

DISSERTATION

THE EXPERIENCE OF CAREER CHANGE DRIVEN BY A SENSE OF CALLING: AN
INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

THE EXPERIENCE OF CAREER CHANGE DRIVEN BY A SENSE OF CALLING: AN INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS APPROACH

The present study used a qualitative methodology to examine how a sense of calling is related to the career change process. Interviews were conducted with eight career changers who perceived their career transition as a way to fulfill a calling. Using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), eight categories were elicited: prior to career change, pre-transition period, process of discerning a calling, definition of calling, challenges of pursuing a calling-infused career, ways of dealing with challenges, impact of a calling-infused career change, and unique aspects of a calling-infused career change. Generally, interviewees were satisfied with their calling-infused career transitions and reported greater levels of well-being in the area of work and personal life. In-depth self-exploration and making meaning from challenging experiences were addressed as a way to discern a calling. Interviewees defined calling as a source of fulfillment, a way to serve the greater good at work, a spiritual conviction that one is doing what one is meant to do, and a part of one's identity. As unique characteristics of calling-infused career change, interviewees indicated that their career changes happened with altruistic motives and in the pursuit of intrinsic rewards. Interviewees also reported feeling blessed to be able to live out their calling and viewed pursuing a calling as an ongoing process.

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LIST OF KEYWORDS

Keywords: calling, career change, interpretive phenomenological analysis, adult career, meaningful work, well-being

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

I. Statement of Research Problem

Career development is a lifelong and ongoing process. In rapidly changing world of work, it is no longer expected that workers will hold one life-long career. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor (2012), the average job tenure of American workers was 4.6 years in 2012. In this unstable and quickly changing job market, most workers may experience both voluntary and involuntary turnover at some point in their working lives. Although the uncertainty of one's career path has become a common characteristic of modern society, changing one's job is still a challenging and often unwanted life experience. Unemployment and job insecurity are still perceived as negative career stressors and significant number of career changers reported that they moved to a less desirable and satisfying position than their previous one (Wanberg, 1995). This result implies that for many workers, changing jobs is experienced as a demotion to a less favorable position rather than a positive turning point towards a better direction in one's career path.

Research also has shown that unemployment is negatively associated with psychological and physical well-being (Paul & Moser, 2009). One sample of unemployed adults not only showed significantly more signs of anxiety and depression than an employed comparison group, but also was at an increased risk of physical illnesses such as cancers or cardiovascular diseases (Herbig et al., 2013). Most research regarding adult career transitions has focused on unemployment, job loss, involuntary turnover, and specifically the negative consequences of unemployment (Eichhorn, 2013; Gowan, 2014). Relatively little is known about career changers who decide to voluntarily change their jobs and what psychological resources lead to

experiencing this career transition as a positive turning point during one's career path. Therefore, an important next step for research is to investigate career changers who are satisfied with their new career path, to examine how they made a career change decision, and to identify the factors that helped to facilitate the transition process.

Pursuing a sense of calling may be one of the antecedents leading to positive voluntary turnover (i.e., voluntarily changing one's career). Approaching one's career as a calling entails feeling driven into a particular career pathway by a transcendent summons, and trying to pursue a sense of purpose with a pro-social orientation (Dik & Duffy, 2009). Over the past few years, there has been an increasing amount of research in vocational counseling psychology and management showing that approaching one's career as a calling is positively linked with career and well-being outcomes for college students and employed adults (Duffy & Autin, 2013). For example, approaching one's work as a calling is linked with higher levels of career maturity and career decision self-efficacy among college students, increased job satisfaction, higher career commitment for working adults, and higher levels of life meaning and life satisfaction for both groups (Duffy & Dik (2013).

Calling has been described as inseparably intertwined with one's identity (Berg et al., 2010), and individuals may develop the feeling of being drawn into a certain area in which they have engaged in various activities and satisfied particular interests (Schwartz, 2004). Although little is known empirically about how a sense of calling develops, individuals can theoretically develop a new calling based on their former work and life experiences, or conversely may recognize an unanswered calling through unpleasant experiences from their ill-aligned current job. As a result, individuals may consider changing their career paths to pursue their unanswered calling or to find a better job that fits more closely with their interests. However, previous calling

research has not yet investigated the link between a sense of calling and the career transition process. This prompted a need to examine how a sense of calling can be applied to career transitions and how individuals interpret their transition experiences as driven by a sense of calling. Furthermore, understanding the determinants, the process, the impact of a calling on career change, and the consequences of a career change can offer important information for researchers and counselors working with clients considering a transition.

Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the career transition experience among adults who decided to change their careers and perceived the career transition process as a way to fulfill a calling. In the next section, a more thorough literature review on career change and career calling, and the link between these two constructs will be provided.

II. Literature Review

1. Adult Career Development

One of the main areas of focus within vocational psychology historically has been career choice, in particular the process of finding good-fitting work. In this context, a disproportionate amount of the vocational research has been conducted with adolescents or young adult groups who face the career decision-making process. As it has become gradually common for working adults to change their careers multiple times, there is a need to understand career transitions and career change decision-making processes among working adults (Ebberwein et al., 2004).

Super's life span, life space theory (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996) provides a good framework for understanding adult career development by approaching career development as a lifelong process. Super (1990) refers to careers as a series of positions occupied by a person across one's life span. He postulated that an individual becomes mature as she or he goes through diverse life changes and develops one's self-concept by accomplishing particular

developmental stage tasks across the life span. According to Super's model, one's vocational self-concept develops through physical and psychological growth, observation of work, and identification of working and life experiences (Zunker, 1994). As experiences become elaborated with an increased awareness of the world of work, a more sophisticated vocational self-concept is formed. In this perspective, career change is regarded as a personal growth process of finding a better job that more satisfactorily permits one to express one's maturing vocational self-concept.

Super and Knasel (1981) introduced the concept of career adaptability, which refers to one's "readiness to cope with changing work and working conditions" (p. 195) and resources for doing so successfully. Career adaptability is the capability to cope with adversity and emphasizes the view of a person as an active agent. The concept addresses individuals' proactive attitude toward the career change process including a realistic assessment of one's personal, work, and situational contexts (Cairo et al., 1996). Therefore, career adaptability is especially applicable to adult workers who are struggling with career-related challenges and transitions in stressful times (Harry & Coetzee, 2013). Savickas and Porfeli (2012) described that individuals with high levels of career adaptability are better able to deal with both the predictable tasks and unpredictable adjustments prompted by sudden changes in work.

O'Connor and Wolfe (1987) provided a series of five stages of the adult career transition: stability (pretransition), rising discontent, crisis, redirection and adaptation, and restabilizing. The first stage, stability, is a time when individuals have a stable life structure with established roles and relationships. In the second phase, rising discontent, an individual recognizes discontents and dissatisfactions in their current state. A desire to make changes starts to emerge, but realistic alternatives are not yet developed. The third phase, crisis, refers to a time that inner conflicts, uncertainty about the self, and emotional discomforts reach their peak. After the crisis,

an individual actively looks for a new direction or other alternatives. This fourth stage, redirection and adaptation, is a time of trying tentative actions to make changes and an individual gradually makes a decision. The last phase, restabilizing, is the conclusion of the transition in which an individual makes a firm decision and is ready to commit to a new life structure that has been taking shape. By conceptualizing a career transition as the process of coping with changes in the self and the environment, O'Connor and Wolfe (1987) suggested that the transition should be regarded as a *natural and inevitable*, not as a *detour*. In this time of uncertainty, all individuals are required to continuously learn new skills and to deal with changes in the self and their work environments. From this perspective, career change is viewed as a normal part of career progress (Carless & Arnup, 2011), and it facilitates personal growth by providing individuals the opportunity to proactively respond to changes in the self and their environments.

2. Career Construction Theory

Career Construction Theory (CCT; Savickas, 2005) considers an individual person as an active agent and addresses how the individual elicits meaning from her or his life experiences. According to CCT, careers do not simply “happen.” Rather, careers are created as individuals make the decision to take certain work roles, which allows the individuals to express themselves and accomplish their goals (Savickas, 2005). From this perspective, CCT focuses upon how an individual develops the what, how, and why of making a career decision by using a narrative approach (Glavin & Berger, 2012). Narrative approaches encourage the person to take authorship in developing vocational identity and building her or his own career path. This approach assumes that the person can recognize and create meaningful and integrated narratives (Gibson, 2004). According to Gibson (2004), “Authorship involves not just recognition of the themes that motivate us as characters in the narratives of our lives and careers, but also the task of standing

back and evaluating those motives, and of asking who we are becoming, and who we want to become” (p. 188).

CCT addresses three components regarding understanding career development over the life span: the psychology of individual differences, the psychology of development, and the psychology of motivation (Savickas, 2005; Savickas, 2011). The psychology of individual differences relates to the content of vocational personality (i.e., *what* different people prefer to do). The psychology of development relates to the process of adaptation (i.e., *how* individuals deal with vocational tasks and work related challenges). The psychology of motivation relates to *why* a certain career choice is made and which life themes make meanings and lead to certain vocational behaviors (i.e. calling). CCT suggests that these three perspectives are central components when constructing an individual’s career.

Vocational Personality. Vocational personality refers to an individual’s career-related characteristics such as interests, needs, skills, abilities, and values (Savickas, 2005). Career construction is based upon Holland’s (1997) theory of vocational personality. While Holland’s theory conceptualizes vocational interests as objective and stable traits, career construction theory views career-related traits as unstable, subjective, dynamic, and fluid. Savickas (2005) criticized the objective perspective of traits, arguing that it fails to explain the significance of personal experiences and each individual’s unique point of view. Rather than objective truths, Savickas (2005) argued that vocational traits are socially constructed and continually evolve as people adaptively respond to their surrounding environments. With this perspective, CCT emphasizes the importance of exploring each individual’s life themes and vocational self-concept because they reflect the content that an individual has chosen to construct (Glavin & Berger, 2012).

Life Themes. The live theme derived from Super's developmental theory (1951) is that career choice is an implementation of a self-concept, and work is a way of manifesting one's self-esteem. Savickas (2002) considered career development as an on-going matching process between the self and environment.

The life theme component explains the "why" of vocational behavior and the subjective matter of work in an individual's life. The "why" can be revealed by creating rich career narratives. Career narratives illustrate core life themes that explain the "meaning" (i.e., why the work is personally meaningful) and "mattering" (i.e., why the work matters to society; Savickas, 2005). Therefore, life themes extracted from career narratives provide future direction and an enhanced image of future potential selves. CCT suggests that counselors can help their clients create deeper meaning and broader mattering of their work in addition to helping their clients develop increased actualization of their self-concept (Savickas, 2005).

Career Adaptability. Career adaptability refers to an individual's attempts to implement one's self-concept in social roles (Savicas, 2005). Career adaptability relates to 'how' individuals interact with their environments and originates from Super's (1990) construct of career maturity. Super (1990) believed that people engage in a series of vocational stages over time: growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and disengagement. The entire working life cycle is referred to as a *maxicycle*. However, the world of work is characterized by instability and mobility, and individuals are required to adapt to a series of transitions (e.g., from school to work, from position to position, from job to job). CCT views career development as a series of adaptations to these transitions and suggests that the *minicycle* (i.e., re-cycling through the five stages as needed) more accurately captures the current nature of the world of work (Glavin & Berger, 2012). According to CCT, career adaptability can be defined with a set of attitudes,

beliefs, and competencies: the ABCs of career construction. The ABCs can be described with four characteristics: concern, control, curiosity, and confidence. That is adaptive individuals are more likely to feel concern about their vocational future, have a sense of control over their career, proactively explore possibilities, and have greater levels of confidence on pursuing their career (Savickas, 2005).

3. Work as a Calling

There are different ways individuals experience and understand the purpose of work. Some may see work as the way of simply gaining financial rewards for living, whereas some may feel “called” to a certain career that aligns with one’s life purpose (Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012). Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) differentiated attitudes about work as a job (focus on financial rewards), a career (focus on prestige, power, and achievement), and a calling (focus on enjoyment of fulfilling, socially useful work), and found that approaching one’s work as a calling was associated with the highest levels of life and work satisfaction. Given that viewing one’s career as a calling has consistently been linked to positive career development and well-being, many researchers have begun to explore what it means to have a calling, and what living out a calling looks like (e.g., Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012; Peterson et al., 2009; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Dik and Duffy (2009) defined calling as “a transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation” (p. 427). The concept of calling originated from a religious context, but has since expanded in scope and relevance. The weight of the most recent evidence shows that there are relatively few differences in the perception of

having a calling across gender, religious orientation, income, and racial identities (Duffy, Allan et al., 2013; Duffy, Bott et al., 2012).

Most research has examined calling in relation to work and well-being outcomes. However, Duffy and Autin (2013) recently distinguished *having a calling* and *living a calling*. Duffy and Autin (2013) suggested that having a calling is not always connected to living the calling, because some people may face realistic barriers that prevent them from actualizing their calling in their careers. For example, Duffy and Dik (2009) provided several barriers that hinder the process of living a calling; societal (e.g., poverty, economic conditions), workplace (e.g., discrimination, unfavorable work environment), and individual (e.g., unemployment, physical or psychological disability). As an effort to differentiate these two types of calling, presence of calling is defined as an individual's perception that she or he is called to a particular career path, whereas living a calling refers to the sense that one is currently working in a job that is a match with her or his calling. Research has revealed that perceiving a calling is positively associated with career commitment and work meaning, and these relationships are stronger among those with high levels of living a calling (Duffy, Allan, & Bott, 2012). Living a calling also fully mediated the link between perceiving a calling and job satisfaction (Duffy, Allan et al., 2013). These results consistently suggest that living a calling is more highly associated with positive work-related and well-being outcomes than perceiving a calling (Duffy, Allan et al., 2013).

Calling and Career Development

Research on perceiving and living a calling has rapidly increased in recent years within vocational psychology and management. Previous research shows remarkably consistent results despite diverse definitions of the construct and multiple programs of research undertaken in four continents. Large-scale studies showed that approximately 40% of college students reported that

they have a calling (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010), and approximately 30% of one sample of 9,803 adult workers representing more than 70 countries reported that they view work as a calling (Peterson et al., 2009). The benefits of approaching work as a calling have been examined with diverse occupations including administrative assistants, zookeepers, academics, and psychologists, among many others (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Duffy, Foley et al., 2012; Oates et al., 2005; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997).

Research on calling has explored how having a calling is positively related to several general and career-related well-being variables (Berg et al. 2010; Wrzesniewski et al. 1997). Approaching work as a calling is linked to higher levels of career maturity, intrinsic work motivation, work hope, career decision self-efficacy, and academic satisfaction among college students (Dik et al., 2008; Duffy, Allan, & Dik, 2011; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Steger, Pickering et al., 2010). Studies with adult workers found that those with a sense of calling exhibited increased job satisfaction, greater levels of occupational identification, higher career commitment, and a stronger sense of that their work is meaningful (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Davidson & Caddell, 1994, Duffy, Dik, & Steger, 2011; Duffy, Foley et al., 2012; Peterson et al., 2009; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Furthermore, fulfilling one's calling strengthens relationships both inside and outside work (Cardador & Caza, 2012) and promotes a sense of social connection by making workers feel that they are contributing to society in a positive way (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009).

