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7 **Psychological success: when the**  
8 **career is a *calling*<sup>†</sup>**  
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17 **Summary**

18 This article has the dual purpose of expanding an understanding of the relationship between  
19 subjective and objective careers, and describing one condition under which the subjective  
20 career takes on particular salience: when the person feels a sense of calling in his or her career  
21 (that is, a sense of purpose, that this is the work one was meant to do.) This sense of calling  
22 does not necessarily have to be connected to a set of religious beliefs. We present a model of  
23 psychological success based on the career as a calling in order to clarify relationships between  
24 the subjective and objective career, and we offer propositions related to the model. Further, we  
25 offer a case study to illustrate the notion of the career as a calling, as proposed in the model.  
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28 **Introduction: The Value of a Dual Perspective**  
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31 One of Everett Hughes' great contributions to the field of careers was pointing out the importance of  
32 which beholder's eye is viewing a career (Hughes, 1958). Hughes asserted that the *subjective career* is  
33 most pertinent from the vantage-point of the individual as he evaluates different facets of his career  
34 (Van Maanen, 1977; Hughes, 1958). In contrast, Hughes highlighted the criticality of the *objective*  
35 *career* when considering the vantage-point of society and an external perspective that 'validates'  
36 the tangible facets of an individual's career, such as income, promotions, hierarchical job level, and  
37 job mobility (Van Maanen, 1977; Hughes, 1958).

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40 ***But it's not 'either-or'!***

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42 When Hughes identified these two different views of the career, he was simply citing the importance of  
43 understanding different vantage-points rather than focusing exclusively on objective career constructs.  
44 In this case, one vantage-point is inside, and the other is outside (of the person). Both are correct, and

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50 †This is a revised and expanded version of a contribution to the symposium, 'Unpacking and Reconceptualizing Career Success',  
51 Peter Heslin, Chair, Academy of Management Annual Meeting, Denver, August 12, 2002.

neither is better than the other. Since Hughes' evocation, career research theorists have considered the limitations of examining one vantage-point in the absence of the other; more specifically, they have sought a better understanding of the subjective career (Barley, 1989; Goffman, 1961; [Hall, 1996](#)<sup>Q1</sup> Arthur et al., 2004).

Exploration of the subjective career was and continues to be timely given the fundamental shift that has occurred within the career context (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Mirvis & Hall, 1996). Traditional career research was consistent with hierarchical, position-oriented organizations in which promotions, income differentials, rank, and job retention were relevant to 'captive' individuals as they navigated their careers. In contrast, in a turbulent environmental context, characterized by technological advances, globalization, and other complex factors, individuals are less dependent on organizational career arrangements. Instead, individuals experience more career transitions, have greater agency in career decisions, and must be adaptable and able learners (e.g., [Hall, 1996](#)<sup>Q1</sup>). Consequently, subjective career measures such as job satisfaction, self-awareness and adaptability, and learning, essentially individual-level factors, rather than organizational-level factors, have taken on greater salience in today's environment. Our contention, however, is not that one vantage-point is more pertinent, but rather that the subjective career cannot be ignored—as it was in prior decades—particularly in today's career environment.

### *Interdependence of the subjective and the objective views*

Most recently, the debate has shifted from whether one vantage-point is more critical than another to how objective and subjective careers relate to one another. Rather than focusing on just one vantage-point, researchers acknowledge their *interdependence*, effectively emphasizing the 'two-sidedness' of careers (Goffman, 1961; Arthur et al., 2004). Arthur et al. (2004), in this special edition, studied extant literature of career success (68 articles) in order to assess whether the articles consider the objective and subjective career exclusively, dually, and the existence of, if any, causal direction between the two. For example, 65 per cent (44) of the articles acknowledge both subjective and objective sides of career success. Importantly, with respect to interdependence, 37 per cent discuss the objective career's impact on the subjective career. Underlying these studies is the implicit assumption that subjective success is a direct function of objective outcomes. For example, an individual's satisfaction and identity (both subjective measures) are both outcomes of the perception associated with the individual's rank with a company hierarchy or income.

Reverse causality was attributed to 19 per cent of the articles, essentially that subjective perceptions drive objective outcomes. Arthur et al. explain that these studies were focused primarily on 'psychologically-grounded studies, where the authors hypothesize relationships between personality (e.g., [Seibert](#)<sup>Q2</sup> & Kraimer, 2001; Boudreau, Boswell, Judge, & Bretz, 2001), behaviors (e.g. Johnson & Stokes, 2002) or attitudes (e.g., Orpen, 1998) and career success' (Arthur et al., 2004,<sup>Q3</sup> p. 8).

Consistent with the former line of reasoning that objective measures drive subjective perceptions, Nicholson and Andrews (2004), also in this special edition, assert that from a Darwinian perspective the utility of subjective facets of the career is secondary to objective utilities, a by-product of objective indicators such as wealth and status. Further, they argue that when subjective outcomes are not correlated to objective success or failure, individuals will conduct 'ex-post' rationalizations that help them maintain mood and equilibrium (Nicholson & Andrews, 2004). They conclude that there is a need for people to be assisted in doing 'critical self-appraisal that does not demotivate, but helps to guard against the perceptual biases that may lead to unrealistic expectations and disappointing outcomes' (Nicholson & Andrews, 2004, p. 26).

### *Our approach: an integrative model*

It is our contention that this depiction, although in some cases offering an accurate assessment of career outcomes, is overly simplistic and attempts to causally explain all of the variance in career outcomes. The purposes of our paper are: (1) to further explore the interdependence between subjective and objective careers; and (2) to delineate and describe a condition under which the subjective career takes on particular salience and represents an example of reverse causality whereby the subjective career drives objective outcomes.

First, we will offer examples of when objective success does not lead to accompanying psychological success. Then, we show that when an individual is enacting a career ‘calling’ subjective measures are critical to understanding ‘success,’ and, in contrast to Nicholson and Andrews (2004), subjective outcomes can cause objective outcomes. Of the articles in Arthur et al. that posited reverse causality—subjective careers drive objective outcomes—none focused on the calling in particular. Given growing interest in the nature of a career calling both in the popular press and in academia, we believe that it is a fruitful example of reverse causality.

We see our approach as fitting into an emerging trend in management research that [Cameron, Dutton, and Quinn \(2003\)<sup>Q1</sup>](#) refer to as positive organizational scholarship. Luthans, Luthans, and Luthans (2004, p. 5) state that ‘positive psychology focuses on strengths, rather than weaknesses, health and vitality, rather than illness and pathology.’ We will argue that, even when an individual’s career is a calling, there are periods in time—particularly during career transitions—when the person’s subjective assessments of his or her career deviate from perceptions of personal ‘success.’ In today’s turbulent career environment, every individual will face periods of uncertainty and must learn new capabilities that will result, even when an individual is quite successful objectively, in subjective assessments that do not neatly mirror the individual’s attained status, wealth, and prestige. Individuals with a sense of calling, however, possess career metacompetencies (Hall, 2002)—identity and adaptability—that will, in the long term, aid them in navigating a complex career terrain. And employing organizations can benefit, as well, from the competitive advantage that a labor pool with ‘positive psychological capital’ provides (Luthans & Youssef, 2004).

