadens our understanding of work role transitions,” (Wittman, 2019, p.725), this research focuses specifically on the psychological component of a career pivot (Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth, Corley, & Harrison, 2008; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). This component refers to the simultaneous process of psychologically disengaging from one occupation, which is viewed as a “job” or “career,” while engaging with another occupation, which is viewed as a “calling” (Ebaugh, 1988; Ashforth, 2001; Ramarajan, 2019). This process begins well before the physical occupational change occurs, and also extends well beyond it, only culminating when the individual has developed a personally and socially acceptable “self-narrative” to justify the significant transition, and therefore to complete the major psychological movement (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010).

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<sup>30</sup> I use the term, “disengaging,” as opposed to “deidentifying” or “disidentifying,” because individuals in this stage are in the process of separating or “becoming an ex” (Ebaugh, 1988) from the behaviorally-anchored occupation, but they are not necessarily eliminating the occupational role identity from their self-definition. For example, an individual may psychologically disengage from an occupational role—determining that it does not align with who they ought or desire to become in the future—but nevertheless allow the identity to “linger” (Wittman, 2019) or be retained in the working self-concept through legacy identification (Eury, Kreiner, Treviño, & Gioia, 2018).

To provide clarity around the theoretical underpinning of this study, I now turn to situate it within research on role transitions and callings. I explain that while existing research cannot adequately explain how people pivot, an understanding of this career phenomenon is critical to advancing management theory.

### **Career Pivots: At the Intersection of Research on Callings and Role Transitions**

There are two key components of making a career pivot: (1) an occupational transition, and (2) a shift in work orientation (i.e., from a “job” or “career” to “calling” orientation). Therefore, while the concept of a “career pivot” has not been explored in prior work, per se, it effectively lies at the intersection of two literatures: one, on role transitions, and the other, on callings. However, research on role transitions has seldom explored how people make occupational transitions (Anteby, Chan, & DiBenigno, 2016), and research on callings has not explored how people shift from a “job” or “career” to “calling” orientation (Wrzesniewski, 2002). As a result, existing organizational theory cannot explain how people pivot.

A well-established body of scholarship centers on role transitions, defined as people’s “psychological (and if relevant, physical) movement between roles” (Ashforth, 2001, p. 271), including their “disengagement from one role (role exit) and engagement in another (role entry)” (Ashforth, 2001, p. 21). This scholarship has examined the *cognitive decision-making* and *behavioral processes* that are involved in exiting work roles and organizations (Hom, Lee, & Shaw, 2017; Hom, Mitchell, Lee, & Griffeth, 2012; Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Li, Lee, Mitchell, Hom, Griffeth, 2016), as well as the *socialization processes* that are involved in entering and becoming adjusted into new roles (Saks & Ashforth, 1997). Further, and most pertinent to the current study, this scholarship has explored the *psychological processes* underlying role transitions.

In the research on “micro” role transitions, for example, scholars have examined how people move psychologically between their various work and family roles throughout the day (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000; Jachimowicz, Cunningham, Staats, Gino, & Menges, 2020), as well as how they psychologically shift between multiple, simultaneously-held job roles (Campion, Caza, & Moss, 2018; Caza, Vough, & Moss, 2018). Further, in the research on “macro” role transitions (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010), scholars have examined how people move into and out of “professions”—specific types of occupations that are characterized by autonomy, authority, and esoteric knowledge (Hodson & Sullivan, 2012; Anteby et al., 2016), such as those of physicians, lawyers, and pastors (Anteby, Chan, & DiBenigno, 2016; Bloom, Colbert, & Nielson, 2020; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006). However, “professions encompass only a subset of occupations” (Anteby et al., 2016, p. 188), or a subset of the broader work categories to which people belong (Anteby et al., 2016; Hom, Lee, & Shaw, 2017; Lee, Carswell, & Allen, 2000). Thus, the prior work research on “macro” role transitions cannot inform our understanding of how people make career pivots, which involve moving between occupational, but not necessarily “professional” roles. For instance, consider an individual who makes a career pivot from firefighting, an occupation that he or she does the “for the paycheck” (Pratt, Lepisto, & Dane, 2019), to animal shelter work, an occupation that he or she views as a “calling” (Schabram & Maitlis, 2017). While the individual’s role transition entails a movement between occupations, it does not entail movement into or out of a “profession.” Thus, the existing scholarship on role transitions, even within “macro” role transition research, cannot explain how people make the type of occupational transitions that are involved in a career pivot. The absence of occupational dynamics in the scholarship on role transitions is symptomatic of a wider problem in organization and management research. As Anteby and colleagues (2016) observed,

“Only limited management and organizational scholarship considers occupations, but when it does, its emphasis tends to be only on professions, such as those involving lawyers and physicians. But occupational dynamics, more broadly, permeate organizations as well” (p. 188). In sum, while not unique to role transition scholarship, the absence of occupational dynamics within this research area nevertheless limits our understanding of career pivots.

In addition to the occupational transition, another component of a career pivot is the “work orientation shift” (i.e., from a job or career to calling orientation). Surprisingly, how people navigate shifting work orientations (Wrzesniewski, 2002) remains relatively unexplored in the well-developed literature on callings. To date, calling scholars have acknowledged that people can pursue meaningful occupations that align with their callings (e.g., Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), or unfulfilling occupations that misalign with them (Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010), but they have not explored how people can make positive shifts from the latter to the former occupations, as would be the case during a career pivot. In a similar vein, research on the meaning of work and careers (Bellah et al., 1985; Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) has established that people can experience their work in several ways, such as a means to a financial end (i.e., a “job”), an opportunity to attain status through advancement (i.e., a “career”), or as worthwhile end in itself (i.e., a “calling”). However, it has not explored how people navigate shifts in these experiences (Wrzesniewski, 2002), such as how they leave a “job” or “career” to pursue a “calling,” as would be the case in making a career pivot. Overall, research has not examined how people experience a shift in work orientation, and thus this component of a career pivot is poorly understood.

### **Importance of Understanding How People Pivot**

Although existing organizational theory cannot explain how people pivot, from an occupational transition or work orientation shift perspective, understanding how people pivot is nevertheless important for three reasons. The first reason concerns the nature of contemporary careers. In an era of “self-directed,” “values-driven,” “boundaryless” careers (Briscoe, Hall, & Frautschy DeMuth, 2006), characterized by individual agency and portability (Petriglieri, Petriglieri, & Wood, 2018), people can readily move across organizational boundaries—a reality that has unmoored work identities from organizational memberships and re-rooted them in broader occupational groups (Anteby et al., 2016). In other words, the “organization man,” (Whyte, 1956) who stays loyal in exchange for lifetime employment, has been replaced, in many respects, by the “occupational (wo)man,” who anchors to an occupation, while moving fluidly between organizations over the course of his or her career” (Anteby et al., 2016, p. 185). In a context where work identities are increasingly defined by occupations over organizations, people may find it increasingly important to locate themselves within the “right” occupations, namely those that align with their occupational callings.

The second reason it is important to understand how people make career pivots concerns findings in the research on callings and the meaning of work. Research on callings has found that pursuing a calling is associated with numerous benefits for people’s work, careers, and lives, including greater job satisfaction (Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012; Neubert & Halbesleben, 2015), career self-efficacy and decidedness (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Hirschi, 2012; Park, Sohn, & Ha, 2016), and life satisfaction and meaning (Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Bott, 2013; Duffy, Allan, & Bott, 2012; Praskova, Creed, & Hood, 2015; Praskova, Hood, & Creed, 2014). On the other hand, having an unanswered calling, or staying in an occupation that does not align with one’s calling, is linked to numerous negative outcomes,

including feelings of regret (Berg et al., 2010), reduced work engagement, and poorer physical and psychological health (Gazica & Spector, 2015). Similarly, research on the meaning of work has found that viewing work as a calling is associated with more positive outcomes than viewing work as a job or career. For instance, people who have a calling orientation tend to miss fewer days of work, and be more satisfied in their work and lives, compared to people who have a job or career orientation (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Given the benefits of pursuing a calling versus leaving a calling unanswered, and viewing work as a calling versus as a job or career, understanding how people make career pivots is key to helping people lead more meaningful lives and careers.

The third reason it is important to understand how people pivot concerns evidence that these role changes may represent uniquely challenging identity transitions, especially relative to other types of role changes. Career pivots are likely to be difficult identity transitions, firstly, because they involve occupational change. Since people experience callings toward lines of work that transcends jobs and organizations, (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), making a career pivot inherently involves changing one's occupation (as opposed to simply one's job or organization). An investment banker at one bank, for example, is unlikely to pursue a calling by becoming an investment banker at another bank. Overall, making a career pivot represents a major shift in the content of people's work, above and beyond that of a typical job change. A second feature of these role changes that makes them difficult identity transitions is that they involve a change in the personal and social significance, or meaning, attached to work. When people make career pivots, not only must they account for a major change in the nature of their work (i.e., "what I do for work"; my occupation), they must also account for a major shift in the meaning attached to work (i.e., "what work means to me": my orientation

toward work). Whereas people may have previously experienced work as a means to an end (i.e., a “job”) or as way to enhance status through advancement (i.e., a “career”), they experience work—following the role change—in a very different way. Called work is personally meaningful, intrinsically enjoyable and an end in itself (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Thus, the career change to pursue a calling requires transforming one’s views about the meaning of work in life—from viewing work as a source of pay or prestige to viewing work as a source of passion or purpose. Overall, making a career pivot is likely to be a uniquely challenging identity shift, relative to that underlying other types of role changes.

In sum, career pivots are timely, consequential, and involve a challenging identity transition, but the literature does not yet speak directly to how individuals make these role changes. My study addresses this important question through a longitudinal qualitative study of individuals making career pivots.

## METHODS

The purpose of this study was to build theory about a phenomenon that is not well explained by the existing literature—the *career pivot*. Thus, I adopted an inductive, qualitative approach (Lee, Mitchell, & Sablynski, 1999) that followed the basic tenets of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). My primary source of data was 201 semi-structured interviews, conducted in three waves evenly-spaced over a period of 18-months, with individuals who were in various stages of making a career pivot. Through constantly comparing interviews with those that had come before, and through regularly returning to the literature to make sense of findings, each interview informed the next, and themes emerged (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I triangulated these themes with archival and observational data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which were gathered over a 3.5-year period between

May 2017 and November 2020. I now turn to provide detail on the research context and theoretical sampling technique that was used to identify interview participants. I then explain how interview data were collected, analyzed, and triangulated with other data sources, thereby allowing grounded theory to emerge. A comprehensive timeline of data collection efforts is provided in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

### **Research Context**

Participants were identified through *When to Jump*<sup>31</sup>, a global community, named after a book by the same name (Lewis, 2019), which facilitated connection and the exchange of stories among individuals who were making a “jump,” usually a career “jump,” from “work that is comfortable to a career [they] have only dared to dream of” (When to Jump, 2020). I discovered *When to Jump* in May of 2017, through a chance encounter with the community’s founder, an individual, who at the time, had recently “jumped” from a “prestigious corporate job” in venture capital to “pursue his dream of becoming a professional squash player” (When to Jump, 2020).

Between May and November of 2017, I familiarized myself with the research context through informal conversations, e-mail exchanges, and an unstructured interview with the community’s founder. I also read the founder’s book, which contained 40 self-narratives by individuals who had made “jumps” in their careers, and I attended a stop along his book tour, where I mingled with audience members who told me they were seeking inspiration and guidance in making their own jumps. Further, I subscribed to and read the community’s e-mail newsletters, in which community members often shared details about their jumps. I also read blog posts on the *When to Jump* website, in which members of the community shared their

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<sup>31</sup> Name used with permission of the community’s founder.

personal experience of making a jump. Additionally, I listened to episodes of the community podcast, in which individuals who had made jumps participated in interviews.

Through familiarizing myself with the context, I learned that many individuals conceptualized jumping as moving away from one occupation, which they viewed as a steady “job” or good “career,” while moving toward another occupation, which they viewed as a “calling” (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Participants frequently used the term, “calling,” explicitly. Thus, *When to Jump* represented an “extreme case” (Eisenhardt, 1989), in which to find a rare, concentrated sample of individuals who were making a *career pivot*—that is, an occupational change accompanied by a shift in work orientation, from a job or career to calling orientation.<sup>32</sup> Extreme cases, like *When to Jump*, are useful for developing theory because the specific dynamics being studied are more visible than they are in other contexts (Eisenhardt, 1989). In recognition of this unique opportunity to develop theory about career pivots, I set out to conduct a longitudinal study of individuals linked to this “frame-breaking” research context (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010, p. 666), and developed a protocol for conducting the interviews that would serve as the main source of qualitative data for the study. In November of 2017, I began recruiting individuals to participate in interviews.

### **Theoretical Sampling**

Interview participants were identified on a rolling basis, as opposed to all at once, and according to the basic principles of “theoretical sampling” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Theoretical

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<sup>32</sup> I also recognize one limitation of this research context is that individuals attracted to *When to Jump* may differ, in some respects, from the general population of individuals who make career pivots (e.g., because they engage with social media and interact with an online community). Nevertheless, I determined that this research context was appropriate for the present study because it afforded me the unique opportunity to efficiently identify interview participants for whom the phenomenon of a career pivot would be salient. If I had attempted to identify participants elsewhere, for example in a randomly-selected organization or workplace, I would have been unlikely to find such a high prevalence of individuals who could inform my understanding of career pivots.

sampling, a hallmark of the grounded theory method, is a technique that guides the selection of participants over time for the purposes of developing theory, as opposed to, for example, achieving representativeness in any given population (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In practice, this means that I initially recruited individuals whom I thought would offer varied perspectives on career pivots, but over time, recruited those whom I expected held specific viewpoints that would allow me to delineate properties of the emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Initial participants were identified in three ways. First, in November 2017, with the help of the community's founder, I solicited participation in the community's monthly newsletter. Second, I contacted individuals who had shared stories about their pivots in online blog entries on the community's website. Third, I contacted individuals who had interacted with posts on the community's social media pages on Facebook and Instagram. For instance, one Instagram post encouraged individuals to respond with a description of their career "jump." I sent private messages to the individuals who responded to this post, in which I informed them generally about my research, and asked if they would be willing participate in a virtual Skype interview. As the research progressed, I identified participants by additional means. For example, some participants offered to introduce me to other people in their informal networks who had made, or were deliberating, a career pivot. Given that individuals making career pivots are a hard-to-access hidden population (e.g., not easily identifiable in any given organization or workplace), I welcomed such introductions and through them identified three participants (Faugier and Sargeant, 1997). Although I identified and interviewed the first participant in November 2017, I continued to recruit and interview new participants until June 2019, after which I halted new recruitment on the basis that my model was "theoretically saturated" (Glaser, 1965, p. 441).

## Interview Participants and Schedule

I ultimately recruited a total sample of 78 individuals, who collectively had diverse backgrounds and work experiences (see Table 1 for sociodemographic characteristics). Each individual was invited to participate in interviews at three time points, which were roughly evenly-spaced over the course of 18 months. Collecting longitudinal data was crucial for theory development because career pivots are dynamic phenomena that unfold over time—encompassing physical and psychological processes that begin well before the physical occupational change, and often extend well beyond it (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Examining these phenomena cross-sectionally (i.e., with one round of interviews) would not have allowed for an understanding of these processes (Dobrow & Weisman, 2021). Indeed, as Langley (1999) noted, “Longitudinal data (whether obtained with archival, historical, or real-time field observations) are necessary to observe how processes unfold over time” (p. 6). An 18-month longitudinal design was well-suited for understanding these processes because this time frame is generally sufficient for observing role movements in most organizational contexts (Felps et al., 2009). Further, this time frame was especially likely to be sufficient in the context of *When to Jump*, where individuals were at least in the early stage, if not farther along, in making career pivots at the beginning of research period. Interviews were conducted on a rolling basis, such that the last participant completed a Time 1 interview during the same month that the first participant completed a Time 3 interview. The rolling nature of the interview schedule meant that the stream of interview data was constant and uninterrupted, thereby enabling me to stay close to the phenomenon and analyze the interviews one-by-one, without at any time becoming overwhelmed or a victim of “death by data asphyxiation” (Pettigrew, 1990, p. 281).

Most of the 78 individuals (74%) agreed to participate in at all three time points, such that 201 interviews were conducted in total. These interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, resulting in 2,278 typed pages of interview data. Data corresponding to nine participants was later excluded from the analysis, on the basis that the participants were not making career pivots. For example, several participants were making a “jump” from full-time employment to independent work (e.g., becoming freelancers or gig workers) because they sought greater freedom and flexibility, not because they sought to experience work as a calling or to make an occupational transition (Petriglieri, Ashford, & Wrzesniewski, 2019). I screened out these participants because they were not making career pivots. After excluding those participants who were not making career pivots, the final sample included 69 participants, including 24 men and 45 women, who ranged from 23 to 63 years of age ( $M = 34.50$ ,  $SD = 8.93$ ). Most (77.9%) had at least five years of work experience, and most (86.8%) had a 4-year degree or higher level of education<sup>33</sup>. Going into their career pivots, participants had diverse occupations and work orientations (see Table 2 for detail). In terms of occupation, they were working as finance/investment associates, directors, and managers ( $n = 7$ ), advertising/marketing managers ( $n = 6$ ), teachers ( $n = 5$ ), software engineers/developers ( $n = 3$ ), executive/administrative assistants ( $n = 2$ ), office managers ( $n = 2$ ), recruiters/staffers ( $n = 2$ ), medical science directors and researchers ( $n = 2$ ), property management and resident services employees ( $n = 2$ ), communication associates and directors ( $n = 2$ ), and in a variety of other occupational roles. In terms of work orientation, 30 participants described viewing their behaviorally-anchored occupation, at the beginning of the pivot, as a way to make a paycheck, thus reflecting a “job

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<sup>33</sup> Drawing on this sample afforded me the unique opportunity to study the phenomenon of interest (i.e., the “career pivot”) among individuals for whom it was highly salient. Nevertheless, I acknowledge the sample is highly educated, which may limit the generalizability of research findings. I discuss the limitations of using this sample, more broadly, in the Limitations and Future Research section on page 158.

orientation” (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). The other 39 participants described being driven to engage in these occupations by the prospect of promotion, ascending in an occupational hierarchy, or attaining status through advancement, thus reflecting a “career orientation” (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). See Appendix 1 for quotes providing evidence of participants’ orientations toward their behaviorally-anchored occupations at the beginning of the career pivot, as well as further information about the coding scheme that was utilized to code participants’ work orientations.

Insert Tables 1 and 2 about here

### **The Evolving Interview Protocol**

Typical of research that develops grounded theory, I conducted interviews guided by a semi-structured interview protocol. I chose to follow a semi-structured format, as opposed to a structured or unstructured format, so that I could organize the interview around a set of predetermined questions, while retaining the flexibility to follow-up on any surprising or interesting participant responses (Brinkmann, 2013; Gaskell, 2000; Lee et al., 1999). Because my data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously (Charmaz, 1995), the specific line of questioning also evolved over time, as I sharpened the protocol to capitalize on emerging themes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Although I made numerous modifications to the protocol over time, two of these modifications, in particular, had a noteworthy influence on the trajectory of my data collection and analysis.

**Career Pivot Stages.** The first modification was based on my discovery that participants could be categorized into one of three, distinct stages of making a career pivot: early, middle, or late. Therefore, I required three, distinct versions of the “core interview questions,” to guide my interviews with participants in each stage. The original protocol contained two versions of the

core questions: one tailored toward participants in the late stage of a career pivot (i.e., who had already made physical role changes and were experiencing work as a calling), and another for participants in an earlier stage (i.e., who had not yet made physical role changes and were still working in occupations that they viewed as jobs or careers). However, as I began to conduct the Time 1 interviews, it quickly became apparent that my two versions were insufficient. Specifically, rather than being categorized in one of two distinct stages (i.e., early and late), participants could be categorized into one of three stages: early, middle, and late. Table 3 provides sample quotes from participants in each stage.

Insert Table 3 about here

Participants in a “late stage” had already made physical role changes and were experiencing work as a calling, although they were still psychologically disengaging from their former occupations as well as internalizing their new occupational identities. Both participants in “early” and “middle” stages had not yet made physical roles changes and were working in occupations that they viewed as jobs or careers. However, participants in each stage differed in one important regard. Participants in the “early” stage sensed that their occupations left their callings unanswered, and they had thus begun to psychologically disengage from their behaviorally-anchored occupations. However, these participants could not identify the particular occupations that they were called to pursue. Due to having only a “generalized” sense of unanswered calling, or *generalized unanswered calling*, these participants had yet not begun to psychologically engage with another occupation, and they were far from completing any career pivot. The other group of participants, whom I categorized as being in the “middle” stage of a career pivot, were in a markedly different psychological and emotional state. Not only did these participants have a sense of unanswered calling, but they could also identify the particular

occupation that they needed to pursue in order to answer that calling (e.g., being a musician, artist, photographer, writer). Because these participants had a sense of *particularized unanswered calling*, they had begun to psychologically disengage from their behaviorally-anchored occupation, and to psychologically engage with another occupation. In a state of “liminality,” these participants were “truly in between identities, with one foot still firmly planted in the ‘old world’ and the other making tentative steps toward a ‘new world’” (Ibarra & Obadaru, 2020, pp. 474-475). Participants in this “middle,” liminal stage were much further along in making a career pivot than those in the early stage. Overall, my discovery of these three stages led me to modify the interview protocol, such that it contained three, as opposed to two, versions of the core interview question. As discussed later on, my discovery of these three stages proved important for theory development.

**Self-Narrative Perspective.** Another modification to the protocol, that greatly influenced my data collection and emerging theoretical insights, was adapting it to examine the research question—that is, how people make career pivots—from a self-narrative perspective. I adopted this perspective based on my analysis of the Time 1 interview data, which revealed career pivots were radical, unconventional role transitions that often required some degree of “starting over” (e.g., uptake of skills and on-the-job learning), as well as a loss of status and/or security (e.g., a loss of title or steady paycheck). Table 4 provides sample quotes from the participants that indicated these characteristics of career pivots.