The presence of a calling also is related to life satisfaction and life meaning. Duffy, Allan, and Bott (2012) found that life meaning and academic satisfaction fully mediated the relationship between calling and life satisfaction among college students. The calling–life satisfaction relationship was stronger with adult workers, which implies that workers are more likely to

experience living out a calling through their work when compared to students who have not yet entered the “real” work world (Duffy, Foley et al., 2012).

In terms of how calling is linked to job satisfaction, research found that work meaning and career commitment mediated the relationship between calling and job satisfaction (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Steger, Pickering et al., 2010). Individuals with a calling tend to be more committed to their careers, and perceive their work as personally meaningful, which in turn is associated with greater work satisfaction. Interestingly, Duffy, Dik, and Steger’s (2011) study showed that career commitment suppressed the relation between calling and withdrawal intentions: having a calling without career commitment was linked to greater withdrawal intentions. This result provided indirect evidence as to how calling can be related to career change. In other words, individuals with missed or unanswered callings may not be able to commit to their current work, and eventually consider leaving the job.

Along with quantitative research examining the link between a sense of calling and outcome variables, there are several qualitative studies exploring how individuals experience a calling and how a sense of calling influences their work and life. Hunter, Dik, and Banning (2010) used responses to open-ended written responses from 295 college students to explore how the participants define calling and how a sense of calling impacts their career and non-career experiences. The study found that participants understood calling as originating from internal and external “guiding forces,” as a strong fit with their internal characteristics, and as a factor driving them to pursue pro-social values. There are also several qualitative studies focusing more on specific populations or occupations. Three qualitative studies targeted Christian populations and explored how participants discern and maintain a calling in their lives (Hernandez, Foley, & Beitin, 2011; Oates, Hall, & Anderson, 2005; Sellers, Thomas, Batts, &

Ostman, 2005). Most participants in these studies expressed that a sense of calling positively influenced their lives by increasing work commitment and providing a positive perspective toward barriers. French and Domene (2010), in interviews with seven White, Christian, female university students, described five characteristics of the nature of calling: an altruistic focus, intensity, a deep passion for the area to which they felt called, a sense of facilitating the discovering of a calling in others, and burdens of having a calling. However, since all participants had Christian religious backgrounds and the source of calling was explicitly religious, the extent to which these results generalize to other population is unclear.

Bunderson and Thompson (2009) interviewed 23 zookeepers and analyzed the interviews with a grounded theory method. The results suggested that zookeepers with a strong sense of calling reported broader meaning and significance in their work, and were also more likely to view their work as a moral duty requiring sacrifices in terms of both financial rewards and personal comfort. Duffy, Foley et al (2012) conducted a qualitative study with eight counseling psychologists who approached their work with a sense of calling. The results showed that the way the participants discerned their callings was different based on unique, personal life experiences and that all of the participants reported creating benefits to society through their work as a critical part of their callings.

These qualitative studies all expand our understating of how calling is conceptualized and intertwined into one's current line of work. However, little is known about how calling is developed across time or a series of occupations. Therefore, there is currently a need to examine how a sense of calling develops over time, and how an unanswered calling is discerned and influences the individual's further career development.

4. Career Change

Louis (1980) defined a career transition as a process in which an individual transfers to a different objective role. According to Louis, there are five types of job transitions: entry/reentry, intra-company (transfer), intercompany, interprofession, and exit (retirement). Career change is often interchangeably used with job change, but Carless and Arnup (2011) viewed them as separate types of transitions. According to Carless and Arnup (2011), career change involves changing to a work position in a different field that is largely unrelated to previous work skills or responsibilities, whereas job change refers to a movement to a similar type of job. Career change indicates more than leaving an organization or changing companies. It encompasses an interprofessional transition from one occupational field to another. Career change is typically a more difficult work transition compared to job change because it requires new training and additional human capital investment in new field (Blau, 2007; Carless & Arnup, 2011). The current study defines “career changer” as an individual who voluntarily decides to enter a different type of position or field that is not directly related with previous work.

Factors Leading to Career Change

As career change becomes common in work life, whether because of voluntary personal choice or because of an organization’s decision, the need for research to identify antecedents of turnover and psychological resources for fostering positive career transition has become clear (Ebberwein et al, 2004). In recent years, there have been increased attempts to identify determinants of voluntary career change or career transition, yielding five frequent causes: reduced job satisfaction, burnout, job insecurity, personality traits, and unanswered callings.

Reduced job satisfaction. Rhodes and Doering's (1983) career change model provides a general framework to explain individual and organizational factors that lead to career change. According to this model, job satisfaction is a critical factor that initiates the career change process. Rhodes and Doering (1983) suggested that decreased job satisfaction leads to thinking about changing one's career (Blau, 2000), an intention to leave the job, and searching for alternative career options. Latack and Dozier (1986) suggested a positive perspective about how lower levels of satisfaction at the previous job can lead to career growth: Individuals with low job satisfaction may view job loss as a new opportunity to leave dissatisfying and unpleasant work (Eby & Buch, 1995). However, Breeden (1993) suggested that the level of job satisfaction is not a precursor of career change, but instead is more likely related to post-change attitudes when an individual reports higher levels of satisfaction in a new job. Some studies have argued that when starting a new job, employees tend to perceive their new jobs in a more favorable manner; therefore, increased job satisfaction can be a consequence of job change (Bernstrom, 2013; Boswell et al., 2005). In Careless and Arnup's (2011) study, which examined the determinants of career transition, job satisfaction did not have a significant role in influencing the decision to enact a career change. The inconsistent results may reflect the limitations of relying on retrospective research designs, or methodological differences such as the use of different measurement strategies (i.e., intentions to change or actual change), or different time intervals between assessments of job satisfaction (Careless & Arnup, 2011).

Burnout. Burnout refers to psychological discomfort in response to constant interpersonal stressors at work (Maslach, 1982). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) suggested that burnout is the negative opposite of engagement which is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Maslach and Leiter (1997) also described burnout as when "energy turns into

exhaustion, involvement turns into cynicism, and efficacy turns into ineffectiveness” (p.24). Burnout originally was considered to happen among helping professionals who do ‘people work’ (Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). However, it gradually became known that burnout also occurs outside the helping professions (Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). According to Maslach (1982), the three key dimensions of burnout are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (i.e., having a cynical and detached attitudes toward one’s work), and diminished professional efficacy. Burnout syndrome has been consistently associated with negative physiological and affective outcomes as well as with deleterious organizational outcomes (Burke & Greenglass, 1996; Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002; Cherniss, 1992; Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Emotional exhaustion is typically considered to be the primary indicator of burnout syndrome (Demir et al., 2003). Higher levels of emotional exhaustion have been linked to increased smoking (Melamed et al., 1992), alcohol use (Soler et al., 2008), and poor physical health such as cardiovascular disease and psychosomatic complaints (Melamed et al., 2006).

Research also has found that burnout is associated with turnover intentions, and diminished organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Burke & Richardsen, 1993; De Lange et al., 2004; Grandey et al., 2005; Kahill, 1988). Two studies of emotionally exhausted physicians reported decreased patient involvement (Schmoldt et al., 1994) and higher levels of dissatisfaction regarding their health care quality (Tayfur & Arslan, 2013). Lee and Ashforth (1996) found that the emotional exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions were significantly related to turnover intentions and decreased organizational commitment. The diminished professional efficacy was more strongly associated with the lack of effective coping strategies. Finally, Mitchelson and Burns (1998) found that two dimensions of burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion and depersonalization) were significantly related to maladaptive perfectionism among

working mothers. Given its consistent negative impact on individuals who experience it, burnout might lead to a career change in an attempt to re-experience fulfillment and a greater sense of vitality in life.

Job insecurity. Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) defined job insecurity as “perceived powerlessness to maintain desired continuity in a threatened job situation” (p. 438). Lazarus and Folkman (1984) posited a two-stage theory, the Job Insecurity Appraisal Theory. First, an individual perceives a subjective threat about the current job, and next, feelings of job insecurity arise. The significance of the threat is dependent on the individual’s evaluation of her or his ability to cope with the threat. If an individual perceives that her or his personal resources are not sufficient to handle the threatening situation, feelings of job insecurity intensify, subsequently resulting in poorer well-being (e.g., increased exhaustion, decreased vigor) and poorer work-related outcomes (Kinnunen et al., 2014; Sverke et al., 2004; Vander Elst, De Witte, & De Cuyper, 2014). Job insecurity has been described as the top work-related stressor with which employees are struggling (Blau, 2007). Job insecurity is also associated with negative work-related outcomes such as reduced organizational commitment and effectiveness, job dissatisfaction, job exhaustion, and turnover intention (Blau, 2007; Kinnunen et al., 1999; Kinnunen et al., 2000; Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999). In addition, meta-analyses found that job insecurity is negatively related to psychological well-being (e.g., increased distress, depressive symptoms, and emotional exhaustion) and self-rated health (Cheng & Chan, 2008; Sverke et al., 2002). According to the two meta-analyses, the estimated correlations between job insecurity and psychological well-being indicators were $-.24$ (across 37 samples) and $-.28$ (across 77 samples). Furthermore, several longitudinal studies show that persistent perceived job insecurity over a duration of more than 3 years predicted poorer self-rated health and depressive symptoms in U.S.

samples (Burgard et al., 2009). Finally, persistent job insecurity has been identified as a significant predictor of poor quality interpersonal relationships (Kinnunen et al., 2000). Generally, it appears as though persistent feelings of job insecurity are linked to job exhaustion and turnover intentions, and eventually result in career change behaviors.

Personality traits. Individual characteristics are widely considered a fundamental influence on career-related decision-making. In an exploratory study conducted on engineers, higher levels of achievement orientation, aggression, independence, self-confidence, and sociability were correlated to intent to leave the current job (Meyer & Cuomo, 1962). Similarly, MacKinney and Wolins (1960) found that turnover was related to high levels of sociability, ascendance, and neuroticism among foremen.

To date, the Big Five personality measures (McCrae & Costa, 1987) have frequently been used to better understand the relationship between personality traits and career-related behaviors (Seibert & Kraimer, 2001; Wille, Fruyt, & Feys, 2010). Research suggested that emotional stability (Neuroticism), Conscientiousness and Openness to experience were significantly related to job mobility. Emotional stability is defined as being “calm, cool, and collected,” as opposed to being overly anxious, depressed, and worried. Conscientiousness is associated with being careful and responsible, and Openness to experience refers to being creative and broad-minded (Van Vianen, Feij, Krausz, & Taris, 2003). Research has found that voluntary turnover is negatively linked to emotional stability and Conscientiousness (Barrick & Mount, 1996; Judge, 1992), and career change behaviors were positively associated with Openness to experience and Extraversion (Carless & Arnup, 2011). Wille and colleagues (2010) determined that Agreeableness and Openness to experience scores at the beginning of one’s professional career are the most significant predictor of job changes over the next 15 years.

Based on the Big Five personality traits research, Openness to experience appears to be consistently associated with career change variables. Individuals who score higher on Openness to experience are characterized as being creative and proactive, sensation seeking, and having varied interests (Wille, Fruyt, & Feys, 2010). Similarly, Fuller and Marler (2009) found that having a proactive personality is positively associated with career mobility variables such as job search self-efficacy, learning goal orientation, and entrepreneurial cognitions. Research on the proactive personality type has also demonstrated that having a more proactive personality is positively related to network building (Thompson, 2005), career resilience, and developmental feedback-seeking (Chiaburu et al., 2006). These results reflect that individuals who show initiative, who have a high activity level, and who are open to new experiences are more likely to actualize their desires to find a more satisfying career.

Unanswered callings. Many individuals are likely looking for more than just financial rewards from their job, which had led to the development of new approaches in order to understand what work means to people. Along with the extrinsic benefits of work, there is growing attention directed toward work's intrinsic rewards: which include fulfilling one's purpose, experiencing meaningful work, engaging in self-expression, and benefiting society (Berg et al., 2010). A sense of fulfilling one's career calling can also be seen as an intrinsic reward. Recent research has consistently found that calling is related to positive work attitudes, such as being interested in work and having a sense of work as worthy of one's time and energy (Vallerand et al., 2003).

However, the benefits of a calling may be limited to individuals who feel they are living their calling through their current occupations. According to Duffy and Sedlacek (2007), searching for a calling was linked to high levels of discomfort, indecision, and identity confusion.

Berg et al. (2010) defined an unanswered calling as an occupation that an individual feels drawn to pursue, expects to be intrinsically enjoyable and meaningful, and perceives as a central part of his or her identity, but is not formally experiencing in a work role. Berg et al. (2010) examined how individuals recognize themselves as having unanswered callings and found that participants with unanswered callings were more likely to report work-related stress and feelings of frustration. Similarly, Duffy, Bott et al. (2012) demonstrated that living a calling has a stronger correlation with career commitment ($r = .68$ vs. $.33$), work meaning ($r = .62$ vs. $.34$), and job satisfaction ($r = .52$ vs. $.23$), respectively, than having a calling. These results imply that when individuals are working in a job that does not support their calling, the unanswered calling may relate to decreased job satisfaction, intent to leave the job, or career change.

Arguably, conventional wisdom holds that career change usually happens in negative contexts when personal traits and environmental work conditions do not fit well. However, an alternative approach has recently emerged highlighting positive factors that make career change a beneficial life experience. Witchger (2011) interviewed adult career changers enrolled in nursing and allied health programs, and examined how unplanned events have influenced on their career change process. According to their results, all participants perceived that there were critical or minor unplanned events impacting on their career change decisions and that the personal traits of flexibility, curiosity, persistence, optimism, and risk taking were useful in finding benefits from unplanned events. In Williams and Forgasz's (2009) research with students who had changed careers before enrolling in teaching programs, intrinsic motivation and altruistic reasons were more important than extrinsic rewards such as pay or working conditions in the decision to be a teacher. Most participants also believed that the most prominent attributes they bring to new career are previous life experiences and personal qualities rather than specific

content knowledge. These results indicate that a desire to fulfill important personal values is a crucial factor for voluntary career change and that one's personal meaning-making system needs to be considered in understanding how career changes can foster career growth.

5. Calling and Career Change

The majority of calling research has been conducted with college students and employed adults. The construct is developmentally relevant for college students, but the lack of work experience makes it reasonable to assume that for many, their sense of calling may change in the years after graduation as they navigate the world of work. Most calling research with adult groups has been conducted on employed samples, focusing on how their sense of calling is linked to their current job. This body of research does not provide a full picture as to how calling develops across time, because research is sparse on people who are looking for a new calling or dealing with an unanswered calling (e.g., not fitting with their current line of work). There is little research examining unanswered callings (Berg et al., 2010) or the relationship between calling and well-being outcomes among unemployed participants (Torrey & Duffy, 2012).