In order to capture the complexities associated with a career calling, we introduce a case study. We outline a ‘Calling model of psychological success’ that highlights the importance of subjective constructs and measures, and finally offer propositions for future research.

## **The Person’s Own View of Success**

Before more fully introducing the notion of a calling into the paper, it is necessary to describe its connection to what is known as psychological success (Mirvis & Hall, 1996). Below, we will assert that objectively ‘successful’ outcomes do not always lead to psychological success. Later in the paper, we will explain how a calling, a subjective construct, is consistent with psychological success and actually precedes objective outcomes.

When viewed from inside the skin of the person pursuing the career, success, by definition, has to be defined in terms of how it looks through that person’s eyes. In the present volume, Heslin (2004) has argued that we need to do a better job of conceptualizing and measuring this subjective view of success in three ways: (1) utilizing research on what employees want; (2) attending more to how people in different contexts view their career success; and (3) using more qualitative methods (e.g., Juntunen et al.’s (2001) qualitative study of 18 Northern Plains Indians).

To contribute to this conceptualizing, let us look at some relevant theory. The term used to describe this *subjective* view of success is *psychological success* (Hall, 1976). The nature of psychological success derives from Kurt Lewin's (1936) early work on the psychology of success and failure, through his experiments on aspiration levels and goal-setting. The concept was introduced to the organizational behavior literature by Argyris in his early writings (e.g., *Personality and Organization*, Argyris, 1957) on the inherent conflict between the needs of the healthy individual and the economic goals of organizations.

In the context of careers, psychological success develops in a cyclical fashion as a result of setting and attaining challenging goals. This success cycle was first observed in a longitudinal study of AT&T managers, which traced the causes and effects of early job challenge and success (Hall & Nougaim, 1968; Howard & Bray, 1988; Hall, 2002). A sense of psychological success would likely be achieved when the person independently sets and exerts effort toward a challenging, personally meaningful goal and then goes on to succeed in attaining that goal (Lewin, 1936; Locke, 1990a, 1990b).

Hall also went on to hypothesize that success would lead to an increase in the person's level of self-esteem, a more competent identity, and increased involvement in that area of career work. A simplified version of the 'psychological success cycle' is shown in Figure 1. Various studies over the years have generally shown support for this success cycle (Hall & Schneider, 1973; Hall & Hall, 1976; Hall & Foster, 1977; Hall, 2002). A similar goal-setting–performance cycle is reported by [Austin and Smith \(1996\)<sup>Q1</sup>](#), based upon their review of the literature.

Wiese, Freund, and Baltes (2002), whose selection, optimization–compensation model resonates with the Hall success cycle, found compatible results. By selection they mean 'developing, elaborating, and committing oneself to personal goals;' optimization is 'the acquisition, refinement, and application of goal-relevant skills or resources;' and compensation is, 'maintain[ing] one's goals in the face of losses in goal-relevant means' (p. 322). They found that, over a 3-year period, strategies of proactive life and career management, such as commitment to personal goals and focusing resources and effort, predicted how emotionally balanced and satisfied people would feel 3 years later (Wiese et al., 2002).

Hall (1993, 2002) has argued that, because of the increased complexity and turbulence in the contemporary work environment, the traditional notion of a single life-long career cycle, with a series of stages, has been replaced with a series of shorter learning cycles (see Figure 2). Each career learning cycle looks like an abbreviated version of the old Super (1957) career stages: exploration, trial, establishment, and mastery. Within each learning cycle we would expect to see yet smaller cycles of goal-setting, effort, psychological success, and identity change, as the person gains experience and achieves a high level of performance and mastery. Then, near the end of each learning cycle, the person starts exploring again, necessitated by changes in technology, products, markets, economic factors, or personal values, needs, or life situation.

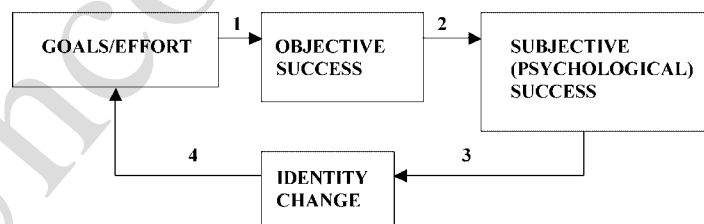


Figure 1. A simplified version of the psychological success model (adapted from Hall, 2002, p. 74)

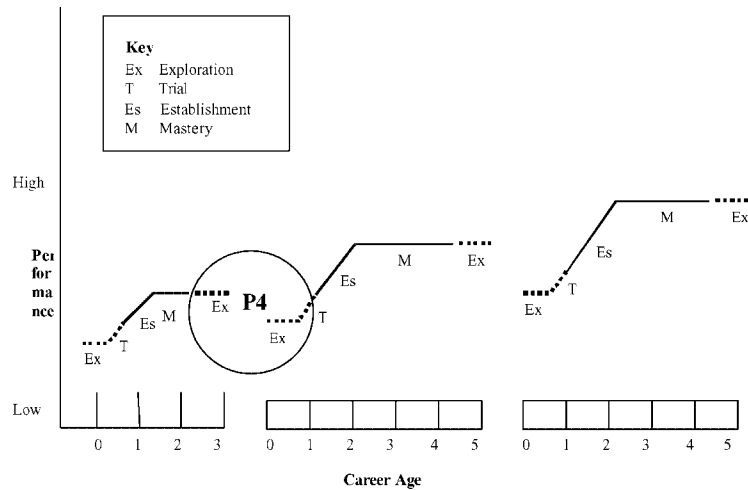


Figure 2. The career as a succession of learning cycles and career transitions (from Hall, 1993)<sup>Q11</sup>

Q11

## When Objective Success does not Feel Successful

The psychological success cycle is a way of describing how *objective* success in task accomplishment can lead to *subjective* feelings of success. (And this is an argument that Nicholson & Andrews, 2004, make, that objective success provides the ‘ground’ for subjective career success. Although they cite a number of objective success criteria, which they do not list in order of importance, they do point out that status, or hierarchical position, ‘heads the list in every social system, by virtue of its capacity to bundle together multiple utilities,’ quoting Ellis, 1993 & 1994.) To complicate this matter and to show that objective success does not necessarily cause subjective success, we propose that, under certain conditions, *task success can lead to psychological failure*. Without going into a great deal of detail, here are some of the scenarios under which psychological failure can result from task success:

- *When behaviors associated with career success lead to personal failure.* This phenomenon has been well documented in the work/life literature, going back to the classic work of Bartolome and Evans (1981: *Must Success Cost So Much*). The idea here is that long hours spent on work and career can lead to excessively high involvement in work goals (see link 4 in Figure 1), causing a person to lose involvement with the family. This is not a modern phenomenon, as we hear in the words of Abigail Adams, whose husband John Adams had a career that kept him separated from his family for many years:

I recollect the untitled man to whom I gave my heart and in the agony of recollection, when time and distance present themselves together, wish he had never been any other. Who shall give me back my time? Who shall compensate to me those *years* I cannot recall? How dearly have I paid for a titled husband? (McCullough, 2001, p. 290)

- *When assignment success does not result in identity change.* It is possible for the psychological success cycle to be short-circuited. This happens when a person accomplishes the task goal but for some reason does not internalize the new level of task competence into his or her identity (link 3 in Figure 1) (e.g., through external rather than internal causal attributions).

