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“I’M HELPING TO PUT A MAN ON THE MOON”: COMMUNICATING HIGHER PURPOSE IN THE WORKPLACE

by

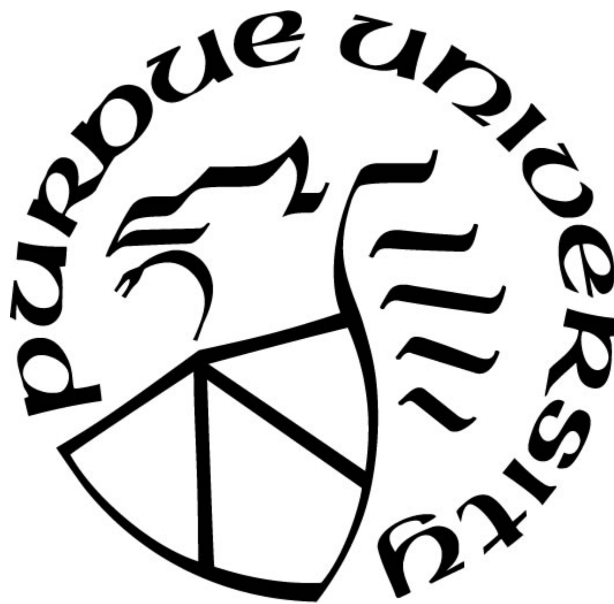
Kristen Michele Olson

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts



Brian Lamb School of Communication

West Lafayette, Indiana

May 2018

THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL
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Dedicated to Emily and Nikki, for always raising the bar a little higher,
and to Andrew, for showing me that I could reach it.

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This project was the result of immense dedication and support from a number of individuals. I would first like to thank Dr. Robin Clair for her patient mentorship and expert guidance from conception to completion of this project, as well as her dedication to my development as a scholar. My sincere gratitude also goes to committee members Dr. Stacey Connaughton and Dr. Natalie Lambert for their thoughtful insights and valuable advice on this project.

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ABSTRACT

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Higher purpose in one's work can be defined as a driving force that extends beyond oneself that fulfills some larger need, goal, or hope and perhaps benefits others. This construct may have important implications for workplace motivation and engagement. A survey by Calling Brands (2012) found that 65% of workers would put in more effort for an organization with a higher purpose. Furthermore, a joint study by Net Impact and Rutgers University found that for 24% of the workforce and 45% of college students, "a job that seeks to make a social or environmental difference in" (Zukin & Szeltner, 2012, p. 12) or impact on the world – in other words, a job with higher purpose – would be worth a 15% pay cut. The same study also found that individuals working jobs where they felt this sense of higher purpose were twice as likely to be satisfied with their jobs. Thus, examining employee narratives about the higher purpose of their work may offer insight into how these individuals view their work, whether they are motivated by the higher purpose, or whether they find their jobs to be meaningful. These narratives may guide the individuals' own thinking about the work they do.

This study sought to gain increased knowledge about narratives of higher purpose in the workplace and to better understand how these narratives relate to motivation, supervisor communication of higher purpose, and organizational identification. The researcher collected narratives of higher purpose through an online questionnaire administered to 131 full-time working adults through use of an online system. These participants were contacted using a referral method in order to obtain a quota sample representative of the United States workforce based on U.S. Census occupational categories. A literature review led to four main research questions. Research question one concerned motivation and related themes: *What motivators and subsequent themes are associated with work motivation?* Research questions two through four concerned narratives of higher purpose: *What themes exist in narratives of higher purpose? How are narratives of*

higher purpose different when superiors communicate about higher purpose? and *What forms of identification exist in narratives of higher purpose?*

Preliminary analysis on the sample and conceptualizations of terms revealed that participants largely differentiated between motivation, purpose, higher purpose, inspiration, and calling. This helped to conceptualize the term higher purpose. The data indicated that one can feel inspired to work without higher purpose, highlighting a difference between these terms. Additionally, participants who reported a narrative of higher purpose were more likely to consider their work their calling, though reporting a higher purpose did not guarantee that one's work was one's calling; thus, calling was also differentiated from higher purpose.

Thematic analysis of responses from open-ended survey questions revealed findings related to each of the four research questions. In regard to research question one, employees reported being motivated to work by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, though intrinsic factors were more often elaborated upon and were also more often listed, especially for participants reporting narratives of higher purpose. The data also suggested a new categorization of motivators using the following division: intrinsic-internal/external and extrinsic-internal/external. Themes of narratives of higher purpose were identified in response to research question two and focused on a concern for benefiting others. However, the findings concerning supervisor communication of higher purpose, research question three, indicated that supervisor communication may have little to no influence on the content of individuals' narratives of higher purpose. Additionally, the findings concerning organizational identification, research question four, were tentative, but they indicated that most participants holding narratives of higher purpose did not evidence organizational identification.

These findings offer further conceptualization of a term that as yet hardly appears in the academic literature. Higher purpose was differentiated from other, similar terms, allowing it to emerge as a distinct construct meriting future research. Importantly, themes of higher purpose were revealed and analyzed, giving further nuance to the construct, which offers practical implications for employers hoping to create workplace engagement initiatives utilizing higher purpose. Another contribution of this work concerns the analysis of work motivation, which suggested an expansion of the standard division of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This division may yield more precise findings in analysis of future research on work motivation.

This study provided insight into what motivators and subsequent themes are associated with work motivation, what themes exist regarding narratives of higher purpose, what influence supervisor communication has on the content of these narratives, and what forms of identification are present in these narratives. This area offers ample room for related research with potential to impact both employees and employers through practical application.

Keywords: workplace, narrative, identification, motivation, engagement

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In a *Harvard Business Review* article about an accounting firm's initiative to bolster employee engagement in their offices, management turned to narratives of "higher purpose" to achieve their goal (Pfau, 2015). The firm had good reason to wager on the effects of emphasizing higher purpose. A survey by Calling Brands (2012) found that 65% of workers would put in more effort for an organization with a higher purpose. Furthermore, a joint study by Net Impact and Rutgers University found that for 24% of the workforce and 45% of college students, "a job that seeks to make a social or environmental difference in" (Zukin & Szeltner, 2012, p. 12) or impact on the world – in other words, a job with higher purpose – would be worth a 15% pay cut. The same study also found that individuals working jobs where they felt this sense of higher purpose were twice as likely to be satisfied with their jobs. Taking these findings into account, the accounting firm designed an initiative to increase employee engagement by fostering feelings of higher purpose through narratives. Management created company-wide narratives aimed to inspire, such as, "'*We Champion Democracy*'" and "'*We Shape History!*'" (Pfau, 2015, n.p.). The initiative was developed and put into play.

Employees of the accounting firm were invited to submit posters declaring their own narratives of what they do for a living as it related to higher purpose in the firm's *10,000 Stories Challenge* (Pfau, 2015). To encourage participation, the company promised an extra two days of paid vacation for all employees as a perk if the goal could be reached by late November of the same year, a short five months away. Just one month later, the 10,000-story target had already been surpassed. According to Pfau, even after announcing that the goal had been met, narratives continued to flood in from employees, culminating in over 42,000 stories by the time the original

deadline rolled around. Personal narratives like "*I Power Innovation*" and "*I Combat Terrorism*" mirrored the company-wide mantras (Pfau, 2015, n.p.).

The results of the initiative showed great success: feelings of pride in the company increased, engagement was reported as higher than ever, and ratings of the company as "a great place to work" (Pfau, 2015, n.p.) rose in just a few months, as measured by an internal survey. External assessments moved the company up an impressive 17 spots in *Fortune*'s 100 Best Companies to Work For (*Fortune*, 2014, 2015). More recently, *Fortune* has moved the company up 20 more spots from 2015 to 2016 and an extraordinary 31 additional spots from 2016 to 2017 (*Fortune*, 2017). Both internal and external reports suggested that the accounting firm had succeeded in their mission of igniting a sense of higher purpose to fuel their workforce, and, as a result, an internal engagement survey indicated that their employees had experienced a surge in engagement.

Higher Purpose and Work Motivation

The concepts of higher purpose and work motivation precede and extend beyond this particular case. Initiated by Herzberg in the late 1950s and developed throughout the 1960s, studies of work motivation and concepts similar to higher purpose (e.g., "self-actualization," "significance of work," "meaningfulness of work") began to fill business journals (Herzberg, 1964, 1966; Lawler III, 1969; Schwartz, Jenusaitis, & Stark, 1963). These were guided by the Human Relations and Human Resources perspectives. By the 1970s, Hackman and Oldham (1976) had developed a model with refined conceptualizations and operationalizations for the variables of concern. Before detailing these studies and others (see Chapter Two), it is important to note that work in this area was driven theoretically by Maslow's hierarchy of need (1943, 1954), but was also linked in a practical and significant sense to the economic boom following World War II

(Latham, 2007). Many factors play a role in theory development, including the socio-economic and political climate of the time (Nord, Brief, Atieh, & Doherty, 1988). In other words, work motivation may be related to employee engagement, but not entirely dependent upon it. Nevertheless, understanding engagement is a serious concern for businesses and for employees.

Problem

Today, the need for studying these constructs in the workplace is significant. The percentage of engaged workers in the U.S. is alarmingly low. According to Adkins's (2015) article from *Gallup*, in 2015, only about one third of U.S. employees felt engaged in their work, and this was reported as the highest percentage in over half a decade. Adkins suggests that part of this slight increase may have been due in part to the growing economic recovery following the 2008 recession. In another *Gallup* article, authors Mann and Harter (2016) report that worldwide, employee engagement lies at a dismal thirteen percent, noting that the global economy will likely feel adverse effects as a result of this statistic. The authors explain that while many companies take the steps necessary to measure engagement, and do so with good intentions, real investment and focus are needed to increase engagement. Those who are able to do so see sizeable gains, such as Pfau (2015) describes.

In their discussion of meaningful work and the meaning of work, Cheney, Zorn, Planalp, and Lair (2008) argue that there is a need for further investigation, especially from a communication perspective. As they note, "Communication scholars are uniquely positioned to contribute to the literature on meaningful work because of our historic emphasis on meaning and social interaction" (p. 172). In addition, the authors express the need for interpretive investigation into commonly-held understandings of other work-related concepts, as well. In fact, the authors specifically call for research examining companies such as those who make an appearance on

Fortune's lists in order to look at practices contributing to meaningfulness and well-being at work. An investigation of higher purpose and its relation to engagement fits just such a prescription.

Narratives of Higher Purpose

Narratives like those submitted by employees in the *10,000 Stories Challenge* can offer insight into how individuals view their work, whether they are motivated by a higher purpose, or whether they find their jobs to be meaningful. These narratives of higher purpose, or "dramatic declarations of purpose" as Pfau (2015, n.p.) terms them, may guide an individual's own thinking about the work they do. Furthermore, narratives may offer clues into how employees think about their own occupational role or even how they think about other occupations. In addition, these narratives may act as persuasive tools to encourage engagement.

Alternatively, narratives of higher purpose that spread through an organization by employers or other employees may have the potential to guide the individual narratives of both new and established workers. Comparing individual narratives to organizational narratives, such as "*We Champion Democracy!*" (Pfau, 2015), one might ascertain whether employees identify with their organization. Identification has been linked with employee job performance and satisfaction (Carmeli, Gilat, & Waldman, 2007; Efraty & Wolfe, 1988), as well as engagement (Rothbard, 2001), motivation (Cheney, 1983b), and lower intent to leave an organization (Scott et al., 1999), all of which hold benefits for both employees and employers.

Purpose

Thus, the purpose of this study is to gain increased knowledge about narratives of higher purpose as related to work and to better understand how these narratives function with respect to motivation, supervisor communication, and identification. For instance, do particular themes exist

concerning narratives of higher purpose related to work? Do narratives of higher purpose appear across demographics and occupations? Does higher purpose differ from motivation, inspiration, or calling? Does supervisor promotion of higher purpose influence employees' narratives? How does identification manifest in narratives of higher purpose?

Overview of Chapters

Following a literature review (see Chapter Two), the above questions are formulated into refined research questions. In Chapter Three, a methodology for exploring the research questions is provided. The study addresses the problem of low engagement by providing further insight into higher purpose, a potential construct relevant to engagement initiatives. The study also examines the relationship between narratives of higher purpose and work motivation, supervisor communication, and identification. Chapter Four provides a preliminary analysis of the data, and Chapter Five offers a discussion of the implications of the findings. Finally, Chapter Six concludes with a summary of the current thesis, contributions and limitations of the study, and directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous section introduced the problem and purpose of this thesis in relation to higher purpose. Further refinement of the concepts and their relationships to each other are in order. For instance, conceptualizations similar to higher purpose exist and are differentiated from the meaning of work and meaningful work, among other terms in this chapter. In addition, narrative, identity, and identification are discussed in light of their relationship to motivation and engagement. This chapter concludes with research questions for the study.

Conceptualizations

Before providing the additional background information and specific research questions that drive this study, it is important to conceptualize the relevant terms concerning organizational motivation and purpose as well as communication, specifically relating to narratives. First, higher purpose is conceptualized. Following this, inspiration, calling, job crafting, and anomie are conceptualized and contrasted to higher purpose. Unlike higher purpose, these earlier terms have well-grounded theoretical and scholarly conceptualizations. The meaning of work and meaningful work are discussed in the section following these initial conceptualizations.

Higher Purpose

A conceptualization of higher purpose is difficult to assemble, as it has hardly appeared in academic research, although the term has flooded popular media (Big Think, n.d.; Denning, 2013; Izzo, 2017; Quora, n.d.; VanWiggeren, 2015; Whelchel, 2014; White, 2014; Wilson, n.d.) and spread around the globe (Knight, 2015). Scholarly articles are fewer in number and may focus on personal mental health rather than work (e.g., Bronk, Hill, Lapsley, Talib, & Finch, 2009; Rainey,

2014). Though Damon, Menon, and Bronk (2003) offer a conceptualization of *purpose* that largely mirrors higher purpose, defining it as a “stable and generalizable intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and leads to productive engagement with some aspect of the world beyond the self” (p. 121), their work focuses on purpose in adolescents and, again, does not discuss higher purpose in a workplace context.

Throughout this review of relevant literature, various terms with similar or even identical meanings of higher purpose appear in research. These are each related to higher purpose. In order to provide a preliminary conceptualization of the term, however, mainstream sources such as nonfiction books and work-focused weblogs, where the term appears quite frequently, are consulted. Some of these sources are written by credentialed authors, such as Daniel Pink, a Truman Scholar and former editor of the *Yale Law & Policy Review* journal (The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, n.d.; *Yale Law & Policy Review*, 1990).

In one instance of the term, Pink, author of the popular (2009a) book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us*, uses *purpose* to describe one of three key motivators for workers: the desire to do something that has an impact that benefits others or the world. Pink refers to this as acting “in the service of some greater objective…a cause larger than [oneself]” (p. 131). To illustrate, Pink points to Grant’s studies of groups working at a call center for a university fundraiser (Grant et al., 2007; Grant, 2008b, 2008c). In one study, an experimental group of callers interacted conversationally with a student receiving a scholarship funded by donations secured at the call center, while a control group received no information about the student(s) benefiting from their work (Grant, 2008b). A month later, the callers in the experimental group were obtaining five times the monetary donations through twice the number of pledges per week as their control group

counterparts. As Grant explains, “Small information about prosocial impact can play a large role in increasing employee motivation” (2008b, p. 56).

Three groups were involved in a similar study (Grant, 2008c). This time, the comparison group was informed about the personal benefits of their work, such as the money and skills they would gain, while the experimental group was reminded of what their work would accomplish for university students receiving the funds in the form of scholarships. The control group received no extra information about their work. The comparison group and the control group showed no significant difference in success, but the experimental group, being informed of the higher purpose of their work, saw double the money raised through double the pledges. Providing the means for a narrative of higher purpose led to increased success.

Economist and scholar Dan Ariely, and author of the book *Payoff: The Hidden Logic That Shapes Our Motivations* (2016), explains that sometimes, the purpose behind one’s work may not be apparent. In these situations – working at a call center, perhaps – Ariely suggests that employees seek out the deeper meaning or purpose of their work. This might entail looking beyond one’s own desk to see who actually benefits from the work. To illustrate, a 2016 *Time* article by blogger Eric Barker uses Ariely’s suggestion to generate the following realistic example: “You’re not ‘filling out boring paperwork.’ You’re ‘helping people get insurance that could save their life.’” This perfectly mirrors Pfau’s (2015) initiative: “encouraging [employees] to see themselves not simply as professionals executing audits, for example, but as members of a profession that helps millions of American families make better informed decisions about investing their life savings” (n.p.).

Alternatively, a manager or other superior can function to point out higher purpose to make it apparent to workers. Indeed, Pfau (2015) found in his study of accountants that employees whose supervisors communicated about higher purpose were more motivated to perform better, held more

positive views of the company, and were less likely to leave the company. Expanding on these findings, it may be logical to assume that these supervisors who spoke of higher purpose were better able to engender feelings of higher purpose in their subordinates.

In line with Pink's (2009a) definition of purpose, Ariely's (2016) suggestion asks workers to look beyond their own benefit. In essence, Ariely recommends exactly what Pfau (2015) was able to succeed in doing: highlighting a "higher" purpose of the work and of the workers in order to generate feelings that drive performance. Pfau simply had both employers and employees engage in the exercise. Although Pfau settles on the term higher purpose (and occasionally higher calling) for the titles of his talks, speeches, and popular articles (e.g., Pfau, 2017), he frequently uses the terminology "inspirational stories" to discuss the stories of higher purpose from his 2015 article. Thus, the term "inspiration" should also be compared and contrasted to the term higher purpose in order to arrive at the best term and conceptualization for the current thesis project.

Inspiration

Thrash and Elliot (2003) conceptualize *inspiration* as the creation of an excited feeling, stimulated by another person or idea, that drives and directs motivation toward some target. One might immediately envision creative inspiration, where a fashion designer might take inspiration from a city skyline in creating a glimmering dress, or an artist might awake from a strange dream and paint the scene she or he has envisioned. Allport and Odbert (1936) describe "inspired" as a temporary state, but it can be conceptualized as either a trait or a state according to Thrash and Elliot (2003). Inspiration can be motivating in either the short- or the long-term: a new idea may compel an individual to action in order to realize the idea, or a lifelong inspiration might drive an individual to pursue a certain path.

Inspiration can also be explained as something that compels an individual to create its likeness, much like the famous Zelda Fitzgerald inspired many of her husband F. Scott's female characters in his novels. In another sense, inspiration may come from the words of those one deems wise or aspires to emulate, or from the ideas of another to which one attaches oneself. One imagines a movie such as *October Sky* inspiring audiences, especially youth, to pursue science, or a film like *Rocky* inspiring persistence through hard work and dedication.

Inspiration, like purpose, is tied to intrinsic motivation (Thrash & Elliot, 2003), which is discussed later in more detail, but the cause is less pro-social; inspiration, according to these scholars, is fundamentally focused on the self: on future versions of the self, on future creations by the self, on future achievements of the self, and so forth. In all of these ways, inspiration differs from the higher purpose underlying an individual's work.

Calling

Although the concept of *calling* originated in the lectures of Max Weber (1904-5/1930/2001) in the late 1800s and early 1900s and was clearly defined as the application of the religious onto the secular which gives rise to a strong capitalist system, the definition of late has drawn some debate. Before turning to a more in-depth coverage of Weber's conceptualization, it should be noted that today the definitions of calling are multiple and subject to discussion (Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015), but it is agreed that the definitions hold a sense of urgency to fulfill what one is "meant to do" in life.

Calling has an inherent spiritual or religious connotation to it (Weber, 1904-5/1930/2001). Weber examined the origins of calling as a value-related motivator; his work on motivation is discussed in a later section. He wrote that "the idea of duty in one's calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs" (p. 182). Clair, McConnell, Bell, Hackbarth, and

Mathers (2008) suggest that Weber maximized his focus on religion as the primary cultural institution that drives work motivation, which will be discussed later.

More recently, and related to the thesis project at hand, Bunderson and Thompson (2009) offer a comprehensive overview of the religious background of calling as it relates to contemporary work. From their study of zookeepers, the individualistic nature of a calling comes clearly into focus. The zookeepers, in their interviews about zookeeping as a calling, focus solely on what drove them to pursue zookeeping and how this led to the fulfillment of their own personal aspirations. There is little, if any, mention of a greater goal, meaning, or purpose behind their work, and a noticeable lack of its impact on others: no zookeeper was quoted as having mentioned protecting the health of the animals, educating the public, protecting endangered species, or performing zookeeping for other prosocial causes.

From a critical perspective, Berkelaar and Buzzanell's (2015) discussion of calling makes it clear that employers can exploit workers' intrinsic drives in order to suit their own organizational ends. Considering calling's history as a form of social control, the term conjures ideas of keeping workers in their proper places, operating much like a class system, as Marx and Engels (1848/1964) suggested. This is highly reminiscent of Classical approaches to the management of workers. However, when not used to exploit, calling involves putting one's individual abilities to use in order to produce good.

Drawing from Dobrow and Tosti-Karas's (2011) conceptualization, Kaminsky and Behrend (2015) define calling as "a consuming and meaningful passion toward a domain" (p. 284). Calling may explain why some individuals pursue a career despite beliefs that they will not succeed or, alternatively, why some individuals do not choose a career in which they have confidence about their ability to succeed; calling is not rational, but emotional. In their study of clergy, Conway,

Clinton, Sturges, and Budjanovcanin (2015) show that enacting one's calling leads to experiences of intrinsic motivation, to be discussed later, which leads to feelings of well-being. Bunderson and Thompson (2009) reveal that calling fosters identification with an organization, also discussed later.

While calling and higher purpose share similarities, such as a general leaning towards prosocial and fulfilling goals, the conceptualizations of each differ in important ways. Calling underlies one's choice of career or life work, while higher purpose is the driving force behind one's commitment to that particular path. For instance, Dik, Duffy, and Eldridge (2009) define calling as linked to one's purpose in life, but the authors also explain that a calling originates from an external summons. This summoning aspect is central to the definition of calling, which differs from a higher purpose identified by an individual. As an example, one may experience a calling to join the ministry, yet the higher purpose underlying the work one performs in the ministry may range from "helping the needy" to simply "spreading the word of God." In essence, different purposes can drive separate individuals to pursue the same calling. Thus, higher purpose is a more focused and personalized conception of the reason for engaging in work, and one that also acts as a motivating force.

Job Crafting

Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) offer a framework of *job crafting*, a concept related to job design but which considers redesign from the worker's perspective, rather than a manager's perspective. Job crafting refers to "the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work" (p. 179). Thus, job crafting encompasses alterations made by employees to shape their work into something more rewarding or desirable.

Berg, Wrzesniewski, and Dutton (2010) later identified types of job crafting, including making changes to the task, relational, and cognitive aspects of the job. The cognitive changes in particular involved "redefining what [workers] see as the type or nature of the tasks or relationships that are involved in their job, as well as reframing their job to see it as a meaningful whole that positively impacts others rather than a collection of separate tasks" (p. 165). While this definition hints at finding the higher purpose underlying one's work, this concept limits the possibility of who can uncover that purpose; in the case of job crafting, only the worker can make the changes necessary to highlight the work's higher purpose.

