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Activities speak louder than words

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CHAPTER 5

Doing what you are and what matters

Meaningful work for professionals

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Abstract

Current changes in professional work seem to be eroding its meaningfulness, which is the amount of significance work holds for professionals. Here we present a model of meaningful work based on the work activities professionals engage in. We argue that what professionals do provides a unique insight to explain experienced meaningfulness, because not all work activities are equally meaningful. Our model is based on two sources of meaningfulness, namely doing what you are and doing what matters. 'Doing what you' are pertains to the execution of work activities that are congruent with professional identity and that allow professionals to affirm and express that identity (i.e., intrinsic meaningfulness). 'Doing what matters' pertains to the execution of work activities that have a positive impact on the goals of the organization (i.e., extrinsic meaningfulness). We present eight work activity types that their uniquely map on the two sources of meaningfulness. Each activity type impacts the well-being and performance of professionals leading professionals to thrive, wither, persevere, or succumb. We outline how the balance between meaningful and meaningless work activities influences work itself, the way work is perceived by key stakeholders, and professional identity. Working with this model can help professionals and organizations, to address and potentially prevent the imbalances that arise as a result of change that otherwise may result in meaningless and thus demotivating professional work.

"I do what I am" (Ik doe wat ik ben)
- Griet op de Beeck[*]

Professional work, which requires a certain level of knowledge, autonomy, and altruism (Hodson & Sullivan, 2012, p. 260), is increasingly prevalent in the labor market (Anteby, Chan, & DiBenigno, 2016). There is a lot to be gained in the understanding of professional work, especially in light of recent changes in professional work that seem to be eroding its meaningfulness, defined as the amount of significance work holds to the focal employee (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Many professionals nowadays face a paradoxical tension between their autonomy and organizations' and regulators external control of professional work aimed at cost efficiency and consistency (Parker, 2014). For example, physicians are increasingly confronted with constraints in the usage of diagnostic tests, judges are progressively obliged to specify and justify their sentences, and teachers face increasing external involvement in the pedagogic choices they make (Oldham & Hackman, 2010). Some of such changes represent misconceptions of others about what professional work entails (Vough, Cardador, Bednar, Dane, & Pratt, 2013), and show that the meaningfulness of professional work is at risk of being eroded. Specifically, many contemporary changes to professional work undermine the flexibility and autonomy that professionals require to do their work, are at odds with the notion of job enrichment, and often imply increased bureaucracy work for professionals (Oldham & Hackman, 2010). Organizational researchers' concern about meaningful work is thus shifting from front-line workers to professionals, who are increasingly at risk of burnout and turnover (cf. Hakanen et al., 2006; Hartnett & Kline, 2005).

Professional work is comprised of a set of work activities or tasks (Ilgen & Hollenbeck, 1991). Given that not all work activities are likely to be equally meaningful (Gabriel et al., 2011), we propose that a focus on what it is that professionals do is important to explaining professionals' experience of overall meaningfulness of work. Hence, the focus is thus on the specific work activities professionals choose and are required to undertake and the meaning those activities provide (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). Professionals tend

[*] (answering why she was happy as a writer)

to identify more strongly with what they do than other employees (Anteby et al., 2016; Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Carnevale, Rose, & Cheah, 2013) or as Pratt et al. (2006, p. 236) state, professionals "are often defined by what they do". Drawing on the identity literature we argue that how professionals define and see themselves in the context of their work (Ashforth et al., 2008), both emotionally and cognitively, guides them in engaging in work activities and the meaningfulness they experience from these. Meaningfulness as value for the (professional) self is found in work activities that are congruent with professional identity (Kira & Balkin, 2014; Shamir, 1991). Henceforth we will refer to this as 'doing what you are', that is the execution of those work activities that professionals see as representative of their occupation.

Professionals, however, do not function in a vacuum (Anteby et al., 2016; Briscoe, 2007). They also (have to) engage in work activities that are expected and valued by the organization. Work activities professionals see as congruent with organizational goals create vicarious meaningfulness for them through the value that these activities generate for the organization (Grant, 2008c; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Henceforth, we will refer to such activities as 'doing what matters', that is the execution of work activities that positively impact the organization even if they are less or not congruent with professional identity. By positioning professional work activities on the axes of doing what you are (not) and doing what does (not) matter, we define eight types of activities, namely raison d'être activities, necessary obligations, divergent duties, imposed evils, mindless work (Elsbach & Hargadon, 2006), illegitimate tasks (Semmer et al., 2007), prosocial passions, and career development activities (see Figure 1). The aggregate orientation of doing what you are and what matters across the complete set of a professional's work activities ultimately determines whether professionals experience (sufficient) meaningfulness at work.

We argue that each work activity (type) through its inherent impact on the experience of meaningfulness affects both the well-being and performance of professionals. Doing what you are is an opportunity for self-expression and self-verification for professionals (Shamir, 1991; Stets, 2005). Vice versa, doing what you are not threatens professional identity and is stressful, because professionals' expectations are violated (Petriglieri, 2011; Semmer et al., 2007; Thoits, 1991). Doing what matters is an opportunity for professionals to reap benefits in terms of well-being and performance due to the contribution they feel they made to the collective (Grant, 2008c; Hackman & Oldham, 1976;

Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). Conversely, doing what does not matter, is likely to be perceived as stressful and demotivating by professionals due to the lack of purpose (Ariely, Kamenica, & Prelec, 2008), the experience of time wasted, and the perceived lack of appreciation (Siegrist, 1996).

Our contribution is threefold. First, we use identity to complement and integrate sources of meaningfulness (Rosso et al., 2010) and suggest that how professionals define themselves offers critical insights into their experienced meaningfulness. Second, we show the value of taking into account the premise that not all work activities are equal in that variation exists in the degree to which activities are appraised by professionals as meaningful depending on the value they have for the self and the organization. Even though research has shown that this approach is insightful (Aiken et al., 2001; Taber & Alliger, 1995), this has yet to be recognized in the identity and meaningful work literatures. Third, we contribute a dynamic perspective to the meaningful work literature by arguing that self-chosen or imposed changes in (prescribed) activities can tip the balance between meaningful and meaningless work either incrementally until a threshold is exceeded or more radically at once (Selenko et al., 2018). We suggest that both professionals and organizations possess the agency to change situations that, likely unintentionally, result in imbalances and offer recommendations for interventions by both the professional and the organization that ought to contribute to the long-term sustainability of meaningful work.

Our argumentation proceeds in three steps. First, we present our model of meaningful work activities by defining doing what you are and doing what matters, followed by the definition of our eight types of work activities. Second, we delineate both proximal and distal consequences of each of these types in terms of professionals' well-being and performance. Third, we discuss the dynamics in and balance between meaningful and meaningless work and suggest ways in which both professionals and organizations can attain and maintain the sustainable experience of meaningful work for professionals.

MEANINGFUL WORK ACTIVITIES FOR PROFESSIONALS

Professions are socially constructed over time through human interaction about work, a profession's members, activities that comprise a professional role, and the institutional and cultural systems that uphold a profession. Professional work is defined as work within a specific occupation that is characterized by a certain degree of specialized knowledge, autonomy, authority over clients

or subordinates, and altruism (Hodson & Sullivan, 2012, p. 260). Professions thus encompass a subset of all occupations and are usually situated in the service sector, hence the altruistic nature of professional work (Evetts, 2003). Professional work, although growing in prominence is studied relatively rarely despite the aforementioned paradoxical tension that threatens the work experience of professionals (Oldham & Hackman, 2010; Parker, 2014). Here we look at professional work from a 'doing' perspective (Anteby et al., 2016) and focus on the work activities professionals undertake and how this affects their experience of meaningful work.

Meaningfulness can be defined as the amount of significance that something, in this case work, holds (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Meaningfulness is subjectively perceived or experienced and can thus vary between individuals and depart from that which is meaningful or valuable to the organization. Both individuals and organizations alike have a stake in fostering meaningfulness, as it relates job satisfaction (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), well-being (Campbell, Converse, & Rodgers, 1976), engagement (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004), occupational identification (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), organizational commitment and identification (Cardador et al., 2011), organizational citizenship behavior (Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006), and job performance (Fried & Ferris, 1987; Grant, 2008c; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Based on its relationship with these positive outcomes, meaningfulness usually carries a positive valence, in that more meaningfulness is considered to be better (Rosso et al., 2010). In our model of meaningful work, we focus on meaningfulness in relation to separate work activities rather than the job as a whole as the perceived meaningfulness of different work activities that make up a job is variable (Bailey & Madden, 2016). Meaningful work activities are thus those activities that are significant to professionals.