- *When a changed identity is not seen by significant others.* Another example of task success not leading to psychological success would be the case of the person's undergoing a fundamental transformation of identity (link 3 in Figure 1). One way this can happen is after an international expatriate assignment, when the person goes through the upending experience of mastering a completely different culture and language and perhaps running or starting up a new business in that country. As a result, the person comes out of the experience feeling like the conquering 'hero,' coming back with newfound general management, leadership, negotiation, and conflict management skills—and his corporate superiors still see him as the same person he was before he went overseas (Hall, Zhu, & Yan, 2002).
- *When objective success in one phase of the career propels the person into a new career learning cycle.* As we mentioned in our earlier discussion, we can think of contemporary career stages as 'mini stages,' where the mini stages would be the phases within a learning cycle: exploration of new options, trial (trying out new career behaviors), establishment (developing competence, confidence, and acceptance in the new role), and mastery (high performance) (Hall, 1993). After an individual has mastered the new role, or as the individual or the external world changed, she or he might begin to explore another career change, at which time a new learning cycle would begin. The individual would thus be back at link 1 of the psychological success cycle, as shown in Figure 1. We can also locate an individual in Figure 2 as being between the final establishment stage of one learning cycle and the initial exploration stage of the next one. This transition zone is shown in the circle in Figure 2.

During the transition period, when a person is exploring a change and is about to enter a new learning cycle, by definition she is not yet competent in the new area of work. Therefore, it is unlikely that she would feel successful. Thus, while the outside world would be focused on the present, observing her current objective success (which would be high), she herself would be focused on the future and the new skills she needs to develop. She would thus see herself as a *learner*—that is, not yet a high performer in her new area of endeavor. Thus, her objective success in one phase of her work might motivate her to move on and explore a new area in which she does not yet feel subjective success.

### *A model of success outcomes: when the career is a calling*

When might objective success feel *most* successful to the person? We would argue that one of the deepest forms of satisfaction or psychological success can occur when the person experiences work as more than a job or career—when it is a *calling*. For the purposes of this paper, we define a calling as work that a person perceives as his purpose in life. Therefore, as Dobrow (2004) notes, the person approaches his work with a 'subjective, self-relevant view of (the) meaning' (p. 20) of career activities.

The early notion of a calling was described as a divine inspiration to do morally responsible work (Weber, 1958, 1963). However, more recently it has moved away from a religious connotation toward a broader secular view characterized by an individual doing work out of a strong sense of inner direction—work that would contribute to a better world (Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Lips-Wiersma, 2002a, 2002b; Wrzesniewski, 2003). In this secular view the calling comes from an internal motivation that is not driven by instrumental goal-seeking. Rather, it reflects a generalized form of psychological engagement with the meaning of one's career work (e.g., Kahn, 1990; Hall, Briscoe, 2004; Dobrow, 2004; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Wrzesniewski, 2003; Lips-Wiersma, 2002a, 2002b; Hansen, 1997). For example, Hansen (1997) describes how a person's career self-assessment and development often involves a self-reflective quest for personal and professional purpose, as part of the development of the

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2  
3 'whole person.' Although some people may pursue a calling out of religious beliefs, such a set of  
4 beliefs is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition<sup>1</sup> for having a calling.<sup>2</sup>

5 To illustrate, in a recent research interview, the first author had a long conversation with an unem-  
6 ployed person who, in his skills training work with a government-sponsored career center, had found  
7 his calling in the computer graphics area. He described in detail many examples of synchronicity that,  
8 in his view, showed that he was moving in a vocational direction that he was supposed to be moving in.  
9 When asked if he was a religious person, he replied emphatically that he was not.

10 Consistent with a more generalized viewpoint, Bellah and his colleagues (1996) described a work  
11 orientation that they refer to as a 'calling.' In their view, a calling orientation describes those who work  
12 for the fulfillment of doing so and, in addition, believe that their work impacts society in some way<sup>3</sup>  
13 (Bellah et al., 1996). Buechner (1973, p. 95) describes a calling as 'The place where your deep  
14 gladness . . . and the world's hunger meet.' Similarly, Hansen (1997) describes how a person's career  
15 self-assessment and development often involve a self-reflective quest for personal and professional  
16 purpose, as part of the development of the 'whole person.'

17 It is important to understand that having a sense of calling is a highly individual, subjective experi-  
18 ence. A calling is an individual's experience toward any career domain—e.g., teaching, social work,  
19 medicine, clergy, musicians, professional workers, software engineering (Wrzesniewski, 2003)—that  
20 'allows for a . . . self-relevant view of meaning' (Dobrow, 2004, p. 20). Wrzesniewski, McCauley,  
21 Rozin, & Schwartz (1997) reported that people with a sense of calling reported the highest life and  
22 job satisfaction and had the lowest absenteeism, compared to people with other orientations.

23 The challenge that researchers are currently exploring is how to characterize the key facets of a call-  
24 ing and how to distinguish it from separate, but similar, constructs. For example, [Novak \(1996, p. 34\)](#)<sup>Q1</sup>  
25 identified four qualities of a calling: (1) each person's calling is unique; (2) a calling involves precon-  
26 ditions, such as talent (a calling must fit one's abilities), an openness to discovering one's calling, and a  
27 love for the work involved; (3) a calling provides great energy, enjoyment, and vitality to one's efforts;  
28 and (4) one's calling is not easy to discover—it requires much reflection, dialogue with others, trial  
29 activities, and persistence. Weiss, Skelley, Hall, and Haughey (2003) posited several features of a call-  
30 ing which include the following: an awareness that one has a calling; awareness that one's work serves  
31 others; and a process of introspection or discernment as a method of arriving at a career choice, to  
32 know the right path for oneself. [Dobrow \(2003\)](#)<sup>Q1</sup>, in a longitudinal study of musicians, examines  
33 seven salient characteristics of callings: passion; identity; need to do it/urgency; engulfs conscious-  
34 ness; longevity; sense of meaning; and self-esteem.

35 Two closely named concepts are work engagement (Kahn, 1990) and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990),  
36 both of which exist on an episodic basis—as the individual expresses his 'preferred self' (Kahn, 1990,  
37 p. 700) and has the 'optimal experience' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 6). Dobrow (2004) has suggested  
38 that a calling may be the result of 'repeated instances of work engagement or flow' (p. 10) in a parti-  
39 cular career domain. A career calling is similar to Levinson's (1978, 1996) concept of the 'dream'—  
40 the individual's vision of an ideal career state—that is central to early adulthood. We believe one dis-  
41 tinction between the two is that the individual's perception of the dream may not necessarily contain  
42 the belief that his or her work is serving a purpose. Another difference is that an awareness of a calling  
43 can come to a person at any point in life, without having been visualized earlier in the dream.

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46 <sup>1</sup>We thank an anonymous reviewer for the wording on this point.