Anomie

In stark contrast to these positive terms, Émile Durkheim's (1897/1951) study of suicide and its relationship to anomie, or purposelessness and alienation, is linked to work in the sense that as industrialization grew at exponential rates and religion failed to address this or provide a guiding framework for work purpose, suicides increased (see Clair et al., 2008, for an overview). Rapid industrialization can lead to "disintegration" in society. In *The Division of Labor in Society* (1933/1984), Durkheim notes the complex aspects of the division of labor, which may provide increased productivity and reduce conflict but can also, if taken too far, lead to isolating the individual. The division of labor often places people into specific occupations, which can have positive or deleterious effects. Clair et al. (2008) point out the racist and sexist positions that Durkheim held as he grounded his theories in the now-debunked cranial capacity studies. Nevertheless, Clair et al. (2008) note that his work continues "to be the source of considerable insight" (p. 122).

For instance, researchers distinguish anomie and anomia, with the first term representing amoral societal organization and the second term representing the individual alienation that can

follow from anomie (e.g., Tsahuridu, 2009). Past and recent research has linked anomia and work, such as in an ethical context (Cohen, 1993) or as related to worker control (Hodson, 1999). For the purposes of this study, the interest is pointed toward anomia, the individual's perspective of work.

Having explored conceptualizations similar to higher purpose, as well as those that stand in contrast from fields of psychology and sociology, an examination of communication scholarship in related and relevant areas is in order. Specifically, the meaning of work and meaningful work are discussed. It should be noted that there are studies from industrial-organizational-psychology and business that specifically speak to the concepts of meaning and meaningfulness of work that must be included, as well. These concepts are similar to higher purpose and are supported by substantial academic research. Conceptualizations as well as overviews of each area are given, along with their relation to the subject of higher purpose.

Meaning of Work and Meaningful Work

This section overviews the meaning of work and meaningful work. While the terms appear similar, their meanings and origins differ. Clair (1992) first introduced the meaning of work in society under the rubric of the legitimation of work. She later published an article addressing the discursive construction of the meaning of work via the grand narratives of capitalism and communism, approaching the topic from a macro-level orientation, but also including individual narratives (Clair, 1996). Thus, her work crossed the macro-level and the micro-level, addressing the meaning of work in society and in some cases the personal meaningfulness of work for individuals. Finally, she and her co-authors addressed both the meaning of work and the meaningfulness of work in the book titled *Why Work?: The Perceptions of a "Real Job" and the Rhetoric of Work through the Ages* (Clair et al., 2008).

In 2008, Cheney et al. explored the aspect of meaningful work. These authors focused primarily on the concept as a micro-orientation, as a personal perspective, from an interpretive approach. This approach seems more in tune with a Human Resource model, whereas Clair's approach fits more appropriately with a critical/postmodern understanding of work. First, Clair's discursive approach will be explained, and then Cheney et al.'s micro-level approach will be covered. Finally, an example of scholarship that combines the two terms will be overviewed.

Meaning of Work

Drawing from Foucault, Stuart Hall (1997) explains the discursive approach as the following:

> more concerned with…"politics." It examines not only how language and representation produce meaning, but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practised and studied. (p. 6)

Grand narratives are *discursive formations*,

> what is and is not appropriate in our formulation of, and our practices in relation to, a particular subject or site of social activity; what knowledge is considered useful, relevant and "true" in that context; and what sorts of persons or "subjects" embody its characteristics (p. 6)

or *semantic fields*, "broader themes and meanings" (p. 38).

Clair (1992) draws from this postmodern approach to study the discursive construction of work. Also using a critical/postmodern perspective, Clair argues that grand narratives and everyday discourse co-produce each other. The meaning of work stems from this co-production. In essence, discourses create reality and meaning systems, or whole discursive formations. As Mumby and Clair (1997) explain, organizations are created by these discourses:

> we can define *organization* as a social collective, produced, reproduced and transformed through the ongoing, interdependent, and goal-oriented communication practices of its members…we suggest that organizations exist only in so far as their members create them through discourse…discourse is the principal means by which organization members create a coherent social reality that frames their sense of who they are. (p. 181)

Clair (1992, 1994, 1996) empirically tested how dominant ideology can pose hegemonic meanings as indisputable by hiding alternative meanings. This is similar to Mumby's (1987) discussion of the "immutable" aspect, which will be discussed in the section on narrative. As Clair (1992) explains, "The rhetorical argument that gains dominance is eventually perceived as an uncontestable, natural and 'taken-for-granted' perspective" (p. 4).

In Clair's (1996) article on "real jobs," university students were asked to provide narratives about their own or another's use of the colloquialism. Stories of parents' or friends' usage of the phrase were common, as well as instances where the students themselves had advised others to get a "real job." The study addressed the ideas these students held about the meaning of work and what types of work were considered meaningful. The most common themes that emerged from the study reflected deeply-rooted cultural ideas on what constitutes valuable work, which will be addressed further in the section of this chapter discussing the narrative construction of reality.

Clair et al. (2008) offer an extensive history of the definitions and meanings of work, focusing on authors, activists, and theorists from ancient Greece into the twentieth century. The authors assert that "the true meaning of work is elusive and subject to change" (p. 17), "multiple meanings of work exist, [and] different values are assigned to different kinds of work by different people" (p. 29). The notion that some work is perceived as more meaningful than other work in society addresses a slightly different concept from the meaningfulness of work.

Meaningful Work

Cheney et al. (2008) take an interpretivist approach, focusing on the individual rather than the macro-level. The authors define meaningful work as a satisfying endeavor that involves an individual's interest and affords the individual acceptable work-life balance. Though paid employment comes immediately to mind, the authors also discuss "invisible activities" (p. 142) such as volunteering and hobbies that may hold more meaning for certain individuals. The authors explain that in order for work to be meaningful, the individual must perceive that it has a purpose. Without this perception, meaning is not realized. Cheney et al. continue to describe meaningful work as that which has a "personally significant purpose" (p. 144): one which matters to the individual. In essence, the authors are describing a higher purpose as conceptualized for this thesis project and similar to earlier contributors such as Hackman and Oldham (1976). Although a review of Hackman and Oldham's study interrupts the communication perspective of this portion of the thesis, pointing out that similar, earlier research existed from industrial-organizational-psychology and business schools is important to this review of literature.

Hackman and Oldham's (1976) model of job enrichment, or work redesign, uses Herzberg's (1966) motivation-hygiene theory (discussed in greater detail later) to offer five dimensions that lead to increased work outcomes for both the worker and the employer. These outcomes include higher job satisfaction and motivation. Of the five dimensions contributing to these outcomes, two correspond precisely to what one might term *meaning* or *purpose*: "task identity (the degree to which the job produces something [independently] meaningful), [and] task significance (the importance of the work [to others])" (Amabile, 1993, p. 187). Hackman and Oldham (1976) found that these two task dimensions, along with the skills or talents required by the work, together predict experiences of meaningful work.

All work is capable of having meaning, and thus of having a higher purpose. Though, as Pratt and Ashforth (2003) note, sources of purpose always differ from person to person. However, Hackman and Oldham (1976) make a claim about one universal source of purpose: "When an individual understands that the results of his [*sic*] work may have a significant effect on the well-being of other people, the meaningfulness of that work usually is enhanced" (p. 257). In Clair's (1996) study, one participant's story elucidates this point: a student employed at a home for disabled children noted that her work was "'a wonderful offering of [herself]'" (p. 258) that was fulfilling because it allowed her to help others, despite the low status her work was awarded by others due to their conceptions of a real job.

The subject of meaningful work has made an appearance outside of academia, as well. Curtis's (2012) article in *Forbes* magazine provides examples of several lottery-winners who chose to return to their jobs, making the case that work is clearly central to more than just one's livelihood. Work makes up a large part of identity, discussed later, and the meaning it imparts is bound to have an effect on an individual.

Curtis (2012) notes the idea of meaningful work by speaking of "work[ing] on things that really matter…to other human beings and to our planet…solv[ing] social and environmental problems, and…creat[ing] impact" (n.p.). Indeed, her idea of meaningful work focuses primarily on the work's purpose, specifically doing some greater good to impact others or the world. Purpose is just one aspect of meaningful work, however; meaningful work *has* purpose. In this way, purpose or higher purpose can be differentiated from meaningful work.

Additionally, Curtis (2012) includes a quotation from Nathaniel Koloc, the founder of ReWork, a company designed to find meaningful work for job-seeking individuals:

> For many people, work becomes meaningful when there is positive impact associated with it. It's possible to re-frame and re-envision traditional business

> offerings with a lens of social and environmental impact. We can transition hundreds of thousands of jobs to being "impact" jobs if more companies come to understand the value (both financially and culturally) of working to make the world a better place as part of their core business. (n.p.)

This quote precisely encompasses the idea of higher purpose and the possible positive outcomes associated with it: workers who are more satisfied, more productive, and more dedicated. Additionally, ReWork's webpage lists the company's four components of meaningful work: legacy, mastery, freedom, and alignment. The definition of the first component, *legacy*, specifically mentions higher purpose: "A higher purpose, a mission, a cause. This means knowing that in some way – large or small – the world will be a better place after you've done your work" (ReWork, n.d.).

Meaning of Work and Meaningful Work

Kisselburgh, Berkelaar, and Buzzanell (2009) integrate both concepts by discussing the meaning of work in the context of STEM fields, focusing on women in STEM. The authors reference Stohl's (1986) memorable messages, explaining that such messages can impact children from a young age and influence their later thoughts about work (specifically, "gender-appropriate" work) in their adult life, shaping their conception of the meaning of work. Even the absence of messages can be an influence, as Lucas (2006) notes. While the messages that children receive (or do not receive) from parents and social circles may be less accessible, messages from educational systems and the media may be more easily altered to reconfigure norms about STEM fields. In this way, STEM careers may be able to become more meaningful work for women. In a similar way, changing messages pertaining to work, the meaning of work, the purpose behind employment, and so forth may produce a workforce that thinks differently about the work they perform.

The conceptualizations of the term higher purpose have been reviewed, situated in relation to similar terms, and related to past scholarship. In the following section, the relevant concepts of worker identity and identification with an organization merit discussion. Each term is conceptualized, beginning with work on identification, for which research from organizational communication is considered. Identity is discussed in both organizational and interpersonal communication contexts.

Identity and Identification

Identity and identification are related terms, yet each refers to a different construct with different realms of research. An abundance of articles on the concept of identification exist, especially in fields such as rhetoric, philosophy, and others. In the interest of space, the following section discusses identification from an organizational communication perspective. Next, identity is detailed, including research from interpersonal contexts.

Identification

The term *identification* indicates that one's sense of self is defined in part by her or his membership in an organization (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Essentially, one's involvement in the organization becomes a defining feature of his or her identity. Due to the importance of the organization in the individual's life, the values and concerns of the organization become espoused by the individual (Miller, 2012).

Following Burke's discussion of identification, Cheney (1983a) conceptualizes identification as "an active process by which individuals link themselves to elements in the social scene" (p. 342). Cheney applies the concept of identification to work organizations and notes that organizations often push for employee identification through "intentional and unintentional

attempts" (p. 156), "facilitating identification through their myriad means of communication…[identification] is often encouraged by the organization in its dealings with the member" (p. 146). Since organizations normally work to socialize individuals, identification may be seen as the culmination of highly successful socialization.

Organizations are often interested in expediting this process of identification (Cheney, 1983b) due to its beneficial outcomes for the organization, such as higher commitment and lower intent to leave the organization on the part of the workers (Cole & Bruch, 2006). Positive outcomes may also be beneficial to employees. In fact, identification may lead a worker to become engaged in their work, as noted in Rothbard's (2001) discussion of engagement in work and family roles. Cheney (1983b) notes the motivating aspects of identification in his discussion of the broad concern among organizations for employee identification. However, Cheney alludes to supervisory tactics that are characteristic of Classical approaches: "In the past they relied on more direct, even forceful, means of influence (e.g., close supervision, purely monetary rewards, and assembly-line 'determinism')" (p. 158). In Cheney's study, the persuasive attempts by the organizations to influence the identification of their employees evidenced similar means of influence.

Drawing from and building upon Cheney, Williams and Connaughton's (2012) work focuses on individuals in organizations and these individuals' experiences and decisions concerning identification. The authors offer a thorough conceptualization of identification as

> a complex process through which individuals experience feelings of oneness with a social collective (e.g., an organization) [including] feeling attached to the collective, the alignment of one's goals or values with the organization's goals and values, and the display of strong emotions or attitudes towards the organization. (p. 460)

With a focus on agency, the authors emphasize that individuals may choose to identify with certain groups. In their case study, members of a social sorority struggling with new leadership, low membership, and low social status were observed, surveyed, and interviewed. The authors were primarily interested in the members' communicative enactment of identification, as well as their identification tensions, in the context of the struggling organization. In their discussion of identification in a broader context, the authors explain that identification is a decision left up to members of an organization, emphasizing that it is a choice to be made; indeed, the results of their study reflected this. Therefore, if and when individuals choose to identify, they are choosing to allow themselves to be persuaded by their organization.

Tompkins and Cheney (1985) note that organizations may offer their members incentives in exchange for identification. Though the authors present financial incentives as examples, one might consider how non-monetary transactions may play a similar role. If organizations highlight the higher purpose behind their employees' work, this may well function as an incentive that drives identification. Furthermore, the narratives of higher purpose that employees espouse may point to identification if those narratives align with the broader organizational narratives handed down by the organization.

Identity

In their work on social identity theory, Tajfel and Turner (1986) explain that part of a person's self-concept can be attributed to the groups to which the individual belongs. Multiple identities can make up a person's self-concept, including groups such as a political party, an educational institution, or even a sports team. Identities can be used as shortcuts to indicate a host of values, beliefs, attributes, and so forth; Cheney gives the example of, "'I'm a New Yorker'" (1983b, p. 146). From this succinct declaration of identity, one might make reasonable assumptions

about an individual. Thus, the identities taken on by individuals serve to define them in terms of a larger whole and show their agreement with that whole.

Looking at interpersonal research on identity, Koenig Kellas's (2005) study of storytelling in 58 family triads shows that identity can be communicated through narratives. One can make the possible extension of the outcomes of storytelling in families to narratives in the workplace. Koenig Kellas notes that both sense-making and the sharing of culture are accomplished through storytelling. Narratives, discussed in the following section, are able to effectively transmit messages of "who we are and what we do."

When immersed in discussions of family, individuals consider family culture and family narratives that shape their behaviors, such as how to cope with stress (Koenig Kellas, 2005). These types of narratives help create a family's identity. In considering the context of workplaces, one might say the same: workplace culture and workplace narratives serve to enculturate and instruct new or learning members, constructing a workplace identity. Dailey and Browning (2014) point out that the context of organizational newcomers is particularly likely to elicit the retelling of these types of narratives.

It is important to thoroughly examine the creation and transmission of reality through narrative. The narrative construction of reality, retellings of narratives, and learning through narratives are discussed in the following section. These topics relate to this literature review due to the prevalence of narratives in organizational life. Narratives function to form a particular reality as well as socialize new and existing members to that reality, and examining narratives of higher purpose may tell a great deal about how employees perceive their work.

Narrative

Discussions concerning the power of narrative have been traced to the third century BCE, and contemporary studies have been significantly influenced by modern and postmodern philosophies, from Nietzche to Foucault (Clair et al., 2014). Once again, for the sake of brevity, the focus in the following section takes up narrative in contemporary contributions, especially as related to organization.

Clair et al.'s (2014) comprehensive overview and critique of narrative theory in a variety of communication disciplines provides a conceptualization of narrative, beginning with discussions from early Greek philosophers and moving to contemporary scholars. As the authors summarize, "Narrative gives meaning to our lives" (p. 3) as a means to "understand human existence" (p. 2). Additionally, narratives are a natural and "powerful way to express life" (p. 3) and can be "considered the foundation of human communication" (p. 3). Thus, narratives are a normal part of human life that offer understanding of individual experience, which is fundamental to studies of communication.

As Clair et al. (2014) describe, the 1980s brought about a discussion of narrative across disciplines that spurred Fisher's (1984) work on the narrative paradigm. Fisher, a rhetorician working in the discipline of communication, describes narratives as "stories we tell ourselves and each other to establish a meaningful life-world" as well as "a way of relating a 'truth' about the human condition" (p. 6). Therefore, through narrative, one can both create and transmit meaning. Notably, MacIntyre (1981) states that "we understand our own lives in terms of narratives" (p. 197). Thus, in addition to the ability to transfer meaning to others, narratives also enable extensive sense-making in the minds of individuals.

Relatedly, in order to understand others, one must always consider their narratives. Drawing on Goldberg (1982), Fisher notes that narratives underlie individuals' beliefs: "The ground for determining meaning, validity, reason, rationality, and truth must be a narrative context" (Fisher, 1984, p. 3). Thus, the associated narrative must be considered in order to reach an understanding of any individual or community mindset (Clair et al., 2016). For this reason, it is essential to examine personal narratives in order to investigate the meanings that employees assign to their work.

Narrative Construction of Reality

Dailey and Browning (2014) offer a broad definition of *narrative* that includes having a beginning, middle, and end, as well as some reference to time, place, and causality. As Browning and Morris (2012) describe, narratives "(1) foreshadow a problem, (2) provide a sequential rendering of actions in the face of complications leading toward resolution, (3) achieve closure, [and] (4) invite or pronounce moral implications" (p. 32).

Narratives offer an individual's own perspective on or understanding of information. Therefore, narratives encompass not only facts, but also interpretations, which can do much to inform. What Dailey and Browning (2014) term "the circulation of culture via narratives" (p. 24) can function as a means of organizational assimilation, introducing members to "how things are done here" or otherwise directing behavior.

Mumby (1987) discusses how members of organizations construct their own reality; at the same time, Mumby points out that organizations can create narratives designed to exploit their workers. Organizational narratives create, transmit, and seemingly set in stone certain realities, such as power structures. Mumby describes this last piece as the "immutable" aspect because it appears as though reality is unchangeable or out of one's control. The perception that reality is

fixed and unchangeable, or that alternative narratives are unwarranted, can limit and control employee behavior. Relatedly, Cheney's (1983b) work on organizational identification, discussed previously, also centers on organizations' "ability to portray *their* priorities not as the products of real choices but as the way things are and the way individuals want them to be" (p. 156).

No narrative is unbiased; therefore, any narrative has a political function of promoting the interests of a particular group, according to Mumby (1987). Just as history texts privilege one point of view, so, too, do organizational narratives handed to employees by their employers. Mumby makes the case that an organization with an ambiguous past can interpret (or re-interpret) that past in ways that suit the organization. This new narrative of the past then functions to create a reality desired by the organization.

Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm, on the other hand, shows how narrative can allow previously silenced voices a chance to enter the conversation, so to speak. By participating in the narrative, they contribute to constructing its meaning or reality. Perhaps the ideal role of an organization would be that of a storyteller, as Fisher describes: "His or her contribution to public dialogue is to impart knowledge, like a teacher, or wisdom, like a sage. It is not to pronounce a story that ends all storytelling" (p. 13). An organization contributing to organizational dialogue might function to impart information yet encourage the extension of the narrative through employee participation.

In an article examining how communication is able to shape reality, Clair (1993) explored how women frame their stories of sexual harassment in varying levels of organizational hegemony. Clair also explored how narrative can act as a challenge to that hegemonic discourse (Clair, McGoun, & Spirek, 1993). In 1996, Clair examined the colloquialism "a real job" through narratives written by college students. Due to their anonymous nature, colloquialisms are

extremely effective at transmitting a dominant viewpoint as "reality" and can also function to socialize individuals while being masked as regular conversation. This particular colloquialism, "a real job," paints work that is part-time, low-paid, seasonal, or unskilled as less valuable, in adherence with Adam Smith's (1776/1937) *The Wealth of Nations*. The student narratives that were collected largely mirrored Smith's idea of what constituted valuable work, with a multitude of narratives referencing times when students had been spoken to about getting "real jobs" or had spoken to others about getting "real jobs."

However, some exceptions were raised, such as students who felt that even their academic studies constituted a "real job." Six students supported alternate definitions of "a real job," while one student rejected the notion altogether. Thus, as Clair et al. (2008) note, the repeated phrase was "generally supporting the dominant view of reality but always leaving room for resistance" (p. 12). Similarly, organizational members can resist the narratives delivered to them. Marx and Engels (1848/1964) endorsed this type of resistance to the status quo in their writings, just as critical perspectives do so today.

Retelling of Narratives

Stories often surface again and again in organizations. Although the retelling of these organizational narratives can constrain organizational change by endeavoring to uphold the status quo, organizations can also use narratives to initiate change (Dailey & Browning, 2014). Stories about other organizations can even be used to drive change, as long as the other organization is comparable in important ways. Dailey and Browning note that like humans, organizations take cues from the successes and failures of similar others.

In a similar vein as Mumby (1987) and Cheney (1983b), Dailey and Browning (2014) examine how the retelling of narratives in the workplace can also work to control employees,

especially when considering who is telling the story. They add that countering narratives can often resist this type of control. Narratives of higher purpose are not the subject matter in their discussion, however, and it is likely that narratives of higher purpose are both employed differently by organizations and received differently by employees.

Narratives of higher purpose can also be created by individual employees without the interference or influence of management. For instance, a factory worker tells his story of largely monotonous labor in the memoir *Rivethead* (Hamper, 1991). One day, the author encounters a development that suddenly gives his factory line job more purpose. After hearing that the plant would be producing a vehicle for famous country singer Louise Mandrell that day, Hamper tells his co-workers, "'You must realize the significance here. Today we will be building a truck for a goddamn celebrity. Someone we can attach a face to'" (p. 258). He continues, "In between jobs, I raced up and down the line apprising my co-workers of the impending approach of the Mandrell Sister Suburban. I dangled my [newspaper] clipping in front of their faces in hopes that it would generate for them the same type of enthusiasm I was delighting in" (p. 258). Though his co-workers did not share in his level of excitement, Hamper explains, "What we had here was an actual entity who was able to confirm for us that what we were doing every night resulted in some kind of tangible cause and aftereffect" (p. 260). In his excitement, Hamper put additional effort into each assembly, exclaiming, "'This one could be it'" (p. 261).

Learning through Narratives

Some organizations may, formally or informally, use narratives to instruct members or to pass on information, much as parents use stories to teach their children. Bosk (1979) provides a convincing example from the medical field concerning a patient on a respirator:

> A nurse's aide was assigned to watch a woman on a respirator. A patient at the other end of the hall had a cardiac arrest. The aide left the room to see what the commotion was about. The patient on the respirator turned her head and the tube kinked. By the time the nurse's aide returned, the cardiac monitor indicated a stopped heart. (p. 108)

The lesson of this story may be summed up as, "Do not let the tube kink." It is noteworthy to add that parents, teachers, or organizational members *could* communicate the same message both more simply and more swiftly without the narrative component. However, it is precisely the narrative component that makes the lesson memorable. As Mumby (1987) puts it, "An organizational story is easier to recall than a set of statistics containing the same information" (p. 122).

In fact, organizational stories can lead to a bias in which hearers find a story more believable than other sources offering the same information, as Martin and Powers (1983) found in their study of organizational stories. Interestingly, these hearers fail to recognize the story's persuasive impact, indicating that they underestimate the power of stories to affect their views. Moreover, when a story aims to disconfirm information that hearers have previously heard from other sources, such as a formal company policy statement, the story is simply dismissed as an exception. Thus, organizational narratives have the potential to add credibility to previous information but not subtract from it. Because of this, Martin and Powers (1983) point out the questionable ethicality of using stories to manipulate employees.