Insert Table 4 about here

As it became clear that career pivots tended to possess these characteristics, I returned to the literature on role transitions to understand what research and theory suggest about transitions that possess these characteristics. I found that role transitions, which possess precisely these

three characteristics, are those in which self-narratives play an important role (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). In brief, without an effective “story” to account for the seemingly radical and socially undesirable transition, it is difficult for people to feel continuous across time, with respect to their work identities (i.e., frustrating a “self-continuity” motive; Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Breakwell, 1986; Brickson, 2013), and to view themselves in positive terms, or as making a career move that shows progression, growth and improvement in the career (i.e., frustrating a “self-enhancement” motive; Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991). Not surprisingly, a key feature of the *When to Jump* community, and what the participants often seemed to appreciate most about it, was that it enabled them to hear and read other people’s inspirational and reassuring stories about making career pivots (see Table 5 for supporting quotes).

Insert Table 5 about here

Acknowledging the highly challenging nature of career pivots, particularly from a self-continuity and self-enhancement perspective, and reflecting on why members sought community—to hear and read other people’s stories about making career pivots—I recognized that an important answer to the question of “how people pivot,” was through constructing self-narratives, about the role change, that preserved their self-continuity and enhanced their self-esteem. Therefore, in accordance with a grounded theory approach, which treats emerging findings as leads and dictates that scholars, “follow these leads, whatever they might be” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 83), I adopted a narrative perspective to examining my research question, and adapted the interview protocol in several ways.

First, while I had initially planned to ask people unique questions at each time point (e.g., as not to be repetitive and obtain as much “new” information as possible), my plan for the Time

2 and Time 3 interviews dramatically shifted based on adopting the narrative perspective. Specifically, to examine how people made career pivots, through a narrative lens, I needed to understand the way in which people's retrospective account of events changed over time, so as to facilitate their career pivots. To examine the evolution of people's self-narratives over time, I asked participants many of the same questions across each time point, allowing for the possibility that their recollection of events might change (Dobrow & Weisman, 2021). For example, during the Time 2 and Time 3 interviews, I repeated many of the same questions that had been asked during the Time 1 interview (e.g., "When do you think you first realized that you might want to jump?"). Whenever I repeated a question that had been asked in a prior interview, I was careful to acknowledge that a similar question had been asked in the prior interview, as not to make participants feel that I had not been paying attention or was wasting their time (Dobrow & Weisman, 2021). I usually achieved this by adding a phrase to the beginning or end of the question, such as "When you look back on things now," or, "Recognizing your perspective on this may have changed." Through asking participants to repeatedly provide accounts of past events, I was able to understand how they reinterpreted the past, in real-time, to construct self-narratives about their career pivots that preserved their sense of self-continuity, and also their sense of self-esteem.

To round out my understanding of career pivots from a narrative perspective I also modified the protocol to include several questions about the role of community and narratives. For instance, I asked community members what they hoped to gain from hearing and reading others' stories about making career pivots. I also sought to understand what kind of perceptions people held about these stories (e.g., whether there was any common thread that seemed to

weave across them). Finally, I added a question about how people’s own experiences of making a career pivot compared to the stories about career pivots that they heard in the community.

## Interviews

Guided by the evolving interview protocol (see Appendix 2 for a final version), interviews averaged 40 minutes each<sup>34</sup>, and followed a similar flow. First, I introduced the research and gained consent to record the interview. Next, I asked warm-up questions, including factual questions about the individual’s occupation, job title, degree of interaction with *When to Jump*, and “jump,” as well as a “grand tour” question about the individual’s typical workday (Spradley, 1979, p. 87). In line with the name of the *When to Jump* community, I initially used the term “jump” to refer to making a career pivot. However, in staying true to the data and in the spirit of facilitating rapport, I flexibly adapted my terminology to mirror participants’ own (e.g., “career transition,” “career change,” or “career pivot”), while periodically ensuring that both participant and I had a mutual understanding of the term’s underlying meaning to avoid the jingle-jangle fallacy (Block, 1995). After completing the warm-up questions and capturing a basic understanding of the participant’s jump, I then segued into the more complex, core interview questions (Leech, 2002). These questions differed slightly depending upon the participant’s stage in making a career pivot: (1) early stage; working in a “job” or “career” and experiencing a *generalized* unanswered calling, (2) middle stage; working in a “job” or “career” and experiencing a *particularized* unanswered calling, or (3) late stage; experiencing work as a calling, after having completed an occupational change.

Across participants, the longitudinal interviews captured a different snapshot of making a career pivot. Thus, I gained an understanding of career pivots through both real and retrospective

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<sup>34</sup> On average, interview were 40 minutes at T1, 41 minutes at T2, and 40 minutes at T3.

accounts, in line with guidelines suggested by Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2012) for developing grounded theory with “qualitative rigor.” For some participants, the interviews captured real-time progression between all of the three stages (i.e., early, middle, late). For other participants, the interviews captured real-time accounts of only one or two stages, or retrospective accounts of all three. Regardless of a participant’s stage at the initial interview, I invited them to participate in follow-up interviews at all three time points, in recognizing that the psychological process of making a career pivot often begins well-before and extends well-beyond the physical role change (Ashforth, 2001; Ebaugh, 1988; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010).

Throughout the collection of interview data, I also engaged in frequent memo-writing—composing 218 typed pages in total. Ongoing memo-writing encouraged me to reflect on surprising interview responses, and to evaluate the validity of my tentative model in relation to the incoming stream of qualitative data (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1965). Memo-writing also fostered reflexivity, pushing me to consider how aspects of my personal identity could be shaping the research outcomes (Hardy, Phillips, & Clegg, 2001). Further, writing memos was helpful in the context of my longitudinal design. In addition to reading transcripts from prior interviews, I frequently reviewed my old memos as a way of preparing for participants’ Time 2 and Time 3 interviews. Reviewing these memos refreshed my memory about important highlights from prior interviews, and helped me approach the conversation with a level of baseline knowledge that signaled I placed value on the participant’s time (Dobrow & Weisman, 2021).

### **Observational and Archival Data**

While the heart of my qualitative study was semi-structured interviews, I also collected data from multiple other sources to triangulate theoretical insights gained from the interview data

(Gioia et al., 2012; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Namely, I engaged in field observation by attending regular meet-ups with members of the *When to Jump* community in my local city. Whenever I attended one of these meet-ups, usually at a coffee shop, restaurant, or women's club, I wrote field notes throughout the conversation, as time permitted, and then engaged in reflection at home, while I converted my handwritten notes to typed notes. Beyond this in-person observation, I engaged in virtual field observation by participating in a Facebook group and Slack channel for people making career pivots, where I shared my own experience of making a career pivot. I regularly interacted with people whom I met on these social media platforms, including through public posts, private messages, and offline e-mail exchanges. In addition to engaging in observation, I collected and analyzed archival data, such as media articles and blog posts that interview participants had shared to provide greater background on their career pivots. I also reviewed the content of 30 community newsletters, in which community members often provided updates on career pivots. Further, I listened to 17 episodes (or 9.3 hours) of the community podcast, in which individuals often participated in interviews about their experiencing making a career pivot, and I wrote down eight pages of corresponding notes. Finally, I reviewed publicly-available blog posts on the *When to Jump* website and recorded nine pages of quotes and notes. I used this rich observational and archival data to corroborate the themes that surfaced in my analysis of the interview data.

### **Data Analysis**

In line with the narrative perspective adopted during data collection, my analysis of the interview data also reflected a narrative perspective. In other words, I sought to understand how people constructed self-narratives over time, and thus how they made career pivots. I

accomplished this aim through conducting both within- and between-person analyses of the interview data.

The within-person analysis involved considering interview data for each participant one-by-one, to examine how the participant interpreted and reinterpreted events as they unfolded across sequential interviews. In practice, this means that for each participant, I engaged in open-coding to identify the seemingly-important topics appearing in his or her Time 1 interview. These concepts often took the form of “in-vivo” codes, that directly reflected participants’ own language, although they were later grouped into second-order themes, that reflected my own language and interpretation (Gioia et al., 2012). Next, I compared the concepts appearing in a participant’s Time 1 interview with the concepts that had appeared in his or her subsequent interviews. If, by Time 2 or Time 3, the participant had progressed to a different stage of a career pivot (e.g., from early to middle, or middle to late), I paid particular attention to understanding whether, and in what ways, their recollection of past events had changed. The within-person analysis generated important insights about how self-narratives evolved over time, but it also had a limitation, in that not all participants progressed through every stage of a career pivot during the 18-month period over which the interviews were conducted. To address concerns over this limitation of the within-person analysis, I also conduct a between-person analysis.

The between-person analysis involved comparing the data gathered from interviews with participants at similar and different stages of career pivots. In practice, this means that I compared the concepts that appeared in my interview with one participant, who was in the early stage of a career pivot, with the concepts that appeared in my interview with another participant, who was also in the early stage of a career pivot. I also compared the concepts that appeared in my interviews with participants who were in different stages. Overall, the within- and between-

person analyses facilitated an understanding of how people make a career pivot, even though not all participants progressed through all three stages during the research time frame.

Through conducting this analysis of the interview data, and through triangulating my findings with the observational and archival data, I distilled the theoretical insights presented in this article. Figure 2 summarizes my data analysis and provides a graphic representation of the data structure, including the first-order concepts and second-order themes, as well as the aggregate dimensions that served as the basic building blocks for my theoretical model (Gioia et al., 2012). I concluded the analysis by creating a theoretical model to explain how people make a career pivot through self-narrative construction (see Figure 3).

Insert Figures 3 and 4 about here

## **FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this research was to understand how people make career pivots, moving psychologically toward occupations that align with their callings while disengaging from occupations that leave their callings unanswered. In the course of the Time 1 interviews, I found that career pivots unfolded across three stages, and that they were radical, unconventional career transitions—often requiring some degree of “starting over,” and an accompanying loss of security and/or status. Puzzled to understand how individuals made such transitions, I returned to the management literature on role transitions, where I found that role transitions, precisely possessing these characteristics, are those which tend to require the most substantive narrative accounting. In brief, because these transitions are radical and fail to represent career “progress” in the socially normative sense (e.g., owing to the inherent loss of status and/or security), people must engage in substantial “narrative identity work” to construct compelling self-narratives,

about the role transition, that account for its seeming discontinuity and “socially undesirable” nature (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Reflecting on this existing research, alongside participants’ comments about what they most appreciated from the *When to Jump* community—that is, the opportunity to hear other people’s stories about making career pivots—I recognized that constructing a personally and socially acceptable “career pivot self-narrative” played a critical role in facilitating the psychological role movement underlying a career pivot. Thus, I adopted a self-narrative perspective to examining the research question, how do people make career pivots?

My examination consisted of a within- and between-person analysis of the longitudinal data to understand how self-narratives are initially developed, subsequently revised, and eventually maintained as the enduring stories people tell about their career transitions to pursue a calling. My examination reveals that several elements of the self-narrative, including its exposition, inciting incident, and rising action, evolve between the early and middle stages of a career pivot. Subsequently, in the late stage of a career pivot—when people are working in their new occupations—if their new occupational identity is validated and work is experienced as a calling, the self-narrative becomes enduring, and the career pivot is complete. Below, I provide evidence to support all findings. First, I provide evidence supporting the existence of different stages of a career pivot. Next I present data highlighting the unique characteristics of career pivots, which, in conjunction with participants’ comments about the value of stories, led me to adopt a self-narrative perspective on the research question. Finally, I present evidence of how self-narratives formed, changed, and became enduring over time, thereby facilitating people’s career pivots. To protect interview participants’ anonymity, I use pseudonyms to quote and refer to them below.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> For the purposes of staying true to participants’ own language, I also use the term “career” and “occupation” interchangeably in this section. However, I acknowledge that a “career” and an “occupation” are distinct concepts.

## Stages of a Career Pivot

My first finding is that making a career pivot unfolds across three stages: early, middle, and late. Table 3 provides a summary of the defining characteristics of each stage, and sample quotes from the participants that exemplifies each stage.

**Early Stage.** In the early stage of a career pivot, the individual is working in an occupation that they view as a “job” or “career,” as opposed to in an occupation that they view as a “calling” (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). People who view their work as a job, or possess a “job orientation,” primarily conceive of their work as a means to an end, or as a way to make a steady paycheck and fund the more enjoyable life activities that they engage in outside of work (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). For example, reflecting on her historical view of work as an academic registrar, Courtney, a participant in the early stage of a career pivot explained:

I was always one of those ‘work to live’ people. As long as I pretty much enjoyed what I was doing and liked the people I worked with, it really didn’t matter where I was or what I was doing. My focus was on life outside of work.

As another participant, Doug, a visual merchandiser, explained, “It’s how I make my money to live and enjoy the other things.” Other participants, like Doug and Courtney, who expressed a job orientation, frequently referred to their work as a “day job” or “9 to 5,” and as something that provided them with stability and security, but from which they did not necessarily derive deep meaningfulness. As software developer Aiden succinctly stated, using the word, “calling” unprompted, “Is this my calling, so to speak? My purpose? Absolutely not.” In addition to those with a job orientation, other people in the early stage of pivot expressed a view of work as a career, reflecting a “career orientation” (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). People who possess a career

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Whereas an occupation refers to a person’s membership in a category of work and community that spans across jobs, a career refers to, “The individually perceived sequence of attitudes and behaviors associated with work-related experiences and activities over the span of the person’s life” (Hall, 2002, p. 12).

orientation tend to conceive of work as a source status and respect, and are driven to work by the prospect of promotion, praise, and advancement within an occupational hierarchy (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). At the same time, they do not view their work as a calling. For example, highlighting her career orientation at the early stage of her career pivot, trade and investment consultant Theresa explained, “The work was interesting, and I was growing, and I was getting promoted. But I didn't feel passionate about it, and I didn't feel fulfilled doing what I was doing.” In a similar vein, one participant, Ella, reflected on her attitude toward nonprofit management at the early stage of her career pivot, saying:

I look at myself, and I think about how, yes, I had the resources. Yes, I had people that cared about me. Yes, I got praise on a weekly basis. What I was missing was sort of the larger purpose piece at the top, that was like my own calling.

Overall, the first defining characteristic of this early stage in the career pivot is viewing work as a job or career.

Another defining characteristic of the early stage in a career pivot is possessing a sense of “generalized” unanswered calling. In brief, people in the early stage of a career pivot have a general sense of unfulfilled purpose in their lives because they hold the belief that there exists an occupation which they (1) are destined to pursue and (2) would experience as personally and/or socially significant, but (3) are not currently pursuing in a formal work role. I refer to their sense of unanswered calling as “generalized” (i.e., as opposed to “particularized”) because the people in this stage, while recognizing that their callings are unanswered, are unable to identify the particular occupations that would align with their callings. Either they may be unable to discern these occupations, altogether, or they may only be able to discern them in a general sense (e.g., “something creative”). For example, expressing a generalized unanswered calling in the early stage of his career pivot, package delivery driver Emmett reflected on his work:

It's definitely filling a need right now. Like I think I mentioned before, the benefits, the pay, the exercise, and the interactions with people...those are all great things, but there's still something inside me that feels like this is not the long-term solution to satisfy the desires inside me. It's not what I'm supposed to be doing.

However, when I asked Emmett to elaborate on what he was “supposed to be doing,” he was unable to pinpoint the particular occupation. He emphasized, “The overwhelming theme is just a desire inside me that's been there for a long time. I am supposed to be doing something else and not scanning packages for the rest of my life.” Software developer Adam made a similar comment, noting that while he was “not quite sure” of his “purpose” or “passion,” he nevertheless had “this constant feeling that I'm not doing what I'm meant to do.” Office manager Kyle, too, described a similar feeling, explaining, “when it comes down to it, there's something nagging saying, I'm not truly fulfilling something perhaps deeper in me.” That “something nagging” he later tried to explain, was an awareness of “something that's not being fulfilled,” of something “that's missing,” of “some sort of, well,” he paused, “that inner voice is calling.” As these quotes highlight, people in the early stage of a career pivot experience a sense of generalized unanswered calling—simultaneously aware that their behaviorally-anchored occupations misalign with their callings, while unaware of the particular occupations that would align if ultimately pursued. Importantly, my discovery of this type of unanswered calling represents an extension of how unanswered callings have been conceptualized in the literature, to date (i.e., as definitionally stemming from an individual's failure to pursue a particular, known occupation; Berg et al., 2010; Gazica, 2014; Gazica & Spector, 2015).

The final characteristic of the early of stage of a career pivot is that the individual is beginning to psychologically disengage from the behaviorally-anchored occupation. This psychological disengagement, which goes hand-in-hand with the awareness of an unanswered calling, was exemplified by management consultant, Lucy, who explained, “What we're trying to

achieve as individuals in society...we're all searching for something a bit more, and I don't think it's necessarily always material things. Yes, we do want those. We all want to be able to survive and have a nice life. But I think a lot of people realize that they're not fulfilling their purpose.” She then went on to explain that once people “become conscious of it” (i.e., this feeling of unfulfilled purpose), “you ask yourself, what am I doing? If I'm not doing what is really true to what I stand for, what can I do? And then they start getting itchy feet.” These “itchy feet” represented the initial break down of Lucy’s psychological bond with her occupation, and was highly characteristic of the early stage of a career pivot. Overall, people in the early stage of a career pivot are working in an occupation, that they view as a job or a career, and they are experiencing a sense of generalized unanswered calling, which is spurring them to psychologically disengage from the behaviorally anchored occupation.

**Middle Stage.** In the middle stage of a career pivot, people are continuing to work in an occupation that they view as a job or career, and they are continuing to psychologically disengage from this behaviorally-anchored occupation. What differentiates this stage from the early stage of a career pivot is that people are no longer experiencing a sense of *generalized*, but rather *particularized* sense of unanswered calling—simultaneously aware that the behaviorally-anchored occupation misaligns with their calling, and able to articulate the particular occupation would align their calling (e.g., being a musician, writer, or non-profit director). For example, hospitality training specialist Alexa, who was able to articulate that being a professional artist would answer her calling, explained:

Becoming an artist is something that I never, I think it's always been a need, but it's also always been something that I have been terrified of for so many reasons. I think that I needed that time to sort of realize like, this isn't going to ever go away. This desire to create things and to put them out there, it's just going to keep showing up, and unless I answer that, I'm not going to be happy.

As a result of experiencing a particularized unanswered calling, people in this middle stage of a career pivot are not only stimulated to psychologically disengage from the behaviorally-anchored occupation, but they are also compelled to psychologically engage with another occupation (i.e., the particular occupation that is expected to align with their calling). This middle stage is therefore characterized by a state of “liminality” (e.g., Howard-Grenville, Golden-Biddle, Irwin, & Mao, 2011; Ibarra & Obadaru, 2016), in which people are “truly in between identities, with one foot still firmly planted in the ‘old world’ and the other making tentative steps toward a ‘new world’” (Ibarra & Obadaru, 2020, pp. 474-475). A quote from Marcus, a computer technician in the middle stage of a career pivot, exemplifies this liminality:

I mean...it's almost like...right now I'm kind of living two lives. One, I have to show up to work every day and, you know, do my job to a certain level. And then I get to...in the moments in between...at night and on weekends...I get to be who I feel like I really am...what I want to be...what I want to pursue. So, being able to cut out my day job...it would be like shedding a second skin. I just get to be and pursue what I want to be all of the time.

Other participants in the middle stage of a career pivot made similar comments, alluding to the uncomfortable state of being “betwixt and between” identities (Ibarra & Obadaru, 2016). For example, insurance underwriter Zoe, who felt called to be a professional coffee roaster but was not yet doing so, explained of her situation, “I am in flux right now.” Another participant, Miriam, who was also in the middle stage of a career pivot, alluded to a similar feeling, explaining, “I am still in this like in-between phase.” Overall, people in the middle stage of a career pivot are working in an occupation, that they view as a job or a career, and they are experiencing a sense of particularized unanswered calling. Due to this particularized unanswered calling, they are continuing to psychologically disengage from the behaviorally-anchored occupation, while beginning to psychologically engage with another occupation, in an emotional and psychological state of liminality.

**Late Stage.** In the late stage of a career pivot, people are no longer working in the occupations that they viewed as jobs or careers. Instead, they are working in the occupations that they expected would align with their callings. Because, in many cases, people had engaged in provisional trials of these occupations (e.g., through hobbies; Berg et al., 2010; Ibarra, 1999, 2003), the sense of calling they expected to experience, indeed, materialized. For example, non-profit director Omar remarked, “It was only when I got in alignment...like now I feel driven. What makes me passionate? Who do I want to serve? How do I do that? I feel like I'm in alignment on those things.” Similarly, student affairs professional Carly explained:

I think empowering the next generation of students to like stand up for what they believe in and get an education so they can go out and better the world...like I feel like I'm sort of inadvertently helping the future through helping these students. It feels really great. I just don't know how else to articulate it. But I really do feel like it's what I'm meant to do.

Overall, people in the late stage of a career pivot are working in the occupation, that they expected would be a calling, and, in most cases, are beginning to complete the process of psychological disengagement (i.e., from the former occupation) and engagement (i.e., with the new occupation).

**Summary and implications for research design.** My first finding is that there are three distinct stages of making a career pivot: early, middle, and late. This finding led me to adapt the interview protocol to contain three versions of the core interview questions. It also framed my analysis of the interview data, in which I examined how “career pivot self-narratives” were developed, refined, and eventually retained across the different stages of a career pivot.

### **Characteristics of Career Pivots**

My second finding concerns the unique characteristics of career pivots. Specifically, I found that these career transitions have two distinguishing characteristics: (1) they are radical and (2) they are unconventional. Table 4 provides a summary and sample quotes.

**Radical.** One characteristic of a career pivot is that it is radical. I refer to this type of role transition as radical because it often requires some degree of “starting over,” or period of learning during which people must work to overcome a gap between their existing skills, knowledge, and experience, and those that are required by their new occupations. One participant, Omar, alluded to this notion that a career pivot involves some degree of starting over when he explained, “I had no prior background of non-profit management at all so I was like, can I learn this? Am I passionate enough about it to go through the learning process and almost, not start completely over, but kind of start really fresh in a new field?” Similarly, a former financial risk manager, Simon, described this career transition as “sort of starting again,” and former office manager, Kyle, referred to it as “really having to start from scratch.” Due to this radical nature of the career transition, making a career pivot was sometimes facilitated by an individual’s entry into an “identity workspace,” such as an educational institution, where the individual could practice new skills, learn from mistakes, and obtain missing qualifications in the safety of a “holding environment” that was relatively free of social judgment (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010; Petriglieri et al., 2018; Winnicott, 1975). Kyle, for example, went back to school to pursue a master’s degree in Counseling—an endeavor he described as “quite a feat.”

