

DISSERTATION

CALLING, ENGAGEMENT IN THE ARTS, AND WELL-BEING AMONG SPECULATIVE
FICTION AUTHORS

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Summer 2026

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ABSTRACT

CALLING, ENGAGEMENT IN THE ARTS, AND WELL-BEING AMONG SPECULATIVE FICTION AUTHORS

Research on work-related and overall well-being among people with careers in the arts in general, and authors in particular, remains sparse. Like many careers in the arts, fiction authorship is typified by financial hardships and difficulties that limit the extrinsic incentive to pursue and persist in this area of work. Accordingly, research on authors holds the potential to further our understanding of the construct of calling, which is a eudaimonic form of work experience. Authors often work “day jobs” in addition to writing, which presents the opportunity to advance research on how calling is experienced among multiple jobholders. Also, recent research has revealed the RAISE mechanisms of engagement in the arts as facets that engender well-being, but little is known about how these mechanisms are experienced among authors (or those with careers in the arts). Using cross-sectional survey research, I applied qualitative and quantitative methods among 110 speculative fiction (i.e., science fiction and fantasy) authors to better understand work experiences and well-being among this population. Qualitative document analysis was used to analyze responses to three open-ended items on authors’ experiences. Results revealed a series of themes across initial motivation to pursue authorship, discovery of desire to be an author, and manners through which authors persist in their career paths. Six multiple linear regression models were conducted in which the RAISE mechanisms were used to predict life satisfaction, meaning in life, psychological richness, affect balance, creative self-concept, and empathy. Significant associations were found in four of the six models. Moderation

analyses were applied among multiple jobholders ($n = 84$) to discern how calling toward writing's association with several work-level variables may be influenced by levels of calling toward day job. Results revealed a significant interaction effect for one of three moderation models. Calling toward writing was found to be negatively associated with burnout for those high in calling toward day job, nonsignificant for those average in calling toward day job, and positively associated with burnout for those low in calling toward day job. Although results should be interpreted tentatively due to several limitations, integration of qualitative and quantitative results of the present study sheds light on the potential role of calling and the RAISE mechanisms in authors' work-related and overall well-being.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to all of the members of my dissertation committee, Bryan Dik, Michael Steger, Kimberly French, and Aaron Eakman, for their guidance and support throughout this project. Bryan, your unwavering encouragement and belief in me have been invaluable in helping me complete this program. Your wisdom and mentorship have been critical in shaping my growth as a researcher and person. Mike, I am highly grateful for all of the support you've provided for me throughout my time in the program. Your insights have profoundly shaped the way that I think about the construct of meaning. Kim, your unique combination of expertise on the interface between domains and on the intricacies of living in Atlanta has been hugely helpful for both my dissertation and my planning for my next chapter. Aaron, I am grateful for your guidance as a committee member for both my thesis and dissertation, especially regarding the synthesis of the qualitative and quantitative findings in this study.

I would also like to acknowledge the Department of Psychology at Colorado State University for providing the Success Grant funding that made participant compensation for this project possible. My thanks go out as well to the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association, Science Fiction Research Association, and all others in the speculative fiction community who helped distribute the survey.

Allie Alayan and Isaac Hunter are owed a debt of gratitude for offering their expertise in qualitative research and being so generous with their time. Their help with the coding process made completion of this dissertation feasible.

On a personal note, I am incredibly grateful to my partner, Makenna, for her support, patience, and flexibility in following me across the country as I pursue this career path.

Makenna, I could not have done this without you (and our cat, Sox) in my corner.

Thank you to my lifelong friend and podcast co-host, Charles, who has played a crucial role in building the connections within the speculative fiction community that helped enable the recruitment of authors for this study.

I also want to express my appreciation to my family. To my parents, thank you for always supporting me and for encouraging me to pursue whatever I felt called to do for work. To both of my grandmothers, thank you for serving as enduring sources of inspiration. And thank you to Evan because you are family, too.

Furthermore, I am grateful to every author who took the time to participate in this study. I know how busy you all are (which has now been empirically demonstrated), and it means a great deal to me that you were willing to give your time and offer your perspectives in order to make this study happen.

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INTRODUCTION

Research within the social sciences on the work experiences of artists in general and authors in particular remains relatively sparse. Nevertheless, this population presents with several characteristics that make study of their experiences conducive to furthering the scientific literature across multiple areas. One such area is the burgeoning line of research on sense of calling in the work domain (see Dobrow et al., 2023). Besides the minuscule percentage of authors that reach substantial commercial success, writers who pursue this path typically find it rife with financial strife, hardship, and adversity (Gouthro, 2014; Lindemann, 2013; Lois & Gregson, 2019). With extrinsic incentives such as financial reward being limited in authorial work, meaningful work orientations like calling may hold increased relevance as has been observed among other artists (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). Authors also often work “day jobs” as a means of financial support (Lois & Gregson, 2019), making them a population for whom the understudied topic of calling among multiple jobholders can be examined.

Research on authors can also advance the nascent but promising line of literature on the RAISE mechanisms of engagement in the arts and humanities, which are Reflection, Acquisition, Immersion, Socialization, and Expression. Empirical work has long evidenced that engagement in artistic pursuits has numerous well-being benefits (Westgate & Oishi, 2021). The RAISE mechanisms are the result of recent work designed to conceptualize and measure the facets that account for this relationship (Tay et al., 2018; Thapa et al., 2024). Although understanding the impact of art engagement, including through study of the RAISE mechanisms, is an emerging area of empirical inquiry, research on creating art (e.g., writing, painting) has lagged behind that on consuming art (e.g., reading, viewing art exhibits). In particular, there is a

dearth of research examining the creation of art in the work domain (i.e., as a professional pursuit). Research on authors presents an opportunity to address this gap in the literature.

The present research involved a sample of speculative fiction (i.e., science fiction and fantasy; SFF) authors and is designed to discern matters germane to their work and well-being experiences. Specifically, this empirical investigation was a cross-sectional survey study that applied both qualitative and quantitative methodology to investigate (1) if calling plays a role in authors' motivation, discovery narrative, and persistence in the pursuit of authorship despite limited financial incentive and likelihood of success, (2) how sense of calling toward one's day job and sense of calling toward writing interact in their association with work-level variables, and (3) how the RAISE mechanisms of engagement in the art of writing are linked to markers of psychological well-being among published authors.

Calling

The notion of work as a calling has a deep-rooted background in theological and historical contexts, dating back to the sixteenth century or earlier (Weber, 2001), but only in recent decades has it received substantial attention within the social sciences (for a review, see Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). This renewed theoretical and empirical interest in calling has been fruitful in a variety of areas. Among other lines of research, the literature has advanced through work toward conceptualizing/defining the concept (e.g., Dik & Duffy, 2009; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011), developing psychological instruments for measuring calling (e.g., Dik et al., 2012; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Hagmaier & Abele, 2012; Vianello et al., 2018), and accumulating a robust set of empirical work discerning the construct's relationships to other variables (e.g., Dobrow, 2013; Domene, 2012; Duffy et al., 2014; Marsh & Dik, 2021).

While calling can apply to any role or life domain, such as parenting (Coulson et al., 2012), leisure activities (Berg et al., 2010), or caretaking (Duffy et al., 2017), the most robust research activity involves the work domain (for a review, see Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). Perspectives within the social sciences on how to best conceptualize calling substantially vary among scholars. Bellah et al. (1985) established a tripartite classification of work orientations that differentiated between job, career, and calling orientations. Wrzesniewski and colleagues (1997) adopted the distinction of these three job orientations for empirical purposes and defined calling as work that is inseparable from life, noting that this kind of orientation involves the purpose of work being viewed as for “the fulfillment that doing the work brings to the individual...an end in itself” (p. 22).

In the following years, definitions emerged that focused less on differentiating between the three work orientations in favor of further expounding the nature of the calling construct itself. These definitions vary regarding whether calling is viewed as unidimensional or multidimensional, but most scholars consider it to be multidimensional (e.g., Dik & Duffy, 2009; Hagmaier & Abele, 2012; Vianello et al., 2018). According to Dik and Shimizu (2019), calling definitions exist across a continuum from “neoclassical” to “modern.” Neoclassical definitions often contain a prosocial facet of calling, as well as the sense of a transcendent force that can be viewed as the “caller.” Sources of calling in neoclassical views can be religious in nature, such as God, but they can also take more sublunary forms like a family legacy. Conversely, modern calling definitions focus on internal experiences, such as meaningfulness and passion, while viewing a guiding force or altruistic inclinations as nonessential for experiencing a calling.

Dik and Duffy’s (2009) tripartite conceptualization has been among the most influential neoclassical definitions in the social scientific literature. They asserted that calling is composed

of a transcendent summons (i.e., feeling drawn toward one's work by a guiding force beyond oneself), purposeful work (i.e., alignment between one's work and a sense of larger life purpose), and prosocial orientation (i.e., desire to help others through one's work). Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas (2011) provided a unidimensional modern definition in which calling is viewed as “a consuming, meaningful passion people experience toward a domain” (p. 1003). This definition holds particular relevance for artists. This is because the definition, and the corresponding scale designed to measure calling, were developed in a manner that targeted musicians, integrated feedback from musicians, and involved artists in the scale development studies (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). Thompson and Bunderson (2019) called for increased coherence in the literature on calling by advocating for a conception of a transcendent calling. They posited that a transcendent calling would equally weigh both the “outer requiredness” prioritized by neoclassical definitions and “inner requiredness” emphasized by modern definitions.

Despite differences between the definitions adopted for empirical investigation of calling, research indicates modern and neoclassical measurement techniques result in very similar findings. Dobrow et al.'s (2023) meta-analysis showed only small differences between the two with modern callings having stronger relationships with hedonic constructs and neoclassical callings showing stronger relationships with eudaimonic constructs. Generally, Dobrow and colleagues concluded that the pattern of relationships with other variables is quite similar.

An Overview of Empirical Findings on Calling

Empirical investigation on work as a calling has shown that the construct is highly relevant to many people's perspectives toward their work. Population estimates from a nationally representative sample indicated that 43% of adults in the United States believe it is mostly or totally true that they have a calling in the work domain (White et al., 2021). Likewise, White and

colleagues found no significant differences in rates of presence of a calling, search for a calling, or living a calling across most of the demographic variables in their data, including religious tradition (or lack thereof), household income, educational attainment, race/ethnicity, political affiliation, and sex. Indeed, calling (despite its Judeo-Christian roots) has appeared to be widely applicable to many in the U.S., including to both those who are highly religious and those with more secular worldviews (Cahalan & Schuurman, 2016; Steger et al., 2010; White et al., 2021).

Presence of a calling (also known as perceiving a calling or having a calling) has been linked to myriad positive experiences in work and overall life (see Dobrow et al., 2023; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). Generally, it has shown its strongest associations with other work-level variables. Presence of a calling positively relates to career development through constructs like career decidedness (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Steger et al., 2010), career decision self-efficacy (Duffy, Allan, et al., 2011), and career commitment (Duffy, Dik, et al., 2011). This link has been corroborated in longitudinal research revealing calling's mutual temporal effects with career development variables (Hirschi & Herrmann, 2013). Having a calling is also connected to higher well-being at work, such as through links to job satisfaction, work meaningfulness, and work engagement (e.g., Dik et al., 2012; Duffy et al., 2013, 2014; Peng et al., 2020). The most widely replicated associations between calling and facets of overall well-being are its positive relationships with meaning in life and life satisfaction (Ahn et al., 2019; Choi et al., 2018; Dik et al., 2012; Duffy, Allan, et al., 2012; Duffy et al., 2013; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010; Steger et al., 2010). It is also linked to various other markers of well-being, such as hope and zest for life (Marsh et al., 2020; Peterson et al., 2009).

Scholars have suggested that perceiving a calling alone may not be enough to fully garner calling's benefits toward career development, work well-being, and overall well-being. Indeed,

the extent to which a perceived calling is actualized in one's daily life may be crucial (e.g., Duffy, Bott, et al., 2012). This is a central assertion of Duffy and colleagues' (2018) Work as Calling Theory (WCT), which provides a theoretical model of directional relationships between calling and other variables. Accordingly, the variable of "living a calling" (i.e., a sense that one's current work circumstances align with one's perceived calling) is placed as a mediator between perceiving a calling and outcomes in the WCT model. Living a calling's mediating role is supported by numerous empirical studies (e.g., Duffy, Bott, et al., 2012).

The clear preponderance of research on calling has shown it to be beneficial. Still, limited evidence suggests it may, for some people under particular circumstances, have a "dark side" (Duffy et al., 2016). WCT positioned workaholism, burnout, and exploitation as possible negative outcomes of calling. Still, empirical evidence on calling's supposed dark side is mixed. Studies have found calling to relate to workaholism among working adults in Germany (Hirschi et al., 2019; Keller et al., 2016) and Church of England ministers (Clinton et al., 2017). Dalla Rosa and Vianello's (2020) research involving a sample of 234 Italian workers found that calling's relationship with workaholism is mediated by the degree to which one holds an obsessive passion toward work. Bunderson and Thompson's (2009) seminal qualitative work on zookeepers suggested that workers with higher levels of calling were more susceptible to exploitation, given an increased willingness to sacrifice comfort, time, and financial compensation. Calling also has associations with increased work hours (Horvath, 2015; Marsh et al., 2020), which could intimate workaholism or exploitation.

Despite the substantial theoretical, conceptual, and qualitative work asserting that burnout could be a consequence of calling (Cardador & Caza, 2012; Dik & Duffy, 2012; Duffy et al., 2018; Vinje & Mittelmark, 2007), quantitative research has generally not supported a positive

relationship with burnout. In a study of 107 employed adults in the United States, calling was found to be linked to lower rates of burnout (Hagmaier et al., 2013). Further research by Rawat and Nadavulakere (2015) using a sample of workers at child care centers found calling to be connected to decreased emotional exhaustion (a component of burnout; see Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Among a physician population, calling has ranged from showing no relationship to burnout to being associated with decreased burnout (Yoon, Daley, et al., 2017; Yoon, Hunt, et al., 2017). Another study involving 362 employed adults found a negative correlation between living a calling and burnout, while even demonstrating that living a calling can attenuate the effect that burnout has on job satisfaction (Duffy et al., 2016). Jo et al.'s (2018) examination of calling, burnout, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among Korean firefighters also showed a moderate negative correlation between calling and burnout; however, they provided nuance by showing that having a high sense of calling could exacerbate the impact that burnout has on PTSD. Results from another study implementing moderation analyses on a sample of healthcare workers in Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that calling had a moderate negative correlation with burnout and even served to lessen the impact of burnout on turnover intentions (Dalla Rosa et al., 2024).

Another body of research that has investigated calling's dark side is that of unanswered callings (i.e., callings that are perceived but not lived out through one's working life). Berg et al.'s (2010) findings led them to conclude that stress, frustration, and regret follow in the wake of an unanswered calling. Gazica and Spector's (2015) study of 378 academic employees suggested that not perceiving a calling at all may be better than having an unanswered calling. This is because those in their sample who had unanswered callings showed lower rates of subjective well-being and physiological health than those who lacked a sense of calling (cf. Marsh et al.,

2020). In all, the preponderance of the evidence suggests that having and/or living a calling is highly beneficial, but perhaps, under specific sets of circumstances, people may experience vulnerabilities to adverse effects. Future research is necessary to fully illuminate the particular conditions under which calling's dark side is experienced.

Calling as an Artistic Pursuit

The abovementioned endeavors have led to a dramatic increase in scientific research on calling, but much still remains to be uncovered about the construct. One such area in which there is a relative dearth of research is that of calling's role in artistic career pursuits. Most artistic career paths are characterized by a lack of financial incentive due to what Lois and Gregson (2019) referred to as "a glut of job-seekers and a scarcity of positions" (p. 52). This oversupply of artistic aspirants suggests that other, nonfinancial incentives draw people toward these career paths. The limited research that has investigated this topic shows that calling may play a substantial role in initial motivation toward artistic career paths as well as persistence through encountered adversity (Cinque et al., 2021; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2012).

Despite sense of calling's clear relevance to many artists, numerous barriers may impede them from manifesting their callings in their working lives, especially in respect to their primary jobs. Correspondingly, creative pursuits, such as writing, are frequently endorsed when people are asked about their unanswered callings. As Lois and Gregson (2019) identified, nearly half of those in Berg and colleagues' (2010) sample of participants with unanswered callings conveyed that their calling involved creative work. These participants described unrealized callings in music, painting, improvisational/stand-up comedy, creative directing, and writing. In such cases, the artistic career may not have been pursued due to financial limitations and low job availability (Lindemann, 2013; Lois & Gregson, 2019). Still, these unpursued artistic callings may have

greater centrality in many people's identities than their primary jobs do. This is exemplified by a teacher in Berg et al.'s study who stated the following:

“Part of the reason I am working as a lecturer is because I am trying to write a novel. So that pays no bills at the moment, but that, in my heart of hearts, is more important to me than the teaching. If somebody said I had to stop writing, I would have no idea who I was, as a person” (p. 984).

Despite the abundance of individuals who have callings toward artistic pursuits, these experiences are rarely researched outside of a relatively robust series of studies on current and former elite music students (e.g., Dobrow, 2013). Conclusions from these studies may generalize to other creative pursuits and provide guidance on the calling-related experience of other artists, such as authors. Indeed, much like in the field of authorship, “the pursuit of a professional music career is risky in terms of a low likelihood of objective success and may not even be rewarding to those who do obtain a coveted position” (Dobrow, 2013, p. 265).

Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas's (2011) longitudinal research involving 1,500 participants led to the development of their 12-item calling scale and evinced factors that may be at play for those with callings toward artistic pursuits. These studies involved four samples representing those in domains of (1) music, (2) art (i.e., writers, actors, visual artists, and dancers), (3) business, and (4) management. The researchers found higher rates of calling among the music and art samples than the other two samples, suggesting calling may be especially pertinent among artists. Also, among musicians and artists there was no significant relationship between calling and extrinsic motivation, which contrasted with the business and management samples. Furthermore, those in the art sample had a stronger relationship between calling and intrinsic motivation than was found in the other samples. These findings indicate calling among artists may be less driven by external factors (such as salary) than some other career paths.

Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas (2012) attempted to elucidate why people seek artistic careers, given the financial hardships with which these paths are often fraught. Among their sample of musicians, they found that calling at age 17 was negatively related to receptivity to career advice 6 weeks later, 3.5 years later, and 7 years later. Decreased receptivity to career advice may be viewed as a negative outcome, but it is also plausible that calling buffers against discouragement in the face of financial hardship or negative feedback commonly experienced in artistic professions. Cinque and colleagues' (2021) qualitative study on theater actors supports this interpretation. These actors described experiencing many hardships, especially monetary ones, but the researchers found that calling fostered resilience within this adversity. Indeed, calling played a key role in why these actors pursued careers in the arts, despite the obstacles.