Narratives may reflect and create an individual's relationship with the organization in which he or she is employed. An examination of the narratives that employees hold in regard to their purpose at work may highlight particular themes. This thesis is most concerned with the narratives associated with higher purpose. Specifically of interest are the themes invoked within the main genre of narratives of higher purpose and their relationship to constructs such motivation, supervisor communication, and identification.

Thus, the next relevant research to be reviewed is in the areas of motivation and engagement, focusing on workplace settings but also including research from educational contexts. Because of the multi-disciplinary nature of the study of motivation and engagement, research from beyond the communication field is included and adapted to fit an organizational context. Definitions of each construct are given. Finally, the main research questions for this thesis are set forth.

Motivation and Engagement

Similar to identity and identification, motivation and engagement are terms that may appear to be interchangeable. Yet, these terms have different conceptualizations. For instance, a worker might be motivated but not engaged in her or his work, or alternatively, she or he might be engaged but not motivated. The terms are defined and tied to scholarship, including both communication and education disciplines.

Motivation

The *Oxford Reference Dictionary of Psychology* broadly defines motivation as "[a] driving force or forces responsible for the initiation, persistence, direction, and vigour of goal-directed behaviour" (Motivation, 2014, n.p.). This is in accordance with Pinder's (2008) comprehensive definition of work motivation as "a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behavior, and to determine its form, direction, intensity, and duration" (p. 11). According to Soden and Lovrich (1988), workplace motivation involves wanting to perform a job well, aspiring to advance to higher roles, and seeking to grow and develop the abilities needed to work independently.

One of the earliest contributions to work motivation discussions can be traced to Weber (1922/1978). Weber suggested four motivations of behavior: goal-oriented, value-oriented, affective, and traditional. In *goal-oriented* behavior, an individual rationally chooses how to go about achieving a goal by "employing *appropriate means to a given end*" [emphasis in original] (p. 28). In *value-oriented* behavior, "a person acts rationally to achieve something ethical, religious, or having some other form of intrinsic but immeasurable value" (Clair et al., 2008, p. 125). *Affective* action is motivated by the emotions of the individual (Weber, 1922/1978), and *traditional* action follows from norms or customs, or the way things are usually done. Weber discusses the gradual phasing-out of values, emotions, and traditions as *rationalization*. Allan (2013) notes, "Weber sees this move toward rationalization as historically unavoidable; it is above all else the defining feature of modernity" (p. 151).

Considering its definition and conceptualization by Weber (1922/1978), one can see the implications motivation has for work-related contexts, especially considering research findings. Motivation predicts success better than other factors (Bashaw & Grant, 1994): no matter how qualified or experienced workers are, those merits will not drive individuals to begin a new endeavor or to persist at their work in the way motivation does. Additionally, motivation has an influence on not only one's choice of task, but also one's performance and persistence at that task (Eccles et al., 1983). Thus, motivation predicts successful performance or, put another way, achievement of goals.

Although Weber (1922/1978) suggested four main motivators of behavior, contemporary scholars commonly divide motivation into two basic categories: intrinsic and extrinsic (e.g., Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999; Kuvaas, Buch, Weibel, Dysvik, & Nerstad, 2017). Bomia et al. (1997) explain that intrinsic motivation "refers to influences that originate from within a person which

cause a person to act…[such as] self-concept, self-esteem, self-satisfaction, personal values, and personal/emotional needs and drives" (p. 3), while extrinsic motivation "refers to outside sources or values that influence a person to act…[such as] rewards; positive or negative outcomes; and comfort or discomfort" (p. 3). Ryan and Deci (2000) provide an more expansive definition of intrinsic motivation:

> Intrinsic motivation is defined as the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external prods, pressures, or rewards…Although, in one sense, intrinsic motivation exists within individuals, in another sense intrinsic motivation exists in the relation between individuals and activities. (p. 56)

The authors also provide another definition of extrinsic motivation as "a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome" (p. 60). More contemporary human resource scholarship suggests new conceptualizations are in order related to the intrinsic and extrinsic models. For instance, Amabile (1993) suggests that in some instances, intrinsic and extrinsic motivators can work together synergistically.

Unlike a promised pay raise, having higher purpose to drive one's work is an intrinsic motivator. Valuing one's work for personal, intrinsic reasons without feelings of pressure to reach an end result has been linked to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover (Lam & Gurland, 2008). In a longitudinal study by Sortheix, Chow, and Salmela-Aro (2015), those who valued their work for intrinsic reasons showed better fit with their job two years later than those who valued their work simply for extrinsic reasons, such as salary or job security. Additionally, the researchers report that those who are motivated to work for extrinsic reasons see more dissatisfaction (Vansteenkiste et al., 2007) and burnout (van Beek, Taris, & Schaufeli, 2011), as well as lower well-being (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999) and higher turnover (Vansteenkiste et al., 2007). Furthermore, Grant (2008a) performed two studies that "provide convergent support for the role of intrinsic

motivation in strengthening the association between prosocial motivation and persistence, performance, and productivity" (p. 54).

As Maslow (1943) notes in his hierarchy, from basic physiological needs such as food and water to esteem needs such as confidence and respect, individuals seek to fulfill these basic needs but are content once they are fulfilled; thus, these lower-tier needs are no longer motivating once fulfilled (Maslow, 1954). Instead, it is the upper-level needs (e.g., self-actualization) that continue to motivate individuals. Interestingly, higher purpose makes its appearance among this upper tier, in the form of providing self-esteem, and perhaps leading to self-actualization.

Herzberg's (1966) two-factor theory, or motivation-hygiene theory, also discusses motivating aspects of jobs. Similar to Maslow's (1943, 1954) theory of motivation (Maslow's hierarchy of needs), Herzberg (1966) asserts that employees expect more than just lower-tier needs to be met at work (e.g., safety, sense of belonging). According to Herzberg, job satisfaction is determined by a set of intrinsic factors, termed *motivators*, that lead to increased satisfaction, as well as separate factors that lead to decreased satisfaction, termed *hygiene* factors. The motivators are termed such because they drive employees to better performance, while the hygiene factors are not motivating. The motivators primarily concern features of the work itself, whereas the hygiene factors are comprised of aspects of the work environment. In his (1964) journal publication that discusses his 1959 work, Herzberg confirms his findings:

> The proposed hypothesis appears verified. The factors on the right that led to satisfaction (achievement, intrinsic interest in the work, responsibility, and advancement) are mostly unipolar; that is, they contribute very little to job dissatisfaction. Conversely, the dis-satisfiers (company policy and administrative practices, supervision, interpersonal relationships, working conditions, and salary) contribute very little to job satisfaction. (p. 4)

Herzberg explains that the hygiene factors themselves will not produce satisfaction or motivation in employees, though their absence would be felt sorely and lead to dissatisfaction. Similarly, the

motivators are needed to produce satisfaction, though their absence would not necessarily lead to dissatisfaction. In short, Herzberg's work confirms and adds to the contributions of Maslow.

Motivation has been examined for important reasons. According to Amabile (1993), motivated workers produce higher quality work that evidences creativity, and they do this not only willingly but persistently. Unmotivated workers enact the opposite, opting to leave the workplace as early and often as possible, expending minimal effort on their assignments, and demonstrating low commitment and high turnover. Workers' motivation can be altered by organizational change, and given the constant workplace modifications resulting from new technology, restructuring, downsizing, and increased globalization, Amabile (1993) argues that the threat of an unmotivated workforce looms closer and closer.

Soden and Lovrich (1988) make a clear call for research concerning employee motivation in their work discussing public sector employees. The authors note that workers who are "topped out" at their pay scale may suffer from a lack of motivation, as they have no higher rung to pursue. Another factor considered by the authors is the lack of "challenge and personal growth" (Soden & Lovrich, 1988, p. 94) that workers are able to experience in their public-sector jobs. Finally, the authors discuss work ethic, pointing out that it may suffer as a result of too individual-oriented a mindset. If attention to social welfare may be beneficial to work ethic, then higher purpose may be a way to improve employee motivation.

One under-studied issue in workplace motivation concerns a specific aspect of rewards. Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) report that today's workers are expected to use critical thinking to strategically evaluate the problems, solutions, and outcomes they encounter at work. Due to the difference in mental strain, this type of work is inarguably far removed from the manual labor typical of the industrial era. Unsurprisingly, rewards such as pay are highly effective at

motivating employees who perform manual tasks. Accordingly, the use of rewards to elicit desired behavior remains an unquestioned staple in society, as Kohn, author of *Punished by Rewards*: *The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise and Other Bribes* (1993), explains. However, as it turns out, when creative or critical thinking are required of workers, as is overwhelmingly the case in the workforce today since manual labor has declined or been computerized, extrinsic rewards such as contingent financial incentives no longer function as a motivating factor to workers at the same level, except to motivate them to simply earn more rewards (Pink, 2009a). Therefore, Pink (2009a, 2009b) argues that the reliance on money-as-motivation is severely outdated for the present-day workforce. Of the many and diverse studies upon which Pink's claim is based, an earlier meta-analytic review conducted by Deci et al. (1999) may be the most compelling testament to this thinking: "Careful consideration of reward effects reported in 128 experiments leads to the conclusion that tangible rewards tend to have a substantially negative effect on intrinsic motivation" (p. 658-659), the authors concluded.

Spence and Helmreich (1983) reached this same conclusion even earlier, stating that "introducing a tangible reward into a situation in which intrinsic motivation would otherwise be sufficient to guarantee performance" can have "deleterious effects" (p. 24). Essentially, the "behavior becomes extrinsically rather than intrinsically motivated" (p. 24). Thus, when extrinsic rewards are dangled in front of employees, their intrinsic motivation as well as creative and critical thinking are undermined. As Irlenbusch explains in a 2009 article from The London School of Economics and Political Science, "'We find that financial incentives may indeed reduce intrinsic motivation…As a consequence, the provision of incentives can result in a negative impact on overall performance'" (n.p.). Although the Human Relations movement has been criticized for

their focus on intrinsic rather than monetary motivations, perhaps intrinsic rewards should be given further attention.

What, then, might take the place of a contingent monetary reward? As noted previously, Pink (2009a) offers purpose as one answer. Others include autonomy and mastery, according to Pink, but purpose holds a special quality. Rather than doling out a reward as a result of doing well, purpose instead precedes the desired behavior, notes Pink. This proposed effect of purpose on motivation may explain the finding from the Net Impact and Rutgers study (Zukin & Szeltner, 2012) that many workers are willing to make 85% of their current earnings just to feel that there is a higher purpose behind what they are doing. Purpose appears to be worth at least 15% of a salary to some workers, showing that not only is purpose motivating to many employees, but also that many employees long to feel that their work has purpose. In essence, urging employees to consider the higher purpose of their work or creating a narrative of higher purpose, as Pfau (2015) succeeded in doing, is valuable to both employees and employers. But what of those who did not support the view that a salary cut would be worth a more purpose-oriented job? The findings raise questions about which individuals are ready to give up salary for purpose and to what particular occupations this finding might be tied.

As noted, Bashaw and Grant (1994) found that motivation is a better predictor of career success than other factors that commonly receive credit, such as how much employees know or how capable they are of doing their jobs. High motivation is correlated with greater success, but, intriguingly, the source of the motivation is not related to success. Thus, merely having a purpose fueling one’s work, no matter what that purpose might be, will be motivating to employees. For instance, an accountant who feels that her work shapes history may feel motivated in that work and thus be highly successful. A coworker who feels that his work powers future innovations may

feel just as motivated and be just as successful, though the source of his motivation is different. The simple fact that each employee feels their work has purpose is what drives their success.

For the purpose of further information about intrinsic rewards and motivation, as well as to include work from a field that is often neglected in workplace research, educational studies of motivation will now be discussed. In addition, reviewing the literature on the motivation of students in educational settings will supply information about non-monetary reward settings; that is, students are rarely paid for their studies. This information removes the financial questions that may have been raised by the previous studies.

Motivation in Educational Contexts

In Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece's (2014) textbook on motivation in educational contexts, they define the constructs *expectancies* and *values* and review relevant research utilizing the constructs. As the authors describe, "Expectancies are individuals' beliefs and judgements about their capabilities to perform tasks successfully" (p. 47). When, after repeated failure, an individual no longer believes they can succeed at a task, they will give up on it, even if they value the task. Values "refer to individuals' beliefs about the reasons they might engage in tasks" (p. 47). Task value may stem from the utility of the task, one's interest in the task, the rewards or punishments for completing the task, or other reasons the task may be worth doing.

Together, expectancy and value help predict engagement and achievement, as well as motivation to continue a task, according to Schunk et al. (2014). The choice of task people make is best predicted by value, whereas their achievement at that task is better predicted by their expectancies, though value still plays a role. In short, expectancy asks whether one can succeed at a task, hence its relationship to success, while value asks why one might want to succeed at the

task, indicating the importance placed on the worth of the task or what could be gained from the task.

Xiang, McBride, Guan, and Solmon (2003) found that value is a better predictor of motivation than expectancy. Additionally, value is even more accurate at predicting motivation than one's self-efficacy, or their belief in their ability to succeed at the task, which influences their expectancies. Thus, the value that an individual assigns to a task or perceives it to hold may determine a large part of their motivation to carry out that task.

Within the value construct, attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value, and cost are the four identified types of value (Eccles et al., 1983). *Attainment value* is concerned with, "How important is it to do well on this?" *Intrinsic value* asks, "Is this interesting or enjoyable for me without promise of reward?" *Utility value* considers, "Is this useful for my future?" Finally, *cost* inquires, "What will I lose if I do this, or will others view me negatively for doing this?" The value construct is particularly relevant to the study of how higher purpose acts as a motivating force in the workplace. Although the above value questions focus on self-oriented outcomes, higher purpose relates to and fits best with both attainment value and intrinsic value.

Fulfilling a higher purpose, then, must be both important (attainment value) and personally satisfying or gratifying (intrinsic value). Eccles et al.'s (1983) definitions of these constructs align with this observation: attainment value concerns the importance of doing well on a task, while intrinsic value is the gratification gained from doing the task. The source of higher purpose may differ for each individual employee, just as Pfau's (2015) article explained that each employee submitted their own personal narrative explaining what they do to highlight the altruistic purpose that drives them: for example, "I Help Farms Grow" (n.p.). However, the general idea is the same

for any source of higher purpose: the purpose behind the task is what gives it importance as well as what makes it intrinsically rewarding.

Bomia et al. (1997) explain that intrinsic motivation, or self-motivation, “can lead the student to go beyond the scope and requirements of [an] educational course because they are seeking to learn about the subject, not just fulfill a limited set of requirements. It can also encourage learning even when there is little or no external reinforcements (external motivation) to learn and even in the face of obstacles and setbacks to learning” (p. 4). Thus, intrinsic motivation holds many benefits for students and may even facilitate a positive orientation to lifelong learning. The same may be true for employees with intrinsic motivation to work.

Turning now to engagement, the term is first conceptualized using work from various fields of study. Engagement is then examined in the context of communication research, followed by a discussion of educational research. Similar to educational research on motivation, engagement research in this area has much to offer and can be related to engagement in the workplace.

Engagement

Beginning with conceptualizations from the management field, Kahn (1990) defines personal engagement in the workplace as bringing along one’s personal self and attaching that identity to one’s work self so that one does not have to sacrifice who she or he would like to be at work. Engaged workers are physically and mentally active in their tasks as well as socially mindful of others with whom they are working. Kahn sums up engagement as “the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's ‘preferred self’ in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full role performances” (p. 700). This is similar to the concept of identification, discussed previously. A disengaged worker, according to Kahn, exhibits the opposite: they are cognitively

(and often physically) absent, unemotional, and drained of their mental, physical, and/or social energy. They are detached from both their work and their coworkers.

Kahn (1990) offers three psychological conditions that impact engagement: the meaningfulness of the work, the safety of the worker, and the availability of the worker to engage in the work. Of these, meaningfulness, as discussed in the previous meaningful work section, holds important implications for the discussion of higher purpose. Kahn explains that a worker who feels that his or her work has value, incentive, worth, and benefit is more likely to be engaged in their work. A sense that the person is needed to do this work, as well, bolsters engagement. Most interestingly, workers who feel that they do not agree with the overall aims of their organization struggle with engagement, as they feel they are fulfilling a purpose they do not support or personally value.

Using Kahn's (1990) work, Rothbard (2001) focuses on the attention and absorption aspects of engagement. Rothbard gives the example that engaged workers will be less distractible and defines absorption as intense concentration that is intrinsically motivated. Adding to this conceptualization of engagement, Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday (2004) discuss employee engagement as having a presence in one's organizational role and being both persistent and determined in one's work. Moreover, the authors provide support that engagement fosters high organizational productivity and performance.

In the psychology field, Saks (2006) refers to engagement as simply being "psychologically present" (p. 601) at work. Other psychology researchers, however, define engagement as "energy, involvement, and efficacy" (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001, p. 416), or as the reverse of *burnout*, which is characterized by "exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy" (p. 397). Due to the nature of psychology, researchers generally focus on negative states, such as burnout, rather than

their positive counterparts, such as engagement. However, looking at burnout can perhaps further inform the conceptualization of engagement. Maslach et al. explain burnout as detachment and lack of productivity at work. They add that "a lack of intrinsic rewards (such as pride in doing something of importance and doing it well) can…be a critical part of [burnout]" (p. 414). Applying this to engagement, then, one can speculate that intrinsic rewards, such as having a higher purpose, drive engagement.

As another benefit of engagement, van Beek, Taris, and Schaufeli's (2011) discussion on workaholism points out that work engagement is independent of workaholism. The results of their study of Dutch employees suggests that engagement mediates the effects of workaholism, in that workaholics saw higher levels of burnout that engaged workaholics did not experience to the same degree. Therefore, engagement holds a protective factor that prohibits employees from feeling the full negative effects of overwork.

Engagement in Communication Contexts

Turning now from management and psychology studies of engagement to organizational communication studies of engagement reveals an interesting finding. Organizational communication and workplace engagement studies may suffer from a lack of visibility, if not a lack of noted existence. Hayase (2009) argued in her thesis that no studies have specifically investigated internal organizational communication and employee engagement. Indeed, "engagement" is not included in some of the most popular organizational communication undergraduate textbooks (e.g., Miller, 2012), but that is not to say that it is not being studied from a communication perspective (e.g., Hayase, 2009; Yang, Kang, & Johnson, 2010). Researchers from other fields have also argued that further studies in the area should be taken up. For instance, scholarship conducted by economists note that "research supporting the possible significance of

employee engagement is evident, however, research pointing at creating employee engagement…is still remarkably not fully explored" (Jiony, Tanakinjal, Gom, & Siganul, 2015, p. 128-129).

Clair (2012) describes becoming engaged as working "on behalf of [one]self and other[s]" (p. 143), pointing out the often prosocial nature of engagement. Using a narrative from the anti-sweatshop movement, Clair explores ethnographic engagement in the context of social movements, conceptualizing engagement as sustained involvement, dedication, persistence, and energy. This is fitting with Robinson et al.'s (2004) definition. Clair (2012) also provides an overview of the origins of the term *engagement* as well as common usage of the term. Clair and Mattson (2013) later revise this conceptualization into six aspects of engagement: "(1) entering [a] conversation, (2) initiating activity, (3) dedicating oneself, (4) expressing avowal, (5) proclaiming moral commitment, and (6) charming others" (p. 30). Though the authors consider community engagement through the context of a personal narrative, their third definition of engagement seems to embody aspects of employee engagement. Regarding engagement as dedication, the authors note, "*Although the* [health communication] *campaign requires much time, energy, and funding, it is energizing and fulfilling*" (p. 34). This description further emphasizes the positive effects of engagement.

Jiang and Men (2015) conducted a study using a random sample of 391 employees of various fields to test a model "that examined how authentic leadership, transparent organizational communication, and work-life enrichment are interrelated" (p. 225). The authors found that authentic leadership has a strong positive effect on transparent organizational communication and "a relatively small but significant relationship to work-life enrichment of employees" (p. 239). Furthermore, transparent organizational communication and work-life enrichment both showed

strong positive effects on employee engagement. Thus, the authors advise that "upward communication and listening…welcom[ing] employee participation and comments" (p. 240) can facilitate employee engagement.

There has been a growing body of research concerning employee engagement to combat the lack of academic exploration in the area identified about a decade ago (Saks, 2006). Even so, Jiang and Men (2015) still call for further research to address employee engagement in communicative contexts. Specifically, these researchers express the need for the investigation of factors that drive employee engagement. Narratives of higher purpose appear to be one such factor.

Before providing the specific research questions for this study, one more area is explored. Once again turning to educational settings, studies in engagement are many, appearing to be more prevalent than in the organizational communication field. These articles shed additional light on the subject of workplace engagement through an application of findings to workplace settings as well as a comparison of findings to workplace settings.

Engagement in Educational Contexts

Employers are concerned about engagement for good reason. In school settings, engagement has been shown to affect achievement outcomes, such as test scores, grades, high school enrollment, and even college degree attainment for students throughout their educational careers (Fredricks et al., 2004; Svanum & Bigatti, 2009). Similarly, engagement in the workplace drives performance and commitment (Bakker, Demerouti, & Brummelhuis, 2012; Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006; Robinson et al., 2004), two areas of high importance for managers expecting to see results.

Drawing on Bomia et al.'s (1997) conceptualization of classroom engagement, Savory, Goodburn, and Koenig Kellas (2012) gave a definition of classroom engagement from which one

can project a definition of workplace engagement: "willingness, need, desire, and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in" (p. 2) one's work. However, Fredricks et al. (2004) offer the most widely-accepted definition of engagement in their "School Engagement" study, describing it as a changeable construct that can be modified through, for example, one's environment. The authors also describe three components that, together, make up the construct and contribute to its cohesive definition: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement. These components are described by the authors in terms of students' engagement in a classroom environment; for the purposes of this review, the definitions are extended to give examples using workplace settings and activities.

Fredricks et al. (2004) offer clear differentiation between the three types of engagement. Behavioral engagement is comprised of actions and participation, perhaps showing up to work on time or staying focused and on-task. Emotional engagement is similar to the concept of identification in that it involves reactions that are capable of influencing behavior, including positive emotions and evaluations of a workplace that may result in reduced turnover. At the same time, however, emotional *dis*engagement can be comprised of disinterest, boredom, or anxiety, which may increase turnover. Finally, cognitive engagement centers on a willingness or commitment to enact certain behaviors, such as skill mastery, usually in the pursuit of an overarching goal. Often, cognitive engagement involves what might be termed "going above and beyond," perhaps willingly staying late to perfect a project or opting for a more challenging assignment to gain skills relevant to one's work.

Svanum and Bigatti (2009) discuss educational engagement theories that equate student engagement to involvement in or energy allocation toward academics. A finding by Robbins et al. (2004) identified that academic course engagement, comprised of academic skill and effort put

towards academics, predicted student success and retention. Because academic course engagement is determined by self-disciplined behaviors such as effort, attendance, and going beyond what is minimally required – behaviors that largely translate to the workplace – if engagement behaviors in college students can predict their success and retention, then the same principles might be expanded to apply to employees in the workplace.