One explanation for the radical nature of a career pivot concerns the very fact that the individual is attempting to enter a new occupational group. In order to remain differentiated and control a given sphere of activity, an occupational group must have some unique task, skill, and knowledge requirements that make it difficult for newcomers to freely enter and encroach on the occupational “jurisdiction” (Abbott, 1988). People seemed to recognize that they were entering new jurisdictions, referring to the pivot as being akin to entering “a new world” (Ron and Jocelyn), or as entering a specific world, such as the “world of acting” (Walker), or “the coffee

world” (Zoe). Further, to enter these new worlds, a major period of learning was required, regardless of whether the individual was coming from a high-ranking employee background or not. As Jocelyn explained:

Even if you're this high-level manager in one occupation and you transition to the next, not all skills transfer. There are still skills that you have to learn through experience. Yes, some of the skills, specifically leadership skills are transferable, but there are things that will take you a step or two or three behind. You're going to have to start on a lower level just to learn the kinks of whatever new career you're pursuing.

Understandably, people sometimes found it difficult to come to terms with the learning and “starting over” that their career pivots entailed. Sophie highlighted this idea, admitting, “I hate being a beginner and when you change your line of work, there are transferable fields, but you're always going to be more of a beginner.” She subsequently clarified, “I like learning, but I just don't like feeling incompetent.” In sum, the first characteristic of a career pivot is that it entails a radical role transition.

**Unconventional.** The second characteristic of a career pivot is that it is unconventional. I refer to this career transition as unconventional because it often involves a loss of status and/or security, and thus it fails to conform to social norms concerning what is usually expected of any career transition—that is, career *progression*. Terry, a former executive in the grocery industry who was making a career pivot to pursue his calling as the owner of a coffee shop, alluded to the unconventional and somewhat regressive nature of the role transition, when he repeatedly described his career pivot as “jumping way back,” or as “a jump way back,” and moreover, as “going from being a high-profile, well-known person within an industry...to a nobody.” Many other participants made similar comments. For example, Madison, a former investment banker turned health coach and personal trainer, explained that one of the most challenging aspects of making a career pivot was in “accepting the new title and the new reality of what I am now.”

Reaching this point of acceptance was difficult, in part, because family and friends seemed to disapprove, or not understand, why she would make a career move that involved a loss of “corporate benefits and status.” Puzzled friends frequently asked her, “Why are you going to be a personal trainer?” Further, her parents expressed their explicit disapproval for her career pivot, urging her, with respect to her investment banking career, “You need to stick with it.” Madison, like many of the participants, was well-aware of the unconventional nature of her transition, particularly in the eyes of others. “I think all my friends and family,” she explained, “thought I was going crazy or having a crisis.”

Similar to Madison, other participants remarked on the negative social commentary that resulted, or could result, from making this type of unconventional career transition. For example, Priya, a pharmacist who was making a career pivot to become a wellness coach, explained that her parents “were really upset,” “very against” and “not on board with” her career pivot because “they thought that, you know, I had wasted six years of my life in pharmacy school.” Another participant, Owen, a software engineer in the early stage of making a career pivot, explained that “it was not easy to even think about changing something,” due to the potential backlash, from “friends and family,” that could result from giving up his “stable job.” As Owen’s quote also demonstrates, making a career pivot is not always unconventional in the sense that it involves a loss of prestige or status, it is sometimes unconventional in the sense that it involves a loss of stability or security.

Many participants highlighted the loss of stability and security that could come from making a career pivot. For instance, Julian, who was working as an assistant in higher education, explained that his biggest reservation about making a career pivot was, “Oh my God, I don’t want to lose my security.” He subsequently elaborated, “Because I mean, I don’t know what’s

going to happen to me after I make this leap. Right now, I make good money. I have insurance. It's very good from the financial aspect, but I have no idea what that's going to look like once I make the official transition.” The loss of security that is sometimes involved in making a career pivot was similarly highlighted by Dion, a former bartender turned yoga teacher. He explained, “There is no job security in yoga. There are no health benefits. There is no vacation pay. There is no retirement plan. There is none of that.” Not surprisingly, participants often surmised that it was only a certain “kind” or “type” of person that makes a career pivot. Adeline, for example, suggested it might be someone who “identifies as some slight level of crazy” because they are “able to do something” that is “surprising or risky.” In sum, social conventions hold that people should make role transitions to progress in their careers (i.e., not to incur a loss of status or security; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Since career pivots often defy these social conventions, one of their defining characteristics is that they are unconventional career transitions.

**Summary and Implications for Research Design.** My second finding is that career pivots have two defining characteristics. One, they are radical, often requiring some degree of “starting over.” Two, they are unconventional, often involving a loss of status or security. After finding that career pivots tended to possess these characteristics, I returned to the literature on role transitions to understand what scholars have established about role transitions that possess these characteristics. I discovered that role transitions, possessing these precise characteristics, are those in which self-narratives are particularly important to completing the underlying psychological role movement (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). In brief, without a coherent self-narrative to account for the radical nature of the role transition (i.e., the element of “starting over”), it is difficult for individuals to feel continuous about who they have been and who they are becoming in their careers, and therefore to complete the psychological role movement

(Ashforth, 2001; Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Breakwell, 1986; Brickson, 2013). Further, without a coherent self-narrative to account for the unconventional nature of the role transition (i.e., the loss of status or security), it is difficult for individuals to see themselves as growing toward a more positive conception of the self, and thus also to complete the psychological shift (Aron et al., 1991; Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In sum, identifying the two defining characteristics of career pivots (i.e., their radical and unconventional nature) led me to realize the important role of self-narratives in making a career pivot. This realization contributed to my decision, following the first round of interviews, to adopt a self-narrative perspective on understanding how people make career pivots.

### **Value of Stories**

The other contributing factor that led to my decision to adopt a self-narrative perspective was my finding that a key feature of the *When to Jump* community, and what the participants seemed to value most about it, was that it enabled them to hear and read other people's stories about making career pivots. Participants perceived the stories as valuable because they provided much needed inspiration and reinforcement (see Table 5 for a summary and sample quotes). For instance, Zoe, a participant who was making a career pivot from insurance underwriter to coffee roaster, explained:

When you hear other people's stories about how they've done this, it kind of encourages you. So, you feel like you're doing something good, and you're doing the right thing. And other people are going through the same thing you're going through.

As Zoe's quote highlights, community members received confirmation in other people's stories that pursuing a calling, or making a career pivot, was not only something that was "good" or simply nice to do, but perhaps something that was "right" to do—furthering reinforcing the

career pivot by instilling a sense of moral obligation to complete it. Another participant, Eileen, described the valuable reinforcement provided by other people's stories, stating:

Knowing that people are making these decisions out there that are countercultural helps me and reminds me that it can be done, and that people are doing it. It kind of grounds me too. It reminds me to think about what path I want to take. I think I need that constant reminder.

For Eileen and other participants that I interviewed, stories shared in the community were an important and necessary reminder that despite the radical, unconventional nature of making a career pivot, it was nevertheless possible and attainable. Stories were particularly valuable, in terms of providing reinforcement and inspiration, when individuals could see themselves as the protagonists of the stories that they were hearing. For instance, one participant, a marketing executive, Eliza, mentioned, that of all the inspiring stories, "My favorite one is the girl who was a single mom and was a marketing executive, similar to my situation." I began to recognize that, in hearing other people's stories, participants were beginning to craft their own.

**Summary and Implications for Research Design.** Overall, my third finding is that people valued their community for facilitating an exchange of stories, and that stories served as an important source of inspiration and reinforcement. Reflecting on people's appreciation for these stories, alongside the unique characteristics of career pivots, I recognized that successful completion of the underlying psychological role movement was likely to hinge upon whether an individual could construct a compelling "career pivot self-narrative," or personally and socially acceptable story that accounted for radical and unconventional role movement. Accordingly, I determined to use the longitudinal data to examine how career pivot self-narratives were initially developed, subsequently revised, and eventually maintained as the enduring stories people told about their career transitions to pursue a calling. Although I did not enter the research with the original intent of examining the evolution of people's self-narratives, I made this decision in the

spirit of induction, or in staying true to the data, which is typical of grounded theory research, and of qualitative research, in general (Charmaz, 1995).

### **The Construction of a Career Pivot Self-Narrative**

Although the circumstances surrounding each participant's career pivot were unique, and participants came from diverse backgrounds, as I compared the way their self-narratives evolved across the different stages of a career pivot, the longitudinal data revealed a common process of self-narrative construction. First, in the early stage of a career pivot, participants developed an initial version of the self-narrative. This self-narrative contained three elements: exposition (i.e., factual information about the protagonist's background, which set the stage for his or her eventual career pivot), an inciting incident (i.e., an event, or confluence of events, that jarred the protagonist out of a steady state, with respect to how he or she was thinking about his or her career, and thus set into motion the career pivot; Lee & Mitchell, 1994; McKee, 1997), and rising action (i.e., a sequence of events, presumably leading up to the individual's eventual physical occupational change). After developing these initial career pivot self-narratives, people who discerned callings progressed to the middle stage of a career pivot, and revised their self-narratives. Finally, in the late stage of a career pivot—when people were working in their new occupations—if their new occupational identity was validated and work was experienced as a calling, the self-narrative became an enduring story that people told about their career transitions, and the career pivot was completed. Based on these findings, I constructed a theoretical model of the process of making a career pivot through self-narrative construction. This model is depicted in Figure 3.

In the next section, I unpack my process of arriving at this model by demonstrating how the self-narrative was developed, revised, and eventually maintained, across the early, middle,

and late stage of a career pivot, respectively. I begin by presenting the self-narrative that was initially developed in the early stage of a career pivot, when people were working in an occupation that they viewed as a “job” or “career” and experiencing a generalized unanswered calling. Next, I share the revised self-narrative that participants articulated in the middle stage of a career pivot, when they were still working in the behaviorally-anchored occupation, but now experiencing a particularized unanswered calling. Finally, I explain how the self-narratives were eventually retained as enduring stories in the late stage of a career pivot, when people were working in a new occupation that aligned with their callings.

Although participants did not always recite their self-narratives in the specific form presented in this article (i.e., as a continuous monograph, from start to finish), through analyzing participants’ responses to the interview questions, in totality, and through triangulating their responses with archival and observational data, an archetypal self-narrative for each stage was allowed to emerge.

**Early-Stage Self-Narrative.** The self-narrative of an individual in the early stage of a career pivot begins with a protagonist, representing the individual telling the story, who is working in an occupation that is viewed as a “job” (i.e., way to make a paycheck) or a “career” (i.e., way to achieve external goals, such as wealth, power, and status, through advancement). Additionally, the individual has a sense of generalized unanswered calling, or salient awareness that their occupation misaligns with the type of work that they are called to or “meant” to do. At the same time, this individual faces a conundrum because, despite their desire to pursue more personally and/or socially significant work, they cannot articulate any particular occupation that would be viewed as calling. At best, they may be able to do so in general terms (e.g., recognize that it is “something creative” or “in and around food”). One participant, Tucker, alluded to this

conundrum, “it’s just kind of the realization that what they are doing is not their calling, rather than knowing what their calling is. At least that was the case for me.” Another participant, Eliza, who was also in the early stage of a career pivot, described the situation in similar terms,

I think people are in my common shoes in the sense that they think they're unfulfilled in their current position and they want to make a jump, they just don't know to where and they're too scared to do it. I think that's pretty common.

Overall, in the early stage of a career pivot, the self-narrative centers on a protagonist who has a generalized unanswered calling, and is working an occupation with a job or career orientation.

To some extent, it is no surprise that the protagonist has ended up in the current predicament—that is, in a “job” or “career” with an unanswered calling. Upon learning about the protagonist’s past (i.e., the exposition of the self-narrative), his or her present situation makes perfect sense. In brief, the protagonist’s location within the current occupation reflects the outcome of a constrained and non-agentic career decision making process. In other words, the protagonist did not have much agency when he or she initially chose to enter the current occupation, and thus the fact it is not a calling is to be expected. For instance, at the time of the initial occupational choice, the protagonist may have been grappling with uncertainty about what type of work would be meaningful (e.g., due to a lack of prior work experience), and thus succumbed to accepting whatever job opportunity came along. Alternatively, the individual may have been making an initial occupational choice in the context of a challenging labor market, such as in the context of the 2008 financial crisis, and thus had few work alternatives to choose from. Tristan, a college admissions consultant in the early stage of a career pivot, described one such scenario in his self-narrative:

A lot of people...they didn't have...including myself...maybe an active say in...they didn't have much agency in their job search. Because there just wasn't many jobs available, so we took what we could get. And I just fell into college admissions. I started doing SAT prep. I actually, at [University], my freshman winter, I started working for

[College Admissions Company] for SAT prep, and then in college, I think I would tutor some students in high school on the SAT or the ACT and then I started helping them with their essays, and anyway. So it's just something I fell into...didn't necessarily choose.

He then went on to summarize his overall lack of felt agency for the occupational choice, “it’s like I fell into it. I didn’t feel like I had a strong sense of agency.”

Another possible constraint on the protagonist’s initial occupational choice was social influence, such as from peers or parents. For example, Aiden, a software developer in the early stage of a career pivot, included background information in his self-narrative, suggesting that former business school peers had influenced his choice of academic major and occupation:

All the kids in the business school...it was all about money, right? Like what could you do to make the most money? Investment banking was glamorized as this career that you can make a ton of money...six figures right out of school. And investment banking is in the financial area, so I figured, finance major? Easy. Let's make some money. Let's do that. It's glamorous, sexy, whatever. So I went for it.

Similar to Aiden, numerous other participants made comments about the influence of peers and educational environments on occupational choices. For instance, one participant, who was in the early stage of a career pivot, included the following detail in the exposition of her self-narrative, demonstrating that her occupational choice had been constrained by peers and the norms of her educational environment:

Essentially everyone from Wharton goes down two paths. You either become an investment banker, a consultant or, if you can’t get a job there, you can do startups. So I got a job at [Company] doing management consulting. I really hated it.

In addition to influence from educational environments and peers, another key source of social influence was parents. Participants in the early stage of a career pivot frequently mentioned that parents had influenced their occupational choices, ultimately leading them to pursue occupations that were “safe” and “secure,” or alternatively, those in which achievement could be easily measured against external goals (e.g., status, recognition, power, wealth). For example, people

operations director Chloe explained that her choice to major in human resource management and pursue a related occupation had stemmed from her perception that working in business was “something like acceptable,” and, importantly, “I also wanted to make my parents proud of me.” In sum, regardless of the specific reason, whether it was due to social pressure, uncertainty, or a challenging labor market, a common theme within the early-stage self-narratives was that a protagonist “fell” into an occupation without much agency. This exposition, or background detail, was an important piece of the developing self-narrative because it helped explain why the protagonist had ended up in a job or career with an unanswered calling. It also set the stage for what came next in the story. That is, the inciting incident.

The inciting incident is the shock, or confluence of shocks, that jars the protagonist out of a steady state with respect to how he or she is thinking about the future career (McKee, 1997; Lee & Mitchell, 1994). The shock may be an event that is surprising to the protagonist (e.g., an unexpected personal illness, layoff, or denied promotion), or it may be an event that is not surprising, but rather foreseen (e.g., a bonus payout or birthday). Further, the shock may be an event that is positively valenced (e.g., the birth of a child), or negatively valenced (e.g., a terrorist attack). The important and defining characteristic of the event (or series of events) is that it jars the participant out of a steady state with respect to their career thinking by heightening their awareness of the generalized unanswered calling. The inciting incident is an important component of the early-stage self-narrative because it helps explain why the protagonist, after all of this time in working in occupation that misaligns with his or her calling, has finally begun to initiate a career pivot. In other words, the role of the inciting incident in the early-stage career pivot self-narrative is to establish why the protagonist’s awareness of his or her unanswered calling rose to the surface, and thus why he or she is motivated to explore possible callings in the

present. A typical account of the inciting incident in an early-stage career pivot self-narrative was exemplified by Aiden, who described how a confluence of shocks, including layoffs and a death event, eventually heightened his awareness of the unanswered calling, to the point where he was finally now motivated to begin exploring possible callings. He said:

I did just enough to do my job decent, but I wasn't very good at it. I didn't really enjoy it. What happened is, eventually when layoffs would come, I would be one of the first ones to get laid off. I got laid off from my first job after being there for about three or four years. Took another job and got laid off after about a year and a half there. Took another finance job, got laid off after another year and a half there. Then on my fourth one, I was just completely burned out. What happened is, shortly after I joined that—I'm going to kind of go past your question a little bit, but shortly after I was there, my dad passed away, and so you know, real life hit me in the face big time. A combination of not really enjoying my job, plus my dad passing away—I was completely just out of it. I got fired from that job. At that point, I knew I needed to switch. I could not get another finance job.

As Aiden's quote suggests, after the inciting incident, the protagonist begins to psychologically disengage from the occupation. However, the protagonist is not able to identify an occupation that is expected to be a calling, and thus, as Aiden put it, "I didn't know where I wanted to jump." This circumstance leads to the final part of the early-stage self-narrative: the rising action, in which the protagonist engages in "identity play" (Ibarra & Obadaru, 2020; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010).

Identity play refers to a set of activities that are engaged in with the intention of inventing and reinventing the self (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010). In the context of the early-stage career pivot self-narrative, the protagonist engages in identity play by generating a range of ideas about possible callings, and then by exploring these possible callings (e.g., through hobbies, courses, interaction with people in the occupation) and evaluating whether exploration experiences point to any particular occupation that is likely to represent a calling. This playful iteration between exploring and evaluating possible selves—images of who one might become in a particular

occupation (Markus & Nurius, 1986)—is often a circuitous process, with many dead-end paths along the way, leading to no calling discovery. One such example of identity play leading to no calling discovery was described by Nina, a private equity strategy associate who had recently explored the possibility that career coaching was her calling:

I tested out career coaching for a little bit and I realized I hate this, like literally this is terrible, and I can't believe I ever thought that I should quit my job and become a career coach...like I thought my passion was career coaching and then I tested it out and I was like, this is not it.

Nevertheless, while identity play was not the most “efficient” of activities, the protagonist’s hope was that, as long as they stayed committed to engaging in exploration and evaluation, the calling would be discovered eventually. John, a property/development manager in the early stage of a career pivot, alluded to the importance of remaining open and flexible during engagement in identity play when he explained:

I’m also just kind of open. I’m listening. I’m talking with numerous people, whether it’s my brother or my parents or my friends, just kind of throwing my ideas out there and seeing what I get back from them. Whether it be characteristics or traits of mine they see, or whether it be things they think would work, whether it be jobs that they’ve just started and are interested in you know me pursuing with them. I’m kind of an open book right now, just trying to take as much as I can in and then process it when I can.

John later engaged in identity play by exploring and evaluating a number of possible callings, including teaching, coaching baseball, renovating homes, and others—some of which he explored while he was employed as a property developer/manager, and others which he explored after he had quit his job. As was the case for John, and some other participants in the early stage of a career pivot, entering a dedicated “holding environment” (e.g., such as by moving into unemployment, taking a sabbatical or trip, going back to school), was often critical for engaging in identity play (Ibarra & Obadaru, 2020; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010; Petriglieri et al., 2019;

Winnicott, 1975). As another example, consider a segment of the self-narrative from former hospitality training specialist, Alexa:

I didn't want to go any further in hospitality, but I didn't know what I wanted to do... Yeah. So I took a year off and I thought, okay, I am going to discover what it is that I want to do.

Overall, the series of events that occurred during identity play represented the rising action of the early-stage self-narrative, and were presumably building up to the protagonist's discovery of a calling and subsequent entry into a new occupation. The early-stage story necessarily ended at this point since the individual who was telling it was still playing with possible callings and did not know yet where they were headed. Once the individual had identified a calling through identity play, the individual progressed to the middle stage of the career pivot.

**Middle-Stage Self-Narrative.** By the time individuals reached the middle stage of a career pivot, they had claimed particular occupations that would align with their callings, although they were still working in their behaviorally-anchored occupations. Thus, they no longer experienced a sense of *generalized* unanswered calling, but rather a *particularized* unanswered calling, stemming from their failure to pursue a particular, known occupation. This shift in unanswered calling was important because it seemed to mark the beginning of self-narrative revision. In brief, because individuals now had a sense of what they were moving toward (i.e., particular occupational roles expected to align with their callings), they began to craft self-narratives leading to those particular ends. Specifically, I found that by the time participants had reached this stage, they were beginning to revise each element of the early-stage self-narrative, such that the exposition, inciting incident, and rising action, aligned with their new calling claims.

In the middle stage of a career pivot, the exposition of the narrative evolved, to include the detail that the protagonist had always had a particular passion, interest, or gift. This key component of the exposition in the middle-stage self-narrative represented a major change over the exposition of the early-stage self-narrative, in which no such passion, interest, or gift was mentioned. For example, consider how the exposition of the self-narrative evolved for Lucy, a participant who progressed from the early to middle stage of a career pivot during the research period. When I interviewed Lucy during the early stage of her career pivot in October 2018, she provided background information that, for much of her career as a management consultant in the United Kingdom, she had been focused on “chasing the pound” (i.e., chasing wealth and status, reflecting a career orientation). However, upon reaching the age of 46, she determined that it was time to “figure out” and “fulfill” her “purpose,” so she left her job to travel the world and toy with possible ideas about what occupation might represent her calling. By the time of our interview, she had come up with one possible idea—being the owner of a coffee shop—but she was not confident, and did not claim, this was her calling: Frustrated by her persistent sense of generalized unanswered calling, she remarked:

To be honest, I didn't have a plan when I left my job. I just knew it was time to go. We took the year off to travel and I was hoping to get inspiration to see what I wanted to do when I grew up, but nothing specific came to mind except for the coffee shop idea.