We propose that professionals derive meaningfulness from two sources. First, the extent to which professionals experience that what they do (i.e., their work activities) matches who they are professionally (i.e., their professional identity) is a self-focused source of meaningfulness which we label 'doing what you are' (i.e., intrinsic meaningfulness). Second, we argue that the extent to which professionals experience what they do (their work activities) to contribute to organizational goal is an other-focused source of meaningfulness which we call 'doing what matters' (i.e., extrinsic meaningfulness).

Doing what you are

The first source of meaningfulness of professional work activities, represented on the vertical axis in the model (see Figure 1), is based on the congruence of a particular work activity with one's (professional) identity. Professional identity is how professionals define and see themselves in the context of their work and ultimately answers the question "who am I as a professional?" (Ashforth et al., 2008; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Dutton, Roberts, & Bednar, 2010). Professional identity provides individuals with a sense of meaning in the sense of enabling the expression of who they are, which fosters a positive self-concept and guides professionals' values and expectations (Miscenko & Day, 2015; Van Knippenberg, 2000), attitudes (Ashforth et al., 2008), decisions, career changes (Khapova, Arthur, Wilderom, & Svensson, 2007), the specific work activities that professionals engage in, and their experienced meaningfulness.

We argue that the expression of one's professional identity through the execution of particular work activities forms a crucial intrinsic source of meaningful work for professionals and we propose augmenting Rosso et al. (2010)'s 'self as source of meaning' category (which they see as being comprised of values, motivations, and beliefs about work) with identity. Indeed, Rosso et al. (2010) and other scholars working on meaningfulness, acknowledge that a congruence between work activities and individuals' self-concept is associated with the experience of intrinsic motivation and brings about experienced meaningfulness (Cardador, Pratt, & Dane, 2006; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Kira & Balkin, 2014). Identity theory helps to explain how such congruence functions as a source of meaningfulness (Burke, 1991). Engaging in congruent work activities affirms, expresses, and strengthens professional identity (Kira & Balkin, 2014). The expression of one's professional identity is seen as a powerful motivating force, which could make work activities that are by themselves not seen as pleasant both meaningful and intrinsically motivating as long as they are aligned with the individual's self-concept (Shamir, 1991).

For professionals, the professional role will likely be the most frequently salient identity category compared with other identities pertaining to organizational membership, team membership, nationality, gender, personal characteristics (e.g., intelligence, hardworking), or work roles (e.g., leader) (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016; Caza & Wilson, 2009; Miscenko & Day, 2015; Ramarajan, 2014). Work plays a major role determining who employees are (Christiansen, 1999),

what professionals do is expected to be an even more determining factor in their identity. Indeed, professionals appear to generally have higher commitment towards their profession than their organization as they are more likely to switch employer than profession (Anteby et al., 2016; Khapova et al., 2007). We label the congruence between work activities and professional identity intrinsic meaningfulness, because here meaningfulness derives from those actions that are directed primarily toward the self (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Rosso et al., 2010). Professionals want to engage in activities that are congruent with professional identity, because they are allow the affirmation of the identity and are enjoyable, interesting, and/or satisfying. Parker, Bindl, and Strauss (2010) argue for including the reason to or the 'why' aspects of actions, which in this case is focused on the self rather than the organization. Because doing what you are is intrinsically motivating, or driven by professional identity, the salient beneficiary is the self.

A work activity is congruent with professional identity when it is prototypical for the profession, which is the extent to which a particular activity has characteristics that are representative for the profession (Rosch, 1999; Rothbart & Lewis, 1988). A work activity is incongruent with professional identity when it is not typically perceived to be part of the profession or is not part of the formal training for that profession. In other words, professionals experience intrinsic meaningfulness when a work activity is represented in their claims about what constitutes their work (Dutton et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Doing what matters

The second source of meaningfulness, captured on the horizontal axis in the model, is based on the congruence of a particular work activity with organizational goals. Following the literature on job design and task significance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), we consider a work activity to be congruent with organizational goals when professionals perceive that activity to have a positive impact on the organization as the main beneficiary. Significance attained through the execution of particular work activities provides individuals with a sense of purpose, defined as a sense of intention and directionality (Ryff, 1989). Doing what matters may thus be placed in Rosso et al. (2010)'s 'work context as a source of meaning' category and is compatible with the design of tasks that Rosso and colleagues define therein. There is ample evidence that experienced significance in work is

related to greater experienced meaningfulness (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Fried & Ferris, 1987; Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). For example, Grant (2008c) has shown that when fundraising callers' perceptions of significance increased after making explicit how their efforts contributed to financing student scholarships, their sense of purpose and meaningfulness and subsequent performance increased.

As professionals typically work in organizations, their contribution to organizational goals is expected to be relevant to them (Anteby et al., 2016; Briscoe, 2007). Professionals also perform activities because they are 'part of the job' and expected by the organization, which at times may make professionals feel like they 'have to do' instead of 'want to do' these activities, particularly when those activities are not aligned with professional identity. Professionals can recognize and accept that an activity is important for the effective functioning of the organization (i.e., identified motivation) and thus draw upon this external source of meaningfulness (Parker et al., 2010). When work activities matter more to the organization than to the professional him- or herself, the experienced meaningfulness transcends the self (Bailey & Madden, 2016). Because the salient beneficiary is the organization, doing what matters is driven by an extrinsic sense of purpose and significance. Extrinsic meaningfulness or doing what matters thus falls in the category meaningfulness found through actions directed toward others (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Rosso et al., 2010).

A work activity is perceived as significant when it has a positive impact on the organization, even when that activity is incongruent with professional identity. Work activities are perceived as less significant when they do not have a positive impact or could even damage the organization, directly or indirectly (e.g., by creating inefficiencies). In other words, professionals experience extrinsic meaningfulness when their work activities matter to the organization.

Deconstructing professional work

In each quadrant of our model we define two types of work activities that are distinguished based on whether professionals are motivated to engage in activities primarily because they 'want to' or primarily because they 'have to'. For example, in the first quadrant we distinguish raison d'être activities and necessary obligations which are both intrinsically and extrinsically meaningful. However, to a nurse medical activities such as examining heart rates (i.e., a

raison d'être activity) is something they want to do whereas cleaning beds (i.e., necessary obligation) may be something they have to do. The model is shaped as a pie chart to reflect the idea that more time spent on one type of activity generally comes at the cost of time spent on another. Although professionals may temporarily work above or below their contractual workload, we assume that the (daily, weekly, monthly) time available to engage in work activities is generally relatively fixed and finite. Our model presupposes that the deconstruction of work into the eight types is idiosyncratic to the individual professional, and that a given professional may spend more time on some of the task types and less on others relative to his or her peer group. Furthermore, professionals in the same profession can experience activities differently (e.g., what is an imposed evil to one doctor, may be a raison d'être activity for another) and the experience can change over time for individual professionals, thus individuals' pie charts are likely to differ from each other and over time. Although individual or context-specific decompositions of professional work can thus vary both between individuals and over time, we provide an example of how a professional might experience their activities in Figure 1 and illustrate our definitions of the activity types using examples from the teaching context, as this is likely a professional context with which readers will have at least some familiarity.

