Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal With Supervisor (RISCS): Scale Development and Conditional Model of Meaningfulness at Work

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The experience of meaning and meaningfulness at work is associated with important individual and organizational outcomes. Relationships, particularly with higher status role partners, are a pathway through which employees construct meaningful experience. Relationship with one's supervisor is often cited as 1 of the most important job characteristics with regard to individual attitudes and performance. In Study 1 a brief measure of Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal With Supervisor (RISCS) is produced. Utilizing RISCS, Study 2 draws on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) to construct a conditional model involving communication with one's supervisor, RISCS, general social status, and meaningfulness at work. Results show that communication with one's supervisor serves as a form of social support in that it has a direct positive effect on relational identification and meaningfulness. Relational identification also acts as a mediator of the relationship between communication and reported meaningfulness. The first and second stage mediation effect is moderated by general social status, such that the mediating effect of relational identification is only present when subordinate general social status is low. In combination, these results suggest that employees of lower general social status utilize relational identification with a higher work status individual (i.e., supervisor) to experience a higher level of meaningfulness at work. These results explicate previous equivocal findings on social support, and, offer practical implications for supervisor training.

Keywords: meaning, meaningfulness, well-being, social status, relational identification

Meaning-making is a natural human endeavor (Wong & Fry, 1998) and, therefore, employees strive to find meaning and meaningfulness in their work (Berg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton, 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). This

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process is adaptive because meaningful work provides numerous individual benefits such as higher job and life satisfaction (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997), lower levels of stress and depression (Locke & Taylor, 1990; Treadgold, 1999), empowerment (Spreitzer, 1996), personal fulfillment (Kahn, 2007), and career development (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Dobrow, 2006). The employee experience of meaningful work is also advantageous for organizations. In fact, management consultants suggest that meaningful experience at work is the key feature that defines most successful and innovative companies (Bain, 2007). Meaningful work is associated with higher employee engagement (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004), reduced absenteeism (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), and higher individual performance (Grant, 2012; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Wrzesniewski, 2003), even to the point of self-sacrifice (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009).

Meaningfulness Through Interpersonal Identity

Social connections are an important source of meaning at work. This phenomenon has been examined across three research streams—interpersonal relationships, leadership, and social groups. First, interpersonal relationships impact the way in which employees experience meaning at work (Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003). Theory suggests that close interpersonal relationships may lead to higher levels of perceived meaningfulness by way of strengthening one's valued identity (Kahn, 2007). Next, particular leadership styles, such as transformational leadership, can influence the way in which employees assign meaning to their work. Leaders can influence employees to focus on agreement between one's work and personally held values, resulting in work being perceived as more meaningful (Bono & Judge, 2003; Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). Finally, when employees identify with their workplace groups, viewing them both positively and distinct, they are likely to experience greater levels of meaning (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006). Alternatively, being part of a low status group or not having a valued group to identify with will have deleterious effects on meaning (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999).

The commonality of these three research streams is that the employee incorporates an aspect of work into their own individual identity in the service of constructing meaningful experience. The employee expands their individual identity to include coworkers (interpersonal relationships), the work itself (by way of a leader's influence), or valued workgroups. However, meaningfulness resulting from interpersonal identity has received very little attention. Available research on the topic shows that relationships with specific individuals have been shown to be more salient than others in terms

of producing meaningful work experiences (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), such as when an employee forms a relationship with a mentor (Kram, 1983; Ragins & Verbos, 2007).

Relational Identification

Social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel, 1978, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) suggests that behavior exists along a continuum from interpersonal to intergroup phenomena. The concept of the relational self relies on SIT to explain the extension of individual identity. The relational self is defined by assimilating one's identity with significant others, thereby defining oneself as connected to a role or position in a relationship (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). Identity is the nature of one's role-relationship, which is understood with reference to a network of interdependent roles. Relational identification is the extent to which one defines oneself in terms of a given role-relationship (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). This can be thought of as the extent to which one expands his or her individual identity to include someone with whom one shares a role-relationship.

