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## **Perceiving a Calling, Living a Calling, and Calling Outcomes: How Mentoring Matters**

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# Perceiving a Calling, Living a Calling, and Calling Outcomes: How Mentoring Matters

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In this study, we integrate two careers-related literatures—callings research and mentoring research—by examining how mentoring relationships might help close the gap between people’s perception of a calling and actually living out their calling. Drawing on work as calling theory (WCT; Duffy, Dik, Douglass, England, & Velez, 2018) as a framework, our results first revealed that, consistent with previous research, perceiving a calling is an important antecedent to living a calling. However, in our sample of 129 U.S. teachers, results further showed that the relationship between perceiving a calling and living a calling is stronger for those with a mentor in their profession. We additionally extend WCT by examining both positive and potentially negative outcomes associated with living a calling, focusing on stress-related outcomes. Our findings revealed that, in addition to reporting higher levels of job satisfaction and work engagement, those who were living their calling experienced lower rates of stress-related absenteeism and reported fewer somatic complaints than those who did not believe they were living their calling. In sum, this study is unique in its integration of two focal careers-related literatures, and it provides practical implications for professionals, counselors, educators, and organizations.

### **Public Significance Statement**

Findings from this study suggest that mentoring relationships can increase the likelihood that individuals will be able to translate a perceived calling into actually living out their calling. Career counselors might use this knowledge to help individuals overcome the barriers to living out a calling; and in turn, allow them to experience the benefits associated with living a calling at work such as greater job satisfaction and work engagement, along with reduced strain and absenteeism.

**Keywords:** callings, mentoring, careers, work as a calling, teachers

We want to feel called, not just driven. We want work to be a channel through which we express our passion and vitality, not a chin-up bar which we have to pull ourselves up to every morning.

—Gregg Levoy (1997), author of *Callings: Finding and Following an Authentic Life*

Zappos wasn’t just a job—it was a calling.

—Tony Hsieh (2010), CEO of Zappos

The concept of a calling resonates, not just for CEOs like Tony Hsieh, but for people across career stages, ages, and occupations

(Duffy & Dik, 2013). A *calling* is described as a sense of passion for a particular line or type of work, along with the belief that this work is meaningful and purposeful (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dik & Duffy, 2012; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). Researchers suggest that about 30% to 50% of adults view their work as a calling (Duffy & Dik, 2013), and 40% of students believe that they have a calling for a particular career (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007). Given these numbers, it is not surprising that an interest in callings is trending in popular culture. For example, even the media mogul Oprah Winfrey has popularized callings through her OWN network, speeches, and her recent book (Winfrey, 2019).

Scholars have also devoted attention to understanding the nature and potential of callings, especially over the last 2 decades (see Duffy & Dik, 2013; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). Despite the preponderance of research, however, a limitation of the callings literature has been the lack of an overarching theory explaining how individuals come to perceive a calling, live a calling, and experience the range of outcomes living a calling might engender (Duffy & Dik, 2013). Recognizing this limitation, Duffy et al. (2018) recently proposed work as calling theory (WCT) as a model for identifying and explaining “predictors and outcomes of living a calling at work” (p. 423). A strength of this model is that it

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integrates prominent findings from extant callings research into a single framework. The theory also provides clear, testable propositions that can advance the callings literature. Such advancement, however, is contingent on tests of key relationships proposed in the theory. In addition, questions remain as to the different factors that might mitigate or strengthen relationships proposed in WCT.

In the current study, we aim to address both these items using a sample of 129 secondary school teachers in the United States. In doing so, we further make three important contributions. First, we contribute to the callings literature by examining how the presence of a mentor might influence a key relationship proposed in WCT. A mentor is traditionally defined as a senior, more experienced person who takes an interest in developing a protégé by providing career-related and/or psychosocial support (Ensher & Murphy, 2005; Kram, 1985). Despite a rich body of literature connecting mentoring to many career-related outcomes (see Allen, Eby, Poetee, Lentz, & Lima, 2004; Eby et al., 2013), research on callings has not broached the question of whether a mentor might contribute to individuals' development or pursuit of a calling. In this study, we integrate mentoring research and theory with WCT to suggest that those with a mentor in their career field will be more likely to translate their perception of a calling into actually living out that calling, thereby intensifying a core relationship proposed in WCT (Duffy et al., 2018).

Second, we extend WCT by examining two stress-related outcomes that might be associated with callings: stress-related absenteeism and strain. As described later, WCT recognizes that although living one's calling should mostly promote positive outcomes, negative outcomes are also plausible (Duffy et al., 2018). Other scholars have identified this possibility as well (e.g., Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Cardador & Caza, 2012; Dobrow, 2013), with arguments for negative outcomes most often following the premise that people working in their calling field might be more likely to overinvest in their work at the expense of nonwork aspects of their lives (e.g., Duffy, Foley, et al., 2012). This reasoning points to the importance of understanding potential stress-related outcomes of callings, and especially those that have a bottom-line impact for organizations. To this end, absenteeism has been cited as costing organizations an average of \$2,650 per salaried employee each year (Cooke, 2014). Research conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (2014), moreover, points to absenteeism as a critical employer concern, with nearly three-quarters of companies in a national survey stating that absenteeism has a moderate to large influence on productivity and revenue. In addition, somatic symptoms associated with strain have been linked to decreased employee performance (Ford, Cerasoli, Higgins, & Decesare, 2011), along with increases in the frequency and duration of absences among employees and students (Hoedeman, Blankenstein, Krol, Koopmans, & Groothoff, 2010; Jones, Smith, & Johnston, 2005).

Third, this study offers an important contribution in its focus on teachers. As noted, the concept of a calling resonates for individuals across many occupations (Duffy & Dik, 2013). However, education scholars observe that the notion of a calling might be especially salient for teachers, along with those considering teaching as a profession (Blustein, 2010; Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2011, 2012; Serow, 1994). Despite this, recent trends suggest that the number of individuals planning for a teaching career is declin-

ing (Higher Education Research Institute, 2016) and that current teachers are leaving the profession at an unsustainable rate; while simultaneously, the demand for teachers is increasing (Flannery, 2016). Indeed, even among those enrolled in university teacher education programs (and thus pursuing teaching as a career), teaching is perceived as a career that is highly demanding but low in potential return with respect to factors such as social status and salary (Richardson & Watt, 2006). Given this situation, it is imperative that those who perceive a call to teach are actually able to live out that calling. As such, to the degree that the presence of a mentor might influence the connection between perceiving and living a calling, this study offers an important practical contribution for the teaching profession and those involved in the counseling and development of teachers.