Dobrow and Heller's (2015) 11-year longitudinal study further established the role of calling for artists managing the clash between financial and intrinsic incentives. They found presence of a calling as an adolescent was related to greater perception of one's ability (but not actual ability), and, in turn, increased obtainment of degrees/positions germane to professional music in adulthood. This helps elucidate mechanisms through which calling motivates and sustains artistic pursuits. Additional study of this sample revealed that 66% were not professionally pursuing their calling as adults (Tosti-Kharas & Dobrow, 2021). Among those not actively pursuing a professional path in line with their calling, a stronger sense of calling was associated with lower income from their career, implying deleterious effects of unanswered artistic callings.

Lysova and Khapova's (2019) qualitative research on 24 founders of video game companies provided key findings in the nascent area of research on creative callings. Across aggregated dimensions of (1) Experiencing Creative Calling, (2) Enacting Creative Calling in the

Video Game Industry, and (3) Sustaining Creative Calling in the Video Game Industry, they identified several second-order themes. These themes included sustained passion with regard to creation, inner urge to create, meaningfulness associated with creation, emergent entrepreneurship, bonding with like-minded people, an idealized work identity, and a crafted work identity. One main conclusion regarding their research involved the conceptualization of *creative calling* as “an enduring, compelling, and meaningful urge to engage in creative work...that delivers the best possible and valuable experiences for other people” (p. 36). Lysova and Khapova also asserted that creative callings were not domain-specific.

Calling and Meaningful Work Among Authors. Dobrow and Heller (2015) suggested that researchers should examine if their findings on callings among musicians generalize to other samples of artists. As an example of a field pertinent for such research, they identified writers and authors. Nevertheless, among the already small subset of scientific work on sense of calling toward creative or artistic pursuits, research on the construct’s relevance to writers and authors is particularly sparse. Lois and Gregson’s (2019) ethnography on unpublished romance writers is perhaps the only thorough examination of calling among fiction writers. They sought to understand how writers emotionally navigate the uncertainty of an industry that provides little in the way of financial or psychological security. Similar to other artists (Cinque et al., 2021; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2012), results indicated that callings were wielded as emotional capital used to stymie the negative feelings that can undermine one’s identity as a “real” writer and lessen one’s drive to succeed as an author. Lois and Gregson also found that prospective authors buoy their senses of calling by constructing discovery narratives (i.e., the story of how they came to discern their callings) and emotional confirmations (i.e., drawing from emotional states

experienced while writing as validation that one must be called to become a writer). The researchers referred to this as “aspirational emotion work.”

A recent qualitative study of 27 Japanese manga artists focused on their development of calling (Fontana et al., 2025). Manga artists often both write and draw their stories and face numerous challenges around the precarity of work, making their experiences particularly relevant to those of fiction authors. Fontana et al. asked several open-ended questions as part of their interview process with their sample, including prompts designed to uncover matters related to artists’ initial discovery of desire to pursue having a profession as a manga artist, the influence of context in the identification of their career path, and the manner in which they navigate hardship associated with their creative career. They found numerous themes among their sample that pointed toward the development of their callings typically beginning during youth with what is referred to as an “elusive dream” characterized by being drawn toward the path (e.g., existential passion, innate love), clear barriers (e.g., lack of self-confidence), and efforts to overcome those barriers (e.g., cultivating of a sense of specialness). Fontana and colleagues identified that positive feedback and recognition from one’s social environment played a critical role in manga artists’ capability to sufficiently develop self-efficacy and sense of value necessary for pursuit of a difficult vocational path in the arts. In turn, the artists tended to develop a sense of destiny, self-love, and purpose imbued with the prosocial capability provided by art (e.g., making others happy through their stories and drawings). Fontana et al. referred to this stage as *becoming a called professional*.

The literature reviewed above, coupled with research suggesting aspiring authors experience a strong desire for meaningful work and a sense of being compelled toward authorship (Gouthro, 2014), supports the notion that calling may play a key role in the

experiences of fiction authors. Still, more research is necessary to fully explicate calling's role among this population.

Calling Among Multiple Jobholders

As previously discussed, many who perceive a calling are unable to live that calling out in their primary job. Still, people often find a way to seek the realization of their calling through a secondary job, side hustle, or leisure pursuit with aspirations of eventually pursuing it full time (Berg et al., 2010). Nevertheless, there is a dearth of research examining factors related to calling among multiple jobholders. Webster and Edwards (2019) provided one of the only studies on this topic using a sample of 566 working adults. This research examined how a second job as a calling impacts work engagement in one's primary job. They found that holding a second job viewed as a calling strengthened the negative relationship between second job-to-primary job resource drain and primary job work engagement. Webster and Edwards concluded that perceiving a second job as a calling could negatively impact one's primary job. However, they did not report any analyses involving levels of calling toward participants' primary jobs. Thus, little is known about how calling toward areas of work associated with primary and secondary jobs interact (e.g., dual jobholders who perceive a calling toward both lines of work may experience different outcomes than those who only perceive a calling toward their secondary work).

Dik and Duffy (2012) provided guidance regarding the potential experiences of people with multiple callings and callings outside of their primary jobs. They referred to those who do not have a primary job that aligns with their calling but pursue it through other means (e.g., a separate life role or a secondary job) as "compensators." Compensators were proposed to have the potential to experience positive outcomes commensurate to those of people who have

callings toward their primary jobs so long as they are provided sufficient time and means by which to invest in their callings outside of their primary work. Dik and Duffy also differentiated compensators from those with multiple callings. They suggested that the pursuit of multiple callings can be highly fulfilling but may leave people vulnerable to negative outcomes like burnout due to the high degree of investment required to live out multiple callings. While Dik and Duffy's postulations surrounding this topic provide a helpful starting point, they remain in need of empirical examination.

As previously mentioned, it is common for authors (and those in artistic career paths in general) to have "day jobs" or primary jobs that provide financial stability as they engage in less lucrative creative work (Hennekam, 2017; Lindemann, 2013; Lois & Gregson, 2019).

Accordingly, the paucity of research on calling as a secondary vocational pursuit makes the population of writers worthwhile to examine. Lindemann (2013) noted that 78% of those not currently professionally working in their area of art are still producing art in their personal time. Lois and Gregson (2019) found the majority of those in their sample of romance writers also held a day job separate from pursuing publishing. Their study also illustrated the way in which many writers felt as though they needed a "real job" to supplement their writing pursuits.

Those who supplement authorial work with day jobs would be among a population of multiple jobholders, a group which comprises over 8 million people in the United States (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Little is known about how callings may be experienced for multiple jobholders, and research on authors can increase our understanding of this phenomenon. Indeed, it is sensible that some individuals with multiple jobs may experience multiple callings (i.e., calling toward work in both their day job and their "side hustle" of authorship), while others may have a calling relevant to only one career path (e.g., calling only toward authorship). Others

may not perceive a calling at all. It currently remains largely unidentified in the literature how these experiences vary in their impact on levels of work-related well-being (e.g., job satisfaction, burnout). Investigating these matters can address Duffy et al.'s (2018) call for further research into how the WCT model may fit for people with multiple callings.

Though research directly examining calling among multiple jobholders is scarce, a robust line of literature in the area of management has explored implications of multiple jobholding on workplace experiences/outcomes. In Campion et al.'s (2020) systematic review of this literature, they identified that contextual factors can determine whether people tend to experience enrichment (i.e., resource gain) or depletion (i.e., resource loss) from holding multiple jobs. One key factor they identified was focused on if one seeks out an additional job due to push (e.g., financial necessity) or pull (e.g., psychological fulfillment) motivations. Specifically, they noted that push motivations tended to result in depletion, while pull motivations were more inclined to enrichment. Campion and colleagues identified calling as an area warranting further research among multiple jobholders regarding expanding understanding of enrichment and depletion.

Engagement in the Arts and Humanities

Although there are many financial downsides to artistic occupations, a growing body of literature has illuminated the beneficial nature of engagement in the arts and humanities (AH), such as creative writing (for a conceptual framework, see Shim et al., 2019). Furthermore, Tay et al. (2018) delineated a model for the benefits toward well-being/flourishing garnered through engagement in AH based on a review of relevant prior research. Consequently, an incipient line of research has formed focused on identifying and examining the specific mechanisms through which engagement in the arts generates well-being (Tay et al., 2018). Recently, Thapa et al. (2024) developed psychometric instruments for measurement of these mechanisms and

endeavored to determine their impact on markers of psychological flourishing. While this budding area of research shows promise for clarifying how people's lives can be enhanced through artistic engagement, much remains to be ascertained.

Tay and colleagues' (2018) work resulted in the identification of four primary mechanisms through which engagement in AH engenders benefits toward psychological flourishing: (1) immersion (i.e., sense of being fully engaged with the present activity, which may induce a flow state), (2) embeddedness (i.e., several socio-cognitive processes that underlie the acquisition of skills through engagement), (3) socialization (i.e., impact of one's identity and belongingness through one's AH community), and (4) reflectiveness (i.e., development of self-awareness, as well as the means and motivation to change oneself, one's perspective, and one's behavior). Later work by Thapa and colleagues (2024) renamed the embeddedness dimension "acquisition," shortened the reflectiveness dimension to "reflection," and expanded the model to include a fifth mechanism of expression (i.e., engagement in AH as a way to convey aspects of one's authentic self and/or one's perspective). The mechanisms of reflection, acquisition, immersion, socialization, and expression have been acronymized as RAISE.

Tay et al.'s (2018) model for the role of engagement in AH on well-being had several broad hypotheses, among which were the suppositions that (1) varied and deep engagement in AH results in greater well-being and (2) AH forms that induce deeper engagement provide stronger positive influence on human flourishing. The broad categories of flourishing outcomes posited by Tay and colleagues as engendered by the RAISE mechanisms were (1) general well-being effects, (2) neurological, physiological, and psychological reactions, (3) psychological competencies, and (4) positive normative outcomes. These sentiments are echoed by Westgate and Oishi (2021). Based on a review of the literature, they asserted that engagement in AH leads

to enhancements in affective and cognitive skills, which, in turn, produce greater subjective well-being, meaning in life, and psychological richness.

Tay and colleagues (2018) and Thapa et al. (2024) provided direction for which areas of well-being each mechanism may most strongly benefit. A synthesis of these suggests the following set of relationships. Reflection was expected to primarily produce improvements toward one's normative characteristics, such as enhanced morality, civic engagement, and prosocial values. Benefits of reflection toward levels of meaning and purpose were also suggested by Thapa and colleagues. Acquisition was asserted to have a positive impact on psychological competencies, including self-efficacy, hope, autonomy, relatedness, and sense of competence. Immersion was posited to result in increased positive valence of emotion and physiological markers of flourishing (e.g., decrease in emission of cortisol). Socialization was positioned as having a positive impact on subjective well-being (e.g., life satisfaction), Ryff's (1989) components of well-being (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance), and physical well-being. Expression was posited to also predict subjective well-being, greater empathy, and positive physical health behavior.

Thapa et al.'s (2024) research involving over 1,000 participants recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) developed the Mechanism of Engagement in the Arts and Humanities Scale (also known as the RAISE scales). The RAISE scales consist of a three-factor reflection scale (life/worldview, emotional, and external), a six-factor scale for acquisition (vicarious experience, direct encouragement, social persuasion, experience of mastery: ability, experience of mastery: success, and positive physiological response), a two-factor scale for immersion (effort and passage of time), a three-factor scale for socialization (relationships, identity, and conversation), and a one-factor expression scale.

To test the validity of scores on the RAISE Scale, Thapa et al. (2024) examined the relationships of these dimensions with well-being/flourishing variables. Broadly, the results suggested that the RAISE mechanisms are positive concurrent and longitudinal predictors of well-being. The authors used relative weight analysis to discern a rank order of each mechanism's contribution toward each well-being outcome. The outcomes consisted of holistic positive functioning, meaning in life, civic engagement, curiosity exploration, work-life balance, job satisfaction, positive affect, negative affect, and interpersonal reactivity. Thapa and colleagues separately reported their findings for engagement in arts from engagement in humanities. As the present manuscript is focused on fiction writing, the relationships described below regard engagement in the arts rather than humanities; although, the results were similar between these categories.

Thapa et al.'s (2024) research found that reflection was the most robust predictor among the RAISE mechanisms toward civic engagement and meaning in life. Acquisition was the strongest predictor of holistic positive functioning, work-life balance, job satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect. Immersion was the least influential contributor to the models for every outcome except negative affect (for which it ranked second lowest). Socialization was in the top two predictors for positive functioning, civic engagement, work-life balance, job satisfaction, positive affect, and interpersonal reactivity. Expression was the most impactful mechanism for curiosity exploration; however, it was one of the weakest predictors of the other outcomes. Thapa et al.'s findings substantiate the RAISE mechanisms' association with well-being and illustrate which mechanisms may foster which aspects of flourishing.

Despite the auspiciousness of Thapa et al.'s (2024) findings, their study had several limitations, and much remains to be uncovered about the RAISE mechanisms and their relation

to well-being. Indeed, the researchers acknowledged that their MTurk sample was not particularly apt for research on engagement with the arts. They also did not report on how participants engaged in the arts or humanities.

Perhaps due to the recent nature of the RAISE framework and scales, thorough implementation in empirical contexts has been scarce to this point outside of the research associated with initial scale development and validation process (Thapa et al., 2024). Marsh and Dik's (2026) study of 652 undergraduate students who were readers of fiction remains perhaps the only other published study that used the RAISE scales in their entirety. Marsh and Dik corroborated the appropriateness of the previously identified factor structures of the scales and demonstrated a general link between the RAISE mechanisms and all four of Tay et al.'s (2018) categories of flourishing. They also found several patterns that emerged regarding strength of correlational relationships. Reflection tended to show a greater association with normative variables (e.g., empathy), acquisition appeared most strongly linked to general well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, meaning in life), and socialization appeared to be more strongly correlated with normative variables and creative self-concept. Meanwhile, immersion and acquisition showed generally weaker links with indicators of flourishing among their sample of fiction readers.

Several other studies address the RAISE mechanisms, even if not through administration of the full RAISE scales. In particular, research on virtual art galleries has been an emerging area of inquiry. Cotter et al. (2024) found that immersion in the context of repeated virtual art gallery viewing was associated with higher well-being. Alpys and colleagues' (2025) experimental work did not replicate the impact of immersion on well-being nor did it find such an effect in reflection, but it did show that these two variables were predictive of emotional response to viewing art. Furthermore, they found that a social connection condition that asked participants to

link art to a sense of connectedness with others did result in significantly higher rates of well-being. One study surveyed 208 art museum professionals to rate the importance of each of the RAISE mechanisms in enhancing well-being of visitors to museums on a 7-point scale from 1 = “not at all important” to 7 = “very important.” All dimensions were found to have scores above the scale’s midpoint, ranging from 5.22 (reflection) to 6.24 (immersion).

Tay and colleagues’ (2018) framework suggested that there are likely differences between modes of engagement (e.g., reading, writing, dancing, painting) in how the mechanisms impact well-being. Research that has directly examined the RAISE mechanisms has also primarily involved samples of consumers of AH, rather than creators of AH, which is a distinction that research suggests has important differences across some markers of flourishing (Drake et al., 2024). These factors suggest that research is needed on samples that are involved in creation of art, more consistent in their engagement in AH, and uniform in how they engage (e.g., solely investigating the RAISE mechanisms’ impact on well-being among authors). There are also numerous well-being variables that have been proposed to relate to engagement in AH but have not yet been investigated in relation to the RAISE mechanisms, such as psychological richness (Westgate & Oishi, 2021). Empirical inquiry into these matters among a sample with professional roles in the arts (i.e., published authors) can help address a gap in the engagement in AH literature and expand scientific understanding of how to advance human flourishing.

The Present Research

Research Questions

The above review of literature on calling and engagement in AH as related to artistic pursuits in general, and writing in particular, revealed several areas in which there remains a dearth of knowledge. These informed the research questions of the present study. There is a

scarcity of research on how calling may contribute to authors' experiences within their line of work. Lois and Gregson's (2019) study provides an important foundation, but it has a small sample and solely focused on experiences of unpublished romance writers. In particular, Lois and Gregson's research illuminated the role of writers' self-history discovery narratives in their understandings of the legitimacy of their callings to become authors. Also, their findings revealed the substantial relevance of calling to how writers understand the ways in which they persist through hardships that characterize the pursuit of authorship. Still, a larger sample of participants representing a different genre of fiction authorship can expand the knowledgebase on calling-related experience among writers. Such considerations contribute to the first research question of the present study, which is: Does sense of calling play a key role in the discovery process of desire to become an author, motivation to pursue authorship, and resistance to hardships that characterize authorship as a line of work? These matters were deemed most appropriately examined through qualitative means.

There is growing evidence of how the RAISE mechanisms of engagement in AH are linked to well-being, but scholars have noted the need for further research on the effect of each mechanism germane to populations particularly inclined toward engagement with art, as well as specific forms of art engagement (Marsh & Dik, 2026; Thapa et al., 2024). Furthermore, little is known about the RAISE mechanisms among people professionally engaged with artistic endeavors. These considerations led to the formation of research question 2, which inquires "How is each RAISE mechanism pertaining to engagement in writing uniquely associated with well-being/flourishing among authors?"

For reasons of financial security, many writers work a primary job separate from their writing (see Lois & Gregson, 2019). Little is known about how calling is experienced in the

context of holding multiple jobs. Furthermore, there is a paucity of research on how dual jobholders vary in their levels of calling toward each area of work (e.g., calling toward both areas, calling toward only one area, etc.). Correspondingly, it is unknown how such differences may impact work experiences. These factors led to research questions 3 and 4. Research question 3 is: Among authors who work multiple jobs, what arrangements of calling toward each of their two lines of work are most typical? Research question 4 is: How do authors with different arrangements of calling toward multiple professional lines of work differ across markers of work-level well-being?

Hypotheses

Several hypotheses emerged from the review of literature relevant to this study's research questions. The qualitative and exploratory nature of examining research question 1 precluded formal hypotheses. A broad hypothesis was developed for research question 2 that higher rates of the RAISE mechanisms would be positively associated with higher rates of each of the markers of psychological well-being and flourishing included in the study. No hypotheses were developed at the level of which RAISE mechanisms would be uniquely linked to which criterion variables. For research question 3, the hypothesized arrangements of experience were: (1) Compensators (high perceiving a calling toward authorship and low perceiving a calling toward day job), (2) Multiple Callings (i.e., high perceiving a calling toward authorship and high perceiving a calling toward day job), and (3) No Calling (i.e., low perceiving a calling toward authorship and low perceiving a calling toward day job). Given the limited nature of research on calling among multiple jobholders, no hypotheses were formed regarding expected interaction effects of calling toward writing and calling toward day job.

Selection of Criterion Variables

Investigating research question 1 involved collection of qualitative data, and research question 3 involved examination of two domains of calling. The remaining research questions required selection of germane criterion variables.

Well-being and Flourishing Variables. To evaluate research question 2, variables were selected based on considerations regarding engagement in the arts' links to well-being suggested by Tay et al.'s (2018) conceptual model, Westgate and Oishi's (2021) review, and Thapa et al.'s (2024) empirical findings. The researcher also considered how to sufficiently investigate these matters without overburdening participants with an exceptionally lengthy survey. At least one variable was included from each category of Tay and colleagues' areas of flourishing that the RAISE mechanisms were posited to predict (i.e., general well-being, psychological reactions, psychological competencies, and positive normative variables).