The benefit of relational identity and identification are manifold. Two benefits central to the current study are the extent to which meaningful experience correlates with relational identification, and, the postulate that relational identification with one's supervisor is particularly beneficial. Relational identity serves a meaning-making function by providing the individual with an understanding of their place in the social world (Chen, Boucher, & Tapias, 2006). It is important to note that individuals seek places in the social world that are advantageous. Individuals have been shown to identify with others for the effect of self-enhancement (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994), in essence enjoying the psychosocial benefits of others' social status. It is hypothesized that this status differential is a key social dynamic involved in the correlation of identification and meaningful experience, such that employees feel greater meaningfulness at work when they form a relational identity involving another higher status employee (e.g., supervisor).

Supervisor Relational Identification

A positive relationship with one's boss is often cited as one of the most important job characteristics with regard to individual attitudes and performance (e.g., Society for Human Resource Management, 2014). Empirical results show that identification with a supervisor has a direct and positive impact on organizational citizenship behavior and task performance (Riketta,

2005; Riketta & Van Dick, 2005). In fact, relational identification with one's supervisor is one of the key processes by which supervisors motivate followers, because identification relates to positive employee actions such as self-regulation, self-evaluation, and self-definition (Andersen & Chen, 2002). A rationale for the positive correlation between supervisor relational identification and job performance is that identification leads to intrinsically motivation by virtue of taking the perspective, goals, and interests of a supervisor as one's own (Wang, Walumbwa, Wang, & Aryee, 2013). The proneness toward relational identification with those of higher status suggests that in the context of the workplace subordinates will be predisposed to identify with a manager or supervisor. Of course this proneness is dependent on whether or not the supervisor is viewed as a positive resource by way of positive supervisor role behaviors and attributes (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; Sluss, Ployhart, Cobb, & Ashforth, 2012; Wang et al., 2013). Positive supervisor behaviors, particularly socially supportive behaviors that enhance the socioemotional needs of subordinates, lead to the development of both an emotional bond and shared identity between individual employees and their supervisors (Blau, Tatum, & Ward-Cook, 2003; Lweicki & Bunker, 1995; Masterson, Lewis, Goldman, & Taylor, 2000; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; Sluss et al., 2012; Walumbwa, Cropanzano, & Hartnell, 2009; Wang et al., 2013).

A series of studies have examined the positive effects of the relational dynamic between supervisor and subordinates under the guise of social support. Simple communication with one's supervisor can serve as a form of social support (Beehr, Bowling, Bennett, 2010; Beehr, Farmer, Glazer, Gudanowski, & Nair, 2003; Beehr, King, & King, 1990; Chen, Popovich, & Kogan, 1999; Monnot & Beehr, 2014; Stephens & Long, 2000). More specifically, the supportive effect of communication depends on whether the content of communication is positive, negative, or nonwork related. Talking about the positive or nonjob related aspects of work with one's supervisor is positively related to a number of aspects of individual well-being (Beehr et al., 1990, 2003; Monnot & Beehr, 2014; Stephens & Long, 2000), whereas talking about the negative aspects of work with one's supervisor is negatively related to individual well-being (Beehr et al., 2003; Monnot & Beehr, 2014; Stephens & Long, 2000). Though negative communication has been shown to positively related to satisfaction with one's supervisor (Beehr et al., 1990) and meaningfulness at work (Monnot & Beehr, 2014).

The seemingly counterintuitive finding that talking about the negative aspects of work with one's supervisor is related to lower levels of satisfaction with work, but higher levels of satisfaction with supervisor and meaningfulness at work can be explained by the process of relational identification. Although speaking about the poor aspects of one's workplace may serve to further focus one's attention on stress (Beehr et al., 2010), it can also fill one's experience with a sense of significance (Monnot & Beehr, 2014).

Greater communication, even when negative, with one's supervisor enhances the likelihood of relational identification. Sharing a greater degree of relational identity with a supervisor affords higher levels of experienced meaningfulness because of the status differential. Specifically, a supervisor is a higher status role partner and therefore greater communication and identification affords the benefits of status, because status is a social psychological resource.