According to Torrey and Duffy (2012), calling was positively linked to life satisfaction via more positive self-evaluation among involuntarily unemployed participants. These results imply that during a time of unemployment, having a calling can help individuals maintain a positive self-concept as well as a perception of the time as meaningful. Berg et al. (2010) indicated that individuals who perceive a calling, but are unable to live out their calling, experience fewer benefits than those who are currently living out their callings. Duffy, Allan et al. (2013) also demonstrated that living a calling fully mediates the relation between the presence of a calling and life satisfaction, and they suggested that an ability to live out one's calling is at least as important as the presence of a calling. The link between perceiving a calling and job

satisfaction is mediated by both career commitment and work meaning, and was only significant for those with high levels of living a calling (Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012). These results show the relative importance of living a calling, the feeling of being unable to live a calling may facilitate the career change process in such a way as to pursue a new career that more closely aligns with one's calling.

III. Purpose of the Present Study

The purpose of the present study was to explore how a sense of calling is related to the career change process by focusing on the subjective experiences of career changers. To explore this phenomenon, a qualitative research study was conducted on adult workers who changed their careers or were involved in career transition as a way to pursue their callings. The study also aimed to explore both positive and negative aspects of a calling-infused career change. The central research questions of the present study were:

- 1) How does a sense of calling influence the career change process? Put another way, how do individuals discern their callings, and what impact does this have on their experience of a career change?
- 2) What were positive and negative experiences of a calling-infused career change?
- 3) In what ways do a calling-infused career change differ from prior career changes that occurred for other reasons?

METHOD

This chapter provides an overview of the study's research design, rationale, procedure, data collection, analysis, and assessment for credibility and validity.

I. Rationale for Qualitative Research Approach

Though psychological research has been dominated by quantitative methods, counseling psychologists have been paying attention to qualitative research as a way of gaining a clearer understanding of complex phenomena (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). Creswell (2007) described the common characteristics of qualitative research methods as research (a) conducted in a natural setting, (b) regarding the researcher as a key interpretive instrument rather than an objective observer, (c) using multiple data sources, (d) analyzing data inductively, (e) focusing on identifying participants' meanings, (f) using an emergent design, (g) flexibly using a socio/historical/ or cultural lens, (h) engaging in interpretive inquiry, and (i) integrating interpretations with a holistic view. Qualitative methods are a way to explore complicated phenomena with depth and richness rather than drawing conclusions based on preconceived notions (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997). This approach allows researchers to be open to discovering meaning, relationships, and concepts about the phenomena with full description in the participants' natural language. Therefore a qualitative approach is often beneficial in the beginning stage of research on previously unexplored topics (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1992; Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997).

From among the various qualitative methods, I chose to use interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin 2009). IPA is a qualitative analysis method focused on exploring an individual's ideographic interpretation of an event or experience

rather than eliciting an objective record of the experience (Taylor & Murray, 2012). Smith and Osborn (2003) stated the defining characteristic of IPA this way: “The participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world” (p. 51).

The key theoretical perspectives of IPA are phenomenology, interpretation (hermeneutics) and idiography (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Among qualitative methods, the phenomenological approach is used particularly when the aim of a study is to examine the meaning of a certain phenomenon through focusing on concrete experiential stories (Langdrige, 2007). IPA tries to capture a person’s direct experience and encourages participants to tell their story with their own words (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The aim of this study was to add a new perspective to the understanding how career change happens, and particularly how a sense of calling relates to this phenomenon. Career change is a social phenomenon that can happen to anyone at any time for a wide range of internal and external reasons. Therefore, IPA was considered as an appropriate approach for this study in that IPA emphasizes capturing each participant’s lived experiences.

Hermeneutics refers to the theory and principles of textual interpretation (Rennie, 1999). IPA researchers do not produce an objective or definitive description of a phenomenon. Rather, IPA emphasizes the researchers’ active role in interpreting each participant’s experiences and drawing out integrative themes (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Participants make sense of the phenomenon and interpret it with their own words, and the researcher elaborates by adding interpretations about the meaning of the participant’s explanations. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) explained that IPA proceeds with two interpretations: the participants’ meaning-making

(interpreting their own experience), and the researcher's sense-making (interpreting the participant's account).

The last key point of IPA is that it maintains an ideographic approach during the analysis process. IPA addresses the unique experiences of each individual and the distinct contexts in which those experiences happen (Eatough & Smith, 2008). Researchers try to deeply understand one case before moving on to the next case, so as to maintain sensitivity to each person's distinct experiences. Researchers try to set aside findings from the former case, and each case is independently analyzed. A cross-case analysis is conducted at the final stage in order to elicit general themes. In this way, a whole picture is built up of both shared and unique experiences of individuals (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

These characteristics of IPA seem to reflect that IPA is an appropriate approach to address the research questions of the proposed study. There is a growing body of literature on career change, yet little research has explored the phenomenon of career change driven by the pursuit of a calling. Furthermore, the theoretical definition of calling described by Dik and Duffy (2009), a summons from external sources driving pursuit of a purpose-laden engagement with prosocially-oriented motives encourages an idiosyncratic approach to capture how each individual discerns her or his calling and what exactly it means in her or his life. The ways that individuals discern and interpret their callings are likely unique and complex depending on the life and work experiences they have been through. Therefore, quantitative methodologies may be premature and not well-equipped to capture the complex ways that individuals understand their callings (Duffy, Foley et al., 2012). There is a need to analyze each case independently to sufficiently understand how an individual has constructed meaning about her or his career change experiences, and the unique life circumstances that have influenced in the process of

discerning a calling. For these reasons, this study used IPA to understand each participant's meaning of a calling and its impact on career change, as well as to identify general themes encompassing each individual's unique stories.

II. Procedures

Sampling and Recruitment

Morse (2000) suggested guidelines for deciding sample size in qualitative research based on the scope of the study, the nature of the topic, the quality of the data, the study design, and the use of shadowed data (in the case of participants speaking about others' experiences). For IPA, purposive sampling is used, and each participant's concepts become a unit of analysis.

Purposeful sampling is a type of non-probability sampling that is used when researchers explore a new phenomenon and select a particular sample in accord with the researcher's particular interest in that phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). Since an individual can generate detailed concepts, qualitative methods do not require large sample sizes (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Typical sample sizes for phenomenological studies that aim to capture common themes of the target experience is between 1 to 10 persons in a relatively homogeneous group (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Based on this guideline, 8 individuals who were in the process of a career transition were recruited for this study.

The criteria for participant selection were as follows. First, to minimize memory contamination during the retrospective recall of career change experiences, participants were required to either be currently in the process of changing a career, or to have done so within the past three years. Second, to establish a common criterion for what constitutes a "career change," participants were required to have had at least two years of work experience before the change, and the change was required to occur between one career field and another, rather than from one

job to another within the same career field. Finally, since the most critical point of the study is exploring the phenomenon of career change with a calling, participants also were required to have perceived that a sense of calling is or was related to their career change. The researcher considered not only career changers who had already shifted their careers, but also non-traditional students who returned to college as part of the career change process. As an effort to recruit individuals who meet all three criteria, this researcher utilized a screening procedure. During the screening procedure, the researcher addressed the three criteria, and asked all candidates whether they viewed their new career as a calling. For those who passed the screening procedure, this researcher sent the main interview protocol to ensure that all participants are able to answer all calling related interview questions.

Recruitment occurred after this study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Colorado State University. During October of 2014 and February of 2015, participants were recruited through emails to professional and personal networks and through an advertising flyer that provided information including study purpose, participant eligibility, researcher's contact information, as well as a \$50 cash reward for participation in the study. The flyers were posted at the University Career Center and Adult Learner Services Center at a large public university located in the Western region of the United States.

Efforts were made to follow a maximum variation approach (Patton, 1990) that ensures diversity in terms of participants' age, gender, religion, and occupation. In an initial contact with candidates, the researcher provided general information about the study and conducted the screening procedure based on the participant selection criteria. Then, candidates who met the participant criteria and showed an interest in the research were sent the interview protocol through email to ensure that they were able to answer the study's interview questions. During the

initial screening process, two individuals were excluded from the study because they did not identify their new career as a calling. Finally, eight individuals agreed to participate in this research. This sample size was within the recommended sample size range according to best practices for IPA research (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

Participants

Participants consisted of eight individuals who engaged in a career transition with a calling, and resided in a Western state in the United States. Six participants self-identified as White, and two participants self-identified as multi-racial (Hispanic/Indian and Asian/White). The average age of the sample was 34.5, with a range of 29 to 46 years of age. All participants had attained at least a bachelor's degree. Two participants had a full-time position in their calling-infused new career, and four participants had a part-time position while pursuing a higher degree in the calling-infused field. Two participants were full-time students who went back to college to earn a degree in their calling-related fields. Demographic information about participants is presented in Table 1, with pseudonyms used to protect participants' identities.

Data Collection

Although there are a variety of data sources useful for conducting IPA, including diaries or journals, the preferred approach is to collect data in semi-structured, one-on-one interviews (Smith & Osborn, 2003). In-depth interviews allow the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue with initial questions. A qualitative research interview is considered “a purposeful conversation.” The purpose is informed by the initial questions and can be modified during the interview depending upon the participant's response (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Using a semi-structured interview provides several advantages including control over what happens

during the interview and reliability through using the same format for all participants (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

For the current study, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted. As presented in Appendix B, 16 interview questions were asked to explore three principal domains of interest: the individual's life and work history (i.e., general background information, previous working history, and critical life events); the career transition experience (i.e., the process of career transition, factors leading to the career change, the challenges and coping strategies in navigating the career change); and personal experience and meaning of calling (i.e., the definition of calling, the process of discerning a calling, the impact of calling on life and work, the unique aspects of calling-infused career change).

The interview protocol was sent to the participants by email one week before the interview to provide sufficient time to prepare their responses. Participants were interviewed in person by this researcher for approximately 60 to 90 minutes. During the interview, they were administered an informed consent document, which included consent for digital recording of the interview. Participants were also asked to make any additional comments at the end of the main interview. All interviews were audiorecorded, and each interview was transcribed verbatim by two undergraduate research assistant students who were majoring in Psychology. For the purpose of anonymity, all identifying information was removed during the transcribing process, and pseudonyms were used to keep all participants' information confidential.

Data Analysis

The interview data was analyzed using the IPA method suggested by Smith et al, (2009). The following stages of data analysis were completed using transcripts recorded in Microsoft Word.

Step 1. The researcher read and re-read each transcript to get a general sense of the meaning. While reading the transcript, the researcher made initial notes about preliminary interpretations, general themes and associations among presented information.

Step 2. After gaining an overall understanding, the researcher went through the transcript in a more detailed manner, line by line. Initial comments were added in the right-hand margin regarding the meaning of each part of the interview, identifying repeated content, similarities, and possible associations. Then, theme titles that provided broader meaning for each comment were identified. The elicited theme titles were also added in the right-hand margin, and this researcher ensured that the title captured the meaning of the text (Dickens, 2014). This process was repeated during the entire analysis process.

Step 3. This step was conducted with only the elicited theme titles and the researcher's notes, moving away from the individual transcript itself. The researcher identified connections and associations among the elicited titles. These titles were clustered together, and themes were created in the left hand margin (Smith et al., 1999). With the list of themes, a color-coding method was used to differentiate each theme by different colors. The researcher revisited the original transcript and highlighted the texts that represented each theme with different colors. For the first three transcripts, the researcher created the list of themes for each transcript. After checking a similar pattern among three lists of themes, the researcher integrated the three lists together and used the integrated list as basic theme categories. However, when a new theme was found, it was also added to the basic theme categories.

Step 4. Once each individual analysis was conducted, the researcher triangulated the analyzed interview with one of the research assistants. The second researcher blindly analyzed three transcripts and independently generated a list of themes about each transcript. For each

transcript, the researcher and second researcher compared the two analyses and discussed all discrepancies. After conducting the third analysis, the researcher checked that there were not significant discrepancies between the two researchers' analytic results. Therefore, for the last five transcripts, the principal researcher conducted the main analyses and the second researcher evaluated the appropriateness of the researcher's interpretation and emergent themes. After completing each interview's analysis, the principal researcher revisited the original transcript in order to ensure that all themes and connections were based upon the original material (Knight, Wykes, & Hayward, 2003).

Step 5. As the last step, the researcher examined the relationship within and across final emergent themes (Dickens, 2014). Finally, 8 categories and 28 themes were created (see the Table 2). The frequency of each theme was computed and the themes were listed by the order of frequency.

III. Credibility and Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to ensuring the methodological rigor and credibility of the data analysis in qualitative research (Foster, 2014; Morrow, 2005). As a way of increasing the credibility of qualitative research, multiple strategies were utilized throughout the data analysis process.

Triangulation. Triangulation refers to using multiple measurements and sources to establish internal credibility (Merriam, 2009). Denzin (1978) suggested four types of triangulation: use of (1) multiple methods, (2) multiple sources of data, (3) multiple investigators, and (4) multiple theories. The strategy utilized in this study was investigator triangulation. For the first three transcripts, the researcher and the research assistant independently analyzed each transcript and compared the results, discussing discrepancies where they occurred until

consensus was reached. Once consensus was achieved regarding the accuracy of elicited themes, the primary researcher completed main analyses and the research assistant audited the appropriateness of interpretation and accuracy of coding for the remaining transcripts. After the internal audit completed, an external audit was conducted with randomly selected three cases. The three cases were validated by an external auditor, a postdoctoral researcher in social psychology who was knowledgeable in IPA qualitative methodology. The external auditor reviewed the researcher's analyses and evaluated the validity of all of the codings and elicited themes. For any differences, the primary researcher and the external auditor discussed the discrepancies until the final consensus was achieved.

To improve trustworthiness, the primary researcher repeatedly revisited each transcript and evaluated the appropriateness of coding while analyzing the interviews.

Member checking. Member checking means that interviewees review their transcript and provide feedback on emerging themes and analysis results (Foster, 2014). This process is to improve credibility and internal validity (Dickens, 2014). Member checking helps to reduce misinterpretations and encourages participants to actively engage in the research process (Guba, 1981; Foster, 2014). The researcher conducted a follow-up interview in order to solicit feedback on the accuracy of interpretation and to ask additional questions. Except for one participant, the seven participants responded to the follow up interview and confirmed that their transcript and coding results appropriately reflected their experiences.

Thick description. Finally, the researcher tried to develop sufficient and rich descriptions as a way of achieving external validity. Since most qualitative research is conducted with a particular population, rich narratives are recommended to fully evaluate the transferability of results to other populations (Morrow, 2005). Rich and thick descriptions provide a chance for

readers to determine if the described information can be applied to their situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this reason, this study presented demographic information with pseudonyms, each participant's biographies, direct quotes, and rich descriptions of interview contents.

RESULTS

I. Participant Biographies

This study was conducted with eight participants, and the background information on each participant is presented in the following sections. Each profile consisted of demographic information, self-characteristics, a brief career history, and future plans.

