Chapter III

A Call to Action: The Implications of Calling for Employability, Innovative Work, and Proactive Professional Development

ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper examines the relationship of calling to employability and innovative work behavior (IWB) and the mediating role of proactive professional development.

Design/methodology/approach: The paper is structured around two studies that use data collected in the Netherlands from a) employees from a healthcare organization and b) alumni of a large public university.

Findings: The results reveal that calling has no direct association with employability. Further examination of this relation show that proactive professional development partially mediates the calling-employability relationship and has a negative confounding or suppressing effect on it. In this case, calling is both indirectly positively and directly negatively associated with employability. Furthermore, proactive professional development fully mediates the relationship between calling and IWB.

Research limitations/implications: Future research requires longitudinal examination of the calling-employability and calling-IWB relationships.

Practical implications: Our results suggest that in addition to pursuing one’s calling, individuals need to proactively engage in building their competencies to enable their employability.

Originality/value: The paper reveals the complicated nature of the relationship between calling and employability and shows how calling can benefit organizations through employees’ work behaviors.

Keywords: Calling, Proactive approach to work, Career development, Employability, Innovation at work
3.1. Introduction

Calling, which is understood as an extreme condition of pursuing purposeful, meaningful, intrinsically motivated and passion-driven work (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Elangovan et al., 2010), has attracted much attention from both scholars and practitioners in the past several years. The concept reflects emergent employees’ expectations of pursuing meaningful careers as work becomes more central in people’s lives and focus is placed on lifecycle engagement in work (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Rosso et al., 2010; Newman, 2011). Growing research on this topic indicates that calling positively relates to career development variables (e.g., career self-efficacy, etc.) (e.g., Hall & Chandler, 2005; Hirschi & Hermann, 2013), work-related attitudes (e.g., organizational commitment, etc.) (e.g., Cardador, Dane, & Pratt, 2011) and well-being (e.g., job satisfaction, etc.) (e.g., Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Thus, existing research focuses on studying how individuals with a calling experience their work and career, while paying little attention to examining whether calling may stimulate individuals to take a proactive approach toward their career and their organization. At the same time, contemporary discourses on careers and work increasingly emphasize the importance of individuals engaging in proactive career and work behavior to enable individual career success and the success of organizations in today’s highly insecure, unstable and competitive work environment (Sullivan & Baruch, 2009; Waters, Briscoe, Grant & Ashforth, 2008). This situation suggests the relevance and the necessity of studying the relationship of calling to individuals’ proactive career and work behaviors to understanding whether having and pursuing a calling contributes to or impedes the development of individuals and their organizations. In their conceptual paper, Elangovan et al. (2010) propose that one of the defining elements of calling is an action orientation because calling refers to a call to action (i.e., the emphasis is on doing rather than simply being), implying that calling
should drive individuals to take a proactive rather than a passive approach toward their careers and their organizations. Although action orientation as a defining element of calling has not been explicitly addressed by other definitions of calling, there are reasons to expect that calling stimulates individuals’ proactive career and work behaviors. Calling is strongly associated with intrinsic motivation (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Conway, Clinton, Sturges, & Budjanovcanin, 2015), which is seen as an important driver of positive proactive career and work behaviors (e.g., Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2011).

Studying the underexplored role of calling in stimulating individuals’ proactive career and work behaviors allows this study to contribute to the further development of the literature on the outcomes of calling. It also allows us to determine whether having a calling may help individuals build their career success and engage in behaviors that contribute to the success of their organizations. Career success in the contemporary work environment depends considerably on individuals’ employability and their engagement in proactive professional development, both of which are concerned with outcomes of the proactive approach employees take to the development of their valuable and transferable competencies (Fugate et al., 2004; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Hall & Chandler, 2005). In particular, employability allows individuals to have a sustainable career (Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015) and represents the ultimate way of enabling employment security in the context of “new careers” (Inkson & King, 2010; De Vos, De Hauw, & Van der Heijden, 2011). In this paper, we take a competency-based approach to employability that acknowledges the necessity of proactively engaging in the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities that are valued by current and prospective employers (Fugate et al., 2004; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). Drawing on Hall and Chandler’s (2005) calling theory of career success and existing research that links calling to career behavior (e.g., Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Hirschi, 2011; Hirschi &
Hermann, 2013), we propose that calling is associated with increased employability and proactive professional development.

The success of an organization in the contemporary changing and competitive environment depends to a great extent on innovation and employee innovation (West, 2002; Anderson, De Dreu, & Nujstad, 2004; Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014). Organizations not only encourage employees to engage in behaviors that can bring about innovation but they also increasingly expect employees to take initiative with this respect (Grant & Ashforth, 2008). Based on prior conceptualizations (Farr & Ford, 1990; De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010), we define innovative work behavior (IWB) as employee behavior oriented toward the generation, promotion and implementation of new and useful ideas. Drawing on self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005) and previous research suggesting that individuals with a calling are autonomously motivated (Conway et al., 2015), we propose that calling is associated with increased IWB of employees.

The aforementioned logic suggests that calling is likely to positively relate to both employability and IWB. However, calling may relate to employability and IWB through proactive professional development. For example, the SDT argues that intrinsically motivated employees such as those with a calling experience a desire to explore and to learn (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When individuals realize this desire by engaging in learning behaviors related to their interests (i.e., proactive professional development), their cognitive flexibility and willingness to take risks are enhanced, stimulating them to engage in the development of new ideas (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Grant & Berry, 2011) and to take actions to realize these ideas (Devloo, Anseel, De Beuckelaer, & Salanova, 2014). Thus, we propose that proactive professional development will fully mediate the calling-
employability and calling-IWB relationships. Figure 3.1 depicts the overall theoretical model and explains the two-study structure of the paper.

![Diagram](image)

**Note:** Sample 1 ($N = 423$) – employees from a healthcare organization. Sample 2 ($N = 583$) – alumni of a large public university.

**Figure 3.1.** Hypothesized theoretical model

Our study contributes to the literature on calling and its outcomes in several ways. First, we shed light on the implications of calling for individuals’ careers and their proactive work behavior in organizations to address the question of the value of calling in coping with the demands of the contemporary work environment. Second, we enrich the understanding of the role calling plays in enhancing individuals’ employability, which has received limited attention to date and has been studied only in a sample of emergent adults (Praskova, Creed, & Hood, 2015a; 2015b). Emerging adulthood (approximately 18–25 years) is a period in life when little about the future has been decided and many different directions remain possible (Arnett, 2000). Thus, it is likely that emergent adults may not yet have found their calling and/or may manifest it differently that working adults do. For example, adults that are working may already be living a calling (Duffy, Bott, Allan,
Third, we not only theoretically link calling and a proactive approach to work but also empirically test their relationship, providing an important step toward recognizing the value of the individual pursuit of meaningful work not only for individuals’ careers but also for organizations. Our theoretical model addresses research that argues for the need to better understand the relationship between calling and individuals’ career and work behaviors (Elangovan et al., 2010; Duffy & Dik, 2013).