Measurements of engagement often focus on self-perceptions or intentions at one point in time, rather than actual activities across a timespan (Svanum & Bigatti, 2009). While Svanum and Bigatti only measured academic engagement throughout one semester, their research was longitudinal in nature, extending to degree completion. They accessed cumulative GPA, among other measures, at the end of the study. Their study of 225 college students aged 18-64 ($M = 24.65$, $SD = 7.20$) spanned from 2000-2006 and found that course engagement reliably predicted degree attainment: highly engaged students were 1.5 times more likely to graduate than those who ranked low on academic engagement, regardless of college admission exam scores such as the SAT. Moreover, highly engaged students obtained their degrees one semester sooner, on average; that is, they were more efficient at completing their studies. Degree efficiency was also unrelated to college admission exam scores. This suggests that engagement fosters both goal success and efficiency.

Savory et al. (2012) created a survey designed to measure classroom engagement that focused on the following areas: student learning, engagement with course topics, classroom relationships, cognitive development, classroom performance, and general education outcome. Instructors can complete this survey to measure their responses compared to their students'. Specifically, the authors note that welcoming student questions, offering useful feedback and support, and challenging students to do their best work is an instructor's best route to a more

engaged class. Again applying this finding to a workplace context, one can insert a supervisor or manager in place of the instructor and project that workers need to feel supported in asking for help, given practical feedback about their performance, and held to high expectations.

Because of its focus on learning and growing, rather than end gains, the cognitive aspect of engagement is closely related to intrinsic motivation (Fredricks et al., 2004). Wigfield and Eccles (2000) note the "quite positive" nature of the "important psychological consequences" (p. 72) resulting from engaging in intrinsically-valued activities. Furthermore, Sortheix, Dietrich, Chow, & Salmela-Aro (2013) found that intrinsic work values, and not extrinsic work values, were related to work engagement. Given the potential role of higher purpose as intrinsic motivation, it may be determined that employees who feel that their work has purpose are the most engaged in it.

Research on motivation and engagement in the workplace and other contexts has been overviewed. However, studies of how a sense of higher purpose can affect these constructs are lacking. Spence and Helmreich (1983) report that employees generally work for extrinsic, financial reasons – out of necessity – but it has been demonstrated that nearly a quarter of the workforce values meaningful work over a higher salary (Zukin & Szeltner, 2012).

This concludes the review of motivation and engagement, two constructs of significance in studies of the workplace. The reasons behind employee motivation and engagement may be closely linked to the higher purpose, meaning, and identity that workers feel underlies their efforts, which can be communicated through narratives. Thus, research questions to study these relationships follow.

Research Questions

The essential focus of this study is to better understand the construct higher purpose. More specifically, this study explores what motivates workers (RQ1), what constitutes narratives of higher purpose (RQ2), as well as how communication about higher purpose may influence these narratives (RQ3). In addition, organizational identification, which provides a semblance to work engagement, is explored for its relationship to narratives of higher purpose and ultimately to perceptions of motivation (RQ4). Based on the preceding literature, four research questions are asserted:

RQ1: What motivators and subsequent themes are associated with work motivation?

RQ2: What themes exist in narratives of higher purpose?

RQ3: How are narratives of higher purpose different when superiors communicate about higher purpose?

RQ4: What forms of identification exist in narratives of higher purpose?

Thus, the next chapter proposes a research methodology to explore these research questions. The procedures for obtaining a sample, selecting participants, and administering a questionnaire are detailed. An overview of the questionnaire is given, and a number of issues which arose during its employment are discussed.

CHAPTER 3. METHOD

The previous chapter relied primarily on a Human Resource perspective, more specifically on Maslow's theory of motivation (1943, 1954) and the theories that branched from his classic work, to conceptualize the construct of higher purpose. Higher purpose in the workplace was situated in an array of concepts that are mostly similar (e.g., inspiration, calling), likely related in meaning (e.g., the meaning of work/meaningful work, identity/identification), and either causatively associated or correlated with motivation and engagement, according to recent studies (e.g., Cheney, 1983b; Rothbard, 2001; Thrash & Elliot, 2003; Weber, 1904-5/1930/2001). In addition, one construct of contrast was proposed (i.e., anomie). Although numerous studies suggest a relationship between the concepts of higher purpose and engagement or motivation, none have studied its connecting form of communication (i.e., narrative). Thus, the role of higher purpose in motivating employees in the workplace has not yet been thoroughly established. Research studies of communication in the workplace have potential to benefit both employees and employers by addressing how stories of higher purpose relate to employee motivation, engagement, identification, and more. Finally, the previous chapter proposed research questions for study.

In this chapter, the methodology seeks to examine how higher purpose functions in the workplace and in relation to motivation, communication, and identification. The study is outlined, survey questions are justified, and methods of data analysis for the study are detailed.

Method

This study focused on the ability of narratives to capture the meanings and understandings associated with employees' work. Narratives of higher purpose, identification, communication, and motivation at work were explored through thematic analysis of data gathered from participants

completing an online questionnaire. First, procedures for obtaining the sample of participants are described. Data collection and survey questions are then detailed. Procedures for data analysis are explained, and unanticipated outcomes are discussed.

Procedures for Sample

Data were collected using an online questionnaire. Students at a large Midwestern university were asked to refer participants, as detailed in the following sections. This choice of instrument allowed for both multiple-choice and open-ended responses, permitting the researcher to procure employees' own narratives of higher purpose and then to perform qualitative analysis of this data.

Participants

For this study, the researcher attempted a quota sample. In a quota sample based on population demographics from the United States Census Bureau, a researcher typically needs at least 50 participants in order to fill the quota, as percentages of the population are difficult to divide with smaller numbers (Clair, 1993). Additionally, according to qualitative researchers, once a researcher has saturated the field and begins to see only repeating responses, the appropriate sample size has been reached (Patton, 2002). Once unique cases cease to appear, data collection can be concluded and analysis can begin (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Wilhoit's (2012) study of individuals bicycling to a university campus required only 40 interviews to reach saturation in her data.

The researcher proposed to include individuals working at paid employment, as this is a study of narratives in the workplace. The following requirements were stated for participants: working full-time, non-student, and at least 21 years of age. It may be noted that these requirements

specifically excluded volunteers such as individuals assisting non-profit organizations. Although volunteers may engage in similar tasks as employees, and although workplace and volunteering environments may be similar, due to the high prevalence of messages of higher purpose in organizations relying on volunteers, including volunteers as participants had the potential to inflate data on the prevalence of narratives of higher purpose in the workplace. Thus, volunteers were excluded.

In an effort to reach participants who were employed full-time without entering a specific workplace, participants were selected using a referral method. Owen (1984) refers to this type of method as "'network sampling'" (p. 276). Students at a large Midwestern university seeking to fulfill a course requirement or extra credit accessed referral instructions via an online research participation system managed by the School of Communication (see Appendix A for student and participant instructions). The students were asked to contact a working adult and send them a link to a Qualtrics survey, which was available on the online system. No financial compensation was given to students or participants. However, students received credit for each received referral, within a limit according to their course restrictions, through use of a unique ID code that was given to participants and recorded in the questionnaire. Offering credit for participation in research is not uncommon (e.g., Myers, Davis, Schreuder, & Seibold, 2016), and in this case the students were not the participants but simply assisted in finding the participants. IRB approval was granted for this study.

The most significant criteria for selection of participants was their occupational category. This assured that participants came from a variety of occupational fields. Because a quota sample was attempted, it was thus necessary to ask for the occupational category of each participant.

A quota for occupational category was determined using United States Census Bureau (2012) data. As an example, in Clair's (1993) study using a quota sample, 16% percent of the U.S. population at that time fell into the service sector. Therefore, eight responses from that field needed to be obtained (16 percent of her 50 participants). The proportional number of responses needed from each field were calculated to determine the quota. In the current study, the online system was used to create the appropriate number of referral slots available for each occupational category. Thus, once all responses from a particular occupational category were obtained, students were only allowed to refer participants from the remaining fields. The categories included[1] Management, business, and financial; Professional; Service; Sales and related; Office and administrative support; Farming, fishing, and forestry; Construction and extraction; Installation, maintenance, and repair; Production; and Transportation and material moving. These occupational categories were based on previous U.S. Census categories (2012).

To provide an example based on the U.S. Census (2012), a sample of 100 participants according to occupational category would be divided as follows (as shown in Figure 1): 15.06% (15) Management, business, and financial occupations; 22.15% (22) Professional (including computer, engineering, and science occupations; education, legal, community service, arts, and media occupations; and healthcare practitioners and technical occupations); 17.71% (18) Service occupations; 11.06% (11) Sales and related occupations; 12.98% (13) Office and administrative support occupations; 0.71% (1) Farming, fishing, and forestry occupations; 5.16% (5) Construction and extraction occupations; 3.53% (4) Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations; 5.75% (5) Production occupations; and 5.88% (6) Transportation and material

[1] It should be noted that when answer choices from the survey are referenced, the first letter of the answer choice is capitalized to denote this.

moving occupations. In the current study, an option ofMilitary specific occupations was listed, as well as an option of Other.

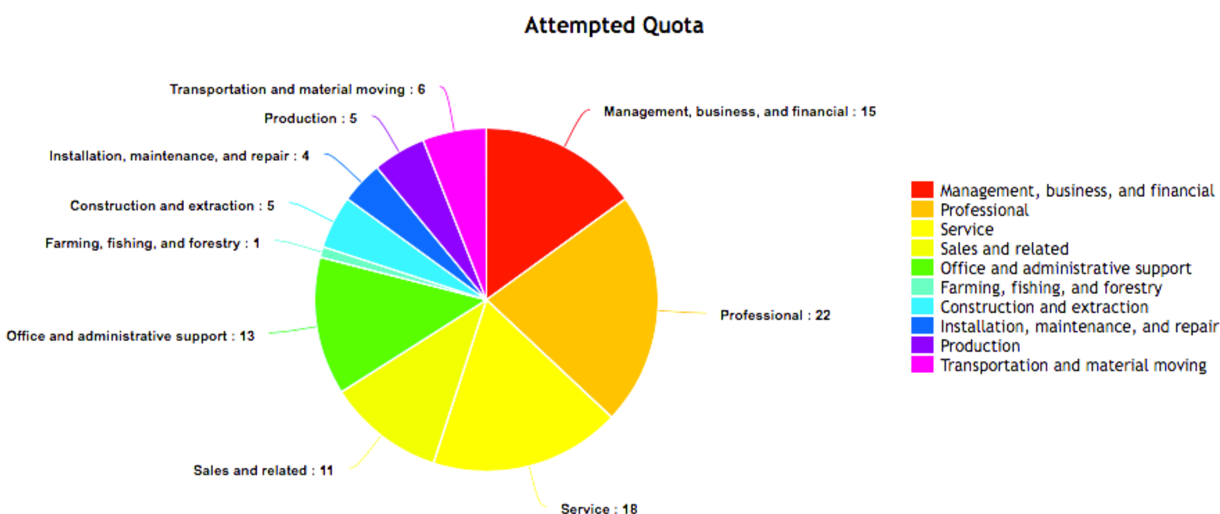

Figure 1. Attempted quota. This chart shows the distribution of occupational categories in the attempted quota.

Questionnaire

The Qualtrics survey to be completed by participants included both scaled questions and open-ended questions. Myers et al. (2016) used a similar design in their study of student identification at a university. The researcher used scaled questions to obtain direct, often yes-or-no answers from participants, and open-ended responses were used to gather narrative information in the participants' own words. Questions were grouped and placed on pages of the questionnaire according to their similarity or topic, and participants were able to navigate between these pages while completing the questionnaire. The following measures were employed in the Qualtrics survey for participants (see Appendix B for full questionnaire). First, the unique ID code was requested: *What is the unique code given to you by the student who referred you?* Participants were then asked, *In what field do you work?* in order to confirm their occupational category. This assured

that the proper quota would be obtained. Any participants selecting a category other than that chosen by the student who had referred them still completed the survey, and responses were categorized by the field the participant selected.

Next, the participants were asked, *What is your specific title?* and given an open-ended response box in which to answer. This data, along with later responses, helped to clarify participants' work, especially in cases where their occupations or other responses were vague.

Participants were then asked, *What motivates you to work?* and again given an open-ended response box in which to type their answer. Responses were noted and then coded for intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. These responses were used to explore research question one, *What motivators and subsequent themes are associated with work motivation?*

To explore research question two, *What themes exist in narratives of higher purpose?*, the survey moved to questions about purpose, beginning with, *What is the purpose of your work? Please describe in a few sentences* and offering an open-ended response box in which to answer. This question served as an initial attempt to procure a narrative of higher purpose. However, it was expected that answers might focus largely on tangible tasks and outcomes, such as, "I file paperwork." Indeed, many answers did so. Participant 1, an Account Executive[2], answered, "To sell customers our cloud services." Participant 129, an Area Director, offered, "I teach skills to youth at Boy Scout Camps." Following this question was, *Do you feel that your work has a purpose beyond the obvious or what others might think?* This question, hinting at the definition of higher purpose, served to ascertain whether participants felt that their work had a higher purpose without committing them to the use of the term. Because of possible religious or other connotations, the term was not used initially. This question offered answer choices of "Yes," "Somewhat," and

[2] When participants' specific titles are referenced, they are capitalized when taken verbatim from participants' responses.

"No." Thus, responses to this question could be compared to a later question about higher purpose, phrased similarly. The participants were then directed, *If so, please describe the purpose*, and offered an open-ended response box in which to explain. The next question asked was, *To what degree is that purpose meaningful?* This question provided answer choices ranging from "Very Meaningful" to "Not Meaningful," and also included responses of "Unsure" and "I don't feel that my work has purpose." Again, responses to this question could be compared to a later question about higher purpose, phrased similarly.

Next, participants were directed, *If you feel that your work has a purpose, please share an example or story that explains why it is meaningful. If not, please explain why not in a few sentences.* An open-ended response box allowed participants to type their responses. The next question served as a buffer between questions, asking, *What quotes, mottos, or slogans guide your thoughts about the purpose of your work?* and again offered an open-ended response box. While these mottos might be interesting, they did not relate to the specific research questions.

Participants were then introduced to the term higher purpose: *Do you feel that your work has a* higher *purpose? That is, a purpose that extends beyond yourself that fulfills some larger need, goal, or hope, or perhaps benefits others?* Answer choices of "Yes," "Somewhat," and "No" were again offered. The next question, *Is that higher purpose meaningful?*, again offered answer choices ranging from "Very Meaningful" to "Not Meaningful," and also included responses of "Unsure" and "I don't feel that my work has purpose." Attempting to extract a narrative, participants were directed, *If you feel that your work has a higher purpose that extends beyond yourself that fulfills some larger need, goal, or hope, or perhaps benefits others, please describe it in a few sentences. If not, please explain why not in a few sentences.* An open-ended response box allowed participants to type their responses.

The next section included a narrative component for participants to read in hopes of helping them to express the higher purpose in their own work. Participants were directed, *Please read the following excerpt from an article about a workplace:*

> *"It's a fabled story about a janitor's exchange with President Kennedy during the early days of NASA: "What do you do?" the president supposedly asked the man with a broom during a visit to Cape Canaveral. 'Well, Mr. President, I'm helping to put a man on the moon.'" (Pfau, 2015)*

Following this excerpt, participants were asked, *If you were approached while at work and asked the same question, "'What do you do?'" (Pfau, 2015), how might you respond?* An open-ended response box recorded their answers. These answers were expected to specifically speak on the higher purpose underlying the participants' work.

To address research question three, *How are narratives of higher purpose different when superiors communicate about higher purpose?*, participants were next asked about the communication of higher purpose in their workplace: *How often, if at all, would you say your superior(s) (e.g. manager, supervisor, boss) speaks about the purpose of your work or your company's work?* The survey provided answer choices ranging from "Never" to "Frequently" and also included a response of "Do not have a superior."

An investigation of research question four, *What forms of identification exist in narratives of higher purpose?*, required narratives to be coded for evidence of identification or a lack thereof.

To check that higher purpose could be differentiated from similar terms, two questions addressed related terms. Because participants may have had little familiarity with the concepts of job crafting or anomie, the survey only asked about inspiration: *Who or what inspires you to work? Please explain why and/or how,* and calling: *Do you feel that your work is your calling? Please explain why and/or how*. Each question was followed by an open-ended response box.

To separate these two questions on terms, that is, to provide a buffer between two questions concerning terminology, two questions on religion were asked between them: *How would you describe yourself with respect to religion or spirituality?* and *Please select from the following list what best describes you. If more than one descriptor fits, feel free to mark more than one.* The following responses were offered for the second question: “Not at all religious,” “Somewhat religious,” “Religious,” “Very Religious,” “Secular,” “Agnostic,” “Atheist,” “Spiritual but not committed to any one religion,” “Unsure,” and “Other.”

The final question of this section of the survey directed participants to share any other comments they may have had: *Please feel free to tell us anything at all that you believe would help us better understand your connections to work or to your organization.* Again, an open-ended response box was offered. Answers to this question helped to expand on previous responses given by participants.

A series of demographic questions followed these measures in order to assess the following: *What is your sex?* [Answer choices offered.] *How old are you? What is your race/ethnicity?* [Answer choices offered.] *Approximately how many years have you worked at your current company? Approximately how many years have you worked in your field? What is your approximate position/level/rank in your current company? Choose what you believe fits best.* [Answer choices offered.] *What is your highest degree of education completed?* [Answer choices offered.] While this information was not directly relevant to the research questions, there was potential for a need for these answers to arise during data analysis. Indeed, these responses allowed a deeper look into factors that may have influenced narratives of higher purpose, such as age, tenure at a company, or years in a particular field. Additionally, this demographic data may be valuable for any potential future analysis of the data in another study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for the current study was qualitative. Following guidelines offered by Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) and informed by Braun and Clarke (2006), a thematic analysis was employed in order to identify themes present in the open-ended survey questions. Thematic analysis is useful for analyzing large qualitative datasets (Nowell et al., 2017) and is suitable for beginning researchers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Emergent themes were grouped into categories and assessed for similarities and explanatory thrust in relation to the research questions. When participants translate their experiences into written or verbal narratives, the process often creates meaning and understanding where, previously, there were but unstructured thoughts (Thorne, 2000). The sharing of this personal understanding of an experience holds rich detail that invites investigation. Analysis of these narratives offered insights to the meaning of work experiences for the participants. Through thematic analysis, main themes can emerge to show how individuals generally engage in sense-making about the subject at hand. Thus, this type of analysis was particularly useful for this investigation of higher purpose in the workplace.

Drawing from Owen's (1984) thematic analysis, a theme can be identified when three criteria appear: "(1) recurrence, (2) repetition, and (3) forcefulness. Criterion two is an extension of criterion one in that it is an explicit repeated use of the same wording, while criterion one involves an implicit recurrence of meaning using different discourse" (p. 275). In the current study, the recurrence of a response among different participants or the repetition of a response from one participant qualified as a theme. The forcefulness component, however, was not as easily identified; Owen defines this as "underlining of words and phrases, the increased size of print or use of colored marks circling or otherwise focusing on passages in the written reports" (p. 275-276). Because responses were recorded in open-ended response boxes on an online survey,

forcefulness could only be assessed by the use of capital letters, powerful or superlative language choice, or use of punctuation such as exclamation points. Using Owen's criteria, the analysis produced a number of themes.

This analysis helped to answer the first and second questions, *What motivators and subsequent themes are associated with work motivation?* and *What themes exist in narratives of higher purpose?* Using thematic analysis, the researcher identified categories and themes. Specifically for research question one, the researcher identified whether the motivating factors listed by participants were intrinsic or extrinsic based on definitions provided in Chapter Two. The third research question, *How are narratives of higher purpose different when superiors communicate about higher purpose?*, was analyzed using a similar method. The researcher searched for differences in themes in the narratives of participants who indicated that their superior communicated about higher purpose, in accordance with research question three. Finally, the researcher noted when narratives reflected organizational identification as well as when narratives were more individual-focused, per research question four, *What forms of identification exist in narratives of higher purpose?*

Unintended Experiences with the Research Participation System

A number of issues arose while using the research participation system with this study. Although these unintended experiences are not pertinent to the current study, the following may be beneficial for future research that utilizes a similar design. Specifically, the problems that arose may allow future researchers to design a study that avoids such issues.

Issues with Referral Slots

Due to the setup of the online system, students could register for multiple referral slots in different occupational categories but only one slot in each category. However, this helped to prevent the same survey participant from filling out the survey multiple times, so it was judged to be beneficial to the study.

Some students selected referral slots allocated to occupation categories that were not in accordance with their referral's actual occupation; for example, one student registered for the Transportation category but referred a participant who was a health practitioner (Professional). Nonetheless, students were given the benefit of the doubt and awarded credit regardless, under the assumption that they did not perhaps understand their participant's job or the Census Bureau's occupational categories.

Similarly, some participants inputted a specific job title that appeared mismatched to the occupational category they selected. For example, a project manager chose Service as an occupational category. Because it could not be determined in all cases why a participant chose a particular occupational category, the quota was based on the participants' selection of their occupational category. Other cases were ambiguous, such as one participant who simply put "Employee" as a specific job title but selected the Professional field. Thus, there was good reason to base the quota on the participants' selection of occupational category, but this may also speak to limitations of this data collection, discussed in Chapter Six.

Data collection occurred in two waves. Wave one took place in December 2017, and wave two began in January 2018. Before re-opening the online system for the second wave, the total responses from the first wave were counted. Each occupation category, as selected by participants,

was calculated, and new referral slots were created in accordance with the numbers still needed to fill the quota.

Issues with Responses

Nineteen responses were started but not finished. Because participants were informed that they could exit the survey at any time if they did not wish to finish, an option was selected by the researcher to delete any responses that were not submitted by the participant. Moreover, none of the 19 participants had completed more than one-fourth of the survey, so loss of data was minimal.

There were cases of errors made in responses. Some students filled out the survey themselves, not in accordance with survey instructions of referring an adult at least 21 years of age and employed full time. Other students referred participants who were students and/or not yet age 21. In certain cases, responses from participants who were students and/or under age 21 were not removed from the data (see discussion of these cases, next). The decision of credit allocation and whether to include the data was made on a case-by-case basis.

Some participants fell into the category of student participants, though the researcher was not expecting students to complete the survey. All data could not be examined before granting credit due to short deadlines for allocating credit. When possible, student participants were noted and denied credit, and students were also denied credit when they had made an unqualified referral. However, it is highly likely that other students filled out the survey themselves but were not discovered.

One survey participant, a self-described “Full-Time Student” whose father was a farmer, filled out the survey herself. Thus, she was not granted credit and instead marked as an “Excused No-Show” in the research participation system so that she was not penalized. The student did not include a unique ID code in her survey, but since she had selected the only available slot for

Farming, fishing, and forestry, her unique ID code was identifiable. Though she was 21 years old, her survey responses were not included in the data because she was merely making projections about her father's work.

Another survey participant likely filling out the survey for himself did not specifically designate himself as a student, but he chose Other as his occupational category and declined to input a work title, number of years at his company, number of years in his field, or his level/rank in his company. This student also left six of the 11 open-ended response questions blank. This student put his age as 18. Thus, he was not granted credit due to his age and was marked as an "Excused No-Show." His survey responses were removed from the data.