Significantly, when I interviewed Lucy again 10 months later, in August 2019, she had progressed to the middle stage of a career pivot, having identified a particular occupation that she believed was her calling: being a travel agent (or travel counselor, as she referred to it). Further, she seemed to have reinterpreted the past, revising the exposition of her self-narrative to support this calling claim. Although in our two prior interviews, which had encompassed nearly 100 minutes total, she had provided no information indicating that being a travel agent was

something that she had always wanted to do, in our third interview she explained, “I had an inkling in my 20s. I loved to go and be a holiday rep, but then I realized it didn't pay very much and I had gone into a career that was paying well.” Further, she provided new detail about a conversation with a friend that had occurred just before she left for her recent trip:

I met up with some friends and I would start asking them for career advice. What should I do when I get back? I don't want to get back into doing senior management. Then I would go on and one of my friends was convinced. She's going on, “You would be so good at being a travel person. Advising people. Your attention to detail.” and I just go, “Yeah, yeah. It's only because you want me to be your travel agent.” We laughed about it and I laughed it off. I think that thought stuck with me. I'd do a bit of research and then I just forget about it. Well, I'd forget about it for a few months. It just kept on popping up and I was going, “No, no.” It didn't feel right at the time.

In revising the exposition of her self-narrative to include this new anecdote, Lucy communicated that the role of a travel agent aligned with her unique gifts and talents, such as her high attention to detail and excellent advisory skills. As a result, her revised self-narrative substantiated her claim that the role of travel agent was her calling, or her unique “niche” in the societal division of labor (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Further, her revised self-narrative helped to preserve a sense of “self-continuity” (e.g., Breakwell, 1986; Brickson, 2013), by establishing that pursuit of the calling was a long time coming. She reiterated, “It's not an overnight decision. It's something that was planted a while back. It's just that my mind needed to work on it unconsciously until it popped into my conscious in the case of this three months ago.” In fact, she claimed, “Actually it's been an 18-month journey, possibly longer.” Nevertheless, in our prior two interviews, which had occurred over that same 18-month period, the idea of being a travel agent had never come up in conversation.

These latter comments from Lucy also point to a second way in which people tended to revise the exposition of their self-narratives during the middle stage of a career pivot. That is, they suggested that thoughts of pursuing the calling had been brewing for some time. For

example, Zoe said she had “always been interested in coffee,” Connie said she was “always curious” about health food, and Carly said that working in higher education was something she “always had in the back of my mind.” Nevertheless, despite having these thoughts, an important aspect of the narrative was that they had been historically “denied” (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020, p. 416), either by being explicitly rejected (i.e., deemed non-viable occupational choices) or by being tacitly rejected (i.e., simply not considered). For example, in the middle stage of his career pivot, Marcus provided background detail demonstrating his historical denial:

You know, I've kind of always pushed down the...you know, I've played music my whole life through different bands and stuff, but...especially later in high school, I pushed down the thought of making that a real career just because it is...I mean, it is a hard thing to be able to do. There is no doubt. Not many people are able to sustain that. I kind of pushed down...I let internal and external voices really drive my decisions seven...eight years ago. The voices saying, "How will you live? You can't make any money.

Numerous other participants made similar comments. For instance, Amy described how she had historically rejected the notion of pursuing her calling as entertainment television host and producer:

I didn't know if entertainment could be a viable career for me. I didn't know if it was practical. I didn't know if I had the talent for it. I didn't know exactly what it meant to be in entertainment...what I wanted to do. I had admired TV hosts for a long time, but I wasn't sure if I could be one. And then I think as I started maturing and realizing that I wasn't going to go to med school, it was more like, okay I do have what it takes to do this, and this is what I want to do. And so it wasn't really a deliberation, more of a realization where I was like, okay, I need to just see what's always been inside of me this whole time.

In addition to participants like Marcus and Amy, who had explicitly rejected the thought of pursuing their callings in full-time work roles, other participants like Sophie had tacitly rejected this thought by simply not considering it altogether. As Sophie explained, “I don’t know if I had it on my radar that I could make money doing it.” Therefore, she had not considered the possibility, until recently, that photography could “be a career and not just a hobby.” Overall,

people in the middle stage of a career pivot seemed to revise the exposition of their self-narratives to substantiate their calling claims. By adding details to the exposition about the deeply-rooted nature of the calling, the fact that the individual was making a career pivot, in the present, was actually not all that unexpected or discontinuous; it was the eruption of an impulse that had been denied for some time. By including this detail in the exposition of the revised narrative, the plot of the story followed a familiar “return of the repressed” plot (Freud, 1915/1957), that was likely to be socially understood and accepted.

In addition to revising the exposition of their self-narratives, people in the middle stage of a career pivot also revised their accounts of the inciting incident and rising action. They revised the inciting incident by adding and removing mention of different shocks. For example, in the early stage of a career pivot, an individual may have said that a sudden realization (i.e., an “awakening”), or a minor event, such as reading the *When to Jump* book, was the shock that heightened their awareness of the generalized unanswered calling, whereas in the middle stage of a career pivot, an individual may have referred to one or more additional shocks, such as the death of a loved one, on top of, or in replacement of the original shocks. Further, as time passed during the middle stage of a career pivot, these shocks continued to undergo revision, presumably as new events occurred in individuals lives, and as they reinterpreted the past. For instance, when I initially interviewed computer technician Marcus, he suggested that a “realization that I spend 90% of my time doing something I don't love,” was the inciting incident that set into motion his career pivot. He elaborated:

It's just that there is such a small window of time during each day, or during each week, where I am doing something that I get lost in and feel fulfilled doing. That kind of realization...it's like a wasting-my-life kind of a feeling...like...it's slipping by. The last seven years I have been in this job have gone by really fast. I could see ten more down the line...20 more down the line...and I am still doing the same thing. That scared the

crap out of me, you know. That made me realize, it's not what I want to be doing for the next 20 years.

Significantly, when I interviewed Marcus again later that year, he added a new important

“shock” to the exposition of his self-narrative, which was his sister’s graduation from college:

I mean, it's kind of always been in the back of my head. I think too...the other thing...so, I have a twin sister, and she was probably...well, she just graduated college now. So, four years ago she started as a student in interior design. And, you know, I saw how passionate she was about that. It seemed like she was becoming really fulfilled through that, and she was really loving it. And I was like, well, you know, I'm not really doing anything that's making me fulfilled, or anything I feel like I really resonate with. And so, I think that kind of sparked, well, what am I passionate about? Music. Okay, so if you're passionate about music are you willing to try to make that your whole life?

Many other participants also revised the shock events in their self-narratives. For example, Stuart originally cited his father’s passing as the single key incident that set his career pivot into motion, yet in a later interview he noted that another key shock was the vesting of all his company shares. Similarly, Brandon originally cited several important shocks in initiating his career pivot, including his 29<sup>th</sup> birthday and watching a particular episode of *60 Minutes*, but in a subsequent interview he cited other notable shocks, including a five-year work anniversary.

Beyond revising the shocks in their narratives, people also seemed to revise the type of unanswered calling that was experienced following the shocks. Whereas self-narratives in the early stage of a career pivot tended to suggest that the shocks heightened awareness of a generalized unanswered calling, the self-narratives in the middle stage of a career pivot tended to suggest that the shocks heightened awareness of a particularized unanswered calling. In other words, the middle stage narratives suggested a calling was always known, whereas the early-stage narrative suggested there was a period of time during which the individual was unable to identify a calling.

In addition to revising the inciting incident, my analysis of how self-narratives evolved across the early and middle stages of a career pivot suggested that people also revised the rising action of their self-narratives. Specifically, playful, experimental activities, geared toward exploring and evaluating possible callings in the rising action of the early-stage narratives (i.e., identity play; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010; Ibarra & Obadaru, 2020), were often omitted, downplayed, or reframed in the rising action of the middle-stage narratives. For example, several participants omitted details about having experienced uncertainty about their callings, as having applied for a range of jobs, or as having contemplated a variety of alternatives. Further, participants often reframed circuitous, exploratory activities as more efficient, confirmatory tests of particular callings. The collective effect was that the rising action, which was framed as “identity play” in the early-stage narrative, was reframed as “identity work” in the middle-stage narrative (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010; Ibarra & Obadaru, 2020). Occasionally, contradictions in people’s self-narratives made it clear that these acts of revision were occurring. For example, in the beginning one of our interviews, Adeline explained that she had decided to “step away” from stressful social media advertising career to “look for something else,” and with only “a fraction of a thought about opening an art gallery.” She then engaged in various activities, including working at a hardware store, managing a restaurant, and doing short courses on art curating and business management, and claimed that her calling was to open an art gallery. She explained:

I was definitely driven to like my limit of like how much I could work and that just made me like reassess what I was doing at all. I actually quit that job with just like a fraction of a thought about opening an art gallery. I was like...I just have to like...I don't even have anything lined up. I am just quitting. This is it. I started working at like a hardware store and that's how I met the restaurant people, and I was just like, let's re-evaluate for a little bit. I wasn't going to be able to do that like working there. It was just too busy. I couldn't like step away and look for something else. So I just kind of quit... It was like, it was a few months after...like a month or so after I left the tech company that like the idea for it came to a head.

Subsequently, later in our interview, she claimed to have left social media advertising with the specific intent of opening an art gallery. In this revised account, her jobs at the hardware store and restaurant had always been done with the specific intent of saving money to fund the gallery opening, and the short courses were done specifically to enhance her qualifications for the end goal. Her revision exemplifies the way in which people reframe identity play as identity work:

The restaurant management was like kind of the first part of the jump. Like my jump was more from like a career in tech to the arts and like the restaurant management was like a part of the job. That was something that came up and ended up being how I like funded opening the gallery and like lived during the year between the tech world and opening the gallery... That was always temporary. Like going into that I knew I was opening an art gallery. It just was like, I hadn't signed a lease and so I didn't have the exact like location and so that was something else I was working on. So then I didn't know the exact date that it would be happening and so I just knew it was like an in between.

As I heard these two versions of the rising action in Adeline's story, I noticed a disparity between each account—that is, the first account suggested that an uncertain, circuitous sequence of events had unfolded, whereas the second account suggested a more goal-oriented, linear sequence of events had occurred. Therefore, I probed further to understand these events, including asking whether she had applied for any jobs after leaving the social media advertising company. If she had applied for jobs, it would provide further evidence that a period of identity play was being reframed as identity work. Indeed, her response supported this notion:

I actually did apply for some like...jobs...and like would have been...like...I like love Converse. I applied for a good job in Converse, but you have to start at the bottom there. It's impossible to get it. I did a couple things like that for companies I just knew I would love. It's still like...that was like a very small window of time. And then I was like, "No, I just really want to pursue the gallery."

Overall, I found evidence that a self-narrative in the middle stage of a career pivot, when an individual was able to identify a particular calling, contained numerous revisions over a self-narrative in the early stage of a career pivot, when an individual was unable to identify a calling. Importantly, this finding does not suggest that the early-stage self-narrative was a "true" account

of events, or that the middle-stage self-narrative was a “deceptive” account of events. Rather, each self-narrative was “true” at a specific point in time, and each served an important purpose for the participant. Ultimately, through revising their self-narratives in personally meaningful ways, individuals were reaching more coherent accounts of their discontinuous and unconventional career transitions, which was crucial for completing the challenging psychological shift.

**Late-Stage Self-Narrative.** In the late stage of a career pivot, people were no longer working in the original occupations that they had viewed as jobs or careers. They were working in the occupations that they expected would align with their callings. Since, in many cases, people had actively explored these occupations before pursuing them (e.g., through hobbies, educational courses, conversations with occupational group members), their expectations of alignment often materialized, and people experienced their work as a calling. Priya, a former pharmacist, for example, described her sense of alignment as a wellness coach:

I feel so aligned with where I am right now. Not even for any money in the world I would go back to pharmacy right now. You could give me any amount...I would never go back. I feel so aligned with where I am, and I feel so happy.

Similar to Priya, other participants found that their new occupational roles aligned with their callings. One such participant was Jeanine, a former management consultant, who had studied finance in college, and briefly attended business school, before making a career pivot to pursue her calling as a chef. When Jeanine was working in her new occupational role, she experienced a sense of natural ease in the kitchen, which she interpreted as a sign that the chef role aligned with her calling. She explained:

I feel very like natural in the kitchen. You know when you are good at something and you improve so easily. Versus like I am okay at finance. I did major in it. But like when I am doing finance stuff, I am working really hard. Like it is not natural for me. I thought that's how life was. When I got in the kitchen I was very shocked to see that it is not like that.

Aside from natural ease and internal alignment, other in-role experiences and feelings indicated that people's roles aligned with their callings. For example, some people described feeling a sense of destiny in their new roles, which is prototypical of many calling experiences (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). Mabel, for instance, stated with confidence, "I definitely think this is where I'm supposed to be and what I'm supposed to be doing." Other people indicated that their new roles aligned with their callings by describing their feelings of happiness while performing the work, or by describing the meaningfulness that they derived from engaging it. Overall, many people experienced a calling orientation toward their new occupational roles, suggesting that the self-narrative they had previously developed and revised, and which had been constructed with this specific destination in mind, continued to remain viable. Thus, with the addition of the individual's entry in the new occupational role as a final "turning point," the self-narrative could become an enduring story about the career pivot, facilitating completion of the psychological role movement.<sup>36</sup>

Although experiencing work as a calling was one critical condition for a career pivot self-narrative to be maintained (and the career pivot completed), a second critical condition was that the individual receive validation for the new occupational role identity. This validation often came in the form of positive feedback, financial success, or recognition in the new occupational role. For example, Lauren, who had made a career pivot to pursue her calling as a barber, described her client's positive feedback about her personable nature:

A lot of my clients have said, "you know, I feel like I just got out of therapy." [Laughs]. When they get out of the chair. They're like, "When I lie back in your chair, I just feel like I can tell you my whole life story."

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<sup>36</sup> On the rare occasion that people did not experience work as a calling, the self-narrative was no longer viable (e.g., because people no longer wanted to assert the claim that their current occupational roles were callings).

Client comments such as this one provided validation for Lauren’s new occupational identity because they confirmed that she had the ability to put clients at ease, which was an important quality to have in her service-oriented role. Priya similarly described receiving positive validation for her new occupational role identity as a wellness coach:

This girl was like, “Don't stop what you're doing, because you're inspiring me every day.” That was such an amazing moment, and then yesterday someone told me that I'm so inspiring and like, “Your aura is amazing.” When I hear people say that, it's so great. And I've never heard that in pharmacy. Never. So I feel like you're just a better person when you're on your path, and you're on your purpose.

In sum, when individuals received validation for the new occupational identities, and experienced their work as a calling, the self-narratives that they had crafted were suitable to be retained as the enduring stories that people would tell about their career pivots. With the addition of the individual’s occupational role entry as a final “turning point,” the career pivot self-narrative was thus maintained, and the individual’s career pivot was complete.

## DISCUSSION

Management scholarship is rife with accounts of people pivoting from “steady” jobs and “good” careers into occupations they view as more personally and socially significant. However, existing organizational theory cannot explain how people make these *career pivots*, which entail a major change in both the nature and meaning of their work. Through a qualitative study of individuals associated with *When to Jump*, a global community for people making career “jumps” to pursue their passions, this article casts light on how people move toward occupations that align with their callings, while disengaging from behaviorally-anchored occupations that leave their callings unanswered.

Drawing on multiyear, multisource qualitative data, I found that career pivots were radical and unconventional role transitions—often involving some degree of “starting over,” and

an accompanying loss of status and/or security. Reflecting on the unique characteristics of career pivots, alongside participants' comments about the value of storytelling in their community, I realized that a core component of making a career pivot was crafting a compelling story, or "career pivot self-narrative." Therefore, I used the longitudinal data to examine how a self-narrative evolved across the stages of a career pivot, and eventually become enduring, thereby facilitating the pivot's completion. My examination revealed that several elements of the self-narrative, including its exposition, inciting incident, and rising action, evolved between the early and middle stages of a career pivot. Subsequently, in the late stage of a career pivot—when people are working in a new occupation—if their new occupational identity is validated and work is experienced as a calling, the self-narrative becomes enduring, and the career pivot is complete. This study demonstrates, not only the power of self-narratives in facilitating career pivots, but the real-time evolution of these narratives as they are initially developed, subsequently revised, and eventually maintained as the enduring stories people tell about their career transitions to pursue a calling. The findings of this study have important implications for research and theory.

### **Implications for Research and Theory**

In developing a theoretical model of how people make career pivots, I make several contributions to the literature. First, I contribute to the literatures on callings and role transitions, simultaneously, by formally introducing and establishing the concept of a "career pivot." In defining a career pivot as a role transition that involves both an occupational change and work orientation shift (i.e., from a job or career to calling orientation; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), I create an opportunity for further integration of the literatures on callings and role transitions,

which have to date, developed largely independently. In addition to contributing to these two literatures through integration, I also contribute to each individually.

First, I contribute to the literature on callings by demonstrating how people with unanswered callings can pivot to pursue more meaningful careers. While existing research has acknowledged that unanswered callings can be a catalyst for anxiety and depression (Gazica & Spector, 2015), and that attempting to suppress callings as hobbies can lead to secondary problems (e.g., career regret; Berg et al., 2010; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020), scholars have not yet considered what happens when unanswered callings become unsustainable, and people are motivated to make a career pivot. This research therefore addresses a key unknown in the calling literature, concerning “what happens next” when unanswered callings erupt, and people are no longer willing to pursue their callings “in a more civil guise” (Petriglieri, 2020, p. 172), such as through hobbies or “passion projects” outside of formal work-roles (Berg et al., 2010; Jachimowicz, He, & Arango, 2020).

A second contribution of this study to the calling literature is that it demonstrates how people navigate a shift in the meaning of their work. Prior work (Bellah et al., 1985; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) has established that people tend to view their work in one of three ways: as a way to attain status through advancement (i.e., a “career”), as a way to make a paycheck (i.e., a “job”), or as a personally and socially significant activity in itself (i.e., a “calling”). Further, scholars have acknowledged that people’s orientations toward work can shift during role transitions. For example, in the wake of 9/11, many New Yorkers made role transitions into quintessentially “prosocial” occupations (e.g., teaching), signifying an underlying shift in their work orientations (i.e., from a job or career to calling orientation; Carnahan et al., 2017; Wrzesniewski, 2002). Surprisingly, research has not explored how people internally or

externally rationalize these shifts, especially when they are seen as socially undesirable (i.e., involving a loss of prestige or title; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Therefore, this study advances calling research by identifying a possible mechanism through which people justify a shift in their work orientation—that is, by constructing an effective self-narrative.

A third contribution of this study to the calling literature concerns the emerging research on unanswered callings (Berg et al., 2010; Gazica, 2014; Gazica & Spector, 2015). Scholars have thus far defined an “unanswered calling” as a sense of unfulfilled purpose in the career that derives from an individual’s failure to pursue a particular (known) occupation. However, my study suggests that people can also experience an unanswered calling in a more general sense, especially during the early stage of a career pivot, when they cannot yet identify an occupation that would align with their calling. Therefore, akin to the distinction between “generalized” and “particularized” constructs in other domains of management research (e.g., “generalized” and “particularized” respect in Rogers, Corley, & Ashforth, 2017, and “generalized” and “particularized” relational identification in Sluss & Ashforth, 2007), I introduce to the calling literature a distinction between “particularized” and “generalized” unanswered callings. People who possess either type of unanswered calling hold similar beliefs. For example, they both believe that there exists an occupation which they (1) are destined to pursue and (2) would experience as personally and/or socially significant, but (3) are not currently pursuing in a formal work role. However, only those with a “particularized” unanswered calling can articulate that particular occupation. Future research could build upon this study by examining the differential outcomes associated with each type of unanswered calling, and by developing validated scale measures to explore them further in quantitative empirical studies.

A fourth contribution of this study to calling research is that it highlights *how* people use self-narratives to “construct” their callings. Scholars have previously alluded to the potentially important role of self-narratives in making the claim that one’s work is a calling (Bloom et al., 2020; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). For example, in their seminal investigation of zookeepers’ callings, Bunderson and Thompson (2009) speculated that “zookeepers constructed a sensible narrative of occupational place by consulting and perhaps selectively interpreting their personal history to discover evidence of particular passions and endowments.” (p. 37). Thus, while the authors did not collect longitudinal data (i.e., which would allow them to definitively claim that selective interpretation had occurred), they introduced the intriguing possibility that coming to view one’s work as a calling involved constructing a self-narrative that demonstrated one was a “hardwired” for a certain occupation (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). In sum, in the context of prior research, my finding that people used narratives to construct their callings is not altogether highly surprising. Yet, what my study does illuminate, for the first time in calling research, is precisely how the selective interpretation of one’s personal history occurs during a career pivot (e.g., through reinterpreting oneself as having explicitly or tacitly rejected a calling and though reinterpreting “shocks” as inciting incidents). Future research could further expand upon the insights gained from this study by exploring different aspects of this interpretative process as it unfolds. For example, scholars could examine the individual differences, or socio-environmental factors, that enable people to engage in this process more or less rapidly.

A final implication of this study for calling research is methodological. Given that the findings surfaced in this study were only made possible through the use of longitudinal data, this study calls into question the prevailing approach in calling research, which to date, has largely involved collecting cross-sectional data (i.e., examining people’s callings at a single point in

time). Given the temporally-unfolding process by which a calling is constructed, future research is therefore likely better served by defaulting to the adoption of longitudinal designs. This study also raises a broader, philosophical question, which has implications for future research design, concerning whether a calling can truly be experienced “moment-to-moment” (Mogilner & Norton, 2019). Indeed, if coming to view one’s work as a calling is a gradual process, by one which makes “enduring and coherent changes” to one’s narrative repertoire, then a calling should be a relatively stable career phenomenon. For example, people should be unlikely to experience a strong calling today and no calling tomorrow. Further, people’s levels of calling should be unlikely to fluctuate throughout the workday. Acknowledging these notions, my findings suggest that scholars move toward treating the concept of a calling as a cognition, as opposed to, for example, a feeling of “moment-to-moment” happiness (Mogilner & Norton, 2019).

In addition to contributing to the literature on callings, this study also offers several contributions to the literature on role transitions. First, I contribute to the literature on role transitions by demonstrating how people make *occupational* transitions. Aside from research examining role transitions between professions—specific types of occupations that involve abstract knowledge and authority—relatively minimal research has examined occupational transitions, more broadly (Anteby et al., 2016). By addressing this oversight in role transition research, my study aligns the literature more closely with the present era of “boundaryless careers” (Briscoe, Hall, & Frautschy DeMuth, 2006). Compared to previous eras in history, in which workers tended to stay with a single employer throughout their lifetimes, the contemporary career era is characterized by workers who move fluidly between organizations, while retaining lasting memberships in higher-order, occupational groups (Anteby et al., 2016). In a context where occupational affiliations are overtaking organizational affiliations in their

importance, people may find it increasingly important to locate themselves within the “right” occupations, namely those that align with their callings. I encourage scholars to build upon on this study through conducting additional research that explores occupations, in particularly those beyond the narrow subset of “professions.”