Sue. Sue is a 33-year-old Hispanic Indian woman who works in higher education and is pursuing her second Master's degree in Student Affairs in Higher Education. She described herself as a determined, competitive, and goal-oriented high achiever. She began her education with Bachelor's and Master's degrees in engineering and worked briefly on research projects with NASA. Next, she became a business consultant in the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries. Sue indicated that her consultant career was both exhausting and invigorating. She was not able to pursue this career anymore because she moved to a new state when her husband began a new job and they had a baby. She wanted to find a job that felt more satisfying, so she decided to go back to graduate school to get a master's degree in Student Affairs in Higher Education for her current career. At the time of interview, Sue was halfway through her degree program and working with students interested in distance education. She reported that she would like to work with persistence and retention initiatives for female engineering students.

Jim. Jim is a 32-year-old White man who is a graduate student majoring in Student Affairs in Higher Education. Jim described himself as compassionate, curious, kind, and a lifelong learner. He started off in Food Service, wanting to run his own restaurant and pursue a culinary arts degree. After going through drug and alcohol rehabilitation, Jim returned to community college and found that he could have a positive impact on others through higher

education. He realized that he wanted to do more for others than what a degree in culinary arts could offer him. With a wide variety of leadership development and social justice educational opportunities, Jim decided to pursue a Master's degree in Student Affairs. After obtaining his graduate degree, Jim expressed that he would like to work in service learning, leadership development, or social justice education in a university or community college setting.

Jeanne. Jeanne is a 33-year-old White woman who is a graduate student and freelance artist. Jeanne described herself as a motivated and caring person. She began her college education with Bachelor's degrees in Anthropology and International Studies. Later, she pursued a Master's in Education, as she was working with many cultural groups teaching English. In the meantime, she had always wanted to be involved in apparel and textile design. She said that she felt dissatisfied by not pursuing these interests. Jeanne changed her career to textile science and the design of wearable technology, and she is attending graduate school majoring in Design and Merchandising. She indicated that after obtaining her graduate degree, she wants to pursue positions in advanced development, textile science or wearable electronics design.

Tom. Tom is a 46-year-old White man who is majoring in Higher Education and Student Affairs. Tom described himself as a highly relational and compassionate person who is interested in helping college students succeed. While he completed a master's degree in Higher Education Administration, Tom worked in the software industry for 16 years. He then ran a professional photography business for 6 years. Tom realized he wanted to return to an earlier desire to help others succeed and began a Ph.D. program in Higher Education and Student Affairs. He works as a professional in student affairs.

Alice. Alice is a 44-year-old White woman who works as a flight attendant. Alice described herself as a highly relational, passionate, and caring person. Alice graduated college

and worked as an office manager for 23 years. When she felt exhausted with her office management career, she remembered that she had wanted to be a flight attendant since childhood and finally decided to pursue her lifelong dream. Alice reported that she feels greatly satisfied with her career decision and that she feels a sense of fulfillment in her new career.

Monty. Monty is a 31-year-old White man who is a graduate student majoring in Social Work. Monty described himself as someone who tries to find humor in life but is otherwise reserved and contemplative. He graduated from high school and joined the Marine Corps. After a medical retirement from the Marine Corps, he chose to major in Social Work in college. He was essentially forced to change his career after he was injured in the Marine Corps. Ultimately, Monty was happy to change his career so that he could be present for his wife and children. Monty reported that after obtaining his Master's degree in Social Work, he would like to begin a career in law enforcement or social work.

Nick. Nick is a 31-year-old White man who is a graduate student majoring in Design and Merchandising. Nick described himself as very patient, kind, and laid-back. He started off with a bachelor's in German and a career in hotel management. After he realized that hospitality was not fulfilling and was not the best fit for him, he decided that he was interested in working in the outdoor industry. Therefore, he changed his career to outdoor apparel and gear product, and he went back to college to get a Master's degree in Design. Nick expressed that after obtaining his Master's degree, he wants to work in product development for an outdoor gear company.

Bill. Bill is a 29-year-old White man who is an undergraduate student majoring in History with a minor in Russian. Bill described himself as a very responsible and strong-willed person. He started off as a soldier in the U.S. Army for 8 years. He decided that he had sufficiently served his country and left the army to attend college. Bill indicated that after

obtaining his undergraduate degree, he would like to work for the U.S. Department of State as a diplomat.

II. Emergent Themes

Study results described common themes among the eight participants in terms of their career change experiences with a sense of calling. Major themes were categorized into eight domains: Prior to Career Change, Pre-Transition Period, Process of Discerning a Calling into a New Career, Definition of Calling, Challenges of Pursuing a Calling, Ways of Dealing with Challenges, Impacts of the Calling-Infused Career Change, and Unique Aspects of Calling-Infused Career Change. The categories, the emergent themes that were identified within each, and their frequencies were displayed in Table 2. In this section, each theme was described and illustrated with quotes from interview narratives.

1. Prior to Career Change

The *Prior to Career Change* referred to how interviewees described and perceived their past careers. Except for one interviewee who perceived his former career as a calling as well as his new career, seven interviewees reported negative work experiences. Most interviewees reported low levels of job satisfaction, lack of passion and a sense of fulfillment at their former work. One example response was, “I didn’t have that drive from the inside to do it, it was just a job to make money.” These seven interviewees also typically viewed their former jobs as work for a paycheck. Although interviewees reported positive aspects of former work, all interviewees generally stated lack of fulfillment and enjoyment. For example, Tom, who pursued a high paying job to support his family stated:

I recognized that I was doing something important for this company and we were providing products that were important to our customers, so the job it’s self—I recognized intellectually they were important but personally, maybe even a little

emotionally; um it was not satisfying to me. I was working hard making a good living, providing for my family, you know contributing to society; all that was right, but it wasn't that important to me. I really didn't enjoy those. I didn't find work fulfilling at all I didn't feel like I was contributing much to humanity or the greater good. The job was good but after eight years of it I felt like there wasn't enough fulfillment for me to want to do that for the rest of my life. The job meant to me a paycheck and a way to live where I wanted to. (Tom)

Interestingly, although most interviewees commonly reported unpleasant working experiences, they held positive and acceptant attitudes toward their past career. With a holistic perspective, all participants considered their past careers as a meaningful part of their whole career path. Sue noted how past careers were interwoven together and became a new calling:

Now this career change going from business world to student affairs I'm looking to combine my engineering background with the business skills and my student affairs. I have a really strong analytic background, pull my desire to work with engineering students going back to school for student affairs and I have the business savvy skills that I have learned as a consultant. So now I'm working on pulling everything together and I'm finally feeling like I'm making my own again. (Sue)

Also, interviewees did not report any regrets regarding their former careers and understood their former careers as a reasonable decision at the time. An example response was:

I will never regret the time that I spent there. The big part of hospitality is dealing with people and dealing with different types of personalities, and carrying yourself in a professional way. That is something that will benefit me no matter what I do. It will help with the outdoor career, not when I'm necessarily designing the gear, but when I'm talking with customers, when I'm talking with factories and vendors, or when I'm trying to move up through my own company. It will certainly help me I think advance in my career, because I will be able to interact with people in a way that leaves a really good impression. (Nick)

2. Pre-Transition Period

The *Pre-Transition Period* referred to the period immediately before participants actually undertook pursuit of the new calling-infused career. Seven out of the eight interviewees went back to college to get a degree for their new careers. Generally, interviewees were open to new experiences and proactively pursued relevant working experiences. A few participants noted that

a work opportunity was continuously connected to new work opportunities and the accumulated working experiences made their career transition smooth. Sue's story supported this point:

I will always be there on a college campus because of my husband's job. So I wanted something where I could work on campuses. But every time that I tried to apply to a job on campus, every single time I was told I don't have higher education experience I only had the business experience. So I said fine, I'll go back to school and that's how I found the online program at my husband's college and that's what I'm doing now. I had gotten into this student affairs program and I ended up getting the job at the online program. (Sue)

There were four participants who quit their former careers without yet knowing their callings, and then gradually discerned their callings during the transition period. Typically, these interviewees were engaged in their calling-infused careers in various ways such as having a part time job or volunteering. For example, Jim had gradually discerned and been able to ensure his new calling based on actual working experiences:

I went around to places to see if they needed people to work. I didn't really think I was going to be hired and it just so happened that I found some people who thought I was a good person I guess and wanted me to work there and I walked into and talked to the HR people that if I hadn't gone in and talked to her that day I wouldn't have gotten that job I got a job in the student life office at campus and I was working with clubs and organizations and got to help students around leadership development, which is something that I didn't really know that much about and I found that I could be successful with that and I came over here and transferred to this current school, and started working at student organizations. I think it was through being brave enough to try out new things and listen to the lessons that were being brought to me that I was able to find my path. Not having to force myself into a path but more being open to what was being shown. (Jim)

3. Process of Discerning a Calling

The *Process of Discerning a Calling* referred to the process of how interviewees discovered, explored, and became convinced of their callings. Within this category, six themes were identified: self-reflection, critical life event as a turning point, finding a calling through the

job that wasn't a calling, identifying an innate calling, finding a calling from deficits in the past, and finding a calling with others' help. These themes and quotes were described below.

3.1: Self-Reflection

Generally, interviewees noted that they were able to better understand their callings through in-depth self-exploration and reflection. Example quotes for this category included: "I went through this transition period where I tried to figure out where my strengths were" "It was a lot of reflection and also my pros and cons list. I am taking everything in my background and pulling it together" and "I started to think, 'Okay, now is the time. Now you need to really start to think about what it is you feel you want to do. What you think you would be most happy doing. What do I like to do when I am not working?' It was a pretty basic analysis and started to realize how important the outdoor lifestyle was to me."

Participants described about how they discerned their callings with a "process-oriented" perspective, as opposed to an "a-ha experience" in which the calling was revealed in a single clarifying event. Interviewees generally stated that the more they were able to know about themselves, the clearer their callings were. Two interviewees mentioned 'age' as an important factor in the process of discerning their calling. They emphasized that they were able to better understand themselves as they got older, and a sense of calling was the result of better self-understanding. For example, Jeanne stated:

Age. You think you know more than you really you do, and then when you get older you know more, actually realize that you don't know very much but you know you gain a little bit more wisdom in your knowledge about yourself. I had to go through certain experience to realize that. As I became an adult and started to learn about myself, I realized all these different things; 'Wow, I'm not at all who I thought I was, I'm a different person', you know? So the calling part to me was I finally realized what I was good at it and what I loved to do and I was returning to what I thought I was kind of designed to do. So that for me is what calling means. As they get older, they start to learn certain truths about themselves, that maybe they didn't know before. It's part of growing up and becoming an adult, learning about self. (Jeanne)

3.2: Critical Life Event as a Turning Point

Six interviewees reported that there was a critical turning point that influenced their career change decision. Two interviewees reported significant life changes (e.g., geographical relocation, pregnancy, marriage) that did not allow them to maintain their former career. Therefore, they were unavoidably forced to look for a new career. For example, participants stated: “My husband was applying for a position, so we moved out here. When I moved, I knew I was losing my job. They weren’t going to let me work remotely” or “I got married and realized that I also needed to take care of my wife and if we ever wanted children, I would not want them to grow up in a place where their father could go to war.”

Two other interviewees reported a life-changing event. More specifically, these interviewees noted that the life event has become a significant turning point causing big changes to their life values, worldviews, work values, or purpose of life. One example response was:

When I woke up in the hospital, I knew something was wrong. I knew that I’m supposed to talk like this, but I can’t. This is ridiculous, I’ve never been brain damaged before so this not acceptable and start challenging myself to get back to where I used to be. And that was a very pivotal moment when I made the decision that ‘this is not ok, so I need to figure out how to fix myself.’ And that’s when the career change sort of idea hit me. And I had to look at things outside of that lens of what can I do in the Marines, to what can I do in life. There was a lot of exploration of my interests, strengths, and my challenges. None of that would have happened had I not been injured I don’t think. (Monty)

Another two participants noted unexpected meetings with other individuals as a critical event that made them mindful of their callings. For example:

I met a person who at the time was pursuing a PhD in arts and I had told her when we first met that I wanted to do something in design. Some of it was being exposed in some the stuff in her program and it was really cool interdisciplinary melding of. (Jeanne)

Tom described specifically how an unexpected brief conversation led him to discern his unanswered calling.

I happened to meet someone in a grocery store, she is a professor, a scholar in higher education, and we got into a conversation, just by chance. Over 20 years later I have this conversation with this Dr. and it made me think about why I wanted to work in a college before. So it wasn't until I had this chance meeting with this person, this professor in a grocery store that it reminded me of what I was missing, and how interested I was in this field. (Tom)

3.3: Finding a Calling Through the Job that Wasn't a Calling.

Among seven interviewees who reported negative past working experiences, five interviewees noted the unpleasant former working experience had become an opportunity to think about what they really want to do. Interviewees noted that they were able to realize their callings by thinking about why they were not fulfilled and what their ideal careers would be. More specifically, two interviewees described unfulfilling work experiences as core to the process of figuring out meaningful work and important work values. Example responses were:

Being laid off when I look back is the best thing ever. At the time it sucked. It gave me the opportunity to think about what I really want to do and what my calling is. (Sue)

Sometimes you have to do things you are not as excited about like process of elimination to know the things you would be excited about. So when I think of what has lead me to this point (her calling), it's a push effect where I've worked these jobs. (Jeanne)

I worked at Chuck E Cheese when I was 17 and that's basically just dancing around in a giant mouse suit and there might be some people that really get some sense of satisfaction from that, but for me there was no calling in that. So it was like I needed to do something a little bit more meaningful for me. I won't miss working for Chuck E Cheese but I'm glad I'm able to have a better idea of that sense of calling, identifying what that is. (Monty)

3.4: Identifying an Innate Calling

Participants expressed a strong emotional passion in a certain area that was not logically explained. Interviewees described the intensive desire to do a certain job using the words "instinct," "innate" or "inexplicable curious feeling." Jeanne reported this in the following way: "I wouldn't say that there was a moment of discernment, it was just always there." Interviewees generally reported that they were able to gradually ensure that the intense desire was a calling

because it has been consistent and even became stronger over time. Monty, who perceived a sense of calling in social work, stated:

There was really nothing else that kind of jumped out at me. I think it was innate. I remember in elementary school when I'd see the kids getting picked on by other kids, there was a tension in me, and I saw that there was something wrong with that. When somebody basically treated somebody else terribly, I reacted to that internally. That's one of things I can remember most. And that is not something that has really changed over time that was 25 years ago when I first noticed it maybe. And around now where I still see the same thing. (Monty)

3.5: Finding a Calling from Deficits in the Past

Interviewees also stated another specific source of their calling while describing the discerning process. In response to the question about the source of calling, two participants noted that their calling was an outcome projected from their past life experiences. In particular, two interviewees illustrated that deficits in their past life became a calling that they wanted to pursue. Their deficits have been transformed into a pro-socially-oriented motivation to promote benefits for those who are struggling with the same deficit. For example:

I was a first-generation student. My parents did not go to college. And when I went to college, I didn't know anything about how colleges worked, I missed out on many benefits because I just didn't know they existed. I found out later that there was something that could have really helped me that I didn't know about until it was too late. I didn't know about financial aid when I started college, so I went to school full time and worked full time. So college was really hard for me. I didn't have the time for a lot of not in class experiences, being in clubs or other learning opportunities. The part of discerning my calling was being I was a first-generation and experiencing the problems I did. I want to help students. I felt that calling. (Tom)

3.6: Finding a Calling with Others' Help

In two other cases, participants described that what they received from other people became what they want to give others. The two interviewees stated that they developed altruistic motives through others' help, and it became a calling in the sense of wanting to "pay them back," "passing them to others," or "it is my turn." Example responses included:

Without the support and selflessness of the people(Alcoholic anonymous) in those rooms who were willing to spend long days and nights with me on the phone when I just wanted to drink, it was a very hard transition to stop drinking and to change life really. And so because of that selflessness that inspired me to try and provide the same thing for other people. And to kind of give back what I have been given in a way from those people who helped me recover and get sober and change my life this is me paying that back. (Jim)

It was life or death. I just remember when I was in the hospital, social workers were interacting with me and my family and providing that kind of support and those kind of resources that were very important for us. And so I felt this obligation to do the same for the next, like ‘it’s my turn to be on the opposite end, and help.’ ...I go to the hospital that he is in, the rehab center, just to spend time with him because I know what it feels like to be there. Alone in a hospital, you don’t know anybody there, I know that feeling to have somebody familiar walk in. And to see this guy it takes time, costs money – because he doesn’t charge me anything but gas money and all that stuff— time away from my family, um it’s scheduled conflict stuff like that. So it’s not like a painless thing to do, but I do get a sense of fulfillment out of it just because I know that I’m actually connecting with another person and helping to meet a need that I felt, that I needed at one time. (Monty)

4. Definition of Calling

The *Definition of Calling* referred to how interviewees generally defined a sense of calling using their own words. In accordance with IPA’s emphasis on exploring participants’ experiences from their own perspective, all participants were asked to define a sense of calling with their own words. Four themes emerged: (a) fulfillment, (b) serving others, (c) spiritual and intuitive feelings (i.e., feeling driven to that particular work), and (d) a part of self-identity.