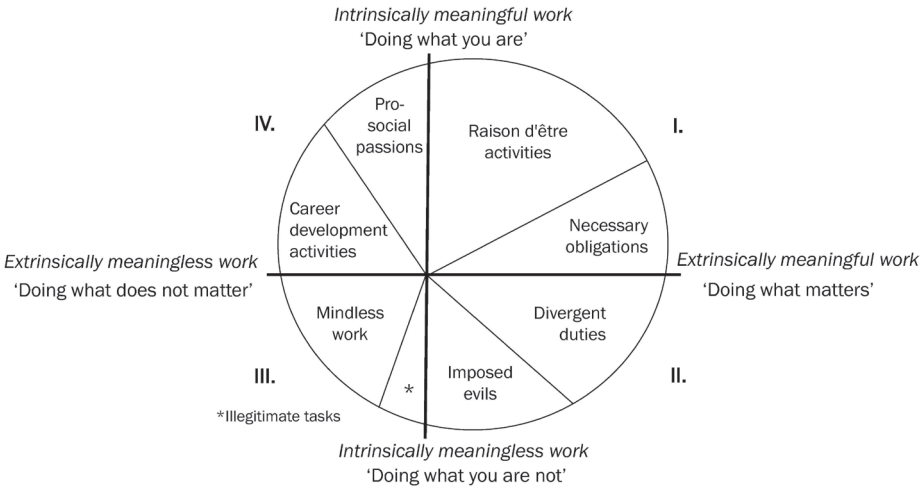

Figure 1: Professional work deconstructed into eight types of intrinsically and extrinsically meaningful work activities

'Raison d'être' activities are activities that belong to the core of the profession and are (proto)typically associated with the profession. For example, teaching classes tends to be a raison d'être activity for teachers. Carrying out raison d'être activities is a way of maintaining, expressing, and building one's professional identity, with which they are congruent, and are thus an intrinsic source of meaningfulness. Raison d'être activities are also a source of extrinsic meaningfulness, as these activities tend to represent the core of the profession and are therefore crucial to the organization (a school implies that there are teachers who teach). Finally, executing raison d'être activities may be seen as something that professionals want to do, because professionals were motivated by and chose to execute those work activities when they pursued (training in) that particular profession.

'Necessary obligations' are activities that typically belong to a profession and cannot be ignored, but do not define its purpose. An example would be grading exams and assignments, something that teachers may not aspire to do but that is an institutionalized 'part of the job'. Necessary obligations thus do affirm one's professional identity and are at least somewhat intrinsically meaningful, but differ in the sense from 'raison d'être' activities that the motivation to engage in necessary obligations is more externally driven (i.e., have to do) than raison d'être activities. Necessary obligations form a source of extrinsic meaningfulness, as professionals do perceive the value of such activities to organizational goals.

'Divergent duties' are activities that are not typically perceived to belong to one's profession at the onset but become part of a professional's job based on interest or availability. Divergent duties show similarities to OCB, in that both are likely to be perceived as valuable to the organization by professionals yet neither is likely to be formally required (cf. Organ, 1988). An example of both would be a teacher who takes on the training of a new teaching assistant although this is not part of his formal job description. Divergent duties, however tend to become adopted as part of one's job, because they are delegated or included through job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Although not all professionals need to execute divergent duties as these 'leftover tasks' are not formally assigned to a particular (professional) job role, the execution of these activities is perceived to be valuable in the eyes of the professional and clearly aligned with organizational goals as 'someone needs to do it' (i.e., extrinsic meaningfulness). An example would be a teacher who is also the IT coordinator for the school

based on her own preferences and expertise from her former job. Based on the atypicality of divergent duties, they do not provide meaningfulness through the expression of professional identity. However, professionals are expected to still want to engage in divergent duties, because adding these unique activities is a way to distinguish oneself from other professionals (Brewer, 1991) and/or to include other aspects of the self in the current job (Berg et al., 2010).

'Imposed evils' are activities focused on administration for regulatory, monitoring, and efficiency purposes. Imposed evils are not aligned with professional identity, because the external control over professional work clashes with the autonomy and authority aspects of how professional work is defined (Hodson & Sullivan, 2012). However, imposed activities can provide extrinsic meaningfulness, because they are focused on increasing organizational efficiency (e.g., the provision data to inform managerial decision making) and thus likely to be perceived by professionals as contributing to the organization. Administering student grades in an online system, for example, might be useful to the school's administration, but can make teachers feel like administrative personnel rather than teachers. Similar to necessary obligations, professionals see imposed evils as something they have to do, and is thus associated with a lack of perceived autonomy.

'Mindless work' includes activities that are not challenging or representative of the profession but that offer a way of dealing with other challenging tasks such as highly cognitive and creative work and/or a high work load. Mindless work activities are low in cognitive demand and performance pressure (Elsbach & Hargadon, 2006) and are not aligned with professional identity because mindless work is not typical for any profession. It can, for example, be relaxing to clear one's desk after a stressful day of teaching for a teacher, but also for an accountant, or a detective. Rather than providing a sense of intrinsic meaningfulness, mindless work helps to create the conditions under which the other tasks may be accomplished. Mindless work activities also do not provide extrinsic meaningfulness as they are too simple to be perceived as a valuable contribution. However, because it helps professionals to feel in control, engaging with easy tasks that are at least somewhat useful or can form a needed distraction, professionals will sometimes want to do mindless work.

'Illegitimate tasks' are activities that reasonably should not be required of professionals and/or are not at all necessary in the eyes of the professional. By definition, illegitimate tasks are ill-aligned with professional identity, because

they fall far outside the range of one's occupational role. In addition, illegitimate tasks offer no extrinsic meaningfulness, because these activities are, compared to imposed evils, seen as inefficient (Semmer et al., 2015). Even though some activities need to be done and serve a purpose, they could be done by someone else - whose profession it fits better - or should not be done at all. For example, a teacher might see completing two identical forms for the transfer of a student as unnecessary and a waste of time. Daily vacuuming the classroom is an illegitimate task for a teacher, but legitimate for a professional cleaner. Due to the clear lack of value and incongruence with professional identity, professionals are unlikely to execute illegitimate tasks if given the choice. Professionals often, however, have to execute illegitimate tasks because of supervisors expressing power, the incompetency of others, or because of organizational mistakes.

'Prosocial passions' are activities that are not formally expected by the organization, but are performed because they are congruent with professional identity and the altruistic nature of many professions (Hodson & Sullivan, 2012). Employees might feel that as a professional they have to rather than want to do perform these professional passions in order to avoid negating their professional identity. An example is a teacher who goes above and beyond the call of duty and makes house calls to a very sick student. The drive to engage in this behavior is found in the prosocial motivation to help and benefit others, the organization, or society at large (Grant, 2007, 2008a). Despite intentions to contribute to others, in executing prosocial passions professionals are likely to perceive conflict with organizational goals and the lack of extrinsic meaningfulness. Going above and beyond the call of duty means directing time and effort to activities that are incongruent with the organization's mission or insufficiently acknowledged as such by the organization. Professionals may be burdened with the sense that in the eyes of the organization they could spend their time and energy more wisely. Prosocial passions differ in that respect from OCB, defined as behavior not formally required but clearly perceived as valuable for the organization (cf. Organ, 1988).

'Career development activities' are those activities that contribute to the sustainable employability and (intra-and extra-organizational) mobility of the professional. Career development activities provide a means to strengthen the awareness of and pride in who one is professionally (Savickas et al., 2009). Following a course on special education needs can be an intrinsically meaningful activity for teachers, for example. However, career development activities are

less likely to be perceived as valuable to the organization by professionals, because they are targeted at the career of the professional in general rather than their direct value to the organization. Indeed, by increasing one's employability more broadly, the chances of the professional leaving the organization may increase, although empirical evidence for this 'employability paradox' remains limited (Nelissen, Forrier, & Verbruggen, 2017). Nevertheless, engaging in career development activities is likely more strongly aligned with the professional's own goals than those of the organization.

CONSEQUENCES OF (NOT) DOING WHAT YOU ARE AND WHAT MATTERS

Below, we delineate the potential consequences in terms of professional's affect, well-being, and performance of engaging in doing what you are and what matters (see Figure 2). Engaging in work activities that are both intrinsically and extrinsically meaningful (i.e., quadrant I) or neither (i.e., quadrant III) is relatively unambiguous as uniform cues are conveyed. The two sources of meaningfulness or lack thereof likely interact and strengthen one another creating relatively enduring positive or negative consequences for professionals. However, work activities that either are intrinsically or extrinsically meaningful (i.e., quadrant II and IV) are relatively ambiguous as they entail contradictory cues

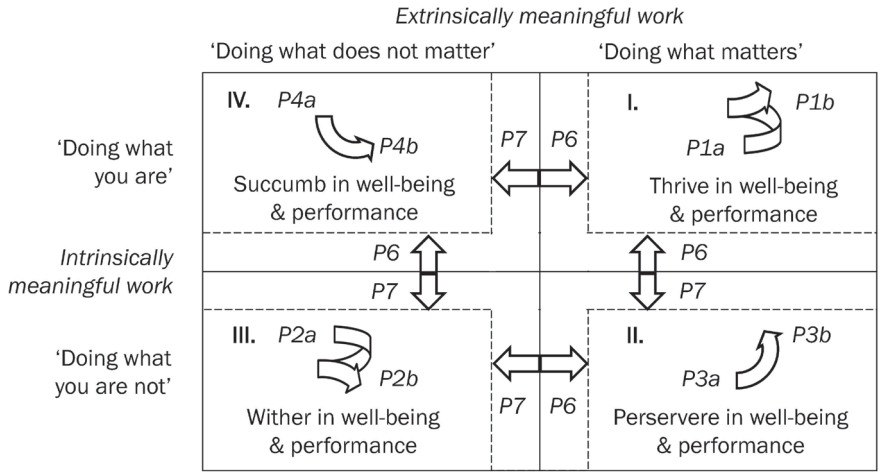

Figure 2: The consequences of doing what you are and doing what matters and potential shifts between balance and imbalance in meaningful work (including propositions)

as to their value and meaningfulness. Professionals simultaneously experiencing the presence and the lack of meaningfulness are likely to face both positive and negative consequences, depending on the role of time (i.e., during and immediately after execution versus the long-term).