A second contribution of this study to the role transition literature concerns research on narrative identity work: the process by which individuals construct stories about themselves to reinforce desired identities (Bloom et al., 2020; Snow & Anderson, 1987; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). Although I did not draw from research on narrative identity work to inform my initial theorizing, my findings about how self-narratives evolve over time nevertheless make a contribution to this research. To date, scholars in this area have offered theories about the conditions under which narrative identity work is likely to occur. Further, they developed propositions about the benefits that accrue to individuals who engage in it (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). However, scholars have not examined how narrative identity work occurs in real-time, such as during a radical and unconventional career transition, when it is likely to be especially prevalent. This longitudinal study therefore advances our understanding of narrative identity work by highlighting the specific tactics people use to revise the exposition, inciting incident, and rising action of their self-narratives, and therefore reinforce desired “called” identities. Further, this study suggests that a critical inflection point in narrative identity work, at least in the context of making a career pivot, is the point at which individuals can identify an occupation that aligns with their calling (i.e., a destination to move toward).

A final contribution that I make to role transition research concerns identity play. While the concept of identity work is well-established in role transition research, the concept of identity play has received far less attention (Ibarra & Obadaru, 2020; Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010). My

findings suggest one reason for this may be, that as time progresses, people often reframe identity play as identity work (e.g., to downplay circuitry and enhance impressions of efficiency). Therefore, interview-based research that relies solely on retrospective accounts of career transitions may inadvertently make conclusions that over-emphasize the importance of identity work (relative to play). Exploring identity play represents a fruitful direction for future scholarship.

### **Limitation and Future Research**

This research is subject to several limitations that scholars could address through future research. The first limitation concerns the fact I conducted all interviews for this research on my own. Prior work suggests that people present their career histories, and tell stories more generally, in different ways in the presence of different audiences (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). For example, an individual may present his or her career history far differently (e.g., more favorably) in the presence of a job interviewer, or a new romantic partner's parents, than in the presence of a close friend or mentor. Given this reality, the fact that I conducted all interviews on my own suggests that participants may have told me a single version of their self-narrative—that is, one which was specifically suited to me (e.g., as a doctoral student, woman, American, etc.). Nevertheless, while this aspect of the research may be seen as a potential limitation, it may also represent an important strength. If multiple individuals had conducted the interviews (e.g., me at Time 1, someone else at Time 2, and someone else at Time 3), I may have concluded that the differences observed, in the interview data across time points, were the result of participants' tailoring their stories to different audiences. Nevertheless, one interesting direction for future research would be to examine how self-narratives comparatively evolve in the presence of different audiences.

A second limitation of this research is that it does not cast light on individual differences, which may have important implications for the construction of a career-pivot self-narrative. For example, are highly creative individuals better able to connect the dots in their personal histories, and therefore to construct career pivot self-narratives? Alternatively, might individuals who have strong “perspective taking” abilities develop more compelling self-narratives because they can anticipate the potential viewpoints of their audience (e.g., Grant & Berry, 2011; Hoever, Van Knippenberg, Van Ginkel, & Barkema, 2012)? Addressing such questions, as well as exploring other questions related to individual differences, represents a promising direction for future research.

A third limitation of this research is the nature of the sample. While to some extent my participants represented a diverse group of working adults with varied career backgrounds, I also acknowledge that most were highly educated and came from the United States. Therefore, my findings may not generalize to all populations. I encourage scholars to build upon my work by examining how samples, with different demographic and cultural backgrounds, can inform our understanding of career pivots and career pivot self-narratives. For example, one future study might examine how self-narratives compare in a Western cultural context, such as the United States, versus an Eastern cultural context, such as China (Barkema, Chen, George, Luo, & Tsui, 2015). Research has demonstrated that the United States has individualistic cultural values, such that people tend to value the pursuit of individual over collective interests (Hofstede, 2001). On the other hand, China has collectivistic cultural values, such that people tend to prioritize the collective over the individual (Hofstede, 2001). As a result, it may be the case that career pivot self-narratives in the United States will be more likely than those in China to demonstrate “self-indulgent” themes (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019), such as the ideas of “pursuing my passion”

or “doing what I love.” It is also possible that career pivots, in general, are more prevalent in certain cultural contexts compared to others, and that people from different contexts engage in career pivots at different stages of their lives. For instance, due to the Confucian influence on society, which emphasizes that people contribute to society later in life, it is possible that people in China are more likely to make career pivots in the later stages of their lives, as opposed to in the early or middle stages (Li & Liang, 2015).

A final limitation of this research concerns my focus on self-narratives from an individual perspective. In this study, I sought to examine how people constructed self-narratives, and in turn, completed their own career pivots. Importantly, I did not explore how the telling of one’s own career pivot self-narrative may influence other people (e.g., community members who hear these stories). While my findings suggest these stories may have some social benefits (e.g., in providing other people with inspiration and reinforcement to make their own career pivots), they also point to some potential determinants. For example, one preliminary finding, which was beyond the scope of this article, but would nevertheless be interesting to explore in future research, is that people in the early stage of a career pivot often viewed the self-narratives of people in the middle and late stages as objective, chronological narrative accounts (i.e., as opposed to carefully-crafted self-narratives). As a result, people in the early stage, who had not identified a calling, often felt as though there was something wrong or abnormal about their experience (e.g., that they had not “always known” what they were destined to do). Consider this question from one of my participants, John, who described this feeling after reading career pivot self-narratives in the community founder’s book:

I think the big difference between me and the people from the book is that everyone in the book seemed so sure about what they wanted to do. Mine is just following more of a notion rather than an actual concrete plan.

As this quote demonstrates, because late-stage narratives tended to emphasize identity work (e.g., efficient planning) over identity play (e.g., circuitous discovery), and particularized over generalized unanswered callings, people in the early stage of a career pivot often noticed an uncomfortable discrepancy between their own experiences and those of the protagonists in the self-narratives that they read. Unfortunately, career pivot self-narratives of those in the early stages of a career pivot were less likely to be shared than those of people in the middle and late stages. Therefore, people in the early stage sometimes wondered if they were alone in their uncertainty. Considered a question that I received from one participant, Courtney,

In your research, are most people pursuing a passion because they know what that is? Or are they like me and they're trying to figure out what that is or where they belong? And going off of that, what is the journey like when you know what that passion is, and you're just trying to make changes and do things to specifically reach that passion? And what is the journey like when you're like me and you're trying to find it? There's a part of me that thinks maybe those journeys are quite different.

As this quote demonstrates, by listening to middle- and late-stage narratives, community members in the early stage often developed the impression that there were two, inherently different journeys that people could traverse during a career pivot: one characterized by certainty and driven by a calling that was always known, and another characterized by uncertainty and requiring exploration. It did not occur to many early-stage participants that perhaps, once a calling had been claimed in the middle or late stage of a career pivot, that people rewrote the past—giving the impression of having traversed a different journey. Building on this preliminary finding, about the detriments of career pivot self-narratives in a social context, a line of inquiry that is ripe for future research concerns examining the extent which people are aware, or unaware, as Weick (1995) succinctly stated that, “stories suggest a causal order for events that originally are perceived as unrelated” (p. 129).

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*Notes.*

<sup>a</sup> Includes one participant who preferred to answer questions via e-mail at this time point. This participant composed written answers in response to an abbreviated version of the interview protocol.

<sup>b</sup> Includes two participants who participated in a fourth-round interview. In both cases, the participant contacted the researcher sometime after the third-round interview to share an update pertaining to his or her career pivot. The researcher then asked the participant if he or she would be willing to participate in another interview. Both participants agreed.

**Table 1. Demographics of Participants**

<b>Name<sup>a</sup></b>	<b># of Interviews</b>	<b>Age<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Highest Education Level<sup>c</sup></b>	<b>Years of Work Experience<sup>d</sup></b>	<b>Avg. Weekly Work Hours<sup>e</sup></b>
Adeline	3	29	F	4 year degree	7	80
Aiden	3	34	M	4 year degree	11	50
Ari <sup>f</sup>	1	24	M	4 year degree	4	50
Alexa	3	38	F	4 year degree	24	40
Alice	2	23	F	4 year degree	2	88
Alyssa <sup>f</sup>	2	52	F	Master's degree	24	-
Amy	3	28	F	4 year degree	6	60
Brandon	3	29	M	4 year degree	11	80
Camila	3	36	F	Master's degree	20	70
Carly	3	24	F	4 year degree	2	15
Caroline	3	37	F	Master's degree	10	50
Celine	3	36	F	4 year degree	15	20
Chloe	2	46	F	Doctorate degree	24	50
Christine	3	-	F	4 year degree	30	-
Courtney	3	41	F	Master's degree	25	40
Dion	3	33	M	2 year degree	18	45
Doug <sup>g</sup>	1	51	M	2 year degree	33	38
Duncan <sup>h</sup>	4	29	M	4 year degree	4	45
Eileen	3	41	F	Doctorate degree	13	50
Elaine	3	26	F	4 year degree	4	75
Eliza	3	35	F	Master's degree	12	60
Ella	3	34	F	Master's degree	12	40
Emma	3	24	F	4 year degree	1	60
Emmett	3	51	M	Some college	36	60
Fernando	3	40	M	Master's degree	20	90
Gloria	3	48	F	4 year degree	20	25
Jack	2	33	M	Some college	15	55
Jade	3	43	F	Master's degree	21	60
Janet <sup>g</sup>	1	34	F	Some college	12	10
Jeanine	2	30	F	4 year degree	9	-
Jocelyn	2	41	F	4 year degree	17	-
Johanna <sup>f</sup>	3	34	F	Master's degree	20	60
John	3	29	M	4 year degree	7	50
Joyce <sup>i</sup>	8	30	F	Master's degree	10	45
Julian	3	33	M	4 year degree	4	60
Kate <sup>f</sup>	2	31	F	4 year degree	12	35
Kaya	1	25	F	4 year degree	3	72
Kira	2	33	F	Master's degree	6	40

Name <sup>a</sup>	# of Interviews	Age <sup>b</sup>	Sex	Highest Education Level <sup>c</sup>	Years of Work Experience <sup>d</sup>	Avg. Weekly Work Hours <sup>e</sup>
Kristen	3	39	F	Master's degree	22	55
Kyle	3	57	M	Some college	42	40
Kylie <sup>g</sup>	1	41	F	4 year degree	-	-
Lauren	3	37	F	4 year degree	18	50
Leah <sup>h</sup>	4	25	F	4 year degree	3	60
Lola	2	30	F	4 year degree	8	30
Lucy	3	45	F	4 year degree	25	40
Luis	3	25	M	Master's degree	2	50
Mabel	3	26	F	4 year degree	4	60
Madison	3	28	F	4 year degree	6	50
Marcus	3	25	M	High school graduate	8	60
Mariah	3	52	F	Master's degree	34	40
Maya <sup>f</sup>	3	33	F	Master's degree	13	55
Mia <sup>f</sup>	3	52	F	Master's degree	30	45
Mila	2	32	F	4 year degree	10	40
Miles <sup>i</sup>	1	29	M	4 year degree	7	40
Miriam	3	31	F	4 year degree	15	-
Naomi <sup>g</sup>	1	-	F	2 year degree	10	-
Nina	3	25	F	4 year degree	3	60
Omar	3	-	M	Master's degree	11	-
Owen	3	32	M	Master's degree	12	6
Patricia	3	27	F	4 year degree	11	43
Priya	3	32	F	Doctorate degree	7	20
Rebecca	3	36	F	4 year degree	14	70
Remi <sup>f</sup>	3	55	F	Doctorate degree	34	48
Ron	3	63	M	-	41	-
Rose <sup>f</sup>	3	33	F	4 year degree	11	15
Roy	3	23	M	4 year degree	1	40
Sadie	2	24	F	2 year degree	5	-
Sally <sup>i</sup>	5	39	F	Master's degree	15	80
Sienna <sup>k</sup>	3	22	F	Master's degree	1	20
Sophie	3	30	F	Master's degree	5	40
Stuart	3	39	M	4 year degree	20	55
Terry	3	51	M	4 year degree	35	50
Theresa	3	36	F	Master's degree	14	45
Tristan <sup>g</sup>	1	-	M	4 year degree	9	-
Tucker	3	35	M	4 year degree	10	55
Walker <sup>l</sup>	3	26	M	4 year degree	4	-
Wyatt <sup>g</sup>	1	-	M	Master's degree	14	-
Zoe	3	24	F	4 year degree	9	90

*Notes.*

<sup>a</sup> All names are pseudonyms.

<sup>b</sup> For most participants, the number in this column reflects age at initial interview (when demographic survey was first distributed). However, some participants completed the demographic survey at a later date (e.g., after the second-round interview). For these participants, the number in this column reflects age at time of survey completion. Several participants did not complete the demographic survey, but verbally disclosed age during an interview. In these cases, I recorded the participant's age and included it in the table above. A "-" denotes no age information available.

<sup>c</sup> Several participants did not complete the demographic survey, but educational information was available on a public LinkedIn profile page. In these cases, I recorded the information from LinkedIn as of November 2020 and included it in the table above. A "-" denotes no educational information available.

<sup>d</sup> For most participants, the number in this column reflects total work experience in years at time of initial interview (when demographic survey was first distributed). However, some participants completed the demographic survey at a later date (e.g., after the second-round interview). For these participants, the number in this column reflects total work experience in years at time of survey completion. Several participants did not complete the demographic survey, but total work experience information was available on a public LinkedIn profile page. In these cases, I recorded the information from LinkedIn as of November 2020 and included it in the table above. A "-" denotes no information available regarding a participant's total years of work experience.

<sup>e</sup> For most participants, the number in this column reflects average weekly work hours across all full-time and part-time jobs, at time of initial interview (when demographic survey was first distributed). However, some participants completed the demographic survey at a later date (e.g., after the second-round interview). For these participants, the number in this column reflects average weekly work hours at time of survey completion. Some participants did not wish to disclose their average weekly work hours. A "-" denotes no information available regarding a participant's weekly work hours.

<sup>f</sup> Participant was not making a career pivot and was therefore excluded from the analysis. For example, some participants were leaving organizations to pursue their occupations as independent workers (e.g., as freelancers or gig workers) and had no shift in work orientation (e.g., continuing to view work as merely a way to pay the bills).

<sup>g</sup> Participant declined or did not respond to request for subsequent interviews.

<sup>h</sup> Participant participated in four interviews. Participant contacted the researcher after the third-round interview to provide an update on his or her career pivot. The researcher arranged a fourth-round interview to learn more about the update.

<sup>i</sup> Denotes member of *When to Jump* community in London. Number of interviews reflects the number of in-person meetings between the researcher and participant. Some meetings were attended by the researcher and two participants.

<sup>j</sup> Denotes organization founder.

<sup>k</sup> Participant was excluded from the analysis on the basis that she was a student who did not have full-time work experience, and thus did not feel behaviorally-anchored to any occupation. She was an MBA student who had previously majored in economics during her undergraduate degree. She was hoping to move away from economics and business to pursue a career that she was passionate about.

<sup>l</sup> After graduating with an undergraduate degree in economics, this student made a career pivot to pursue his calling as an actor. Although he was a student, I included him in the analysis because he had previously worked as a private equity intern and felt behaviorally-anchored to that occupation (in terms of pursuing it after graduation). As he described it, “The summer before my senior year, I worked for a small private equity firm in Quincy, just south of Boston. I was going down the path. You know, do the thing. Get the econ major. Do the thing.” Thus, he made a career pivot when he deviated from a career in private equity to pursue his calling as an actor.

**Table 2. Participants' Occupations and Work Orientations Before and After Career Pivot**

Name <sup>a</sup>	Before Pivot		After Pivot	
	Occupation	Work Orientation <sup>b</sup>	Occupation <sup>c</sup>	Work Orientation <sup>d</sup>
Adeline	Social media advertising manager	Career	Art dealer	Calling
Aiden	Software developer	Job		
Alexa	Hospitality training specialist	Job	Art photographer	Calling
Alice	Engineer	Job		
Amy	Communications director, finance	Job	TV host and producer	Calling
Brandon	Marketing professional	Job	TV host and producer	Calling
Camila	English as a foreign language teacher	Job	Gluten-free business owner; life coach	Calling
Carly	Staffing manager	Job	Student affairs professional	Calling
Caroline	English as a second language teacher	Job	Owner of a travel planning business	Calling
Celine	Assistant, investment banking	Job	Entrepreneur	Calling
Chloe	People operations director	Career		
Christine	Secondary school teacher	Job	Natural foods business owner	Calling
Courtney	Registrar	Job		
Dion	Bartender	Job	Yoga teacher	Calling
Doug	Visual stylist/ merchandiser	Job		
Duncan	E-mail marketer	Job	Aerospace consultant	Calling
Eileen	Medical science director	Career		
Elaine	Head of customer success	Career	Wellness business owner	Calling
Eliza	Marketing executive	Career		
Ella	Nonprofit management	Career	Career development coach	Calling
Emma	Technical sales associate	Career	Solutions consultant	Calling
Emmett	Package delivery driver	Job		
Fernando	Brand manager	Career	Marketing consultant	Calling
Gloria	Public defender investigator	Career	Integrated wellness coach	Calling
Jack	Marketing professional	Job		
Jade	Technologist	Job		
Janet	Travel coordinator	Job		
Jeanine	Management consultant	Career	Chef	Calling
Jocelyn	Retail manager	Career	Yoga studio owner	Calling
John	Property/ development manager	Job		
Joyce <sup>e</sup>	Psychological well-being practitioner	Career	Clinical consultant	Calling
Julian	Assistant, higher education	Job		
Kaya	Software engineer	Job		
Kira	Technical recruiter	Career	Founder of career coaching / talent development business	Calling
Kristen	Creative manager, tourism business	Job		

Name <sup>a</sup>	Before Pivot		After Pivot	
	Occupation	Work Orientation <sup>b</sup>	Occupation <sup>c</sup>	Work Orientation <sup>d</sup>
Kyle	Office manager	Job	Social work student <sup>b</sup>	Calling
Kylie	Surgical first assistant	Career		
Lauren	Graphic designer	Job	Barber	Calling
Leah	Strategic merchandising consultant, food retail	Job	Hairdresser	Calling
Lola	Business development director	Career	Business owner/ independent consultant	Calling
Lucy	Management consultant	Job	Travel counselor	Calling
Luis	Physiotherapist/physical therapist	Job		
Mabel	Communications associate/ assistant	Job	Graphic designer	Calling
Madison	Investment banking associate	Career	Health coach and personal trainer	Calling
Marcus	Computer technician	Job		
Mariah	High school teacher	Job		
Mila	Investment manager	Career	Health coach	Calling
Miles <sup>f</sup>	Venture capital investor	Career	Squash player	Calling
Miriam	Marketing/advertising professional	Job		
Naomi	Resident service manager	Job		
Nina	Private equity strategy associate	Career		
Omar	Medical researcher	Career	Director of non-profit	Calling
Owen	Software engineer	Career		
Patricia	Office manager	Job	People operations (and office manager)	Calling
Priya	Pharmacist	Job	Wellness coach	Calling
Rebecca	Operations director	Job	Success coach	Calling
Ron	Public relations executive	Career	Entrepreneur	Calling
Roy	Inventory control analyst	Job	Procurement professional	Calling
Sadie	Service coordinator	Job		
Sally <sup>e</sup>	Finance professional	Career	Healthcare technology entrepreneur	Calling
Sophie	Speech and language pathologist	Career	Photographer	Calling
Stuart	Risk management, finance	Career	Vegan café owner	Calling
Terry	Broker, grocery industry	Career	Coffee shop owner	Calling
Theresa	Trade and investment consultant	Career	Writer; literature foundation manager	Calling
Tristan	College admissions consultant	Job		
Tucker	English teacher	Job		
Walker	Private equity intern (and economics student)	Career	Actor	Calling
Wyatt	Product lead, digital services	Career		
Zoe	Insurance underwriter	Career	Coffee roaster	Calling

*Notes.*

<sup>a</sup> All names are pseudonyms. Includes 69 participants who were making a career pivot.

<sup>b</sup> See Appendix 1 for demonstrative evidence of participants' work orientations before and after the career pivot.

<sup>c</sup> This column is blank for participants who did not enter new occupational roles that they expected would align with their callings.