All participants typically viewed a calling as something in which they experience enjoyment and fulfillment. While describing the definition of calling, interviewees used the words “fulfillment,” “passion,” and “enjoyment.” For example, Monty stated:

I would equal it to the passion that you feel inside for what it is that you want to do in life. The calling would be where I’m fulfilled and where money doesn’t matter and the prestige doesn’t matter, but more of the value that you find in it that can’t be measured really, it’s not physical. (Monty)

Interviewees also defined calling as serving the greater good or helping other people. Six interviewees indicated that calling is approaching work with pro-social attitudes. Example quotes

reflecting this theme include: “Being able to contribute effectively to a team, organization and benefit somebody,” “Selflessness to a certain extent, doing things for others,” and “Something where you can really make an impact and inspire other people.” This theme was evident not only interviewees who were pursuing a helping profession, but also those in jobs that were not directly related to helping careers indicated that calling is a kind of contribution to society through work. Interviewees also expressed how pro-social aspects of calling directly related to a sense of fulfillment. For example, Jim stated: “The positive way that I am able to influence other people. Calling is the positive impact that I have on other people and that I feel fulfilled by it.”

Regarding “Spiritual and intuitive feelings,” interviewees noted that they felt driven to that particular work by inexplicable forces. There were various ways of describing the inexplicable force such as “a higher power,” “I am supposed to be,” “you hear a voice that tells you,” and “a heritage.”

Commonly, interviewees indicated that there was a strong force beyond the rational thinking process, which led them to pursue the particular career. For example, Jeanne stated:

It’s sort of an inexplicable need to pursue this really curious feeling, and just the desire to see how it turns out. It’s almost like something you come in with, spiritual or something. For me it’s always been kind of a feeling and something where it was like just as you know a bird is born with wings because it is meant to fly, I was born with this thing because I am meant to pursue it. (Jeanne)

Finally, interviewees noted that a calling is a central part of their self-identity.

Interviewees viewed their callings as a key component of who they are. They indicated that pursuing their calling is not limited to only the career domain, but instead is a form of expressing and actualizing one’s true self. For example:

I see career often as way for people to build their identity. And I think calling because there is an innate quality to it, is a part of your true identity whether you want it to be or not, it’s part of just who you are. So for me that’s the difference is that with a career, often the career is creating your identity, but the calling... your true self is creating the identity. (Tom)

More specifically, interviewees addressed that the calling encompassed all aspects of who they are and what they have. Interviewees defined the concept of calling with an integral perspective. Example quotes were: “A calling is being able to intersect personal and professional life in a seamless way where one is not completely overtaking the other,” “It has to do with integrity,” and “All of my layers and all of my characteristics have been sort of perfectly calibrated to pursue this calling. This was something just in me.”

5. Challenges of Pursuing the Calling-Infused Career

The *Challenges of Pursuing the Calling-Infused Career* referred to negative factors that made them hesitant to pursue the calling or hardships during the career transition period. Generally, participants indicated both internal and external challenges.

5.1: Fears of Starting Over in a New Career

Regarding internal factors, participants described fears of taking a risk and starting over a new career at the bottom. For example, Sue stated:

I am starting all again from the bottom rung. I took an entry level position with Online Plus. It's hard starting from the bottom and having to work all the way back up. I spent nearly a decade as a consultant using my experience from my masters building up to be a consultant to work my way up the corporate ladder. I fell all that way back down and I didn't even land on the bottom rung. I fell to the floor. (Sue)

More specifically, interviewees who quit a high position and started a new career at the entry level indicated that they have experienced a mental battle about what they had to endure as a result of choosing to follow their callings. For example:

The upper management job would be a job that I probably would have right now. It pays a lot of money and there is a lot of prestige there, and it's a big career move. It can be mentally challenging sometimes to look back at what I was doing. (Nick)

I was a vice president and now I was the lowest. All the different people I work with on a pretty regular basis only three are older than I am, that's it. But there are a lot of people that have higher positions than me that are much younger. So I had to learn to go back

down, to be more humble, to be more accepting and to be patient and to just let them do that. (Tom)

As another challenge that aggravates a “mental battle,” Tom stated, was a lack of support about his career change decision. Since he gave up a socially desirable position, he noted that he had to face other’s doubtful views toward his career decision, which made it difficult for him to validate his decision.

It’s difficult to make a decision when many people are telling you, you are making the wrong decision. They don’t understand why I would give that up after 18 years of work, or in the case of my business, building that up into something very successful, why I would give that up. And that was a whole other group that was telling me I was making the wrong decision. So that was a big thing, having so many people telling me externally I was making the wrong decision. (Tom)

5.2: Financial Challenges

In terms of external challenges, the most common challenge was financial insecurity that they were not able to make money during the transition or had to invest money to get necessary education. In addition, some participants stated that the cost of choosing a calling was that their new career is financially less rewarding compared to their past career. Example quotes indicating this point included, “The biggest challenge is the pay difference, from what I used to do to what I do now. It’s been difficult to pay our bills and get them paid on time,” and “Coming back to school, not being able to work full time, having to pay tuition...so there’s student loans there. It certainly made an impact to go from having some savings and having enough money to basically go do whatever I want to having to watch every penny and being on student loans and having spent all of my savings.”

6. Ways of Dealing with Challenges

The *Ways of Dealing with Challenges* theme referred to how participants coped with challenges or what made them keep pursuing their career changes despite challenges.

Interviewees reported external and internal ways of dealing with challenges: (a) self-validation that it is the right decision, and (b) external supports from others.

6.1: Self-Validation

Participants also noted self-validation as an internal way to deal with challenges.

Although participants believed that they were driven into the new career by a strong sense of calling, they also indicated that they were struggling with internal conflicts and doubts about the career decision. As a way of reconciling these concerns, participants reported that they reminded themselves of what they had gained by choosing their callings. Interviewees reported that they reassessed the cost and opportunity of choosing a calling, and were able to be satisfied with benefits from choosing the calling. The following were a few examples:

It meant reassessing my life and being okay with taking an \$80,000 pay cut. I'm no longer making six figures. But knowing that I'm 10 times better and happier with that decision. So I keep going back to I'm happier and that kind of triumphs the money. (Sue)
I know what the time that I spend is worth and not having to compromise my values for what I am doing. I'm not having to legitimize the energy that I am spending. I just spend it. I may feel super tired, maybe stressed out but there is always that feeling that I'm doing something right. So, it's not necessarily something that I need to think about a lot. (Jim)

I remind myself why I'm doing what I'm doing and that I wasn't happy with my job. The only reason you would be staying is for the money, and the resume. My sense of calling or sense of what I'm doing is strong enough that once I analyze everything in my head and get beyond my emotions, analyze all the pros and cons, I can convince myself that 'Yes, I am doing the right thing.' So in the end of the internal debate in my head, I know that I am doing the right thing. (Nick)

More specifically, three participants noted that the calling itself became a coping strategy for dealing with challenges. Examples to illustrate this included: "I push myself because I love it so much. I can't think of any other thing I would rather do," and "My calling. It is difficult to be in college now, but I know when I think about my calling at night before I go to sleep, it will all be worth it and everything I'm enduring long papers and going to class at 8 a.m. will be worth it."

6.2: External Supports from Others

Interviewees generally described that they received a wide range of supports from others throughout the process. The most frequently reported support was emotional support from close ones or colleagues that respect their decision. For example, Nick stated that:

I feel the need to talk to other people about it. They are very supportive and I think they have listened to me talk about it enough that they are convinced that I'm doing the right thing, so I should be convinced too. (Nick)

For those who had to take financial risks as the result of choosing a calling, they also reported that their family's support play a critical role in pursuing their calling. Alice described that:

I can't see doing this without the support of my husband, he thinks that it's (career change) really cool. Every month, it's been reworking the budget. Trying to find out where we can cut, and figure out how to fit things in there that are. But, my husband has charge of our finances, so he just sits down and figures it out. (Alice)

Moreover, participants reported the importance of social support within the calling-driven career. Interviewees noted that they were able to validate their decision through knowing that they shared the same values with their colleagues. Example responses for this point included:

My supervisors, peers, mentors, and advisors. Getting positive reinforcement back from them. I'm not alone. I feel much more drawn to higher education because I feel much more connected with the people that are here and we are moving towards common goals. I still have my own personal philosophy and own goals but seeing that those things match with the things other people are doing too. (Jim)

Not only do I feel like I am doing something that I'm meant to do, but I am in an organization with more people who think like I do. So that is also an important part of why I believe this was my calling and I'm in the right place. (Tom)

Likewise, they stated that the support provided a sense of assurance and relief. The results showed the importance of social support even after embarking on the new career. Besides emotional support, two participants who went back to college stated that they used available financial aid or resources such as a teaching assistantship or scholarship.

7. Impacts of the Calling-Infused Career Change

Impacts of the Calling-Infused Career Change referred to the impact of pursuing the calling-infused career at work and in their lives in general. Interviewees described their experiences of living out the calling, and how it impacts their career and life domains. All participants expressed higher satisfaction with their careers, and stated that they have never regretted changing their career to pursuing their callings. Regarding the impact of having a calling, four themes were identified: (a) fulfillment and passion at work, (b) greater happiness in general, (c) a clear sense of direction and purpose in life, and (d) a positive self-concept.

7.1: Fulfillment and Passion at Work

Most participants indicated greater satisfaction at work compared to their former career. Along with increased satisfaction, they also reported that they were passionate and felt fulfilled at work. In addition, they noted that they became proactive and motivated to learn something more in the calling-infused area.

With my previous career, because I knew that it wasn't what I really wanted, didn't challenge myself, and I didn't, if there was a new opportunity that came up to get a different certification or whatever, you know I already had one. But, now I'm like, Oh I want to learn everything! I want to do everything! , Being passionate and excited and just very much proactive in the building of my skill sets and things. I tried on like six or seven topics and my advisor said that "You have to just take one day at a time, think about one thing at a time" and I'm like "but that's not possible!" (Jeanne)

Participants indicated that the positive impacts lasted even when they were exhausted or stressed out at work.

I may feel super tired, maybe stressed out but there is always that feeling that I'm doing something right. There is also the fulfillment that because it is in line with my values. I feel that I do get more than I put in. My satisfaction level becomes higher and there is greater self-worth. (Jim)

I actually enjoy getting up in the morning on work days. On Sunday nights, before, I didn't like Sunday nights, it meant the weekend was ending and I would have to go back

to work the next day. I don't feel that way. Sunday nights are fine but I'm perfectly happy getting up in the morning and going to work. (Tom)

7.2: Greater Happiness in General

In addition to greater career satisfaction, most participants reported increased well-being and happiness in general. Regarding the reason for the increased well-being, interviewees indicated that greater job satisfaction was naturally connected to greater happiness in general. For example, Alice stated that "I have never felt passion in my life about my work until now. I am so much happier; it has made for things to be even happier at home."

Sue also described how satisfaction at work is connected to general life well-being.

Being able to enjoy it and have satisfaction, it's not just a job, it's a life style. It's a life decision. I love being back in school. Going back to school, learning, and working on a campus for the first time ever I'm learning so much about how I view the world. I want whatever I am doing at work to have helped me grow personally. Now I'm learning from my interaction from school to bring directly into my job now, and then I'm able to take that home. I am able to weave that one class work into my personal life and that is what a career for me that I am able to weave everything in and out because it's helping me grow personally not just work. So that's been where it's been very satisfying, being able to weave professional and personal life. (Sue)

The interviewees who were in a degree program, and not actually living out their calling yet, reported high levels of satisfaction with the process of pursuing the calling. For example, Nick said:

My well-being has improved because of my calling, because it gave me direction that I needed. Once in my new career, doing my job will bring me more happiness and excitement. There is some of that happiness and excitement already, because I'm getting close and I'm thinking about it. (Nick)

7.3: A Clear Sense of Direction and Purpose in Life

While explaining the impact of a sense of calling, most participants conveyed that they felt they were on the right track. Generally, participants described the experience of living a calling as "I am doing something right. This is what I am supposed to do." All participants

ensured that their callings provide a clear direction about what they need and how to get there. Participants noted that having a clear life direction makes them feel more peaceful, balanced, stable, and self-assured about their future. An example response was: “I feel more peaceful, more balanced on the inside. My work is in harmony with the person that I am on the inside.”

In particular, Monty described how he has become purposive and approached the same activity with more proactive attitudes after he recognized his calling.