3.2. Theoretical Background

3.2.1. Experiencing Work as a Calling

As with many other concepts, there is little agreement on the preferred definition of calling. Although the majority of definitions tend to support the idea that calling constitutes meaningful/purposeful engagement in a (work) domain, job or profession, authors seem to disagree on what causes an individual to view his/her (work) domain, job, or profession as meaningful/purposeful (Duffy, Allan, Bott, & Dik, 2014). In particular, some research suggests that calling represents an external summons that may come from God, a higher power, a family legacy, or the needs of society (Dik & Duffy, 2009), whereas other research suggests that it represents a sense of duty or destiny (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009) or even one’s identity (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). The first stream of research builds on a “sacred” (intrinsic religiousness) understanding of calling, whereas the second builds on a “secular” (meaning in life) understanding (Steger, Pickering, Shin, & Dik, 2010).

Because this paper does not address a work context in which external summons are likely to be prominent in determining the meaning or purpose of one’s work, similar to other studies (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010; Hirschi, 2011), we build on a “secular” understanding of calling. In particular, following Dobrow and Tosti-
Kharas (2011), we define career calling as a consuming, meaningful passion an individual experiences toward a particular career domain. The meaningfulness of the passion is subjectively determined by individuals themselves, suggesting a broad understanding of how and to which areas this pursuit of passion by individuals contributes (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011).

Research notes that calling emphasizes a call to action (Elangovan et al., 2010) and serves as one of the necessary conditions of a protean career orientation (Hall, 2002; Hall & Chandler, 2005), which, as an attitude, reflects a feeling of personal agency (Briscoe, Hall & DeMuth, 2006). This understanding suggests that individuals with a calling are likely to take a proactive approach toward their working life. However, little research has attempted to test this theoretical assumption (e.g., Hirschi, 2011). Instead, research has examined the implications of calling for well-being (e.g., Wrzesniewski et al., 1997, Hirschi, 2012), job satisfaction (e.g., Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Duffy et al., 2012), and workplace attitudes (e.g., Cardador et al., 2011), among other important career- and work-related outcomes. Examining the relationship between calling and a proactive approach toward working life is critical in the context of contemporary work environments. Such an understanding of calling would allow individuals to build their careers in a sustainable and meaningful way (i.e., be employable) and would stimulate organizations to become more creative and innovative.

3.2.2. Calling and Employability

Consistent with other definitions of employability (e.g., Fugate et al., 2004), Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden’s (2006) definition suggests a competency-based understanding of employability, defining it as the “continuous fulfilling, acquiring, or creating of work through the optimal use of one’s competences” (p. 453). Employability
competences represent individuals’ knowledge, skills, and abilities to responsibly execute various tasks within a job and their ability to adapt to changing situations on the internal and external labor markets (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Fugate et al., 2004; Van Dam, 2004). In line with previous studies (e.g., McArdle, Waters, Briscoe, & Hall, 2007; Fugate & Kinicki, 2008), our study employs a competence-based perspective toward the examination of individuals’ employability.

Employability allows individuals to pursue their work- and career-related motivations and aspirations in the contemporary work context because it enables important consequences that facilitate employment opportunities. However, the question arises of whether calling contributes to employability. Hall and Chandler’s (2005) calling theory of career success suggests that this is likely to be the case. According to this theory, individuals with a calling in their career possess enhanced “meta-competencies” of identity awareness and adaptability that help them to navigate toward a sense of psychological success. Prior research supports this assumption, showing that calling is associated with higher identity clarity and self-efficacy (e.g., Hirschi, 2012; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). To be employable, individuals need to have clarity on the skills and competencies that they need to develop as well as adaptability in the way they approach this development. Thus, these two meta-competences may be seen as important building blocks of employability (Fugate et al., 2004; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006), suggesting that individuals with a calling are also likely to be more employable. Therefore, building on Hall and Chandler’s (2005) calling theory of career success, we argue for a positive relationship between calling and employability.

*Hypothesis 1*: Calling is positively associated with employability.
3.2.3. Calling and Innovative Work Behavior

Because calling matters for individuals’ career development, it is also likely to have implications for individual work behaviors in organizations. In this paper, we specifically focus on IWB because a growing body of research emphasizes the crucial role of innovation and creativity in the workplace to enable the success of an organization and to increase its competitive advantage (West, 2002; Anderson, De Dreu, & Nujstad, 2004; Anderson, Potočnik, & Zhou, 2014). Following Farr and Ford (1990), we define IWB as an individual’s behavior directed toward the initiative and introduction (within a work role, group or organization) of new and useful ideas, processes, products or procedures (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). Scholars tend to differentiate IWB from creativity by suggesting that whereas creativity involves the generation of novel and useful ideas, IWB also includes the production and implementation of creative ideas (Anderson et al., 2004). Consistent with the multi-dimensional nature of IWB (Scott & Bruce, 1994; Janssen, 2000), we consider IWB to be reflected in idea generation, idea promotion or championing, and idea implementation.

Although little research to date has attempted to link calling to behaviors oriented toward an organization (Elangovan et al. 2010), we suggest that calling may contribute to our understanding of the factors that stimulate individuals to engage in proactive work behaviors such as IWB. To explain why there might be a relationship between the two variables we rely on self-determination theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). SDT argues that it is important to distinguish between autonomous and controlled motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). Autonomous motivation implies that individuals engage in an activity because they find it interesting (i.e., intrinsic motivation) or because they value this activity and integrate it in their selves (i.e.,
controlled motivation implies that individuals engage in an activity because of a sense of pressure to engage in the activity triggered by external forces or contingencies that may be related to threats and guilt (i.e., introjected motivation) or to reward and punishment (i.e., external motivation). Furthermore, SDT suggests that satisfaction of the need for competence (i.e., feeling of a sense of mastery and effectiveness) and the need for autonomy (i.e., experiencing freedom regarding one’s behavior and acting consistently with one’s integrated sense of self) enables the nurturing of autonomous motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

Individuals with a calling are likely to be autonomously motivated. They are intrinsically motivated to work because they identify with work-related activities that reflect their passion (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011) and integrate these activities into their sense of self (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Elangovan et al., 2010). In addition, individuals with a calling follow self-endorsed values originating from a sense of duty or destiny (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009) or identity (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011), which reflects integrated/identified motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Recently, Conway et al. (2015) found support for the links between calling and intrinsic and identified motivations. Prior research suggests that individuals with both intrinsic and identified/integrated motivations are likely to set and to strive for proactive goals and to engage in proactive work behaviors (Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2011). Thus, in relation to one’s calling, we do not distinguish between the two types of motivations but instead refer to intrinsic motivation in its broader sense, meaning autonomous rather than controlled motivation.