The Psychosocial Benefits of General and Specific Status Identification

There is considerable evidence that status is a social and psychological resource (e.g., Ferrie, Shipley, Stansfeld, & Marmot, 2002; Martikainen, Adda, Ferrie, Smith, & Marmot, 2003; McLeod & Kessler, 1990; Stansfeld, Head, & Marmot, 1998). Therefore, relational identification with another individual will enhance individual meaningfulness of work if the opposite individual is of higher social status.

Relational identification involves differing levels of self-categorization (e.g., dyad, group) According to SIT individuals develop a sense of belonging to groups (Tajfel, 1978). This same sense of identification can vary depending on the size of group. Therefore, for example, the individual self would be the lowest level of abstraction and most exclusive, whereas a work group would be a higher level of abstraction and inclusion, and an organization would be a still higher level of abstraction and inclusion. There are even broader levels of categorization related to status. For example, social status is perhaps the most general level of categorization and inclusion that extends beyond the organization to the societal level. Therefore, extending one's own identity to include an individual of higher status is a very low level of abstraction and inclusion.

When assessing social status, it is conventional from a psychosocial standpoint to focus on nonmonetary symbols of intergroup status relations, such as education and occupational prestige (Duncan, 1961; Stevenson, 1928). Education is often viewed as the most fundamental category associated with general social class or status (American Psychological Association [APA], 2006), because the positive effects of higher education span numerous domains of life, including social and psychological resources, and behaviors associated with lower health risks (Ross & Wu, 1995). Additionally, higher education is associated with career-related knowledge and skills, and a signaling effect of the educational degree itself enhances career advancement (Hungerford & Solon, 1987). Having an occupation is related to host of positive outcomes, including better physical and mental health (Jin, Shah, & Svoboda, 1995), and more prestigious occupations are associated

with a variety of working conditions that lead to better psychosocial outcomes (Marmot, Bosma, Hemingway, Brunner, & Stansfeld, 1997). Social status involving the assessment of educational achievement and occupational prestige would be classified as a categorization that involves a high level of abstraction and inclusion.

Alternatively, the status differential between a subordinate and a supervisor involves categorization that involves a very low level of abstraction and inclusion. These two levels of abstraction and inclusion (i.e., social status differential vs. supervisor–subordinate role status differential) are expected to interact. Given the psychological benefits of status, and the inclination of individuals to utilize relational identities as a way of self-enhancement, it is theorized that lower status individuals will benefit from relational identification with higher status individuals.

Proposed Conditional Model

A moderated mediation effect, or conditional model, is proposed wherein communication with one's supervisor acts as a form of social support. This form of social support has a positive impact on meaningfulness at work through relational identification with one's supervisor. However, one's level of social status moderates this indirect effect. As described above, positive, negative, and nonwork related communication with one's supervisor are hypothesized to have a direct effect on both relational identification (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; Sluss et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2013) and meaningfulness. Likewise, because work relationships are a source of meaning (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003), supervisor relational identification is hypothesized to have a direct effect on meaningfulness. Therefore, relational identification is hypothesized to mediate the relationship between supervisor communication and meaningfulness. Specifically, relational identification with one's supervisor is hypothesized to be a way which employees enhance their meaningful experience at work. This is in accord with the theory that status is a psychological resource (Semmer, McGrath, & Beehr, 2005). Specifically, relational identification is a way in which to share in someone else's status and enjoy similar psychosocial benefit, which includes the experience of more meaningfulness at work (Dutton et al., 1994). Finally, given that supervisor relational identification serves a meaning function for lower status individuals, then general social status should moderate this mediation effect. Specifically, the mediation effect should be weaker for individuals of higher general social status and stronger for individuals of lower social status (see Figure 1).
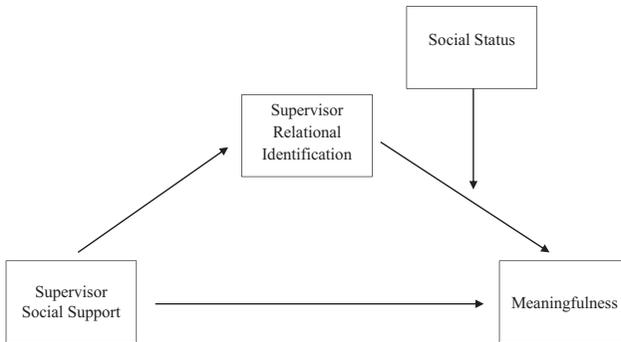
Figure 1. Hypothesized conditional model involving second stage moderated mediation. Supervisor social support = In the current study this is defined as either positive, nonwork related, or negative communication with one's supervisor; supervisor relational identification = Relational Interdependent Self-Construal With one's Supervisor (RISCS); meaningfulness = perception of meaningfulness at work; social status = general social status.