47 <sup>2</sup>Ironically, some of this more recent thinking is quite compatible with much earlier work by William James (2002), in which he  
48 defined 'religious' in terms of what the individual *considered to be* divine.

49 <sup>3</sup>Bellah et al. also discuss a career orientation, which, in their view, relates to upward mobility and career status. However,  
50 contemporary research and theoretical writing on careers are clear that this is an outdated definition of careers (Hall, 2002;  
51 Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; Greenhaus, Callahan, & Godshalk, 2000).

The protean career orientation is one in which the individual is (a) self-directed, and (b) driven internally by one's own values (Hall, 2002; Hall & Briscoe, 2004). The person with a protean career orientation is motivated to follow her own distinctive 'path with a heart'—i.e., a path that expresses one's unique human potential and facilitates growth (Shepard, 1984). Following the path with a heart seems quite compatible with the notion of following a calling. Pursuing a protean career calls for a new kind of personal capability, career 'metacompetencies,' such as identity growth through self-reflection and self-learning, and adaptive personal change or transformation. In the protean career the person's definition of success is internal, subjective success, and the person's focus shifts from a view of the 'work self' to that of the 'whole self.'

But the two concepts are not identical, as the protean career may not necessarily involve a belief that one's career is to serve a certain purpose. We would argue that having a protean career orientation is a necessary but not sufficient condition for having a calling. Pursuing a calling entails both having a protean career orientation *and* being conscious of having a strong sense of purpose.

Returning to our earlier discussion of when to use either the subjective or the objective career, it seems clear that explorations into the calling necessarily require a focus on the subjective career. The determination of whether one's work constitutes a calling is deeply personal, as suggested by the difficult work of self-exploration for assessing whether one in fact has a calling. This is not to say that other people do not play a role; indeed, many people do turn to counselors, therapists, consultants, and spiritual directors, as well as family, friends, support groups, or community attachments to help them clarify their values and needs and appreciate their strengths. Self-exploration is at once a deeply personal, reflective process, and a relational one. But although a skilled helper committed to one's best interests can be invaluable, ultimately the process of evaluating success in finding and pursuing one's calling must be done subjectively, as the ultimate judge of one's vocation is one's self. Conceivably, once the person had publicly expressed her calling it might be possible for an external observer to form a judgment about how well she had done, but what would matter most to the focal person would be her own subjective evaluation.

### *Implications of an expanded notion of a calling*

Table 1 compares the earlier notion of a calling as a religious experience with one that is conceptualized as a secular experience. As stated, our contention is that the source and experience of a calling can be of either a religious or a secular, inner-directed nature. Therefore, our conceptualization is consistent with others who advocate an expanded notion of a calling—one that transcends a religious connotation (e.g., Wrzesniewski, 2003; Lips-Wiersma, 2002a, 2002b; Dobrow, 2004). The table compares religious and secular views of a calling on four dimensions: (1) the calling's source; (2) who is served by the calling; (3) method(s) of identifying a calling; (4) the calling's 'meaning.'

Table 1. Two views of a calling

	Religious view	Secular view
Source of calling	From God or a higher being	Within the individual
Who is served?	Calling serves community	Serves individual and/or community
Method of identifying a calling	Discernment (e.g., prayer, listening)	Introspection, reflection, meditation, relational activities
The meaning	Enacting God's larger plan for an individual's life	Enacting individual's purpose for personal fulfillment

Whereas a religious calling stems from a set of beliefs in God or a higher being (e.g., Weiss et al., 2003), a secular calling originates from within the individual (e.g. Dobrow, 2004). While research on a religious calling often indicate that a calling serves the community or others, a secular or more generalized view underscores how the individual's basis of meaning can be from serving herself, her community, or the larger society (Dobrow, 2004). An individual whose calling originates from a relationship with God or a higher being typically will identify his purpose through the process of 'discernment,' which 'involves learning and practicing to hear very clearly our own voice . . . ' and enhances one's ability to act with authenticity (Weiss et al., 2003, p. 13). Methods of discernment include listening and prayer by the individual. In contrast, an individual whose calling originates from within will identify a calling through career self-exploration, which includes methods such as introspection, reflection, meditation, and relational activities (e.g., discussions with friends, family members). Finally, an individual who enacts a religious calling perceives that she is acting and finds meaning from acting on God's (or a higher being's) larger plan for her life. In contrast, an individual who enacts a secular calling finds meaning from her personal fulfillment.

In sum, our view of a calling is consistent with others who assert a more expansive or generalized concept that transcends religious connotations. A calling can arise from a set of religious beliefs or from an individual's sense of self and meaningfulness.

### *Calling and career metacompetencies*

An individual whose career is driven by a sense of calling benefits from enhanced metacompetencies, both of which aid the individual in navigating the career 'terrain' and a sense of psychological success (Hall, 1996, 2002). A 'metacompetency' is a capacity that facilitates the acquisition of other, more specific competencies or skills (Briscoe & Hall, 1999). Two metacompetencies that greatly assist the person in continuously learning new career skills are identity awareness (self-awareness) and adaptability. Self- or identity awareness is the ability to gather self-related feedback, to form accurate self-perceptions, and to change one's self-concept as appropriate (Briscoe & Hall, 1999). Adaptability is the capacity to change, which includes both the competence to change and the motivation to change (Morrison & Hall, 2002). Strong self-awareness helps the person sense when his skills need updating, and strong adaptability permits him to engage in the actions that are necessary to acquire those skills. Thus, these two metacompetencies enable the person to be a self-directed learner, one capable of making independent protean changes in his career.

As the processes of self-exploration (secular) and discernment (religious) suggest, to have an awareness of one's calling requires that the person have a clear sense of identity, or self-awareness. The individual with a clear sense of identity has clarity with respect to his values, life purpose, and aptitudes or 'gifts.' Both self-exploration and discernment involve reflection, listening to one's inner voice, and enhances one's ability to act authentically (e.g., Weiss et al., 2003). Further, discernment or self-exploration enhances 'self-appropriation,' which describes the person's ability to 'take in the changing "data" of their consciousness to be able to read and understand themselves and the reality in which they are accurately immersed' (Weiss et al., 2003, p. 17). In a similar vein, Heslin (2004) argues that for individuals with a sense of calling in their work, self-referent and subjective criteria of success are more salient than objective and other-referent criteria, compared to people with what Bellah et al. (1996) called a job or a career work orientation.

This ability to sort out internally and externally driven influences is consistent with the second metacompetency, *adaptability*, which involves the ability to 'identify for himself or herself those qualities that are critical for future performance and is also able to make personal changes necessary to meet these needs' (Hall, 2002, p. 161). Thus, the person with high adaptability would have the capacity to

engage proactively in the process of goal-setting, initiating effort, and achieving psychological success, as shown in Figure 1. Having a clear sense of identity does not have a lot of impact unless the person can take such independent action and pursue goals and a course of action that would result in psychological success and thus express one's identity. Essentially, the processes of self-exploration and discernment foster an individual's adaptability, which enhances her ability to take action consistent with her identity.