**Table 3. Stages of a Career Pivot and Sample Quotes from Participants at Each Stage**

Stage of Career Pivot	Defining Characteristics of Stage	Sample Quotes
<b>EARLY</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in occupation, viewed as job or career</li> <li>• Sense of generalized unanswered calling</li> <li>• Beginning to psychologically disengage from behaviorally-anchored occupation</li> </ul>	<p>“I still feel that [Company XYZ] is not my long-term place where I'm supposed to be. It's definitely filling a need right now. Like I think I mentioned before, the benefits, the pay, the exercise, and the interactions with people...those are all great things, but there's still something inside me that feels like this is not the long-term solution to satisfy the desires inside me. It's not what I'm supposed to be doing.” – Emmett</p> <p>“What we're trying to achieve as individuals in society...we're all searching for something a bit more, and I don't think it's necessarily always material things. Yes, we do want those. We all want to be able to survive and have a nice life. But I think a lot of people realize that they're not fulfilling their purpose. And in my case, I think it's your age then you start thinking, oh my god, I've been on this earth for 46 years. How long have I got left? Am I doing what I want to do? And I do think people just sort of lose their way in their job and one day wake up. Well, it's in your subconscious, but one day you become conscious of it, and you ask yourself, what am I doing? If I'm not doing what is really true to what I stand for, what can I do? And then they start getting itchy feet. I think people consider leaving because of pure boredom or because they have had an awakening...they realize that they're not fulfilling their purpose.” – Lucy</p>
<b>MIDDLE (Liminal)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in occupation, viewed as job or career</li> <li>• Sense of particularized unanswered calling</li> <li>• Continuing to psychologically disengage</li> <li>• Beginning to psychologically engage with other occupation</li> </ul>	<p>“I mean...it's almost like...right now I'm kind of living two lives. One, I have to show up to work every day and, you know, do my job to a certain level. And then I get to...in the moments in between...at night and on weekends...I get to be who I feel like I really am...what I want to be...what I want to pursue. So, being able to cut out my day job...it would be like shedding a second skin. I just get to be and pursue what I want to be all of the time.” – Marcus</p> <p>“I still have a day job. I sometimes say that I am doing the coffee part time, but that's really not true. I just kind of have two full time jobs. The coffee probably takes up more time than the insurance even though, you know, I am technically still employed by the insurance company. I am hoping in the next month or two to do the coffee full time. I just have to get a couple of pieces in order before I can actually do that. I am in flux right now.” – Zoe</p>
<b>LATE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in occupation, that was expected to be a calling</li> <li>• Completing psychological disengagement and engagement</li> </ul>	<p>“I think there's an internal alignment of when you feel right with something. And I think you can only be out of alignment so long before either you get frustrated, or you quit, or you find some alternative. I think there's an internal drive for everyone that is maybe a combination of, where am I passionate? Where am I talented? And how do I serve? And, if those things are not aligned, I don't know...I just felt it. Sure, I was talented in science. I studied it in college and in graduate school. But I wasn't really passionate about it...and I could serve, but I wasn't really serving in a way that I wanted to or serving the communities that I wanted to. So, I felt off. And I could only do that for so long before I was like, “I just can't.” Having the skills to do something doesn't make you...at least for me...it didn't make me wake up in the morning feeling excited about going into the office, into the lab and conducting research. It was only when I got in alignment...like now I feel driven. What makes me passionate? Who do I want to serve? How do I do that? I feel like I'm in alignment on those things.” – Omar</p> <p>“I think empowering the next generation of students to like stand up for what they believe in and get an education so they can go out and better the world. Like I feel like I'm sort of inadvertently helping the future through helping these students. It feels really great. I just don't know how else to articulate it. But I really do feel like it's what I'm meant to do.” – Carly</p>

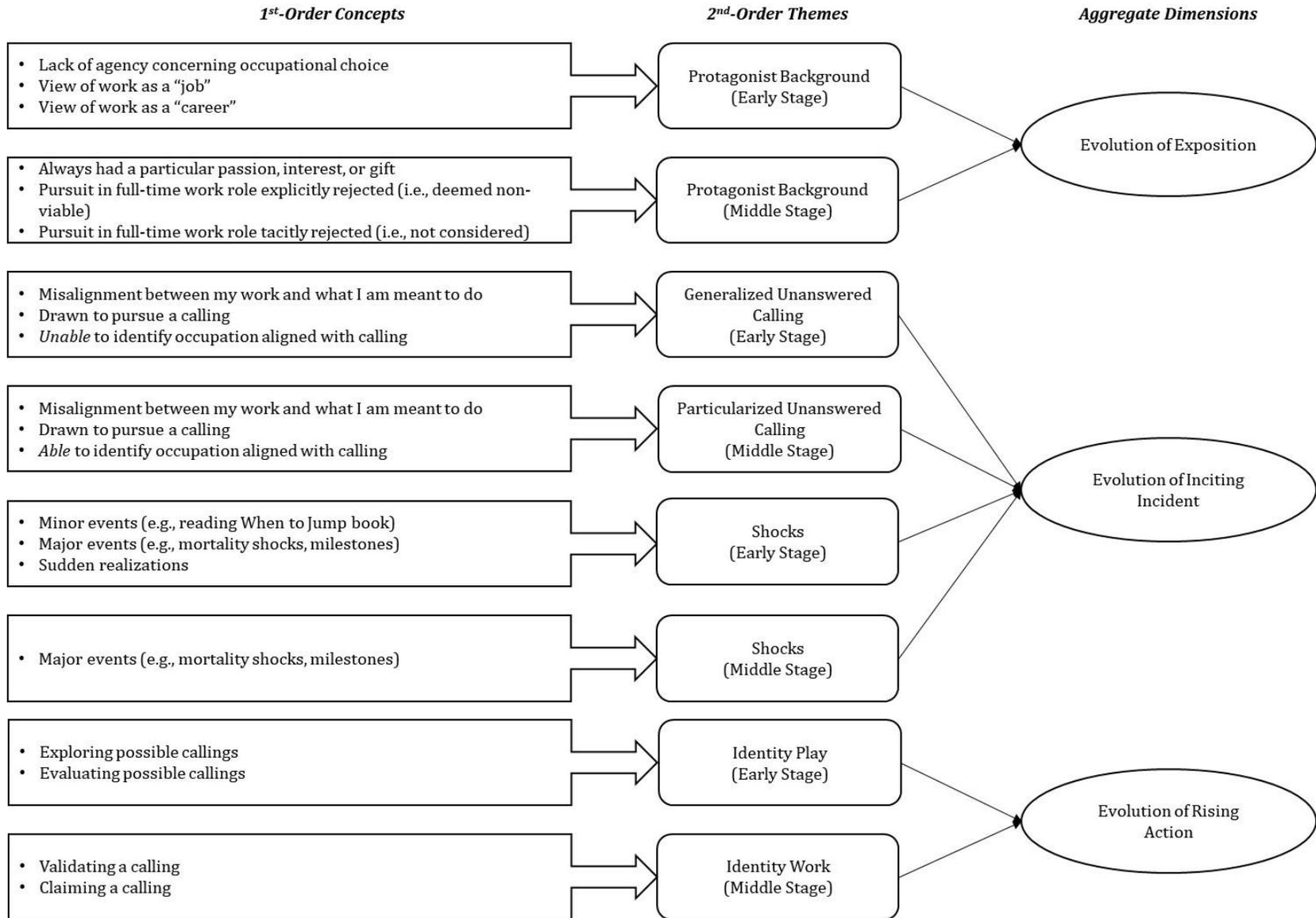
**Table 4. Characteristics of a Career Pivot and Sample Quotes from Participants**

Concept	Sample Quotes
Degree of Starting Over	<p data-bbox="448 369 1412 491">“I think like understanding, am I ready for this role? I had no prior background of non-profit management at all so I was like, can I learn this? Am I passionate enough about it to go through the learning process and almost, not start completely over, but kind of start really fresh in a new field?” – Omar</p> <p data-bbox="448 533 1404 688">“Even if you're this high-level manager in one occupation and you transition to the next, not all skills transfer. There are still skills that you have to learn through experience. Yes, some of the skills, specifically leadership skills are transferable, but there are things that will take you a step or two or three behind. You're going to have to start on a lower level just to learn the kinks of whatever new career you're pursuing.” – Jocelyn</p> <p data-bbox="448 730 1393 852">“I hate being a beginner and when you change your line of work, there are transferable fields, but you're always going to be more of a beginner. And so, trying to learn as ferociously and as quickly as I could. I like learning, but I just don't like feeling incompetent.” – Sophie</p> <p data-bbox="448 894 1398 1077">“Close friends that I have told, they're all stuck in corporate jobs, and they're all making six-figure money, they're very successful, but they just don't really enjoy it. But they probably never will leave because they like the money, and it's okay enough that they'll deal with it. They also are supportive, but at the same time they don't really understand how I could potentially leave something so lucrative and so comfortable for the idea of starting over again.” – Aiden</p>
Loss of Status and/or Security	<p data-bbox="448 1104 1398 1287">“My jump is to go from an executive role and to jump way back and open a brew bar concept, a coffee shop, beer and wine place. So, to go from a safe position with a salary and known within an industry, great reputation, and jumping into something I know nothing about. I mean I do know something about it. I've been passionate about food. I used to buy coffee. I know some of that. But it's come a long way from sitting behind a desk doing e-mails and spreadsheets.” – Terry</p> <p data-bbox="448 1329 1398 1419">“It was really hard at the beginning because I was so used to the corporate benefits and the status as well. I think all my friends and family thought I was going crazy or having a crisis based on some of the looks that I got from them.” – Madison</p> <p data-bbox="448 1461 1398 1614">“I think a lot of it is fear and that, you know, “Oh my God, I don't want to lose my security.” Because I mean, I don't know what's going to happen to me after I make this leap. Right now, I make good money. I have insurance. It's very good from the financial aspect, but I have no idea what that's going to look like once I make the official transition.” – Julian</p> <p data-bbox="448 1656 1398 1839">“But based on my experience, and people who I know, okay, so mostly it's about security, like financial security. And maybe also some people are just used to some things. Even if it's uncomfortable still, it's something that they know well, and it was the case for me also. So, when you know something well, it's easier to stick to it than to try something new that you don't know anything about. So, security, getting used to something, just being afraid to try something new.” – Owen</p>

Table 5. Quotes Demonstrating Stories as a Source of Inspiration and Reinforcement

Concept	Sample Quotes
Other Peoples' Stories as Source of Inspiration	<p data-bbox="537 321 1399 443">“I really like the support and the people that have jumped, you know, the experience of jumpers, was paramount. I found that their stories strengthened my desire and trust that, oh my gosh, people can jump and end up in a better place, you know?” – Kyle</p> <p data-bbox="537 474 1399 562">“I read these stories and I felt, if they can do it, I can do it. I don't know if that's competition or empowerment, one of the two. But very early on, I could identify with those stories and said, if they can do it, I can do it.” – Elaine</p> <p data-bbox="537 594 1399 716">“I need to have more confidence in myself. But reading stories of other people who have done this helps a lot. I kind of live vicariously through other people's stories. When I read memoirs and peoples' personal accounts, for me, it's really motivating and inspiring.” – Kylie</p> <p data-bbox="537 747 1399 835">“You know, it's just good to have a group of like-minded people around you to bounce ideas off and get inspired by. I think that's why I was interested in <i>When to Jump</i>.” – Caroline</p> <p data-bbox="537 867 1399 1014">“I think his podcast definitely resonated. It was less about coaching how to jump, but it's more about sharing people who've done it. I think that was the difference in his podcast, because there's a lot of podcasts of showing how to do it, teaching how to do it, coaching it or stuff like that. Hearing other people do it resonates and kind of affirms that it's doable, it's possible.” – Jade</p>
Other Peoples' Stories as Source of Reinforcement	<p data-bbox="537 1035 1399 1157">“When you hear other people's stories about how they've done this, it kind of encourages you. So, you feel like you're doing something good, and you're doing the right thing. And other people are going through the same thing you're going through.” – Zoe</p> <p data-bbox="537 1188 1399 1310">“Knowing that people are making these decisions out there that are countercultural helps me and reminds me that it can be done, and that people are doing it. It kind of grounds me too. It reminds me to think about what path I want to take. I think I need that constant reminder.” – Eileen</p> <p data-bbox="537 1341 1399 1430">“I think it has really been a great experience too to be in a community and to be hearing different people stories and to be around people who are doing the same thing, generally. I've loved that.” – Eileen</p> <p data-bbox="537 1461 1399 1856">“The individual stories have helped make jumps feel more accessible and attainable. My favorite one is the girl who was a single mom and was a marketing executive, similar to my situation. She jumped to become a writer. That was great. I think the community itself has helped significantly to make sure that I am held accountable for not staying in something that doesn't make me happy. My community is very homogenous. My non-<i>When To Jump</i> community is very homogenous. So, having this community of people that help me brainstorm different ways to achieve the goals that I have. Like my favorite anecdote is...my jump buddy is this guy who lives in Kansas. He wants to be a singer even though he is a tech person. [Marcus]. When I was telling him about what I was looking for. He was like, why don't you open up your own gym? I was like, I've never even thought about that. I think there is just like a level of blinders that I have on about what path is right for me and being part of the community has helped open up those blinders.” – Eliza</p>

**Figure 2. Data Structure**



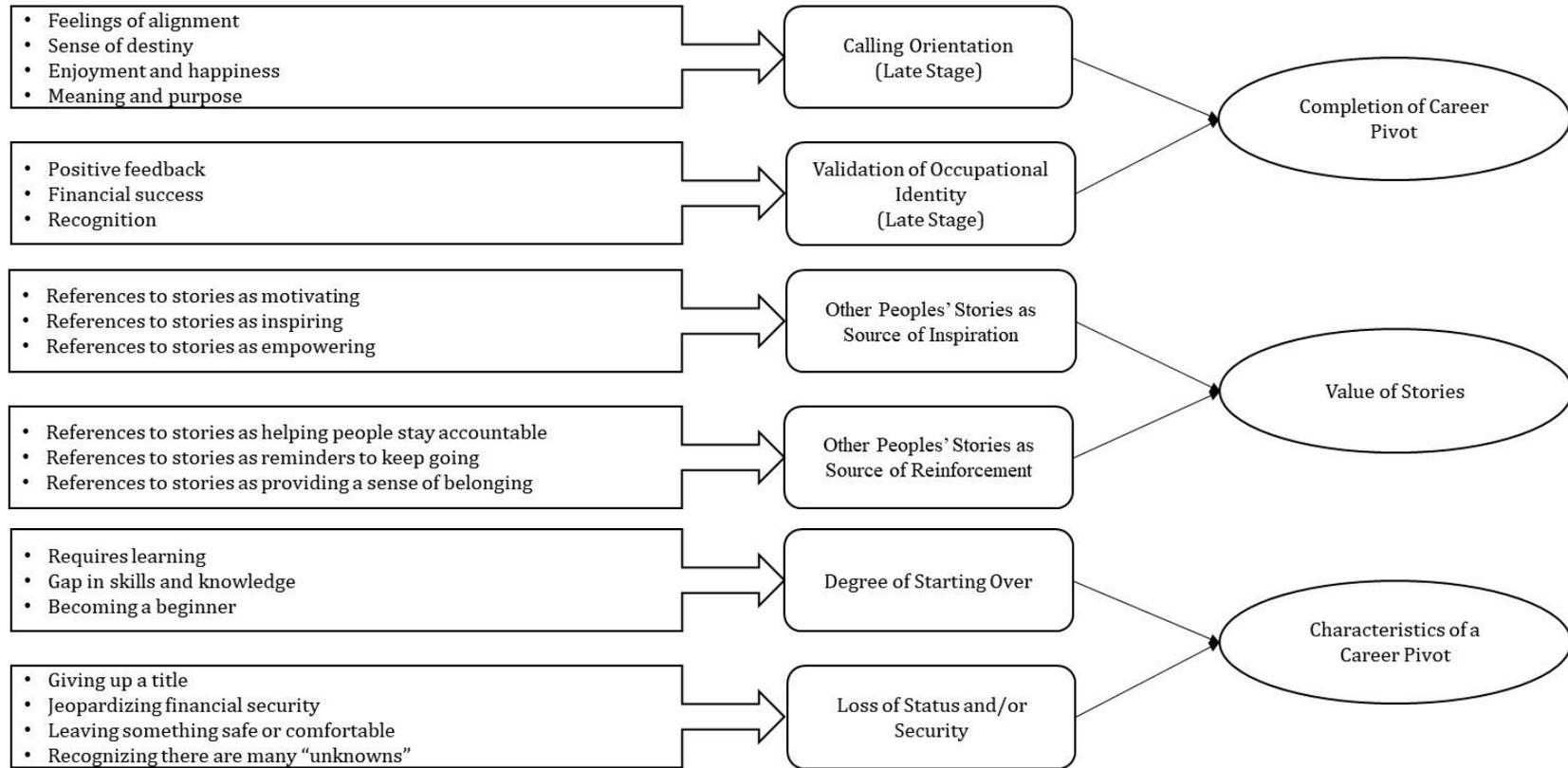
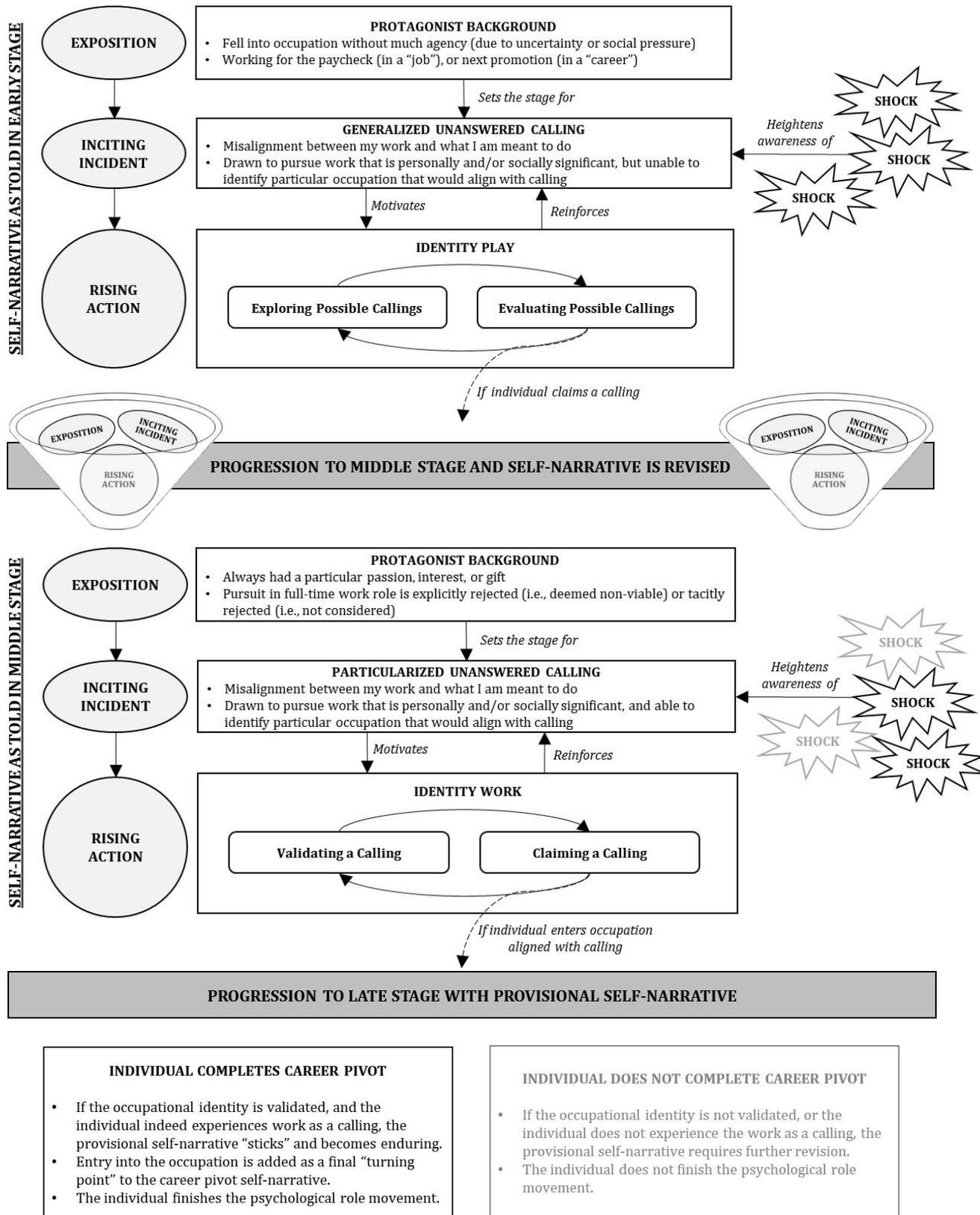


Figure 3. A Model of Making a Career Pivot Through Self-Narrative Construction



### Appendix 1. Sample Quotes Demonstrating Participants' Work Orientations

Name <sup>a</sup>	BEFORE PIVOT		AFTER PIVOT	
	Work Orientation <sup>b</sup>	Sample Quote Demonstrating Work Orientation	Work Orientation <sup>b</sup>	Sample Quote Demonstrating Work Orientation
Adeline	Career	"We had big name clients like Toyota, Hyundai. We had a lot in the auto industry[...]I definitely learned a lot and then I kind of got pushed to the point where I was like working from 8am to 2am like almost every day of the week and it was just not what I envisaged my life being, especially being in social media advertng. I was like putting ads into news feeds."	Calling	"The high points are, for me that it's like totally fulfilling. Like leaving your career to do something you actually enjoy. I love what I do every day, even on the bad days. I just really enjoy the work. I enjoy that it is different every day. I enjoy the aspects of helping artists' careers and teaching collectors how to buy art. That is like hugely important."
Aiden	Job	"Let's just say a typical day is like 9:00 to 5:00, and I'm spent, you know, just coding. I'm more specifically a web developer, so I kind of do the front-facing stuff, but typical kind of corporate coding job[...]Is this my calling, so to speak? My purpose? Absolutely not."		
Alexa	Job	"Even though I wasn't passionate about the hotel business, it was great to be around that environment. I had engineered that job to basically have an amazing schedule. I worked a four-day work week. I worked nine to six thirty and I had full benefits. I had a free weekend every week."	Calling	"I can't imagine doing anything that is as exciting, as fulfilling and as interesting to explore. It just seems like it never has an end to it[...]I also know that I'm not the type of person that can just go to a job and leave it and the work is a means to end. For me, the work has to be the end. It's not the thing that allows me to have a life. It is my life. I think everyone is different and figuring that out has been really helpful for me."
Alice	Job	"I don't feel too fulfilled with my day to day job[...]And a lot of people around me, the people on my team, are passionate about that. But I feel like my sole purpose, in terms of what I want to do, it's not necessarily that. Yes I will get my stuff done on time and meet the targets, but at the end of the day that doesn't fulfill me because the purpose that I have...the purpose that I want to work towards, it's not the one that my manager or director have defined for me."		
Amy	Job	"Before I made the jump to do entertainment full-time, I had a day job working in finance, which was great. I had a wonderful team. It was a supportive environment, but it didn't play to all my strengths. I couldn't be as social and I couldn't be as engaging and[...]And so I think that we all have natural abilities and tendencies. To me, the best thing you can do is find a job or career path that really lets you accentuate the best parts of yourself. And for so many people I know, it's like the opposite. They take these jobs that maybe pay really well or have great benefits or whatever it is, but it's soul sucking because it doesn't play to their strengths as a person and let them be individuals. Like I said, I know that there is obviously a practical aspect of everything. I took a job like that for years while I was hustling in entertainment because I had to. I literally had to do that in order to pay rent and buy food."	Calling	"On good days and bad days, I am like, well, this is all I want to do with my life so I got to figure it out and I got to find a way. There is no other industry and no other profession that would make me as happy and be as fulfilling for me, personally. So, on days when it's tough, I try to kind of maintain that mindset of like, this is it. So every day I just have to work my butt off to make sure that I stay in this."