Doing what you are and what matters

Work activities that are both intrinsically and extrinsically meaningful to professionals are unambiguously associated with primarily positive consequences (i.e., quadrant I; raison d'être activities and necessary obligations). Following the ideas of self-expression and self-verification, professionals, like all individuals, tend to strive for and aim to maintain a positive self-concept (Shamir, 1991). As professional work often is an important part of one's self-concept, professionals in particular are expected to have the tendency to positively value their professional role (Semmer et al., 2010). The identity affirming nature of doing what you are, provides an opportunity for professionals to express what they value by engaging in those activities that will make them feel proud and that will fuel their self-esteem (Stets, 2005; Thoits, 1991). We expect that activities that reflect both doing what you are and what matters enhance professionals' positive emotions based on the congruence with identity, because identity processes may be considered to entail 'emotional endeavors' (Winkler, 2016, p. 4) and positive self-regard is considered a key affective component of identity (Dutton et al., 2010). Professionals feel positive (enthusiastic, energized, concentrated, and happy), as is captured in positive affect (e.g., Watson et al., 1988), when they build a positive self-concept by doing what they are. Based on the positive self-concept, we thus propose the following:

Proposition 1a: If a work activity is intrinsically and extrinsically meaningful, professionals are likely to feel positive during and immediately after execution.

The immediate positive effects of doing what you are and what matters are expected to accumulate over time. First, doing what you are and what matters is likely to drive professionals' job satisfaction and enhance their performance. Indeed, congruence between (professional) identity and work activities was shown to be related to higher job satisfaction, commitment, creativity, job performance, and prosocial behaviors, and lower absenteeism (Grant, 2008a; May et al., 2004; Polzer, Milton, & Swarm Jr, 2002; Swann, Gómez, Seyle, Morales, & Huici,

2009; Thatcher & Greer, 2008). This relationship may be explained by identity theory and the desire of individuals to have a positive, professional identity (Stets, 2005; Thoits, 1991). Professionals have the tendency to choose and appreciate work activities that are consistent with their self-concept (Korman, 1970; Shamir, 1991), will be energized by the positive affect associated with doing what you are, and will show self-determined behavior to maintain that positive state (Porath, Spreitzer, Gibson, & Garnett, 2012; Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005). In other words, professionals will endeavor to spend time and energy to continue to do what they are and what matters. As a result, generally professionals will become better at executing these activities and continue to have positive experiences (i.e., upward spiral) (Kira & Balkin, 2014). Second, doing what you are is less likely to induce problematic forms of stress among professionals and may potentially even buffer against stress deriving from other less meaningful activities, as long as it is not overdone[13]. Peeters, Schaufeli, and Buunk (1995), for example, found that stressors aligned with one's profession were seen as trivial. Doing what you are and what matters thus allows professionals to build a positive self-concept and become better at their job, while experiencing limited stress due to the professional legitimacy of these work activities. In sum, we expect that professionals sustain the short-term positive consequences of doing what they are and what matters over time (i.e., thrive) in terms of their well-being and performance and propose the following:

> *Proposition 1b: Over time, professionals who engage in work activities that are both intrinsically and extrinsically meaningful thrive in terms of well-being and performance.*

Neither doing what you are, nor what matters

Work activities that are neither intrinsically nor extrinsically meaningful to professionals, are unambiguously associated with primarily negative consequences (i.e., quadrant III; illegitimate tasks and mindless work). Based on identity theory, we argue that the more a professional engages in doing what they are not and what does not matter, the more stress he or she will experience because he or she is likely to perceive those work activities as a threat to professional identity (Petriglieri, 2011; Semmer et al., 2007), without

[13] Overdoing it, for example, employees with calling who become overloaded after enhancing their job and/or cases of expertise entrenchement or destruction of passion of professionals discussed later in this chapter.

any satisfaction or significance from doing what matters to counterbalance these negative feelings. Identity threat is "an experience appraised as indicating potential harm to the value, meaning, or enactment of an identity" (Petriglieri, 2011, p. 644) and is unsettling for individuals who, again, strive for a positive self-concept. Work activities perceived by the professional as falling outside his or her professional boundaries and also not clearly benefitting the organization feel threatening and even insulting (Semmer et al., 2010; Stocker, Jacobshagen, Semmer, & Annen, 2010), because the activities send a signal of disrespect and make professionals sense a failure in living up to their professional standards (Semmer et al., 2015). The experience of having one's professional identity questioned or degraded by others immediately brings about negative emotions, such as anger, fear, guilt, and nervousness (Meister et al., 2014; Williams, 2007), captured in the overarching construct of negative affect (e.g., Watson et al., 1988). Self-discrepancies, such as incongruence between professional identity and activities, have been found to be related to disappointment and sadness as well as fear (Higgins, 1987). In addition, professionals experience negative affect doing what they are not and what does not matter, because it is demotivating and frustrating to do something that is experienced as futile (Ariely et al., 2008). Illegitimate tasks, for example, were found to be a distinctive stressor (Semmer et al., 2015) associated with more episodes of anger within the same workday (Eatough, Meier, Igic, Elfering, Spector, & Semmer, 2016). Based on the experienced identity threat of incongruent work activities and the frustration of doing something futile, we propose:

Proposition 2a: If a work activity is neither intrinsically nor extrinsically meaningful, professionals likely feel negative during and immediately after execution.

The immediate negative effects of neither doing what you are nor what matters, over time and cumulatively, are likely to translate into longer lasting negative consequences for professionals if they are unable to change this situation. First, professionals' feelings of identity threat are likely to intensify when these work activities take up a significant proportion of a professional's job, which is, in turn, likely to make professionals wither in terms of well-being. Professional identity encompasses one's own, subjective interpretation of what it means to be a police officer, doctor, or teacher. This interpretation becomes threatened if those meanings are unlikely to be found in relation to one's

professional identity in the future (Petriglieri, 2011), creating an unbridgeable gap over time between who one wants to be professionally and who one will be. Given that activities are not perceived to be of value to the organization either, this is not off-set by an extrinsic source of meaning. Incongruent work activities may thus form a barrier to the enactment of one's professional identity (Petriglieri, 2011). Maitlis (2009), for example, describes the painful situations in which professional musicians are not able to play their instruments anymore after experiencing severe trauma. Activities that are in the category of 'neither doing what you are, nor what matters' entail a similar threat to professionals' well-being, because they limit the time and resources available for meaningful activities. The carrying out of illegitimate tasks by Swiss armed forces, for example, was shown to be associated with lower job satisfaction and higher resentment (Stocker et al., 2010).