For a while I couldn't identify the sense of calling so I felt stagnant with no real goal or anything like that. That was not fun, but once I figure out what that calling was and really could map it out. For example, running— if I go and be a parole officer, I'm going to have to know how to run really well because there is a possibility that I might have to chase somebody, before if I never had to chase somebody, I could run but I hated running so that's the reason I didn't do it. And once I found that calling, it's influenced my general life because I know have a reason to be active mentally and physically and academically. (Monty)

7.4: Positive Self-Concept

Interviewees reported positive feelings for having voluntarily made their career decisions and kept pursuing their desired careers so far. Two interviewees especially emphasized having greater self-worth because they took a risk to do what they really wanted to do. For example:

Having taken this step and deciding that I am just going to do it has almost made me respect myself more. Respect and kind of taking a sense of ownership of my decisions, and feeling like I am more of who I want to be and like I know more about who that is. (Jeanne)

8. Unique Aspects of a Calling-Infused Career Change

The *Unique Aspects of Calling-Infused Career Change* referred to the participants' descriptions of how they differentiate the calling-infused career change from other career changes for different reasons. Since all participants reported that they prioritized a sense of calling on their career change decision, interviewees were asked what would be the unique part of career transition with a calling. This category contained more diverse themes than the other

categories: (a) valuing internal more than external rewards, (b) feeling blessed to live out a calling, (c) there is a right time to pursue a calling, (d) post-rational aspects of decision-making, (e) pursuing a higher purpose beyond personal prosperity, and (f) it's process, not an event.

8.1: Valuing Internal More than External Rewards

All participants answered that they prioritized internal rewards rather than other external rewards such as higher positions, income, or prestige. Participants stated that compared to their past when they pursued a high paying job, they were more driven by what they really wanted to do or what they felt would make them happy. For example: "I am ten times better and happier with that decision. I keep going back to that kind of triumph over the money," "Calling would be where I'm fulfilled and where money doesn't matter and the prestige doesn't matter, but more of the value that you find in it that can't be measured really, it's not physical," "My biggest goal was to make money and to be financially secure. But my definition of success shifted when I got into higher education; having a real impact on peoples' lives," and "Money is not everything. I've been roped into that, climbing my way up in the office world, just to make more money. It never made me happy."

Participants generally noted that making money is not the driving force for changing their career, and they valued personally important internal rewards over external rewards. Example responses included:

The one I hear most often though is really about money which there is nothing wrong, but changing for calling is about understanding and answering that call from inside of yourself about what you are supposed to do. So from a money stand point I made a very stupid decision, and that's the way it would look and I definitely understand my older friends who saw me in those previous careers they think, they either wonder why I would do such a thing, they don't think they could do it, or they just think I'm crazy, that something happened and I'm crazy. That I need to do it because I was made to do it, and because I can make a bigger difference overall in this new career rather than the one I had before or a totally different career that I may have switched. (Tom)

Nick also described how his past high paying job was different from the calling-infused career.

I was in a job where I could be making lots of money, so it's not about the money; it's about finding what makes me happy. I think I'm falling into calling is mainly because I'm pursuing what I feel, I'm changing my career to try to find happiness and fulfillment. (Nick)

8.2: Feeling Blessed to Live Out a Calling

Participants felt blessed and fortunate to be able to pursue a calling. Interviewees reported gratitude about being able to live out their callings or finally discern an unanswered calling. An example response was: "I don't think it's all that common. I appreciate that I have this opportunity. I feel very fortunate that I am able to do that." More specifically, Alice noted:

So now it's not just a passion but I consider myself very blessed to be doing what I always wanted to do ever since I was three years old and I love to do it. I feel very blessed that I get to do what I always wanted to. (Alice)

Moreover, Jim perceived being able to live out a calling as a privilege from the perspective that all psychological and environmental conditions were met to pursue his desired career.

I feel really fortunate that that work has so much to do with what I feel that I am. That bravery to really pursue what your dreams are and the ability, the privilege that I know I have in being able to actually do that. I feel blessed that I have the talent or ability to do this job and there could be other people who would live to do this but don't have the ability, don't have the education, don't have the internal talent to be able to do the same things. (Jim)

8.3: There is a Right Time to Pursue a Calling

Some participants described that although they recognized their calling early, they were not able to pursue the calling until situational conditions were met. Participants stated that having a calling is not naturally connected to living out a calling, and they took a certain amount of time until they finally decided to pursue the long-held calling. More specifically, some participants

stated that they needed a certain amount of time to be ready and to ensure they truly understood their callings.

Tom noted that although he was greatly satisfied with living out his calling, he clarified that he was unable to follow his calling under financially insecure situations.

I had planned to work in a college to work with students. But my software career was going financially very well and um it didn't seem like the right time. I got my master's, but I didn't do anything with it. At this stage in my life, if I didn't have a career where I made good compensation and saved money. I wouldn't be able to do a job like this, getting paid so little. I had to meet my obligation. I realized that my obligations towards my family, I realized at that point I could have retired probably. We were fine financially. So that really wasn't an obligation anymore so that morning it all clicked. So I feel I did make the right decision. It took me a lot longer to get here than I thought. (Tom)

Participants described that they needed to be ready psychologically, financially, and situationally to be able to follow their calling. Relevant expressions were "There is a right time," or "It is a good time to do it." For example, Nick knew that he did not like his former job and would eventually leave someday, but actually took several more years at his former job. He described how he smoothly transferred from the former career to his calling-infused calling: "I felt that I had learned everything that I was going to learn and I felt that I had done enough for the company that I didn't feel like I was abandoning them. It was good timing for everyone." Alice also described why she was not able to pursue her calling before, and how it took 23 years until finally she got into her calling-infused career. She stated that she might choose the same career, not her calling, if she went back to that time again.

I don't think I would have pursued it 23 years later after I got married and started working in an office, because I was married young, and just bringing home money. I was raising my family, so it just kind of stayed down here. I kept my calling stuffed way down deep inside and I didn't let it resurface until recently, because I knew that I couldn't. I kept my dream stuffed aside until the right time. There is a right time for everything, and it kind of knows when it is, and if it's meant to be, it will be. (Alice)

Jeanne also indicated that although she had regretted not choosing her calling earlier, she believed that her career transition happened at a time that could work out well:

Although it's sort of like the idea that you can't walk through the same river twice, everything that has happened up to this point has brought me to right now. So it's good that I waited because things are going really good right now. All of this has culminated in things really working out. But I wonder sometimes what would have happened if I would have pursued design like I was thinking of in my undergrad. That would have been really an intriguing thought to me. But, all I can do is just throw myself at it now. (Jeanne)

8.4: Post-Rational Aspects of Decision Making

Three participants indicated that the calling-infused career change is more close to an emotionally driven career decision than a result of logical reasoning process. Participants used words such as “inexplicable process,” “more the emotional plane than the logical thinking plane,” or “a recurring feeling that you should go in a particular direction.” Some interviewees stated that this career decision might not be understood from an outside view, or even can be regarded as “a stupid decision.” Some interviewees reported that trusting one's calling is a sort of like taking a risk because it does not always logically make sense. For example, Jeanne stated:

One of my best friends said because I was making about \$60,000 dollars a year and she said when you gave that up, I thought you were a little crazy, and she said but then if you hadn't done that it wouldn't be you. We live in this sort of logical world of bills and what have to make some sense. The calling is something that you come in with and something that you are called to do, just like my decision. It might not make sense to everybody. It's instinctual, more sort of on the emotional plane I would say rather than the logical, thinking plane. But ultimately I feel like emotions are what actually drive people in their decision making and so there's that you are excited about one, like permanently excited about one, the one where you are driven by calling, at least in my case. (Jeanne)

Tom described that changing a career with a calling is not different from other career changes for different reasons. He addressed that he just made a decision based on what he valued the most important in his life. In his case, his calling was the most important over any other factors.

Changing for calling is about understanding and answering that call from inside of yourself about what you are supposed to do. So from a money stand point, I made a very stupid decision, and that's the way it would look and I definitely understand. My old friends who saw me in those previous careers they think, they either wonder why I would do such a thing, they don't think they could do it, or they just think I'm crazy, that something happened and I am crazy. So that tells you that people valued different things in what they receive from a job. That I need to do it because I was made to do it, and because I can make a bigger difference overall in this new career rather than the one I had before or a totally different career that I may have switched. (Tom)

8.5: Pursuing a Higher Purpose beyond Personal Prosperity

Similarly to pursuing internal important values, three interviewees addressed the pro-social motivation as the purpose of their career change. They emphasized that their calling is not limited to personal well-being or prosperity. They expressed macro-level career goals beyond personal well-being such as “wanting to make a career of assisting or empowering people to make the changes that need to happen.” Participants also indicated that the pro-social goals were a prominent driving force leading them to change their careers. For example, Jim stated:

I think it's less about what do I personally want and more about what do I want to see happen in the world. What kind of world do I actually want to live in, and feeling that I can have an influence on that. Instead of what can I buy, it's what can I make happen. What change can I be a part of? Being less focused on myself and more focused on how I fit in the greater picture. (Jim)

Monty stated that while he had recovered from the physical injury, he thought about the finitude of life. He described how his important work values had been shifted since the accident, and how this major life change influenced on his career direction.

I don't know how old I will live to be, but we'll say 80. When I'm 80 and I look back how will I feel? Um will I look around at all of these things I've amassed and that I'm going to die in 30 seconds and I'll never use them again? Or will I look back and see the times that I interacted with people and my actions had an effect on them and how that influenced them and how they treated? I don't know, but I think that —my calling anyway is being involved in a human life in a positive way. And I think that's more valuable than anything. So I don't know I just look back, I plan on looking ahead and saying “what is going to leave me the most satisfied”? I would love to have lots stuffs. I'm not going to lie, but if I have all that stuff, but I haven't done anything more with my life, I don't. I'd be as satisfied then if I have a reasonable amount of stuff to survive or

whatever but I've done very substantial thing in the world with other people. I think that's where my decision process is. (Monty)

8.6: It's Process, Not an Event

Participants noted that discerning and living the calling is an on-going process, rather than choosing a certain occupation at one point. Interviewees described that they were able to discern their calling through past life and work experiences, and the calling has continuously developed over time. They viewed a calling as an overarching theme that provides a direction rather than a certain specific job title or specific occupation.

For example, Sue illustrated that she was finally able to discern a clear sense of calling based on dedicated efforts to integrate her past experiences, interests, and her personal background. She viewed calling as a navigating process, not an event happened one day:

It has been a process for me. I think some folks realize what they want to do, like I want to do XYZ, but for me it has been very much a process, a long process and it will continue to be a long process but ultimately I'm more satisfied. I think being a process is important. It didn't just happen overnight. There's a lot of different steps to get there so a process. (Sue)

Nick described that calling is not choosing a certain occupation, but something that provides a general direction. He also suggested that there can be a wide range of ways of actualizing his calling.

For me it's a little bit less about the specific job itself and more about the actual industry I'm putting myself in. I want to be involved in the excitement of the outdoors. If I go in and designing doesn't work for me, there are still other opportunities in the outdoor industry that I can pursue, and maybe my experience in the design has introduced me to people, and I have seen what these jobs are, so maybe I will shift here and there, and I am a proponent of a life where you kind of its not point A all the way to point B, there's A and then there's B and C and D and you kind of as you go things change and you can't necessarily predict everything fifty years out. The idea, the calling was sort of developing and I realized that this is what I want to do for a career. (Nick)

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to conduct an in-depth exploration into how a sense of calling relates to the career change process. The results reflected the rich and unique ways in which participants discerned and described a sense of calling, as well as the ways in which it impacted their career development and other life domains during their career transition. In this section, I discussed the major convergent themes that emerged from the study.

The Process of Discerning a Calling: A Result of Self-Understanding and Maturity

Participants indicated that they have a clearer sense of calling in conjunction with a better understanding of themselves, their interests, their values, and their skills. More specifically, participants stated that their vocational identities became clearer as a function of improved self-understanding, and they were able to recognize a career that fits well with them. This finding supported Parson's theory that understanding one's self, and the "true reasoning" process (i.e., finding a career that matches well with one's self) are essential for making a good career decision (Dik & Duffy, 2012). Duffy and Dik (2009) also indicated that when a career best matches with one's interests, skills, abilities, and values, individuals are likely to feel that the career is what they are meant to do.

The participants of this study also reported that age was an important factor in discerning their calling. In support of Weiss et al.'s (2003) point that a calling is a process of self-realization, the development of calling seems to align with the development of one's self-concept. Super (1990) suggested that work is the actualization of one's self-concept. As individuals are getting older, they have a more mature self-concept, and approach work as a way of actualizing themselves (Super, 1990). As suggested by previous research (Duffy, Dik et al., 2011; Elangovan

et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), a calling seems to develop in relation to general maturity level and evolve by integrating meaningful life and work experiences. From this perspective, calling might be a more salient factor for middle aged and older adult groups who have greater self-awareness based on abundant life and work experiences.

The Process of Discerning a Calling: Making Meaning through Insightful Reflection

In addition to self-understanding, the ability to make meaning from life experiences seems to be a critical component to discerning a calling. In particular, participants of this study reported that challenging experiences in life became an opportunity for them to discern their calling. Two participants reported that being challenged with deficits in their past led to a desire to work for those who are struggling with similar deficits. Several participants reported a critical life event (e.g., accident, being laid off, or being hospitalized), and indicated that the difficult experience became a turning point that led to reassessing their lives at a different angle. Additionally, five participants reported that negative work experiences helped them identify what they were dissatisfied with, what they really want to do, or what they are looking for through work. Dik and Duffy (2009) also suggested that critical life events can be a catalyst for discerning a sense of calling. Given this, the development of a calling seems to be linked with an individual's capacity to make meaning out of one's experiences. A number of scholars in psychology assume humans to be meaning-making organisms and emphasize their function as active agents who are able to elicit meaning by interweaving their life experiences (Bandura, 2006, Baumeister, 1991; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Frankl, 1969). Savickas (2005) suggested that career decisions are based on meaning and mattering. In other words, individuals choose a vocation that holds personally significant meaning while also mattering to society. A sense of meaning and mattering of a career choice can be facilitated by in-depth self-reflection and rich

narratives. A number of studies commonly indicated that identifying a sense of calling is a time consuming process and based on reflective practice (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Elangovan et al., 2010; Gregory, 2013). As shown in this study, discerning one's calling would be the product of an individual's effort to deal with life's challenges in a meaningful way to promote self-growth. These results provide an implication for individuals who are currently dissatisfied with their work. By interweaving past careers, current challenges, and future hope, individuals may be able to discern meanings or patterns that portray a significant life theme. The emerged life theme may denote a sense of calling overarching their entire work life.

The Definition of Calling

As suggested by Bellah et al. (1986), participants defined calling as a construct denoting one's purpose in life, personal meaning, and important life values. All participants described the fundamental characteristics of calling as feelings of fulfillment, passion, excitement, and working for its own sake. This result mirrored the "modern," secularized view of calling as an internal drive toward a certain line of work that fits well with oneself and facilitates internal happiness (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dik & Duffy, 2012). In terms of the source of calling, there are scholars who emphasize an internal guiding force (i.e., "duty to the self") aside from the religious roots of calling (i.e., "one's duty to God"; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Rodgers, 1978; Weber, 1930). As part of a secular view of calling, Novak (1996) stated that non-religious individuals are able to have just as a strong sense of calling as religious individuals without using the word "God." Consistent with this perspective, an inward force pursuing a sense of fulfillment was the most frequently mentioned definition among participants in this study.