6 Identified and integrated types of motivations are often collapsed into one type, – identified motivation, because they involve the values a person closely identifies with, which are difficult to distinguish (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Conway et al., 2015).
Existing research has extensively demonstrated that individuals who are intrinsically motivated are likely to be more creative because intrinsic motivation enhances their cognitive flexibility, willingness to take risks, and persistence in problem solving (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004; Grant & Berry, 2011). Thus, they are likely to engage more in the idea generation process which serves as one of the important elements of IWB. A study by Devloo, Anseel, De Beuckelaer and Salanova (2014) develops this argumentation further by suggesting that intrinsic motivation also stimulates individuals to engage in idea promotion and idea realization in addition to idea generation, forming IWB. Given that individuals with a calling are likely to be intrinsically motivated to do their job (Conway et al., 2015; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011) and that calling implies an emphasis on doing rather than simply being (Elango et al., 2010), we argue that it stimulates individuals’ engagement in IWB. Because IWB captures employees’ behavior that contributes to an organization, it is important to explain why experiences of calling that are often seen as benefiting an individual’s career could also benefit the organization in which these individuals work. First, because calling is often understood to incorporate a pro-social element (Elango et al., 2010), it is likely that it drives individuals to generate, promote and realize new ideas that are potentially useful to other people within their organization. Previous research supports this assumption by showing that prosocial motivation contributes to greater creativity (i.e., idea generation) (Grant & Berry, 2011) and other-oriented work values contribute to more change-supportive behaviors (i.e., change-related idea generation and championing) (Lysova, Richardson, Khapova, & Jansen, 2015). Furthermore, experiences of a calling are closely related to the organization in which individuals work because they may see this organization as a space where they have autonomy to pursue their calling. In this way, the organization can be seen as providing an environment that allows these individuals to
satisfy their need for autonomy (Gagné & Deci, 2005); thus, it facilitates engagement in IWB (Devloo et al., 2014). Building on the aforementioned logic, we propose that calling is associated with increased IWB.

Hypothesis 2: Calling is positively associated with IWB.

3.2.4. The Mediating Role of Proactive Professional Development

Drawing on self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005), we suggest that the understanding of the relationships between calling and employability and between calling and IWB could be further enriched by examining the role of proactive professional development. In particular, we propose that proactive professional development, or *self-driven engagement in work and profession-related learning and development activities*, serves as a mediator in these relationships. Consistent with SDT, intrinsically motivated individuals with a calling will seek novelty and challenges and engage in learning, exploration, the pursuit of work-related and professional interests, and extending and exercising their capacities (Ryan & Deci, 2000). By engaging in this proactive learning and development related to one’s profession, these individuals may satisfy their need for competence and for autonomy because they are able to volitionally guide their learning and development in the domain of their calling by further mastering associated skills and competencies. By engaging in proactive learning and development, individuals with a calling can contribute to their careers and their organizations.

The aforementioned logic suggests that intrinsically motivated individuals with a calling are likely to engage in more proactive professional development. This logic is also consistent with Hall and Chandler’s (2005) calling theory of career success, which suggests that the enhanced meta-competencies of individuals with a calling are likely to greatly assist individuals in continuously learning new career skills. Existing research
provides additional support for this assumption by showing that calling is positively associated with important antecedents of engaging learning and development activities, among which is career insight (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Maurer, Weiss, & Barbeite, 2003). Furthermore, it suggests that calling stimulates professional development (Hirschi & Hermann, 2013) and individuals’ initiative for personal growth (Duffy et al., 2014). Thus, we expect that individuals with a calling engage in increased proactive professional development.

**Hypothesis 3.** Calling is positively associated with proactive professional development.

We further propose that engagement in proactive professional development is positively associated with employability and IWB. Previous research suggests that professional development is dependent on continuous learning (De Vos et al., 2011). In particular, studies have shown that active engagement in different types of formal and informal development activities encourages the development of important competencies that enable employability (Van der Heijden, Boon, Van der Klink, & Meijs, 2009; Van der Heijden, de Lange, Demerouti, & Van der Heijde, 2009; De Vos et al., 2011). Furthermore, creativity and innovation in organizations depend heavily on employees’ knowledge and skills (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998; Youndt, Snell, Dean, & Lepak, 1996), which are positively influenced by employees’ engagement in learning and development (e.g., Amabile & Gryskiewicz, 1987; Hirst, Van Knippenberg, & Zhou, 2009; Janssen & Van Yperen, 2004). Thus, we expect that engagement in proactive professional development is associated with enhanced employability and IWB.

**Hypothesis 4a:** Proactive professional development is positively associated with employability.
Hypothesis 4b: Proactive professional development is positively associated with innovative work behavior.

Finally, further building on SDT and on the aforementioned logic, we propose that calling relates to employability and IWB through proactive professional development. Intrinsically motivated individuals such as those with a calling experience a desire to explore and learn which triggers them to engage in learning and development to address this desire and to pursue their interests (i.e., proactive professional development) (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Through this engagement in proactive professional development, important knowledge, skills and competencies are acquired that contribute to employability (Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). In addition, individuals’ cognitive ability and willingness to take risks are enhanced in this developmental process, which facilitates idea generation (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Grant & Berry, 2011) and implementation (i.e., IWB) (Devloo et al., 2014). Thus, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 5a: Proactive professional development fully mediates the relationship between calling and employability.

Hypothesis 5b: Proactive professional development fully mediates the relationship between calling and innovative work behavior.

3.3. Overview of the Studies

We conducted two studies to test the hypotheses. In Study 1, we tested only Hypothesis 1. Although this study tested only Hypothesis 1, it did so with two samples (Sample 1 and Sample 2) conducted in different settings. The measure used in Sample 1 clearly referred to a “sacred” understanding of calling as in the notion of “being called” to do a job (i.e., external summons) (Duffy et al., 2012), whereas the measure used in Sample 2 concerned a “secular” understanding of calling as subjectively defined by the respondent
(Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). Thus, Study 1 allows us to examine the relationship between calling and employability in different contexts and with different perspectives on the sources of calling. Using only Sample 2 in Study 2, we extended the exploration of the calling outcomes for organizations by considering the implications of calling for IWB, and we examined the mediating role of proactive professional development in the relationship between calling and both employability and IWB. Thus, in Study 2, we tested the complete theoretical model using a “secular” understanding of calling (Figure 3.1).