Some unqualified referrals were noted after credit allocation. Five survey participants were under age 21 (one aged 19 and four aged 20). Their responses were included in the data because the participants did not specifically mention their status as students and because their responses talked exclusively about their jobs. One other participant was under age 21 (age 20) and was noted before credit was granted. However, since this participant only talked about her job, she was likewise included in the study and her referring student was granted credit. Finally, one other survey response had to be removed because the participant spoke exclusively about her student job, not a full-time position; the student thus did not gain credit. In addition, one participant claimed to be age 1, but this was assumed to be an error. The response was retained and the referring student gained credit.

It was similarly noted after credit was granted that two other participants were students; one, however, held a full-time job, and the other held multiple summer internships. Though they specifically mentioned that they were students, these survey responses were both retained because the participants were 21 years of age and talked exclusively about their jobs.

Although these issues concerned participants who were students, the researcher also found issues with some participants who were non-students. It was discovered after the commencement of data analysis that participants 70 and 71 were in fact the same participant submitting responses twice. The survey was taken just two minutes apart and had identical demographic responses, including age, race/ethnicity, number of years at company, number of years in field, rank in company, education, etc., as well as close to identical written responses. The only difference was that the unique code was incorrectly entered for participant 70 and correctly entered for participant 71; thus, participant 71 was counted for purposes of filling the quota and participant 70 was removed. A similar issue occurred with a later participant who filled out the survey almost identically twice in a row (the second survey was started 11 minutes after the first). The student gained credit for only one response.

Unique ID Codes

Two students contacted the researcher due to confusion about the instructions for obtaining their unique ID code. Both students had made up their own code instead of using the code assigned to them. The first student had not seen an update on the instructions and thus was asked to view them again. The second student simply did not read the instructions, and when given the instructions via email, he replied that he had figured the issue out and had simply referred another professional to complete the survey with his proper ID code.

Three survey participants inputted one student's name instead of a unique ID code. This did not pose a threat to identity, since students were simply making referrals for the survey. Thus, the student's name was used to determine her school email address using the university directory, and she was contacted in regard to her earned credit. She was given instructions on how to access her unique ID code and asked to reply with the code so that her credit might be allocated. One

other survey participant inputted another student's name, but that name did not appear in the university directory and thus the student could not be contacted to be allocated credit.

Another survey participant inputted an incorrect unique ID code and contacted the researcher via email to correct the issue. However, it was discovered that the student making this and many other referrals had only signed up for one survey slot. Thus, only one credit could be granted to the student. The researcher suggested to the survey participant that he or she contact the student and instruct them to register for additional slots so as to gain credit for all responses, but the student did not do so.

Unfortunately, many participants inputted an incorrect code, so their students could not gain credit. However, since the codes were provided by the students, it is possible that the students provided incorrect codes after not fully reading the instructions for obtaining the codes. Instructions were bolded to emphasize the most important sections (see Appendix A).

Three participants inputted what appeared to be student identification numbers assigned by the university; thus, these numbers must have been provided by the students. Five participants inputted a 58-letter code that appeared as part of a URL in the study sign-up confirmation email, rather than a six-digit numerical code as instructed. Thirteen participants inputted some variation of EwSbOF, the final letters of the URL for the instructions page that was listed elsewhere. Again, this was not a six-digit numerical code, and it was not copied from the URL in the address bar of the current page, as directed in the instructions. However, one of the students who inputted EwSb0F as their unique ID code contacted the researcher via email, and credit was able to be granted to her through process of elimination.

Two participants inputted three- or four-letter codes. Four total participants inputted a student's name, as mentioned earlier. Though participants were reminded that inputting the correct

ID code was the only way students could gain their credit, one participant wrote, “Just depends on what’s needed,” while two others wrote, “There was not one” and “N/A.” Three participants inputted “unique identifying code” or “[unique identifying code],” suggesting that the student who contacted them did not edit the example email offered on the student instructions page (see Appendix A).

In all, these mistakes accounted for an estimated 20 referrals that did not receive credit due some sort of input error. In addition, it should be noted that some students registered for multiple referral slots but did not recruit enough participants to fill the slots. About 44 additional students were not granted credit because their codes never appeared in the data. It is likely that these students registered to make a referral but did not do so. Alternatively, their participant(s) may have chosen not to begin or submit the survey.

Student Participants

One student registered for one referral slot in each of six remaining occupational categories that had openings (Construction, Maintenance, Office and administrative support, Production, Service, and Transportation). The participant, presumably the student himself, a 22-year-old Sales Intern, completed the survey six times within an hour and a half. The participant inputted EwSb0F for the first survey and then the same unique identifying code for the rest. Almost all written answers were identical, including use of the exact same motto each time. In addition, the student’s selection of occupational category was the same each time (he chose Sales and related occupations), though this did not match any of the categories for which he had registered. Thus, the student was granted credit for just one participation slot (0.5%) and marked as an “Excused No-Show” for the rest, since one might perhaps find it believable that this student thought his work could have fallen into the Office and administrative support category for which he had registered.

Additionally, although the participant indicated that he worked at an internship, it is unknown whether this internship was paid or unpaid and full- or part-time. Thus, the participant could not be excluded solely on those grounds. This student contacted me asking why he was only allotted credit for one survey, at which point he admitted to his status as a student and to taking the surveys himself. Therefore, just one of his surveys was retained in the data, and the duplicates were eliminated.

An almost identical case occurred just a few hours later with a student who registered for one slot in each of five remaining occupational categories (Construction, Maintenance, Office and administrative support, Production, and Service). It is probable that the sixth category was already filled at the time. The participant was a 20-year old skilled laborer who answered *What is your specific title?* with “Mr.” each of the five times he filled out the survey. He completed the five surveys within 30 minutes, again with almost identical written responses each time, including the use of the same motto. Though the participant was underage (20), the participant was granted credit for one participation slot (0.5%) and marked as an “Excused No-Show” for the rest; likewise, just one response was retained in the data, while the rest were eliminated. This was due to the fact that the participant talked at length about his full-time job on a farm. However, instead of selecting Farming, fishing, and forestry as an occupational category, this participant chose Management, business, and financial occupations for each of the five surveys. Though it seemed mismatched to the work he briefly described, as noted earlier, no assumptions were made and the response was not re-categorized into a different occupational category.

Issues with Deadlines

As mentioned, the survey was conducted in two waves because of the semester break, and there was a deadline for survey participation each semester. Two participants submitted the survey

after the first deadline of December 8th at 5 P.M. One participant inputted the unique ID code correctly, but because it was after the semester deadline, the student could not be given credit. The other participant inputted a 58-letter code and therefore would not have received credit regardless. Two other participants submitted the survey after the second deadline of January 31st at 11:59 P.M., and since credit could still be allotted, the students were given credit.

Near the end of data collection, it was not possible to fill the remaining slots in the quota. Regardless of what occupational category students registered for, as long as participants appeared to be different people completing the survey, the researcher was obligated to allot credit to a student when her or his participant completed the survey, even when the participant selected a different occupational category. This was because of the precedent already set of presuming that students may be ignorant of the actual occupational category of the worker. This resulted in far too many participants from Management, business, and financial occupations and Sales and related occupations, compared to underrepresented occupations (e.g., Service occupations and Office and administrative support occupations).

This concludes the overview of the method used to collect and analyze data in the current study. Using a referral method, university students sent a link to an online questionnaire to adults, at least 21 years of age, who were working at full-time, paid employment. In the following chapter, a descriptive analysis of the sample, including participant demographics, is detailed. A preliminary analysis of each research question is given.

CHAPTER 4. ANALYSIS & RESULTS

The previous chapter detailed the method used to obtain participants following guidelines for participant selection. An overview of the survey questions, the method of data analysis, and issues with the online system were described. In this chapter, a descriptive analysis of the participants and the quota sample achieved, as well as a preliminary analysis of the conceptualizations of terms, is presented. In the main analysis, research question one, concerning motivation and related themes, is covered first. Next, research questions two through four, concerning narratives of higher purpose, are discussed.

Descriptive Analysis of Sample

An attempted quota was presented in Chapter Three. To fulfill this quota, the researcher attempted to obtain the following percentages in each occupational category: Management, business, and financial, 15.06%; Professional, 22.15%; Service, 17.71%; Sales and related, 11.06%; Office and administrative support, 12.98%; Farming, fishing, and forestry, 0.71%; Construction and extraction, 5.16%; Installation, maintenance, and repair, 3.53%; Production, 5.75%; and Transportation and material moving, 5.88%. The following descriptive analysis details the achieved quota sample.

Participants and Achieved Quota Sample

The sample for the study consisted of 131 survey responses, from which 15 responses were removed, leaving 116 participants. After the removal of duplicate participants and unqualified participants, the following percentages were achieved in each occupational category (as shown in Figure 2): Management, business, and financial, 24.14% (n=28); Professional, 24.14% (n=28);

Service, 11.21% (n=13); Sales and related, 19.00% (n=22); Office and administrative support, 4.31% (n=5); Farming, fishing, and forestry, 2.59% (n=3); Construction and extraction, 3.45% (n=4); Installation, maintenance, and repair, 0.86% (n=1); Production, 0.86% (n=1); and Transportation and material moving, 3.45% (n=4). It should be again noted that participants of the survey were offered two additional options not listed in the attempted quota, Military specific occupations, 1.72% (n=2) and Other, 4.31% (n=5), which reduced the achieved percentages slightly.

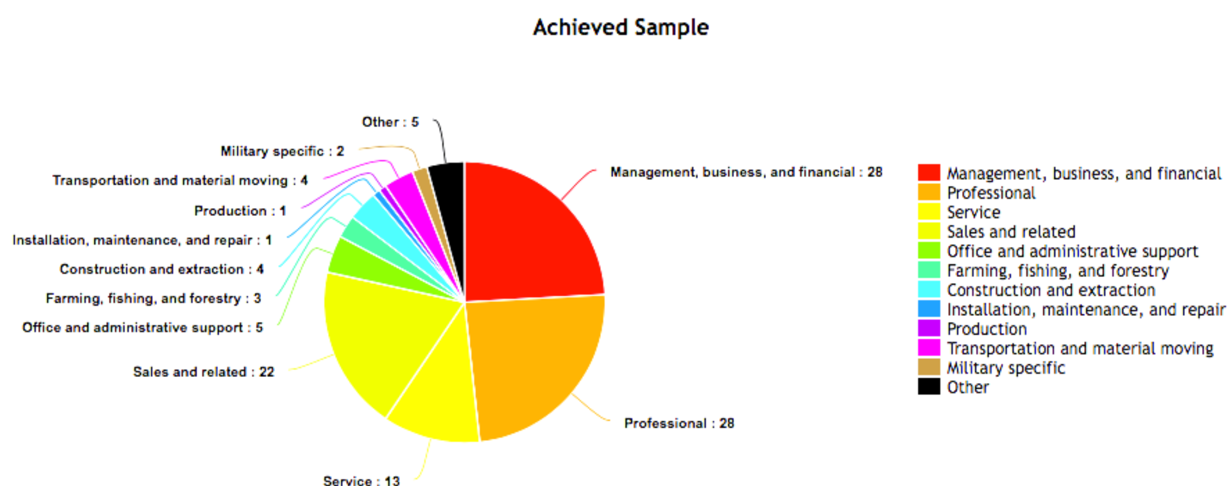

Figure 2. Achieved sample. This chart shows the distribution of occupational categories in the achieved sample.

Participant Demographics

Of the 116 retained responses, 44% (n=51) female participants and 56% (n=65) male participants completed the survey. Their ages ranged from 19 to 60 years (*M*=33.75, *SD*=12.68), with 57% (n=65) falling between 18-30 years and 43% (n=49) between 30-60, excluding one participant who mistakenly entered her age as 1 year old, as well as one participant who did not provide an age. The following breakdown describes the race/ethnicity of the sample: American

Indian or Alaska Native, 0.87% (n=1); Asian, 17.39% (n=20); Black or African American, 4.35% (n=5); Hispanic or Latino(/a), 0.87% (n=1); Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 0% (n=0); White or Caucasian, 69.57% (n=80); Bi-racial, 5.22% (n=6); and Multi-racial, 1.74% (n=2), excluding one participant who declined to answer. Omitting non-numerical responses, participants had worked at their current companies for 2 months to 41 years (*M*=7.65, *SD*=8.45) and in their current field for 2 months to 41 years (*M*=11.11, *SD*=10.91). Some participants offered written answers, such as participant 22, who noted that he was "Not in sales yet." Participant 25 wrote, "I just started," and participant 11 put "Lifetime." Participant 44 indicated that he had worked in his field as a Wheat and Barley Farmer for "about 12 to 14 hours a day in harvesting season, and not that much in the winter."

The participants' approximate positions, levels, or ranks in their current companies showed the following percentages: Intern/Entry level, 22.41% (n=26); Unskilled laborer, 2.59% (n=3); Factory line worker, 0% (n=0); Skilled laborer, 7.76% (n=9); Trade professional, 0.86% (n=1); Clerical/clerk, 2.59% (n=3); Lower management, 9.48% (n=11); Middle management, 8.62% (n=10); Upper management, 12.07% (n=14); Professional, 18.97% (n=22); Executive, 5.17% (n=6); Other, 6.90% (n=8); and Unsure, 2.59% (n=3). Their highest degrees of completed education had the following percentages: None, 0% (n=0); High school diploma or equivalent (GED), 19.00% (n=22); Trade, technical, or vocational training, 3.45% (n=4); Associate or 2-year degree, 9.48% (n=11); Bachelor's or 4-year degree, 44.83% (n=52); Master's degree, 19.00% (n=22); Professional degree, 1.72% (n=2); Doctorate degree, 2.59% (n=3); and Post-doctorate degree, 0% (n=0).

Preliminary Analysis

This research hoped to gauge acceptance of the term *higher purpose* as well as differentiate it from other, similar terms such as calling and inspiration. As pointed out in Chapter Two, few studies of higher purpose have been conducted, and several terms may be associated with the concept. The following preliminary analysis attempts to describe relationships and identify findings.

Conceptualizations of Terms

Differences in responses to terms were analyzed using a comparison method. Each column of data containing participants' responses to a question concerning a term (e.g., inspiration, calling) was copied into a separate spreadsheet. In this way, comparison was facilitated by the ease of evaluating all answers across each row. For example, a participant's initial response to *What motivates you to work?* (question 5.1) could be directly compared to *Who or what inspires you to work?* (question 11.1), listed in the next column. Before comparing these terms, however, higher purpose will first be described.

Higher Purpose

Some participants showed acceptance of the term higher purpose but did not appear to associate that higher purpose with a purpose beyond the obvious or beyond what others might think. For instance, participant 37 answered No to question 6.1, *Do you feel your work has a purpose beyond the obvious or what others might think?* and thus did not submit a response to the next question, *If so, please describe the purpose.* However, the participant responded Yes to question 8.1, *Do you feel that your work has a higher purpose? That is, a purpose that extends beyond yourself that fulfills some larger need, goal, or hope, or perhaps benefits others?* The

participant did not agree with the initial question hinting at higher purpose but agreed with the second, which offered a full definition. The participant found this higher purpose meaningful (Q8.2) but simply described it as "I enjoy reaching others [*sic*] goals." This participant's response to *"What do you do?" (Pfau, 2015)* was unrelated to higher purpose: "You are appreciated."

In one case, a participant evidenced frustration with the survey or perhaps with the terminology used. Participant 42, a 23-year-old Captain of a Fishing Vessel, gave responses that included: (*What motivates you to work?*) "Feeding my family", (*What is the purpose of your work?*) "My work consists of me catching fish. I then sell the fish to the vendors. I then take the money to feed my family", (*Do you feel your work has a purpose beyond the obvious or what others might think?*) No, (*To what degree is that purpose meaningful?*) Very meaningful, (*If you feel that your work has a purpose, please share an example or story that explains why it is meaningful*) "Feeding my family", (*What quotes, mottos, or slogans guide your thoughts about the purpose of your work?*) "Feeding. My. Family."

This participant's frustration continued throughout the survey: (*Do you feel that your work has a higher purpose? That is, a purpose that extends beyond yourself…*) Yes, (*Is that purpose meaningful?*) Very meaningful, (*If you feel that your work has a higher purpose that extends beyond yourself…please describe it in a few sentences*) "FEEDING MY FAMILY." The answers showed clear repetition: (*If you were approached while at work and asked the same question, "'What do you do?'" (Pfau, 2015), how might you respond?*) "What do I do? What I do is feed my damn family", (*Who or what inspires you to work?*) "Feeding my family!", (*Do you feel that your work is your calling? Please explain why and/or how*) "Yes. I get to feed my family!", and (*Please feel free to tell us anything at all that you would believe would help us better understand your connection to work or to your organization*) "Family guy just doing his thing feeding his

family." Thus, this participant evidenced no differentiation between his thoughts on motivation, purpose, higher purpose, inspiration, or calling, which may indicate that the terms may be interpreted similarly by those not familiar with the conceptualizations of each as defined in the literature. Alternatively, perhaps this participant felt that feeding his family was his only and highest purpose, as well as his calling and inspiration.

Calling

An interesting finding arose concerning calling in response to question 12.2, *Do you feel that your work is your calling? Please explain why and/or how*. Of the 58 participants who did *not* report narratives of higher purpose (selection of these narratives is discussion in the Main Analysis section), just eight responded that their work was indeed their calling (less than 14%). Thirty-four responded no (about 59%), while three were unsure, 10 gave no answer, two gave an ambiguous answer such as "Sometimes," and one gave an answer to a prior question on religion.

Conversely, of the 58 participants who did offer narratives of higher purpose, 29, or 50%, indicated that their work was indeed their calling. Fourteen participants, or about 24%, said it was not. One participant gave "N/A," five offered ambiguous answers, and six were unsure. One participant gave a qualified answer: "It is not religiously calling." Two other participants simply answered, "I believe in God." Thus, there was some support for the religious connotation of the term. Additionally, it appears there is a distinction for many when comparing the terms higher purpose and calling.

Inspiration

In response to question 11.1, *Who or what inspires you to work? Please explain why and/or how*, individuals offered answers that were the same, different, or somewhat the same as their

answers to question 5.1, *What motivates you to work?* Twenty-six participants (22.61%) gave responses for motivation and inspiration that were exactly the same or communicated the same idea. Twenty-three participants (20.00%) gave responses for motivation and inspiration that were mostly the same or spoke on a generally similar idea. Twelve participants (10.43%) had responses that were not quite the same thing, and 53 participants (46.01%) gave responses that were undeniably different. For example, participant 4 gave "money" as a motivator and "family" as inspiration. These calculations exclude one participant who offered a response for motivation but declined to give a response for the question on inspiration.

In contrast to responses given to questions on purpose, higher purpose, motivation, and calling, the question concerning inspiration elicited many answers that named specific individuals. For example, participant 12 listed, "Bob Dylan" and participant 114 wrote, "Key'Mani." Participant 7 offered, "Elon Musk is inspirational because he dares and has the capability to give [the] public a better future." In addition to a parent, participant 96 listed, "Conrad Roentgen who discovered Xray [*sic*] and assembled the first X-ray machine used in medicine, and refused to own patent for it, preferring that all humans gets a use of it [*sic*] for less cost. [And] Jonas Salk, a virologist who discovered the first polio vaccine, refused to take patent [*sic*] for the same reason. It is because of him millions of people – if not billions – can actually walk today, as simple as this might sound, as huge it in fact is."

Many participants listed "family" or "kids" as inspiration, but some gave more specific responses. Participant 25 wrote, "My cousin inspired me because he died in Iraq." Another example of specific individuals listed were participants' parents and, in one case, a grandparent. While no names were given, 14 participants specifically mentioned parents as their inspiration. For example, participant 3 said, "My father inspires me to work because he came from Jerusalem

(one of eleven kids) with almost no money and a dream to become a doctor…and he did it. He is the best provider and inspires me to work hard and be good at your job but also to have passion." Participant 21 said, "My parents inspire me to work because they have shown me what hard work and dedication can do for not only themselves, but their family." Participant 23 said, "My mother, because I watched her struggle my whole life." Participant 71 said, "My parents. They were role models in their work ethic." Participant 105 said, "My parents taught me to work hard from a very young age, teaching me that's what it takes to be successful." Participant 117 said, "I am inspired to work based on my father. He always worked his hardest when I was growing up and now I plan to also do that." Participant 126 said, "My parents inspire me to work because they started up this Chinese restaurant 25 years ago and they worked hard to afford my tuition for school." Participant 112, who spoke about a grandfather, said, "My inspiration is my grandfather. He is 88 years old and still works, 3rd shift at that. I know, that when I'm that age, I don't want to be working, let alone 3rd shift going nowhere. Not to mention, my grandfather, obviously, has an unfathomable work ethic." In one unique case, participant 108 listed parents as motivation, but not as inspiration.

A single participant (8), who listed himself as simply an Employee working in a Professional field, revealed that he did not have any inspiration to work: "Nothing really inspires me to work, I work for a living," which mirrored his response to the question on motivation: "I need to work to make money and for a living."

Participants giving the same response for both questions may have interpreted the words "motivation" and "inspiration" similarly. In fact, one participant (10), a Sales Manager answered, "Wasn't this question already asked" in response to the question on inspiration, before listing the same responses as he did for motivation. Additionally, participant 119 listed, "Family, money" as

motivation and then “Family is my biggest motivation” for the question on inspiration, evidently finding the terms “inspiration” and “motivation” synonymous.

However, a number of participants evidenced a stark difference in their interpretations of the two concepts. Participant 16 listed, “Achievement, significance, financial incentives” for motivation but “My future wife and kids” for inspiration. Participant 25, who listed his cousin as his inspiration, listed “I want to serve my country” as his motivation, showing that he thought of the two terms differently. Participant 59 listed, “Money and self-actualization” as motivation but “My professor. She was the one to let me know money and fame are important but not everything. I need to do what I’m interested in and good at” as inspiration. Other examples included listing money or promotions as motivation and family as inspiration.

It generally appeared that money was a motivator but not an inspiration to participants, whereas family could function as both. Participant 109 offered a simple yet clear example; for motivation: “My family and money,” and for inspiration, simply, “My family.” Participant 111 gave a similar answer: “Promotions” for motivation and “Myself” as inspiration.
However, other cases showed that not all participants were in agreement. Participant 110 gave the opposite answer as participant 111, listing “Myself” as a motivator and “Wages and desire to learn for my future” as inspiration. Participant 26 gave, “Knowing I'm helping the process to make an engine” as motivation and “The money I make” as inspiration.

Thus, in general, there was support for a distinction between the terms higher purpose, calling, and inspiration, though this was not unanimously the case among responses from all participants. Calling was in many cases differentiated from higher purpose, and inspiration often elicited responses speaking about parents or family members. Turning now to the main analysis, the four research questions are addressed.

Main Analysis

The main analysis first covers data concerning research question one, which asked about motivation and related themes. Next, selection of the narratives of higher purpose is detailed, along with descriptive information for the set of participants reporting these narratives. Research questions two through four concerned narratives of higher purpose, and data are presented pertaining to what themes existed in the narratives, how the content of the narratives is influenced by supervisor communication, and what forms of identification exist in the narratives.

RQ1

What motivators and subsequent themes are associated with work motivation?