Westgate and Oishi (2021) asserted that meaning in life, happiness (conceptualized as life satisfaction and positive affect), and psychological richness were the constructs at the core of what constitutes a life well lived. They also posited that these variables are outcomes associated with quality engagement in the arts (Westgate & Oishi, 2021). Thus, life satisfaction, meaning in life, and psychological richness were selected as measures of general well-being for this study.

Self-efficacy (see Bandura et al., 1999) and creativity were both identified by Tay et al. (2018) and Thapa et al. (2024) as psychological competencies that could result from the RAISE mechanisms. Thus, creative self-concept was included (i.e., creative personal identity and creative self-efficacy; Karwowski et al., 2013). Empathy was included to represent normative flourishing because writing has been linked to increased empathy (Kou et al., 2020).

Work-level Variables. Several variables of interest were measured to address research question 4. Work-level variables were drawn from Duffy et al.'s (2018) WCT. Living a calling was selected given that it is the central variable of WCT. The model outlines both positive and negative outcomes associated with calling (Duffy et al., 2018). Among these, job satisfaction is a positive outcome and burnout is a negative outcome. While calling has been positively linked to job satisfaction (e.g., Peng et al., 2020) and typically negatively associated with burnout (e.g., Hagmaier et al., 2013), there remains a paucity of evidence regarding how this may be impacted by the degree of calling one holds across multiple work domains. Through inclusion of these variables, the present research can inform WCT in the context of multiple lines of work and creative work.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

This research project involved recruitment of a sample of SFF authors to take a confidential online survey. The project was originally intended to consist of two waves, but the present study was cross-sectional in nature as data collection at the second timepoint did not yield a sufficient sample size to include in analyses. All proposed procedures were approved by the institutional review board (IRB) at Colorado State University. Participants were eligible if they were eighteen years of age or older, were located in the U.S., Canada, U.K., or Australia and had published at least one work in science fiction, fantasy, or another speculative fiction genre. All participants signed a consent form before participating (see Appendix A). Power analyses suggested approximately 138 participants would have sufficient power to detect medium-sized effects in the proposed multiple linear regression models. As such, this was the target sample size; however, due to difficulty in recruitment, the analyses remained somewhat underpowered at $n = 110$ total participants. Demographic breakdown of the sample is provided in Tables 1-3.

The researcher recruited participants through several methods. Using accounts owned and operated by the researcher in association with his role as a co-host of a podcast focused on fantasy and speculative fiction literature, the researcher posted publicly about the opportunity to participate in the study, inviting published authors to contact the researcher via direct messaging. This occurred through several social media platforms, including Instagram, Bluesky, X, and Reddit. An announcement with the researcher's contact information was also made on the aforementioned podcast.

Table 1*Participant Demographics (N = 110)*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>%</i>
Age	$M = 40.52$, $SD = 10.02$, Range = 20–63	—
Race	Asian/Pacific Islander	1.0
	Black/African American/African	9.7
	White	81.6
	Biracial/Multiracial	3.9
	Another race	3.9
	Hispanic or Central/South American	1.9
Ethnicity		
Gender	Men	53.6
	Women	40.0
	Non-binary	3.6
	Specified another option (e.g., genderfluid)	2.7
	Preferred not to respond	0.9
Religion	Christian	32.1
	Atheist	16.5
	Spiritual but not religious	15.6
	Agnostic	14.7
	More than one religion	13.8
	Jewish	2.8
	Sikh	2.8
	Buddhist	0.9
	Another religion	0.9
Education	Doctoral degree	8.3
	Professional degree	2.8
	Master's degree	26.6
	Bachelor's degree	47.7
	Associate or some post-secondary	10.1
	Vocational/trade/technical training	1.8

	High school diploma/GED	0.9
	Less than high school	0.9
	Other	0.9
Employment status	Full-time worker	58.2
	Part-time worker	14.6
	Other (e.g., freelancer, specified disabled)	7.3
	Homemaker	4.6
	Retired	2.7
	Student	1.8
	Unemployed	0.0
	More than one option selected	10.9
Country of residence	United States	67.3
	United Kingdom	19.1
	Canada	11.8
	Australia	1.8

Note. Seven participants did not report their race. One participant did not report their level of education. The category of men included one participant who selected transgender man and one participant who identified as both non-binary and a man. The latter participant was counted in both men and non-binary categories.

Table 2

Writing and Publishing Characteristics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>%</i>
Genre published in	Fantasy only	56.4
	Fantasy and sci-fi	24.6
	Sci-fi only	15.5
	Other genres only (e.g., broader speculative fiction, horror)	3.6
Writer status	Full-time author	25.5
	Part-time author with another job	50.9
	Hobbyist/side project author	17.3
	Other	6.4

Publication method	Traditionally published (at least one work)	32.1
	Small press (none traditionally published)	19.3
	Self- or independently published only	43.1
	Literary magazines/journals/anthologies only	5.5

Table 3

Household Income by Country of Residence

<i>Income bracket</i>	<i>%</i>
United States (<i>n</i> = 74)	
Less than \$20,000	5.7
\$20,000–\$39,999	1.4
\$40,000–\$59,999	8.6
\$60,000–\$79,999	14.3
\$80,000–\$99,999	10.0
\$100,000–\$149,999	25.7
\$150,000–\$199,999	18.6
\$200,000 or more	15.7
United Kingdom (<i>n</i> = 21)	
Less than £15,000	10.0
£15,000–£24,999	0.0
£25,000–£34,999	5.0
£35,000–£44,999	10.0
£45,000–£59,999	15.0
£60,000–£79,999	20.0
£80,000–£99,999	20.0
£100,000 or more	20.0
Canada (<i>n</i> = 13)	
Less than \$25,000	15.4
\$25,000–\$39,999	7.7

\$40,000–\$59,999	0.0
\$60,000–\$84,999	0.0
\$85,000–\$109,999	23.1
\$110,000–\$149,999	23.1
\$150,000–\$199,999	0.0
\$200,000 or more	30.8

Note. Six participants did not report income (four from the U.S. and two from the U.K.) Australian participants ($n = 2$) are not included to preserve participant privacy given the snowball sampling method, in which participants may have disclosed participation to others.

The researcher also directly contacted executive board members across numerous organizations within the science fiction, fantasy, and speculative fiction communities. The study received support through distribution by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association and Science Fiction Research Association, which enabled dissemination of recruitment materials to listservs and Discord servers inviting published authors to contact the researcher directly. Through the above social media platforms and emails, the researcher also initiated direct messages with numerous authors. Though only a small percentage of prospective participants responded to these requests, this appeared to be the method that resulted in the highest number of participants who were successfully recruited.

A number of participants were also recruited in person through the researcher's attendance at multiple book fairs located in South Florida, where authors were approached directly. Authors who expressed interest in participating were given business cards containing the researcher's contact information and a QR code that linked to the online survey. Additionally, this research sought to implement a snowball sampling strategy (Goodman, 1961) in which participants were asked to share the link to the survey in small private spaces with other published authors; however, patterns of recruitment observed by the researcher suggested that only a small number of participants were recruited through this method.

A CAPTCHA was included to prevent access to the survey of “bots” or computerized responses. Despite this measure, during data collection, an instance occurred in which following the survey link being posted on the publicly accessible forum of Reddit (subreddit r/fantasywriting), fraudulent respondents appeared to access the survey. For approximately one hour, numerous responses were provided in short succession that showed obvious signs of “click farming” behavior (i.e., fraudulent responding for purposes of compensation). This survey link was promptly deactivated by the researcher, and all responses were screened for quality. The overwhelming majority of these responses failed the attention check procedures and were removed for this reason. Several responses were removed due to poor or nonsensical responding to qualitative items (e.g., posting an email address into the response box).

Following this occurrence, the researcher ceased all public hosting of the newly created survey link and asked participants engaging in snowball sampling procedures to post the link only in small private shared spaces with other published authors or send the link directly to known published authors. Generally, this appeared to prevent “click farmers” from accessing the survey; although, in one other brief instance, several additional responses were collected and eliminated using similar procedures to those described above. In that case, the link was deactivated shortly after perceived click farming began and a new link was generated. It warrants mention that the majority of responses to the present study were associated with verifiable authors that the researcher directly interacted with through the methods delineated above, which suggests strong data quality of participants retained for analyses.

Attention check procedures involved the administration of four items drawn from research empirically demonstrating their effectiveness for removing inattentive participants (Curran & Hauser, 2019; Huang et al., 2015). Research has suggested it is inappropriate to

remove participants solely based on failure in response to a single item, so participants were considered to have failed attention checks if they responded to two or more items on the incorrect side of the scale (e.g., expressing agreement or neutral responses to an item that correct answers would involve disagreement, such as indicating any level of agreement to the statement "I have never used a computer"). An exception to this was made for participants who failed both items "I work fourteen months a year" and "I work twenty-eight hours in a typical work day," while passing the other attention checks; this was because failure exclusively to these items may be indicative of an interpretation of both items indicating a figurative degree of feeling overworked. In one case, a participant falling into this category contacted the researcher directly after completing the survey to note their awareness of the items likely serving as attention checks but having still indicated agreement with both responses. As central questions in this study were relevant to multiple jobholders feeling overworked (e.g., burnout), excluding participants who responded in this manner presented risk of biasing the sample in a way that could influence results pertaining to key variables. In all, 86 participants were removed from the data via attention check procedures, which upon scrutiny of the responses appeared to be predominantly (though not exclusively) involving cases associated with fraudulent responses, rather than inattentive responses from authors meeting inclusion criteria.

Amazon e-gift cards (\$5 USD) were provided as compensation for each completion of the survey. Participants in the U.K. received £5, which during the time of the study was worth approximately \$6.50 - \$6.75 USD. U.K. participants received this slightly higher amount of compensation due to this being the lowest amount permitted by Amazon U.K.'s webpage.

In seeking to address research question 1, a qualitative research strategy was applied to written responses to three open-ended questions. Research questions 2, 3, and 4 were addressed

primarily through quantitative research using previously established scales for calling, mechanisms of engagement in the arts, work well-being, and overall well-being.

Quantitative Instruments

The following instruments were administered as part of a broader survey. A description of each scale and a brief overview of its psychometric properties are presented. All instruments used in the present study are included in Appendix B.

Calling

Calling serves as a key variable in this survey and was assessed through multiple instruments.

Presence of Calling Toward Domains. To separately measure presence of calling toward one's day job and presence of calling toward writing, two different versions of Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas's (2011) 12-item Calling Scale (CS) were used. This scale presents several advantages over other calling scales for the purpose of measuring calling toward a particular artistic line of work, given that it was developed and has shown validity evidence among musicians and artists. Additionally, its items are designed to be modified to fit a given sample's domain-specific line of work. Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas list example items such as "I am passionate about *playing my instrument/singing/engaging in my artistic specialty/business/being a manager*" and "The first thing I often think about when I describe myself to others is that I'm *a musician/an artist/in business/a manager*." The italicized portions of the items are replaced with content relevant to each study's sample. All participants were administered the CS with items referencing writing/authorship (e.g., "My existence would be much less meaningful without my involvement in writing," "The first thing I often think about when I describe myself to others is that I'm an author"). Authors who identified as having a day job in addition to writing also

completed a version of the scale that adapted the items to be relevant to their day jobs (e.g., “I am passionate about the work that I do at my day job”).

This scale has seven response options, ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Scores on the CS have shown construct validity through relationships in the expected directions with career-related self-efficacy, clarity of professional identity, and pursuit/achievement in one’s artistic career path (Dobrow & Heller, 2015; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). CS scores show strong test-retest reliability ($r = .90$ six weeks later and $.61$ seven years later) and internal consistency reliability ($\alpha > .87$ across four samples; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011) as well. Among the present sample, internal consistency reliability for administrations for both calling toward writing ($\alpha = .83$; $\omega = .90$) and calling toward day job ($\alpha = .93$; $\omega = .95$) were acceptable.

Living a Calling. To assess participants’ levels of living a calling, the Living Calling Scale (LCS; Duffy, Allan, et al., 2012) was administered. The LCS is a six-item questionnaire that provides a unidimensional measure of the extent to which participants believe their current job circumstances align with their perceived calling. An example item is “I am currently working in a job that closely aligns with my calling.” The response options range from 1 (“Strongly Disagree”) to 7 (“Strongly Agree”). LCS scores have been demonstrated to have strong internal consistency reliability, as results typically show $\alpha > .80$ (Duffy, Allan, et al., 2012; Duffy, Bott, et al., 2012). Scores on the LCS have demonstrated validity through relationships in expected directions with variables like job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and career commitment (Duffy, Bott, et al., 2012; Duffy et al., 2013, 2014). Internal consistency reliability for the present sample was robust ($\alpha = .93$; $\omega = .97$).

Job Satisfaction

This study administered the job satisfaction instrument created by Judge and colleagues (1998) that was based on Brayfield and Rothe's (1951) job satisfaction index. Participants rated the five items of this scale (e.g., "I feel fairly well satisfied with my present job") across response options from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). Scores on the scale have shown validity through positive relationships with perceiving and living a calling, alongside relationships with core self-evaluations and life satisfaction (Duffy, Bott, et al., 2012; Judge et al., 2003). The instrument has also shown good internal consistency reliability with $\alpha > .85$ among multiple samples (Duffy et al., 2022; Judge et al., 1998), and it also had strong internal consistency in the present sample ($\alpha = .79$; $\omega = .88$).

Burnout

Burnout was assessed using the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005). The OLBI has 16 items that measure two dimensions of burnout: exhaustion (e.g., "There are days when I feel tired before I arrive at work") and disengagement (e.g., "After my work, I usually feel worn out and weary"). The items are rated on a five-point scale from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree." Scores on the scale have shown strong internal consistency reliability of $\alpha > .70$ for both subscales, validity through relationships with other burnout measures, and measurement invariance across multiple national contexts (Halbesleben & Demerouti, 2005; Reis et al., 2015). To reduce participant burden, the present research only applied the exhaustion subscale, and its scores showed acceptable internal consistency reliability in this study ($\alpha = .83$; $\omega = .88$).

Engagement in the Arts

The RAISE mechanisms of engagement in the arts were assessed by the RAISE scales (Thapa et al., 2024). The RAISE scales separately measure each of the RAISE mechanisms through which beneficial engagement with the arts and humanities has been posited to promote well-being (Tay et al., 2018). These mechanisms are reflection, acquisition, immersion, socialization, and expression. The scales ask participants to respond to a series of items after the following prompt: “Thinking about when you engage in the activities related to the [humanities/arts], please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements in general - that is on average across different forms of activities related to the [humanities/arts]. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).” Likewise, all of the following scales begin with the prompt “When I engage in activities related to (the humanities/arts)” except for the socialization scale, which begins with the prompt “My engagement in activities related to (the humanities/arts) allows me to.” For the present study, the directions prompted participants to answer in reference to writing fiction in particular.

Each scale can be used to create a composite score for the corresponding mechanism or (for all but expression) divided into multidimensional scores. The reflection scale has three dimensions measured by five items each, which are internal-life (e.g., “I reflect on the philosophy of life”), internal-emotional (e.g., “I cherish the events of my life”), and external-others (e.g., “I try to take other people’s perspectives”). The acquisition scale has three dimensions, which are (1) experience of mastery-ability (four items; e.g., “I learn new abilities”), (2) experience of mastery-skills (four items; e.g., “I feel a sense of accomplishment”), and (3) vicarious experiences (five items; e.g., “I learn how to behave successfully by watching successful others”). The immersion scale has two subscales of three items each. The two

dimensions are passage of time (e.g., “I don’t feel the passage of time”) and effortless involvement (e.g., “I am no longer worried about the challenges of everyday life”). The socialization scale has three subscales of (1) relationships (five items; e.g., “build deep relationships”), (2) conversation (four items; e.g., “get into deeper conversations with others”), and (3) identity (five items; e.g., “develop a sense of identity”). The expression scale is unidimensional and has five items (e.g., “I can freely express my thoughts and emotions”). For parsimony, the present study used composite scores to represent each mechanism, as has been implemented in previous research (Marsh & Dik, 2026; Thapa et al., 2024).

The RAISE scales remain relatively new, and several limitations warrant mention relevant to their implementation. Indeed, evidence of their factor structure, validity, and reliability is still accumulating. To my knowledge, only two studies have applied all five scales in their full form. These studies were Thapa et al.’s (2024) scale development and validation process among participants drawn from MTurk and Marsh and Dik’s (2026) study among a convenience sample of undergraduate students in the U.S. who identified as readers of fiction. Thapa et al. tested factor structure for each of the RAISE instruments as discrete scales, so there were five separate processes through which exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were conducted (i.e., there was no model in which items representing all five of the RAISE mechanisms were included together). Thus, in the absence of a hierarchical model testing a factor structure aligned with the overall RAISE framework, there is potential overlap between item content included across different RAISE scales that poses limitations germane to discriminant validity. This concern is supported by high correlations between several of the RAISE scales (e.g., $r = .81$ for the relationship between scores on the socialization and acquisition scales). Furthermore, as acknowledged by Thapa and colleagues, the sample

limitations regarding the use of an MTurk sample in the development and validation process restricts conclusions about its generalizability to samples more pertinent to engagement in the arts. In all, research among the scale is nascent and may warrant increased tentativeness in interpretation of the findings.

Despite the abovementioned limitations, the scale has shown potential in its limited use. In Thapa et al.'s (2024) study, scores on each scale had strong internal consistency reliability ($\alpha > .80$) and test-retest reliability ($r > .50$ after two months). Concurrent and longitudinal validity evidence was shown through expected relationships with an array of well-being/flourishing variables, including meaning in life, positive affect, and holistic positive functioning. In the present sample, I found acceptable internal consistency reliability across Reflection ($\alpha = .90$; $\omega = .96$), Acquisition ($\alpha = .92$; $\omega = .95$), Immersion ($\alpha = .81$; $\omega = .90$), Socialization ($\alpha = .95$; $\omega = .97$), and Expression ($\alpha = .91$; $\omega = .94$).

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). The SWLS is a five-item scale, which has response options ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). The SWLS has been widely used for decades, during which time it has displayed substantial evidence of reliability and validity. Much of this evidence is delineated in Pavot and Diener's (2009) review, which shows relationships in expected directions of SWLS scores with (among others) well-being, health, and psychological distress. This review also conveyed its robust internal consistency reliability and temporal stability. In the present study, strong internal consistency reliability was also found ($\alpha = .89$; $\omega = .93$).

Meaning in Life

Meaning in life was measured by the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger et al., 2006). The MLQ is the most frequently used measure of meaning in life (Steger & Martela, 2022). It has ten items across two five-item subscales, which separately assess presence of meaning in life (e.g., “I understand my life’s meaning”) and search for meaning in life (e.g., “I am searching for meaning in my life”). Participants rate their level of agreement with each item from 1 (“absolutely untrue”) to 7 (“absolutely true”). Analyses in the present study only involved the presence subscale (MLQ-Presence).