### Theoretical Foundation

What exactly is a calling? Past discourse on this question is rooted in spirituality and the principle that a call is to serve God, humankind, or a higher purpose (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Elangovan, Pinder, & McLean, 2010). In the current literature, however, there remains a lack of consensus among scholars as to the exact definition of a calling (see Duffy et al., 2018; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019 for reviews). To this end, Dik and Shimizu (2019) recently examined the various calling definitions proposed by researchers and determined that they exist along a continuum from neoclassical to modern. Recognizing these variations, we endeavored to define a calling in a way that embodied the different, yet related, descriptions offered by scholars who recognize a calling as a sense of passion for a particular type of work, coupled with the belief that this work domain is meaningful and purposeful (Dik & Duffy, 2012; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). We therefore adopted an inclusive definition and followed Duffy et al. (2018) by defining *a calling* as "an approach to work that reflects seeking a sense of overall purpose and meaning and is used to help others or contribute to the common good, motivated by an external or internal summons" (p. 426).

### WCT

WCT is a theory of vocational psychology designed to offer a more complete view of how a perceived calling leads to a lived calling, along with a better understanding of the range of outcomes associated with living one's calling (Duffy et al., 2018). The theory moreover contains two propositions that together provide the theoretical foundation for the current study. First, WCT stipulates that perceiving a calling and living a calling are distinct constructs, recognizing that individuals' perception that they have a calling does not imply that they are living out that calling (Duffy, Douglass, Gensmer, England, & Kim, 2019). To this end, Duffy and colleagues (2018) theorized that "perceiving a calling is best positioned as a variable that predicts living a calling" (p. 426), and of the two constructs, living a calling is more closely associated with work- and well-being-related outcomes. This follows inasmuch as individuals are unable to obtain "the benefits of approaching work as a calling . . . unless there is an opportunity to actually live out that calling" (Duffy et al., 2018, p. 426).

Second, WCT proposes that although living a calling is primarily associated with positive outcomes, it also has the potential to

lead to negative outcomes—and particularly those related to an overinvestment in one’s work (Duffy et al., 2018). This proposition is aligned with research suggesting that individuals living their calling are more likely to commit a significant amount of time to their work, as well as sacrifice personal time for their work (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). As a result, both negative work-related outcomes (e.g., burnout, Cardador & Caza, 2012) and negative health/well-being-related outcomes (e.g., poor sleep quality, Clinton, Conway, & Sturges, 2017) are conceivable consequences for those living a calling. The circumstances under which living a calling might lead to negative outcomes, however, is less well understood given the dearth of research in this area, especially compared to research on positive outcomes (Duffy et al., 2018).

## Model and Hypotheses

Figure 1 displays our hypothesized model, which as shown, aligns with the two tenets of WCT described in the preceding text. In our hypothesized model, we furthermore integrate theory and research from the mentoring literature to propose that the presence of a mentoring relationship might strengthen the link between perceiving a calling and living a calling. We additionally incorporate several outcomes that have received less attention in the callings literature despite their theoretical and practical importance. In the following text, we describe our specific hypotheses.

**Perceiving a calling and living a calling.** We first hypothesize a positive relationship between perceiving a calling and living a calling. As described in the preceding text, this proposition follows from WCT, which stipulates that perceiving a calling is best positioned as an antecedent to living a calling (Duffy et al., 2018). An association between perceiving a calling and living a calling has also received empirical support in several studies. For example, in a series of studies using samples drawn primarily from an online panel (i.e., MTurk), Duffy and his colleagues (e.g., Duffy & Autin, 2013; Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Bott, 2013; Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012) reported bivariate correlations ranging from .35 to .49 between perceiving and living a calling. Correspondingly, Duffy et al. (2019) observed that “multiple studies have found that the correlation of these two variables hovers around .50” (p. 329). Aligned with these findings, we also propose the following:

*Hypothesis 1:* Perceiving a calling is positively related to living a calling.

**Mentoring as a moderated effect.** In examining the relationship between perceiving a calling and living a calling from the previous research reviewed in the preceding text, it is noteworthy that only about 25% of the variance in living a calling appears to be explained, on average, by perceiving a calling. Why are so many individuals who believe they have a calling ultimately unable to live it out? According to WCT, one answer to this question reflects access and opportunity. The opportunity to live one’s calling, for example, could be limited by socioeconomic constraints (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). Likewise, some people could receive restricted opportunities given racial, gender, or other forms of discrimination (Duffy et al., 2018). These factors, each of which limits people’s opportunity to live out their calling, are acknowledged in WCT (Duffy et al., 2018). However, the factors affecting individuals’ access to a career field that allows them the opportunity to live out a calling likely go beyond socioeconomic and sociocultural factors. To this end, we propose that a key factor which might increase individuals’ access to a career field that allows them the opportunity to live out their calling is having a mentor in that field. In particular, for those with such a mentor, we would expect a greater likelihood that these individuals will be able to translate a perceived calling into actually living out that calling.

One theoretical perspective from the mentoring literature that supports this view is mentor role theory. According to mentor role theory (Kram, 1985; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990), mentors might provide several important career development functions for protégés, including sponsorship, coaching, protection, challenging assignments, and exposure. Two of these functions, sponsorship and exposure, are particularly relevant here as both pertain directly to protégé access and opportunity. That is, through the exposure mentors bring to their protégés, as well as through the sponsorship mentors provide in support of their protégés, access to career positions and opportunities for protégés are likely to be enhanced. Aligned with this view, meta-analytic evidence points to a positive relationship between perceived career support provided by a mentor and protégé reports of their career prospects (Eby et al., 2013). Still, for the current study, it is further likely that the presence of a mentor will only influence the strength of the relationship between perceiving a calling and living a calling for protégés if the mentor resides within the career field in which a protégé seeks an opportunity to live out their calling. If the mentor is not in the same field, their ability to increase opportunities for a protégé by pro-

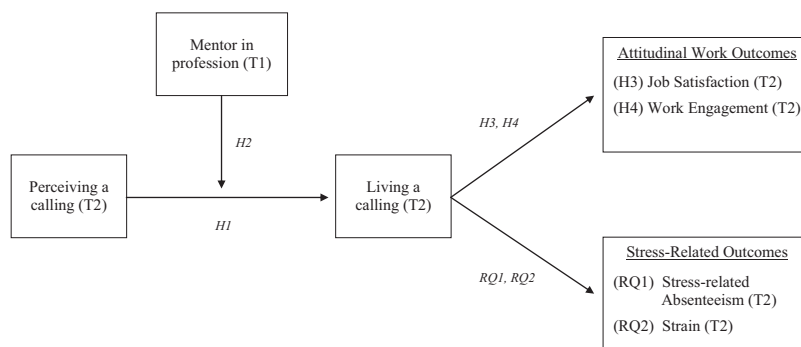


Figure 1. Hypothesized model summary.

viding sponsorship and exposure will ultimately be more limited. Supporting this view within the current study context, many teaching degree programs integrate mentoring relationships into their curriculum (Sundli, 2007), suggesting that mentoring relationships are indeed a relevant and useful development tool that might enhance opportunities for future teachers.