Analysis of RQ1

Participants were asked, *What motivates you to work?*, in order to ascertain what served as their motivation for working. In response to this question, 177 items were listed by participants, including motivators such as paying bills, family members, gaining or applying skills, making a difference in the world, and making money. The number of motivators listed varied by individual. Some participants mentioned as many as three motivators, while others mentioned only one. A thematic analysis of these items was conducted to determine what themes existed amongst the responses.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, Owen's (1984) thematic analysis was used to explore themes of motivation. Recurrence of an idea was most often the basis of a theme, as most participants did not repeat themselves within their response to a question. Forcefulness was also rare, but the following provide examples where its assessment was useful: participant 3's use of the words "passion" and "fantastic" implied importance or significance, and participant 42 was

particularly forceful and repetitive in his use of "Feeding my family" as a response for his motivation to work.

Responses to question 5.1, *What motivates you to work?*, were coded for themes of motivation. As recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006), after a first reading of the data in which the researcher read all participants' responses to each question asked, a second reading of the data, in which the researcher read only the responses to question 5.1, sought to identify terms and eventually themes of motivation. To begin generating themes, smaller words or phrases were first put into groupings from which themes later emerged. As discussed in Chapter Three, words or phrases that appeared repeatedly, recurrently, or forcefully were grouped into themes (Owen, 1984). For example, the word "family" recurred many times throughout responses. Terms such as "my kids" or "children" appeared quite frequently, as well. As in the case of participant 42, family occurred both repetitively and forcefully. These various terms for family were grouped together. As more responses were examined, mention of additional individuals such as patients, customers, clients, or students also recurred; that is, these individuals were mentioned frequently as motivation to work. Thus, these groups of individuals were placed into one theme called Others, representing the theme of other individuals serving as one's motivation to work.

The same method was employed to find seven other themes of motivation to work. For example, recurrence of responses concerning self-improvement, application of one's skills, being challenged, and succeeding was prevalent. This focus on aspects of the self as motivation emerged as a theme called Self, representing the theme of aspects of oneself serving as one's motivation to work. Through the same method, Features of the Job, Larger Goal, Rewards, Requirements, Status, and Recognition also became themes. A systematic recurrence count for each theme was employed based on Owen (1984) and is shown in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1. Themes of Motivation. This table shows the frequencies of themes of motivation.

Theme	Frequency
Others	48
Self	34
Features of the Job	23
Larger Goal	19
Rewards	38
Requirements	8
Status	6
Recognition	2

Next, the eight themes were separated into types of motivation based on definitions from the motivation literature. Thus, two broad categories were created: Intrinsic and Extrinsic motivation. The categories are detailed below.

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivators were plentiful and highly varied. Themes in this category included Self, Others, Features of the Job, and Larger Goal. The most prevalent theme was Others, such as employees, customers or clients, students, family, company, country, or people, others in general, and especially helping these groups (n=48). That is, these “others” were mentioned 48 different times and by 45 different individuals. The next most prevalent theme was Self, including achievement and success, satisfaction, self-actualization, application of skills, being challenged or appreciated, becoming better, finding a passion, and living comfortably (n=34). This was followed by the theme of Features of the Job, such as interest in the area, pleasant or motivating customers, students, or coworkers, or a good working environment (n=23), and Larger Goal, such as having a job that is important, making a difference, and effecting change or progress (n=19).

When participants mentioned family as a motivator, their use of terms often varied. Participants mentioned supporting their families, taking care of their families, feeding their families, providing for their families, and “family” or “children” in general. These responses were all coded under the theme Other, and later categorized intrinsically due to the implication of helping these individuals. However, when money or pay were specifically mentioned as a participant’s motivation to work, even when in pursuit of the goal of supporting a family, responses were instead coded under Reward, discussed next under extrinsic motivators.

Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivators varied little and were listed less frequently and with less elaboration. For example, participants 4 and 72 simply answered, “Money,” while participants 12 and 13 responded with “Paycheck” and “Commission.” Participant 38 simply responded, “THE MONEY.” These responses fell into a group that became the Rewards theme, later categorized as extrinsic motivation. These extrinsic motivators were most often mentioned secondarily to intrinsic motivators, such as how participant 3 noted: “I work for experience…Also, it is fantastic to put great work experience on a resume, and of course money is a motivation.”

The most prevalent theme in the Extrinsic category was Rewards, especially financial incentives (n=38). The following themes appeared only a few times each: Requirements, which included going to work simply because it is required or working because one has deadlines or bills (n=8); Status, such as obtaining a promotion or reaching retirement (n=6); and Recognition, including showing others who said you cannot do something that you can indeed do, as participant 23 explained (n=2). The number of recurrences needed to form a theme varied considerably. Owen’s (1984) other aspects, repetition and forcefulness, were often the basis for less frequent themes, such as Recognition (n=2).

While personal advancement or achievement appeared frequently and were coded under intrinsic themes, the responses of “Promotion,” “Chance of promotion,” and “Move up” were treated differently due to the connotation of the phrases. Since these participants felt that a chance of promotion motivated their work, this was considered a reward or status, which fell under extrinsic motivation. Similarly, “Provide for my family” and “Put food on the table” were treated intrinsically due to the concern for meeting the needs of their family, while “Make a living” was treated extrinsically due to its focus on making money. A comparison of two similar responses may better demonstrate this decision. Participant 6 indicated that his motivation to work was “Living comfortably,” while participant 7 listed, “To pay for the cost of living.” Participant 6’s response was coded intrinsically, while participant 7’s answer, with its financial focus, was coded extrinsically.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

In 24 out of the 116 instances, individuals listed both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in their answer (n=24). As mentioned, most often, the intrinsic motivation preceded the extrinsic motivation, but some exceptions existed. For example, participant 60, a Teacher wrote, “First to earn money, and then I love teaching,” and participant 96, a Radiologist, said, “1- Payong [*sic*] the bills. 2- Helping people…” In a few select cases, motivators were categorized as both intrinsic and extrinsic (n=3). Participant 11, a Financial Analyst, wrote, “Truthfully, money. It is my work.” At first glance, this answer appeared to be extrinsic and based on financial reward; however, on closer inspection, the individual appeared to be explaining that his work in finances was motivating. Because of the ambiguity of the response, it was categorized both intrinsically and extrinsically. In another case, participant 105, a Business Assistant, explained, “I like knowing I have plenty to do which motivates me to work hard.” Again, at first glance, this response seemed extrinsic and

based on pressure or deadlines. Nevertheless, it was categorized as both intrinsic and extrinsic because of the positive tone of the phrase and its implication that the employee is needed to do the work. A final case concerns competition. The Director of a tomato product business, participant 124, reported that “Being the best” was motivating. While achievement would be coded intrinsically, competition with others would be extrinsic; thus, this response was coded for both.

One participant (65), a Manager, simply answered that “Nothing” motivated her to work. This response was not coded, as it indicated the absence of motivation, either intrinsic or extrinsic.

Selection of Narratives of Higher Purpose

The previous section concerned responses to a question about motivation to work. In the next sections, narratives of higher purpose are examined. In order to select narratives of higher purpose, it was necessary to first limit the set of responses to those who indicated that their work did indeed have a meaningful higher purpose. Sixty-one participants responded that “Yes,” they felt their work had higher purpose and that the higher purpose was either “Meaningful” or “Very Meaningful” to them. Participants who responded that they only “Somewhat” felt their work had a higher purpose were not counted; similarly, those who responded that their higher purpose was only “Somewhat” meaningful were also excluded.

Relatedly, it should be noted that participants’ answers to a series of earlier questions on purpose (*Do you feel that your work has a purpose beyond the obvious or what others might think?* and *To what degree is that purpose meaningful?*) were not a criteria for selection. This was due to multiple cases of mismatch between participants’ answers for two reasons. First, some participants indicated that their work did not have a purpose beyond the obvious, yet that their work did have a higher purpose. This indicates that the definition used in the earlier question may have been rejected by some participants. Second, some participants indicated that their work did *not* have a

purpose beyond the obvious, but then indicated that the purpose was meaningful. For instance, participant 9, a Schwan's Delivery person, indicated that his work did not have a purpose beyond the obvious, yet that the purpose was Meaningful, instead of selecting the answer choice indicating, "I don't feel that my work has purpose." Similarly, participant 46, a Student, indicated that his work did not have a purpose beyond the obvious, but that the purpose was Very Meaningful. It is possible, however, that these participants were referring to their response to an even earlier question on a prior page, which asked, *What is the purpose of your work? Please describe in a few sentences.*

Participants indicating that their work had a meaningful higher purpose were set aside. These participants' responses were then inspected for narratives of higher purpose. Some participants, such as participant 37, an Owner of a business, offered a narrative of higher purpose that was worded simply: "I enjoy reaching others [*sic*] goals." Other participants, such as participant 3, an Office Manager/Marketer, offered more: "I help individuals fall in love with a place they call home, a place that they will experience countless life transitions in and create memories." Likewise, other participants offered strongly worded narratives. Participant 25, an Air Force Officer, said plainly, "I save lives." Participant 40, a Student, offered, "'I'm helping to create a more progressive society.'" Participant 45, a tour guide, simply said, "I help [make][3] a person's day better." Participant 55, a Maintenance Manager, offered a narrative that was particularly assertive: "I power the country and the world." This participant may have identified strongly with

[3] Occasionally, vague or omitted terms were replaced or added into the narratives of higher purpose using words from participants' other responses. This was done in cases where it would enrich the narrative or offer a better understanding of the participant's ideas on higher purpose. When these terms are inserted, they appear in brackets. For example, a small specification was added to participant 59's narrative: "I'm making a better place to work for all these important people [at the embassy]," and participant 104's rather unspecific narrative was expanded upon slightly: "I love being there [at the nursing home] to help and bring more to their [the elderly's] lives."

Pfau's (2015) story of the janitor. Participant 71, an Executive VP at a business, said, "I help people all over the world talk to each other."

In total, 61 participants' responses were examined for narratives, though three participants were removed from this pool of 61. Participant 106, a Credit Analyst, gave only one written answer to the questions concerning higher purpose, and this answer matched the participant's single written response to earlier questions about purpose. Participants 108 and 110, who did not list their titles, neglected to offer any open-ended responses on the subject of higher purpose, so their narratives were sought from their other responses. All participants gave responses for question 6.2, [*Do you feel that your work has a purpose beyond the obvious or what others might think?] If so, please describe the purpose*, but all three of these answers were particularly self-centered in nature: "Define myself and grow as in [*sic*] person," "Blissful life for me," and "[Accomplish] my goals from working hard…support my family financially." Though these answers could have been analyzed for themes of higher purpose, it was because these responses were offered to an early question about purpose, and because very limited data were available from these participants' responses, that they were not (see Limitations in Chapter Six for further discussion). Thus, these participants were removed from the group of 61, and the pool was reduced to 58 participants. This left the number of participants reporting a narrative of higher purpose at exactly half of the sample of 116 participants.

This study sought to examine narratives of higher purpose in a broader occupational context than Pfau's (2015) work offered; thus, narratives were primarily sought in response to question 9.2, *If you were approached while at work and asked the same question, "'What do you do?'" (Pfau, 2015), how might you respond?* Narratives in response to this question were generally

concise and often summarized the participant's previous thoughts on higher purpose. Thirty-eight out of the 58 narratives were identified from answers to this particular question.

In some cases, narratives could not be procured from question 9.2. For example, out of the 58 participants, one participant (34) answered question 9.2 with, "Your role is important" and three others (participants 35, 36, and 37) offered, "You are appreciated," indicating that these participants may have misunderstood the scenario or the question. Thus, their narratives were identified among their other responses. Many other participants offered answers to question 9.2 but gave a more thorough or eloquent answer to another question (e.g., participants 10, 57, 69, 76, 96, and 127). Participant 2 gave a response that was not able to be understood out of the context of her previous answers; thus, her narrative was selected from her other answers. Another participant (22) indicated that he was actually saving money to go to the moon, which did not relate to the explanation of his work's purpose, so his narrative was sought elsewhere among his responses. Two participants (6 and 124) responded "Same as before" and "See previous sentence." Ten total narratives were identified in responses to question 8.3, *If you feel that your work has a higher purpose that extends beyond yourself that fulfills some larger need, goal, or hope, or perhaps benefits others, please describe it in a few sentences*.

Narratives of Higher Purpose Participant Demographics

Participants offering narratives of higher purpose were 52% male (n=30) and 48% female (n=28). They ranged in age from 21 to 60 years (*M*=36.58, *SD*=13.66), with 47% (n=27) falling between 18-30 years old and 53% (n=30) between 30-60, excluding one participant who did not provide an age. Participants' highest education completed included High school diploma or equivalent (GED), 12.07% (n=7); Associate or 2-year degree, 10.34% (n=6); Bachelor's or 4-year

degree, 44.83% (n=26); Master's degree, 24.14% (n=14); Professional degree, 3.45% (n=2); and Doctorate degree, 5.17% (n=3).

Participant race/ethnicity was as follows: American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.87% (n=1); Asian, 13.79% (n=8); Black or African American, 5.17% (n=3); White or Caucasian, 74.14% (n=43); Bi-Racial, 3.45% (n=2); and Multi-racial, 1.72% (n=1). Approximate position/level/rank held in their company included Intern/Entry level, 19% (n=11); Unskilled laborer, 1.72% (n=1); Skilled laborer, 15.52% (n=2); Lower management, 5.17% (n=3); Middle management, 10.34% (n=6); Upper management, 15.52% (n=9); Professional, 25.85% (n=15); Executive, 8.62% (n=5); Other (Corporal, Student Athlete, Educator/Counselor, Business Teacher, LPN), 8.62% (n=5); and Unsure, 1.72% (n=1). Again omitting non-numerical responses, participants had worked at their current companies for 2 months to 41 years (*M*=9.42, *SD*=9.62) and in their current field for 2 months to 41 years (*M*=13.29, *SD*=11.76).

Participants' occupational category selection was as follows: Management, business, and financial, 17.24% (n=10); Professional, 36.21% (n=21); Service, 13.79% (n=8); Sales and related, 13.79% (n=8); Office and administrative support, 5.17% (n=3); Farming, fishing, and forestry, 3.45% (n=2); Construction and extraction, 1.72% (n=1); Installation, maintenance, and repair, 0% (n=0); Production, 1.72% (n=1); Transportation and material moving, 0% (n=0); Military specific occupations, 3.45% (n=2); and Other, 1.72% (n=1). Thus, participants reporting narratives of higher purpose were nearly identical to the full sample in all of these demographic measures.

RQ2

What themes exist in narratives of higher purpose?

Analysis of RQ2

Of the 58 narratives of higher purpose, 10 narratives were given before the definition of higher purpose was offered in question 8.1, *Do you feel that your work has a higher purpose? That is, a purpose that extends beyond yourself that fulfills some larger need, goal, or hope, or perhaps benefits others?* Interestingly, nine of these pre-definition responses spoke about the purpose of their work as helping others and/or changing the lives of others. Thus, some individuals spoke about the higher purpose of their work even before being prompted. The nine individuals were both female and male and included an Event Specialist, age 21, a Realtor, age 23, a Sales Manager, age 55, a self-identified Student Athlete who filled out the survey speaking about a sales job, age 27, a Business Owner selling pig feed, age 50, a Health Practitioner, age 24, a Radiologist, age 49, a Director of a tomato product business, age 34, and a CEO working in an educational institution who declined to give her age. Thus, this group of participants was not limited in terms of diversity.

Themes were identified using the same method employed in analysis of research question one. As presented earlier and in Chapter Three, themes were identified using Owen's (1984) thematic analysis. While recurrence was the most frequent reason a new theme was created, there were instances where repetition from the same participant or forcefulness in the participant's writing prompted a theme. For example, just one participant (32), a Registered Nurse, mentioned families in the second half of her narrative of higher purpose. However, because it was phrased strongly, "I am helping to *build* families" [emphasis added], and since this idea was not yet covered in existing themes, a new theme was created.

The following themes were identified (as shown in Table 2): Success, or helping others to reach goals, succeed, or achieve a better life, was coded 18 times; Society, which included changing the world, progress or modern conveniences, and freedom, was coded 14 times; Education, specifically educating others, was coded 11 times; Health, or helping others regain their health or live healthier, was coded eight times; Safety, or ensuring the safety of others or saving lives, was coded six times; Experiences, or giving others an experience or enjoyment, was coded six times; Needs, or providing others with food or a job or fulfilling some ambiguous need for them, was coded six times; Savings, or saving others money or generating profit for them, was coded five times; Family, specifically building families, was coded once; and finally, Repurposing Materials, such as limiting wasteful disposal of products, was coded once.

Table 2. Themes of Narratives. This table shows the frequencies of themes of narratives of higher purpose.

Theme	Frequency
Success	18
Society	14
Education	11
Health	8
Safety	6
Experiences	6
Needs	6
Savings	5
Family	1
Repurposing Materials	1

Upon further analysis, categories and subcategories were created to further analyze the themes. Examining the 58 narratives of higher purpose from which the 10 themes emerged, two broad categories of themes were created. Though the definition of higher purpose was proposed

as "a purpose that extends beyond yourself that fulfills some larger need, goal, or hope, or *perhaps* benefits others" [emphasis added], 57 of the 58 narratives of higher purpose concerned helping others. Thus, this large category was labeled Benefiting Others. Just one narrative was coded in the other category, titled Repurposing Materials. The participant (75) offering this narrative, a Product Manager in Sales and related occupations, did not specify whether anyone might benefit from repurposing (e.g., people, industries, the Earth).

In the Benefiting Others category containing 57 of the narratives, nine themes were included: Success was coded 18 times; Society was coded 14 times; Education was coded 11 times; Health was coded eight times; Safety was coded six times; Experiences was coded six times; Needs was coded six times; Savings was coded five times; and finally, Family was coded once. From these themes, subcategories emerged. Specifically, it was apparent that Maslow's (1943, 1954) hierarchy of needs could be employed to inform the creation of subcategories. Family and Safety fit into the middle-tier needs of security, love and belonging, while Health, Needs, and Savings fit into the bottom tier of physiological needs. Success, Society, Education, and Experiences fit into the higher tiers of esteem and self-actualization. Importantly, however, each of these nine themes concerned the benefit of others; thus, Maslow's hierarchy was employed here to create these categories not concerning one's *own* needs, but rather *others'*. Therefore, higher purpose differs from motivation in that higher purpose appears to most often stem from others' needs, whether in the lower-, middle-, or upper-tier of Maslow's hierarchy, or perhaps from the self's need to connect by helping others.

Multiple Themes

In some instances, more than one theme emerged for a narrative of higher purpose. Eighteen narratives were coded for more than one theme. Just one of these 18 touched on three

themes, the rest being coded for two. Of these 18 multi-coded narratives, the theme of Society appeared five times, Success four times, and Health three times. Education, Safety, Experiences, Needs, and Savings each appeared twice. Family appeared once; however, as mentioned, this theme was only found once in the dataset.

Examining the multi-theme pairings, Success and Education were paired most often, being paired in four instances. Society and Education were paired three times. Success and Health, as well as Society and Health, were each paired twice. The following pairs were only found once: Society and Safety, Society and Experiences, Success and Savings, Success and Needs, Savings and Needs, Family and Health, and finally Society, Safety, and Experiences.

Interestingly, when examining the motivations of the 58 participants who gave narratives of higher purpose, 94.74% (n=54) listed at least one intrinsic motivator. Fourteen participants provided both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Just one participant identified *only* extrinsic motivation for his work. These figures exclude the single participant who declined to list any source of motivation. This may point to additional findings concerning higher purpose, further discussed in Chapter Five.

RQ3

How are narratives of higher purpose different when superiors communicate about higher purpose?

Analysis of RQ3

Of the 58 participants who indicated that their work had a meaningful or very meaningful higher purpose, 21 responded that their superior(s) “Frequently” spoke about the purpose of their work or the company’s work. Eighteen participants indicated that their superior(s) spoke about

this “Often.” Thus, over 67% of these participants had superiors who communicated frequently or often about purpose in the workplace. Eleven participants indicated that their superior(s) “Sometimes” communicated about purpose, and four said it was only “Rarely.” Four other participants selected “Do not have a superior.” Excluding these four participants who did not have a supervisor, the percentage responding “Frequently” or “Often” rises to over 72%.

Again examining only the responses from the 58 participants with narratives of higher purpose, new or different themes did not appear based on frequency of supervisor communication about purpose. Comparing the 39 participants who indicated that their supervisors communicate “Frequently” or “Often” about purpose (and excluding the four participants who did not have a superior) to the 15 remaining narratives who indicated this only happened “Sometimes” or “Rarely,” narratives did not evidence different themes or patterns. Themes in each of these two groups did not differ from the full set of themes found in response to research question two, discussed previously. A comparison between themes in these two groups (Frequently/Often vs. Sometimes/Rarely) is shown in Table 3, below. It is noted that some narratives evidenced multiple themes; the frequency counts reflect this.

Table 3. Themes of Narratives by Frequency of Communication. This table shows the frequencies of themes of narratives of higher purpose as they appear in two groups: participants indicating reception of communication about purpose from a superior "Frequently" or "Often" and participants indicating this only "Sometimes" or "Rarely".

Theme	"Frequently/Often" Frequency	"Sometimes/Rarely" Frequency
Success	13	3
Society	11	2
Education	10	1
Health	4	4
Safety	2	4
Experiences	5	1
Needs	4	1
Savings	2	2
Family	0	1
Repurposing Materials	0	0

As shown in the table, little to no difference exists between the themes encountered in narratives of higher purpose from each of the two groups, as nearly every theme is represented in each group. Additionally, the number of occurrences for each theme is similar when accounting the size of the first group, nearly three times larger than the second.

Examining the full dataset, 53 of 116 responses (about 46%) indicated that supervisors communicate frequently or often about purpose in the workplace. Forty-eight or about 41% of responses indicated that supervisors communicate only "Sometimes" or "Rarely." Five participants indicated "Never," and 10 participants did not have a superior. Excluding those without a superior, the percent of responses indicating "Frequently" or "Often" rises to 50%. Nevertheless, participants with narratives of higher purpose were slightly more likely to indicate that their supervisors communicated about higher purpose more often in the workplace, though this did not appear to influence the content of the narratives.

RQ4

What forms of identification exist in narratives of higher purpose?

Analysis of RQ4

Narratives of higher purpose were examined for organizational identification and evidenced varied forms of identification with either an organization or society as a whole. The researcher examined narratives of higher purpose for grammatical choices that might evidence identification (e.g., "we"), similar to Cheney's (1983b) explanation of this identification strategy as used by organizations. Some narratives evidenced identification, some did not, and some responses were mixed. Most narratives utilized "me" pronouns such as "my," as well as ambiguous pronouns such as "they" or "their," though a few narratives employed terms that showed oneness with the organization or society, such as "us" and "our." A discussion of the limitations of this analysis appears in Chapter Six. First, narratives evidencing identification with one's organization or society as a whole are presented. Next, narratives lacking identification with an organization or society are discussed. Finally, a small number of narratives evidenced mixed identification; these are briefly examined.

Identification

Identification was determined based on the participant's use of pronouns. "We" pronouns or indicating that the self was part of a whole (e.g., "*my* company") evidenced a basic form of identification with one's organization or society that appeared in five narratives, or 8.62%.

Two narratives evidenced identification with one's organization. Participant 34, a Business Owner who "provide[s] customers with a feed product to feed their pigs," offered a narrative of higher purpose that differed slightly from the typical style: "People who thank *us* for a quality feed

product that helped them win the show they exhibited at" [emphasis added]. Participant 124, a Director of a business that "produce[s] the freshest best tasting tomato products in the world," said in his narrative of higher purpose, "*Our* products provide sustance [*sic*] to the nation, that means providing jobs and food for families" [emphasis added].