In both studies, we controlled for age in relation to employability and IWB. Previous research has shown that age influences employability (e.g., Van der Heijden, 2002), IWB (e.g., Ng & Feldman, 2013) and proactive professional development (e.g., Maurer, Weiss, & Barbeite, 2003). We did not control for gender in our models because it was correlated with our main outcome variables, similar to previous research on employability (Praskova, Creed, and Hood, 2015a; 2015b) and IWB (Janssen, 2003).

3.4. Method

Participants and Procedure. Sample 1 consisted of 423 employees from a health care organization in the Netherlands that offers support for people with mental, physical and psychiatric disabilities. The questionnaire was first sent by post to all 1,470 employees of the organization because not all of them had personal e-mail. The link to the online questionnaire was also posted on the internal computer network of the organization, providing an opportunity to respond digitally for employees who had personal e-mail. A total of 447 employees responded to the questionnaire (response rate = 30.4%). However, after checking for the potential existence of repeated responses and listwise deletion, the final sample consisted of 423 employees (response rate = 28.8%).

---

7 This data was collected in collaboration with a master student – Astrid Kusters.
Our final sample consisted of employees who were 42 years old on average ($SD = 12.16$). The sample was 80.1% female. Of the respondents, 76.6% reported working part time. The respondents’ average organizational tenure was 11.07 years ($SD = 10.25$). In terms of education level, 54.4% of our respondents had completed middle-level applied education and lower, 39% had completed higher professional education, and 6.6% had completed university education.

**Sample 2** consisted of 583 participants who were approached to participate in a study specifically aimed at the alumni of the Faculty of Economics of a business school at a large public university in the Netherlands as part of a longitudinal study on career mobility, behavior, and outcomes. A total of 8,874 individuals were invited by email to take part in the online survey study. These individuals received a personalized link to the questionnaire. A total of 795 participants responded to the online questionnaire ($response rate = 8.9\%$). However, after listwise deletion, the final sample consisted of 583 participants ($response rate = 6.6\%$).

Our final sample consisted of participants who, due to their business-related education, were mainly employed in different commercial occupational fields, including 12.9% in facility services, 10.5% in fast-moving consumer goods, 10.3% in construction and property, and 10.1% in telecommunication. The participants were 35 years old on average ($SD = 8.95$), and 63.8% were male. On average, the participants in our sample were employed within their current organization for 4.8 years ($SD = 6.39$).

**Analytical strategy.** We used ordinary least square (OLS) regression to test Hypothesis 1 (Study 1). To test the full model (Figure 3.1) in Study 2, we used structural

---

8 This data was collected as a part of the alumni study on which I collaborated with Judith Plomp, Dr. Maria Tims, Dr. Chen Fleisher and Prof. dr. Svetlana Khapova.
equation modeling (SEM) with Lisrel 8.72 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2005). Prior to testing our hypotheses, we performed a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) to establish discriminant validity of constructs in our model. To evaluate how these constructs fitted the data and the fit of the overall measurement model, we relied primarily on the following four indices: comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI; also known as a nonnormed fit index NNFI), root-mean-square-error of approximation (RMSEA), and standardized root mean-square residual (SRMR). The cut-off values indicating reasonable model fit were as the following: CFI and TLI no smaller than .90 (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2005) and RMSEA and SRMR no larger than .08 (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). Further, we used a chi-square difference test to compare different measurement models.

3.5. Study 1

3.5.1. Method

Measures. All response items use 5-point Likert scales with response categories ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree).

Calling. In Sample 1, we measured calling using two items from the Living Calling Scale (LCS; Duffy et al., 2012). A sample item was “I am working in the job to which I feel called”. These two items strongly correlated with each other ($r = .72, p < .001$). Despite the fact that this measure was developed by scholars that approach calling as a sacred concept, the items do not focus on the external summons nature of the calling source and thus allow us capture calling as a secular concept. Previous studies have shown the appropriateness of using two-item scales to measure calling (e.g., Duffy et al., 2012). In particular, a widely used two-item Brief Calling Scale was found to correlate moderately and highly with scores of other measures of calling (Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy, 2012). The Cronbach’s alpha of the two-item version of our calling scale was .83.
In Sample 2, we measured calling using seven items adopted from a calling scale developed by Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas (2011). A sample item was “I am passionate about being in my profession”. Existing studies found scores on this measure to be positively correlated with other calling measures, intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and career commitment, among other variables (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Duffy, Autin, Allan, & Douglass, 2015). Previous research using this calling measure has reported that it had a one-factor structure with reliability of .88 in a sample of musicians (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2012). To verify the one-factor structure of the short version of the calling scale, we first conducted exploratory component analysis (EFA) in SPSS. Although the seven-item scale appeared to extract one factor, we further tested how the items would load if we forced two factors instead of one. The theoretical reasoning behind this approach lies the likelihood of calling incorporating different components that form the overall understanding of this concept (e.g., Elangovan et al., 2010; Duffy, Allan, Bott, & Dik, 2014). This research suggests that, on the one hand, calling signifies a meaningful passion and deep satisfaction with one’s profession; one the other hand, it signifies an ultimate profession one feels drawn to pursue. The results of EFA with the forced two-factor structure supported the presence of these two components of calling in our data. Reading through the items that loaded on these two factors, we saw that four of the items loaded on Factor 1, capturing the meaningful passion component of calling, whereas the other three items, which loaded on Factor 2, captured the ultimate choice component of calling. To compare the fit of the one-factor model suggested by previous studies (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; 2012) with the two-factor model with calling as a second-order latent factor and meaningful passion and ultimate choice as the first-order latent factors that resulted from EFA, we conducted a CFA of this measure. The CFA showed that the two-factor model fit the data reasonably well ($\chi^2 = 48.40, df = 13, p < .001$, CFI = .99, TLI = .98,
RMSEA = .070, SRMR = .030) and was better than the one-factor model ($\Delta \chi^2 = 144.84, df = 1, p < .001, CFI = .95, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .16, SRMR = .059$). Therefore, we proceeded with the two-factor structure of the calling measure, in which the meaningful passion and ultimate choice subscales were strongly correlated ($r = .66, p < .001$). The Cronbach’s alpha was .87 for the meaningful passion component scale and .80 for the ultimate choice component scale. Because our interest in this study was overall calling rather than its sub-components and given the high inter-correlation between the two calling components, we worked with the two components as an unweighted average to produce a single score.