Second, the majority of our participants discussed the pro-social aspects of calling in direct or indirect ways. Participants who felt called into a helping profession particularly

addressed the altruistic aspect of calling and explicitly described that they were called to serve others. Notably, participants who did not directly engage in helping careers also reported altruistic motives. More specifically, participants described calling as promoting benefits to the society or contributing to the “greater good” through their work. This finding was consistent with research suggesting that a pro-social motivation is a prominent component of a sense of calling (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Duffy, Foley et al., 2012; Hernandez et al., 2011; Wrzesniewski, 2003).

In support of Dik and Duffy’s (2009) multidimensional definition of calling, half of the participants also expressed that they experienced an inexplicable force leading them into a certain line of work. They used a wide variety of terms to describe the force such as: “an inexplicable feeling that I was born with this thing,” “...being called by God,” “hearing a voice,” “the needs of society,” and “a heritage.” Experiencing an external force beyond oneself was not limited to religious participants (i.e., a calling from God), and the source of the force varied depending on each participant’s life experiences and personal beliefs. However, there were also a few participants who denied the existence of an external force and addressed internal sources such as a strong sense of personal fit or passion. As suggested by Dik and Duffy (2012), a transcendent summons may not be a common component that is experienced by most individuals. However, consistent with previous quantitative and qualitative calling studies (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Duffy, Foley et al., 2012; French & Domene, 2010), the dimension of a transcendent summons was consistently identified by half of the participants. These varied results may imply that a sense of calling is identified differently depending on each individual’s life experiences, family or cultural backgrounds, and attitudes toward one’s job. Therefore, further research needs to examine what type of individuals tend to experience an external force beyond oneself, whether there are conceptual differences between an externally originated

calling and an internally originated calling, and whether a sense of calling functions differently depending on one's experience (or lack thereof) of a transcendent summons.

Impacts of a Calling-Infused Career Change: Greater Career Satisfaction and Well-Being

For all of our participants, they were satisfied with their new career, and no one reported having regrets for choosing the calling-infused career. All of the participants commonly reported higher levels of fulfillment and happiness at their current work when compared to their former careers. Among the participants who already perceived a calling but did not pursue the calling until this later career transition, they reported greater work and life satisfaction with their new career. Although some participants had to sacrifice some financial benefits as a result of pursuing their calling, they reported high levels of satisfaction with their career decision. This result also supported the understanding that the benefit of calling is more powerful in the state of living out a calling than the state of having a calling (Duffy, Allan et al., 2013).

Regarding work-related domains, most participants reported a strong sense of passion, vigor, and feelings of fulfillment at their new career. These results were consistent with previous research that approaching a job as a calling is more likely to relate to greater job satisfaction than other work attitudes (e.g., viewing work as a job or career) (Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Previous quantitative calling studies suggested that calling links to greater occupational identity, organizational commitment, career commitment, and work engagement (Cardador, Dane, & Pratt, 2011; Duffy et al., 2012; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Hirschi, 2012). Perhaps experiencing a strong sense of fulfillment and passion might partially explain why approaching work as a calling is significantly associated with positive work outcomes.

In addition, the majority of our participants indicated that increased well-being at work was connected to greater sense of well-being in their general life. The positive link between

having a calling and well-being was consistently supported in both college students and adult working groups (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010; Duffy, Manuel, Borges, & Bott, 2011; Peterson et al., 2009). Baumeister and Vohs (2002) also suggested that a sense of purpose and meaning in work align with general purpose and meaning in life. By accumulating meaningful working experiences, participants seemed to feel that their lives are meaningful in general, which in turn leads to greater life satisfaction.

Impacts of a Calling-Infused Career Change: Strengthening One's Sense of Self

Individuals in this study reported increased self-worth about choosing the calling over more externally rewarding jobs. Participants were satisfied with the fact that they proactively made the career decision, and this perceived locus of control seemed to lead to greater self-efficacy. Previous studies found that an internal locus of control was positively associated with career self-efficacy (Taylor & Popma, 1990), career commitment (Colarelli & Bishop, 1990), and more adaptive vocational behaviors (Luzzo et al., 1996). More recently, Duffy, Bott et al. (2013) found that having a sense of personal agency positively related to job satisfaction. It appears that by choosing their calling, participants felt that they chose a career that they really wanted to do, and the perception that they finally actualized their dream job appeared to link to greater self-respect.

Second, participants revealed that their calling provided an overall future direction aligning with their purpose in life. After perceiving a clear sense of calling, participants indicated that they were able to better understand who they are and feel increased certainty about their life and career. Having a clear future direction seemed to make participants feel at ease during the transition process. This result is consistently supported by previous studies that showed having a calling is linked to higher levels of career decidedness, comfort with the career choice, and

vocational self-clarity among college students (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007). In a qualitative study examining the experience of calling among female Christian university students, participants reported higher levels of feeling at ease in their calling-infused work (French & Domene, 2010). Given this, individuals with a calling tend to feel that they are pursuing a career in the right direction, and the career certainty adds to a sense of relief and career self-efficacy.

Finally, participants also reported that doing good for others made them feel good about themselves. These results mirrored previous research that altruistic motivation was positively associated with greater well-being (Post, 2005), career commitment (Nesje, 2014), and greater self-esteem (Crocker & Park, 2004). Individuals with a calling tend to approach work with a pro-social orientation, and altruistic attitudes appear to lead to greater self-worth by promoting positive perceptions that they are doing something good for others or their community.

The Dark Side of a Calling-Infused Career Change

In support of previous research, participants described costs of pursuing a calling (Bunderson & Thompson 2009; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Duffy, Foley et al., 2012; French & Domene, 2010). Participants reported challenges associated with calling-infused career transitions such as a psychological burden about starting over in a new career, sacrificing other life domains by focusing on the calling-infused career, financial burdens after giving up financially rewarding former careers, the lack of social support about their career decisions, and work overload caused by excessive passion within the new career. Particularly, participants who had to take a pay cut to pursue their calling reported that there were “mental battles” to decide whether the career change was worth enough to take the risks.

As ways of dealing with the challenges, participants reported that internal rewards from the calling-infused career outweighed the costs. In particular, positive work experiences and

increased subjective well-being were prominent intrinsic rewards. This finding offers a key practical application for those who are considering a career change. Participants of this study tended to highly value meaningfulness, internal pleasure, and fulfillment after feeling dissatisfied with their former working experiences. The calling-infused career seemed to match well with their value system for preferring internal rewards to external rewards. Simply put, the findings suggest that it is important to be aware of one's essential work values, and carefully assess how much the next career can fulfill their most desirable work values.

Interestingly, social support was a challenge but at the same time, a protective factor during the career change process. Participants reported that they were hesitant to pursue a career transition when other people expressed pessimistic doubts toward their decision. In the same way, participants stated that getting support from their closest relationships was powerful enough to overcome challenges during the career transition. Social support is consistently observed as an important factor in searching for, pursuing, and maintaining a calling (Duffy et al., 2012; French & Domene, 2010). Therefore, clinical practitioners need to consider how their clients can obtain enough support during the process of pursuing a calling.

Unique Aspects of a Calling-Infused Career Change: Valuing Intrinsic Rewards More than Extrinsic Rewards

In addition with greater satisfaction in work and life, calling appeared to matter for those who value intrinsic work rewards such as internal pleasure, meaningfulness, fulfillment, subjective well-being, and making positive contributions to society. Consistent with Dik and Duffy (2009), participants seemed to value higher order variables such as having a life purpose, a sense of fulfillment, work meaning, meaning in life, and social connectedness. This is also consistent with previous studies that have found a positive correlation between pursuing higher

order variables (e.g., greater meaningfulness) and well-being (Nesje, 2014; Steger & Dik, 2010). The participants from this study indicated that making a valuable contribution to society is a powerful reward in and of itself. This finding implies that the pro-social aspect of calling would be the key point explaining why a sense of calling relates to greater well-being in work and life. The benefit of altruistic motivation has been consistently supported with many studies. According to previous studies, altruistic motives were positively associated with greater job persistence, performance, and productivity over various types of jobs (Bing & Burroughs, 2001; Grant et al., 2007; Grant, 2008; Ilies, Scott, & Judge, 2006). A recent study showed that firefighters with higher levels of pro-social motivation tended to be evaluated as much more creative by their supervisors. These consistent findings implicate that it would be a beneficial practice for individuals to think about the ways that their work can make a positive impacts on society.

Unique Aspects of a Calling-Infused Career Change: Feeling Blessed to Live Out a Calling

All participants expressed deep gratitude for being able to finally live out their callings when compared to their past jobs living an unanswered calling or searching for a calling. Participants described that having a calling was not naturally connected to living out the calling, and there were certain conditions that rendered them unable to pursue a calling. Participants described that being able to live out a calling is related to privilege in the way of having resources necessary for the career change such as education, social networks, financial stability, family support, and self-confidence in one's own abilities. The connection between calling and feelings of being blessed was suggested by previous calling researcher (French & Domene, 2001; Duffy, Foley et al, 2012), but understanding a calling as a privilege was a new finding. This

finding provides a clinical implication that exploring perceived career barriers and discussing the way to access necessary resources is a critical part for living out one's calling.

Second, some participants viewed their calling as a privilege in that they felt both compelled to do something, and were given an opportunity do a certain type of work. In this perspective, participants reported feeling blessed and fortunate for discovering their calling and actually living it out. Intriguingly, participants considered their calling as a privilege, even for those where calling-infused careers were less externally rewarding than their former careers. Participants seemed to perceive the sense of being driven into a certain work as a type of privilege. This sense of privilege seemed to lead to greater satisfaction, and self-respect about choosing their important values (i.e., their calling) over other external rewards. This finding may provide one explanation about why the benefits of calling are more significant for living a calling compared to having a calling (Berg et al., 2010; Duffy, Bott et al., 2012). It is plausible that the view of being able to live a calling as a privilege increases one's sense of career efficacy and the level of volition (i.e., one's willingness to pursue a desired career despite of constraints).

Unique Aspects of a Calling-Infused Career Change: It's a Good Time to Pursue a Calling

There were a few interviewees who already perceived their calling in the past, but chose a different career, not the calling. Regarding the non-calling career decision, they reported that "It was not a good time to pursue my calling." Specifically, participants indicated that they had urgent needs and the former career fulfilled the needs better than their calling. Once their urgent needs were met at some level, they seemed to yearn for their calling and what were interested in. Similarly with Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs, Blustein (2006) suggested that individuals fulfill three core needs through work: (a) survival and power, (b) social connection, (c) self-determination. Unlike most career theories focusing on the higher needs (i.e., self-determination),

Blustein (2006) suggested that it is not always possible to choose careers that optimize fulfilling the higher needs. Findings of this study also seemed to mirror the need hierarchy theory that the basic functions of work need to be met prior to individuals being able to actualize themselves and pursuing meaningfulness in their work. Regarding the reason why they did not choose their calling earlier, participants described other urgent needs such as family support obligations, the compatibility of work with child care, or needs for an externally rewarding job. Participants also described that they were able to pursue their calling when they felt free from the obligations to some extent. This finding may denote a plausible link between calling and social economic status. Although individuals are able to discern a calling across the full range of occupational prestige (Dik & Duffy, 2009), the extent to which individuals actually live out a calling may be related to the degree of available resources. Blustein (2006) stated that “by developing systematic access to the resources necessary for survival, one can ideally consolidate greater power.”(p.71). Framed in this way, the gap between having a calling and living out the calling may be bridged as individuals accumulate available resources such as financial security, education, work skills, and psychological readiness.

Unique Aspects of a Calling-Infused Career Change: Post-Rational Aspects of Decision Making

Some participants addressed inexplicable aspects of their career change decision. They indicated that the career decision was not the best option elicited by rational decision making. Instead, they described the career transition as a result of following inexplicably intensive intuition or strong feelings to pursue their current career. These intensive emotional experiences seemed to be the reason that led them to change their careers, but at the same time cause challenges during their transition process. Participants considered their inexplicable positive

emotion as evidence showing them what they are made to do, as a helping force leading them into the new career. At the same time, participants had difficulty in getting support from others because the emotionally driven decision did not logically make sense to other people. These findings were consistent with other qualitative calling research demonstrating that participants reported unique experiences (e.g., being driven by inexplicable forces), spiritual experiences (e.g., transcendentally being called) or inexplicable feelings such as an internal pull or natural intuitions (Duffy et al., 2012; Elliott, 1992; French & Domene, 2010). The non-logical component seemed to resonate with the transcendent summons dimension of Dik and Duffy's (2009) conceptualization of calling. There are controversies surrounding the transcendent summons dimension, because the idea of an external source is perceived as ambiguous, non-universal, and taking a passive role in career decision making (Dik & Duffy, 2012). The dimension is also against prevailing career theories emphasizing rational processes in career decision making. However, Krieshok (1998) argued that "most processing performed by the human mind for decision making and behavior initiation is not performed at the conscious level" (p.217). In response to challenges of the emphasis on rational processes in career decision making, Krieshok et al. (2009) offered a trilateral model that rational and intuitive parts mutually intertwine in making satisfactory career decision. Gelatt (1989) also emphasized an acceptance of uncertainty, tolerance for ambiguity and incorporating intuition in career decision making. Indeed, participants of this study also described that their career change decision was a sort of trusting an outward or inward voice in spite of uncertainty. The intuitive parts were consistently supported by qualitative calling studies (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Duffy et al., 2012; French & Domene, 2010). Although the contents of non-logical components of calling varied across participants (e.g., God's plan, being called by high power, meeting the needs of a society,

an internal drive, or a gut feelings), calling-infused careers seemed to relate to intuitive components to some extent.

Unique Aspects of a Calling-Infused Career Change: A Holistic Theme and Ongoing Process

With a holistic view, participants validated their former negative working experiences as a meaningful part of their career path. Participants also viewed calling as an overarching theme that provides a general direction, rather than selecting a certain occupation at one time. In the same line, they understood the calling-infused career change as an on-going process that kept developing and actualizing over time. These results are consistent with previous findings that calling does not reflect something a person discovers at one time, but is an ongoing process that continuously unfolds and elaborates over time (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Dik & Duffy, 2012; Duffy & Dik, 2013). Dobrow and Heller (2012) suggested that a sense of calling among young musicians changed over time in developing or diminishing ways depending on one's investments or circumstantial conditions. As a way to facilitate the on-going process, Duffy et al. (2012) addressed the importance of being open to new opportunities, taking a proactive stance, and getting social supports. Participants of this study also indicated that there is no end to their journey for actualizing their calling, and emphasized continuous self-reflection and openness to new experiences as ways to facilitate the on-going process.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

In summary, this study expanded the existing knowledge base of calling by investigating the role of a sense of calling in the career transition process. By conducting a qualitative study for those who change a career to pursue a calling, this study contributes a better understanding of

how a sense of calling is discerned, developed, maintained and actualized as an actual career activity.

However, the results and conclusions from this study need to be considered with limitations. First, this was a qualitative study that mainly focused on eight individuals who changed to a career that held a sense of calling. Therefore the characteristics and unique life experiences of each participant need to be taken into account when considering the transferability of the results.