In its initial validation study, MLQ-Presence had positive associations with life satisfaction, self-esteem, and optimism, as well as negative relationships with neuroticism and depression (Steger et al., 2006). Given its frequent use, the MLQ-Presence subscale has accumulated a plethora of further validity evidence, which is corroborated through Li et al.’s (2021) meta-analysis. Test-retest reliability of the subscale scores is strong ($r = .70$ a month later) as is internal consistency reliability ($\alpha > .80$; Steger et al., 2006). In the present study, internal consistency was also strong ($\alpha = .87$; $\omega = .90$).

Psychological Richness

Oishi et al.’s (2019) Psychologically Rich Life Questionnaire (PRLQ) assessed psychological richness. This scale has a 17-item version and a 12-item version, which both have demonstrated acceptable psychometric qualities. For the present study, the 12-item version was used. Respondents indicated their level of agreement to items like “I have had a lot of interesting experiences” with options from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). PRLQ scores have demonstrated construct validity by relating in expected directions to openness, extraversion, neuroticism, meaning in life, and life satisfaction (Oishi et al., 2019). Additionally, test-retest

and internal consistency reliability was shown to be high in Oishi and colleagues' study. Internal consistency of PRLQ scores was robust in the present study ($\alpha = .90$; $\omega = .94$).

Affect Balance

Affect balance was measured by scores on Diener et al.'s (2009) Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE). This scale presents 12 adjectives designed to represent positive affect (e.g., "joyful") and negative affect (e.g., "afraid") and asks participants to rate the frequency with which they experience each emotion from 1 ("very rarely or never") to 5 ("very often or always"). This scale was designed to address limitations of previously developed positive and negative affect scales (e.g., the PANAS; Watson et al., 1988). The PANAS excludes important variables that would be considered critical to modern conceptions of positive and negative affect, such as "happy" and "sad," respectively, which have been included in the SPANE. Diener and colleagues (2009) showed that scores on the SPANE have strong convergent validity with other measures of well-being and emotion, alongside high internal consistency reliability ($\alpha > .80$ for each scale). It can be used to create composite positive affect scores, negative affect scores, or overall affect-balance scores. For the present study, affect balance was calculated in line with recommended procedures, which suggest subtracting the composite negative affect score from the composite positive affect score. Internal consistency for this composite score was strong ($\alpha = .89$; $\omega = .93$).

Empathy

Empathy was assessed using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1980). The IRI has 28 items and was initially developed as having four separate dimensions of empathic concern (i.e., having sympathy for others), perspective taking (i.e., viewing events through another's mindset), fantasy (tendency to relate to fictional characters), and personal distress

(feelings of personal unease in tense social situations). Later research has suggested that a higher order general empathy score created by summing the empathic concern, perspective taking, and fantasy scales is appropriate (Pulos et al., 2004). For parsimony, the present study took the unidimensional approach, which involved 21 items (e.g., “I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me,”) rated from 1 (“does not describe me well”) to 5 (“describes me very well”). Scores on the IRI have shown substantial construct validity based on their relationships in expected directions with social functioning, self-esteem, and sensitivity to others (Davis, 1983). Scores have shown high internal consistency reliability of $\alpha > .90$ (Thapa et al., 2024). Scores on the IRI also showed strong internal consistency reliability in the present study ($\alpha = .83$; $\omega = .88$).

Creative Self-concept

To assess creative self-concept, the Short Scale of Creative Self (SSCS; Karwowski, 2012; Karwowski et al., 2013) was used. This 11-item scale measures two dimensions of creative self-efficacy (e.g., “I trust my creative abilities”) and creative personal identity (e.g., “I think I am a creative person”). It can also be aggregated into an overall creative self-concept score. The present study used the unidimensional approach. Participants rated items of the SSCS on a response scale ranging from 1 (“definitely not”) to 5 (“definitely yes”). Validity can be seen through positive associations of SSCS scores with curiosity and openness, as well as negative associations with neuroticism (Karwowski et al., 2013). Internal consistency reliability and test-retest reliability have also been found to be strong in past research (Karwowski, 2016), and the present study found acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .76$; $\omega = .86$).

Qualitative Analysis Plan and Process

Three open-ended items were developed and administered to participants. The content of these items was based on abovementioned considerations germane to building on Lois and Gregson's (2019) findings about calling's relevance to writers' discovery narratives and persistence regarding their career paths. To assess calling's role in initial pursuit and discovery narratives, participants were asked (1) "What initially motivated you to pursue authorship?" and (2) "How did you discover that you wanted to be an author?" The third item addressed authors' understandings of how they manage to persist despite difficulties of this career path by inquiring "How do you manage to persist through the hardship and adversity that comes with being an author?" This was included in conjunction with text boxes for participants to provide written answers as part of the online survey, and no direct interaction with the researcher occurred during the responses. The analysis strategy designed to address research question 1 followed a similar procedure to qualitative research on calling by Hunter et al. (2010) who employed emergent qualitative document analysis (QDA also known as ethnographic content analysis; Altheide, 1987). This technique allows for labels and themes to emerge from the data in an inductive manner rather than enforcing predetermined concepts onto the data.

To follow QDA procedures, the author of this manuscript recruited two researchers who were both experienced in the application of QDA procedures. As it is important to provide description of the researchers and their training in reporting qualitative research (Levitt et al., 2018), these descriptions are provided herein. All researchers were published authors in the area of calling and vocational psychology. The author of the present manuscript was, at the time of this writing, a doctoral candidate at a university in the Rocky Mountain region of the U.S. Both of the additional researchers had published qualitative work in the scientific literature and had

both also graduated from Counseling Psychology Ph.D. programs. One of the other coders was employed as a tenure-track assistant professor at a comprehensive research university in the Western U.S. The third member of the research team had previously held a faculty position in the Southeastern U.S. and was primarily working in clinical practice at the time of coding. All research team members had received training within the same research lab during their doctoral training, though only two had overlapped as members of the lab concurrently.

Each member of the three-person research team separately reviewed participants' responses and provided descriptive labels for each with the objective of summarizing and categorizing the response's content. This was allowed to continue until all responses were coded or until saturation was reached (i.e., the point in which responses no longer provide novel enough content to warrant new labels). Each coder completed this process individually over the course of several weeks prior to bringing the research team together.

Upon meeting as a group, all coders indicated that they had continued coding through all responses without having determined a point of saturation. Thus, all responses across the three items were provided with labels by each of the three members of the research team. Inter-coder consensus was achieved through a virtual meeting that occurred for approximately seven hours. In this meeting, all coders spoke to their experience of the coding process, development and meaning of their labels, and the potential for biases to impact the results. The research team compared, contrasted, and conversed about labels they had provided. Disagreements were resolved through extensive conversations. The author of the present manuscript ensured that all coders had indicated agreement to the phrasing of each label chosen and the ways in which each theme was composed by individually asking each coder prior to any such decision. This peer debriefing and examination process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) aided in extricating idiosyncrasies

and biases to increase reliability of results. Axial coding was then applied to coalesce similar labels into larger themes that reflected the core commonalities of the labels. Like the labels, inter-coder consensus on themes was established through discussion.

Numerous steps and considerations in reflection of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were taken to maximize trustworthiness of results, specifically drawing from strategies recommended by Ahmed (2024). Credibility can be enhanced through prolonged engagement (i.e., spending substantial time in the field to build rapport) and reflexivity (i.e., acknowledging personal biases). Prolonged engagement with the community of SFF authors was shown by the author of the present manuscript through engagement with the community primarily through a podcast focused on these genres of literature. Within that context, the researcher engaged with the SFF authorial community through social media involvement and podcast interviews of numerous authors over the course of approximately six years. Regarding reflexivity, all coders were invited to engage in reflexive journaling to take note of and document potential biases that they noticed may arise for them during the coding process.

Ahmed (2024) also suggested that transferability be considered through detailed description of research context, participants, and sampling strategies. Detailed information on such matters is documented in the Participants and Procedure section and Tables 1-3, enabling readers of this manuscript to assess transferability of the findings in context. Efforts toward dependability were provided through documentation of the methodological process, including the research team creating a document that tracked how labels were synthesized across each coder and then collapsed into themes. Strategies for confirmability recommended by Ahmed (2024) can involve peer debriefing, member checking, and reflexive journaling. Peer debriefing

was involved between the research team and reflexive journalling was implemented, but member checking was not used in the study, which served as a limitation.

Quantitative Analyses Plan

Research question 2 was investigated through multiple linear regression models in which each of the criterion variables associated with Tay et al.'s (2018) categories of flourishing was (in separate models) regressed on the five RAISE mechanisms. In this way, the unique variance in each criterion variable associated with each mechanism when controlling for the other mechanisms could be investigated. The full sample ($n = 110$) was used for the multiple linear regression models.

To examine matters relevant to research question 3, a scatterplot was generated to identify common ways in which levels of calling toward day job and calling toward writing tend to be experienced. Clustering of responses was used to identify typical arrangements of experiencing calling across multiple areas. Scores for each variable were derived using two separate variables measuring domain-level sense of calling via the CS. One variable represented the degree of calling toward people's areas of work associated with their "day jobs," while the other variable represented the degree of calling toward work in the area of writing.

For these analyses, only participants who indicated working at least one job in addition to authorship were included. Following removal of participants who directly indicated that they did not have another job, 87 participants remained. Three additional participants were removed upon direct scrutiny of all remaining responses, as two indicated homemaking as their other job and one indicated their other job was being a student. While unpaid labor such as the roles provided is widely considered work within vocational psychology (Blustein et al., 2008), the present

research sought to directly understand multiple jobholders for research questions 3 and 4. This resulted in the subsample used for analyses associated with those research questions ($n = 84$).

More statistically robust methods like latent profile analysis with Wald Tests were considered to examine research questions 3 and 4, respectively. However, the small sample size representing individuals who worked multiple jobs led to the determination that it would be more appropriate to examine a scatterplot to address research question 3 and apply moderation analyses to address research question 4. Several criterion variables were included to address research question 4. These work-level variables were examined using moderation analyses designed to discern if the interaction between calling toward writing (placed as the x variable) and calling toward day job (placed as the moderating variable) is associated with different levels of work well-being. A sensitivity analysis was conducted to determine statistical power, and it revealed that the present sample size enabled detection of an effect size of $f^2 = .096$. This fits between Cohen's (1988) guidelines for small (.02) and medium (.15) effect sizes within the context of regression analyses.

Considerations Relevant to Convergent Design, Integration, and Metainferences

Creswell (2022) provided guidelines regarding mixed-methods design, differentiating between three core designs: (1) convergent design, (2) explanatory sequential design, and (3) exploratory sequential design. Given data were not collected in a sequential manner, the latter two methods could not be implemented. The present research was not strictly designed for qualitative and quantitative procedures to answer the same research questions. However, the two forms of data collection allow for elements of integration associated with a convergent design, which involves comparing results across quantitative and qualitative data to identify areas of commonality and divergence. Though convergent design can involve transformation of

qualitative data to directly integrate with quantitative measures, this process is not a requirement for convergent designs, and such transformations were not applied in the present research. Still, it was intended for integration of qualitative and quantitative findings to be conducted in an explanatory manner as relevant. In interpretation of results provided in the Discussion section, metainferences (i.e., conclusions and interpretations formed through synthesis of qualitative and quantitative findings; Fetters, 2020) are provided.

RESULTS

Results of all qualitative and quantitative analyses conducted for the present study are reported below.

Qualitative Analyses

Participant responses to items varied in length from concise single sentence statements to highly detailed multiple paragraph responses. Responses which contained multiple ideas were assigned multiple labels. Some labels were determined as fitting into multiple broader themes through axial coding, and those are listed under all themes they were associated with.

Motivation to Pursue Authorship

Responses to the prompt for initial motivation to pursue authorship resulted in 14 labels. The 14 labels were then synthesized into five themes of (1) Creativity as Motivation, (2) Professional Attainment, (3) Social Connectedness, (4) Affective/Well-being, and (5) Skill Development/Utilization. Themes and their associated labels are provided in Table 4.

Table 4

Initial motivation to pursue authorship: Themes, labels, and examples

Creativity as Motivation

Storytelling

“Like most authors, a love for storytelling, feeling I had a story inside me needing to be told.”

Lifelong Writing

“I’ve always written stories...I finally wrote something I thought could deserve publication and searched for an agent.”

Compelled to Creative Expression

“The stories I was reading became so repetitive and predictable that I felt compelled to write something that wasn’t.”

Desire to Create (without compulsion)

“Writing started as a means of creative expression...”

Professional Attainment

Dream to Publish

“It has been a life-long dream to publish a novel. It sounds cliché, but ever since I was a kid I yearned to see my book on a store shelf.”

Professional Avenue for Creativity

“...I’ve made a living from writing nonfiction and journalism and branched into fiction as a more expressive form.”

Social Connectedness

Community Motivation

“...I joined a writers group and got serious about writing, which let [sic] to my first novel being written.”

Prosocial Impact

“I wanted to do for readers what so many authors have done for me: provide an escape and a way to laugh, to cry, and to think”

Storytelling

“I am a storyteller and entertainer and I am here to tell stories and entertain people.”

Love of Reading/Genre Inspiration

“I read *The Lord of the Rings* when I was twelve and, upon experiencing a sublime sense of catharsis at the end of *Return of the King*, decided that I wanted to write fantasy novels too.”

Affective/Well-being

Emotional Outlet/Writing as Self-care

“I was a frontline worker during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. My sleepless nights needed an outlet. I let my imagination run and started to write down all my ideas. I liked the story and decided ‘Why not? I have nothing to lose.’”

Love and Enjoyment of Writing

“I love writing, the act of writing, the craft, the putting words on a page part...The natural extension seemed to be publication”

Love of Reading/Genre Inspiration

“When I eventually read books like Brandon Sanderson’s ‘*Hero of Ages*’ and Chris d’Lacey’s ‘*Fire World*,’ I was wowed by the intricacy of their novels, and realized I wanted to write a book like theirs, instead of searching for distractions.”

Dissatisfaction with Other Career Options

“...When I realized I was hating my day job and there was a way to actually become an author, I decided to go for it!”

Skill Development/Utilization

Challenge/skill development

“The challenge of crafting a story for an audience, versus just writing for my own enjoyment and reading. Elevating my writing craft and my stories with the support of an editorial team.”

Utilize Capability

“Writing is the thing that I’m best at...”

Creativity as Motivation captured responses that most adhered to the motivation developing out of creative desire or expression itself. Frequently, individuals identified that the pursuit of authorship emerged as a natural byproduct of a desire or tendency to engage in

storytelling or a manifestation of being a lifelong writer prior to acknowledging professional possibilities. Such motivations could come from a sense of being compelled or from enjoyment of the process of creation.

Professional Attainment was the theme accounting for those who were motivated by a desire to have achieved the professional publication of their work through authorhood. Often, Professional Attainment included mention of the desire to perceive the outcome of such attainment (e.g., seeing one's book on a shelf), while others focused on authorship as being an avenue to be financially rewarded for their work. The theme of Social Connectedness involved one's motivation stemming from communal or other-oriented means; this was inclusive both of those who received inspiration from others as a form of motivation and those who were catalyzed by a prosocial motivation to impact others through their own work. The theme of Affective/Well-being motivators stemmed from responses that focused on the pursuance of benefits to one's personal mental health, emotional state, or psychological well-being. Responses that were categorized as Affective/Well-being tended to emphasize engagement with writing (and at times reading) as something that altered their emotional state in a positive way. Responses that identified the path of authorship as an alleviation of dissatisfaction experienced by other career options were considered to fall under the theme of Affective/Well-being. Skill Development/Utilization was the theme that encompassed responses that identified that the pursuit of authorship was a path through which one could acquire, sharpen, and/or make use of one's capabilities.

Discovery of Desire to Pursue Authorship

Application of QDA to participants' open-ended responses about the discovery of their desire to pursue authorship involved the emergence of nine labels. The nine labels were

combined into four broader themes. It warrants mention that there was substantial overlap between the responses to item prompting for motivation and the item addressing discovery, though, sufficient differences appeared to emerge as to warrant separate coding. The four themes were (1) Circumstantial, (2) Early Exposure/Always Known, (3) Positive Experience/Reinforcement, and (4) Expression. The themes and labels pertaining to this item can be viewed in Table 5. The theme of Circumstantial discovery was characterized by life situations or turning points that aligned in a manner that led to the emergence of pursuit of authorship. Typically, responses that fell within the Circumstantial theme resulted from an initial absence of intention to become an author until one's life situation elicited that desire, which usually occurred in adulthood. This contrasted with the Early Exposure/Always Known theme, which was typified by responses that either felt as though they had not undergone a discovery process but had known for the entirety of their lives or had been exposed to the genre through reading as a child and come to understand their desire to pursue authorship at that time. The Positive Experience/Reinforcement theme grouped together responses that placed authorship as a natural extension of affective, cognitive, and/or social experiences that enabled a sense that one had the joy associated with and/or talent for the experience of writing. The Expression theme served as the category for responses that demonstrated the writers' discoveries of their desire for authorship through an urge to actualize or manifest their internal urges to impact others or reify their ideas into a tangible form through their writing.

Table 5

Discovery of desire to pursue authorship: Themes, labels, and examples

Circumstantial
<i>Emotional or Personal Turning Point</i> “I started writing to stay busy while my partner was deployed, and the short story slowly turned into three novels.”
<i>Adulthood Happenstance</i> “A friend asked me to help him with writing a book with him. We worked on that together for a while, but it fell apart. But the drive to write was reawakened in me...”
Early Exposure/Always Known
<i>Early Realization/Always Known</i> “Have literally always wanted to be an author. Made little stapled-together picture books with crayons before I could write words.”
<i>Childhood Discovery through Reading</i> “Reading books as a child and realizing I wanted to write my own”
Positive Experience/Reinforcement
<i>External Encouragement/Social Feedback</i> “In 10th grade, I wrote a story about a young boy reuniting with his mother after her death. It was a creepy Halloween story, but full of detail and emotion....I was shocked by the responses. The classmates I shared it with piled on so much praise...”
<i>Discovery through Love of Writing</i> “I found that I loved telling stories and enjoyed the writing format”
<i>Talent/Self-efficacy</i> “I’ve always been a good writer, even as a child. I think I just had a talent for words and it felt very natural to apply that to the kinds of fiction I most loved to read.”
Expression
<i>Creative Compulsion/Ideas that Wouldn’t Let Go</i> “I noticed I kept writing even when no one asked me to — the ideas just wouldn’t stop.”
<i>Desire to Impact Others</i> “I just always enjoyed writing and wanted to see if I could get others to feel reading my work what I feel when reading my favourite authors...”

Persistence Through Adversity

There were 11 total labels identified in response to the inquiry of how authors persist through adversity and hardship associated with their paths. Five themes emerged from the process of axial coding. The themes for this question included the following: (1) Sense of Calling, (2) Stubbornness/Determination/Pragmatism, (3) External Reinforcement/Support, (4)

Love of Writing Process, and (5) Emotional Awareness/Regulation. All labels and themes for responses to this item can be viewed in Table 6.