Second, the combination of frustration and experienced identity threat that persists after engaging in not doing what you are nor what matters, is likely to result in withdrawal behaviors and lower task performance. Identity theory posits that individuals will defend themselves against identity threats and retaliate to reaffirm a damaged identity, restore justice, or vent negative emotions (Aquino & Douglas, 2003). The associated immediate negative affect (Eatough et al., 2016) is likely to further fuel negative forms of work behavior such as withdrawal and workplace deviance (Fox & Spector, 2006) as negative affect hinders the control of negative reactions (Mohr, Müller, Rigotti, Aycan, & Tschan, 2006). Individuals who felt their identity threatened at work, for example, lowered their efforts to comply with company rules (Elsbach, 2003), deliberately obstructed change efforts (Nag, Corley, & Gioia, 2007), showed more interpersonal and organizational counterproductive work behavior (Semmer et al., 2010), exhibited more antisocial behavior directed toward other employees (Aquino & Douglas, 2003), were inclined to leave the organization (Trevor & Nyberg, 2008), and performed worse (Steele, 1997). In sum, we expect that the short-term negative consequences of neither doing what you are nor what matter amass over time (i.e., professionals wither) in terms of both their well-being and performance and propose the following:

> *Proposition 2b: Professionals who engage in work activities that are neither intrinsically nor extrinsically meaningful wither over time in terms of well-being and performance.*

Doing what matters, but what you are not

Work activities that are only extrinsically meaningful to professionals are ambiguously associated with both positive and negative consequences (i.e., quadrant II; divergent duties and imposed evils). On the one hand, professionals may experience negative affect during or immediately after engaging in such activities due to the incongruence between these work activities and professional identity. Following identity theory, as previously discussed, a violation of professionals' expectations is threatening and associated with negative affect (Eatough et al., 2016; Higgins, 1987), because doing what you are not takes away resources from the adequate fulfillment of those activities that do fall within those boundaries (Semmer et al., 2007; Thoits, 1991)[14]. Semmer (2000), for example, found that nurses experienced more stress searching the archives for an x-ray when done to support a doctor's publication (i.e., threatening professional boundaries) than when it was done to treat a returning patient. Although in general work activities that contribute to (organizational) goals have been found to be related to (daily) positive and activated affect (Gabriel et al., 2011; Harris, Daniels, & Briner, 2003; Henkel & Hinsz, 2004), the conflicting experience of negative and positive affect associated with engaging in extrinsically, but not intrinsically meaningful work, creates an experience of emotional ambivalence (Fong, 2006; Larsen, McGraw, & Cacioppo, 2001). As threats to identity are especially difficult to handle (Petriglieri, 2011) and individuals ruminate more over negative situations (Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1991), we propose:

> *Proposition 3a: If a work activity is only extrinsically meaningful, professionals likely feel ambivalence or negative during and immediately after execution.*

These types of tasks likely do have more positive effects in the longer run, once the task is finished. The immediate negative affect associated with engaging in an activity that is incongruent with professional identity fades, while the positive feeling of having contributed something valued to the organization may remain, especially if reinforced through positive feedback or appreciation

[14] We emphasize that the focus here is on how particular activities are perceived by a given individual professional. It is very well possible, that the same activity may be differentially construed across individuals, or even by a single individual over time or for different purposes.

expressed by others in the organization. Over time professionals are thus potentially able to reap the benefits in terms of well-being and performance due to the experienced contribution made to the organization's mission of doing what matters, which may however take some time. First, experiencing task significance and feeling appreciated is likely to be associated with higher well-being of professionals. Ample research on job design and the role of task significance has shown that the experience that one's job has a positive impact on others is motivational and makes work more meaningful (cf. Grant, 2008c). Contributing to the organization makes these work activities worth the effort, despite the incongruence with professional identity, because this contribution is likely to be seen and appreciated by the organization. The perceived congruence between the work activity and the goals of the organization offers professionals an alternative opportunity to build a positive self-concept by being valued by the organization and being similar to other employees who fit and perform in the organization (Dutton et al., 2010). Second, the increased motivation that derives from work that is extrinsically meaningful for professionals is likely to translate in higher job performance (Grant, 2008c). Because feeling acknowledged and appreciated at work increases motivation and job satisfaction, professionals are encouraged to work harder (Herzberg, 1974; Stocker et al., 2010). In sum, we expect that professionals turn the short-term ambivalent or negative affective consequences into positive ones over time (i.e., persevere) in terms of their well-being and performance and propose:

> *Proposition 3b: Professionals who engage in work activities that only extrinsically meaningful over time persevere in terms of well-being and performance.*

Doing what you are, but what does not matter

Work activities that are only intrinsically meaningful are ambiguously associated with both positive and negative consequences for professionals (i.e., quadrant IV; prosocial passions and career development activities). We argue that professionals are likely to feel motivated and proud in doing what they are, even when it does not contribute to the goals of the organization. Shamir (1991, p. 411) argued that "humans are not only goal-oriented but also self-expressive" and thereby acknowledges that not all behavior is driven by balancing costs and benefits in a calculative manner. This allows for the possibility that some of it may not be instrumental. Professionals are thus motivated to express

their professional identity through those work activities that are congruent with their professional role even when these work activities do not directly contribute to the organization. For example, a police officer who spends hours to help a confused elderly person outside her regular hours can feel like this effort is not seen as valuable by her supervisor, but that she should do this as it fits her professional identity of helping and protecting people in need. In doing so, we expect professionals to experience pride, authenticity, and self-esteem (Stets, 2005; Thoits, 1991) as a direct outcome of engaging in such activities, resulting in the experience positive affect. However, as the effort invested in work activities from this quadrant can conflict with organizational goals or is not seen or appreciated, we again expect that professionals experience ambivalence rather than solely positive emotions (Fong, 2006). For example, they may feel proud to have helped, but also unhappy that this is not recognized by their boss or stressed if this was done in time that could (or perhaps should) have been spent on activities that are valued by the organization. We thus propose:

> *Proposition 4a: If a work activity is only intrinsically meaningful, professionals likely feel ambivalence or positive during and immediately after execution.*

Over time professionals may not be able to sustain the benefits in terms of well-being and performance mainly due to a lack of acknowledgement and appreciation on the part of the organization. First, professionals' reluctance to deviate from self-expressive behavior can make them over-committed (Brockner et al., 1986), which means that they exaggerate their efforts, 'overdo it', and become vulnerable to well-being risks (Siegrist, 1996), such as emotional exhaustion, and both psychosomatic and physical health complaints (De Jonge et al., 2000). Professionals are likely to experience stress due to the lack of reciprocity between cost and gains (Siegrist, 1996) in spending time doing what does not matter, especially when professionals incur high costs in the form of additional hours and energy in making that effort (Bakker, Killmer, Siegrist, & Schaufeli, 2000; De Jonge et al., 2000). Second, the negative effects on well-being and the reluctance to change an ineffective course of action based on identity motives is likely to negatively affect overall performance, since job performance is generally defined in terms of those work behaviors that contribute to the goals of the organization (Motowidlo, 2003). When the behavior does not lead to any rewards or is even harmful, the motivation to have a consistent self-concept may

lead professionals to persist in an anti-instrumental course of action (Shamir, 1991). For example, a zookeeper who is not spending her whole night watching over a sick animal because colleagues are already present (i.e., making the effort inefficient) could feel disappointed in herself as she believes that she should be there. To avoid negative emotional states or a negative self-evaluation, such as 'I failed a sick animal and my colleagues', professionals are likely to keep doing what they are even if it does not clearly contribute to the organization (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). However, being exposed to stress for a prolonged time will negatively affect the performance of professionals (Cropanzano et al., 2003). In sum, we expect that the short-term ambivalence or positive consequences of professionals doing what they are diminish over time (i.e., succumb) in terms of their well-being and performance and propose:

> *Proposition 4b: Professionals who engage in work activities that are only intrinsically meaningful over time succumb in terms of well-being and performance.*

BALANCING MEANINGFUL AND MEANINGLESS WORK ACTIVITIES

So far, we have focused solely on the positive and negative consequences of professionals engaging in a particular singular activity. However, in a given time period, the professional will likely engage in successive work activities that comprise doing what they are, doing what matters, doing what they are not, and doing what does not matter. It is therefore necessary to take into account whether the overall composition a professional's job activities allows for a balance in which sufficient time is spent on meaningful work instead of viewing the aforementioned consequences of each category of work activities in isolation. The impact of only five minutes every week spent emptying out ones' trash can at work, for example, will be limited compared to having to spend many hours engaging in tasks that are experienced as futile. Below, we define (im)balance in meaningful work and delineate mechanisms that may tip the balance either incrementally until a threshold is reached or more radically at once (Selenko et al., 2018). We discuss how professionals and organizational agents may unintentionally destabilize the meaningfulness of work and how both have agency to intentionally help the professional regain the balance (see Figure 2).