Name <sup>a</sup>	BEFORE PIVOT		AFTER PIVOT	
	Work Orientation <sup>b</sup>	Sample Quote Demonstrating Work Orientation	Work Orientation <sup>b</sup>	Sample Quote Demonstrating Work Orientation
Brandon	Job	"Whenever a job came up, I just took it incidentally. I didn't think about where it would lead me. Didn't think about the future. Who cares? Just take it. Bills have to be paid. Family has to be supported... I just took whatever job came along. I didn't care what it was. I just took whatever. I don't want to say I regret it, because every choice I made in life got me up to this point here. So sometimes I struggle with like, with the marketing job. I was there for five years and if I spent those five years focusing on my on camera stuff, god knows where I would have been at this point. But then I said to myself, no, it can't be regretted. That can't be a mistake, because that job afforded me the head shot and the classes and, you know, the money it took to produce three web series."	Calling	"A lot of people would say, they want to be an actor or singer or a host or I don't know, whatever. But they are not willing to put in the time, the work, the money or the energy to do it. I would say, if you are not willing to do that, that means you just aren't supposed to do it. If you find something that you are willing to sleep in a car for and miss rent and eat ramen for the next two years, that's what you need to do and that's where you are going to succeed, because you will grind it out and you will make it work as much as you can. That is how I feel about this career. It was like, I could sleep in a car for a couple of weeks. I could eat ramen for a couple of months for this career."
Camila	Job	"I thought I would love teaching more than I did but the way that I was teaching was not empowering or fulfilling in any way. It was just like repeating words to children and things that just did not fulfill me or challenge me in any way."	Calling	"I'm definitely happy with the mix. It's really good. I love all that I'm doing, honestly. So I really, really enjoy working with clients one on one about something I've always been passionate about ever since going to grad school for counseling and being a therapist and working one to one back then. So I love that. And then I love providing resources for people that are gluten-free. It's not what I want to talk about every day all day for sure, so I like the balance of getting to coach and then having the podcast and having that be a free resource as well."
Carly	Job	"So the jump was, you know, it was a big transition because I had to get into school, figure out how I was going to fund it, figure out my living situation. There were just a lot of factors involved, but I knew that it was worthwhile because I'd be doing what I love versus just a job that was paying the bills."	Calling	"I'm definitely doing the right thing. Like I'm definitely in the space that I should be in, even if I'm just having a positive impact on this one hour of this student's life. Like that's exactly what I want to be doing."
Caroline	Job	"Mostly because teaching... when I was single, I had to have that steady income. Even though it wasn't amazing income, it was enough to support me, pay my bills and allow me to travel."	Calling	"Because I was miserable and don't believe that education, at least where I was working, was helping children. It was hurting them and that's not something I would like to be a part of. With [Business Name], I just get to make people really happy and they don't have to do anything or have any stress. They just get to show up. And I have heard time and time again that they are loving their experience. It's like 100% happy versus like 90% oppressive. It's an easy choice."
Celine	Job	"It was never anything I was passionate about or loved or. Yeah. No. Definitely would not go back to that[...]I haven't earned as much money as I did since then. Probably all the years wouldn't combine to that one year. But I wouldn't go back to it."	Calling	"And now I can kind of say yes, I am doing this for myself. This is my soul's work."

Name <sup>a</sup>	BEFORE PIVOT		AFTER PIVOT	
	Work Orientation <sup>b</sup>	Sample Quote Demonstrating Work Orientation	Work Orientation <sup>b</sup>	Sample Quote Demonstrating Work Orientation
Chloe	Career	"At work, I'm a Director of People Operations, and it sounds fancy to a lot of people. And then kind of going into this other pursuit, it's kind of like, who am I? But beyond that, I feel like it's really about who am I becoming? And to me that's exciting, and I think it's just letting go of what you think other people think of you, and just letting go that notion of wanting to, what I call, "Look good," versus really truly stepping into who you are. I think for me, a lot of my identity has been shaped by the environment I grew up in, the way I grew up, go to school, get a good job, make six figures. And I'm at the point now where it's like, "Okay, I've done all that," and I just realized that, that is just a story... that is just yet another, I don't know, like identity that I have told myself. Why six figures? Why not seven?"		
Christine	Job	"I had a good income. I was in a reliable job. I just found that sometimes when you are in a school environment you feel institutionalised."	Calling	"I am always attracted to natural products or natural solutions. So I think it's just part of who I am."
Courtney	Job	"I was always one of those "work to live" people. As long as I pretty much enjoyed what I was doing and liked the people I worked with, it really didn't matter where I was or what I was doing. My focus was on life outside of work. My focus was on traveling and having experiences and things like that."		
Dion	Job	"I was a bartender for about ten years. I kind of just fell into it by accident. I didn't really I think I was going to be a bartender. I was thinking about going back to school. I was kind of just figuring out what I was doing in life. Anyway, I picked up bartending and it just kind of stuck for a little bit. The long and the short of it is, I did it for a really long time and I was good at it. I could have chosen to just do that for the rest of my life, or to manage bars and nightclubs, but it just felt really empty."	Calling	"I get to wake up every day and do the thing that I love to do the most. It's the thing that I am passionate about. It's not like a hobby and it's not something that is just sort of fun. It really is the thing that gets me out of bed every single day. It gives me purpose. I have purpose to do something. And that that in itself is worth millions and millions to me. You can't even put a price tag on that, you know? The connection that I get to have with my community is so much deeper than I thought it would ever be. You know? Like I get to help people. Through yoga I have gotten to host these really big charity events where we raise money for local homeless youth. Through yoga, I got to host a big class for Susan G Komen and raise money for women's breast cancer. The community aspect of it is like insane to me. And I am not talking about community like you go and you get people in a room and you call it a community. But like people that are actually there. People that are actually part of something bigger."
Doug	Job	"It's how I make my money to live and enjoy the other things. "		

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Duncan	Job	"At the end of the day, that's what my goal was, to really just get a job where I could finally have some sort of purpose instead of making money with a company."	Calling	"I think other people, my friends are like, "Oh David, you're trying to make such a big jump. I don't know if it's doable." I think it took longer than expected, but I think I'm glad that it happened this way because I'm much happier. When you have purpose in your job, it's just a whole different ball game."
Eileen	Career	"I do believe in the medicines, areas that we're developing, our research and development areas, but I think some parts is maybe I am staying for security or what is known or things like that. I just want to make sure that I do feel like there's something that says this may not be it. There's a restlessness I think, and this may not be all, and I don't want to look back and feel regret for not exploring."		
Elaine	Career	"When I started as Head of customer success, I was doing it as a stepping stone to get to what my dream job was."	Calling	"Whereas building [Business]...I am building a form of myself. Everything about it makes sense to me. Everything about it makes me feel fulfilled. It feels like there is a need in the world that I am filling. I'm helping people. Helping health coaches promote themselves. I think that is something I can offer them. A lot of business coaches are not business savvy and I am. I am also helping the greater world find health coaches and ultimately save their lives."
Eliza	Career	"I just kind of haphazardly ended up in this really...my career moved really fast. Even though I was laid off, I moved and was promoted and went to business school just kind of haphazardly. It was never with intention that I said like, here's my life's purpose. Here are my key values. I just felt like I was staying on a train that post-college, I thought I had to be on one. Yeah, I don't if I was intentional about where I wanted that train to go."		
Ella	Career	"I look at myself, and I think about how, yes, I had the resources. Yes, I had people that cared about me. Yes, I got praise on a weekly basis. What I was missing was sort of the larger purpose piece at the top, that was like my own calling, and my thing. And I think at the end of the day, if you are so privileged enough to be able to make a change, and care about work being a part of your identity, even if a variety of other factors are satisfied, if you don't have purpose and feel like what you're doing is unique to you and your calling, you're always kind of a little restless for something else."	Calling	"I love my work. I love it. I feel like for the first time I am like doing the exact thing that is that is like my purpose in life. And like the thing that I am supposed to do that I personally am uniquely qualified and talented at."
Emma	Career	"It feels like after college, the formula of success is you go to college, you get a job and then you work your way up the corporate ladder for the rest of your life."	Calling	"What I found is introducing myself and talking about my work, this is the first time I've ever been so excited to talk about my work."

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Emmett	Job	"I still feel that [Company] is not my long term place where I'm supposed to be. It's definitely filling a need right now. Like I think I mentioned before, the benefits, the pay, the exercise, and the interactions with people...those are all great things, but there's still something inside me that feels like this is not the long-term solution to satisfy the desires inside me. It's not what I'm supposed to be doing."		
Fernando	Career	"Maybe one of the attractions is a clear path of succession in a company, which isn't clear any more and it's hard to fund. Maybe like in a corporate side where you have this safety net where you can go on and you know that there is a somewhat of a future greater than three to five years."	Calling	"I'm checking boxes of what I wanted my consultancy to be. So it's dealing with a multinational client, traveling, visiting different clients, getting to know different industries. So yeah, for me, it's fulfilling in that sense."
Gloria	Career	"I didn't go into this career because it was my passion. I went into it because I was recruited because somebody saw that I was good at it and because I thought it was a good opportunity to get a paycheck and buy a house and have babies. I didn't think, "Oh I'm going to be changing the world doing this."	Calling	"Like awakening this inner beam of light that's always been there but somebody turned it off. That's my passion. And that can happen by speaking in a podcast and getting people calling me going "I can't believe you said that. I feel the same way. I didn't realize blah, blah, blah." Or a client writing me telling me like "Jesus, thank you for opening up my eyes."
Jack	Job	"I work about 50 hours a week. That's what pays the bills."		
Jade	Job	"The whole 9:00 to 5:00 job, it's not a bad thing. But if it's not working for you, if it's not fulfilling for you, and if you're just that cog in the assembly line or the sheep that just follows the same path with everyone else, than that's where I think that we owe it to ourselves to question things."		
Janet	Job	"And that's kind of like where I want to get to, because, you know, yeah, we just don't work to pay the bills and everything. We have to live to enjoy life or what is left of it. You don't know how long you are going to be here. If you no longer have that joy in waking up and going to your job, you have to search for what brings you joy and your purpose."		

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Jeanine	Career	"I hated it. Hated it. But at the same time it looked very glamorous from the outside, because the fashion and luxury goods group was really difficult to get into. There was only eight people. In fact, whenever I talked to ex-[Consulting Firm] people they were like, "I didn't even know we had that group." Because it was just so small and it was all women and it was just a hard group to get into internally. And to my friends it looked really cool and externally it sounded cool, I guess. I don't know. It was really hard for me to step away from it, but I was really unhappy and I found myself basically piling on a lot of debt or digging myself into a hole because I was buying so much stuff. Kind of like to fill this void."	Calling	"I really love to eat. I always like to plan itineraries around eating like that is the main thing that I was excited to talk to other people about. That's how I made all my friends. I don't have any friends with dietary restrictions, because...what a buzzkill. But yeah, that was like a big part of my identity and so whenever I had free time when I was working full time, I would take recreational classes in cooking. It was like very natural to me. And so when I had all this extra time off, I was like, you know what, like I love food. Why wouldn't I go to school for food? And I wasn't considering it was a career. I can put all this money down. I can do whatever. I am not really a person to like go for a little bit like I have to go get my diploma. That would be really cool and then it just kind of just spiraled into like one thing after another and at one end I realized that these other people I want to be around like this is the stuff that I enjoy doing and like doing and I was good at it. And like I feel very like natural in the kitchen. You know when you are good at something and you improve so easily. Versus like I am okay at finance. I did major in it. But like when I am doing finance stuff, I am working really hard. Like it is not natural for me. I thought that's how life was. When I got in the kitchen I was very shocked to see that it is not like that."
Jocelyn	Career	"I had a wonderful career. I've led successful businesses. I've led strong teams. But there came a point when I was complacent. And I'm like, I don't want to really do anything past this job, so there were at least two or three more steps above, but I'm like "I don't want to do it anymore." And that is not me. So I knew there was something wrong. Even my husband goes, "What's wrong with you?" And I think that was the point when I was like, this is probably not the place where I really want to... this is not what's bringing me happiness."	Calling	"My experience was that when I was in that chair, when I was teaching, I was exactly where I wanted to be. Not in the seat behind the chairs. That was the perfect validation of, this is where I want to be, and I need to be."
John	Job	"My job is good, steady, secure, like I said. I could stay there really as long as I wanted."		
Joyce <sup>c</sup>	Career	<i>No recording</i>	Calling	<i>No recording</i>
Julian	Job	"Using this as a means to an end. At Northeastern, it's not what I want to do for the rest of my life, and things could be worse, but I have the incredible opportunity to get my education."		

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Kaya	Job	"I am a software engineer[...]I won't bore you by talking about it to death or something. Actually, that's the path I chose. It's not like I am not happy with it. It's something I am doing[...]what I don't like is, actually, the coding part and the part that you just sit somewhere and go for hours and hours sitting. It's very frustrating[...]We are young right now. We are just, if you are sitting at home and getting salary it does not make any sense right now."		
Kira	Career	"I feel recruitment is more about accomplishing certain tasks. You don't really have enough thinking. Looking at the candidates and then moving them through the process. So you don't really get to think about, for example, talent mapping or long term retention strategies that no start up is thinking about that. You, are a recruiter. You are put that in the box[...]it feels like you just go on, bring in the numbers, we don't care what you do. Just bring in the numbers. And, for me, that's not how life should be."	Calling	"There are people out there who strongly believe that you should be doing what you have purposely been called to do and what you are amazing at. So this really speaks truly to the core of who I am as a person as well."
Kristen	Job	"I get a steady paycheck and I'm able to pay my bills and things like that[...]But yeah, I think sometimes you end up in jobs that aren't necessarily what you want. Especially, if you're going to college, you're going to college at 18, 19, you're being forced into a major. You're coming out four years later with a piece of paper that tells you this is what you're qualified to do, and you find a job in that field."		
Kyle	Job	"I don't feel very happy about it. It's something that I do, to sustain myself."	Calling	"Well for the school, obviously it's to get to the end goal of being able to practice counseling, but also to have a purpose that is meaningful to me."
Kylie	Career	"I have been in the medical field for a long time. I don't know how much of that was... it strokes your ego working in surgery and being good at it and fixing people. I am at a point right now where I am really kind of searching for my purpose. Like I said, I do love to help people. I like to help people be happy. So I mean I am helping people in surgery, just maybe not in the way that I want to help them. I want to help them "in here" instead of helping them by taking out that organ and saying, okay you're better now."		

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Lauren	Job	"I was comfortable. As long as my bills were paid, I was okay doing art or real small projects on the side, you know, for side money. I always felt like I needed that steady income coming in."	Calling	"With those comments and stuff, it started to click to me that maybe this move was what I was supposed to do in the first place like switching to this career, I can touch more lives and bring more meaning to my own life at the same time...the feeling that I get at the end of the day. I am always physically tired. Sometimes emotionally tired. But I never wake up saying, I don't want to go to work today."
Leah	Job	"I really just hated it. I hated it so much. I felt like all my potential and the best years of my life were just being like squashed away. I was like 22 and then 23 when I left. Closer to 24. Everyone was like, these are the best years of your life. I wish I were in my 20s. But like, I was like I hate being 22. For the first time nobody was telling me what to do. I didn't have to graduate college. Didn't have to go to this class to graduate college. It was like, okay, keep working until you get a better job and get more experience then work here. And like get seven vacation days off in a year. I was like, oh my god, if I only get one week off a year and I have to have this job, I'll go insane. I need at least three weeks."	Calling	"I was in New York at the hair salon getting my hair fixed, and I was looking at those apprentices and I just knew. Sometimes you just know. You don't know how you know."
Lola	Career	"One of the things I struggled with a little bit in my corporate career was that I was always looking to get promoted. I always wanted the next title, the next raise. That was all I cared about was working toward."	Calling	"I do feel a sense of fulfillment and purpose that I haven't didn't have before I was working for myself and having my own business. It did kind of feel like—I needed to do this. Why wouldn't I do this? I will always regret if I don't."
Lucy	Job	"I was earning decent money but it wasn't ticking my boxes. It was just paying the bills."	Calling	"About three months ago I decided I've been looking at the coffee shops situation, but also thinking about how do I link in my passion for travel with how I can carry on working. I've actually taken up a franchise, gone through all the training and gone live Friday, just gone on. I'm now a travel agent, tour operator. Complete change around from where we started 18 months ago when we were talking, but I'm now a traveled counselor"
Luis	Job	"I think I chose it because it was something that I knew I would enjoy doing. I've always enjoyed fitness and just the human body. And it was something that I knew I would enjoy doing but would have time on the side to pursue... Writing has been a big decision factor in a lot of things, a lot of choices I have made. So I would be lying if I said that that didn't, I wasn't thinking about writing when I chose physical therapy in terms of being able to have time to pursue it."		

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Mabel	Job	"I don't know, the same day in and day out. I wasn't really advocating for more responsibilities, or new experiences, and no one was really saying, "Hey, try this new thing." On the other hand, I wasn't advocating for those things. I just wasn't very satisfied. I think if it had been something that I was interested in, and I saw myself staying in that role, or staying in that role at this company I would've advocated more and tried to grow more, but I just wasn't interested in trying."	Calling	"I definitely think this is where I'm supposed to be and what I'm supposed to be doing."
Madison	Career	"I was working for an investment bank and kind of thought I had it all because it was prestigious and my parents were really happy. But honestly, like within the first three months, I hated it. I knew it didn't really fit with myself at all as a person and the things that I believed in. Even the lifestyle that people who worked there had. I had many conversations with my now husband, who was my boyfriend at the time, and my parents, and especially my parents were like, "You need to stick with it. You just started. It's just a big shock from college life to work life. This is normal." So I was like, "Okay, that's fine." And I definitely stuck with it. I was there for five years."	Calling	"It's a little bit dangerous to see it as cool to just do because people forget that if you do turn your passion into your business, it does not mean that you're just living passionately through life. I still have plenty of things that I don't enjoy doing about my work. But I do feel fulfilled."
Marcus	Job	"Initially, I didn't have any—not that I didn't have any other options, but it was the best thing presented to me at the time. I knew I didn't really want to go to college, and this seemed like a good way to not do that and still make a living."		
Mariah	Job	"I just applied and I thought you know this is something different. You also get summers off and I thought I would be able to work and do writing. I didn't know the intensity of the work week. I think I envisioned I would have time to write."		
Mila	Career	"You feel like you're such a badass when you're 25, 26, and you get to wear fancy suits and go to important meetings and know how much money your company is making every year, and different companies are investing with you. Like you're used to dealing with millions and billions of dollars. My role at my firm was to work with the sovereign well funds, so literally billions of dollars. I'd be talking to these people about their investments, and you feel this kind of sense of power. I don't know if it's entitlement, but just like, wow I'm important."	Calling	"The job that I'm doing now, as a health coach, talking about nutrition, talking about fitness, talking about wellness, self-care, stressing less, like it's all based off of my own experience and my own skills. Talking to people, being a coach, and building relationships, it's like I was able to identify a job that was one hundred percent me."

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Miles <sup>d</sup>	Career	<i>No recording</i>	Calling	<i>No recording</i>
Miriam	Job	"We did one project in particular that I remember that we built out a profile of who our consumer was and it was a person who already lacks self-confidence, was overweight, would spend time on their television at night, and were impulse buyers, and I just had a moment where I was like, "Damn. I'm not helping these people. I am making their problem worse. And that is literally my job, is to sell them something that they don't need and they won't use." I just had a, "Why am I doing this?" moment. Ever since then I've moved into roles that I feel were more beneficial, or services and offerings that I feel would actually help people. Yeah. That's when I decided it's not worth the paycheck for me, anymore, to do something that I don't feel passionate about doing."		
Naomi	Job	"It's never been something that I've loved, it's just something that I've fallen back on money-wise."		
Nina	Career	"I am motivated by the opportunity to be recognized and to be learning the skills that I am here, but I'm definitely not ... I don't come to work every day and I'm like, "Wow, I derive a lot of meaning from doing expert calls on renewable diesel and figuring out if this is an attractive market." Ideally, I would like to get to three, but I think in the short term it's really doing some of these side hustle things and prototyping to make sure that when I figure out what three is, that I'm not positive but I feel like I am at least willing to devote a year to experiment this and I am not going to hate it. Does that make sense?"		
Omar	Career	"Sure, I was talented in science. I studied it in college and in graduate school. But I wasn't really passionate about it—and I could serve, but I wasn't really serving in a way that I wanted to, or serving the communities that I wanted to. So, I felt off. And I could only do that for so long before I was like, "I just can't." Having the skills to do something doesn't make you—at least for me—it didn't make me wake up in the morning feeling excited about going into the office, into the lab and conducting research."	Calling	"I can't imagine anything more suited for both what I'm passionate about, but also what, through connections and through networks, I'm kind of in this unique place to leverage for the benefit for the work we do."

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Owen	Career	"For a long time, I didn't even think about the possibilities to change because it was a good and respected career. I mean, I had very good salary and things like this. So it was not easy to even think about changing something. But also, I had a lot of peer pressure, from my peers, from my family. Because the friends and family, they are in this kind of circle that only believes in conventional jobs. And software engineering sounds like a very good and stable and conventional job. And also it's kind of like, a job for smart people. Which is not true of course, but it sounds like this. But later, I realized that it's not what I really want."		
Patricia	Job	"I'm really familiar with office admin work, because it's very cut and dry. Task complete. Done. Kind of thing. Or do the task, and check it off your list."	Calling	"Definitely my title would change and it already I guess has somewhat changed. Our company isn't big on titles, so that's the other issue. So it's hard to say. That's why I just say People Ops and Office Manager and go through a list of what it entails. And then I think at some point we would probably hire, if we have enough work, a specific office manager, because we're going to get so big that we're going to have to have someone else that handles that. The office manager stuff. Because I've expressed to my manager that I don't like that stuff as much[...]People Ops and culture building. That stuff I really enjoy."
Priya	Job	"I am doing it because it brings in the money. I don't completely agree with it. I am not saying that all medicine should be banned from the face of the earth. I feel like they have their place. But I feel like they are being abused like crazy, especially the pain medications. I feel that I go to work because I need to pay my bills."	Calling	"I feel so aligned with where I am right now. Not even for any money in the world I would go back to pharmacy right now. You could give me any amount, I would never go back. I feel so aligned with where I am and I feel so happy. Just feel healthy and happy and aligned. I feel like the universe is guiding me and God is with me. It might sound a little woo-woo, but yes, that's what it is."  "When you're living your purpose, when you're on your path, it's so much more. It's like so much bigger than you. It's bigger than getting the job done. It's about impacting people. It's about making a mark on the world. It's about inspiring people. I can't tell you how many times, when I get those messages from people, sometimes randomly on Instagram, somebody reached out to me and said like... I didn't know that I was so... But this girl was like, "Don't stop what you're doing, because you're inspiring me every day." That was such an amazing moment, and then yesterday someone told me that I'm so inspiring and like, "Your aura is amazing." When I hear people say that, it's so great. And I've never heard that in pharmacy. Never. So I feel like you're just a better person when you're on your path, and you're on your purpose."