Table 6

Persistence through adversity of authorship: Themes, labels, and examples

Sense of Calling
<i>Story Importance/Sense of Purpose/Impact on World</i>
“Writing has become such an integral part of my existence that I can't stop now. As the world turns darker, it feels increasingly important that artists persist and bear witness to the varying experiences of humanity and community.”
Stubbornness/Determination/Pragmatism
<i>Stubbornness/Grit/Refusal to Quit</i>
“It took me twelve years, seven manuscripts, and 500+ rejections...I was simply too stubborn to give up when everything seemed to say I should. Then I got an agent who believed in my book, went on sub, and had two offers within 6 months.”
<i>Planning/Structure/Long Term Strategy</i>
“After the birth of my third kid, I realized that things were never going to slow down...So I got strategic. I started putting writing times on the calendar. I made commitments to certain times of the week, and whether or not I felt motivated, I put in the work.”
<i>Realistic Expectations</i>
“...I worked in commercial publishing early in my career, so I have a realistic perspective on what the business is like and how hard it is...”
<i>Separating Writing from Publishing/Focus on Process Rather than Outcomes</i>
“I'm not someone who 'gives up' easily and I love writing and was GOING TO write no matter what, so it made sense to keep trying to get published. I also tried very hard to separate the act of writing and the act of 'publishing'.”
External Reinforcement/Support
<i>External Validation/Reader Feedback/Small Wins</i>
“I am lucky that my books sell and I have accumulated a small, but dedicated community of fans. Their kind words and support are incredibly encouraging.”
<i>Community Support</i>
“Through author communities. If I didn't have their support, advice, and guidance in some cases I think I'd have fallen apart”
Love of Writing Process
<i>Love of Writing/Creative Joy</i>
“Stories that I love and that's what keeps me coming back!”
<i>Separating Writing from Publishing/Focus on Process Rather than Outcomes</i>
“It's been tough at times. Very very tough. Especially on the industry side of things. But I try to constantly remind myself why I'm doing this, and that these books are for *me*, and not the publisher, and to find the joy in having made them. But that is still difficult.”
<i>Income from Another Source</i>

“Working full-time helps, I'm lucky that I have a career I love. If I was given the opportunity to be a full-time author I don't think I'd take it as it would become ‘work’ and I worry I'd lose the love of writing.”

Emotional Awareness/Regulation

Emotional Coping/Writing as Outlet

“Writing is cathartic and allows me to sift through difficult emotions and express them. Sometimes it's easier to let characters express those emotions than to express them myself in the real world.”

Rest/Boundaries/Self-Care

“Relying on support from loved ones as well as [a] Mental Health Counselor. And allowing myself to rest up and take breaks for my health as needed.”

Responses under the Sense of Calling theme shared some form of buffering against hardship through a sense of being compelled and/or driven by eudaimonic/prosocial intentions. Oftentimes, authors whose responses fit this category cited a sense that their story was particularly important to tell, which provided an impression that hardship was worth overcoming to do so. Stubbornness/Determination/Pragmatism is the theme that captured the responses that delineated that the perils of authorship could be traversed through outright dispositional stubbornness and/or a sense of realism, practicality, and structure. The phrase “stubbornness” was chosen by the coders to capture the several (six) responses that directly used the word “stubborn” or “stubbornness” to refer to their perceived inability to give up, despite facing an amount of hardship that could make continuing seem unreasonable or irrational.

External Reinforcement/Support was the theme accounting for individuals who saw their persistence as attributable to those around them, be it through direct positive feedback about the quality of their work or through being a part of a broader supportive community in which others provide aid. Love of Writing Process was a theme that addressed when respondents indicated that the pure enjoyment or affection for the craft of writing helped them break through times of adversity. Often, these individuals cited the capability to separate the controllable process of writing itself from the harsh realities and uncertainties that characterize the publishing industry.

A component of receiving income from another source to enable the focus on the enjoyment of writing rather than financial matters was also included in this theme. Finally, a theme arose of Emotional Awareness/Regulation among responses to the question about persistence through adversity. These matters focused on continuing in authorial pursuits through actions taken by the author to directly alleviate emotional distress; some did so through the writing process providing its own outlet for ameliorating psychological distress, while others focused on self-care behaviors, such as taking breaks, resting, exercising, and seeking therapeutic care.

Quantitative Analyses

Quantitative analyses were conducted using R statistical software (R Core Team, 2026).

Preliminary Analyses and Assumption Checking

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations were calculated for all study variables (see Table 7). Variables were also scrutinized for skewness and kurtosis. No variables exceeded Weston and Gore's (2006) guidelines regarding nonnormality (skewness $> |3|$ and kurtosis $> |10|$); although, calling toward writing neared the threshold for being negatively skewed (-2.21) and leptokurtic (9.61). Still, this appeared sensible in line with the literature indicating scores on calling toward writing would likely cluster toward a high value (e.g., Lois & Gregson, 2019).

Table 7*Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Calling-Writing	5.99	0.78															
2. Calling-Day Job	3.87	1.50	.10														
3. Reflection	4.08	0.65	.37**	.21													
4. Acquisition	3.99	0.59	.49**	.23*	.56**												
5. Immersion	3.69	0.85	.35**	.38**	.32**	.45**											
6. Socialization	3.87	0.86	.31**	.15	.53**	.62**	.18										
7. Expression	4.16	0.84	.57**	.07	.39**	.59**	.22*	.51**									
8. Living a Calling	4.96	1.54	.20*	.61**	.28**	.32**	.19	.30**	.18								
9. Job Satisfaction	4.44	0.90	.30**	.50**	.31**	.30**	.14	.27**	.22*	.58**							
10. Burnout	2.88	0.75	.04	-.30**	-.06	-.02	-.04	-.06	.02	-.08	-.02						
11. Life Satisfaction	5.00	1.37	.08	-.08	.12	.30**	.04	.19	.08	.32**	.14	-.33**					
12. Meaning in Life	5.48	1.15	.09	.20	.23*	.18	.13	.38**	.08	.52**	.24*	-.15	.44**				
13. Psych Richness	5.62	0.91	.01	.27*	.33**	.29**	.17	.17	.12	.29**	.21*	-.14	.45**	.26**			
14. Affect Balance	1.08	1.22	-.05	.10	.16	.17	.16	.07	-.06	.06	.04	-.50**	.50**	.36**	.23*		
15. Creative SC	4.50	0.37	.28**	.21	.22*	.19*	.23*	.17	.18	.09	.14	-.02	.03	.12	.25**	-.01	
16. Empathy	3.89	0.50	.22*	.16	.36**	.30**	.25*	.35**	.30**	.19*	.12	.07	.10	.23*	.06	-.00	.34**

Note. *M* and *SD* represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Calling-Writing = Calling Toward Writing; Calling-Day Job = Calling toward day job; Psych Richness = Psychological Richness; Creative SC = Creative Self-Concept. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Assumptions of ordinary least squares analyses were evaluated in respect to each of the models provided below. One participant, labeled case 87 in the data, was identified as a potential outlier and disproportionately influential case. Figure 1 displays case 87's poor fit to one model in consideration of residuals compared to fitted values and two models in which it had substantially higher Cook's distance than all other cases (Cook's distance measures how influential a case is within a model). The same case had an atypically low score on calling toward writing. When the case was scrutinized, it was determined that case 87 was associated with a participant recruited in person at a book fair for whom there is strong evidence to believe that the participant belonged to the population being studied. For this reason, case 87 was not removed outright. However, for models in which the case appeared potentially problematic toward violation of assumptions, analyses were conducted both with and without case 87; this includes multiple linear regression models predicting psychological richness and affect balance, as well as all moderation analyses. For the two analyses in which case 87 significantly impacted the model (i.e., altered significance of a relationship), results from both versions of the model are reported.

Main Quantitative Analyses

Multiple Linear Regression Models. Six multiple linear regression models were conducted to examine the discrete associations between each of the RAISE mechanisms and criterion variables that serve as markers of psychological well-being/flourishing. Thus, all models involved a single criterion variable regressed on the five RAISE mechanisms, which allowed for examination into the variance accounted for in the criterion variable by each mechanism when controlling for the effect of the other mechanisms.

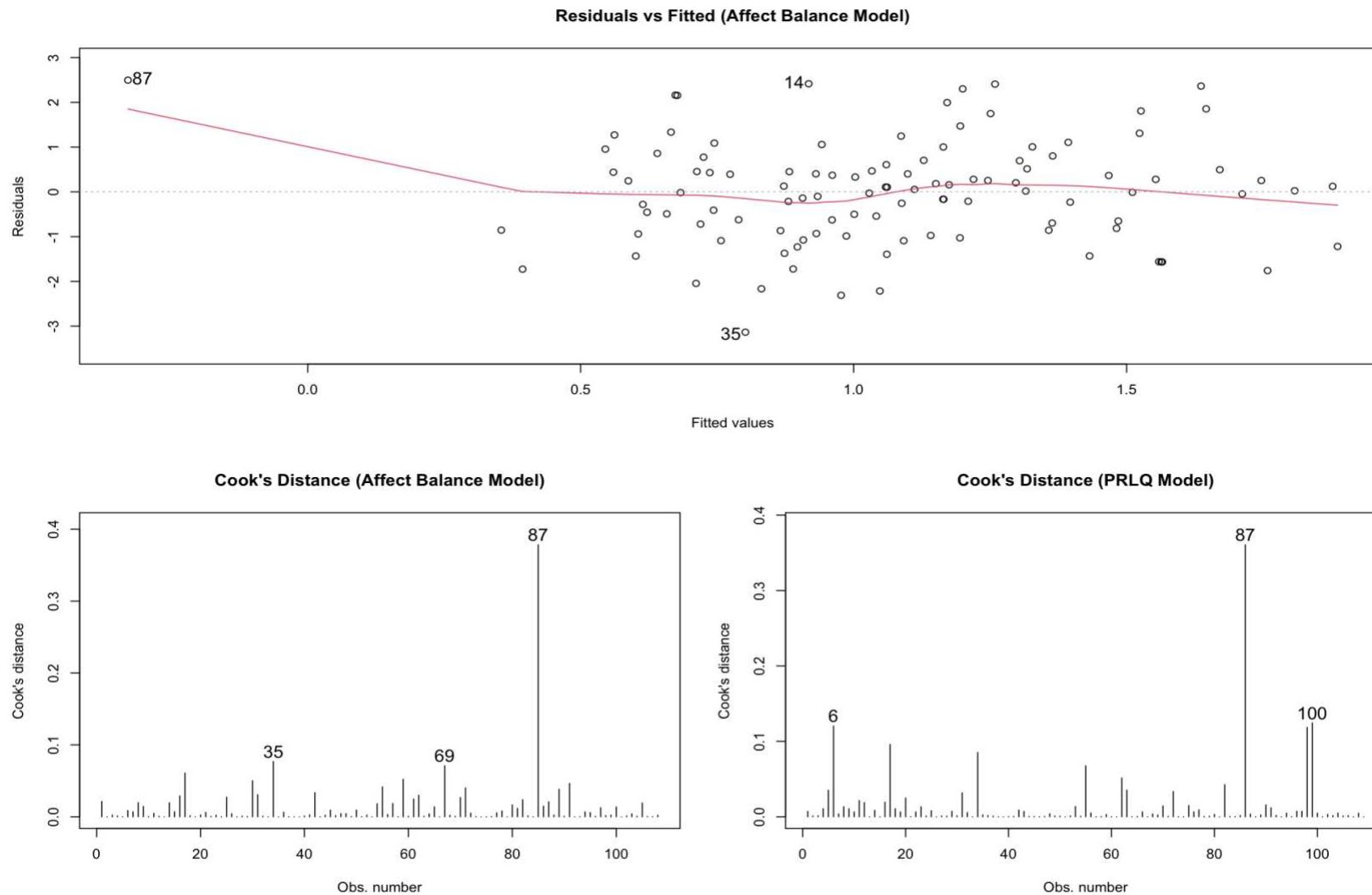


Figure 1

Note. PRLQ Model refers to the model that regressed psychological richness on the RAISE mechanisms. Affect Balance Model refers to the model that regressed affect balance on the RAISE mechanisms.

The first model placed life satisfaction as the criterion variable. In this model, acquisition was found to have a significant association with life satisfaction ($b = .85, \beta = .34, p < .05$). However, nonsignificant relationships were found for reflection ($b = .02, \beta = .01, p = .95$), immersion ($b = -.14, \beta = -.09, p = .42$), socialization ($b = .04, \beta = .02, p = .85$), and expression ($b = -.27, \beta = -.16, p = .16$).

Another multiple linear regression model regressed meaning in life on the RAISE mechanisms. Results showed that socialization served as a significant predictor ($b = .60, \beta = .43, p < .001$). Nonsignificant effects were found in the model predicting meaning in life for reflection ($b = .10, \beta = .06, p = .62$), acquisition ($b = -.14, \beta = -.06, p = .65$), immersion ($b = .13, \beta = .10, p = .36$), and expression ($b = -.18, \beta = -.13, p = .24$).

The unique variance accounted for by each RAISE mechanism in psychological richness was also examined through multiple linear regression. This model represented one of the aforementioned instances in which a single case (case 87) appeared to exert a disproportionate degree of influence based on the assumption checking process, which resulted in the model being conducted twice (i.e., both with and without case 87). The two models differed regarding acquisition serving as a significant predictor only in the model that excluded case 87. Results of both models are reported below. In the model with case 87, reflection had a significant link to psychological richness ($b = .37, \beta = .26, p < .05$), while acquisition ($b = .40, \beta = .23, p = .10$), immersion ($b = .00, \beta = .00, p = .97$), socialization ($b = -.07, \beta = -.06, p = .59$), and expression ($b = -.10, \beta = -.09, p = .43$) were not significant predictors. In the model that excluded case 87, reflection ($b = .41, \beta = .28, p < .05$) and acquisition ($b = .63, \beta = .32, p < .05$) both had significant relationships with psychological richness. Immersion ($b = -.01, \beta = -.01, p = .93$),

socialization ($b = -.11, \beta = -.09, p = .42$), and expression ($b = -.09, \beta = -.08, p = .46$) did not significantly relate to psychological richness in this model.

The analyses involving affect balance regressed on the RAISE mechanisms were also conducted twice to account for the disproportionate influence of case 87. The models again differed in the sense that acquisition served as a significant predictor in only the model that excluded the case. In the model including case 87, expression was a significant predictor ($b = -.37, \beta = -.25, p < .05$), but no significant effects were found for reflection ($b = .17, \beta = .09, p = .46$), acquisition ($b = .62, \beta = .27, p = .06$), immersion ($b = .08, \beta = .05, p = .64$), and socialization ($b = .02, \beta = .02, p = .91$). The model conducted without case 87 had significant effects germane to expression ($b = -.36, \beta = -.23, p < .05$) and acquisition ($b = .94, \beta = .35, p < .01$), but found no significant link to affect balance from reflection ($b = .23, \beta = .12, p = .30$), immersion ($b = .05, \beta = .04, p = .72$), and socialization ($b = -.02, \beta = -.02, p = .91$).

Creative self-concept and empathy were also each regressed on the RAISE mechanisms. No significant associations were found in either model. The effects associated with creative self-concept were as follows: reflection ($b = .04, \beta = .08, p = .53$), acquisition ($b = .05, \beta = .06, p = .65$), immersion ($b = .06, \beta = .14, p = .16$), socialization ($b = .03, \beta = .06, p = .64$), and expression ($b = .04, \beta = .09, p = .42$). The model predicting empathy from the RAISE mechanisms found the following associations: reflection ($b = .13, \beta = .17, p = .14$), acquisition ($b = -.02, \beta = -.02, p = .87$), immersion ($b = .08, \beta = .14, p = .18$), socialization ($b = .12, \beta = .20, p = .08$), and expression ($b = .08, \beta = .12, p = .26$).

Scatterplot. To address research question 3, a scatterplot (see Figure 2) was generated and inspected to discern common arrangements of experience for calling toward writing and calling toward one's day job.

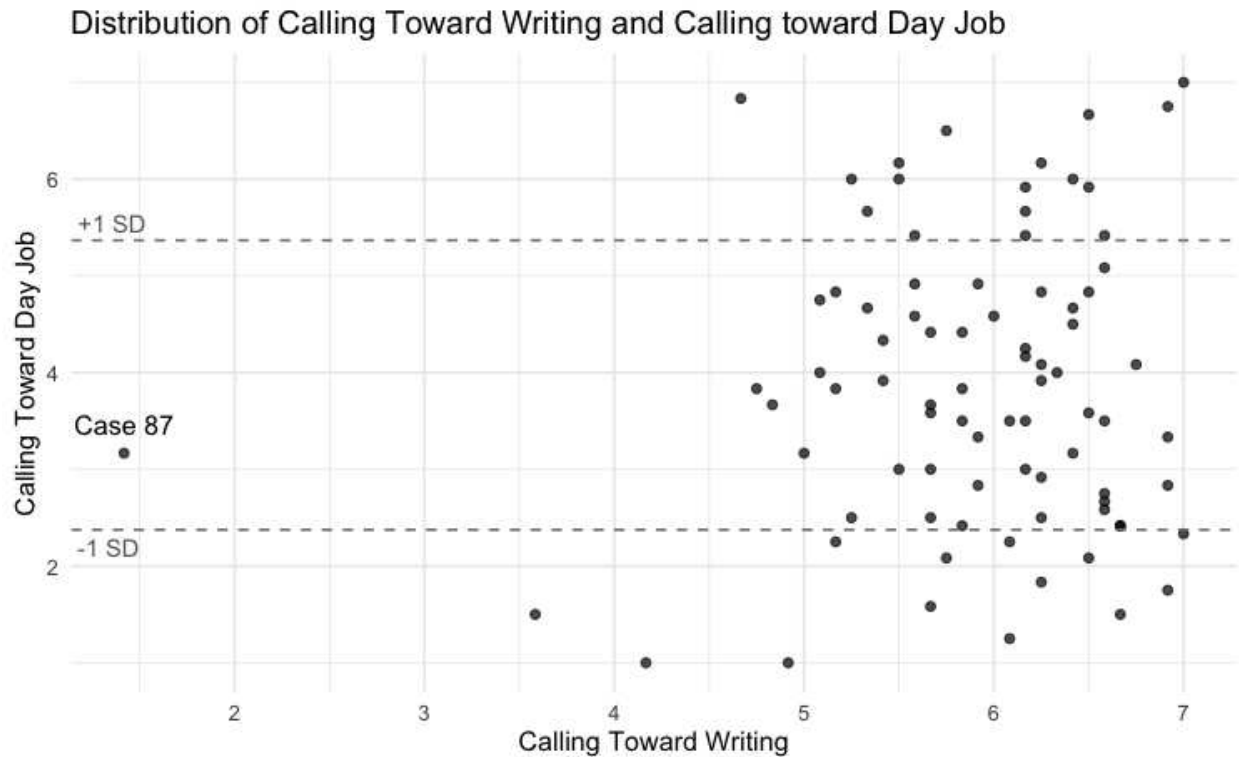


Figure 2

The visual appearance of the scatterplot clearly indicated that almost all cases had a high degree of calling toward writing, while calling toward day job seemed relatively normally distributed.

Almost all participants showed one of these three arrangements: (1) high calling toward writing, low calling toward day job, (2) high calling toward writing, moderate calling toward day job, and (3) high calling toward writing, high calling toward day job.