Further drawing on mentor role theory, certain psychosocial functions exhibited by mentors might also influence the relationship between perceiving a calling and living a calling for protégés. Of particular relevance here is a mentor's function as a role model (Durbin & Tomlinson, 2014), which could influence a protégé's decision to pursue a position in which they can live out a calling as part of an effort to emulate their mentor. In addition, an in-profession mentor is in a prominent position to act as a relational resource (French & Domene, 2010) for a person debating whether to take a specific career development step (e.g., pursuing a degree), or accept certain career sacrifices (e.g., a willingness to accept a lower salary), that would allow for an increased opportunity to live out a calling they perceive. Taking these perspectives on career development and psychosocial roles together, therefore, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 2:* The relationship between perceiving a calling and living a calling will be moderated by the presence of a mentor in one's profession, such that the relationship will be more positive for those with a mentor in their profession than those without a mentor in their profession.

**Attitudinal work outcomes.** As highlighted in Figure 1, our model proposes a positive relationship between living a calling and two work-related outcomes: job satisfaction and work engagement. An association between living a calling and job satisfaction is specifically identified in WCT. As Duffy et al. (2018) theorized,

. . . because living a calling represents the fulfillment of a career one feels compelled to pursue, that serves as an important source of meaning, and that contributes to the greater good, enacting this calling on a daily basis in the workplace is proposed to . . . boost a sense of satisfaction with that work. (p. 430)

Research has additionally supported a positive relationship between callings and job satisfaction (e.g., Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Douglass, 2014; Duffy, Bott, et al., 2012, Duffy et al., 2013), although many studies have not focused on living a calling specifically, but rather on perceiving a calling, as a predictor of job satisfaction.

According to Duffy and Dik (2013), those with a calling also tend to express an increased level of commitment toward their work, as well as experience greater meaning in their work. This theorizing suggests that in addition to job satisfaction, a positive relationship might also be expected between living a calling and work engagement. Although work engagement is not specifically identified as an outcome in WCT (as is job satisfaction), a reasonable extension of the theory is that those living a calling are likely to approach their work with vigor, be dedicated to their work, and be absorbed in their work—all descriptors of engaged employees (Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). In addition, it is likely that those living a calling will demonstrate high levels of energy while working, which is related to work engagement (Owens, Baker, Sumpter, & Cameron, 2016). A few studies

have also demonstrated an empirical relationship between callings and work engagement. For example, Hirschi (2012) found that those who experienced their work as a calling reported greater levels of work engagement in a sample of German employees. Likewise, in a previous study of teachers conducted in a Zambian context, Rothmann and Hamukang'andu (2013) found support for an association between work engagement and callings, even in the face of the many challenges this group faced, including low pay, inadequate housing, and few opportunities for development. Similarly, studies have shown that teachers express greater satisfaction when they view their work as a calling and when they see their work as meaningful (Lavy & Bocker, 2018; Lobene & Meade, 2013). Aligned with WCT and this earlier research therefore, we propose the following two hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 3:* Living a calling is positively related to job satisfaction.

*Hypothesis 4:* Living a calling is positively related to work engagement.

**Stress-related outcomes.** As shown in Figure 1, our model also suggests a relationship between living a calling and two stress-related outcomes: stress-related absenteeism and strain. Unlike for the proposed positive relationships between living a calling, job satisfaction, and work engagement, however, the direction of these relationships is somewhat less clear. Extant theory and research, in fact, points to several plausible explanations for these relationships.

On the one hand, WCT stipulates that living a calling should lead to positive work-related attitudes (Duffy et al., 2018), which intuitively suggests that there might be a negative relationship between living a calling and outcomes such as stress-related absenteeism and strain experienced in the workplace. Research also points to a positive relationship between callings and indicators of generalized well-being such as life satisfaction (Praskova, Creed, & Hood, 2015), and Dobrow Riza, Weisman, Heller, and Tosti-Kharas (2019) found a negative relationship between callings and outcomes that reflect strain in a meta-analysis. In addition, although few studies have examined behavioral outcomes of callings (Duffy & Dik, 2013), Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, and Schwartz (1997) did find that those viewing their work as a calling missed fewer workdays over a year's time in the only empirical test of the relationship between callings and absenteeism to date. Finally, from a conceptual standpoint, we would also expect that individuals living their calling will exhibit fewer physical symptoms reflective of strain and have lower rates of stress-related absenteeism given that those with callings tend to report greater meaning in their work (see Thompson & Bunderson, 2019), along with higher levels of organizational attachment (Cardador, Dane, & Pratt, 2011).

Alternatively, a reasonable argument might be offered for a positive relationship between living a calling and both stress-related absenteeism and strain. As described in the preceding text, WCT recognizes that living a calling might be associated with certain negative outcomes related to an overinvestment in one's work. In their theorizing, Duffy and colleagues (2018) further observe a direct connection between living a calling and stress, noting that "the same features of living a calling that can provide benefits . . . may create vulnerabilities, to the extent that it

repeatedly draws individuals into highly emotional and . . . stressful environments” (p. 431). Indeed, those who are living their calling in a challenging career such as teaching might be particularly susceptible to this possibility. Researchers have linked working in one’s calling to workaholism (see Cardador & Caza, 2012) and to working a greater number of overall hours (Keller, Spurk, Baumeler, & Hirschi, 2016). In addition, other scholars have observed that those living a calling are more likely to make personal sacrifices for their work, feel a greater sense of moral duty and be more critical of their organization’s actions (Bunder-son & Thompson, 2009; Schabram & Maitlis, 2017). Such feelings and behaviors are likely to increase employees’ stress levels and could result in undesired health-related consequences that lead individuals to miss a greater number of workdays and experience more somatic symptoms associated with strain.

Given these differing, yet both credible, perspectives, we test the relationship between living a calling and stress-related absenteeism and strain by positing two research questions.

*Research Question 1:* Is living a calling related to stress-related absenteeism, and if so, is the relationship positive or negative?

*Research Question 2:* Is living a calling related to strain, and if so, is the relationship positive or negative?

## Method

### Study Sample and Data Collection Procedures

We collected data from a sample of high school teachers. To obtain the study sample, after first receiving institutional review board approval, we began by randomly selecting 84 public high schools located in two western states. Then, using the online directories from these schools, we e-mailed a study invitation to between 10 and 20 randomly selected teachers at each school. In total, we sent invitations to 1,552 teachers, with an average of 18 per school. However, 106 of the invitations were returned as undeliverable. The e-mailed invitation contained a description of the study and a survey link. Invitees were offered a small monetary incentive for their participation in the form of a gift card to an online retailer. We also gave respondents the option to forego the incentive and have the authors donate an equal value to one of four charities on their behalf.