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Rebecca	Job	"I have just been very mindful of making sure that that fits in so that it's not stressing me out and it works for the company that is really is paying the bills for the majority of the time."	Calling	"I feel very inspired by it. Usually, at the end of the session I feel really energized, because you can see the direction that someone is taking and that they are getting energized by all the opportunities that they have coming their way and so, it just inspires me."
Ron	Career	"Am I going to follow my heart and feel good? Or am I going to follow my head and believe that I need to do this? That I need to slug it out? That I need to be competitive? That I need to be better than the next person?"	Calling	"[Company name] is not my idea, but I am the channel for it. So I believe that it was gifted to me for a reason, and I'm not doing it for the money. I'm not doing it for fame. I'm not doing it to take up my time. I'm doing it because I believe that [Company name] is a way to connect humanity in a way it's never been connected before. So in many ways I feel as though, I'm on a mission. I feel as though as this part of a movement. So unless from some reason, even if we were to run out of money, I would still keep looking for that money to build a product, a simple product, that could prove my thesis, my premise."  "It gets to a certain point, I believe, where certain people are called to do things that are bigger than themselves. And that's certainly [Company Name] for me."
Roy	Job	"I mean, I was miserable, to be honest. I just... miserable is dramatic, probably. But I just was not motivated in the slightest. When I would go in, I would do a very mediocre job. I had reports I would run. I wouldn't really even double check them because I'm like I don't really care, which is terrible. It really is. And I just, like I said, I just didn't really find any value or meaning in the work that I was doing."	Calling	"My first step was getting into a role that I was really passionate about and wanted to be a part of and so now, my next step will be how do I propel forward."
Sadie	Job	"So I have been at a large national company and at a smaller regional company, and it has kind of given me the ability to see that it is not so much the company that I am with, but the position itself that is unappealing at this point. At both of the companies, you have a lot of the same demands on your schedule and on your time. I feel like, no matter what company you move with, the skeleton of the coordinator position is always going to entail this 9 to 5 monotony."		

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Sally <sup>c</sup>	Career	<i>No recording</i>	Calling	<i>No recording</i>
Sophie	Career	"I mean I think that in my field, that even to someone who wasn't in my field there were these external measures of success that were pretty obvious. So being like, "I worked at like the number one hospital," or whatever. That even if you're not in the field you can recognize like that's an achievement. This is a person who achieved things."	Calling	"I feel like I am more spiritual because I do have this sense of calling and that is new to me."
Stuart	Career	"You know, once you start leaving the investment banking world, the sheen of...the gloss of finance and the money you can make and earn, it starts to, you know, slowly disintegrate. I definitely admit...my motives when I was working--I was initially a lot more money driven than my motives now for, for what I'm doing."	Calling	"It was probably definitely a mix of being an emotional decision and a rational sort of decision making process. But yeah, I would say that in hindsight more of it was based on just wanting to do this and try it. I had probably been sort of pushed along by my father's death. I think it was a large emotional element to sort of say, "Oh, well, yeah, I should definitely try this." My father worked in finance his whole life, but he loved it. He loved it. That was his sort of passion. And I don't feel that way. So, I was like, "Well, I want to try and do something that I'm passionate about. I want to find something I'm passionate about."
Terry	Career	"Throughout my career, if I look back, I took the path of least resistance all the time. Whether it was to go work for a company where my dad was able to help me get a job, whether it was to take promotions just because they were convenient. To get married and have kids, I needed a full-time job so I took another promotion. Because it was the easy thing to do. It was never the hard thing to do."	Calling	"It was a crazy career change to go through this but it was a time in my life that I wanted to do something to pay back and to follow a passion, and be what's important, and not follow spreadsheets and conference calls and run ragged."
Theresa <sup>c</sup>	Career	"But the work was interesting, and I was growing, and I was getting promoted. But I didn't feel passionate about it, and I didn't feel fulfilled doing what I was doing."	Calling	"When I saw the position and when I got the job, I was really excited, because it seemed like the dream job for someone who loves books and reading and to see sort of how you put together a literature festival and to be a part of that team."  "I just sort of went back to the basics and thought, "Okay. What do I love doing?" And it was like, I love to read. And I've always wanted to write."

Name <sup>a</sup>	BEFORE PIVOT		AFTER PIVOT	
	Work Orientation <sup>b</sup>	Sample Quote Demonstrating Work Orientation	Work Orientation <sup>b</sup>	Sample Quote Demonstrating Work Orientation
Tristan	Job	"When a lot of people in my generation graduated from college, the job market was really crappy, so they had to just take whatever they could get. And so a lot of people ended up in these positions that they're not really passionate about, and I think one of the most important things to being happy in life is finding meaning and purpose. And you find meaning and purpose in your work. That's going back to Victor Frankl's man's search for meaning, but yeah. I think it is a common problem among my generation because when we graduated from college, the job market was really down so people took whatever they could get and went from there."		
Tucker	Job	"I may have mentioned this last time as well, but like I said, there's no strong negatives. It's more just tedium, which is worse in a way. At least if it were exceptionally positive or exceptionally negative I would actually feel motivated to do something about it, but this kind of just floating. It just lulls you into a sense of complacency."		
Walker	Career	"I knew, on the one hand, what I was doing was risky...in terms of sort of throwing away this momentum of a career in finance or a career in business. On the other hand, I knew it wasn't that risky in that the absolute worst-case scenario is that I put a year or two into this and then I am broke. But at least I have answered the question and now I can start from ground zero of trying to build a career in business. That was worst case scenario, and that just didn't scare me. That just didn't seem so bad to me. I have the degree, a good network from college, and I am very lucky and very privileged to have these things in my life. I came from a place of privilege that I was able to drop into this. I recognize that."	Calling	"I came home to Brooklyn and just blindly dove into the world of acting. Absolutely blindly. Read every book I could find on acting. Taking a class here and taking a class there. Setting up different profiles on different casting websites and getting my head shots and website. Doing every little off-off-Broadway thing that never paid and nine times out of ten were horrible plays. I was doing it because I was in love with it. I was absolutely in love with it and having the time of my life. And I still am today. In many ways, I felt like I was meeting myself in a genuine way. I felt like I was sort of being someone else in college, or even longer than that. I was walking down this prescribed path rather than doing what I felt was true to me. It has been a wonderful decision in my life so far."
Wyatt	Career	"I think actually working in journalism... like journalism you have to kind of work your way up the ranks. It's like common for you to work a job for a year or two and then go to another job that's a little more higher ranking or different responsibilities and then another time."		
Zoe	Career	"I don't think that I expected the job itself to be super exciting or meaningful. I liked the company, especially at the time. They were really big on educational opportunities and training and they really advertised promoting from within and all that stuff so I really thought that I would be able to grow in the company. I really thought it would be interesting to be able to get into a director level position or something like that."	Calling	"Everybody knows that I'm the coffee person. That's why my blog is "That Coffee Chick," because I'll walk into a networking event or something and everyone's like, "Coffee girl." It's this thing that I can't even help, and I think that that's kind of the difference between more of an interest and that burning passion, because it's something inside of you that you can't even turn off. It's that thing that you geek out about and annoy people with at parties and stuff like that."

*Notes.*

<sup>a</sup> All names are pseudonyms. Excludes two participants who I interviewed during field observation. I have written notes corresponding to these interviews, but I do not have interview recordings.

<sup>b</sup> A participant was coded as having a career orientation if they seemed driven to work by the prospect of promotion/advancement within an occupation or along a career path. They may have also explicitly or implicated expressed a view of work as a source of status (e.g., through working for prestigious companies, attaining impressive titles or reputations, having big name clients, or doing work that was “glamorous,” “sexy” or good for the “ego”). A participant was coded as having a job orientation if they seemed driven to work as a way to pay the bills and enjoy life outside of work. If they discussed their work in positive terms (e.g., as a “good job”), they may have highlighted aspects such as the benefits, stability, security, and/or flexible schedule, as opposed to the actual substance of the work being a source of deep meaning. They may have referred to their work as a “day job” or a “9 to 5,” and as something steady that represented a means to an end. They may have discussed their work as funding a side gig or enjoyable leisure activities. If they disliked their work (which was more often the case of these individuals), they may have mentioned that they did not like talking about their work, and that they tried to do only what was required by their job (and nothing beyond the job requirements). An individual was coded as having a calling orientation if they described their work as enjoyable, rewarding, and/or socially significant. They may have expressed an obsession with work, a willingness to sacrifice in the name of work, and/or a sense of destiny about being in the occupation. They may have viewed their work as fulfilling a need in the word, as having purpose, and as an occupation that they “needed” to pursue. They may have referred to their line of work as a way of being true to oneself and obtaining fulfillment. Finally, they may have mentioned that they enjoyed talking about their work to other people.

<sup>c</sup> Theresa made a career pivot to become a literature foundation manager and writer. She expressed a calling orientation toward both occupations. One quote is provided that demonstrates her calling orientation toward being a literature foundation manager. Another quote is provided that demonstrates her calling orientation toward being a writer.

## Appendix 2. Interview Protocol

### Pre-Interview

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Introduce yourself and the basic premise of the research. Gain consent from the participant that it is fine to record the interview and use anonymized quotes in the eventual manuscript. Inform participant that the interview recording will be deleted once the interview has been transcribed. Provide the participant with an opportunity to ask any questions.

#### Notes:

- When conducting the interview, adapt questions to match a participant’s own language. For example, if a participant refers to a career “jump” as a “pivot,” “change,” or “transition,” use the same terminology when posing questions to that participant.
- Many questions will be repeated, in either a similar or identical form, across time points. When repeating any question that was asked in a prior interview, add a phrase to the beginning of the question to signal to the participant that you acknowledge this repetition, “When you look back on things now…” or, “Recognizing your perspective on this might have changed…”

### Warm-Up Questions for Participants at (a) Time 1, (b) Time 2, and (c) Time 3

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#### (a) Warm-Up Questions at *Time 1*

1. Can you start off by telling me a little bit about yourself?
2. How would you label your current occupation (i.e., your current line of work)?
  - How long have you been in that line of work?
3. What is your “jump”? [**confirm that individual is making a career pivot**]
4. Can you tell me the story of how you came to be in your [current/former] occupation?
  - Why did you pursue your [current/former] occupation?
5. [If employed] Can you walk me through a typical day in your current job?
  - What is your current title?
6. Looking back, how do you feel about your career overall?
7. As you may recall, I recruited you for an interview because of your link to *When to Jump*. To what extent have you been involved in, interacted with, or followed *When to Jump*?
  - Have you attended any of the community events?
  - Have you read the founder’s book?
  - Have you listened to the podcast?
8. What does “jumping” mean to you?

#### (b) Warm-Up Questions at *Time 2*

1. We last spoke in [insert month and year of the Time 1 interview]. Can you tell me a little bit about what has been going on in your work life since then?

- Are you still working in the same occupation?
2. Can you walk me through a typical day in your current job these days?
    - Do you still have the same title?
  3. [If applicable] How have your jump deliberations evolved since we last spoke?
  4. Looking back, how do you feel about your career overall?
  5. As you may recall, I recruited you for the initial interview because of your link to the *When to Jump*. To what extent have you been involved in, interacted with, or followed *When to Jump* since we last spoke?
  6. What does “jumping” mean to you?

**(c) Warm-Up Questions at Time 3**

1. We last spoke in [insert month and year of the Time 1 interview]. Can you tell me a little bit about what has been going on in your work life since then?
  - Are you still working in the same occupation?
2. Can you walk me through a typical day in your current job these days?
  - Do you still have the same title?
3. [If applicable] How have your jump deliberations evolved since we last spoke?
4. Looking back, how do you feel about your career overall?
5. As you may recall, I recruited you for the initial interview because of your link to *When to Jump*. To what extent have you been involved in, interacted with, or followed *When to Jump* since we last spoke?
6. What does “jumping” mean to you?

**Core Questions for Participants Experiencing (a) Generalized Unanswered Calling, (b) Particularized Unanswered Calling, and (c) Calling**

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**(a) Core Questions for Participants Experiencing Generalized Unanswered Calling**

*Understanding Background and Triggers*

1. Why do you want to make a jump? Where does your motivation to make a jump come from?
  - a. How serious are you about making a jump?
  - b. In general, why do you think people make career jumps?
2. How long have you been deliberating making a jump?
  - a. When do you think you first realized that you might want to jump? Did anything noteworthy happen in your work or personal life around that time?
3. Why do you think some people, like you, consider making a jump in their careers, whereas other people do not consider it?
4. To what extent do you feel a sense of passion or purpose in your current occupation?
  - a. How do you think it would be to work in [insert occupation] in another organization? Do you think your desire to make a jump would go away if you were in a “better” organization?
5. What would be the biggest benefits of making a jump?

*Understanding the Psychological and Physical Movement Involved in a Career Pivot*

1. What are the biggest challenges of making a career jump? Can you provide some examples?
2. In general, what do you think holds people back from making career jumps?
  - a. What do you expect would be the financial implications of making a jump?
3. To what extent have you discussed your deliberations to jump with other people, such as friends and family? Co-workers? Supervisors?
  - a. What do they say to you about it?
  - b. How do you respond?
4. How often do you think about making a jump? To what extent have you been acting or performing any differently at work since you started thinking about it?
5. At this point, are there any specific occupations that you are considering pursuing if you leave your current occupation?
  - a. Why are you considering these occupations?
  - b. What do you think you were “meant to do” with your career?
6. Do you ever imagine what life would be like if you were to leave [insert current occupation]? How do you imagine it?
7. How will you know if your jump is successful? What does success look like for you?
  - a. What do you think are some of the key practices that lead to success in making a career jump?
8. Do you think there are a lot of other people like you? Is jumping common in society?

*Understanding the Role of Community and Narratives*

1. What role, if any, has *When to Jump* played in your deliberations to make a jump?
2. What do you think initially attracted you to *When to Jump*?
3. To what extent did you find it helpful to [read/hear] other people’s jump stories?
4. To what extent do the stories from *When to Jump* resonate with your experience of making a jump? Are there any ways that your jump experience seems to differ?
5. From what you have observed, is there any common thread across the stories of people who make career jumps? What is it?

**(b) Core Questions for Participants Experiencing Particularized Unanswered Calling**

*Understanding Background and Triggers*

1. Why do you want to make this jump? Where does your motivation to make this jump come from?
  - a. How serious are you about making this jump?
  - b. In general, why do you think people make career jumps?
2. How long have you been deliberating making this jump?
  - a. When do you think you first realized that you might want to jump? Did anything noteworthy happen in your work or personal life around that time?
3. Why do you think some people, like you, consider making a jump in their careers, whereas other people do not consider it?

4. To what extent do you feel a sense of passion or purpose in your current occupation?
  - a. How do you think it would be to work in [insert occupation] in another organization? Do you think your desire to make this jump would go away if you were in a “better” organization?
5. What might be the biggest benefits of making this jump?

*Understanding the Psychological and Physical Movement Involved in a Career Pivot*

9. What are the biggest challenges of making a career jump? Can you provide some examples?
10. In general, what do you think holds people back from making career jumps?
  - a. What do you expect would be the financial implications of making a jump?
11. To what extent have you discussed this jump with other people, such as friends and family? Co-workers? Supervisors?
  - a. What do they say to you about it?
  - b. How do you respond?
12. How often do you think about making this jump? To what extent have you been acting or performing any differently at work since you started thinking about it?
13. Can you tell me more about why you want to pursue [insert particular occupation]?
  - c. What do you think you were “meant to do” with your career?
14. Do you ever imagine what life would be like if you were pursuing [insert particular occupation]? How do you imagine it?
15. How will you know if your jump is successful? What does success look like for you?
  - a. What do you think are some of the key practices that lead to success in making a career jump?
16. Do you think there are a lot of other people like you? Is jumping common in society?

*Understanding the Role of Community and Narratives*

6. What do you think initially attracted you to *When to Jump*?
7. To what extent did you find it helpful to [read/hear] other people’s jump stories?
8. To what extent do the stories from *When to Jump* resonate with your experience of making a jump? Are there any ways that your jump experience seems to differ?
9. From what you have observed, is there any common thread across the stories of people who make career jumps? What is it?

**(c) Core Questions for Participants Experiencing a Calling**

*Understanding Background and Triggers*

1. Why did you want to make this jump? Where did your motivation to make this jump come from?
  - a. In general, why do you think people make career jumps?
2. How long did you deliberate making this jump before you actually did it?
  - a. When do you think you first realized that you might want to jump? Did anything noteworthy happen in your work or personal life around that time?

3. Why do you think some people, like you, consider making a jump in their careers, whereas other people do not consider it?
4. To what extent do you feel a sense of passion or purpose in your former occupation?
  - a. How do you think it would have been to work in [insert occupation] in another organization? Do you think your desire to make this jump would have gone away if you had been in a “better” organization?
5. To what extent do you feel a sense of passion or purpose in your current occupation?
6. What have been the biggest benefits of making this jump?

*Understanding the Psychological and Physical Movement Involved in a Career Pivot*

1. What are the biggest challenges of making a career jump? Can you provide some examples?
2. In general, what do you think holds people back from making career jumps?
  - a. What did you expect would be the financial implications of making this jump? How did those expectations compare to reality?
3. To what extent did you discuss your jump with other people, such as friends and family? Co-workers? Supervisors?
  - a. What did they say to you about it?
  - b. How did you respond?
4. How often did you think about making this jump before you did it? To what extent were you acting or performing any differently at work once you started thinking about it?
5. Can you tell me more about why you wanted to pursue [insert current occupation]?
  - d. What do you think you were “meant to do” with your career?
6. Do you ever imagine what life would be like if you were still pursuing [insert former occupation]? How do you imagine it?
7. To what extent was your jump successful? What does success mean to you?
  - a. What do you think are some of the key practices that lead to success in making a career jump?
8. Do you think there are a lot of other people like you? Is jumping common in society?

*Understanding the Role of Community and Narratives*

1. What do you think initially attracted you to *When to Jump*?
2. To what extent did you find it helpful to [read/hear] other people’s jump stories?
3. To what extent do the stories from *When to Jump* resonate with your experience of making a jump? Are there any ways that your jump experience seems to differ?
4. From what you have observed, is there any common thread across the stories of people who make career jumps? What is it?
5. Have you told anyone the story of your jump lately? Who? What did you say?
6. Imagine that I am someone you just met, and you were going to tell me the story of your jump. How would you tell it?
7. If you were encouraging someone to make a career jump, what would you say to them?
8. If you were discouraging someone from making a jump, what would you say to them?

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**Wrap-Up Questions for Participants at (a) Time 1, (b) Time 2, and (c) Time 3**

**Wrap-Up Questions at Time 1**

1. What are your plans for the next year or so work-wise?
2. Is there anything else that you think might be helpful for me to know about your experience for my research about how people make career jumps?
3. Do you mind if I reach out to you in the future for a follow-up interview? It would be great to obtain an update on how things are going for you in your career.
4. Do you mind filling out a 10-minute, follow-up survey? What is the best e-mail address for me to send it to?

**Wrap-Up Questions at Time 2**

1. What are your plans for the next year or so work-wise?
2. Is there anything else that you think might be helpful for me to know about your experience, since we last spoke, for my research about how people make career jumps?
3. Do you mind if I reach out to you in the future for a follow-up interview? It would be great to obtain an update on how things are going for you in your career.

**Wrap-Up Questions at Time 3**

1. What are your plans for the next year or so work-wise?
2. Is there anything else that you think might be helpful for me to know about your experience, since we last spoke, for my research about how people make career jumps?

## CONCLUSION

Management scholarship is rife with accounts of people pivoting from steady jobs and “good” careers into occupations that align with their *callings*. In my dissertation, I sought to advance our understanding of callings, as well as the career pivots people make to pursue them. I conducted my examination across two studies, employing mixed-methods.

In the first study, a quantitative meta-analysis, synthesizing two decades of calling research, my co-authors and I identified the beneficial and detrimental outcomes associated with viewing work as a calling across 201 studies in the literature. We found that callings, on the whole, are highly beneficial for people’s work and lives. Further, we suggested that a “calling mindset”—the extent to which people believe work *should* be a calling—can further strengthen the benefits of experiencing a calling.

Given the highly positive view of callings that emerged within the meta-analysis, I conducted a second study, a solo-authored qualitative project, to explore how people who are feeling unfulfilled in their careers can leave unfulfilling occupations to pursue their callings. I refer to this role transition as a “career pivot”—a concept that I introduce simultaneously to the literature on callings and role transitions. Drawing on 201 interviews, conducted in three waves over 18-months, as well as archival and observational data gathered over 3.5 years, I found that career pivots were radical, unconventional career transitions—often requiring some degree of “starting over,” and accompanying loss of status and/or security. Due to these characteristics of career pivots, I recognized that successful completion of the underlying psychological role movement was likely to hinge upon whether an individual could construct a compelling “career pivot self-narrative.” Thus, I used the longitudinal data to examine how self-narratives evolve across the stages of a career pivot, and eventually become enduring, thereby facilitating the

pivot's completion. My examination revealed several elements of the self-narrative, including its exposition, inciting incident, and rising action, evolved between the early and middle stages of a career pivot. Subsequently, in the late stage of a career pivot—when people are working in their new occupations—if their new occupational identity is validated and work is experienced as a calling, the self-narrative becomes enduring, and the career pivot is complete. My dissertation advances our understanding of callings and role transitions.