Moderation Models. Three separate moderation models were conducted that placed calling toward day job as a moderator in the relationship between calling toward writing and a series of criterion variables representing work-level well-being (i.e., living a calling, job satisfaction, and burnout). For each criterion variable, an initial moderation model was conducted in which both calling toward writing and calling toward day job were centered at the

mean. Further probing of conditional effects in line with Preacher et al.'s (2006) recommendation was only completed for models in which the interaction effect was found to be significant.

The first moderation model placed living a calling as the y variable. Results from this model showed that the interaction effect of calling toward writing and calling toward day job was not significant ($b = -.07, p = .50$). An analogous model in which the y variable was job satisfaction also showed a nonsignificant interaction effect between calling toward writing and calling toward day job ($b = .01, p = .94$).

A third moderation model was conducted that predicted burnout. In this model, a significant interaction effect was found between calling toward writing and calling toward day job ($b = -.18, p < .01$). This indicated that for each one unit increase in calling toward day job, the association between calling toward writing and burnout decreases by .18. With this in mind, the interaction was probed. In particular, models designed to reveal the conditional effect of calling toward writing on burnout were analyzed at three points of the moderating variable: (1) the mean, (2) one *SD* above the mean, and (3) one *SD* below the mean. Figure 3 illustrates the slopes at each of these levels of the moderator. When calling toward day job was held constant at the mean, there was a nonsignificant relationship between calling toward writing and burnout ($b = -.09, p = .37$). When calling toward day job was one *SD* above the mean, a significant negative association was found for calling toward writing's link to burnout ($b = -.33, p < .05$), indicating that calling toward writing was associated with lower degree of burnout for those high in calling toward day job. For the model that involved calling toward day job at one *SD* below the mean, the effect of calling toward writing was positive and neared the threshold of statistical

significance ($b = .20, p = .05$). Thus, the effect begins to be significant and positive at a value slightly below one *SD* below the mean.

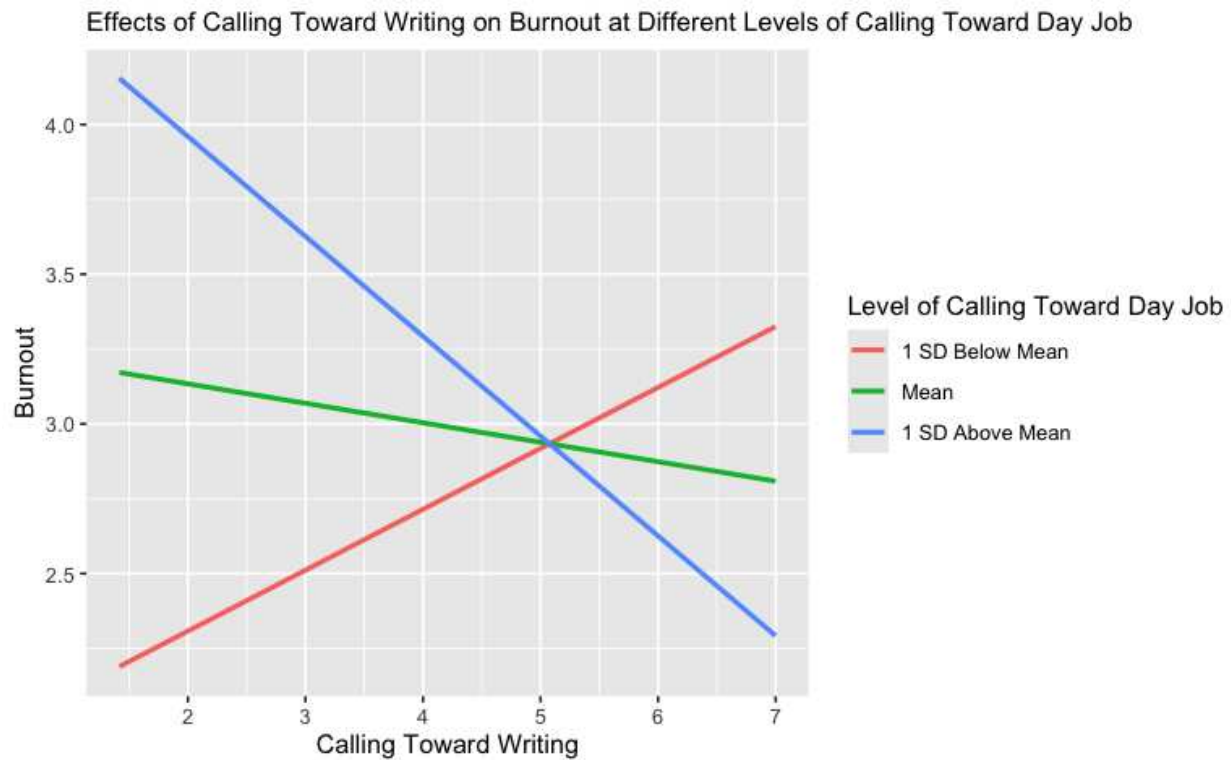


Figure 3

A Johnson-Neyman graph of regions of significance is provided as Figure 4 for visual depiction of values of calling toward day job in which the link between calling toward writing and burnout was significant. At levels in which the effect was significant, this suggested that for those low in calling toward their day job, calling toward writing was associated with higher degree of burnout.

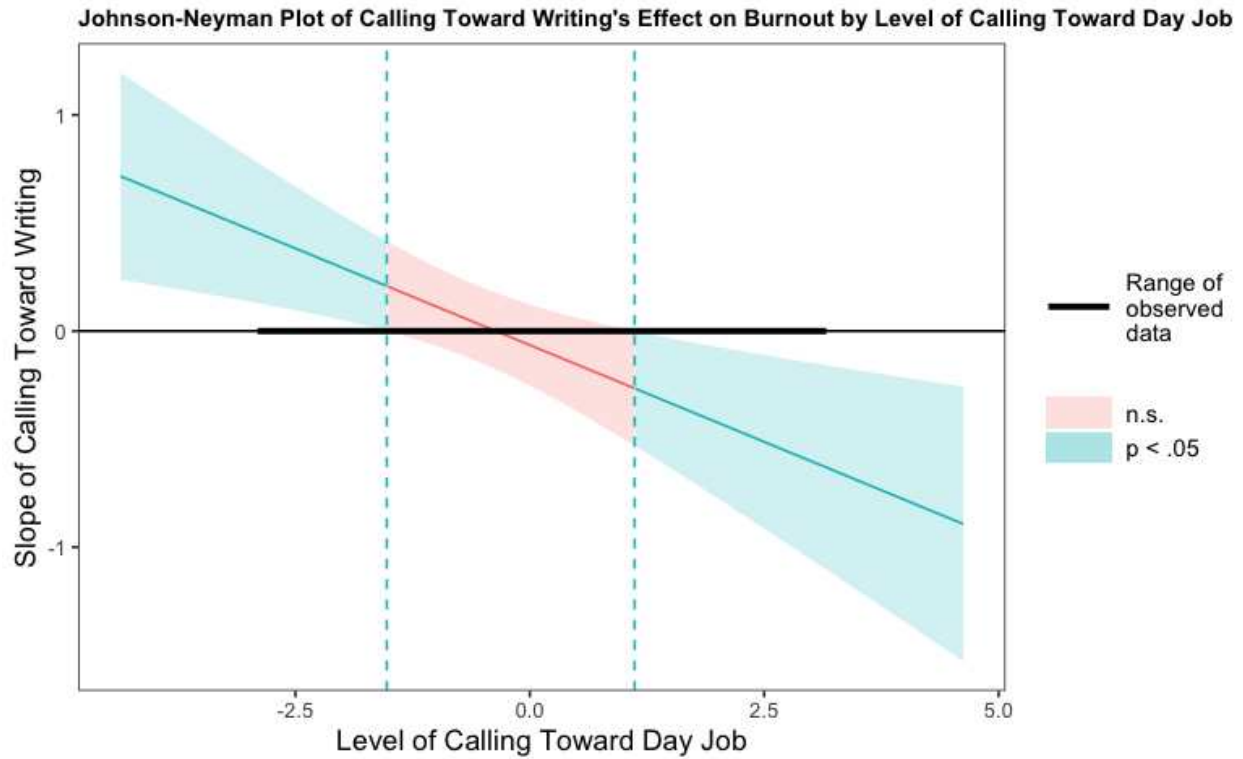


Figure 4

Note. Level of calling toward day job is mean-centered, so a value of zero in this figure is indicative of the mean value of 3.87.

DISCUSSION

The present research is the first study of its kind to examine work and well-being experiences of published SFF genre authors using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Results from this study (1) identified themes of experience related to aspects of authors' initial motivation, discovery, and persistence in the field, (2) revealed associations with well-being/flourishing of the RAISE mechanisms of engagement in AH, and (3) showed potential interaction effects demonstrated by ways of experiencing calling among multiple jobholders. While the research holds several limitations that render results preliminary in nature, findings present with numerous implications that can be explained in the context of prior empirical work and theory. Likewise, this research can lay the foundation for future work in the thus far incipient lines of empirical inquiry on creative callings and the RAISE mechanisms among professional artists. Through integration of quantitative and qualitative results, several metainferences were drawn and are included as relevant toward interpretations and implications of results provided.

Implications of Findings on Motivation, Discovery, and Persistence of Authors

The themes identified in the qualitative analyses conducted within this study illustrate numerous aspects of the experience of authors that can be connected within the context of prior research and theory. This component of the study sought to address research question 1, which was: "Does sense of calling play a key role in the discovery process of desire to become an author, motivation to pursue authorship, and resistance to hardships that characterize authorship as a line of work?" The analysis process was designed to use an inductive, bottom-up approach, so the coding team did not directly enforce labeling of matters related to calling. However,

conclusions can be drawn germane to calling based upon pertinent labels and themes that emerged.

Though calling solely emerged as its own separate theme within the context of the third open-ended question regarding persistence through adversity, several labels identified reflect components found in both neoclassical (e.g., Dik & Duffy, 2009) and modern (e.g., Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011) conceptions of calling. As a form of modern calling, Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas considered calling to represent “a consuming, meaningful passion people experience toward a domain” (p. 1003). Responses that emphasized motivation stemming from a lifelong dream to publish or discovery through love of writing indicate individuals for whom this way of experiencing calling may hold particular relevance.

Dik and Duffy’s (2009) neoclassical tripartite definition of calling composed as (1) a transcendent summons, (2) purposeful work, and (3) prosocial orientation seemed reflected throughout responses focused on motivation, discovery, and persistence. Common throughout all three areas included authors describing a sense of a story inside themselves that they felt compelled to express or share, often due to its perceived importance. In this way, for many writers it may be that a story itself could serve as a guiding force corresponding to the transcendent summons dimension of calling. Throughout the three open-ended items, authors also acknowledged some form of prosocial impact on others or the world that aligned with a prosocial orientation associated with calling.

With the above considerations in mind, it is reasonable to conclude that the answer to research question 1 in this study affirms that calling and its dimensions do hold a relevant role in motivation, discovery, and persistence among published authors. Indeed, several further implications for the growing line of research on creative calling can be drawn from the results

through integration with previous findings. Lysova and Khapova (2019) concluded from their study on Dutch video game industry founders that creative callings tended to focus on expression of creativity more broadly, rather than being domain specific or reserved to particular occupations. Elements of the present research suggest the existence of that form of creative calling, as seen among themes like Creativity as Motivation as a form of initial motivation to pursue authorship. Indeed, such responses often emphasized storytelling or desire for creation more broadly with writing as the means through which to express these facets. Still, other respondents appeared to align with experiences of artistic callings as domain specific (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). For example, this is seen among those who aligned with a Dream to Publish label in which reaching the outcome of having published a novel through seeing one's name on a bookshelf served as their motivation. The implications of the present research suggest that rather than constraining creative callings to either broad or domain-specific in nature, they may be better viewed as existing on a continuum. Zhou and colleagues (2024) proposed that callings could be understood as ranging from narrow (e.g., to become a published epic fantasy author) to broad (e.g., to share stories with others). A fruitful area of future research on creative callings could involve acknowledgment of individual differences regarding where people fall on this spectrum and attending to potential psychological ramifications that are associated with these different ways of viewing one's calling.

The findings of this research also can be synthesized with previous research on callings among individuals in forms of writing as storytelling. This study identified labels and themes throughout authors' descriptions of their initial motivation, discovery, and persistence in the career path that stemmed from community or external reinforcement, including feedback from readers. This corresponded well to the development of becoming and maintaining identities as

called professionals among manga artists (Fontana et al., 2025), suggesting substantial importance of this form of positive social reinforcement in career paths in the arts marked by uncertainty and financial hardships. Lois and Gregson's (2019) ethnography on unpublished romance writers found that callings were often wielded as emotional capital to help individuals persist in the pursuit of authorship and buffer against negative emotional states that might threaten their identities as "real writers." Furthermore, their ethnography depicted individuals who drew from the positive emotional experiences of writing as a means through which one could justify continuing the pursuit. Indeed, sense of calling's emergence as a theme of how authors in the present sample persist through adversity shows similar processes at play; although, because the authors in this study were all published, the experience may not have been as focused on whether or not individuals were "real" writers. Furthermore, the emphasis with themes of Affective/Well-being, Love of Writing Process, and Emotional Awareness/Regulation echoed Lois and Gregson's (2019) findings of the importance of affective experiences in authors' motivations to pursue authorship and continue within the role, despite hardships.

The coders noted that the phrase "stubbornness" was frequently used by participants in response to their ability to persist in the face of adversity, which warranted the word's inclusion in the theme for this item. While similar characteristics regarding persistence through adversity in the work domain have been investigated through constructs like conscientiousness and grit (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Duckworth et al., 2007), there is a dearth of research into the construct of stubbornness within the personality or vocational psychology literature. Results of the present study suggested there may be potential value in further efforts to investigate this construct in the vocational domain, particularly in the pursuit of the arts. Indeed, stubbornness could also play a key role in how those with a sense of calling have shown lower receptivity to career advice,

which can in some cases enable further pursuit and potential fulfillment of a calling in circumstances in which others could be discouraged (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2012).

While the present research sought to illuminate the potential role of calling among authors, it warrants mention that numerous responses, labels, and themes address other psychological experiences that are best understood through theoretical lenses outside of the purview of calling. Though thorough review and interpretation of these elements are outside of the scope of the objectives of the present manuscript, they demonstrate several important aspects of experience of authors that can direct further research in those areas. For example, the role noted across themes of the fiction writing process in itself serving as a coping procedure may align with findings from a robust set of literature on the therapeutic effects of writing (Pennebaker, 1997). Furthermore, elements of Circumstantial themes of discovery evoke experiences that align well with happenstance learning theory of career counseling (Krumboltz, 2009) and have substantial implications for that line of literature worth exploring in future research among authors and others in creative career paths.

RAISE Mechanisms

The present research represented one effort to address the RAISE mechanisms of engagement in AH through application of Thapa et al.'s (2024) RAISE scales and investigation into Tay et al.'s (2018) propositions of forms of psychological flourishing that can be engendered through experience of these mechanisms. While some or all of the mechanisms and their associations with well-being have been examined through a set of prior literature (e.g., Cotter et al., 2023; Gotthardt et al., 2025; Marsh & Dik, 2026), to the present researcher's knowledge, the framework and the scales have not been applied directly in the context of professional artists in general nor authors in particular. The broad hypotheses regarding the link

from the RAISE mechanisms to markers of flourishing were partially supported. At least one of the RAISE mechanisms held an association (controlling for the other mechanisms) with four of the six criterion variables examined. In the case of all but one significant relationship, the relationship was positive, suggesting a link from RAISE mechanisms to higher levels of well-being/flourishing.

Through multiple linear regression models, the following findings provided information and guidance as to which mechanisms may hold unique associations with which forms of well-being. Tay et al. posited that engagement in AH enhances psychological well-being across four categories of flourishing (i.e., general well-being, neurological, physiological, and psychological reactions, psychological competencies, and positive normative outcomes). General well-being was represented through three variables established to be key elements of psychological well-being by prominent scholars (Oishi & Westgate, 2022; Pavot & Diener, 2009; Steger et al., 2006): (1) life satisfaction, (2) meaning in life, and (3) psychological richness. Psychological reactions were represented by affect balance in line with the categorizations identified by Tay et al. (2018). Creative self-concept and empathy were representative of a psychological competency and a positive normative criterion variable, respectively.

Reflection as a mechanism solely held a unique association with psychological richness. Previous empirical work has linked reflection to psychological richness (Marsh & Dik, 2026), and these findings align with Westgate and Oishi's (2021) assertions about the ways in which engagement in AH can elicit psychological richness. Westgate and Oishi specifically highlighted reflection in explaining why engagement in AH can enhance psychological richness by noting that "reflectiveness, in particular, may foster sustained changes in psychological richness, if people take that impetus for change seriously, and come to see themselves and the world from

new perspectives” (p. 90). Indeed, reflection is the mechanism inclusive of the role of artistic engagement in enacting contemplation and consideration of alternative perspectives and viewpoints, so it is sensible that this showed an association with psychological richness.

It warrants mention that the results of this study showed a nonsignificant effect of reflection (and all other RAISE mechanisms) in the model involving the criterion of empathy. This contrasted with Tay et al.’s (2018) supposition that reflection would be linked to normative variables, such as empathy. Indeed, in the case of research on fiction readers, empathy was the variable most strongly associated with the mechanism of reflection (Marsh & Dik, 2026). The present study’s lack of significant findings regarding this association may be at least partially indicative of the underpowered nature of the analyses due to sample size; however, they also may suggest a difference between consumption and creation in the realm of literature. Reading fiction provides the opportunity to take on drastically alternative points of view and emotions of characters created by others in a manner that has been robustly connected to empathy by meta-analytic evidence (Mumper & Gerrig, 2017). However, it is feasible that creation of literature may not permit the same degree of empathetic concern, since the points of view taken on reside within the author as the creator of the characters. Further research could aid in elucidating this potential difference between consumption and creation of fictional works.

The mechanism of acquisition showed significant unique relationships among the mechanisms with life satisfaction, and, in the models that removed one potential outlier participant, both psychological richness and affect balance. Acquisition’s link to life satisfaction, psychological richness, and affect balance appeared to align with previous literature, as it held the strongest correlational relationships among any RAISE mechanism with all of these variables in Marsh and Dik’s (2026) research among fiction readers. Acquisition was among the

mechanisms with the strongest effect on holistic positive functioning, positive affect, and negative affect in Thapa et al.'s (2024) research. As several findings appear to converge on this matter, it bears consideration that acquisition may be of greater relevance to these general well-being and affective states than initially proposed by Tay and colleagues (2018). Perhaps the findings in the present study reflect the broader benefits to life satisfaction and affect balance found in relation to skill acquisition at work more broadly (Ayres & Malouff, 2007), but these considerations warrant further study.