Data collection occurred between October 2017 and December 2017, and we collected data in two waves. In total, 162 teachers completed a Time 1 survey. Under the conservative assumption that all nonrejected e-mail invitations were received, this reflects an 11% response rate. We then sent an invitation for the Time 2 survey to all those participating at Time 1 4 weeks later. The Time 2 survey invitation was again sent by e-mail, and the emailed invitation contained a direct link to the survey. Of the 162 teachers completing the Time 1 Survey, 140 also completed the Time 2 survey. This reflects an 86% retention rate. We next employed several data screening procedures, including the use of “instructed response” items and checks for patterned responses. These screening procedures led to the removal of 11 individuals.

The final sample thus contained 129 public high school teachers. About 33% of the teachers were men, and 88% were non-Hispanic

White. Their mean overall teaching experience was 16 years and ranged from those in their first year to those with 40 years of experience. More specifically, 7% of the sample had less than 3 years experience, 29% had between 3 and 9 years experience, 37% had between 10 and 20 years experience, and 26% had more than 20 years experience.<sup>1</sup> Each of these characteristics closely align with U.S. averages for gender, race, and teaching experience among public secondary school teachers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). A wide range of ages were also present in the sample, including teachers younger than 25 to those over 70. Their mean age was between 41 and 45. Teachers’ school tenure was also inclusive, ranging from those in their first year to those with close to 30 years of experience at their current school. Most, though, had at least some experience at their current school, with 74% having a school tenure of five or more years. In addition, while all taught at public high schools, the schools in the sample included those in large urban areas (55%), midsize communities (33%), and small towns (12%). Finally, respondents taught a range of subjects—the highest being science (16%), English (12%), and math (11%).

As noted, our research design involved data collection at two time points. In the Time 1 survey, we measured constructs related to individuals’ mentoring relationships, along with general workplace characteristics. Calling-related constructs, work and stress-related outcomes, and demographics were then captured in the Time 2 survey. As a key objective of our study was to examine how mentoring might influence the relationship between perceiving and living a calling, we chose this design because it allowed for a period of cognitive separation between the mentoring and calling variables. We now turn to a detailed description of each study construct.

### Measures

**Perceiving a calling.** We measured perceiving a calling using the 12-item Presence Scale from Dik, Eldridge, Steger, and Duffy’s (2012) Calling and Vocational Questionnaire (CVQ). This scale assesses the degree to which an individual perceives they have a calling, and has been recommended as among the most thorough and useful measures for assessing the presence of a calling in subsequent research (Duffy, Autin, Allan, & Douglass, 2015). Previous research has also shown this measure to have both strong reliability (e.g.,  $\alpha = .88$ , Dik et al., 2012;  $\alpha = .91$ , Duffy et al., 2015) and validity inasmuch as it relates positively to other perceived calling measures (e.g., Brief Calling scale:  $r = .69$ , Dik et al., 2012;  $r = .67$ , Duffy et al., 2015). A sample item was, “I see my career as a path to purpose in life,” and response options ranged from 1 = *not at all true of me* to 4 = *absolutely true of me*. Perceiving a calling was measured at Time 2.

**Living a calling.** Because our sample consisted of those in a single profession (i.e., high school teachers), we assessed living a calling with a dichotomous variable in which we directly asked respondents, “Are you currently working in a job in which you are pursuing your calling?” (1 = *yes*, 0 = *no*). Overall, 89 individuals responded they were, and 40 stated that they were not.

As our measure of living a calling was developed for this study, we also conducted a separate validation study in which we as-

<sup>1</sup> Percentages do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

essed its relationship with Duffy, Allan, and Bott's (2012) six-item living a calling measure. For the validation study, we used Amazon's MTurk platform to collect a sample of 408 working adults. Results using this sample revealed that our parsimonious, one-item measure was related to Duffy, Allan, et al. (2012) scale ( $r = .76$ ), offering support for its validity. Living a calling was measured at Time 2.

**Mentor in profession.** We assessed whether an individual had a mentor in their profession using a two-step process. First, we presented respondents with a standard definition of mentoring based on previous research (Ragins, Ehrhardt, Lyness, Murphy, & Capman, 2017):

Mentors are individuals with advanced experience and knowledge who provide personal and career-related support to their protégés. A mentor can be someone you know in any number of ways. For example, a mentor could be someone you work with or used to work with. A mentor could also be a family member, a peer, or an individual you know or knew in a different way.

In addition to this definition, we also informed respondents, "For this survey, we are interested in relationships you may have (or had) with mentors that began before you started working as an educator." After these statements, we asked respondents, "Prior to beginning as an educator, did you ever have a mentor?" Eighty-four respondents indicated that they had, whereas 45 indicated that they had not. In Step 2, then, those who indicated that they did have a mentor in Step 1 were next asked whether their mentor was a high school teacher. Forty-three of the 84 people indicated that their mentor was a high school teacher. As such, these 43 individuals comprised the mentor in profession group. The remaining 86 individuals (i.e., those whose mentor was in a different profession [41 people] and those who indicated in Step 1 that they did not have a mentor prior to beginning as an educator [45 people]) comprised the no mentor in profession group (1 = *mentor in profession*, 0 = *no mentor in profession*). Mentor in profession was measured at Time 1.

**Outcomes.** We included four outcome variables in our model. Two were work outcomes: job satisfaction and work engagement; and two were stress-related outcomes: stress-related absenteeism and strain. With respect to the work outcomes, we first measured job satisfaction using Cammann, Fichman, Jenkins, and Klesh's (1983) three-item scale. Bowling and Hammond (2008) provided meta-analytic evidence that this often used measure of job satisfaction is both reliable ( $\alpha = .84$ ,  $k = 79$ ,  $N = 30,623$ ) and valid, given its relationship with other work-related attitudes (e.g.,  $\rho = .77$  with affective organizational commitment,  $k = 16$ ,  $N = 8061$ ;  $\rho = -.65$  with turnover intention,  $k = 31$ ,  $N = 12,618$ ). A sample item is, "All in all, I am satisfied with my job," and response options range from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. We next measured work engagement using Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova's (2006) nine-item scale. This scale is among the most commonly used to measure work engagement, and previous research has shown it to have strong reliability (e.g.,  $\alpha = .85$  to  $.92$  across 10 samples, Schaufeli et al., 2006;  $\alpha = .93$ , Sonnentag, Binnewies, & Mojza, 2010). In addition, supporting its validity, Christian and colleagues (2011) provided meta-analytic evidence that this scale of work engagement relates positively to other work-related attitudes (e.g.,  $\rho = .52$  with job satisfaction,  $k = 13$ ,  $N = 6654$ ;  $\rho = .59$  with organizational commitment,  $k = 13$ ,  $N =$

7467) and conceptually similar constructs such as job involvement ( $\rho = .52$ ). A sample item is, "At work, I feel bursting with energy," and response options range from 1 = *never* to 7 = *always*.