**Employability.** We measured employability using seven (Sample 1) and eight (Sample 2) items adopted from Van der Heijde and Van der Heijden (2006). In line with previous research (De Vos et al., 2011), the two most important dimensions of employability were measured, namely, expertise and flexibility. Expertise was assessed using items from the “occupational expertise” subscale. A sample item was “I consider myself competent to weigh up and reason out the “pros” and “cons” of particular decisions on working methods, materials, and techniques in my job domain”. The Cronbach’s alphas of the subscale used were .77 (Sample 1) and .79 (Sample 2). Flexibility was assessed using items from the “personal flexibility” subscale. A sample item was “I can easily adapt to changes in my workplace”. The Cronbach’s alphas of the subscale were .75 (Sample 1) and .74 (Sample 2), and the two subscales were moderately correlated (Sample 1: $r = .31, p < .001$; Sample 2: $r = .37, p < .001$). Previous research has demonstrated the strong reliability of both employability subscales, reporting occupational expertise measure reliabilities of .90 (self-rated) and .95 (supervisor-rated) and personal flexibility reliabilities of .79 (self-rated) and .88 (supervisor-rated) (Van der Heijden et al., 2009). The CFA supported a two-factor model with a second-order factor (Sample 1: $\chi^2 = 44.22$,
$df = 13, p < .001, CFI = .97, TLI = .95, \text{RMSEA} = .077, \text{SRMR} = .043; \text{Sample 2: } \chi^2 = 158.83, df = 19, p < .001, CFI = .93, TLI = .90, \text{RMSEA} = .12^9, \text{SRMR} = .058).$ It appeared to fit the data better than an alternative one-factor model (Sample 1: $\Delta \chi^2 = 227.07, df = 1, p < .001, CFI = .76, TLI = .64, \text{RMSEA} = .22, \text{SRMR} = .13; \text{Sample 2: } \Delta \chi^2 = 265.01, df = 1, p < .001, CFI = .80, TLI = .72, \text{RMSEA} = .20, \text{SRMR} = .11).$ The factor loadings for all of the indicators were statistically significant ($p < .001$) and ranged from .54 to .79 (occupational expertise) and .68 to .75 (personal flexibility) (Sample 1) and from .57 to .79 (occupational expertise) and .68 to .75 (personal flexibility) (Sample 2). In this study, we were interested in the overall employability rather than its sub-dimensions. Therefore, similar to previous studies (De Vos et al., 2011), we averaged them into a single score.

### 3.5.2. Results

Table 3.1 reports the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all variables used in this study. As seen in Table 3.1, there is no correlation between calling and occupational expertise and personal flexibility in both samples.

Hypothesis 1 argued for the positive association between calling and employability. The results of the regression revealed that calling was not significantly associated with employability (Sample 1: $\beta = .03, p > .05; \text{Sample 2: } \beta = .01, p > .05).$ Thus, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

---

$^9$ We acknowledge that our RMSEA indices for employability and IWB are higher than ideal. However, other important fit indices indicated a reasonable fit. Previous research has suggested that a possible reason for this discrepancy lies in the effects of sample size and degrees of freedom (Chen, Curran, Bollen, Kirby, & Paxton, 2008). Therefore, we build on indices other than RMSEA to conclude that our CFA model for employability and IWB fits the data reasonably well.
Table 3.1. Means, standard deviations, and correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Sample 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Sample 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Age</td>
<td>42.00</td>
<td>12.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Calling</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Occupational expertise</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Personal flexibility</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Age</td>
<td>35.05</td>
<td>8.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Meaningful passion (MP)</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ultimate choice (UC)</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.14**</td>
<td>.66**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Occupational expertise</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Personal flexibility</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>-.10*</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. PPD</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>-.27**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Idea generation</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.17**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Idea championing</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Idea implementation</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.22**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Sample 1 (N = 423), Sample 2 (N = 583). PPD = proactive professional development.

* p<.05. ** p<.01.
3.6. Study 2

3.6.1. Method

*Measures.* All response items use 5-point Likert scales with response categories ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 5 (completely agree).

*Proactive professional development.* We measured proactive work-related learning and development by asking the participants in Sample 2 to respond to three items from the increasing structural job resources dimension of the Job Crafting Scale (JCS; Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012). We used the following three items: “I try to develop myself professionally”, “I try to learn new things at work”, and “I try to develop my capabilities”. The Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was .78.

*Innovative work behavior.* We measured innovative work behavior by asking the participants in Sample 2 to respond to nine items from the Innovative Work Behavior scale (IWB; De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010). In line with previous conceptualizations of IWB (Scott & Bruce, 1994; Janssen, 2000) and the results of our CFA, we distinguished between three dimensions of the IWB: “idea generation” (four items) (e.g., “I search out new working methods, techniques or instruments”), “idea championing” (two items) (e.g., “I attempt to convince people to support an innovative idea”), and “idea implementation” (three items) (“I contribute to the implementation of new ideas”). Self-reported measures of IWB or innovative-related behavior (IRB) are appropriate in this case due to the established convergent validity between self-ratings and supervisor ratings of IRB (Axtell et al., 2000; Janssen, 2000). The Cronbach’s alphas of the subscales were .86, .88, and .83, respectively, and the three dimensions were strongly correlated (i.e., idea generation and idea championing: $r = .61$; idea generation and idea implementation: $r = .68$; idea championing and idea implementation: $r = .74$, $p < .001$). The reliability of the subscales
reported by the authors of the IWB scale (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010) was .88, .95, and .93. The results of the CFA supported a second-order factor model with IWB as the second-order factor and idea generation, championing, and implementation as its first-order factors ($\chi^2 = 196.52, df = 24, p < .001, CFI = .97, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .12, SRMR = .041$) and showed it to have a better fit than a model with IWB as the only factor ($\Delta \chi^2 = 371.22, df = 3, p < .001, CFI = .92, TLI = .89, RMSEA = .20, SRMR = .072$). The factor loadings for all of the indicators were statistically significant ($p < .001$) and ranged from .71 to .83 (idea generation), .85 to .92 (idea championing) and .74 to .84 (idea implementation). Due to the focus of our study on overall IWB rather than its sub-dimensions and due to their high inter-correlation, we averaged them into a single score, similar to previous studies (e.g., Janssen, 2003).

**Common method bias assessment.** Because all of our data were collected from the same source, we recognized the potential for common method bias and assessed this issue in two ways. First, we performed Harman’s single factor test (Harman, 1976; Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Lee, 2003), which loads all the items of the variable used in the model into one factor while performing EFA. The results showed that this one factor accounted for only 28.32 percent of the variance, indicating that common method bias was unlikely. Second, we conducted Lindell and Whitney’s (2001) marker variable (MV) analysis. To do so, we used a three-item scale of organizational flexibility (e.g., “I work in a flexible work environment”) ($Cronbach’s alpha = .86$), which we created to later use as a market variable. This variable is theoretically unrelated to both employability and IWB and thus could be used as a proxy for common method variance (CMV). Following the guidelines of Lindell and Whitney (2001), we identified the smallest observed correlation between our MV and a focal study variable, which in this case was IWB ($r = .10, p < .05$). Then, we used this correlation to estimate CMV in the partial correlation adjustment to the simple
correlation between calling and IWB \((r = .22, \ p < .001)\). The results of the corrected correlation after partial adjustment with CMV was the same and significant \((r = .22, \ p < .001)\), indicating that CMV bias was unlikely to be a serious concern in our study.