### *Calling and self-confidence*

An important factor that promotes a person's adaptability and helps an individual to gain identity clarity is *self-confidence*,<sup>4</sup> the belief that one can successfully perform a particular task (Hollenbeck & Hall, 2003<sup>Q1</sup>; Bandura, 1997). Self-confidence is especially critical if the career task is one that represents new terrain and some degree of risk for the person (Betz, 1992, 1994). In a world characterized by frequent career transitions for the individual and by careers as mini-stages (shorter learning cycles) (Hall, 1993, 2002), individuals are thrown into more unfamiliar situations and are expected to be resilient and succeed. Only those who are capable of responding to these types of circumstances can thrive in today's protean career context. Now, more than ever, self-confidence is important to career success, as Betz (1992, 1994) and others (e.g., Hollenbeck & Hall, 2004) has suggested.

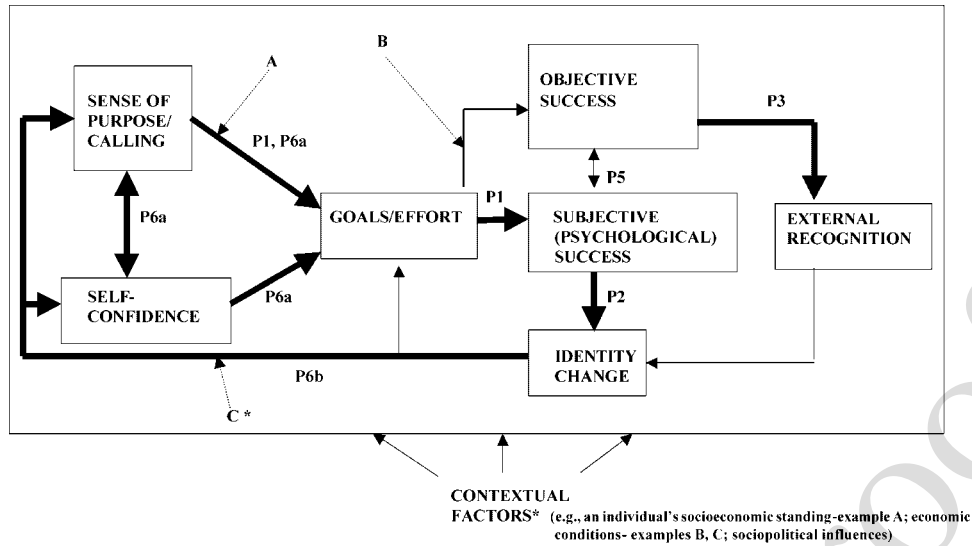
Because it taps the person's perceived ability to perform a particular task, self-confidence can ebb and flow over the course of the person's career, in much the same way that subjective career success fluctuates. Self-confidence is thus different from self-esteem, which tends to be more of an enduring trait of the person. In addition, self-confidence can operate as both an influence on goals, effort, and career success, in addition to being an outcome of success. That is, one's confidence can act as a trigger to a success cycle, getting the person started at work on a career goal, as well as a result of an identity-enhancing psychological success experience.

Interestingly, an individual's calling is expressed through the use of his strengths and aptitudes (Weiss et al., 2003). The individual is drawn to enact his career using abilities which represent his 'genius,' a term used by the ancient Romans, as well as by Shepard (1984). Therefore, an individual will pursue goals and task efforts that use his greatest strengths. In such circumstances, the individual's self-confidence with respect to any given task is likely to be bolstered. Further, when facing unfamiliar or difficult task situations, the individual with a sense of purpose will more likely be able to manage temporary setbacks or failures because he will believe that ultimately he will succeed.

### *A calling model of psychological success*

Figure 3 highlights the 'Calling model of psychological success', which shows the relationships among a *calling*, *self-confidence*, *goals/effort*, *objective and subjective success*, and *identity change*. Taken together, the dynamic interplay of these factors comprises a success cycle that describes adaptive, self-directed career performance. The work of Bandura (1991, 1997), Hollenbeck and Hall (2003<sup>Q1</sup>), and Betz (1992, 1994), have all described how self-confidence develops in positive cycles, based on taking risks by pursuing challenging goals, putting out significant effort, and achieving

<sup>4</sup>We use the term 'self-confidence' synonymously with what Bandura calls 'self-efficacy.' We favor 'self-confidence' because that is the way individuals describe the experience.



\* Dotted lines A, B, C represent examples of contextual influences described in text

Figure 3. A calling model of career success

results. Austin and Klein (1996), Locke (1990a, 1990b), and Latham and Marshall (1982) also discuss the self-reinforcing nature of goal-setting, effort, performance, and rewards.

As Figure 3 suggests, the results of goal-setting and effort (objective success) lead to psychological success. As a result of this inner experience of success, the person comes to see herself in a new, more competent way. This objective success on the task generates external recognition, and the resulting feedback from important others could lead to identity change. For example, maybe now she would see herself as someone who can perform successfully at future task engagements. Perhaps another identity change might be the self-awareness of how much she enjoys that kind of task. And as a result of this identity development, she would have a higher level of self-confidence about this task activity. Thus, we see the completion of the feedback loop, and self-confidence again is an outcome variable resulting from subjective success.

When viewed as a whole, and in its multiple iterations over time, this dynamic success cycle represents the individual's *adaptation* to the career environment within which the calling occurs. With this greater sense of competence, the person feels more self-confident, and a new cycle can begin.

We propose this positive cycle can also be initiated by a sense of calling. As our earlier discussion asserts, when the person sees her career as a calling, she will have a strong focus on goals that reflect her purpose. As a result of this goal clarity, she will exert the effort needed to succeed and carry out the calling. And, as with self-confidence, objective success will lead to subjective success and a more competent self-identity. And this new sense of competence will reinforce the validity and value of the sense of calling. We view the development of the career calling, then, as an ongoing, cyclical process, involving deep exploration of personal goals, trial efforts, and reflection on success, all of which are part of the processes of *career self-exploration* and *discernment*.

The model is a relatively simplified cycle of how a calling and self-confidence enhance psychological success and the process of enhanced identity—and in turn of how psychological success and identity growth feed back to reinforce one's calling and self-confidence. Two facets of the model

are particularly important to the purpose of this paper. First, an individual with a calling is more capable of objective and subjective success because of enhanced goal focus, identity, and self-confidence, even though the individual may occasionally fail to perform well in all circumstances. In today's career environment, individuals will engage in more learning cycles and therefore face temporary setbacks and failures, which, in absence of a calling, may hurt the individual's self-esteem, self-confidence related to those tasks, and identity development. However, the individual with a purpose and sense of self will 'weather the storm' because of the calling's provision of an 'internal compass.' Second, both of the variables preceding task effort, as well as those following objective success, are subjective in nature. The sense of calling, clearly a subjective 'construct,' leads to better task performance, enhanced self-confidence, and clarity of identity.

We cannot overstress the importance of this feedback loop from success outcomes back to causal factors, such as self-confidence, calling, and goals. As Austin and Klein (1996) have pointed out, although most goal-setting studies assume this feedback loop, there has been little explicit focus or research on it. We see this feedback loop as a critical link, since it completes the success process and makes it *self-reinforcing*, as a cycle.