Although the sample size of this study was enough to elicit in-depth and insightful understanding of the career transition phenomenon, it may not be large enough to be generalized to all adult workers who are considering career transitions. There is a need for quantitative research with a greater number of participants in order to gather more information about how calling relates to career change decision or vocational behaviors. For example, future research may examine whether perceived social support or career barriers play a moderating role in the perceiving-living a calling link. In addition, regarding the source of a calling, some participants addressed non-logical components such as intuition or an inexplicable force, while the others emphasized the rational thinking process that reassesses their interests, skills, and abilities. Therefore, future research may explore whether significant differences exist in defining a sense of calling and identifying the source of calling based on an individual's career decision making style.

Furthermore, the participants of this study were also recruited from a Western region in the United States, all interviewees were in the progress of or had completed their Bachelor's degree, and most identified as White. The phenomenon of career transition closely relates to each individual's work values, socioeconomic status, and other external life conditions. Furthermore,

a sense of calling can be differently understood across cultures. Therefore, future research needs to be done with more diverse groups, especially among those from non-western countries, various socioeconomic statuses or working classes.

Also, although there was an attempt to include various occupational types, more than half of the participants changed their career into a helping profession. Therefore, the importance of pro-social orientation might be overrepresented due to the characteristics of social service careers. Therefore, further research needs to examine career changes in more diverse occupations, in particular non-helping careers.

Lastly, most participants changed their career recently within the last three years, and were at the beginning stage of their new career. Therefore, the high levels of satisfaction and motivation reported by the participants might partially come from the excitement of starting a new career. Moreover, as suggested earlier, calling is not a onetime event, but an on-going process. Therefore, longitudinal research needs to be initiated to fully understand how calling is actualized across time, and influences career and life domains.

Implications for Clinical Work

This study highlighted the importance of self-reflection in the process of discerning a calling. Several studies commonly emphasized that openness and active exploration are critical to discerning a calling (Dik, Duffy, & Eldridge, 2009; Dik, Duffy, & Steger, 2012; Duffy & Dik, 2013). This study also showed that all participants invested significant time to explore their interests, skills, and values before making their career change decision. Therefore, career practitioners may help an individual engage in an in-depth self-reflection that connects all past experiences, interests, skills, values, personal beliefs together to find a sense of calling and potential jobs along with the calling.

Second, participants of this study reported that negative working experiences or critical life events influenced the process of discerning a calling. However, participants utilized these significant life challenges as an opportunity to explore personal life meanings and purpose. This finding demonstrated that the ability to make meaning played a central role to discerning and ensuring one's calling. Thus, for those who are not satisfied with their current work, career practitioners may advocate for and assist individuals with the meaning making process. A constructivist career counseling model suggested by Savickas (2005, 2011) may be one useful strategy in identifying meaningful life themes. This approach emphasizes eliciting an individual's career narrative and finding holistic themes using open-ended questions. As individuals verbalize the answers, they are encouraged to explore what is important in detail, why it is meaningful, and how it relates to overall purpose in life (Glavin & Berger, 2012). Once the holistic framework of purpose and meaningfulness is elicited, practitioners may discuss the ways of actualizing the framework of purpose and meaningfulness within their work role (Dik & Duffy, 2009).

Third, the study suggested that altruistic motives were not only a prominent part of their calling, but also were a source leading to greater satisfaction with the new career. This finding supported the positive impact of altruistic motives on career and life well-being (Blustein, 2006; Dik & Duffy 2012). Thus, thinking about how one's current work can contribute to society would be a beneficial practice for promoting one's personal well-being and a sense of having a meaningful life.

Finally, this study suggested that realistic barriers need to be taken into consideration regarding the extent to which individuals are able to live out one's calling. Participants reported psychological burdens before making the career transition decision, while some participants

expressed realistic concerns that kept them from pursuing their calling. Therefore, counseling practitioners need to encourage clients to explore potential career barriers, and to develop coping strategies before making a decision. Moreover, most participants of this study showed that they made a gradual career change by starting a part time job, volunteering work, or going back to school. Dik and Duffy (2012) also addressed that a sense of calling can be actualized in various ways depending on how each individual polishes and cultivates it in one's real life. For those who are not currently able to follow their calling, practitioners may explore the ways of maintaining the calling until finding a good time or other ways of living out the calling outside of work.

Summary and Conclusions

The findings of this study attempted to understand both the career change experience and how it attributed to a sense of calling (phenomenology), and the meaning the experience has (hermeneutics) using IPA. These eight career changes indicated the process of discerning a calling was based on better self-understanding and one's ability to elicit meanings from various life experiences. Although there were various ways of conceptualizing a sense of calling, participants of this study supported Dik and Duffy (2009)'s multidimensional definition: a transcendent summons, purpose and meaning in work, and other-oriented motives. Among them, the dimension of purpose and meaning in work was endorsed by all eight of the participants. In terms of the impacts of the calling-infused career change, all participants reported greater satisfactions in the professional and personal lives when compared to their former career. However, participants also indicated various challenges during the career transition process. Social support and internal happiness was important to overcoming the challenges. As unique characteristics of calling-infused career change, participants viewed pursuing their calling-

infused career as an on-going process and addressed that the career change happened with altruistic motives and the pursuit of internal rewards.

In sum, career change can happen in every person's life at any time. This study was the first attempt to examine how the concept of calling relates to career change phenomenon. This study shed light on making a meaningful and satisfactory career transition by exploring benefits of calling-infused career changes. Future research should explore more about how the calling-infused careers develop and how the benefits differ over time by taking a longitudinal approach. Career counselors and clinical practitioners may help clients discern a calling by facilitating in-depth exploration. Once clients discern a sense of calling, practitioners may assist clients to develop specific skills to keep their calling alive and cultivated.

TABLE 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Religion	Level of Education	Former Career	New Career
Sue	33	F	Atheist	Masters	Engineer/ Business Consultant	Student Affairs
Jim	32	M	Atheist	Masters	Food Service	Student Affairs
Jeanne	33	F	Buddhist	Masters	Education	Design
Tom	46	M	Christian	Pursuing Ph.D.	Software industry/ Photographer	Student Affairs
Alice	44	F	Christian	College	Office Management	Flight attendant
Monty	31	M	Christian	Pursuing Masters	Soldier (Marine)	Social Work/ Law Enforcement
Nick	31	M	Atheist	Masters	Hospitality	Outdoor Gear Product Development
Bill	29	M	Atheist	Some College	Soldier	Diplomat

TABLE 2

List of Categories and Themes

Categories and Themes	Frequency
Prior to Career Change	
Positive and integrative view toward the former career	8
Negative working experiences and viewing former career as a paycheck	7
Pre-Transition Period	
Being proactive and taking actions	6
Process of Discerning a Calling	
Self-reflection	7
Critical life event as a turning point	6
Finding a calling through the job that wasn't a calling	5
Identifying an innate calling	5
Finding a calling from deficits in the past	2
Finding a calling with others' help	2
Definition of Calling	
Fulfillment	8
Serving others	6
Spiritual or intuitive feelings	4
A part of self-identity	4
Challenges of Pursuing the Calling-Infused Career	
Fears of starting over in a new career	4
Financial challenges	4

Ways of Dealing with Challenges	
Self-validation	6
External supports from others	5
Impacts of the Calling-Infused Career Change	
Fulfillment and passion at work	8
Greater happiness in general	8
A clear sense of direction and purpose in life	6
Positive self-concept	2
Unique aspects of a Calling-Infused Career Change	
Valuing internal more than external rewards	8
Feeling blessed to live out a calling	8
(Perceiving a calling as a privilege)	(3)
There is a right time to pursue a calling	5
Post-rational aspects of decision-making	3
Pursuing a higher purpose beyond personal prosperity	3
It's process, not an event	2

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APPENDIX A

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

TITLE OF STUDY: Career change driven by a sense of calling

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Dr. Bryan Dik, Associate Professor of Psychology,
bryan.dik@colostate.edu, (970)491-3235

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jina Ahn, Dept of Psychology, ahnjina83@gmail.com, (970)691-8716

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH: You are invited to be in a research study of how a sense of calling is related to your career change experience. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? This study is being conducted by Dr. Bryan Dik, a faculty member, and Jina Ahn, a graduate student, in the Department of Psychology at Colorado State University. This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Colorado State University.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? The purpose of this study is to better understand how a sense of calling has influenced career transition. To take a part in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age, change your career within the past 3 years, or currently in the transition, and experience a sense of calling in your new career.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? If you decide to be in this study, you will be required to complete a short questionnaire and participate in an hour interview. The interview will be conducted at a Clark PSC room on the CSU campus, or if you prefer, the interview will be conducted electronically via Skype. In the interview, we will ask questions about your career change experiences. We will re-contact you to clarify your comments from the interview and the second interview will take less than an hour.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS? The study has minimal risks. First, some of the questions may ask about topics that are sensitive to you. In order to minimize this risk, you are encouraged to skip any questions which cause you any distress. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential risks.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There are no direct benefits to you for participating. But, it is hoped that this study will offer benefits to society as a whole through what it reveals about factors related to career change.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? You will receive \$50.00 for your time commitment to do two interviews. \$25 will be provided for each interview. You must complete both interviews to receive the payment.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE? We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. All interviews will be recorded, and the research records will be kept in a locked file. Regarding interview transcripts, we will assign a pseudo name to your data so that the only place your name will appear in our records is on the consent and in our data spreadsheet which links you to your pseudo name. Your information will not be shared with anyone except the research team; and it will be kept entirely confidential and used only for research purposes. All electronic interview materials will be kept in a specified locked (password-protected) computer and deleted after the completion of the study. The only exceptions to this area if we are asked to share the research files for audit purposes with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee, if necessary. Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private. All research records will be erased after the completion of the study. Your identity/record of receiving compensation (NOT your data) may be made available to CSU officials for financial audits.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS? Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Jina Ahn at ahnjina83@gmail.com or call (970)-691-8716. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bryan Dik, Ph.D

Associate Professor

Bryan.Dik@colostate.edu

Psychology Dept., CSU

Jina Ahn

Graduate Student

ahnjina83@gmail.com

Psychology Dept.,CSU

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

[Online interview only] By typing your name and date on the consent form, and returning to the researcher via email, you will indicate that you have read the information stated and willingly agree to participate in this study.

APPENDIX B

Recruitment Email Protocol (Faculty members/Career center staffs/Workforce center)

Subject line: Participants needed for study on career change driven by a sense of calling

To whom it may concern,

Greetings! My name is Jina Ahn, and I am a researcher from Colorado State University in the Psychology department. The research team supervised by Dr. Bryan Dik, in the Department of Psychology at Colorado State University is looking for participants for a research study on career transition driven by a sense of calling. I am writing to request your cooperation in the data collection. Your email address was obtained from [source].

I am currently doing a research “The experience of career change driven by a sense of calling.” This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Colorado State University.

This study aims to do interview individuals who voluntary decided to change their career and perceived feelings of being called into a new career. For the purpose, I am looking for individuals who have changed their career within the past 3 years, or are currently in the transition. If any of your [students/clients] appear to change their career and to have a sense of calling into the new career, please consider nominating them as potential participants in this study. We hope that this study will offer benefits to society as a whole through what it reveals about career transition and its relationship to career satisfaction.

Participants in this study will be required to complete a short questionnaire and to respond to questions in a 1 hour interview about their career change experiences. We will contact to them to clarify their comments from the interview. The interview will be conducted at a Clark PSC room on the CSU campus, or if the participant prefers, the interview will be conducted electronically via Skype. They will receive \$50.00 for their time commitment to the study. \$25.00 will be provided for each interview.

If there is someone who may be interested in participating or have any questions about the study, please email Jina Ahn at ahnjina83@gmail.com or call (970) 691-8716. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bryan Dik, Ph.D

Associate Professor

Bryan.Dik@colostate.edu

Psychology Dept., CSU

Jina Ahn

Graduate Student

ahnjina83@gmail.com

Psychology Dept.,CSU

Recruitment Email Protocol (Nominee)

Subject line: Participants needed for study on career change driven by a sense of calling

To whom it may concern,

Greetings!

My name is Jina Ahn, and I am a researcher from Colorado State University in the Psychology department. The research team supervised by Dr. Bryan Dik, in the Department of Psychology at Colorado State University is looking for participants for a research on career transition driven by a sense of calling. Your email address was obtained from [source] at [CSU/ CSU career center/Larimer county workforce center]. This email has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Colorado State University.

This study aims to do interview individuals who voluntary decided to change their career and perceived feelings of being called into a new career. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be required to complete a short questionnaire and participate in a 1 hour interview about your career change experiences. We may re-contact you to clarify your comments from the interview. The interview will be conducted at a Clark PSC room on the CSU campus, or if you prefer, the interview will be conducted electronically via Skype. In case of online interview, you will receive a consent form via email. By typing your name and date on the consent form, and returning to the researcher via email, you will indicate that you are providing consent to participate in this study. Your information will not be shared with anyone. It will be kept entirely confidential and used only for research purposes. To take part in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age, change your career within the past 3 years, or currently in the transition, and experience a sense of calling in your new career.

You will receive total \$50.00 (\$25.00 for each interview) for your time commitment to the study. We hope that this study will offer benefits to society as a whole through what it reveals about career transition and its relationship to career satisfaction.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions about the study, please email Jina Ahn at ahnjina83@gmail.com or call (970) 691-8716. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bryan Dik, Ph.D

Associate Professor

Bryan.Dik@colostate.edu

Psychology Dept., CSU

Jina Ahn

Graduate Student

ahnjina83@gmail.com

Psychology Dept.,CSU

APPENDIX C

Interview protocol

Explain the purpose of the study and obtain consent form for interview and audio taping

Date/Time:		Interviewee ID #:	
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Questions

1. Career history/background

- 1) Tell me about your work history (Previous jobs, # of years working in each job)
- 2) How did you choose your first career? Was the decision making process different from your current career driven by a sense of calling?

2. How have you changed your career in a different field?

- 1) Tell me about your career change experience
- 2) How has your past life/work experiences influenced the career change?
Is there a critical event leading you to change your career? If yes, please explain.
- 3) What factors prompted you make such a career change?
- 4) How does your personality influence this career change?
- 5) What challenges (financial/logistical, psychological, relational, social, etc.) did you confront in navigating this change? What motivated you to take these risks in order to pursue your new career?
- 6) Have you ever regretted your decision to change your career? If yes, please explain.
- 7) What lessons have you learned from the career change experience?

3. How has a sense of calling influenced on the career change process?

- 1) How do you define a calling, in your own words? Describe what you feel you are currently called to do (content).
- 2) How can you be sure that your current career is your calling?
- 3) How did you discern your calling (process of discerning)?
- 4) Has your calling changed or developed over time (process of developing)?
- 5) How has your calling influenced your career transition (career related impact)?
- 6) What impact has having a calling had on your life in general (personal impact)?
- 7) How would you describe the difference between a career change driven by a sense of calling, and a career change that happens for other reasons that don't involve a calling?
(unique aspects of calling-infused career change)