**Analytical strategy.** We used SEM to test the entire model (Figure 3.1), including retesting Hypothesis 1. First, we tested the fit of the measurement model (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988) using the maximum likelihood method. To do so, we used a covariance matrix with measured variables as the input data. One factor loading for each construct was fixed to 1, whereas the other loadings and paths among the latent constructs were freely estimated. To reduce the likelihood of our model being misspecified and the likelihood of type I errors, we conducted our SEM analysis on a partial disaggregation model (Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998; Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002). We did so by creating item parcels for our constructs by averaging the responses of sub-sets of items measuring a construct. In this process, we followed Kishton and Widaman’s (1994) internal-consistency approach by creating parcels for the constructs with a higher-order structure (calling, employability, and IWB) using the factors as the grouping criteria. In particular, we included calling, employability and IWB as three latent factors with their dimensions as indicators: MP (meaningful passion) and UC (ultimate choice) (i.e., calling); occupational expertise and personal flexibility (i.e., employability); and idea generation, championing, and implementation (i.e., IWB). We also added proactive professional development as a latent factor. However, because this construct was composed of only three items, we used each item as a separate indicator for this construct. Next, we tested the model that best fit our data. Following guidelines for mediation models (James, Mulaik, & Brett, 2006; Mathieu & Taylor, 2006), we compared our proposed fully mediated model with alternative partial mediation models to determine the best model to examine our hypotheses using the available data.
3.6.2. Results

Prior to hypotheses testing, we conducted a series of CFAs of our measurement model. The model included four main latent factors (calling, proactive professional development, employability, and IWB) with total of 10 parcel indicators. The measurement model fit the data reasonably well ($\chi^2 = 91.22$, $df = 35$, $p < .001$, CFI = .98, TLI = .97, RMSEA = .052, SRMR = .035). The factor loadings for all the indicators were statistically significant ($p < .001$). To ensure that our model provided the best fit to the data, we compared it with a one-factor model with four factors loading on the single factor ($\chi^2 = 902.44$, $df = 44$, $p < .001$, CFI = .74, TLI = .67, RMSEA = .19, SRMR = .12), which did not have a good fit to the data.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that calling would be positively associated with IWB. This hypothesis was supported ($\gamma = .32$, $p < .01$).

Hypotheses 3, 4a, 4b, 5a, and 5b argued for the mediation model (Figure 1) in which the relationship between calling and employability and between calling and IWB is mediated by proactive professional development. Following the guidelines for mediation (James et al., 2006; Mathieu & Taylor, 2006), we tested both full and partial mediation models. According to these guidelines, the presence of the mediation effect depends on the significance of a) the path between X (calling) and M (proactive professional development) and b) the path between M (proactive professional development) and Y (employability and IWB). The significance of $X \rightarrow Y$ prior to the inclusion of M in the model suggests the mediating model; otherwise, the indirect effect model is suggested. The significance of $X \rightarrow Y$ after the inclusion of M suggests the partial mediation model; otherwise, the full mediation model is suggested.
We tested the proposed structural model using SEM analysis. The analysis indicated that the full mediation model (calling $\rightarrow$ proactive professional development $\rightarrow$ employability and IWB) fit the data reasonably well ($\chi^2 = 148.71, df = 38, p < .001, CFI = .97, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .067, RSMR =.061$). We also compared this model with alternative partial mediation models to determine the best model for examining our hypotheses using the available data. The first partial mediation model (Model 1) was identical to the hypothesized model except for the addition of a direct effect path from calling to IWB (partial mediation) ($\chi^2 = 147.19, df = 37, p < .001, CFI = .97, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .069, RSMR =.060$). Another partial mediation model (Model 2) was identical to the hypothesized model except for the addition of a direct effect path from calling to employability ($\chi^2 = 132.94, df = 37, p < .001, CFI = .97, TLI = .96, RMSEA = .064, RSMR =.054$). Model 3 was the model that included a direct relationship path from calling to employability and a direct relationship path from calling to IWB ($\chi^2 = 132.44, df = 36, p < .001, CFI = .97, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .065, RSMR =.054$). As shown in the results, all models had reasonably good fit to the data, so we performed a chi-square difference test to compare them. The full mediation model fit the data better than Model 1 ($\Delta \chi^2 = 1.52, df = 1, ns$) but less well than Model 2 ($\Delta \chi^2 = 15.77, df = 1, p < .001$) and Model 3 ($\Delta \chi^2 = 16.27, df = 2, p < .001$). Further comparing Model 2 with Model 3, we found that adding an additional direct path from calling to IWB did not significantly improve the fit of the model to the data ($\Delta \chi^2 = 0.50, df = 1, ns$), suggesting that Model 2 fit our data best. Squared multiple correlations showed that the final model accounted for variance in each endogenous variable, including .39 for employability, .24 for proactive professional development, and .37 for IWB. We further focused on this model to test our hypotheses.

The SEM analysis revealed (see Figure 3.2) that calling was positively associated with proactive professional development ($\gamma = .39, p < .001$), which, in turn, was positively
associated with employability ($\beta = .71, p < .001$) and with IWB ($\beta = .64, p < .001$). The inclusion of proactive professional development as a mediator in the calling-employability relationship unexpectedly resulted in the relationship between calling and employability becoming negative and significant ($\gamma = -.26, p < .001$). Age was positively associated with employability ($\gamma = .17, p < .001$) and IWB ($\gamma = .19, p < .001$) but was negatively associated with proactive professional development ($\gamma = -.38, p < .001$). The results suggested that Hypotheses 3, 4a, 4b, 5b were supported, and H5a was partially supported.