Tay et al. (2018) supposed that acquisition (then referred to as “embeddedness”) would be most predictive of psychological competencies, but that association was not found in the present study. Though creative self-concept represented a reasonable self-report stand in for Tay et al.'s (2018) psychological competency of creativity, the construct captures a combination of self-efficacy and identity that has been shown to be relatively stable from young adulthood until older adulthood (Karwowski, 2016). In this way, it may not be subject to substantial fluctuations among a set of authors who were on average approximately 41 years of age and may have relatively stabilized views of their creative self-concept. Further research examining creativity directly, involving a younger sample of writers, and/or with a greater sample size may better illustrate the possible link between acquisition and this form of psychological competency.

Immersion showed no unique significant relationships in the multiple linear regression models predicting markers of psychological flourishing. This finding also aligns with much of the previous work examining this mechanism. Immersion has typically shown the weakest associations with most markers of psychological flourishing of any of the RAISE mechanisms (Marsh & Dik, 2026; Thapa et al., 2024). Several considerations point toward the potential benefits of immersion to well-being. This includes research suggesting that art museum

professionals view immersion as the most important mechanism for enhancing attendees' well-being (Cotter et al., 2023). Furthermore, immersion may promote increased frequency of engagement in AH (Marsh & Dik, 2026), and the general benefits to well-being found from the experience of flow more broadly are substantial (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 2014). Still, the present study did not contribute to evidence in this direction.

Socialization was found to have a significant unique association with presence of meaning in life, which was its sole significant relationship found in the multiple linear regression models. Such findings are perhaps unsurprising in light of the key role that social relationships play in general in regard to meaning in life (O'Donnell et al., 2014). Indeed, meaningfulness associated with family and interpersonal relationships were found by Delle Fave et al. (2013) to account for more variance in general meaning in life than any other domains. Wilkinson and King (2021) suggested that the sense of mattering within a community and engagement with culture would be key factors in accounting for socialization as a central component of why engagement in AH would enhance meaning in life. The findings of the present study coincide with the abovementioned considerations and further illustrate the potential benefits to meaning derived through socialization. Based on findings depicted through qualitative research in the present study throughout narratives germane to initial motivation, discovery, and persistence among authors, the communal aspects of art (e.g., support from other authors, larger community, etc.) play a key role in authors' persistence in their line of work. Correspondingly, qualitative and quantitative findings appeared to converge toward meta-inferences that suggest that socialization within author communities plays a notable and meaningful role in authors' lives.

Expression displayed a negative association with affect balance when controlling for the variance accounted for by the other RAISE mechanisms. This finding is counterintuitive when

taken with Thapa et al.'s (2024) initial assertion and eventual findings that expression would be associated with higher psychological flourishing. Marsh and Dik (2026) also found a slight positive association between expression and positive affect. Drake et al.'s (2024) experimental research showed that actively creating (visual) art had greater benefits to affect than viewing art does as a form of consumption. A corresponding consideration in literature would suggest that writing would be expected to have greater benefits to affect than reading. Indeed, expressive writing has generally shown strong benefits to mental health (Pennebaker, 1997). However, expression as a form of professional creation of art to be viewed by others could account for this discrepancy. Metainferences from synthesizing the described quantitative work with findings from the present qualitative research may illustrate this consideration. One participant noted that their persistence as an author was aided through attending therapy because "...suddenly a very personal aspect of yourself and your work becomes viewed by hundreds or thousands of people all at once. It can be a lot, and I know a lot of writers who crumble under all the scrutiny and lose their passion." Indeed, greater degree of expression of one's personal beliefs, emotions, or experiences could be linked to a more negative affective experience due to the greater exposure of vulnerability involved in the pursuit. Another feasible explanation is that the causal direction could be reversed in which those feeling a more negative balance of affect were more inclined to see their writing as a mechanism through which they could engage in expression. Responses from the present study's qualitative results could depict this experience, such as a participant who conveyed that "writing is cathartic and allows me to sift through difficult emotions and express them."

Calling Among Multiple Jobholders

Research question 3 inquired about the arrangements in which calling could be experienced among multiple jobholders across two areas of work: calling toward day job and calling toward writing. It was hypothesized that members of the sample would be adequately described in order of prevalence as (1) Compensators (high perceiving a calling toward authorship and low perceiving a calling toward day job), (2) Multiple Callings (i.e., high perceiving a calling toward authorship and high perceiving a calling toward day job), and (3) No Calling (i.e., low perceiving a calling toward authorship and low perceiving a calling toward day job). The scatterplot created to investigate this matter showed clear patterns that could be categorized; although, the continuous measurement techniques should be considered in a manner that any cutoff points creating discrete groups would be relatively arbitrary in nature.

Nearly every author (all but two) in the subsample of multiple jobholders were above the midpoint of the 7-point CS for calling toward writing, suggesting that lacking a sense of calling toward one's writing is likely a rare experience among multiple jobholding authors. Across the measure of calling toward day job, the sample was relatively normally distributed in a manner that indicated it was reasonable to conclude the presence of three forms of prevalent arrangements of calling among authors working multiple jobs. The hypothesized categories of compensators (low calling toward day job, high calling toward writing) and multiple callings (high calling toward both day job area and writing) appeared represented by the data. The third profile, rather than representing no calling at all as hypothesized, appeared to have around average sense of calling toward day job and high calling toward writing.

A no calling profile was expected, given that previous research on broader samples typically finds a notably sized number of participants who do not have a sense of calling at all

(Gazica & Spector, 2015; Marsh et al., 2020). Indeed, a nationally representative sample of the U.S. has showed that approximately 43% of the U.S. population perceives a calling, indicating the construct may not hold relevance to a substantial portion of the population (White et al., 2021). Correspondingly, the lack of a clear set of participants who do not at all experience a sense of calling was unanticipated, even in a relatively small niche sample. Still, an array of previous literature did suggest that the experience of calling would likely be overrepresented among a sample of authors, including quantitative research on artists inclusive of writers (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011) and themes in qualitative research on calling among authors and other artistic career forms (Cinque et al., 2021; Fontana et al., 2025; Lois & Gregson, 2019; Lysova & Khapova, 2019). As expected based on the above considerations and general lack of incentive to pursue authorship for extrinsic incentives (Lindemann, 2013), there did not appear to be a contingent of the sample representing individuals high in calling toward day job and low in calling toward writing. In fact, there were no participants in the sample that fell above the midpoint on calling toward day job, while being below the midpoint on calling toward writing.

Moderation models on multiple jobholders in the sample investigated research question 4. These models examined how the extent to which one perceives a sense of calling toward the area of work of their day job alters the relationship between sense of calling toward writing and three criterion variables drawn from WCT (Duffy et al., 2018). The three criterion variables examined were living a calling (the central variable of WCT), job satisfaction (considered a positive outcome of calling in WCT), and burnout (conceptualized as a negative outcome in WCT). In this way, the present research contributed to theory on calling, as it represented a preliminary step in furthering understanding of how WCT may be applied to multiple jobholders, particularly

in the context of artistic/creative career paths in which holding more than one job is typical (Hennekam, 2017; Lindemann, 2013; Lois & Gregson, 2019).

Results from the present research showed no significant interaction effects associated with the analyses involving living a calling and job satisfaction. This could suggest that the relationship between calling toward writing and these two variables is not substantially altered by the degree to which one is called toward the area of work their day job is in. Still, these analyses were underpowered, so caution is urged in interpretation of null results as evidence of the absence of an effect.

A significant interaction effect was found in the moderation model involving burnout. While the limitations (e.g., cross-sectional, underpowered) of the research make this finding far from definitive, this result could hold substantial implications for the view of calling as a “double-edged sword” (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). This perspective supposes that in addition to the construct’s numerous beneficial effects, there is a dark side of calling (Duffy et al., 2016). Probing of the results suggested that among those with a low degree of calling toward their day job, greater sense of calling toward writing was associated with experiencing higher levels of burnout. Oppositely, those who were called toward their day jobs appeared to show sense of calling toward writing to be linked to lower degrees of burnout. Meanwhile, degree of calling toward writing did not appear to be significantly related to burnout for those who were around average in regard to levels of calling toward their day job.

The present results hint at an effect worth examining through more robust longitudinal or experimental research. Should such findings hold up, it would indicate that the greater the sense of calling toward writing, the less they would be expected to experience burnout; thus, a second calling would have additive positive effects. However, among those working day jobs in areas to

which they do not feel called, a greater strength of calling toward writing would be pernicious, as the more called toward writing one perceives themselves to be, the more burnout they would be expected to experience. The latter finding coincides with Webster and Edwards's (2019) work showing that holding a second job as a calling exacerbates the negative impact of secondary job-to-primary job resource drain and work engagement at one's primary job. Based on the results of the present study, those with secondary job callings may be prone to experience burnout that undermines primary job work engagement, if their day jobs do not align with their callings.

Despite the substantial theoretical, conceptual, and qualitative work asserting that burnout could be a consequence of calling (Cardador & Caza, 2012; Dik & Duffy, 2012; Duffy et al., 2018; Vinje & Mittelmark, 2007), the vast majority of quantitative findings in this area have pointed toward calling as being associated with lower burnout and buffering against consequences of burnout (e.g., Dalla Rosa et al., 2024; Dobrow et al., 2023; Duffy et al., 2016; Rawat & Nadavulakere, 2015). The present study illuminates a potential contextual circumstance in which greater sense of calling could be linked to a higher degree of burnout. The novel nature of this finding raises questions about what may explain greater degree of calling being linked to author burnout in the case of those working day jobs that do not feel as meaningful.

Although the authors who participated in the present study were all published and therefore professionally pursuing their callings, the experience of unanswered callings may hold relevance for this explanation. In their research on unanswered callings, Berg et al. (2010) differentiated between *missed* and *additional* callings. They conceptualized individuals with missed callings as people who “do not view their current occupation as a calling but have one or more unanswered callings” and those with additional callings as “those who view their current occupation as a calling and have one or more unanswered callings” (p. 985).

Most of the participants interviewed in Berg and colleagues' (2010) sample who identified as having missed callings acknowledged feelings of frustration/aggravation, which had been described as partially stemming from a sense that they were being restricted or blocked from being able to pursue their calling. Many authors may face repeated sense that one's day job is providing these hindrances as they seek to find time to work on their writing. In that way, the greater degree to which one perceives a calling toward writing in the absence of a calling toward the domain of their day job, the more their psychological experiences may resemble those of people with a sense of a missed calling, even though the authors are still professionally pursuing their authorial goals. This could help delineate how burnout and exhaustion may arise for many who do not perceive themselves as called toward the domain of their day job. While some of those with additional callings faced experiences of overload in attempts to pursue multiple callings, this only represented seven of the 22 participants who identified as having additional callings. Others in the sample described benefits to additional callings, exemplified by one participant who noted that their callings toward teaching, music, and painting each held elements that enriched the other roles. Indeed, it may be that authors in the present study who viewed their day jobs as callings may reflect a corresponding perspective to many with additional callings in a way that was linked to lower levels of burnout.

Gazica and Spector (2015) also found deleterious associations between unanswered occupational callings and numerous metrics of work well-being (e.g., job satisfaction, work engagement), overall psychological well-being/mental health (e.g., life satisfaction, depression), and physical symptoms of health. Their research showed a general pattern that the feeling of having an unanswered calling tended to be associated with adverse effects compared to those with answered callings and even those who did not experience a sense of calling at all. Marsh et

al.'s (2020) replication effort did not support the finding that unanswered callings were detrimental compared to those with no callings, but their results did reinforce Gazica and Spector's work showing that those with answered callings had more positive psychological experiences than those with unanswered callings. As described above, unanswered callings are typically conceptualized in the scientific literature as being experienced by those who are not professionally pursuing their calling. However, the implications of the present study suggest that it may be worth expanding what it means for one's calling to feel unanswered, given that professional engagement in authorship as a second job may correspond to the experience of an unanswered calling. In other words, perhaps one can be professionally engaged in an area aligned with their calling, while still feeling as though their calling remains unanswered due to other contextual barriers (e.g., time restriction from a primary job misaligned with one's calling).

Outside of literature directly addressing calling, other areas of work on the interface between multiple roles can be potentially elucidating. Indeed, aforementioned work on depletion and enrichment perspectives among multiple jobholders can be drawn from (Campion et al., 2020). As Campion and colleagues concluded, depletion is more likely to occur when one experiences push motivations in which they felt a need to take on another job for financial means. In the case of the present sample of authors, it is likely that those with low sense of calling toward day job would see financial means as a key motivator to engage in that area of work, making depletion more probable. However, those who perceived their day jobs to also be in an area that they were called to may experience enrichment associated with pull motivations in which psychological fulfillment drew them to both their day job and authorial work. Findings from the qualitative portion of the present research also coincide with this consideration. Regarding persistence through adversity of authorship, income from another source emerged as a

label as part of the larger Love of Writing Process theme. Correspondingly, individuals such as a participant who indicated the following may demonstrate such enrichment: “I'm lucky that I have a career I love. If I was given the opportunity to be a full-time author I don't think I'd take it as it would become ‘work’ and I worry I'd lose the love of writing.” Taken together, a metainference drawn from the quantitative and qualitative results generally points toward the potential for enrichment when participants had day jobs that provided a sense of calling or fulfillment.

Other potential explanations for this study's finding regarding burnout can be drawn from research on managing multiple roles among work and family. Work and family roles have the potential for both enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) and conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Greenhaus and Beutell asserted that conflict between roles could occur when time dedicated to, strain experienced from, or behaviors expressed within a role inhibits ability to fulfill another role. With this in mind, authors who have day jobs that they do not feel align with what they were meant to do may be inclined to view their primary job as taking valuable time or energy away from their writing, and a stronger sense of calling toward one's writing may enhance this sense of conflict. Greenhaus and Powell proposed in their conception of work-family enrichment that positive spillover can occur in instances in which instrumental paths (e.g., skills, perspectives, flexibility) or affective paths (e.g., positive affect in one role enhances the other) enhance both roles. Though the present data is unable to be applied to clarify if these mechanisms are at play, those high in calling toward both day job and writing may find that resources are generated rather than reduced through participating in multiple roles via one or both of these paths in a manner that may alleviate burnout.

Practical Implications

The findings in the present research point toward several implications for practitioners implementing interventions germane to career counseling and vocational interventions. Still, the limitations of the study warrant appropriate caution in application of the findings. Indeed, all following implications toward practice are best viewed as speculative and contingent upon the preliminary findings herein being replicated through more future work using more robust methods (e.g., multiple time points, experimental research, larger samples). Furthermore, practitioners and those conducting interventions should attend to individual differences rather than viewing the present findings as indicative of monolithic experiences.

Findings related to calling qualitatively reveal the potential form through which professionals in the arts (at least in the case of writers) understand and engage with their work as a calling. Like other qualitative studies on those pursuing creative careers (Cinque et al., 2021; Fontana et al., 2025; Lysova & Khapova, 2019), writers identified dimensions of calling (e.g., transcendent summons, prosocial orientation; Dik & Duffy, 2009) as a means of persistence when managing adversity and hardship in these precarious career paths. Interventions designed to aid writers in their vocational pursuits may leverage the concepts of perceived importance of one's story as a guiding force. Furthermore, helping writers see the potential ways in which their work benefits others could serve as a contributing factor toward enabling writers' persistence in their pursuits.

This study's findings may also guide career counselors aiding multiple jobholders in navigating the potential "double-edged sword" of calling (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), especially regarding its link to burnout. In working with those who have a secondary career pursuit aligned with their sense of calling, consideration of the person's level of calling toward

their day job may be crucial in determining how to guide their engagement with the calling construct. If the present findings are corroborated by future research demonstrating causal relationships, then enhancing one's sense of calling toward a person's secondary job pursuit could increase burnout among workers who do not feel called toward their day job. Thus, interventions designed to reduce burnout by enhancing calling could first prioritize bolstering sense of calling toward day job through means such as job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). In other words, bolstering calling toward one's day job may be viewed as a prerequisite to efforts toward enhancing calling toward writing.

As research showing the RAISE mechanisms' unique associations with flourishing variables among professionals in the arts is limited, the present study may provide a helpful starting place for counselors or other interventionists seeking to work with this population. In particular, the findings regarding which flourishing variables each RAISE mechanism was linked to in this study may provide initial guidance in this area. For example, a practitioner seeking to enhance meaning in life may explore with clients the potential to involve oneself in social forms of engagement with their creation of art (e.g., writing groups). Meanwhile, interventions that promote reflection may be more apt for those addressing psychological richness among their clients. The findings relevant to the negative association between expression and affect balance coupled with qualitative findings in this study reveal the potential nuance practitioners must consider when working with a population of professional artists. While expressive writing has shown the potential to have salubrious effects as a therapeutic activity (Pennebaker, 1997), the results of the present study raise the possibility that greater expression may present with greater vulnerability to adverse effects on one's mood for professional artists, given that their work may be publicly scrutinized (e.g., through online book reviews). Still, qualitative results in this study

showed that some authors view writing as an emotional outlet for coping, so practitioners are advised to work with each individual client to discern the role of expressive writing in the context of their own life.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present study presents with notable limitations, which point toward areas of future research. One limitation regards demographic representation of the sample within this study. Regarding race/ethnicity, the sample was predominantly White (81.6%). A more diverse sample would present with a more robust and generalizable examination of the topic researched. Strong empirical data within the scientific literature regarding breakdown of racial demographics of authors is limited; however, it is worth noting that the sample consisting of primarily White individuals may be similar to percentages seen within the larger publishing industry. Estimates in popular press articles suggest that approximately 89% of fiction authors are White (So & Wezerek, 2020), so our sample may have shown reflections of larger inequity within the publishing industry. Generalizability is also restricted by the sole inclusion of countries with Westernized cultural backdrops. Future research could examine participants residing within countries representing more diverse cultural contexts.

The cross-sectional nature of this research presents a clear limitation. The placement of variables within the models are derived from established theory and framework within the scientific literature. Specifically, the RAISE mechanisms are proposed to predict the psychological well-being and flourishing markers used as criterion variables in our series of multiple linear regression models (Tay et al., 2018; Thapa et al., 2024), and the work-level variables that were predicted within the moderation models are all expected outcomes within WCT (Duffy et al., 2018); however, the present data cannot account for temporal placement or

causal directions of these relationships. Experimental and longitudinal methods should be applied in future research in this area. Other limitations include those typical of a self-report survey method. For example, social desirability bias may contribute toward participants' responses to variables such as empathy, which are widely considered positive attributes. Further research could include informant-report and observable behavioral metrics.

A key limitation of the study stems from the sample size, which is underpowered to fully detect all effects in the models. Though a total sample of 110 published science fiction and fantasy authors is substantial in consideration of the niche and difficult to access nature of the population, caution is still warranted in interpreting results. In particular, there is a marked risk for Type II errors in which effects that may be present remain undetected within the analyses conducted. For the multiple linear regression models, a medium total effect of each model would have required 138 participants. As previously mentioned, the subsample used for the moderation analyses ($n = 84$) was sufficiently powered to detect a f^2 of .096, which was between a small and medium effect. Reliably detecting a small effect of $f^2 = .02$ would require a much larger sample size of $n = 395$. For this reason, significant caution is urged in interpreting results, especially in the cases of the two moderation models for which no significant interaction effect was found. Indeed, it would be inappropriate to conclude that no interaction effect exists pertaining to those models. The limitation regarding sample size is also of particular note regarding two models, which were the multiple linear regression models that regressed psychological richness and affect balance on the RAISE mechanisms. In both models, one particular participant (case 87) significantly impacted results. Replicating this study with a larger sample would be prudent and valuable in future research.