Therefore, to complicate Nicholson and Andrews' (2004) idea, the causal direction between the objective and subjective career can work both ways. While objective career success drives subjective success, as they suggest, subjective success in turn feeds back and drives further iterations of the entire success cycle. Thus, because of the cyclic nature of the process, subjective success is both an end result and a driver of further objective success.

### *Calling and contextual forces*

Outlining the 'inner' portion of the model is a box that symbolizes contextual forces, essentially any socio-economic, demographic, economic, or sociopolitical trends that either facilitate or hinder individual career agency (Arthur et al., 1999; Drucker, 1993). Particularly in today's career context, characterized by rapid technological change and altered social arrangements (family size, number of people living alone, divorce rate) (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999; Demo, Allen, & Fine, 2000), the enactment of a calling—and subsequent outcomes—is a product of the interaction between the individual and contextual factors.

The dotted lines—labeled A, B, and C—in Figure 3 represent areas in the model where contextual factors can impact objective and subjective success and the ability to enact one's calling. Although contextual influences can impact other areas of the model, we provide these three examples to illustrate that the enactment of a calling is subject to situational constraints.

An individual's socio-economic status may impact his or her ability to enact a calling (Example A in Figure 3). For example, although an individual may perceive a calling, he may not establish having that career as a goal and expending effort toward the calling if he is unable to meet the associated financial requirements. Consider, for example, an individual who has a calling for the medical profession but is unable to financially support his children while attending medical school.

Economic factors also impact the ability to enact a calling (see Example B in Figure 2). For example, during a recession, unemployed individuals who seek a new position may feel stifled from both objective and subjective career success—despite putting forth goal-intended effort—when they are unable to secure interviews. Example C similarly shows how a recession may hinder calling enactment, but at a different point in the process. An individual who sets goals, obtains objective and subjective career success, receives external recognition from valued friends, family, or co-workers (among others), and experiences identity change, may be unable to continue moving toward a calling if a recession hinders interorganizational or intraorganizational opportunities for growth.

Individuals with a calling must accommodate and maneuver within the contextual circumstances in which they find themselves. The enactment of a calling is the product of situational factors and an individual's agency with a context. So, for example, an individual facing poor economic conditions must rely upon resilience and a strong sense of self as she pursues her calling.

A major contextual factor in a person's career choice process is his socio-economic background, the degree of privilege and resources that are available to inform and support one's choices (Hall, 2002; Drucker, 1993). Is a calling a luxury that only those born to privilege can experience? It is certainly common to see people in the political arena who come from families with long traditions of public service, as well as many leaders in the world of philanthropy, who do their work out of a sense of calling. However, we would argue that this deep sense of conviction that one has a purpose to do a certain kind of work could cut across all socio-economic levels. The first author is currently conducting research on unemployment and is hearing unemployed people from diverse backgrounds talk about their sense of calling. In fact, several of these people have reported that it was not until their resources ran out, when they 'reached bottom,' that they were able to discern what they described as their true calling. In a discussion with a group of unemployed professionals there was consensus that having resources can in some cases be a barrier to discovering a calling, as that removes a source of motivation to self-explore and try out different kinds of work. To maintain one's unemployment benefits, people reported that they were required to apply for many different full-time and part-time jobs, for work that they would not otherwise have even considered, and this forced exploration and trial work helped them discover work for which they had great passion.

Thus, we would argue that one's socio-economic background could work to either facilitate or obstruct the pursuit of a calling. On the one hand, resources might provide the luxury of not having to do work just to earn a living, leaving the person free to figure out where his inner passions lay. But, on the other hand, a position of privilege can insulate the person from having to take work seriously, so that he never does the self-exploration and trial work activities necessary to discern his calling.

Therefore, to complicate Nicholson and Andrews' (2004) idea, the causal direction between the objective and subjective career can work both ways. While objective career success drives subjective success, as they suggest, subjective success in turn feeds back and drives further iterations of the entire success cycle. Thus, because of the cyclic nature of the process, subjective success is both an end result and a driver of further objective success.

## A Case in Point

### *Laura Stein's career development experiences*

To illustrate these career dynamics linking one's sense of calling to objective and subjective career success, let us consider the case of Laura Stein (a disguised name, but a real person). The purpose of this case study is not presented as evidence for the model, but rather as an illustration to aid an understanding of the model's dynamics. Laura knew she wanted to get involved in public service work when she was in high school. She has always had a clear set of values, giving her a strong sense of identity. This identity was guided by her parents' influence and her strong religious faith. (As we said earlier, though, strong religious beliefs are not necessarily required for a calling. They just happened to be part of Laura's motivation.)

In high school, she was the associated student body president and almost single-handedly reformed the associated student government election system in her senior year. In college, she was one of three

keynote speakers at a major political conference in Washington, DC. As Laura described the effect of this experience, 'The . . . experience bolstered my self-confidence.'

After college, she was granted a fellowship to go to Israel for a year. Early during her stay in Israel, she was asked to be the American student representative at a conference sponsored by the Israeli President on Israel–Diaspora relations. At lunch, the Israeli President invited her to sit at his table and they discussed how much students would benefit from a conference specifically structured around their needs. She volunteered to organize it and the President promptly accepted and offered his residence as the conference location. Ultimately, 120 students from all over the world participated the next year. 'I worked really hard all year. The experience was emboldening. Since then, I don't feel as though my career has been as exciting or original.'

After she completed her fellowship, Laura worked in fundraising for several political campaigns, including a Senate race in New York. Thereafter, she opted to go to a top-tier university for a Masters in Public Administration and worked full-time while completing her degree. After graduation, she was offered a position as Chief of Staff for the First Deputy Commissioner for a medium-sized agency in a big city. The First Deputy Commissioner left shortly after Laura was hired, and Laura thrived with her successors.

Laura has been with the organization for 4 years and has obtained a more senior role as an assistant commissioner of a key agency (which is considered to be an excellent achievement for someone her age). She currently manages a staff of six. Laura's career experiences have given her extensive experience in public speaking, management, organizing and planning, and two top-tier educational degrees. Since she has been with the agency, she has received four unanticipated raises and several promotions. Thus, her objective career success (career attainment in relation to her age) is very high.

Interestingly, however, her subjective experience right now is not primarily one of high success. In fact, Laura is exploring making a career transition. Having just turned 30 and having recently been married, Laura is 'feeling it is time to make a change.' When asked why she is interested in leaving the organization, Laura replied, 'I think I've just reached my learning plateau and I'm getting a bit bored.'

### *Laura's subjective experience at this point in her successful career*

Thus, while Laura's objective career success is high, her subjective view is more mixed. Why? Several developmental shifts seem to be occurring at this time for Laura. First, she has entered the exploratory phase of a new career 'short-cycle' learning stage, as illustrated by the circled zone in Figure 2 (Hall, 1993, 2002). By definition, one does not feel confident of or successful with skills that one has not developed yet. And Laura feels that to move to the next level in her career she will have to develop some skills in areas where she is yet competent, such as her managerial skills in giving feedback and holding people accountable. She sees the skills of coordinating a group of highly committed workers in a short election campaign as being quite different from true management in a regular job: 'Managing a staff of six is different than "managing" a lot of people on a campaign . . . I tend to be soft as a manager and sometimes let people off really easily . . . but I'm getting better.' And to find this next job, in a depressed economy, will require a lot of networking, using social skills in which she, as an introvert, does not have a lot of confidence. 'I've always been a bit shy, which sometimes makes it hard for me to approach others for help.' And in the past, because of her successes, the jobs have always come to her. 'This is the first time I've ever had to look for a job.' Thus, while an external observer would describe her as being highly successful, on the inside this is not always her experience.