Hypothesis 1: Results will support a conditional process model, such that the positive relationship between supervisor communication (i.e., positive, negative, nonwork related) and meaningfulness will be mediated by supervisor relational identification and moderated by general social status.

Hypothesis 2: Social status will moderate the second stage of mediation, such that the relationship between supervisor relational identification and meaningfulness will be stronger for lower status employees and weaker for higher status employees.

Choice of Study Variables

Independent Variables

Empirical evidence suggests that when the supervisor is viewed as a resource, by way of positively viewed interactions and attributes, subsequent relational identification is higher (e.g., Wang et al., 2013). Nontangible socially supportive communication with subordinates provides an important resource for employees and leads to subsequent beneficial individual and organizational outcomes. Socially supportive communication received from one's supervisor serves as a socioemotional resource for a subordinate. Research suggests that emotional support is the most effective type of support, as opposed to other types such as instrumental support (Visweswaran, Sanchez, & Fisher, 1999). Positive and nonwork related communica-

tion relate positively to well-being (Beehr et al., 1990; 2003; Monnot & Beehr, 2014; Stephens & Long, 2000), whereas negative communication is inversely related to individual well-being (Beehr et al., 2003; Monnot & Beehr, 2014; Stephens & Long, 2000) and positively related to meaningfulness at work (Monnot & Beehr, 2014). Therefore, positive, negative, and nonwork related communications were chosen as antecedents of meaningfulness and supervisor relational identification in the current study.

Moderator Variables

The development of relational identification and associated outcomes is a nascent area of research (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007). However, relational identity itself has been shown to serve a meaning function by providing the individual an understanding of their place in the social world (Chen et al., 2006). In the current study supervisor relational identification was assessed because of the importance of the relationship as well the previously described inclination and likely importance of forming relational identification with someone of higher positional status.

The relationship between social status and experience of meaningful work has been largely overlooked by researchers (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzeniewski, 2010). However, social status has long been shown to have important implications for health and well-being (e.g., Martikainen et al., 2003; Stansfeld et al., 1998). A general measure of social status (high abstraction and inclusion) that relies on multiple widely used indicators, such as one's own and one's family's occupational and educational accomplishments, was utilized (Barratt, 2006).

Dependent Variables

Meaningfulness refers to the magnitude or amount of significance one feels (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Two individuals may assign the same meaning to a work activity yet differ in the valence of meaningfulness. This is an important distinction, because meaning has typically been studied as an antecedent of well-being; however, meaningfulness is appropriately conceptualized as an outcome that is complimentary to, and related with, subjective well-being (Arnold, Turner, Barling, Kelloway, & McKee, 2007). The current study is concerned with the antecedents of meaningfulness at work. Meaningfulness is an important part, albeit less well-researched, of the broad category of subjective well-being. Definitions of subjective well-being tend to focus on how one evaluates their life primarily from an emotional stand-

point based on general or specific events or contexts (Diener, 2000). To test the hypothesized outcomes a measure that includes both hedonic and meaningfulness components of subjective well-being was utilized (Monnot & Beehr, 2014).

Before examining the hypothesized relationships between supervisor behavior, employee status, and meaningfulness, a scale was designed to specifically assess relational identification with one's supervisor. Therefore, Study 1 involves scale validation and Study 2 involves hypothesis testing using the newly validated scale.