With respect to the stress-related outcomes, we first followed Ragins et al. (2017) by assessing stress-related absenteeism with the following item: "In the last year, how many days have you missed work because of a stress-related illness? (Examples of stress-related illness include headaches/migraines, chest pains, stomach aches/gastrointestinal illness, high blood pressure, exhaustion, dizziness, and insomnia)." This measure, which captures a count of the number of days a person was absent over the last year, has been shown to be related to other stress-oriented constructs such as insomnia ( $r = .73$ , Ragins et al., 2017). Finally, we measured strain using the 10-item Somatic Complaints at Work Scale (Caplan, Cobb, French, Van Harrison, & Pinneau, 1975). This measure assesses physical stress-related symptoms (e.g., upset stomach, hands trembling, heart beating fast) experienced over the previous month using a three-point scale (1 = *never*, 2 = *once or twice*, 3 = *three or more times*). Previous research has shown this measure to be reliable (e.g.,  $\alpha = .82$ , Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007;  $\alpha = .76$ , Edwards & Harrison, 1993) and valid given its relationship with constructs such as depression ( $r = .48$ , Ragins et al., 2007;  $r = .34$ , Edwards & Harrison, 1993) and anxiety ( $r = .52$ , Ragins et al., 2007;  $r = .42$ , Edwards & Harrison, 1993). All outcomes were measured at Time 2.

**Controls.** We controlled for three demographic variables in all analyses: age (1 = 25 or younger to 11 = 71 or older), gender (1 = *male*, 0 = *female*), and race (1 = *person of color*, 0 = *non-Hispanic White*). In addition, when examining the relationship between living a calling and the outcomes, we also controlled for organizational culture using the item, "I feel the culture of my organization is generally positive." This allowed us to assess the relationship between living a calling and each outcome independent of the overall quality of respondents' work environment. Response options ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. We additionally assessed the validity of our parsimonious measure of organizational culture using the MTurk validation study described earlier. We found that our measure was correlated with several existing measures, including Sarros, Gray, Densten, and Cooper's (2005) Support ( $r = .62$ ) and Stability ( $r = .61$ ) scales from the revised Organizational Culture Profile. Organizational culture was measured at Time 1, whereas the three demographic controls were measured at Time 2.

Finally, although all results for tests of the hypotheses and research questions reported in the text of the article and corresponding tables reflect analyses conducted with the control variables included, we also retested all of the analyses without the control variables. Doing so revealed no substantive changes in our findings.

## Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis proceeded in several stages. We began by conducting three preliminary measurement analyses. First, we screened for missing data and outliers. We then performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of our measurement model, which included all multiitem scales. Third, we conducted tests to gauge the presence and extent of common method variance using

the CFA method marker technique (Williams, Hartman, & Cavazotte, 2010).

Following these preliminary analyses, we next conducted an initial examination of the bivariate correlations between study variables. We then tested our hypotheses using a series of hierarchical regression analyses conducted in SPSS 26 (IBM Corp., 2017). More specifically, we first used logistic regression analysis to test Hypotheses 1 and 2 as living a calling was a dichotomous outcome. We began in Step 1 by establishing a model that included the control variables and mentor in profession, the proposed moderator. We then entered perceiving a calling as a main effect in Step 2 to examine Hypothesis 1. In Step 3, we entered the mentor in Profession  $\times$  Perceiving a Calling interaction to test Hypothesis 2. We next used ordinary least squares regression analysis to examine Hypotheses 3 and 4 and Research Question 2. For each of these tests, after establishing a model that included the control variables in Step 1, we entered living a calling as a main effect in the second step to examine the corresponding hypothesis or research question. Finally, following Ragins et al. (2017), we used Poisson regression analysis to examine Research Question 1 because stress-related absenteeism was a count variable. Again, after establishing a model that included the control variables in step one, living a calling was entered as a main effect in Step 2 to examine Research Question 2.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

**Data screening.** We conducted screening assessments for both missing data and outliers. First, results revealed missing data on only three study variables, and in no instances was there more than three cases of missing data for any one construct (strain: three cases; perceiving a calling: two cases; and organizational culture: one case). Given this small degree of missing data, cases with missing data were removed listwise when testing the corresponding study hypotheses and research questions. Accordingly, sample sizes for each test are reported with the results.

Next, following Edwards and Cable (2009), we screened for outliers based on leverage, studentized residuals, and Cook's *D* statistic, with outliers identified as "those cases that exceeded the minimum cutoff on all three criteria" (p. 661). We further followed Cohen, Cohen, West, and Aiken's (2003) recommendations for determining the minimum cutoff criteria on each of the three indices. Applying these procedures, we found no clear outlier cases.

**Measurement model.** We tested our measurement model in a CFA that contained all multiitem scales, using full-information maximum likelihood as the estimation method. We also used an item parceling strategy given the length of some of the scales. Specifically, we created three 4-item parcels for the CVQ, three 3-item parcels for work engagement, along with one 4-item parcel and two 3-item parcels for strain. For the CVQ and work engagement, parcels reflected the prescribed subdimensions of each construct (Dik et al., 2012; Schaufeli et al., 2006). For strain, parcels were created using random assignment. Fit statistics for the CFA were  $\chi^2_{39} = 83.42, p = .02$ ; CFI = .96, RMSEA = .06, SRMR = .06, and chi-square difference tests showed that this model had better fit than several alternative models in which one or more of

the latent factor correlations were fixed to unity ( $p < .01$  for all). The mean standardized loading across items was .73 ( $p < .01$  for all). These CFA tests were conducted using MPlus 7.20.

**Common method variance.** As our data collection relied on self-report data, we took proactive steps to mitigate the threat of common method bias in our study design. For example, we provided respondents with information about steps taken to ensure confidentiality, collected data at multiple time points, as well as collected more objective reports where possible. Beyond these procedural steps, we also examined the presence and extent of common method variance using the CFA method marker approach (see Williams et al., 2010 for details). Following Williams et al. (2010), we chose a marker variable that was theoretically uncorrelated with study variables—Mitchell et al.'s (1998) six-item knowledge of financial affairs scale. Results first showed evidence of a congeneric method effect as the method-U model had superior fit over the baseline model ( $\Delta\chi^2_{13} = 23.76, p = .03$ ). However, comparisons of the method-U and method-R models revealed that this method effect did not bias the relationships between study constructs ( $\Delta\chi^2_6 = 0.03, p = .99$ ). In short, these results suggest that although the marker variable accounted for a small degree of variance across substantive indicators ( $M = 1.62\%$ ,  $Mdn = 0.48\%$ ), this method effect did not meaningfully influence the relationships between study variables.

### Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations, and scale reliabilities for all variables. A few values are of note. First, the correlation between perceiving a calling and living a calling ( $r = .52, p < .01$ ) was similar to values reported in previous studies, thereby offering further evidence that these are distinct constructs (see Duffy et al., 2018). In addition, the negative correlations among living a calling and stress-related absenteeism ( $r = -.19, p = .03$ ) and strain ( $r = -.21, p = .02$ ) offer preliminary insight into the nature of these relationships.

### Hypothesis Tests

**Hypotheses 1 and 2.** Logistic regression results for Hypotheses 1 and 2 are displayed in Table 2. First, as shown in Model 2 and supporting Hypothesis 1, perceiving a calling had a positive relationship with living a calling. We also found, however, that this relationship was contingent on having a mentor in one's profession. As shown in Model 3, the mentor in Profession  $\times$  Perceiving a Calling interaction was significant and in the expected direction. This finding offers support for Hypothesis 2.

To examine the nature of this moderated effect more closely, we conducted within-group tests for the relationship between perceiving a calling and living a calling for those with and without a mentor in their profession. The results of these tests demonstrated that in both groups, a positive relationship between perceiving a calling and living a calling remained. However, the strength of this relationship varied markedly. For those without a mentor in their profession, results showed that a one-quarter unit increase in perceiving a calling resulted in a 72% increase in the odds that a person will report living their calling (unstandardized log odds = 0.54,  $p < .01$ ). In contrast, for those with a mentor in their profession, results showed that a one-quarter unit increase in



Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics, Bivariate Correlations, and Scale Reliabilities*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Job satisfaction	4.14	0.61	<b>.72</b>										
2. Work engagement	5.79	0.77	.48	<b>.91</b>									
3. Stress-related absenteeism	1.07	2.44	-.30	-.21	—								
4. Strain	1.38	0.34	-.33	-.13	.50	<b>.80</b>							
5. Living a calling	0.69	0.46	.30	.41	-.19	-.21	—						
6. Perceiving a calling	3.11	0.51	.31	.46	.07	.00	.52	<b>.85</b>					
7. Mentor in profession <sup>a</sup>	0.33	0.47	.07	.10	-.03	.10	.01	-.01	—				
8. Organizational culture	3.76	0.95	.38	.11	-.19	-.07	.06	.04	.01	—			
9. Age	4.99	2.24	-.03	.05	.01	-.14	.03	.10	-.15	-.06	—		
10. Gender <sup>b</sup>	0.33	0.47	.05	-.04	-.16	-.19	.04	-.12	.00	.16	.04	—	
11. Race <sup>c</sup>	0.12	0.33	.04	.03	.12	.01	.05	.10	-.17	.00	-.11	.09	—

Note.  $N = 126-129$ . Entries in boldface type on the diagonal are scale reliabilities. Correlations greater than .17 are significant at  $p < .05$  and greater than .23 at  $p < .01$ .

<sup>a</sup> 1 = mentor in profession, 0 = no mentor in profession. <sup>b</sup> 1 = male, 0 = female. <sup>c</sup> 1 = person of color, 0 = White.

perceiving a calling resulted in a 417% increase in the odds that a person will report living their calling (unstandardized log odds = 1.64,  $p < .01$ ).<sup>2</sup> From a bivariate standpoint, the within-group correlation between perceiving a calling and living a calling for those without a mentor in their profession was .41 ( $p < .01$ ). For those with a mentor in their profession, the within-group correlation was .73 ( $p < .01$ ).

**Hypotheses 3 and 4.** Results for Hypotheses 3 and 4 are presented in Table 3. As shown in Model 2, there was a positive relationship between living a calling and job satisfaction, thereby supporting Hypothesis 3. As shown in Model 4, there was also a positive relationship between living a calling and work engagement. This result supports Hypothesis 4.

**Research Questions 1 and 2.** Poisson regression results for Research Question 1 are provided in Table 3. As shown in Model 8, there was a negative relationship between living a calling and stress-related absenteeism.<sup>3</sup> Tests further indicated that those not living their calling as a high school teacher had a rate of absenteeism 127% greater over the last year than those who were. Finally, Table 3 displays results for Research Question 2. As shown in Model 6, there was a negative relationship between living a calling and strain—those living their calling as a high school teacher reported less stress-related symptoms.<sup>4</sup>

## Discussion

### Implications for Research

First, our findings support WCT's premise that perceiving a calling is an important antecedent to living a calling (Duffy et al., 2018). Taking our sample of high school teachers collectively, our finding of a bivariate correlation of .52 between perceiving and living a calling is aligned with earlier findings from multi-occupational adult samples (Duffy & Autin, 2013; Duffy, Bott, et al., 2012; Duffy et al., 2013). Put simply, our results support Duffy and colleagues' (2019) conclusion that the relationship between perceiving a calling and living a calling is approximately .50.

However, by integrating mentoring research and theory with WCT, a key contribution of the current study was that we also found that the relationship between perceiving and living a calling was stronger for those with a mentor in their career field. This

effect was meaningful in our sample of high school teachers: When broken down by those with and without a mentor in their career field, perceiving a calling explained less than 20% of the variance in living a calling for those teachers who did not have a teaching mentor and greater than 50% of the variance in living a calling for those teachers who had a teaching mentor.

These findings highlight an important link between the mentoring and calling literatures. According to WCT, individuals face different hurdles that might limit their ability to live out a perceived calling (Duffy et al., 2018). Mentor role theory, however, suggests that mentors can provide increased access and opportunities that help to offset at least some of these challenges through the career development functions they provide, as well as through the role modeling and other psychosocial benefits they offer (see Kram, 1985; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990).

Our theoretical integration of the mentoring and callings research also introduces several important questions for future research. For example, although we theorized that a mentor within one's career field might strengthen the relationship between perceiving and living a calling for a protégé given the increased access and opportunities such a mentor could provide, other mentor qualities might also be important to consider. Questions related to how mentor attributes influence mentoring outcomes have long been of theoretical interest to mentoring scholars (Allen, Eby, Chao, & Bauer, 2017), and these questions are applicable here as well. For example, are mentors who provide greater levels of

<sup>2</sup> For the within-group analyses, race was excluded as a control variable because the mentor in profession group had only two people of color. We report changes in odds for a one-quarter unit increase in the independent variable rather than a one-unit increase given the variable's limited scale range of 1 to 4.

<sup>3</sup> We also retested Research Question 1 using a zero-inflated Poisson, negative binomial, and zero-inflated negative binomial regression analysis, and results were replicated.

<sup>4</sup> As a robustness test, we also re-examined the study hypotheses using a structural equation model (SEM). Because the model was multigroup in nature and contained an endogenous count variable, we conducted this analysis using a mixture model (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). SEM results confirmed support for each of the study hypotheses (i.e., Hypotheses 1 through 4), as well as replicated findings for Research Question 1. The relationship between living a calling and strain (Research Question 2), however, was not significant in the SEM analysis ( $p = .06$ ).