Balance versus imbalance

Professionals are likely to experience balance when the majority of their time is spent on work that is meaningful either intrinsically (i.e., quadrant IV), extrinsically (i.e., quadrant II), or both (i.e., quadrant I) and that of these three categories, most time is spent doing what they are and what matters (i.e., quadrant I). Balance thus represents a cognitive and subjective, but mainly subconscious assessment of the set of work activities based on a professional's perception of doing what they are and what matters, implicitly weighing meaningful work activities against those that they see as meaningless. This cognitive process becomes conscious either when a feeling develops that the package of activities 'does not add up anymore' or when there is an external trigger for conscious sense making (Morrison & Robinson, 1997). This is in line with the finding that individuals are unlikely to experience meaningfulness in the moment but rather in retrospect when reflecting on it (Bailey & Madden, 2016).

Imbalances in meaningful work are perceived once a certain threshold is surpassed either slowly over time or more suddenly at once (Selenko et al., 2018). The moment the threshold is passed, the imbalance becomes an affective state given that emotions are based on cognitive appraisals of events (Moors, Ellsworth, Scherer, & Frijda, 2013; Smith & Lazarus, 1993). Although, taking stock of meaningfulness is a cognitive activity, feeling imbalance is an emotional experience. Professionals who feel that their work activities have become unbalanced see their expectations of what their professional work constitutes violated, which is related to distress, anger, wrongful harm, disappointment, frustration, and resentment (Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Rousseau, 1989). Imbalance is thus an emotional/affective state based on the belief that the organization has failed to provide sufficient meaningful work activities congruent with both professional identity and organizational goals as expected by the professional. We therefore propose the following:

> *Proposition 5: Professionals cognitively assess whether the majority of their time is spent on work that is meaningful and emotionally experience imbalance when this is not the case.*

From balance to imbalance: losing meaning

Below we discuss how changes made by organizations can create a sense of imbalance between meaningful and meaningless work activities, however professionals themselves can also be the source of imbalance. Pro-

fessionals of course do not aim to create imbalance, but their actions can result in imbalance or the overall loss of meaning. Professionals are unlikely to add meaningless work activities to their own job, but the balance between meaningful and meaningless work may be disrupted when work changes. Individuals are known to proactively change their own work activities through job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), and receive social cues, both explicit and implicit, that steer them into carrying out or more actively choosing certain work activities, thus altering their set of work activities. In addition, maturation in a job or progression in one's professional career may naturally change the set of work activities of professionals or the perceived meaning, disturbing a previously established balance (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt et al., 2006). The magnitude of the changes made by professionals predicts whether an existing balance is incrementally or radically disrupted (Pratt et al., 2006). However, as imbalance is likely to be unintended, we expect professionals to reach their meaningless work threshold slowly and subconsciously in this case. Especially changes in ambiguous work activities (i.e., quadrant II and IV) are likely to incrementally shift the balance as the consequences are not stable over time and not directly clear due to ambiguous cues and differences in the valence of consequences over time.

In addition, professionals can trigger unbalance by losing sight of what they are or what matters to them or by shifts in what matters most. Identities change and are actively constructed together with changing work, roles, or micro-role transitions (Järventie-Thesleff & Tienari, 2016). Professional can struggle to balance their self-identity and their organizational identity and even create an anti-identity to define what is not part of being a professional (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). In sum, professionals may unintentionally do or perceive fewer activities as reflective of doing what you are and what matters through changing their work activities or their professional identity (i.e., constrain) and make their appraisal of meaningfulness less inclusive. An example of professionals losing meaning is expertise entrenchment, which we discuss below.

Expertise entrenchment. Professionals may actively seek out congruent work activities, spend more time executing them, and avoid other tasks (Kira & Balkin, 2014). By focusing on a small part of their job and only developing competence relevant to that part, professionals run the risk of neglecting other important activities and associated competences. An academic who is

always conducting meta-analyses, for example, may miss out on opportunities to learn about and use other newly developed influential research methods. The unwillingness and potential incompetence to execute incongruent activities could make professionals less flexible and more reluctant to do what is needed (Kira & Balkin, 2014). In this way, professionals risk not being able to deal with any changes and fail to develop the broad set of resources and competences necessary to sustain the congruence between work activities and professional identity in the future. As a result, professionals may unintentionally perceive a very narrow set of work activities as meaningful, and start to see more activities as meaningless. We thus propose:

> *Proposition 6a: Professionals can unintentionally create imbalance between their meaningful and meaningless work activities when they constrain doing what they are and what matters.*

From balance to imbalance: destroying meaning

Organizational agents do not aim to create imbalance in meaningful work for professionals either, but their actions can unintentionally constrain (the professional's appraisal of) what is meaningful through which they destroy meaning for professionals. Organizations may trigger imbalance by making changes in the set of work activities of professionals through job (re)design. Adding one illegitimate task to a professional's job may, for example, be sufficient to offset the balance, because it creates a sense-breaking situation in which the understanding of a professionals' identity and their work is challenged (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). In general, again, the magnitude of the change predicts whether professionals see their balance as incrementally or radically disrupted (Pratt et al., 2006). The more radical a change, the more likely an immediate experience of imbalance in meaningfulness. Especially changes in unambiguous work activities (i.e., quadrant I and III) may instantly disrupt balance because the positive or negative consequences are clear.

Organizations may trigger imbalance by a lack of appreciation or a failure to reliably signal what matters to them. Professionals reconsider the importance of a work activity when they do not see their effort translated into sufficient extrinsic meaningfulness, or perceive that they are doing the wrong things through sensemaking (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). In addition, organizational agents sometimes send mixed signals about what they consider to be important or may impose conflicting goals. Leaders may, for example, preach sustainability

in line with their organization, but role model other behavior by conducting work in a wasteful manner. As a result of these conflicting signals, professionals may revaluate sustainability as an important goal in their work group. In sum, organizational agents may unintentionally diminish the activities seen by professionals as doing what you are and what matters (i.e., constrain) through work (re)design or by not clearly signaling what is important making professionals' appraisal of meaningfulness less inclusive. Below we discuss destruction of passion as an example.

Destruction of passion. Professionals' motivation to express their professional identity negatively affects their well-being over time when work activities are perceived to be incongruent with organizational goals. The lack of appreciation from the organization or supervisor for the effort invested in prosocial passions signals that the effort or achievement is trivial or unimportant. A nurse, for example, who spends hours of her own time tracking down an interpreter to help treat a foreign patient may see that effort as wasted time after being not being praised, but reprimanded instead for being late with her discharge papers. As a result of a lack of appreciation, professionals may not only reevaluate an activity in terms of its meaning for the organization, but also reevaluate (part of) their professional identity as negative (Petriglieri, 2011). This has a detrimental effect on professionals' self-esteem and serves to diminish the pride that professionals associate with their identity. The nurse in our example feels less proud about her activities that were intrinsically and extrinsically meaningful before. To cope with such situations professionals may distance themselves from their profession and shrink the importance and pervasiveness of their professional identity through perceiving fewer work activities as meaningful. Thus, we propose the following:

> *Proposition 6b: Organizations can unintentionally create imbalance between meaningful and meaningless work activities when they constrain doing what you are and what matters.*

From imbalance to balance: making meaning

Below we discuss how changes made by organizations can create the sense of balance, however professionals have agency as well in (re)gaining balance. Professionals strive for balance between their meaningful and meaningless work activities, and do so by intentionally broadening (their appraisal of) what is meaningful and thus make their own meaning. Rosso and colleagues

(2010, p. 115) state that "individuals are the ultimate arbiters of the meaning of their own work", as meaning is shaped through their own subjective experiences and appraisals. Professionals are thus assumed to have agency in creating and maintaining meaningfulness in their work and to be motivated to do so (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). However, professionals are most likely to interpret cues and signals when they encounter problematic situations that require conscious sensemaking (Weick, 1993; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). Feeling an imbalance between meaningful and meaningless work could be such a situation that requires professionals to rethink what it means to be a doctor, nurse, police officer, accountant, or teacher.

Professionals may use identity work or customization to address the felt imbalance (Pratt et al., 2006). Some restaurant chefs, for example, framed themselves as artists and their work as an art form to include the highly skilled aspects that the context they worked in required and to distinguish themselves from chefs in fast-food restaurants (Fine, 1996). Professionals adjust what they do and who they are to reestablish balance, because having meaningful work contributes to a positive and coherent self-concept (Shamir, 1991; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). In sum, professionals can do or perceive more activities as doing what you are and what matters (i.e., broaden) through job crafting or identity work and make their appraisals of meaningfulness more inclusive, both are addressed in more detail below.