The following three narratives evidenced identification with one's society. Participant 27, an Academic Advisor "helping students achieve," said, "I'm sending kids to the best colleges in the world to lead *our* society" [emphasis added]. Participant 41, a Manager of helicopter production and design, gave a similar narrative: "I would say that I am helping *our* country [fulfill its needs and goals]" [emphasis added]. Participant 97, a Secondary School Teacher in the subject of math, offered a simple yet profound narrative evidencing identification with society: "I build *our* future" [emphasis added].

No Identification

Similarly, use of "me" pronouns or ambiguous pronouns, or separating the self from the whole, showed a lack of identification with one's organization or society. Narratives were again examined for evidence of identification through the grammatical method described above.

Fifty narratives, or 86.21%, evidenced a lack of identification. For example, participant 57, a Principal Investigator doing "basic and clinical research on a specific disease," offered an example of a narrative lacking identification: "The higher purpose of *my* work is on impacting a human disease" [emphasis added]. As another example, participant 122, a Manager, responded, "I help save *the* company money" [emphasis added].

As another example, participant 64, a Manufacturing Engineer, gave a narrative of higher purpose that may have evidenced identification if different pronouns had been chosen: "I save *the* company money while simultaneously saving *the* customer money" [emphasis added]. Prior to the

questions on higher purpose, however, the participant wrote, "*My* work is meaningful in terms of the products *we* produce and how *we* produce them…which ultimately reduced the end cost for *the* customer" [emphasis added]. This indicates that pronoun use in a narrative of higher purpose may not reliably illustrate a participant's identification or perhaps may indicate that both identification and self-differentiation exist simultaneously.

However, it should be noted that many narratives may not have been as meaningful with different use of pronouns. Compare the following narrative from participant 14, a Corporal in the military, and an alternative narrative proposed by the researcher: "I…ensure the freedom and safety of all Americans" versus "I…ensure the freedom and safety of all of us." The patriotism evident in the participant's real narrative disappears with the use of a shared pronoun, "us." Conversely, consider the following comparison using the narrative from participant 25, an Air Force Officer in the military: "I save lives" versus "We save lives." Even with use of a shared pronoun, the changed narrative in this case remains fully intact and delivers the same message about the higher purpose of the work. Further examination of this area will be taken up in the Discussion (Chapter Five).

Mixed Identification

Finally, mixed use of "we" and "me" pronouns or mixing of the self as a part of and as apart from the whole indicated mixed identification with one's organization. The following two narratives, or 3.45%, evidenced mixed identification. Participant 35, a Business Owner "teach[ing] children how to show livestock," said, "Children have big goals, and it is *my* duty to make sure *we* can reach those" [emphasis added]. Participant 120, a Sales Manager "sell[ing] products to…a lot of companies," gave the following narrative: "I help *my* company generate profit, and I help [*lack of pronoun*] customers get what they need" [emphasis added].

This chapter has provided a descriptive analysis of the achieved sample, a preliminary analysis concerning the conceptualizations of terms, as well as a main analysis covering each of the four research questions in the study. In the next chapter, a discussion of each research question is given. Interpretation of findings and of the relevance of themes that emerged will offer insight into how this study contributes to organizational communication and organizational communication practice.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

The previous chapter detailed the achieved sample and offered a preliminary analysis of the conceptualizations of terms. An analysis of the four research questions as organized and summarized by themes followed. In addition, some post-analysis was conducted in light of the findings of the main analysis. Using this information, the current chapter offers a discussion beginning with the conceptualizations of terms. Each research question is presented, beginning with research question one, which concerns the motivation to work, and moving to research questions two through four, which focus on narratives of higher purpose. Interpretations and meanings of the findings are discussed.

Discussion of Preliminary Findings

Though the conceptualizations of terms was not a main goal of the current research, this area is discussed first to provide depth to the discussion of the construct under study and to expand upon the preliminary analysis of terms presented in Chapter Four.

Conceptualizations of Terms

The conceptualizations of terms offer perhaps the most interesting results of the current study. Narratives of higher purpose were identified in 50% of the sample, and it was determined that higher purpose was indeed a separate construct from similar terms. Questionnaire items about motivation, calling, and inspiration received responses different from higher purpose and mainly different from one another; thus, distinctions between these concepts were supported.

Higher Purpose

It appeared that higher purpose was not a foreign concept to some participants. A particularly poignant quote from an Emergency Room Manager who had worked in her field 25 years, given early on in the survey, in response to question 6.2 (*[Do you feel that your work has a purpose beyond the obvious or what others might think?] If so, please describe the purpose)*, illustrates this:

> To me, work should go all the way down to your core and give you purpose for your entire life. That is not to say that your *work* must be your life's purpose or passion, but that it should drive you in knowing that you are contributing to the world and making your life meaningful. (Participant 113) [emphasis added]

Furthermore, higher purpose did indeed occur across demographic factors and occupational categories. As stated earlier, participants with narratives of higher purpose were nearly identical to the full sample in demographic measures including age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, level in company, occupational category, and tenure in one's field and at one's current company. In fact, percentages for these demographics showed little variation, with no larger than a difference of 12 percentage points for any demographic between the full sample of 116 participants and the sample of 58 participants reporting narratives of higher purpose. Most often, differences consisted of only a few percentage points. Thus, narratives of higher purpose have potential to be reported by employees of all ages and tenure, regardless of sex, race/ethnicity, education, level in company, or field of work. This is an important finding for those hoping to implement initiatives utilizing higher purpose, such as Pfau (2015) did.

The themes identified in response to RQ1 (work motivation) and RQ2 (narratives of higher purpose) evidenced a difference between what motivates individuals to work and what individuals view as the higher purpose of their work, though two similarities existed. It should be emphasized that by and large, higher purpose concerned the benefit of others, and motivation concerned the

benefit of oneself. However, two themes of motivation were quite similar to higher purpose: Others and Larger Goal.

For some participants, benefiting others such as their family served as a motivation to work, just as numerous participants indicated that the higher purpose of their work was to help others. But an important difference existed: only one narrative of higher purpose listed one's immediate family as the beneficiaries, while the listing of immediate family members was largely the case for those who listed others as motivation. Nearly half of the 48 instances in which the theme Others was identified as a motivation were specifically in reference to the individual's own family members. Therefore, motivation appeared to stem from closer, more concrete sources such as family, while higher purpose was more likely to be concerned with benefiting a broader context, including society at large and even the future. It should also be noted that few responses specifically indicated that *benefiting* one's family was their motivation; more often, participants simply listed family as a source of motivation. This invites further exploration into the distinction between others serving as motivation simply by existing or serving as motivation because they will benefit from the work performed.

Having a Larger Goal was the second theme of motivation that was similar in nature to higher purpose. A job that is important, makes a difference, or effects change or progress was identified as a source of motivation by 19 individuals. Therefore, there may be overlap in some cases between what motivates one to work and what one views as the higher purpose of their work. For these individuals, perhaps a motivation or a higher purpose is one in the same; alternatively, the terms may not be entirely distinct in the view of some participants.

To offer a final consideration of the conceptualization of higher purpose, some participants offered particularly poignant responses to question 8.3, *If you feel that your work has a higher*

purpose that extends beyond yourself that fulfills some larger need, goal, or hope, or perhaps benefits others, please describe it in a few sentences. These responses highlight a potential relationship between working hard and benefiting others.

> Working hard allows humanity to flourish because society is working towards a common goal of helping one another with our needs and wants in life. (Participant 3)

> I believe you can work hard, compete aggressively, and make a profit – precisely by meeting needs of others in the pursuit of your self-interest. (Participant 50)

Calling

As noted in Chapter Four, there was some support for the religious connotation of calling, though quite limited. Importantly, when comparing the group without narratives of higher purpose to the groups with such narratives, indications that one's work was one's calling nearly quadrupled from the first group to the second. Additionally, indications that one's work was *not* one's calling were more than halved between these groups. Thus, participants were much more likely to consider their work their calling when they also reported a narrative of higher purpose. To avoid implications of causation, this should also be stated conversely: participants were much more likely to report a narrative of higher purpose when they considered their work their calling. Furthermore, this finding provides a distinction between higher purpose and calling, as reporting a higher purpose did not guarantee that one's work was one's calling, and vice versa.

Inspiration

Inspiration can be differentiated from higher purpose, motivation, and calling based on participants' responses to questions on each term. Moreover, while nearly all participants offered a response indicating who or what inspires them to work, not all participants felt their work had

higher purpose. Thus, it appears that one can feel inspired to work without higher purpose. This presents evidence for a differentiation between higher purpose and inspiration. It should be noted that wording of the questionnaire item concerning inspiration is considered in Chapter Six.

Discussion of Main Findings

The following discussion presents each research question followed by an overview of related findings. Interpretation of these findings is elaborated upon in the interest of highlighting the significance and broader implications. References to relevant literature are made when applicable.

From Intrinsic/Extrinsic to Internal/External Motivation: RQ1

Research question one asked, *What motivators and subsequent themes are associated with work motivation?* The different themes identified in the data reveal that employees are motivated by benefiting others, improving themselves, certain job features, and a larger goal as well as rewards (financial or otherwise), necessity, achieving some status, and being recognized for the work. The analysis of these themes of work motivation offered several insights. First, a review of the categorization of these themes is necessary. The category of intrinsic motivation was comprised of Others, Self, Features of the Job, and Larger Goal, while extrinsic motivation consisted of Rewards, Requirements, Status, and Recognition. Examples are provided to represent each theme of motivation to work before discussing the implications.

Others

“My employees and seeing the gratification of my customers” (participant 2). “My students” (participant 5). “Taking care of my family” (participant 10). “My biggest motivation is helping others, it’s helping people live with their health conditions” (participant 32). “My family”

(participant 47). “Helping patients” (participant 49). “Making the customers happy” (participant 52). “Knowing that my kids will benefit from my work” (participant 54). “I really enjoy helping others live a better life” (participant 55). “I love being helpful to people everyday [*sic*]” (participant 67). “Caring for other people and seeing the effects that my work has on their lives” (participant 69). “I enjoy working with young people, helping them to understand mathematics and how it relates to their lives” (participant 97). “I am motivated to work knowing that I am helping those around me” (participant 117). “The needs of my family” (participant 121).

> My primary motivation behind my work is my children…to show my girls that later is better than never when it comes to changing your life for the better…I only hope that my girls learn to not sacrifice their lives for a [*sic*] over-demanding and under appreciative job. (Participant 62)

Self

“To strive to become better” (participant 9). “Satisfaction from success, self-confidence” (participant 10). “Live a better life” (participant 15). “Achievement” (participants 16, 19). “I am motivated to work because I have a new challenge everyday [*sic*] when I come to work” (participant 30). “I am motivated to work, because I can apply the skills I have learned” (participant 46). “Gaining knowledge, becoming a competent physician” (participant 49). “Self-actualization” (participant 59). “Sense of accomplishment” (participant 71). “The feeling of success and self-fulfillment after completing my work” (participant 84). “To be successful” (participant 90). “Reaching my goals motivates me” (participant 91). “Myself in the future” (participant 107). “Myself” (110). “I also also [*sic*] motivated because I know healthcare” (participant 117).

Features of the Job

"It is so incredibly fulfilling to have a job in which you see a distinct mission, and a source for your passion" (participant 24). "I am motivated to work because the other teachers whom I work with are fantastic, funny, and are driven to help the students" (participant 31). "I enjoy what I do and like my job and the people I work with" (participant 41). "Working environment" (participant 48). "I am also motivated because I enjoy my work" (participant 53). "I love teaching" (participant 60). "Interest in the area" (participant 98). "My love of computing" (participant 115).

Larger Goal

"Opportunity to make a difference in the world" (participant 22). "Participation in a greater goal" (participant 40). "Sense of purpose" (participant 50). "Knowing that…the research and products from my company ultimately can help the world" (participant 54). "Knowing that the products I help produce go on to power cities and move the world every day" (participant 55). "Ever since college I have been motivated by trying to create change" (participant 65). "The need to develop better education systems" (participant 127).

> Everyday [*sic*] knowing that I can make a difference in the world, no matter how small that difference, motivates me to work. (Participant 113)

Rewards

"Getting paid motivates me to work" (participant 1). "And of course money is motivation" (participant 3). "Money" (participants 4, 72, 85, 114). "Paycheck" (participant 12). "Commission" (participant 13). "Financial incentives" (participant 16). "Making money" (participant 17). "I am motivated to work, because I can…gain a reward by doing my work" (participant 46).

Requirements

"Bills" (participant 47). "I go to work because is is [*sic*] required" (participant 73). "I have a lot of pressure on my hands and deadlines" (participant 94).

> My significant other and I are very tight on finances and we both need to work to keep our way of life as it is and to have enough money for a trip we have planned soon. (Participant 129)

Status

"Chance of promotion" (participant 48). "I am 59 years old and motivated to retire" (participant 62). "[To] move up in position" (participant 90). "Promotions" (participant 111).

Recognition

"Recognition" (participant 19). "When someone says that I can't do something" (participant 23).

The natural division of the eight themes into the two categories of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is in line with literature suggesting such a division, especially the work of Hackman and Oldham (1976), as well as literature emphasizing the important differences between the two types (e.g., Kuvaas et al., 2017). Motivation is commonly studied under this division, and the responses given by participants in the current study support the usefulness of the division. While many responses were given in each category, it was noted in Chapter Four that responses of extrinsic motivators were listed less frequently and varied little, consisting of only a few assorted sources such as money, status, bills, and so forth. Furthermore, these extrinsic motivators were listed with less elaboration. Rarely did a participant say more than a few words about a source of extrinsic motivation. This may suggest that perhaps extrinsic motivators like money or paying bills are viewed as such universal needs in a capitalist society that participants felt these responses did

not require any additional explanation. Intrinsic motivators such as children, gaining experience, or the importance of the job, on the other hand, often elicited longer responses or explanations, which may point to participants judging these motivation sources as less universal, more individual, and perhaps less likely to be understood without elaboration.

According to Herzberg's two-factor theory, motivators such as "achievement, intrinsic interest in the work, responsibility, and advancement…contribute very little to job dissatisfaction" (Herzberg, 1964, p. 4), while hygiene factors such as "company policy and administrative practices, supervision, interpersonal relationships, working conditions, and salary…contribute very little to job satisfaction" (p. 4). The hygiene factors themselves should not produce motivation in employees, although dissatisfaction would result from their absence. Thus, applying this to the current study, the motivators should be expected to appear as motivations for working, and the hygiene factors should not. This was partially confirmed in the study: factors such as achievement, interest, and self-improvement appeared numerous times as motivators. However, some hygiene factors did in fact appear as motivators, such as one's coworkers (and, by implication, one's relationships with these individuals), certain working conditions, such as the office environment, and, to be certain, pay. Thus, the motivation literature supports the types of work motivation identified from this study, but the findings of the study only offer limited support for Herzberg's work.

However, this study suggests that there may be alternative or expanded divisions of motivation. Specifically, a division consisting of four categories is suggested: internal-intrinsic/extrinsic and external-intrinsic/extrinsic. For instance, some participants listed enjoyment of their work as a motivating factor, which is categorized as intrinsic motivation. This enjoyment factor is internal to the work; the job itself is fulfilling. This differs from another motivator such

as taking care of one's family, which is external to the job, yet still intrinsic. Similarly, an extrinsic motivator such as a paycheck results directly from doing the work and is distributed at work, so it might be termed internal, whereas bills serve as an extrinsic motivator that is external to the job, or outside of the work. This division (shown in Table 4) suggested by the data in the current study offers further distinction between types of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that may bring to light additional findings in related research.

Table 4. Intrinsic/Extrinsic-Internal/External Division. This table depicts the above example of an expanded division of workplace motivation. Four aspects of work motivation are categorized according to intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, as well as being internal or external to the job.

Intrinsic		Extrinsic	
Internal	External	Internal	External
Enjoyment of the work	Taking care of one's family	Paycheck	Bills

Higher Purpose as Helping Others: RQ2

Research question two asked, *What themes exist in narratives of higher purpose?* Themes were identified in narratives of higher purpose that revealed what employees found meaningful about their work. The more prevalent category of Benefiting Others was subdivided using Maslow's (1943, 1954) hierarchy of needs. Themes consisted of helping others to reach Success, helping Society to progress, providing Education to others, and offering Experiences to others, all of which represented fulfilling the higher-tier needs of others. These were among the most frequently identified themes. Others' Family and the Safety of others were middle-tier needs, and lower-tier needs included the Health and Needs of others, as well as securing Savings for others (which purportedly would lead to the fulfillment of any need that might arise in the future). These

lower-tier needs appeared more commonly than middle-tier needs but substantially less than the higher-tier needs.

However, it should be noted that Maslow's (1943, 1954) theory of motivation has been highly criticized by both himself and others (e.g., Berl, Williamson, & Powell, 1984; Geller, 1982). Thus, the themes might be better subdivided using an alternative theory. In any case, it appears that benefiting others is quite important to the participants of this study. Examples of each theme in the category of Benefiting Others are provided below, followed by the example of the other category containing just one theme, Repurposing Materials:

Success

"I'm helping people and organizations achieve more" (participant 1). "I'm here to help people take a positive step in bettering their lives" (participant 95).

Society

"I'm helping to create a more progressive society" (participant 40). "I power the country and the world" (participant 55). "I'm helping to uplift tribal communities, where before they had no voice" (participant 100). "I help manufacture products that enable people to travel the world at speeds not achievable by other mass transport methods" (participant 103).

Education

"I am preparing the next generation for the workforce" (participant 5). "I teach some of the best kids in the world and help them learn some of the life's [*sic*] important lessons" (participant 20). "[I] help change the world through education" (participant 127).

Experiences

"I helped to create a surprise or provided the bride/groom with something that they will never forget" (participant 2). "I help individuals fall in love with a place they call home, a place that they will experience countless life transitions in and create memories" (participant 3). "I help a person's day [to be] better" (participant 45). "I am making customers enjoy good food and good service" (participant 48).

Family

"I am helping to build families" (participant 32).

Health

"I help people feel better, ease suffering" (participant 49). "The higher purpose of my work is on impacting a human disease" (participant 57). "Seeing a person struggling or in pain and being able to help them is very fulfilling" (participant 69).

Safety

"I am helping to ensure the freedom and safety of all Americans" (participant 14). "I am keep[ing] the world safe one day at a time online" (participant 46).

Needs

"The projects that I procure helps [*sic*] employ individuals" (participant 10). "What I do is feed my damn family" (participant 42).

Savings

“I get to make sure customers will buy the best products at an affordable price” (participant 22). “I save the company money while simultaneously saving the customer money” (participant 64). “I help save the company money” (participant 122).

Repurposing Materials

One theme fell into a category separate from Benefiting Others: Repurposing Materials. The sole participant’s narrative was as follows: “Most of the products in the manufacturing settings are over-designed and can be re-used again” (participant 75). A later response from this participant offers some limited additional detail: “[I] accommodate for wear and tear through thorough inspections.” The vagueness of this participant’s responses limits analysis, but one might consider the reason he was intent on reducing waste. Perhaps a concern for the environment drove this individual’s higher purpose.

The above themes help to conceptualize higher purpose by illustrating in what contexts employees feel that their work has a broader effect. The implications of these findings may help either employees struggling to see the higher purpose behind their work or employers seeking to create an initiative such as Pfau’s (2015). By examining the themes of the narratives of higher purpose in the current study, employees or employers will be better equipped to identify what higher purpose or purposes are relevant to their own workplaces or fields. This presents the possibility of better-informed workplace initiatives and better-informed workers.

Chapter Four presented instances in which the above themes occurred in pairs. In eighteen instances, narratives were coded for more than one theme. Of the themes that were most often paired, Society appeared five times, Success four times, Health three times, and most other themes appeared just once or twice. Examining which themes were paired together most often, Success

and Education were paired in four instances, Society and Education in three instances, Success and Health, as well as Society and Health, were paired twice, while the other pairings occurred only once each.

Some speculation on reasons for these paired themes is warranted. The common occurrence of the theme Society may be linked to the definition of higher purpose itself: *a purpose that extends beyond yourself that fulfills some larger need, goal, or hope, or perhaps benefits others*. Because this definition implies a larger impact on other individuals, reports of higher purpose might be expected to commonly mention society. Similarly, the emphasis on fulfilling some larger need, goal, or hope may explain the common occurrence of the theme Success because of the implication of completing something for someone else. The pairing of Success and Education and Society and Education, as well as Success and Health and Society and Health, may be explained differently. Since both education and health are commonly considered societal endeavors, and since education and health may be expected to lead to a successful society, these themes might be expected to be paired together more often than others.

More interesting is the finding that because multiple themes were mentioned at once in some cases, these pairings suggest that individuals are less one-dimensional than Maslow's (1943, 1954) hierarchy appears to portray them. For instance, Success and Health or Society and Health are each examples in which individuals' narratives of higher purpose concerned helping to fulfill others' needs at different ends of Maslow's (1943, 1954) hierarchy. If one sees Maslow's hierarchy as a strict linear progression of motivations from bottom tier to top tier, then these pairings challenge that concept, as individuals can hold lower- and higher-order motivations simultaneously.

Additionally, a final finding should be mentioned. Of the 58 participants who reported a narrative of higher purpose, 54 listed at least one intrinsic motivator. This provides support that higher purpose may indeed be linked to intrinsic motivation. The fact that only one participant of the 58 identified *only* extrinsic motivation for his work may serve as further verification of this suggestion.

Influencing Narratives of Higher Purpose: RQ3

Research question three asked, *How are narratives of higher purpose different when superiors communicate about higher purpose?* Pfau's (2015) results showed that more frequent communication about purpose from superior(s) influenced employees to perform better, view the company more positively, and have a lower likelihood of intent to leave. Thus, the current study sought to ascertain whether supervisor communication would influence the content of narratives of higher purpose in subordinates, but this was not confirmed by the data. Though participants reporting narratives of higher purpose were slightly more likely to also indicate that their superior communicated "Frequently" or "Often" about purpose in the workplace, results did not suggest different themes in these narratives of higher purpose. However, this result may have been influenced by an issue with the wording of a questionnaire item, discussed further in the Limitations section (see Chapter Six).

If participants' narratives were not influenced by supervisor communication about the purpose of their work, one may consider from where employees obtain their narratives of higher purpose. Some employees may better recognize higher purpose in their work due to their own orientation toward the concept. For instance, a worker may be influenced by parents, friends, or the media in their thoughts about the broader impact of their work. This area may be explored in future studies designed to uncover what or who might influence employees' narratives of higher

purpose, including factors such as the religion of one's relatives, as Weber suggested (1904-5/1930/2001).

A Focus on Family and Outside Factors: RQ4

Research question four asked, *What forms of identification exist in narratives of higher purpose?* The current study sought to explore how identification manifested in narratives of higher purpose. Due to the short length of the narratives, analysis of identification was restricted to an analysis of grammatical choices, explained in Chapter Four. This analysis was further limited as a result of the wording of a questionnaire item. The analysis of shared pronouns suffered in particular. While it may have been possible for many participants to report their narratives using "we" pronouns (as opposed to individual pronouns such as "I" or "my") while preserving their original intended meaning, as demonstrated in Chapter Four, there may be reasoning for why this was not seen. In cases where participants performed their work in solitude or carried out their job's higher purpose without help, use of a shared pronoun would not be expected. Unfortunately, due to the wording of question 9.2, *If* you *were approached while at work and asked the same question, "'What do* you *do?'" (Pfau, 2015), how might* you *respond?* [emphasis added], it is likely that many responses were influenced to begin with the pronoun "I."