Table 2  
*Logistic Regression Results for the Effect of Perceiving a Calling on Living a Calling*

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Controls and main effects			
Age	.11	-.02	.08
Gender <sup>a</sup>	.02	.26	.26
Race <sup>b</sup>	.23	.02	.05
Mentor in profession <sup>c</sup>	.09	.07	.65
Perceiving a calling		1.53**	1.92**
Interaction effect			
Mentor in Profession × Perceiving a Calling			1.18*
Regression statistics			
-2 log likelihood	153.65	115.69	108.73
$\Delta\chi^2$	—	37.96**	6.96**

Note.  $N = 127$ . Semistandardized coefficients (log odds) are reported.

<sup>a</sup> 1 = male, 0 = female. <sup>b</sup> 1 = person of color, 0 = White. <sup>c</sup> 1 = mentor in profession, 0 = no mentor in profession.

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

psychosocial support more effective in helping protégés translate a perceived calling into a lived calling? Or, are mentors more adept in delivering career support, sponsorship, or role modeling more valuable? In addition, beyond mentor qualities, protégé attributes are also of interest. It is conceivable, for instance, that protégés possessing certain personality traits have more or less to gain from the presence of a mentor. Likewise, certain qualities in a mentor might be more or less valuable depending on a protégé's social status or other characteristics (Ragins, 1997). Research examining these (and other) mentor and protégé attributes can offer important new insights, along with theoretical refinement for our findings.

Given our findings for the value of mentoring in this study, another question that emerges is whether certain types of mentoring relationships might also contribute to people's development of a perceived calling. This is an important question, especially as there is a dearth of literature examining how individuals develop a calling in comparison to research on calling outcomes (Duffy &

Dik, 2013; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). Interestingly, and as shown in Table 1, we did not find evidence for such a relationship in our current study of high school teachers. Still, a relationship might exist in certain contexts, with one possibility being those at a formative career stage (e.g., university students). Drawing on mentor role theory, for example, it is possible that the psychosocial support offered by mentors could encourage protégés at a formative career stage to more widely explore career opportunities, thereby allowing them to discover paths perceived as more meaningful. Scholars further note that interpersonal relationships might serve as a resource for young individuals strategizing about their career options, as well as promote learning, growth, and development (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003), which could result in a clearer recognition of a calling. Research examining the connection between mentoring relationships and the development of a perceived calling in samples of individuals at a formative career stage would offer a more complete understanding of the different ways men-

Table 3  
*Regression Results for the Effect of Living a Calling on the Dependent Variables Job Satisfaction, Work Engagement, Strain, and Stress-Related Absenteeism*

Variable	Job satisfaction		Work engagement		Strain		Stress-related absenteeism	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Controls and main effects								
Age	-.02	-.03	.05	.04	-.12	-.12	.05	.07
Gender <sup>a</sup>	-.01	-.02	-.05	-.06	-.18*	-.18*	-.44*	-.44*
Race <sup>b</sup>	.05	.03	.04	.02	.01	.02	.27	.28
Organizational culture	.38**	.36**	.12	.10	-.04	-.03	-.31*	-.30*
Living a calling		.27**		.40**		-.19*		-.38*
Regression statistics								
$R^2$	.15	.22	.02	.18	.06	.09		
$\Delta R^2$		.07**		.16**		.03*		
-2 log likelihood							454.85	432.25
$\Delta\chi^2$								22.60**
$n$		128		128		125		128

Note. Models 1 through 6 are ordinary least squares regression models. For these models, standardized coefficients are reported. Models 7 through 8 are Poisson regression models. For these models, semistandardized coefficients are reported.

<sup>a</sup> 1 = Male, 0 = Female. <sup>b</sup> 1 = Person of color, 0 = White.

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

toring relationships might contribute to callings theory and research.

Our results also revealed a few important findings with respect to the outcomes of living a calling. For example, along with a positive relationship with job satisfaction, we found that teachers who were living their calling also expressed greater work engagement. This finding is especially important for three reasons. First, recent reports suggest that 85% of the workforce is disengaged globally (Harter, 2017). Second, researchers have shown that engaged teachers display greater teaching performance, as well as have students that are more engaged in learning (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon, & Kaplan, 2007). Third, beyond the teaching profession specifically, work engagement is understood to relate to many bottom-line indicators for success across organizations (Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010). The connection between living a calling and work engagement is therefore important in many contexts.

Interesting findings additionally emerged for stress-related outcomes. As described earlier, WCT recognizes that living a calling might be associated with negative outcomes, and particularly those related to an overinvestment in one's work (Duffy et al., 2018). Moreover, the underlying premise for these negative effects stems from the stress that individuals might experience because of their emotional and physical investment when living out a calling (Duffy et al., 2018). In contrast to this theorizing, however, we found negative relationships between living a calling and two stress-related outcomes for teachers: stress-related absenteeism and reports of physical symptoms associated with strain. Those who were living out their calling as a teacher missed fewer schooldays, and had fewer somatic complaints, than those who did not believe that they were living out their calling as a teacher. These differences were moreover meaningful—for example, the rate of stress-related absenteeism was 127% greater for those not living their calling—and held even when the culture of one's workplace was controlled.

It is important to observe that our findings for a negative relationship between living a calling and stress-related outcomes do not preclude WCT's stipulation that undesired outcomes might occur for individuals living their calling. Indeed, the possibility of negative outcomes has received support in earlier research (e.g., Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). However, they do raise questions as to the theoretical process by which negative outcomes might transpire. That is, are negative outcomes a product of the stress levels that come as a consequence of living one's calling as WCT suggests, or are negative outcomes the product of other factors that operate independent of, or perhaps in conjunction with, stress? The former is not supported in our current study of teachers, and results of a recent meta-analysis conducted by Dobrow Riza et al. (2019) might offer additional insight. Specifically, although Dobrow Riza and her colleagues found a negative relationship between callings and outcomes related to strain (thereby supporting our results), they also showed a positive relationship between callings and challenge stressors—a finding that suggests that whereas those living their calling might indeed face increased stressors, they interpret these stressors in an overall positive light and as an opportunity for growth, thereby eschewing undesired outcomes such as stress-related absenteeism and somatic complaints. This conclusion is speculative, however, and the process by which

negative outcomes might transpire from living one's calling remains an important question that warrants future attention.

Finally, taken together with Dobrow Riza et al.'s (2019) recent meta-analytic findings, our results for a negative relationship between living a calling and stress-related absenteeism and somatic complaints among teachers also raise questions as to whether the experience of living a calling might relate to individual attributes that influence people's interpretation of stressors. For example, those who feel they are living their calling might approach their work with greater levels of grit or resilience, which in turn could influence outcomes (e.g., Jordan, Ferris, Hochwarter, & Wright, 2019). Future scholars might wish to test whether the influence of living a calling on outcomes could be indirect through these or similar constructs, and, if so, whether this effect might be stronger among individuals in certain occupations. To this end, it is interesting to note that many studies of callings, akin to our current study of teachers, have taken an occupation-specific focus on challenging jobs where constructs such as grit and resilience might be especially beneficial (e.g., domestic violence workers, Walsh et al., 2020).