Job crafting. By changing the number or form of activities, professionals influence what they do and ensure that it reflects what they are and what matters in the eyes of organizational agents. Indeed, the motivation to have a positive self-concept and do what is meaningful is a known driver for job crafting behavior (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Professionals could, for example, choose not to engage in a divergent duty or to increase their raison d'être activities. In addition, professionals can proactively change how they see their job in order to make it a more integrated and meaningful whole using cognitive crafting. For example, a hospital cleaner may intentionally reframe his work activities from a disintegrative set of cleaning actions towards cleaning in order to help patients get better (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Professionals may thus proactively frame their work activities in a more favorable light and broaden what they perceive to be meaningful as well. Finally, professionals can also engage in job crafting to influence what they do to make meaning on a daily basis (Demerouti et al., 2015; Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012; Tims, Bakker, & Derks,

2014). A nurse, for example, could choose to add some additional light cleaning tasks to her work day, because it could help her process the intense hours of work she had dealing with a patient with dementia (i.e., crafting some mindless work into the day as a distraction).

Identity work. Professionals can adjust what it means to be a professional, because identities can be formed, constructed, changed, adjusted, and crafted deliberately (Selenko et al., 2018). Identity work is defined as "the activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept" (Brown, 2015, pp. 23–24). Research on the adaptive process of medical residents showed that it is possible to customize professional identity to better fit with the working reality. A radiologist in training, for example, slowly shifted his/her professional identity towards being a doctor's consultant in order to make sense of their advising work activities that replaced the patient contact activities they experienced during medical training (Pratt et al., 2006). Based on these two techniques, we propose the following:

> *Proposition 7a: Professionals can intentionally create or restore balance between meaningful and meaningless work activities when they broaden doing what they are and what matters.*

From imbalance to balance: giving meaning

Organizational agents also strive to create balance in meaningful work for professionals given the importance of meaningful work for professionals' well-being and performance (Michaelson et al., 2014). Furthermore, they have the agency to intentionally create meaning by broadening (the appraisal of) what is meaningful to professionals. Whereas professionals may be triggered into action, organizations aim to constantly foster and cultivate meaningfulness for their employees (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). Organizations manage meaningfulness by changing what employees do and by shaping the context within which work is performed, in which appealing to the identity of the professional is central (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Organizational agents have influence over what is considered part of professional work, which if done correctly means including mainly meaningful work activities (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

In addition, as previously said, organizational agents, such as supervisors, provide cues and signals that professionals interpret and translate into meaningfulness, which if done intentionally can help professionals to see more work

activities as part of their professional role or as important to the organization (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). Through sense-giving, leaders help professionals to understand the strategic priorities of their organization and broaden what professionals perceive to matter to the organization (Bailey & Madden, 2016; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991). In addition, professionals understand better why work activities matter when organizational practices and activities are aligned with organizational goals and professional boundaries (Nishii, Lepak, & Schneider, 2008). In sum, organizations can increase the activities seen by professionals as doing what you are and what matters (i.e., broaden) through work (re)design or providing a vision that augments that which is seen as meaningful and make professionals' appraisals of meaningfulness more inclusive. Both are addressed in more detail below.

Work (re)design. Organizational agents, such as HR practitioners and direct supervisors, can ensure that professionals are doing what matters and what they are as much as viable using work (re)design to structure and modify tasks, roles, and jobs to achieve meaningfulness (Grant & Parker, 2009; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). Organizations can adjust the set of work activities of professionals in order to create the conditions for a better balance between meaningful and meaningless work and, for example, by delegating incongruent work activities to someone else, or, if possible, choosing to remove a task completely. In addition, work design allows organizations to point employees to their prosocial impact and thus allow professionals to experience the positive impact their work has on others (Grant, 2008b, 2008c). Asking firefighters to provide fire safety courses to communities, for example, is an additional task that allows these professionals to experience how their knowledge has a positive effect on others. Contact with beneficiaries and stakeholders is thus useful in letting professionals experience that their work and specific work activities matter (Grant, 2007).

Vision. Higher management can intentionally broaden the set of work activities that are perceived as meaningful by professionals by using a vision to make clear what is valuable to the organization and what not. A vision, defined as the image of the future that provides organizational members with behavioral guidelines, organizational norms, and values (Conger & Kanungo, 1987), is one way to communicate to professionals what matters. Despite the fact that visions are rather abstract compared to concrete work activities, President Kennedy, for example, used the ultimate aspiration of NASA to put a man on the moon to communicate how even daily activities such as mopping the floor contributed to

that vision (Carton, 2018). A clear vision could thus be a bright beacon, guiding professionals' appraisal of their work activities in the right direction. Especially leaders, as managers of meaning (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993), can use elements of transformational and visionary leadership, such as inspirational motivation (Bass, 1985), to ensure that the organization's vision is effectively communicated and sufficiently shared with, supported by, and potentially even co-created by its professionals. Visionary leadership, defined as the verbal communication of a future and the persuasion of others to contribute to that future (Stam, Van Knippenberg, & Wisse, 2010; Van Knippenberg & Sitkin, 2013), can help leaders to broaden professionals' perception of what matters. Based on these two examples of techniques organizational agents can use to positively affect meaningfulness, we propose the following:

Proposition 7b: Organizations can intentionally create or restore balance between meaningful and meaningless work activities when they (help professionals to) broaden doing what you are and what matters.

DISCUSSION

We have presented a model of how doing what you are and doing what matters explains whether professionals experience meaningfulness at the level of work activities and how this is reflected in their well-being and performance. First, our model integrates and extends sources of meaningful work when applied to the professional work context with the congruence between work activities and professional identity. Second, we contribute to identity theory by showing that identity threat and self-verification are opposite ends of the same continuum and help to explain the importance of congruence between professional identity and work activities. We show that what professionals do provides a unique means of explaining the extent to which professionals experience meaningfulness, sustain or improve their well-being, and perform well. Compared to examining the job holistically, this highlights that not all work activities are seen as equally meaningful. Third, we provide a dynamic perspective on identity and meaningfulness by showing how balance in the whole set of work activities can be disrupted and restored. Below we discuss these contributions in more detail, how they can spur future research, and how they can be translated into practice.

Whereas doing what matters has been acknowledged to constitute an important means of experiencing significance at work through feelings of purpose (Grant, 2008b, 2008c), less is known about how the consistency

between behavior and identity figures into this (Rosso et al., 2010). However, identities are closely related and shaped by what we do (Christiansen, 1999). We argued that professional identity is a salient and relevant identity category in the professional work context and added that the congruence between work activities and professional identity explicates when professionals experience their work as meaningful (Anteby et al., 2016; Pratt et al., 2006). Until now scholars of meaningfulness have often focused their attention on one source of meaningfulness at a time (Rosso et al., 2010), whereas we combine two sources and showed how extrinsic meaningfulness may complement and substitute intrinsic meaningfulness. Even when work activities are incongruent with professional identity, they are not necessarily devoid of meaning, and even work activities that are meaningful can drift towards situations in which meaningfulness and its positive consequences can evaporate incrementally over time or radically at once (Selenko et al., 2018). The quest for meaningful work will be one of constantly adjusting and shifting the balance as professional work changes in reality and includes meaningless elements as well.

Our conceptualization of doing what you are combines work on self-verification in the identity literature (Dutton et al., 2010) with ideas pertaining to identity threat (Petriglieri, 2011), which to the best of our knowledge has not been done in the identity literature so far (Miscenko & Day, 2015). We show that the possibility to express and affirm professional identity by executing professionals' valued work activities (Shamir, 1991) is one side of the coin, and that work activities that hinder or threaten professional identity (Petriglieri, 2011) are the other. We build on Shamir's (1991) work on self-concept as a motivational force and illustrate that not being able to do what you are negatively affects professionals' well-being. Our focus on professional identity in combination with the significance for the organization allowed us to explain how relatively small changes in the work of professionals can have big consequences. In doing so, we add that changes in work activities form a trigger for identity work, whereas the literature on identity work until now has been preoccupied mostly with radical triggers (Selenko et al., 2018), such as entering a new professional role (Ibarra, 1999; Pratt et al., 2006), a new organization (Beyer & Hannah, 2002), transitioning from unemployment (Koen, Van Vianen, Klehe, Zikic, & Klehe, 2016), or suffering trauma or identity loss (Maitlis, 2009).