Another part of what is happening for Laura at this point in her life is that she is broadening her focus to include life balance and success, in addition to career success. Although she is nowhere near

the point where over-involvement in her career could lead to personal failure, she is beginning to focus on the task of integrating her career with a new role of mother and wife. And she can see that the skills that led to success in the past will not be sufficient to help her achieve successful work/life balance. This process of 'settling down' and getting rooted in one's personal and work life is precisely one of the developmental tasks of the age 30 transition, according to Levinson (1978, 1996). Part of the definition of being in a career transition like this is that there are important personal development tasks and issues that are unresolved, and unresolved personal issues are not generally experienced subjectively as successes.

What is helping Laura confront and move through this new career learning cycle? First, it is her sense of calling and her passion for her work. With her clear sense of identity about what she wants to do and her conviction about its importance, this goal motivates her to move ahead. Although it might be argued that the age 30 transition is the sole driving force here, we would argue that there is an interaction effect. That is, the calling serves to magnify the meaning and effects of the age 30 transition. Also, the calling might act as a 'psychological buffer,' adding to her resilience, when she hits the life or career transition with its inevitable bumps in the road. In this way, staying aware of her calling is an important part of her emotional self-management, which is a key source of self-confidence (Bandura, 1997).

Second, as Bandura's (1997) work also shows, past experience is a source of self-confidence for novel tasks, and Laura has a wealth of previous successes in new undertakings. She knows that, although the specific details and needed skills are different (as they always are), she has gone through transitions like this before, and she knows she can do it again.

The other resource that she is now beginning to call upon more often, as she works on her social skills, is her relational or social capital (knowing whom) (Arthur, Claman, & DePhillippi<sup>Q4</sup>, 1995), of which her past successes have yielded great quantities. Not only does her relational capital give her access to important information and other resources, but talking to friends and asking for their help also yields emotional support and persuasion, which is another source of self-confidence (Bandura, 1997). Her past decisions have been informed and enhanced by both her career skills (knowing how) and the social network (knowing who) (Arthur et al., 1995). A career calling is initially shaped by 'knowing why' investments—self-knowledge, clear identity, an understanding of one's needs—and then subsequently shaped by the enactment of 'knowing how' and 'knowing whom.'

## Propositions

Drawing upon this discussion of Laura's career, we might conclude with a few propositions, based on the above reasoning. First, we have argued that a strong example of the power of the subjective career success is seen when the person is pursuing a calling. And to know fully the degree of success that the person has had in a vocation, we need to understand their subjective career. (We show abbreviations for the propositions—e.g., P1 for Proposition 1—in the models in Figures 2 and 3, to indicate where in the models the propositions apply.)

### *Propositions 1–3: relative correlates of subjective and objective success*

*Proposition 1:* Subjective career success will be highly correlated with the extent to which the person has succeeded in pursuing his calling or basic purpose in life. The connection between

subjective career success and pursuing the calling will be stronger than that between objective career success and pursuit of the calling.

The dark lines in Figure 3 indicate these stronger relationships. For Laura, for example, her career success is more related to the alignment of her career with her sense of identity (subjective career)—values, beliefs, attitudes, sense of self—than to where she ‘ranks’ in the organizational hierarchy and what level of income she attains (objective career).

In turn, the person’s attitudes toward herself and her career will be most strongly affected by her subjective view of what she has done in her career. Although it seems almost self-evident, it is worth making the following proposition explicit:

*Proposition 2:* Subjective career success will be more strongly correlated with identity change than will the objective career.

Laura’s career experiences show, for example, that the growth of her professional identity is affected more strongly by her intrinsic feelings of success than by her objective status achievements.

On the other hand, by definition the objective career is defined and assessed in terms of the externally observable attainments and outcomes resulting from one’s achievements:

*Proposition 3:* The objective career will be more highly correlated than the subjective career with external recognition and outcomes, such as the extent to which the person has had status and impact in her field, the extent to which she is admired, and the attainment of career achievements.

For example, Laura has achieved a solid reputation with those with whom she works—and has worked—based on her educational achievement and her organizational skills and accomplishments. These are externally visible career outcomes—much more visible than subjective success—and they do affect the evaluations of other people.

*Proposition 4:* Divergence of subjective and objective success during a career transition.

Since we have been examining differences between the objective and subjective careers, one might also consider when the two are most different and when they are most similar. We would argue that, in fact, there are periods when the inner and outer views of the career, and of one’s career attainments, are in agreement. And, going back to the notion of career learning cycles that we discussed earlier in the paper, we would propose that this convergence between the subjective and objective careers would be most likely in the mastery phase of a learning cycle. At this point the person has achieved a high level of competence and performance, which would be perceived by external observers, and thus the person has most likely received confirmatory external feedback on her achievements. Based on this external feedback, and on self-reflection, the person would probably experience psychological success. Thus, both objective and subjective career success would most likely be high.

On the other hand, at the end of one career learning cycle and the beginning of a new one, when the person is exploring and trying out new skills and behaviors in new areas of career endeavor, he might not be feeling too successful, as he is looking ahead to a new career subidentity, in which he does not yet feel competent (see circled area in Figure 2). But external observers may still see him in the role of the previous cycle, where he has achieved mastery, and they would probably see him as successful.

*Proposition 4:* The divergence between the objective career and the subjective career will be the greatest during periods of transition between career learning cycles—that is, at the end of one cycle and the beginning of the next. When the person has moved through a transition and has settled into a more stable period of mastery and high achievement, subjective and objective views of career success will become more congruent.

An example of this would be the situation we just saw with Laura Stein, where, in her current role as Assistant Commissioner in a big city, she runs a large department and is seen as an influential high achiever. Yet, at the same time, she feels plateaued and is exploring her next challenge. She is also aware of the skills that she has to develop next (her relational skills). Thus, her self-image and subjective career may not measure up to her objective career, as seen by observers.

*Proposition 5: divergence during the identity development process*

Our fifth proposition examines how the subjective and objective careers are related to adult development processes. It is based on the identity theory of Robert Kegan (1982, 1994). We will state the proposition first and then explain our reasoning.

*Proposition 5.* As the person evolves to higher levels of identity growth (self-awareness and integration), the connection between the objective career and the subjective career will decrease.