Another limitation is the implementation of the RAISE scales, which were only recently developed. The small set of empirical research that has used these scales has been promising regarding their reliability and validity (Marsh & Dik, 2026; Thapa et al., 2024), but further research across various populations is needed to fully establish how robust the scales are for their intended purposes. In particular, the present study represents the first implementation of the RAISE scales among authors, so further research could be helpful in establishing their applicability to this population.

The present research's methods through which participants were recruited hold several limitations. One considerable limitation is potential for sampling bias (e.g., self-selection bias). The opportunity to participate was presented in some form to a far greater number of SFF authors than the small percentage that took the necessary steps in order to participate in the study. When the opportunity to participate was shared via listservs and Discord servers, the researcher did not include the link within the email sent to the community (a measure taken to create a barrier to fraudulent responses). Instead, participants were asked to reach out to the researcher directly via provided contact information. While this method likely enabled better quality of data, it created significant barriers to accessing the survey that may have prevented those who were not highly interested in the subject matter from participating. This holds limits to transferability of qualitative findings and generalizability of quantitative findings.

Further regarding fraudulent responding, significant measures were taken to prevent fraudulent data, especially following a public posting of the survey resulting in the survey likely being accessed by individuals who engaged in fraudulent responses. This included implementation of empirically validated attention checks (Curran & Hauser, 2019; Huang et al., 2015), direct scrutinization of qualitative responses for clear indicators of poor responding, the

application of a CAPTCHA to prevent automated responding, and the aforementioned limitation of access to the link in order to take the survey. Nevertheless, in an online survey accessible via a shared link, it cannot be guaranteed that 100% of responses were high quality and from participants meeting inclusion criteria. Indeed, this survey provided the opportunity for participants to remain essentially anonymous if they chose to (the only identifiable data collected was email address, which could, if desired, contain no information easily traced back to them). Still, as previously mentioned, the majority of participants included in analyses were contacted directly by the researcher and could be identified by the researcher as verifiable SFF authors.

Regarding the qualitative findings of this research, there is potential for biases to impact the identified themes; although, significant efforts were made to mitigate the effects of these biases during the coding process. All coders were published authors in the scientific literature of meaningful work and sense of calling. There are benefits to level of expertise in discerning themes, but drawbacks regarding potential biases in interpreting responses through this lens. All coders were trained in the context of the same research lab, so there is additional plausibility of shared biases among the research team. Furthermore, none of the coders ceased their coding process prior to finishing each of the responses (i.e., a saturation point was not reached). While this maximized the chances that all labels and themes within the data were accounted for in results, it also may suggest that a larger sample could have resulted in additional labels.

Limitations regarding integration of qualitative and quantitative findings existed pertaining to their being designed to address separate research questions. While in some instances results converged in a manner that enabled metainferences, future research seeking to conduct comprehensive mixed-methods approaches could advance the knowledgebase in this area through creating qualitative and quantitative items that correspond with one another to

address similar research questions. Similarly, the present research did not include conducting analyses involving transformation of qualitative data to directly analyze in the same models with quantitative data (Creswell, 2022). Such endeavors could be a fruitful area of further research. The online survey methodology of the present study also precluded capability for member checking as a way to ensure confirmability of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Findings should be interpreted in consideration of these matters.

Another limitation regards the generalizability of the findings on those with multiple jobs. The participants of the present research represent authors as a form of creative career path in which there was little to no representation of individuals for whom their day job served as a calling in an absence of a calling toward their work as a writer. However, it is feasible that many individuals in other career paths perceive the secondary work as enabling one to supplement income as they pursue a primary job in which they may feel called. Bunderson and Thompson's (2009) influential mixed-methods work among zookeepers provided examples of zookeepers who felt called toward their primary work but had taken on additional jobs, such as a participant who noted they "work two days at the art museum just to make ends meet... [as] the payoff for doing what you love" (p. 42). In such cases, it is possible that the secondary job is not felt to be a calling, while the primary job is. The present findings do not account for such experiences, but future research could further understanding in this area. Likewise, some multiple jobholders work more than two jobs, and for practical purposes, the measurement technique implemented in the present study could not precisely account for those experiences. Future research could administer alternate measurement techniques to gather information on the experience of calling among those with more than two jobs.

Conclusion

The present study on the work and well-being experiences of published science fiction, fantasy, and speculative fiction authors provided preliminary but valuable contributions across two main areas of research. One of these lines of literature involves examining the recently conceptualized RAISE mechanisms of engagement in AH (Tay et al., 2018; Thapa et al., 2024). By applying the RAISE scales to a sample of published SFF authors, the study takes a key initial step toward discerning which mechanisms may hold associations with which forms of flourishing among a particular population holding professional roles in the arts.

The present study also furthers knowledge within the burgeoning area of research on calling. In particular, this research elaborates on the thus far limited empirical examinations of the experience of creative/artistic callings (Fontana et al., 2025; Lysova & Khapova, 2019) and calling among multiple jobholders (Webster & Edwards, 2019). Qualitative findings pointed toward key themes regarding how authors experienced initial motivation, discovery narratives, and persistence and were integrated with quantitative results to contextualize and interpret findings. The data provided through open-ended responses suggested a role that constructs germane to calling play in these experiences (e.g., sense of being compelled to share an important story, desire for prosocial impact). These findings also illuminated various other relevant psychological factors germane to authors' experiences across the three domains investigated, which pointed toward fruitful areas of further research on the population. Quantitative findings on multiple jobholders in the sample also provided evidence of the potential “double-edged sword” of calling toward the creative pursuit of writing due to differential associations with burnout depending on levels of calling toward day job. Despite its

clear limitations, the present research provides a set of promising findings that lays the foundation for future work to expand through more robust methods.

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APPENDIX A
CONSENT FORM

Consent to Participate in Research

Project Title: Work and Well-being among Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers

Investigators: Dylan Marsh, M.S. is conducting this study, while being overseen by his advisor and the Principal Investigator, Bryan Dik, Ph.D.

Sponsor: Colorado State University Psychology Department

Protocol #: IRB# 6018

Purpose, Procedure, and Duration:

We are researchers from Colorado State University (CSU), Department of Psychology inviting you to participate in surveys. We want to learn more about factors related to work and well-being among science fiction and fantasy authors.

If you agree to participate in our study, you will be asked to take two total surveys. You will be asked to complete one survey now, and you will then be sent an email in which you are asked to take a follow-up survey eight weeks after completion of this first survey. Each survey will take about 25 minutes to complete.

Eligibility:

- You must meet the following requirements to participate in this research study:
- Age 18 or older
- A published author in science fiction, fantasy, and/or speculative fiction (broadly defined)
- Participants must live in the U.S., U.K., Canada, or Australia.
- Capable of understanding and responding to a survey written in English
- Have access to the internet and an active email address at which one can receive a link to compensation and a follow-up link in eight weeks for a second survey

Risks:

Some of our questions may make you feel uncomfortable or upset, but you can skip any question you don't want to answer. You can also stop the survey at any time.

We will use a survey company called "Qualtrics" to collect your responses. They may have Terms of Service and Privacy policies outside of the control of CSU that allow them to use your data for other purposes. We will make every effort to safeguard your data. However, we cannot guarantee the security of data obtained via the Internet.

Benefits:

You may not benefit personally from being in this study, but your answers could help us understand more about factors related to work and well-being among writers

Compensation:

For each survey you complete, you will be paid \$5 U.S. compensation (or the equivalent in the currency associated with your country of residence). If you reside in the U.K. you will receive £5 of compensation for each survey you complete. You will receive this in the form of an Amazon Gift Card for the Amazon website associated with your country of residence. This enables you to earn a total of the equivalent of \$10 U.S. or £10 for completing both surveys. You must reach the

end of the survey to receive this compensation. Also, in order to receive compensation, participants must respond accurately to several simple items designed to assess whether attention is being paid to the survey. These items are straightforward and easy to answer correctly for individuals who are reading and responding carefully. Participants who do not meet this attention requirement will not receive compensation.

Alternative Opportunities:

We know of no alternative to participating in our study except choosing to not participate in our study.

Confidentiality and Future Use:

We will keep your survey responses confidential to the extent allowed by law. You will not be identified when we write about the study. Note that Qualtrics has specific privacy policies of their own. You should be aware that these web services may be able to link your responses to your ID in ways that are not bound by this consent form and the data confidentiality procedures used in this study, and if you have concerns you should consult these services directly.

Presently, the only identifiable information that we will be collecting is your email address (this is to enable us to provide you with your compensation and the link to your follow-up survey). Any identifiable information will be removed if we share data with other researchers. No identifiable information will be shared in any form outside of the research team associated with this project.

Complaints or Concerns:

If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at CSU_IRB@colostate.edu. If you have questions about the study, please contact the researcher(s) at Dylan.Marsh@colostate.edu and/or Bryan.Dik@colostate.edu.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our study. You do not have to participate in our study, but we hope you will. Please make sure you have at least 25 minutes to complete this survey since you will not be able to stop and come back to the survey at a later time. If you have read and understood the above information and consent to participating in the study and continue on to the survey. Otherwise close your browser now.

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form, and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have been offered the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction through the contact information provided above. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I am not giving up any legal rights by agreeing to this form. I have the option to obtain a copy of this form by emailing the researcher(s) at the above provided contact

APPENDIX B
MEASURES

Open-ended Qualitative Items

1. What initially motivated you to pursue authorship?
2. How did you discover that you wanted to be an author?
3. How do you manage to persist through the hardship and adversity that comes with being an author?

Calling Scale: Calling Toward Writing

Please answer the following items in reference to your experience with writing and authorship. There are no right or wrong answers.

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Moderately Disagree
3 = Slightly Disagree
4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
5 = Slightly Agree
6 = Moderately Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

1. I am passionate about writing.
2. I enjoy writing more than anything else.
3. Writing gives me immense personal satisfaction.
4. I would sacrifice everything to be an author
5. The first thing I often think about when I describe myself to others is that I'm an author
6. I would continue being an author even in the face of severe obstacles.
7. I know that being a writer—either professionally or as an amateur—will always be part of my life.
8. I feel a sense of destiny about being a writer—either professionally or as an amateur.
9. Writing is always in my mind in some way.
10. Even when not writing, I often think about writing.
11. My existence would be much less meaningful without my involvement in writing
12. Writing is a deeply moving and gratifying experience for me.

Calling Scale: Calling Toward Day Job

1. I am passionate about the work that I do at my day job.
2. I enjoy the work that I do at my day job more than anything else.
3. Working at my day job gives me immense personal satisfaction.
4. I would sacrifice everything to be in the area of work I do for my day job.
5. The first thing I often think about when I describe myself to others is that I'm in the area of work I do for my day job.
6. I would continue being in the area of work I do for my day job even in the face of severe obstacles.
7. I know that being in the area of work I do for my day job will always be part of my life.
8. I feel a sense of destiny about being in the area of work I do for my day job.
9. My day job is always in my mind in some way.

10. Even when not working at my day job, I often think about my day job.
11. My existence would be much less meaningful without my involvement in my day job.
12. Working at my day job is a deeply moving and gratifying experience for me.

Living a Calling Scale

Please answer the following items if you currently feel a calling to a line of work. Please answer using the following scale:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Moderately Disagree
- 3 = Slightly Disagree
- 4 = Neutral
- 5 = Slightly Agree
- 6 = Moderately Agree
- 7 = Strongly Agree

1. I have regular opportunities to live out my calling
2. I am currently working in a job that closely aligns with my calling
3. I am consistently living out my calling.
4. I am currently engaging in activities that align with my calling.
5. I am living out my calling right now in my job.
6. I am working in the job to which I feel called.

Job Satisfaction Scale

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Moderately Disagree
- 3 = Slightly Disagree
- 4 = Neutral
- 5 = Slightly Agree
- 6 = Moderately Agree
- 7 = Strongly Agree

1. I feel fairly well satisfied with my present job
2. Most days I am enthusiastic about my work
3. Each day of work seems like it will never end (reverse scored),
4. I find real enjoyment in my work
5. I consider my job rather unpleasant

Oldenburg Burnout Inventory Exhaustion Subscale

- 1 = Strongly disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neither agree nor disagree

4 = Agree
5 = Strongly agree

1. There are days when I feel tired before I arrive at work.
2. After work, I tend to need more time than in the past in order to relax and feel better.
3. I can tolerate the pressure of my work very well.
4. During my work, I often feel emotionally drained.
5. After working, I have enough energy for my leisure activities.
6. After my work, I usually feel worn out and weary.
7. Usually, I can manage the amount of my work well.
8. When I work, I usually feel energized.

RAISE Scales

Thinking about when you engage in the activities related to writing fiction, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Immersion

When I engage in activities related to writing fiction,

1. I don't feel the passage of time
2. I feel that time stops
3. I don't feel how the time passes
4. I can easily devote my whole attention to the activity
5. Once started, continuing the activity takes no effort
6. I am no longer worried about the challenges of everyday life

Reflection

When I engage in activities related to writing fiction,

1. I reflect on the philosophy of life
2. I think about the meaning of life
3. I look at my life in philosophical ways
4. I engage in philosophical or abstract thinking
5. I am deeply contemplative
6. I savor past experiences
7. I take time to enjoy past positive feelings
8. I cherish the events of my life
9. I relive my past experiences
10. I relish past positive feelings
11. I try to understand events from others' perspectives
12. I try to take other people's perspectives
13. I imagine how other people are thinking
14. I seek to understand other people's viewpoint
15. I make an effort to see the world through others' eyes

Expression

When I engage in activities related to writing fiction,

1. I can authentically disclose my values and beliefs
2. I feel I am being authentic
3. I can easily reveal my true self
4. I can freely express my thoughts and emotions
5. I can easily communicate what I believe in

Acquisition

When I engage in activities related to writing fiction,

1. I develop new skills and abilities
2. I learn new abilities
3. I build new competencies and capabilities
4. I acquire experiences to master new techniques
5. I feel competent
6. I feel that I do well in general
7. I feel a sense of accomplishment
8. I feel successful
9. I learn how to behave successfully by watching successful others
10. I develop confidence in my abilities by learning from the mistakes of others
11. Observing others pushes me to do better
12. I can picture myself to behave similarly to those around me
13. I discover new ways of behaving by observing others
14. Others praise my skills
15. People tell me that I am skilled
16. Others tell me that I am talented
17. My competencies and capabilities are complimented
18. I am praised for my abilities
19. I am persuaded to face my challenges
20. I receive valuable feedback from others that helps me improve
21. I am pushed to do better
22. I feel supported when needed
23. I find people who advocate for me
24. I feel relaxed and calm
25. I feel free
26. I feel at ease

Socialization

My engagement in activities related to writing fiction allows me to,

1. Strengthen my current relationships
2. Build deep relationships

3. Maintain close relationships with others
4. Develop warm and trusting relationships
5. Feel closer to the people in my life
6. Engage in more meaningful conversations
7. Have more interesting discussions with other people
8. Get into deeper conversations with others
9. Start inspiring discussions with other people
10. Develop a sense of identity
11. Broaden the identities that are important to me
12. Better understand who I am
13. Have a more accurate reflection of myself
14. Be satisfied with my identities

Satisfaction with Life Scale

Directions: Please read the following questions and respond with your level of agreement with the statements regarding your life as a whole.

- 1 = Absolutely Untrue
- 2 = Mostly Untrue
- 3 = Somewhat Untrue
- 4 = Neither True or Untrue
- 5 = Somewhat True
- 6 = Mostly True
- 7 = Absolutely True

1. I am satisfied with my life.
2. The conditions of my life are excellent.
3. In most ways my life is close to the ideal.
4. So far I have gotten the important things I want from life.
5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing

Meaning in Life Questionnaire Presence Subscale

Directions: Please take a moment to think about what makes your life feel important to you. Please respond to the following statements as truthfully and accurately as you can, and also please remember that these are very subjective questions and that there are no right or wrong answers. Please answer according to the scale below:

- 1 = Absolutely Untrue
- 2 = Mostly Untrue
- 3 = Somewhat Untrue
- 4 = Can't Say True or False
- 5 = Somewhat True
- 6 = Mostly True
- 7 = Absolutely True

1. I understand my life's meaning.
2. My life has a clear sense of purpose.
3. I have a good sense of what makes my life meaningful.
4. I have discovered a satisfying life purpose.
5. My life has no clear purpose.

Psychologically Rich Life Questionnaire (12-item version)

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
 2 = Disagree
 3 = Slightly Disagree
 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
 5 = Slightly Agree
 6 = Agree
 7 = Strongly Agree

1. My life has been psychologically rich
2. My life has been experientially rich
3. My life has been emotionally rich
4. I have had a lot of interesting experiences
5. I have had a lot of novel experiences
6. My life has been full of unique, unusual experiences
7. My life consists of rich, intense moments
8. I experience a full range of emotions via first-hand experiences such as travel and attending concerts
9. I have a lot of personal stories to tell others
10. On my deathbed, I am likely to say "I had an interesting life"
11. On my deathbed, I am likely to say "I have seen and learned a lot"
12. My life would make a good novel or movie

SPANE

Please think about what you have been doing and experiencing during the past four weeks. Then report how much you experienced each of the following feelings, using the scale below. For each item, select a number from 1 to 5, and indicate that number on your response sheet.

- 1 = Very Rarely or Never
 2 = Rarely
 3 = Sometimes
 4 = Often
 5 = Very Often or Always

- Positive
- Negative

- Good
- Bad
- Pleasant
- Unpleasant
- Happy
- Sad
- Afraid
- Joyful
- Angry
- Contented

Interpersonal Reactivity Index

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate letter on the scale at the top of the page: A, B, C, D, or E. When you have decided on your answer, fill in the letter next to the item number. **READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING.** Answer as honestly as you can. Thank you.

ANSWER SCALE:

A = Does not describe me well.

B

C

D

E = Describes me very well.

1. I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.
2. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.
3. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view.
4. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems.
5. I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.
6. I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it.
7. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
8. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.
9. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
10. Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me.
11. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.
12. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.
13. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters.
14. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.
15. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.

16. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.
17. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.
18. When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character.
19. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.
20. When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me.
21. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

Short Scale of Creative Self

Below you will find several sentences used by people to describe themselves. Please decide to what extent each of these statements describes you. There are no good or wrong answers.

- 1 = Definitely not
2 = Somewhat not
3 = Neither yes or no
4 = Somewhat yes
5 = Definitely yes

1. I think I am a creative person
2. My creativity is important for who I am
3. I know I can efficiently solve even complicated problems;
4. I trust my creative abilities;
5. My imagination and ingenuity distinguishes me from my friends;
6. Many times I have proved that I can cope with difficult situations;
7. Being a creative person is important to me
8. I am sure I can deal with problems requiring creative thinking
9. I am good at proposing original solutions to problems.
10. Creativity is an important part of myself
11. Ingenuity is a characteristic that is important to me