### Implications for Practice

This research also has practical implications teachers, counselors, and administrators. First, our findings highlight the value of a mentor for aspiring teachers seeking a means by which they might translate their perceived calling to teach into actually having an opportunity to live it. As described earlier, the increased access and opportunity a mentor can provide might assist individuals in overcoming the challenges they face to living out their perceived teaching calling, as can the role modeling and psychosocial benefits a mentor might offer (see Kram, 1985; Ragins & McFarlin, 1990). Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that even those who face significant hurdles for translating a perceived calling into a lived calling based on discriminatory factors might benefit from a mentor's sponsorship (Ramaswami, Dreher, Bretz, & Wiethoff, 2010; Tharenou, 2005). Indeed, the presence of a mentor could be an "equalizer" of sorts for aspiring teachers who face any number of different obstacles to living out their perceived calling.

An important question for counselors and administrators, therefore, is how best to create and/or promote opportunities for aspiring teachers to develop mentoring relationships. Within university settings, numerous programs exist that can serve as exemplars (Sundli, 2007). In these programs, mentoring is integrated into the curriculum and training new teachers receive. However, creating opportunities outside of university settings is also important. For many individuals who perceive a teaching calling, and especially for those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, mentoring opportunities as part of a university degree program might come too late. Formal mentoring programs offered at the high school level for those expressing an interest in teaching might instead be very impactful. Here, schools (or school districts) could collaborate with professional organizations to provide for such opportunities.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Example relevant professional organizations in the United States include both national groups such as the National Education Association Foundation ([neafoundation.org](http://neafoundation.org)) and the National Center on Education and the Economy ([ncee.org](http://ncee.org)), along with regional groups such as the Southern Regional Education Board ([sreb.org](http://sreb.org)).

Alternatively, schools could consider partnering with colleges, creating mentoring opportunities between high school students expressing an interest in teaching and those aspiring teachers currently enrolled in university teaching degree programs. This option has the added benefit of allowing university students to serve as mentors, thereby offering additional benefits beyond what they receive as a protégé.

Another important consideration for counselors and administrators is program design. Given unprecedented events in today's external environment with the global coronavirus pandemic causing millions of students to shift to online education, skills in online teaching have become a necessity for teachers. This has implications for the roles a mentor might provide, as well as raises questions as to whether mentors with certain attributes or experiences might be better able to provide support for aspiring teachers. Moreover, it raises questions as to whether mentoring programs too should include e-mentoring components. Previous studies on the effectiveness of these formats have found mixed results in comparison to face-to-face mentoring (Smith-Jentsch, Scielzo, Yarbrough, & Rosopa, 2008). Still, scholars have identified various features that can make e-mentoring more effective (e.g., de Janasz & Godshalk, 2013), and counselors and administrators can use this information to incorporate best practices when designing mentoring programs for aspiring teachers that contain non-face-to-face components.

Finally, it is important that teachers, counselors, and administrators alike recognize the range of benefits that can come when teachers feel they are living their calling as an educator. These benefits, which include increased job satisfaction and engagement along with decreased somatic complaints and absenteeism, have bottom-line impacts for schools. It is imperative, therefore, that counselors and administrators provide resources and support that prevent teachers from becoming disenfranchised. This is especially true for more experienced teachers. Although education scholars observe that teachers tend to become more comfortable in their work role over time (Blustein, 2010), some K through 12 educators could come to experience their role as isolating given that the majority of their contact is with a revolving cast of students. These experiences, along with other challenges, might lead to situations in which an individual no longer feels they are living their calling as a teacher, even if they did at one time. Developing communities of learning for teachers (which could include mentoring as one facet), providing opportunities for professional development, allowing for appropriate levels of job autonomy, as well as offering access to counseling resources and support networks are all strategies that might help teachers continue to view themselves as living their calling—and in turn, allow them to remain engaged and less prone to strain (see DeAngelis, 2012).

### Limitations

We must also acknowledge a few study limitations. One was that our findings relied on self-report data, which raises the threat of common method bias. As described earlier, we took steps to mitigate this issue in our research design, as well as assessed its impact using statistical tests. In addition, it is important to note that several variables reflected cognitions and attitudes—constructs that are appropriately measured using self-reports. Finally, it

should be observed that common method variance is not applicable for tests involving interactions (Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010).

It is also important to note that this study used a cross-sectional, correlational design, which prevents us from establishing causal relationships. Nonetheless, it should be observed that the proposed relationships identified in our hypothesized model are aligned with existing theory. For example, although WCT identifies perceiving a calling as an antecedent to living a calling (Duffy et al., 2018), our design prohibits us from verifying empirically that this is indeed the case. We encourage future researchers to examine the relationship between perceiving and living a calling using longitudinal designs.

Some limitations concerning the study's measurement, sample, and generalizability must also be recognized. For example, although we theorized that a mentor in one's career field (here a teaching mentor) would strengthen the relationship between perceiving and living a calling given, among other factors, the increased sponsorship and exposure such a mentor might provide; it should be recognized that we did not explicitly measure these career development functions. Future research should address this limitation. There were also both strengths and weaknesses associated with the study sample. On the one hand, a strength of this study's sample was that it included individuals from many different organizations. In addition, by focusing on a single career field, we were able to account in the study design for factors that could influence results, including industry, job type, and education level. The sampling design also provided for a degree of randomness beyond what is typically seen in survey-based work and vocational research. Still, the study's response rate was modest. This fact was influenced by the sampling design (which involved "cold e-mailing" a survey invitation) and might restrict the study's generalizability despite the randomness inherent in the sample. Questions also remain as to how well our findings might extend to other career fields and contexts, and researchers should examine these questions.

### Conclusion

Notwithstanding these limitations, this study offers increased insight into our understanding of callings and their implications. We extend WCT and callings research by examining two stress-related outcomes of living a calling, along with positive work-related outcomes for teachers. Most importantly, we also integrate mentoring theory and research to highlight how the link between perceiving and living a calling might be shaped by a relationship with a mentor. The callings literature has provided evidence for the importance of living a calling and outcomes. However, less is known about the antecedents of callings, as well as what strategies can be used to help individuals progress from perceiving to living a calling (Duffy & Dik, 2013). The current research indicates that strategies that enable individuals to develop relationships with mentors in their chosen profession might be valuable, allowing careerists to better bridge the gap between perceiving and living their calling. We hope our findings will open new doors for future research on the origins, processes, and outcomes of callings, along with how tools such as mentoring might enable people to live out their calling.

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