What does this hypothesis mean? As Kegan points out, the process of identity development is one in which the person over time becomes increasingly able to perceive and integrate higher levels of cognitive complexity. This happens through a process by which certain parts of the person's experience (e.g., emotions) move from being 'subject,' where they are part of who the person is, to 'object,' where the person can observe them with some detachment. Thus, at a less evolved stage, the person's sense of self is so embedded in and dependent upon successful career performance that, in a sense, the person *is* the career. At a more evolved level, the self becomes more differentiated from the career. Here the person has a higher-level perspective, viewing his life and career as objects, as seen from a balcony, and he sees the career as simply one part of that life. Kegan describes this developmental shift as follows:

This new locating of the self, not in the structure of my psychic institution but in the *coordinating* of the institutional, brings about a revolution in Freud's favorite domains, 'love' and 'work.' If one no longer *is* one's institution, neither is one any longer the duties, performances, work roles, or career which institutionality gives rise to. One *has* a career; one no longer *is* a career. The self is no longer so vulnerable to the kind of ultimate humiliation that the threat of performance-failure holds out, for the performance is no longer ultimate. The functioning of the organization is no longer an end in itself, and one is interested in a way it serves the aims of the new self whose community stretches beyond that particular organization. The self seems available to 'hear' negative reports about its activities; before, it *was* those activities and therefore literally 'irritable' in the face of those reports (Kegan, 1982, p. 105, italics in original).

Thus, at this higher level of identity development, the person's subjective view of success is no longer hostage to the feedback and cues from external sources (other people), such as those that might be reflected in the trappings of the objective career. Subjective and objective evaluations of the person's behavior (and subjective career and objective career) are becoming more independent. Although the data in Laura's case study does not provide us with a measure of her identity growth per se, it is possible to infer that as her identity evolves over time her measures of success will become less correlated with objective attainments of wealth, status, or prestige.

These identity development notions also tie in with what we have been saying about calling. When the person's awareness of her career has moved to a higher level and is experienced as a calling, the person sees her work serving a wider community in the world. This is a place where, as we just heard from Kegan, 'the functioning of the organization is no longer an end in itself' and there is a 'new self whose community stretches beyond that particular organization.'

### *Propositions 6a and 6b: self-confidence and calling as cause and effect*

Finally, our sixth proposition posits the role that self-confidence and calling play both as catalysts to enact a career and as the result of career success. As noted earlier, self-confidence is necessary for an individual who is undertaking new endeavors and is at the beginning of a learning cycle. A sense of calling can play a similar role to trigger a success cycle. (Also, self-confidence and calling can be mutually reinforcing, as we have discussed earlier.) The individual who has high self-confidence will be motivated to act, despite fear of failure, and will have the resilience necessary to weather any temporary setbacks. And, in turn, the positive effects that psychological success has on the person's identity can reinforce self-confidence and a calling.

*Proposition 6a:* Self-confidence and the individual's sense of calling will be mutually reinforcing and will jointly serve as triggers to initiate a new learning/success cycle.

Laura's early career experiences have bolstered her self-confidence so that she is willing to take on subsequent unfamiliar goals in unknown settings. Further, as she gains experience in new tasks and continues to gain identity clarity, her self-confidence will be enhanced.

*Proposition 6b:* Heightened self-confidence and sense of calling will result as an individual experiences psychological success and identity change from the effective enactment of his or her goals and purpose.

We saw this feedback loop connecting subjective success and identity change back to self-confidence and sense of calling very early in Laura's career, after her successful experience as a keynote speaker at the conference in Washington, DC. A similar experience occurred in Israel, when she 'worked really hard all year' at the encouragement of the Israeli President to organize a large international conference, the success of which she described as being 'emboldening.'

Thus, when we examine the 'calling model' in Figure 3, we can see from the dark lines the functioning of the main positive, self-reinforcing cycle of calling, confidence, goal-setting, subjective success, and, ultimately, identity change, which, in turns, feeds back and enhances self-confidence and the person's sense of calling. Objective success leads to external recognition, but its effects often end there; it has a much weaker effect on the goal-setting cycle than does subjective success.

## **Career Implications of a Calling and Conclusion**

This article has attempted to describe a career condition—when an individual has a calling—under which the subjective career precedes objective outcomes. Further, the 'calling model of psychological success' provides an example of the *interdependency* between subjective and objective career outcomes that are currently under scrutiny by researchers.

While some researchers will argue that the subjective career is 'secondary to the objective utilities' (Nicholson and Andrews, 2004) that are deemed to deserve 'priority attention' (p. 13), we assert that, under certain conditions, subjective concepts and outcomes are of utmost importance. As underscored by the 'calling model of psychological success,' the key concepts—i.e., identity, self-confidence, identification of a calling—are subjective. Further, the model demonstrates that subjective measures can, at times, precede objective success, as is the case when the calling ultimately leads to enhanced task performance. Although prior research has demonstrated that the subjective career precedes and contributes to objective outcomes (Arthur et al., 2004), the calling—a distinctively subjective

experience—has been unexamined. We presented the ‘calling model of psychological success’ in order to bridge this gap and illustrated its concepts and rationale with a case study. Finally, we offered propositions related to the model as an agenda for future research on the calling and psychological success.

Our assertions in this paper are not intended to diminish the importance of the objective career, but rather to paint a more realistic depiction of the complexities of careers in general. Individuals who enact their careers within a constraining environment are not simply motivated and affected by objective outcomes like status and wealth (Nicholson & Andrews, 2004<sup>Q5</sup>); they are often driven to action by the clarity of identity, adaptability, and self confidence that accompany and reflect recognition of the ‘gifts hidden in the heart and soul’ (Weiss et al., 2003, p. 24). Q5

Our paper has career and research implications related to a calling. As stated earlier, our view of a calling, consistent with other researchers, reflects a generalized orientation that subsumes either a religious or secular calling. Career consultants and individuals enacting their careers should be aware of the methods and process of identifying their calling, either secular or religious. As Table 1 showed, the process of discernment that accompanies a religious calling is paralleled by career self-exploration in a secular context. Our discussion of contextual issues begs the question: Under what conditions would the subjective career (e.g., a calling) be a more or less powerful driver than contextual factors? Given the impact of situational constraints and opportunities on the enactment of a calling, it is important to understand the relationship between the two. Finally, more research should examine the contexts in which secular callings arise, and whether there are differences in the ways in which individuals experience psychological success depending upon the source of their callings.

As one example of a context in which the secular notion of calling might be relevant is Parker’s (Parker,<sup>Q6</sup> University of Auckland, unpublished, 2000; Parker & Arthur, 2000) research on career communities of practice. She has identified groups of people with strong shared values of service (e.g., social service providers), who have strong identification with their work, and the purpose of their work. She calls these ideological communities. Although we did not find the word calling used in the discussion of this research, the way that people in these ideological communities approach their work appears to be in the same spirit in which a person might pursue a calling. And, furthermore, our hunch is that if some members of these ideological communities were asked explicitly whether they felt a sense of calling in their work, many would respond in the affirmative. (In fact, the first author has found in his research that unless the research inquires explicitly about calling, interviewees do not tend to mention it spontaneously.) Q6

To understand the journey of the self, we must track the more complex world of the subjective career. Moreover, to understand the drivers of a person’s career behaviors, we must know more than simply where and when the person has arrived in his or her career. Objective success can be understood by measuring what one has attained, but the deeper sense of fulfillment comes when those attainments measure up favorably with one’s own inner purpose. True success is not just getting what you want in life—it’s liking what you get.

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