The findings regarding the partial mediating role of proactive professional development in the relationship between calling and employability are unexpected. Using two different samples, Study 1 revealed that there was no association between calling and employability. This finding suggests the likelihood of calling to indirectly relate to employability (Mathieu & Taylor, 2006). The direct relationship path became significant only when proactive professional development was included in the model. Furthermore, in opposition to Hypothesis 1, the direct relationship between calling and employability was negative, whereas the indirect relationship between these two variables through proactive professional development was positive. These findings suggest that we are likely to encounter a case of suppression or inconsistent mediation (MacKinnon, Krull, & Lockwood, 2000; Shrout & Bolger, 2002; Mathieu & Taylor, 2006). It appears that calling contains two sources of variance that reflect two opposing channels by which it influences employability: one channel influences employability via the positive indirect effect of proactive professional development, whereas the other channel influences employability negatively once proactive professional development is accounted for (MacKinnon et al., 2000).
Figure 3.2. Results of the best fitting partial model with proactive professional development as a partial mediator in the calling-employability relationship and as a full mediator in the calling-IWB relationship. Standardized coefficients are reported. All factor loadings and path coefficients are significant at the p < .001 level.
Post hoc analysis. Our unexpected findings suggest the likelihood that calling has two sides. On the one hand, calling signifies an individual’s meaningful passion in his/her profession. This is likely to stimulate the individual to proactively engage in professional development, which, in turn, will contribute to employability (calling (+) → proactive professional development (+) → employability). On the other hand, calling signifies that an individual makes an ultimate choice of profession that may lead to an exclusive focus on this profession only, causing individuals to be unwilling to make professional changes, which has negative consequences for employability (calling (−) → employability). To test whether this might be the case, we conducted additional analyses on the sublevel.

We used SEM analysis to test an alternative model that was similar to the proposed model (Figure 3.1) but in which different calling components (meaningful passion and ultimate choice) were linked to employability dimensions (occupational expertise and personal flexibility). Because calling components previously loaded on the same common calling factor and employability dimensions loaded on the employability factor, we allowed the error terms of the dimensions associated with one factor to correlate. We were interested in understanding our unexpected findings in relation to employability, in this analysis; thus, we focused on the components of calling and dimensions of employability while keeping the focus on the overall IWB. The SEM analysis indicated that the model fit the data reasonably well ($\chi^2 = 607.01$, $df = 196$, $p < .001$, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .060, RSMR =.064). As we expected, the meaningful passion component of calling was positively associated with proactive professional development ($\gamma = .45$, $p < .001$), which, in turn, was positively associated with the occupational expertise ($\beta = .45$, $p < .001$) and personal flexibility ($\beta = .61$, $p < .001$) dimensions of employability. The direct relationship of the meaningful passion component of calling with the occupational expertise ($\gamma = .14$, $p > .05$) and personal flexibility ($\gamma = .02$, $p > .05$) dimensions of employability was not
significant, indicating full mediation of proactive professional development in the relationship between the meaningful passion component of calling and the two employability dimensions. In contrast, the ultimate choice component of calling was not significantly associated with proactive professional development ($\gamma = -.06, p > .05$). As expected, however, this component of calling was negatively and significantly associated with occupational expertise ($\gamma = -.30, p < .001$) and personal flexibility ($\gamma = -.28, p < .001$). Thus, proactive professional development did not mediate the relationship between the ultimate choice component of calling and the two employability dimensions, but the ultimate choice component of calling was negatively and directly associated with occupational expertise and personal flexibility.

3.7. Discussion

Given the lack of research on whether calling stimulates individuals to take a proactive approach toward their career and their organizations, this paper aimed to examine how calling relates to employability, IWB and proactive professional development. We drew on Hall and Chandler’s (2005) career success theory and previous research findings on the career-related benefits of calling (e.g., Hirschi & Hermann, 2013; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011) to argue for positive associations of calling with employability and proactive professional development. The findings of Study 1 and Study 2 showed that the relationship between calling and employability is ambiguous; the relationship is both positive and negative. In particular, building on data from the two samples, Study 1 showed that there was no direct association between calling and employability. Using one of these samples, Study 2 examined the mediating role of proactive professional development in the calling-employability relationship. Study 2 revealed that calling was indirectly and positively associated with employability through proactive professional development. However, at the same time, it was directly and
negatively associated with employability. This finding suggests the partial mediation of proactive professional development in the calling-employability relationship as well as its negative confounding or suppressing effect in this relationship. Drawing on SDT (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005), we argued for a positive association between calling and IWB and the mediating role of proactive professional development. Our findings show that proactive professional development serves as a full mediator in the calling-IWB relationship. In summary, our findings suggest a dualistic nature of calling by illuminating its potential to encourage individuals to take a proactive approach toward work with regard to their engagement in professional development and their behavior in the organization as well as indicating its potential to reduce individuals’ employability.

3.7.1. Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the literature on calling in several ways. First, this study extends the limited research that acknowledges both positive and negative outcomes of calling. The post hoc analysis revealed the “dark side” of calling. The majority of research on calling tends to emphasize its positive outcomes (e.g., Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Hirschi & Hermann, 2013). However, there is limited but growing research that considers negative as well as positive outcomes of calling and that understands calling as a “double-edged sword” (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2012; Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015). In particular, our results show that experiences of calling are not necessarily beneficial for the individual but nevertheless have the potential to contribute to the organization by facilitating individuals’ engagement in IWB. This finding is in line with previous research that emphasized that the outcomes of calling benefit organizations more consistently than workers themselves (Bell et al., 2012a, 2012b; as cited in Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015). In this way, we address Duffy and Dik’s (2013) call for research that acknowledges the “dark sides” of calling. Future research should examine whether these
findings hold in the case of longitudinal designs and explore the conditions under which these negative and positive outcomes of calling could be changed.

Second, our results advance research on career-related outcomes associated with calling. In particular, we enrich the understanding of the consequences of experiencing a calling for an individual’s employability. Drawing on Hall and Chandler’s (2005) calling theory of career success, we hypothesized a positive association between calling and employability and calling and proactive professional development. As expected, calling was found to be positively associated with proactive professional development, confirming related prior findings (e.g., Hirschi & Hermann, 2013; Duffy et al., 2014). However, our analyses related to the calling-employability relationship yielded unexpected results, suggesting that calling has a positive relationship with employability through individuals’ engagement in proactive professional development, a negative relationship with employability when proactive professional development is controlled for, and no relationship with employability when only a direct relationship between the two variables is considered. Thus, our findings appear to contradict the findings of Praskova, Creed, and Hood (2015a; 2015b), who showed that calling had a positive direct effect on employability. However, these authors examined the calling-employability relationship among a sample of emergent adults who might not yet have found their calling and/or may have manifested it differently than working adults (Duffy et al., 2012; Praskova et al., 2015a). Moreover, young adults are likely to be more optimistic in their pursuit of a calling because they feel that they can make any career dream come true (Twenge, 2006) and see themselves as employable. Our findings are consistent with previous research on employability that suggests that the career anchor of technical competence (i.e., the motivation to apply and continually develop one’s skills and knowledge in a particular discipline) may relate negatively to employability (Van Dam, 2004; Van Der Heijde &
Van Der Heijden, 2006). Similar to individuals who experience a calling, individuals who rely on technical competence as their true career anchor are very committed to their careers/professions and view the pursuit of their profession as a goal in itself, thereby limiting their mobility and openness to new or alternative employment.