Following Alvesson's (2010) suggestion that identity and identification are fluid and should be examined accordingly, "without 'boxing' in ideas and lines of thinking in rigid categories" (p. 211), findings are thus considered tentative due to this very limited analysis. Nevertheless, narratives of higher purpose did not tend to demonstrate affiliation with an organization. Only about 8% of narratives evidenced organizational identification, while about 86% of narratives evidenced a lack of organizational identification and about 3% showed mixed identification. However, again, specific wording of the questionnaire item likely influenced the

wording of narratives of higher purpose. This unanticipated issue is also discussed in the Limitations section.

With that said, identification with regard to work may better be studied in the future with an emphasis on family associations or connections to a greater good, or ones higher purpose. For instance, family surfaced as motivation, as inspiration, and, in one case, as higher purpose in participants’ responses to these individual questionnaire items, indicating that identification with family may have been more prevalent in this sample than identification with work. Taking a larger view of the main findings, the responses point to identification with family, society, and even the future more so than with organizations.

This concludes the discussion of the findings from this research project. Next, a concluding chapter offers a summary of each previous chapter, important contributions from this work, limitations of the study, and finally, directions for future research in this area.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to increase knowledge about narratives of higher purpose as related to work. Guided by Maslow's (1943, 1954) theory and those theories that spawned from it, as well as identification and narrative theory, this study investigated similarities between narratives of higher purpose and motivation. In addition, this study explored what constitutes a narrative of higher purpose based on emergent themes. Furthermore, the influence of supervisor communication of higher purpose on employees' narratives of higher purpose, as well the forms of identification that exist in narratives of higher purpose, were each undertaken. With respect to terminology, this study explored specifically whether higher purpose differs from motivation, inspiration, and calling, and also examined whether narratives of higher purpose appear across demographics and occupations. This study differentiated terms, uncovered themes of motivation and higher purpose, explored whether supervisor communication influenced the content of participants' narratives, and examined what forms of identification manifest in narratives of higher purpose.

Chapter One offered an introduction to the subject at hand and overviewed the need for and potential benefits of this research. Using Pfau's (2015) study as the source of interest and a comparison point, the concept of higher purpose was introduced. Chapter Two reviewed literature from relevant areas, including similar constructs such as inspiration, calling, job crafting, and anomie. The chapter continued by detailing such areas as the meaning of work and meaningful work, two areas with similarities to the conceptualization of higher purpose, which was followed by a discussion of identity and identification. Next, the chapter undertook a review of narrative, specifically covering the narrative construction of reality, retelling of narratives, and learning through narratives. Although all are areas deserving further research, this study focused on the

functional aspect of the narratives of higher purpose in relation to work. The review then turned to motivation and engagement in communication and educational contexts. Finally, four research questions were proposed which sought to explore areas such as motivation, supervisor communication, and identification in the current study.

Chapter Three detailed a methodology to undertake this study. The chapter overviewed the procedures and requirements for participant selection, the attempted quota, items on the questionnaire, method of data analysis, and finally, unintended issues with the survey. The researcher sought participants who were employed at full-time, paid employment and who were age 21 or over. The questionnaire consisted of items intended to address the four research questions. It was deployed using an online system that offered university students a link to a Qualtrics survey, and students received credit for referring participants. Data analysis was qualitative. The researcher undertook a thematic analysis of responses to questionnaire items. However, there were some issues with the online research participation system that may be corrected in future studies (discussed in Limitations).

Chapter Four gave a descriptive analysis of the achieved sample and a preliminary analysis of the demographics of the sample. Higher purpose was differentiated from other similar constructs and defined in terms of the themes that emerged from the data, and a main analysis of each research question was undertaken. Chapter Five offered an in-depth discussion of each research question, along with findings. The following sections identify important contributions, implications, limitations, and future directions of this study.

Important Contributions

There are both theoretical and practical contributions resulting from this study. A clear contribution comes from the analysis of what motivates employees, found in response to research

question one. Employees were motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, sometimes at the same time, and these factors included aspects both internal and external to the job. Intrinsic factors were more often elaborated upon and were also more often listed, especially for participants reporting narratives of higher purpose.

The exploration of higher purpose was, in itself, another important contribution. Higher purpose was a term that hardly appeared in academic literature; the findings identified in this study help to conceptualize the term. Themes of narratives of higher purpose were identified, and from a functionalist perspective, they offer practical implications for employers hoping to create engagement initiatives utilizing higher purpose. However, the findings concerning supervisor communication of purpose indicated this may have little to no influence on the content of individuals' narratives of higher purpose, and findings concerning organizational identification were tentative. Another major contribution of this research is clarification between conceptual terms related to higher purpose such as calling and inspiration, which led to important distinctions between these terms.

Future workplace initiatives may utilize the concept of higher purpose to identify potential a source of motivation for their employees or to engage their workers. Initiatives such as these may find it beneficial to ask employees for their own narratives or to distribute company-wide narratives, though according to the findings of the current study, supervisor communication of purpose did not influence the content of employees' narratives of higher purpose. Some themes of higher purpose may prove more pertinent in certain fields or occupations, which may be used to the advantage of employees or employers. Now turning to theoretical implications, important associations with existing literature are made, and some avenues of future research are also discussed.

Theoretical Implications and Future Directions

A variety of theoretical implications can be made regarding the current study. Using related literature, implications can be drawn in a number of areas, including narrative theory, socialization, and identification. In addition, future directions regarding these areas are suggested.

Narrative Theory

In the current study, a remarkable number of narratives of higher purpose concerned helping or caring for others. In fact, nearly all of the narratives collected were concerned with the benefit of others. Future research may reveal how researchers can use empathy to better understand these narratives, as Clair et al. (2016) suggest in their discussion of Extended Narrative Empathy (ENE). As the authors explain, "ENE asserts a theoretical narrative approach that can guide interpretations of lived stories from both textual and field experiences…[it is] a theory that allows multiple perspectives to be seen more clearly…to provide a more holistic view" (p. 470). Specifically, employment of this theory may offer a unique view of the family-related narratives given in response to the current study's questions about inspiration, as well, since "people are born into stories" (p. 475). This relates to the next topic, socialization.

Socialization

Individuals may be socialized into work by traditional family narratives, such as those mentioned above concerning family and especially family history. Participants in the current study noted individuals who served as work inspiration and often gave detailed narratives about these people. For instance, as presented in Chapter Four, an Office manager/marketer explained that her father was her inspiration to work:

> My father inspires me to work because he came from Jerusalem (one of eleven kids) with almost no money and a dream to become a doctor…and he did it. He is the

> best provider and inspires me to work hard and be good at [my] job but also to have passion. (Participant 3)

This holds implications for socialization literature, such as work on organizational assimilation (Jablin, 1984), as these family narratives may function to generate individuals' expectations and views concerning work, such as the purpose of work or the merits of hard work.

Identification

This study noted an important finding concerning identification. Traditional studies (e.g., Cheney, 1983b) have looked at organizational identification as individuals' identification with an organization, but the current study suggests that even when speaking about work, the participants in this sample implied identification with family, society, or the future more so than with their organization, as noted in Chapter Five. These factors usually exist outside of the job, suggesting that aspects external or peripheral to the workplace should also be examined in future studies of organizational identification.

Limitations of Practical Design and Future Directions

A number of limitations to the current study exist, as noted throughout Chapters Three, Four, and Five. Weaknesses of the study are detailed below. The following limitations stemmed largely from practical design, such as the collection of data, and future studies may ameliorate these issues by using alternative methods of data collection. The wording of questions and selection of narratives are also discussed, and related future directions for further studies are explored.

Student Referrals

Using university students to make referrals to working adults proved to be an unforeseen disadvantage. Because of the demographically diverse student population of the university, it was presumed that the quota might be filled rather efficiently; this was not the case. There was an overwhelming response from participants in the occupational categories of Management, Professional, and Sales occupations, with limited response for the other categories. It is likely that the majority of family and friends of students at this university are college-educated themselves, causing the sample to disproportionately represent occupations that employ college-educated individuals. Indeed, 68% of total participants (n=79) and 78% of participants with narratives of higher purpose (n=45) held a Bachelor's degree or higher. Future studies may seek to achieve a quota sample through means other than student referrals, perhaps utilizing a method offering a more geographically diverse sample, as well.

Researchers taking a critical perspective may be particularly equipped to address whether a general inability to obtain a professional position may reduce narratives of higher purpose. In addition, the heavy weighting of the current sample in terms of education (and perhaps, by relation, salary) may suggest that individuals with more education and perhaps a higher salary may have greater luxury to consider higher purpose. While the current study utilized a diverse sample, these questions should be addressed in future explorations of higher purpose.

Occupational Category Selection

It is likely that the actual achieved sample was marginally different than listed in Chapter Four. That is, since participants' choice of occupational category was honored even in cases when it may have been erroneous, it is likely that the actual distribution of occupational categories was slightly different than recorded. This was an unavoidable limitation due to the use of the online

questionnaire; however, the issue would easily be mitigated by use of in-depth interviews in a similar study. If questions were to arise from either the participant or the researcher concerning the participant's occupational category, an interview setting would allow those questions to be resolved.

Wording of Questions

There were three cases in which wording of questions may have profoundly impacted participants' responses. In the first case, the question on inspiration asked *Who or what inspires you to work?* This differed from a question on motivation: *What motivates you to work?* The two questions on terminology should have been worded similarly to facilitate a proper comparison of responses to each. It is likely that participants were influenced to provide the many examples of individuals who inspire them, as was noted in the analysis of the term inspiration.

In the second case, the term "higher" was mistakenly omitted from question 10.1, *How often, if at all, would you say your superior(s) (e.g., manager, supervisor, boss) speaks about the purpose of your work or your company's work?* Thus, in their responses to this question, participants may have reported their supervisor's communication of purpose, rather than higher purpose. However, this question appeared at the end of a series of questions concerning only higher purpose, and all other questions asking about purpose appeared much earlier in the questionnaire.

The third case concerned identification, which was considered in research question four. Chapter Four indicated that the wording of question 9.2, *If* you *were approached while at work and asked the same question, "'What do* you *do?'" (Pfau, 2015), how might* you *respond?* [emphasis added], likely influenced many responses to begin with the pronoun "I" and pressured a focus on the participant's own role in their work. A more neutrally-worded question may perhaps have led to quite a different outcome for the analysis of this question. While the question was

intended to be a helpful example and did appear to assist participants in articulating a clear and concise statement of the higher purpose of their work, the influence of the wording was possibly more detrimental than beneficial.

Selection of Narratives

Two limitations are discussed concerning the selection of narratives of higher purpose. The first limitation considers the exclusion of outliers, and the second concerns the possible employment of a definition of narrative to further refine the selection of narratives.

Outliers

As mentioned in Chapter Three, three participants who indicated that their work had a higher purpose that was meaningful or very meaningful to them were discarded from the analysis of narratives of higher purpose. This was because a narrative of higher purpose could not be identified from the participants' responses. However, there may be good reason for retaining and examining further those responses that appear to be outliers, as Bullis (1999) suggests. There is a potential for further insights from examining outliers, which may have benefited this study. By retaining these three outliers, the definition of higher purpose may have perhaps required expansion.

Definition of Narrative

Because of the brief nature of the narratives offered by participants, an extended definition of narrative such as that offered by Dailey and Browning (2014) was not employed in the analysis. However, this definition might have been used to further refine the selection of narratives in the current study, removing responses that were not full narratives and therefore limiting the analysis to only those responses providing adequate detail.

In the current study, in cases where a word or phrase of a participant's narrative was missing or implied, the narratives were pieced together, much like an enthymeme. For example, the narrative, "I save lives" includes a protagonist, an action, and an outcome, but leaves the condition as an unstated premise. Imposing the restriction of Dailey and Browning's (2014) definition of narrative would not necessarily require removal of this narrative of higher purpose; however, speculating on unstated premises would perhaps have led to different findings.

Additional Future Directions

Future directions unrelated to limitations of the current study are now presented. Beginning with future studies associated with Pfau's (2015) findings and moving to future studies of higher purpose, suggestions for future research are detailed.

Simplistic Narratives

Pfau's (2015) initiative utilized simplistic narratives, most often a single phrase beginning with "I" or "We," whereas the current study gathered narratives with a somewhat wider range of formats, though most evidenced a similar, simplistic style. Future research may explore this area and consider whether and how the formatting or length of a narrative of higher purpose may influence employee's thoughts about the higher purpose of their work. As in the case of Clair's (1996) collection of narratives about "real jobs" where detail was encouraged and the results allowed for a deeper analysis of dialectical tensions, more findings might be discovered in longer narratives.

Higher Purpose

Future studies may also seek to examine whether higher purpose precedes or follows occupational choice. For example, do individuals choose a career based on a higher purpose that

they have previously identified, or can one's higher purpose only be recognized once a new job or role is undertaken? Furthermore, does one's higher purpose change according to occupation, or does a single higher purpose drive some workers throughout their careers? This question may be taken up in the work socialization literature, such as that guided by Jablin's (1984) work on organizational assimilation.

There are many more avenues of research in this area that may hold importance. In particular, future studies should undertake how to increase feelings of higher purpose, perhaps examining case studies such as Pfau's (2015), or how to properly measure higher purpose as a construct. These studies may be able to offer important insights about the role of higher purpose in the workplace and perhaps offer a meaningful contribution to how employees feel about their work.

Conclusion

This thesis established the need to further investigate narratives of higher purpose in the workplace. The research questions sought to examine whether narratives of higher purpose exist in the workplace, what themes characterize them, and how they relate to motivation, communication from supervisors, and identification. The research study investigated these inquiries. Future research concerning motivation in the workplace should consider these research questions as well as related others.

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APPENDIX A. RESEARCH PARTICIPATION SYSTEM INSTRUCTIONS

Instructions for Students

Thank you for signing up for this research study! Please read all instructions to gain credit.

This study explores perceptions of purpose at work. It is using a referral-type system to obtain participants. To gain credit, you will be asked to find an **adult over age 21 who is a non-student, working individual in the field indicated by the study you signed up for**. Your portion of the study should take approximately 5 minutes. You will receive 0.5% credit per successful referral. As a reminder, you cannot exceed the stated 3% extra credit limit for completing research studies using the online system.

You will need to check the Research Participation System to see if you have received credit by the deadline date; this indicates that your participant submitted their survey. To comply with research regulations, we will notify the participants of the following: "The student who referred you will have other options available in order to gain credit for this assignment, so you will in no way impact their grade by declining to participate."

You might consider contacting a family friend, someone you personally know (e.g., your dentist, your high school biology teacher, etc.), or someone you are networked with through websites such as LinkedIn. Once you have found your participant who works in the assigned field, you will refer them to this study. You will need to send them the following information that introduces the research and contains the link to complete their survey (you may edit this information as needed to accommodate how you know your participant):

Subject: Survey about Workplace Motivation

Dear [name],

Hello! I am a XXXX University student enrolled in a communication course. As part of the class, we have been assigned to participate in a research project currently being conducted at XXXX. The study I have chosen to participate in asks students to refer working adults to complete a survey concerning purpose and motivation in the workplace. Your participation in this survey would be much appreciated by both myself and the researchers. Please follow this link to complete the survey (by Friday, 12/8 at 5 PM): https://XXXX.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6zY2vXAbGEwSb0F

Importantly, the survey will ask you to include a unique, identifying code so that I can gain credit for referring you. Please include the following code: [unique identifying code]

Thank you for your help and participation!

Sincerely,
[your name], XXXX University student

The Research Participation System assigned you a unique code when you signed up for this survey. This **6-digit numerical code** is listed at the end of the URL for this survey (id=######). Simply copy your unique code **from the current URL of this webpage.** You will need to be sure to include this unique code in your communication with the participant.

This is the only way to link the participant's completed survey to your name, so if your code is not included, you will not gain credit!

Link to the survey for participants: https://XXXX.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6zY2vXAbGEwSb0F

Instructions for Participants

Thank you for offering your valuable time to complete this survey! This research study is being run by a group of researchers at XXXX University and is part of a project approved by IRB # [number] and explores perceptions of purpose and motivation at work. The survey should take

approximately 20 minutes to complete. We are using a referral-type system to obtain participants, so students were asked to refer an adult, over age 21, who is a non-student, working individual in a particular field.

The student who has referred you should have provided you with: 1) the link to this survey, as well as 2) a unique code so that they may gain credit for their referral. Please have this code available to enter so that the student will receive their credit.

Please note that this survey is optional. If you find that you cannot or prefer not to take the survey or do not wish to continue at any point during the survey, you may simply close your internet browser to exit the survey. The student who referred you will have other options available in order to gain credit for this assignment, so you will in no way impact their grade by declining to participate.

If you have any questions about the study or your participation in the study please feel free to contact Professor Robin Clair at 765-494-3315 or email at rpclair@XXXX.edu. Prof. Clair is the Principal Investigator on the project and she is overseeing this project which is being conducted in partial fulfillment of graduate student Kristen Olson's Master of Arts degree. Kristen is specializing in the area of organizational communication.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of study: Narratives and Workplace Motivation

Principal investigator: Dr. Robin Clair

Co-investigators: Dr. Stacey Connaughton, Dr. Natalie Lambert, Kristen Olson

Purpose of Research: To explore workplace motivation through narratives across various occupations.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?

You will be asked to participate in an online Qualtrics survey.

How long will I be in the study?

The online survey should last approximately 20 minutes.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

The possible risks or discomforts are minimal no greater than everyday activities. You will be asked about your workplace and related attitudes. All research carries the risk for breach of confidentiality; however, safeguards to prevent this risk can be found in the in the Confidentiality section of this form.

Are there any potential benefits?

There are no direct benefits from participating in this study.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

All information will be kept confidential. Participants will not be asked to give their names or company names. If a participant inadvertently gives a name in the survey, we will use pseudonyms in its place. Any hard copies of survey data will be stored in the PI's locked office. The online data will only be accessible to the PI and co-investigators via an online login to view response data on the Qualtrics website. The PI will retain the survey login information for potential future research using the responses. The data will be stored indefinitely. The project's research records may be reviewed by departments at XXXX University responsible for regulatory and research oversight.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or, if you agree to participate, you can withdraw your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Who can I contact if I have questions about the study?

If you have questions, comments or concerns about this research project, you can talk to one of the researchers. Please contact Dr. Robin Clair, the principal investigator, at rpclair@XXXX.edu or XXX-XXX-XXXX.

If you have questions about your rights while taking part in the study or have concerns about the treatment of research participants, please call the Human Research Protection Program at (XXX) XXX-XXXX, email (irb@XXXX.edu) or write to:

Human Research Protection Program - XXXX University

XXXX Hall, Room XXXX

XXX XXXX Street

XXXX, XX XXXX

If you agree to participate in this research study described above, please click NEXT.

APPENDIX B. SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

Survey Questions

Q3.1 What is the unique code given to you by the student who referred you?

___

Q4.1 In what field do you work?

Management, Business, and Financial Occupations

Professional and Related Occupations (including Computer and mathematical; Architecture and engineering; Life, physical, and social science; Community and social services; Legal; Education, training, and library; Arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media; Healthcare practitioner and technical)

Service Occupations (including Healthcare support; Protective service; Food preparation and serving-related; Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance; Personal care and service)

Sales and Related Occupations

Office and Administrative Support Occupations

Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations

Construction and Extraction Occupations

Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations

Production Occupations

Transportation and Material Moving Occupations

Military Specific Occupations

Other

Q4.2 What is your specific title?

___

Q5.1 What motivates you to work?

___

Q5.2 What is the purpose of your work? Please describe in a few sentences.

___

Q6.1 Do you feel that your work has a purpose beyond the obvious or what others might think?

Yes

Somewhat

No

Q6.2 If so, please describe the purpose.

___

Q6.3 To what degree is that purpose meaningful?

Very meaningful

Meaningful

Somewhat meaningful

Not meaningful

Unsure

I don’t feel that my work has purpose

Q7.1 If you feel that your work has a purpose, please share an example or story that explains why it is meaningful. If not, please explain why not in a few sentences.

___

Q7.2 What quotes, mottos, or slogans guide your thoughts about the purpose of your work?

___

Q8.1 Do you feel that your work has a *higher* purpose? That is, a purpose that extends beyond yourself that fulfills some larger need, goal, or hope, or perhaps benefits others?

Yes

Somewhat

No

Q8.2 Is that higher purpose meaningful?

Very meaningful

Meaningful

Somewhat meaningful

Not meaningful

N/A

Q8.3 If you feel that your work has a higher purpose that extends beyond yourself that fulfills some larger need, goal, or hope, or perhaps benefits others, please describe it in a few sentences.

____

Please read the following excerpt from an article about a workplace:

"It's a fabled story about a janitor's exchange with President Kennedy during the early days of NASA: "What do you do?" the president supposedly asked the man with a broom during a visit to Cape Canaveral. 'Well, Mr. President, I'm helping to put a man on the moon.'" (Pfau, 2015)

Q9.2 If you were approached while at work and asked the same question, "'What do you do?'" (Pfau, 2015), how might you respond?

____

Q10.1 How often, if at all, would you say your superior(s) (e.g., manager, supervisor, boss) speaks about the purpose of your work or your company's work?

Never

Rarely

Sometimes

Often

Frequently

Do not have a superior

Q11.1 Who or what inspires you to work? Please explain why and/or how.

___

Q11.2 How would you describe yourself with respect to religion or spirituality?

___

Q12.1 Please select from the following list what best describes you. If more than one descriptor fits, feel free to mark more than one.

Not at all religious

Somewhat religious

Religious

Very religious

Secular

Agnostic

Atheist

Spiritual but not committed to any one religion

Unsure

Other

Q12.2 Do you feel that your work is your calling? Please explain why and/or how.

___

Q13.1 Please feel free to tell us anything at all that you believe would help us better understand your connections to work or to your organization.

___

Demographic Questions

Q14.2 What is your sex?

Male

Female

Other

Q14.3 How old are you?

___

Q14.4 What is your race/ethnicity?

American Indian or Alaska Native (Not Hispanic or Latino)

Asian

Black or African American

Hispanic or Latino

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

White or Caucasian (Not Hispanic or Latino)

Bi-racial

Multi-racial

Q15.1 Approximately how long have you worked at your current company?

___

Q15.2 Approximately how long have you worked in your field?

___

Q16.1 What is your approximate position/level/rank in your current company? Choose what you believe fits best.

Intern/Entry level

Unskilled laborer

Factory line worker

Skilled laborer

Trade professional (plumber, electrician, etc.)

Clerical/clerk

Lower management

Middle management

Upper management

Professional

Executive

Other: If none of the above fit with your occupation, fill in as appropriate ___

Unsure

Q16.2 What is your highest degree of education completed?

None

High school diploma or equivalent (GED)

Trade, technical, or vocational training

Associate or 2-year degree

Bachelor’s or 4-year degree

Master’s degree

Professional degree

Doctorate degree

Post-doctorate degree

Thank you very much for completing the survey! Your responses have been recorded. No further action is necessary. You may now exit.