What individuals do in terms of their work activities is rarely investigated as an antecedent of identity formation, well-being and performance despite of

the aim in organizational behavior research to explain behavior (Barley & Kunda, 2001). Our eight distinguishable types of work activities explain how what professionals do contributes to the overall experience of meaningfulness in the eyes of the professional, and subsequently their well-being and performance. We add to the 'doing' lens (Anteby et al., 2016) by showing how professionals can differ in the experience and evaluation of their own unique set of work activities. This is rarely taken into account despite the knowledge that not every individual in the same profession either experiences their job in the same way or even engages in the same activities (Fine, 1996; Parker, 2007). Exceptions on activity level research are the work on illegitimate tasks (Semmer et al., 2007, 2015, 2010), and a study by Aiken and colleagues (2001) that distinguished between tasks that do directly require nurse-patient interaction and tasks that do not require such interaction to predict the well-being of nurses. We add to the concept of illegitimate tasks or the distinction between direct and non-direct nursing tasks the myriad of work activities that fall in between meaningful and meaningless work based on identity theory, because illegitimate tasks and raison d'être activities only capture the extremes.

Directions for future research

Our model of meaningful work for professionals suggests many research opportunities. First, in order to empirically assess the eight types of work activities and their unique impact on professionals' well-being and performance, a key area in need of development is operationalization. Since illegitimate tasks and mindless work are based on existing concepts including validated scales (Elsbach & Hargadon, 2006; Semmer et al., 2015), it should be possible to measure the other six types of work activities as well. The job analysis literature could provide critical insights as to how to incorporate tasks in research and how to assess to what extent professionals perceive their tasks as meaningful (Sanchez & Levine, 2012). More generally as well, more research should incorporate tasks or work activities in order to explain behavior and well-being, as this can provide valuable and actionable insights yet is under-researched (Barley & Kunda, 2001). Chan and Anteby (2016), for example, found that female security screeners experienced higher work intensity and emotional exhaustion due to the greater amount of time spent on emotionally and physically straining pat-downs compared to their male counterparts.

In future research, scholars could also focus on how professionals use

both job crafting and identity work to re-establish balance in the meaningfulness of their work activities. We argued that professionals have agency in creating meaningful work situations for themselves by changing (the time spent on) their activities, how they appraise their activities, and therewith reconstructing their professional identity. However, little research has taken both processes into account. Pratt and colleagues (2006), for example, focus incongruence between activities and professional identity, which only triggered identity customization because these medical professionals lacked job discretion to craft their jobs. It is assumed that with sufficient discretion job crafting is preferred, because identity work entails a higher emotional burden than job crafting (Winkler, 2016). Research including both strategies of agency over meaningful work experiences could offer new insights, such as whether job crafting and identity work can be done simultaneously or alternately, and whether they may complement, substitute, or interact with one another.

A closer look at the smaller and different changes in work that influence the experience of meaningful work, in particular when mismatched to professional identity, can shed light on the interaction between work and identity. In our model we focus on what professionals do, which can elucidate how incremental and subtle changes in the content of one's job could be triggers for identity work. The rapid technological developments over the past years, for example, may be expected to impact both the content of professional work (Bresnahan, 1999; Frey & Osborne, 2013) and professional identity (Eriksson-Zetterquist, Lindberg, & Styhre, 2009). The increasing use of computers and robotization may not only destruct the meaningfulness of work and cause job polarization (Aghion & Howitt, 1994), but may also help organizations get rid of routine tasks (Autor, Levy, & Murnane, 2003). It would be interesting and worthwhile to study whether these trends may actually facilitate meaningful work for professionals, by reducing their time spent on illegitimate tasks and increasing their time spent on the complex and social aspects of the job. However, negative implications are likely as well, especially when these changes occur without regard for those activities that are appraised as (intrinsically) meaningful by their incumbents.

There are boundary conditions as to whether professionals experience their work as meaningful, which could be delineated in future research so as to facilitate the creation of meaningful work situations. It is likely that professionals can proactively create their own balanced set of meaningful work activities provided they are given sufficient autonomy to do so (Fay & Frese, 2001; Grant

& Ashford, 2008; Parker, 2007; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Organizations could also cultivate meaningfulness by enhancing individuals sense of belongingness, shifting the importance from professional identity to organizational identity (Michaelson et al., 2014). Another potential boundary condition on reaping the benefits of doing what matters but what you are not is the availability of resources. With scarce resources, professionals will have to make choices about the allocation of their time and may experience role conflict, because some expectations felt by professionals or their organizations may not be fulfilled (Heiss, 1990; Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Nielsen, Bachrach, Sundstrom, & Halfhill, 2012; Troyer, Mueller, & Osinsky, 2000). Extra-role behaviors can, for example, be experienced as particularly overwhelming when individuals already struggle to find the time to perform their in-role behaviors (Bergeron, 2007).

Practical implications

Our model of meaningful work, can aid organizational agents in facilitating and sustaining meaningful work. Professional work, like all work, is expected to become increasingly dynamic and susceptible to change (Grant & Parker, 2009). It will thus be evermore critical that bilateral communication about which work activities are intrinsically and extrinsically meaningful is incorporated in the dialogue between supervisors (as organizational agents) and professionals. By including what professionals actually do into conversations about topics such as work load, stress, meaningful work, or engagement at work, organizations can engage in dialogue with their professionals about whether their work is balanced and meaningful. Our model facilitates this discussion, as work activities classified in this manner are likely to be readily understandable for both parties. The use of our model as a communication tool could in that way create meaningful work situations and reduce noise or disagreement about what matters and what falls within professional boundaries. Performance appraisal could form a useful moment for this dialogue as it naturally focuses on what is expected, what is done, and what matters to who.

Supervisors may increase intrinsic and extrinsic meaningfulness by explicating to professionals what falls within the profession's boundaries and what not and which work activities are valuable contributions and why. Indeed, Eatough and colleagues (2016) acknowledge that supervisors have a role in reducing the potential for certain work activities to be seen as ill-fitting the professional boundaries. Sometimes the experienced lack of respect for professional roles

might be subtle and due to oversights in organizational inefficiency (e.g., requiring professors to empty trash bins) or communicating about the appropriateness of tasks, rather than blunt and offensive. Especially the subtle signals that are sent by organizational agents and that violate professional boundaries might require additional diligence of managers. Communication about what can and what cannot be expected of the professional could potentially help to detect and prevent such situations (Björk, Bejerot, Jacobshagen, & Härenstam, 2013).

In addition, organizational agents can strive to explicitly communicate the rationale for asking professionals to execute particular work activities, particularly when these are not in line with professional identity. Taking the time and effort to explain potentially difficult decisions could aid in demonstrating adequate respect for professionals, create understanding for such decisions, and reduce feelings of stress and identity threat (Eatough et al., 2016). Following the literature on organizational justice, supervisors are advised to provide adequate justification for including illegitimate tasks or imposed evils in their subordinates' professional role when there is no other option (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001). Explicit communication and reasoning for making a particular decision might prevent professionals ending up feeling offended, because it showcases respect for professionals and their specialized knowledge (Semmer et al., 2010). But even when there are no other options, it could be useful to explain how work activities matter to the organization by reframing activities in light of the organization's mission to help professionals experience more task significance.

Professionals too have an active role in the dialogue about doing what you are and what matters. Supervisors may not always realize that particular work activities are incongruent with the professional identity of their subordinates (Semmer et al., 2010) and professionals are thus best positioned to signal experienced imbalances as experts in their professional field. In addition, it is increasingly difficult for supervisors to adjust work for professionals based on its changing nature (Grant & Parker, 2009). Supervisors can be made aware of the potential negative consequences by voicing concerns or issues. However, professionals who feel offended by being asked to execute said activities might not always proactively share their feelings due to the negative repercussions that critical upward voicing might have (Milliken, Morrison, & Hewlin, 2003; Morrison, 2014; Morrison & Milliken, 2003). This is prevented when organizations create a climate in which voicing is appreciated and professionals are encouraged to share such feelings about what they are doing and asked to do.