There are several possible explanations for our findings. First, although the concept of calling suggests that it consists of different components (Duffy et al., 2014), it is often operationalized as a unidimensional construct (exception, Hagmaier & Abele, 2012), which increases the likelihood of confusing findings. In the post hoc analysis, we examined whether this might have been the case. In particular, we found that the meaningful passion component of calling facilitates engagement in proactive professional development, which in turn contributes to employability. In contrast, the ultimate choice component of calling restricts individuals to a focus on the ultimate profession, suggesting the premature foreclosure of a career future and “tunnel vision” with regard to one’s career (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2012, p. 267), which has negative implications for employability. Another related explanation that was not testable in the frame of this study involves the close connection between calling and personal identity. Previous research has shown that calling is strongly associated with individuals’ work and occupation (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Viewing one’s work as a calling appears to be closely connected to the individual’s sense of self (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003) and can be considered one of the most important aspects of life (Hirschi, 2011; Cardador & Caza, 2012). Given this close connection between calling and identity, a narrow focus of calling on a particular profession might result in “work-identity rigidity” (Cardador & Caza, 2012, p. 8) and less consideration of “positive selves” (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). Individuals with rigid work identities who experience a calling have a single and idealistic way of viewing of themselves and their work or profession, which makes them less adaptable and flexible in
responding to situational demands and less able to sustain themselves personally and professionally (Cardador & Caza, 2012). Fraher and Gabriel (2014, p. 94) showed that five of ten pilots interviewed found it difficult to cope with job loss and found themselves “stuck” or “entrapped” in the occupational identity linked to their calling, which restricted them from other career options. Similarly, individuals who experience a calling may have little consideration of alternative (un)desired selves and may be limited in re-evaluating and re-interpreting their previous and new behavior consistently with their desired self (Markus & Nurius, 1986), which may have negative consequences for employability (Fugate et al., 2004). When this “unhealthy” pursuit of calling exists (Cardador & Caza, 2012), it might result in individuals lacking the necessary insight for career agency and being less able to develop the competencies needed to utilize a broad set of opportunities or to seek new or alternative employment (Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015). Hirschi (2011) suggests that the presence of calling does not need to be accompanied by positive core self-evaluations, which are represented by the trait-like common core of neuroticism, self-esteem, and locus of control beliefs (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003). Thus, a calling does not ensure individual personal adaptability and, consequently, employability (Fugate et al., 2004; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006). Overall, our findings, which are inconsistent with previous research findings on the topic (Praskova et al., 2015a; 2015b), call for future research that examines a multi-component or multi-dimensional understanding of calling and its outcomes as well as the role of work-related flexibility.

Third, this study contributes to the understanding of the role of calling in stimulating proactive work behavior. We drew upon self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005) to argue for a positive association between calling and IWB as well as the mediating role of proactive professional development in this relationship. Our findings showed that the experience of calling facilitates individuals’
engagement in IWB, and this relationship occurs through individuals’ enhanced engagement in proactive professional development. In this way, we address the need for more research on the relationship between calling and work behaviors (Duffy & Dik, 2013) and on the influence of individuals’ (work) values on proactive behavior (Grant & Ashforth, 2008, p. 22). In addition, we empirically test the existing assumption that individuals with a calling are likely to take a more proactive approach toward their organizations, contributing over and above their normal work duties (Elangovan et al., 2010). However, when building our hypotheses, we relied on previous research findings suggesting that individuals who experience a calling are likely to be intrinsically motivated (Conway et al., 2015; Elangovan et al., 2010; Hirschi, 2011) without directly testing this assumption. Future research should examine a mediating model that includes intrinsic motivation as an additional intervening variable in the relationship between calling and IWB. Furthermore, scholars should explore other potential mediators and moderators in this relationship. For example, it would be interesting to examine whether and how organizational or other context-related factors could impede the engagement of individuals who experience a calling in IWB and other important behaviors that contribute to organizations.

3.7.2. Limitations and Future Directions

There are several limitations that must be acknowledged. First, although the examined mediation model is based on existing theories (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Hall & Chandler, 2005), our data were cross-sectional in both studies, thus limiting conclusions of causal inferences. With respect to the hypothesized direct relationship between calling and employability (Study 1), we attempted to minimize this limitation by testing the hypothesis in different settings and using different calling scales.
Future longitudinal research is required to explore the causal order in the calling-employability and calling-IWB relationships.

Second, all of our data represented self-perceptions of the respondents about our antecedent and outcome variables. Although the results of the CMV bias tests suggested that we should not be concerned with this issue in this study, we encourage future research to gather objective data on employability and to use supervisor assessments of employability and IWB.

Third, although we tested Hypothesis 1 on two different samples, we could only test the full model on Sample 2. Thus, our findings should be considered in light of our specific sample: alumni of business and economics education. Previous research has shown that this category of individuals is likely to report a significantly lower average level of calling than musicians or artists (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). Our studies support this finding; we found the level of calling of the alumni in our study to be slightly above the average. Future research should test the full theoretical model of the relationships between calling and employability and calling and IWB on samples from different settings in which calling is likely to play a more important role (e.g., hospitals, churches).

Fourth, our study accounted only for the role of individual-level variables in examining employability and IWB. However, it is likely that these individual and organizational outcomes are also influenced by context-dependent factors. For example, previous research has shown that perceptions of organizational support for competency development enhance employability (De Vos et al., 2011) and that perceptions of the presence of a more career-oriented learning environment in an organization diminish the implications of calling for the development of professional competence (Guo et al., 2014). Similarly, research on IWB has shown that perceptions of support for innovation in an
organization are positively associated with IWB (Hulsheger, Anderson, & Salgado, 2009). Future studies should explore the relationship between calling and IWB while accounting for context-dependent and demographic factors.

3.7.3. Practical Implications

Given the growing interest in pursuing meaningful work and finding one’s calling, our research has important implications for individuals, counseling practitioners and organizations. First, by demonstrating that experiencing a calling does not necessarily result in greater employability, we hope to draw the attention of individuals and counseling psychologists to the importance of building competences to enable employability in addition to engaging in the search for or development of calling. Although a calling may contribute to one’s satisfaction with life and work (e.g., Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), it may also make individuals become rigidly focused on one profession or work and may discourage them from developing competencies that could be transferable to other professions or organizational contexts. This situation would not allow individuals to build sustainable careers, which are important in the contemporary uncertain and changing work environment. We support the ideas of Newport (2012) and encourage individuals to begin not by searching for their passion but rather by developing important competencies in a field, which will build passion. However, our results also highlight the contribution of employees’ experiences of calling for organizational creativity and innovation. We hope that these findings will draw managers’ attention to the importance of developing a culture or practices within their organization that facilitate employees’ pursuit of their calling.