Study 1

Sample

Respondents were recruited by way of Amazon.com's Mechanical Turk (Mturk) for paid completion of a survey research study. Each participant was paid 50 cents. Respondents spent an average of 18 min ($SD = 8$) on the survey, which suggests the payment is in accord with previously studied incentive rates (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Participants were required to live within the continental United States, be employed at least part-time, and have been in their current job for more than one month. To control for random responding two validity items were included (e.g., "I have been honest when responding to items on this survey") wherein agreement was required. After deleting 48 cases due to respondents not answering affirmatively to the validity check items, the final sample consisted of 526 employed adults. Roughly half of respondents were female (51%) and when asked about education most indicated they had received an associate's degree or higher (64%). Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 67 ($M = 32$, $SD = 14.16$). Most (77%) were employed full time (i.e., 40 hr or more). On average, respondents had been at their current job for 2 years ($SD = 11$ months).

Measures

Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal With Supervisor (RISCS). A general measure of relational identification was employed as a starting point for the current scale. First, the wording of the RISC (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000) assessment was modified to include a supervisor referent. The RISC instrument is designed to assess the previously mentioned construct of relational identification, or the extent to which one defines oneself through

one's role relationships. Example items include "When I feel very close to someone, it often feels to me like that person is an important part of who I am" and "I usually feel a strong sense of pride when someone close to me has an important accomplishment". Responses range from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The RISC includes 11 items and is designed to assess the degree to which people define their identity through those with whom they share a close relationship. Internal consistency of the total normative sample is .88, with mean interitem correlations ranging from .25 to .66. Test–retest reliability over a 2-month period ranged from .63 to .73 and over 1-month period was .74 and .76. The items were altered to include a referent, such that on the supervisor-related form the original item, "My close relationships are an important reflection of who I am" has been changed to "My relationship with my supervisor is an important reflection of who I am." Next, these modified items were then subjected to item response theory (IRT) analyses to ensure internal consistency and efficiency, which resulted in subsequent item selection, and then correlated with theoretically related scales.

Social identification. Dyadic, group, and organizational social identification are important pathways toward meaningful work (Rosso et al., 2010). Therefore, in addition to the dyadic scale being created, group and organization identification were assessed. A measure of group identification was chosen that displays a one-dimensional factor structure with high loadings, and, that correlates positively with measures of teamwork and positive interpersonal relations (Hogg & Hains, 1996). Example items include, "I like my workgroup as a whole" and "I feel I fit into my workgroup." Organizational identification was assessed using previously validated assessment with internal consistency estimates ranging from .89 to .93 (Edwards & Peccei, 2007). Example items include, "I consider myself an organization person" and "My employment in the organization is a big part of who I am." Dyadic relational identification with one's supervisor is expected to positively correlate with group and organization identification.

Subjective well-being. Several measures of subjective affective and meaning-related well-being were utilized. A measure of positive and negative affective well-being was used (i.e., Positive and Negative Affect Scale [PANAS]). The PANAS displays excellent construct validity, and, internal consistency estimates of positive and negative affect are .89 and .85, respectively (Crawford & Henry, 2004). Job-related subjective well-being was assessed in the form of employee contentment (Warr, 1990), enthusiasm, (Warr, 1990), and meaningfulness (Monnot & Beehr, 2014). Contentment, enthusiasm, and meaningfulness display internal consistency estimates of .76 (Warr, 1990), .80 (Warr, 1990), and .91 (Monnot & Beehr, 2014), respectively. Participants were asked to report how they

felt in the past 2 weeks and example items included, calm (contentment), cheerful (enthusiasm), and personally fulfilled (meaningfulness). The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI; Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012) was used to assess one's sense of work as being a source of meaning and greater good. The WAMI displays an adequate factor structure and is positively related to subjective well-being and individual work outcomes (Steger et al., 2012). Relational identification with one's supervisor is expected to be significantly correlate with these previously validated subjective affective and meaning-related well-being.

Demographics. Finally, demographics were assessed by asking respondents to report their gender, highest education completed, and perceived social class (on a five point scale from "Lower Class" to "Upper Class").

Analysis

First, to ensure that the items were not only reliable, but were also highly efficient and informative of the underlying construct, an IRT analysis was conducted (Cai, Thissen, & du Toit, 2011; Samejima, 1969). Category response curves (CRC), item discrimination (α), threshold (β), theta (θ), item information function (IIF) and test information function (TIF), as well as standard error of measurement (SEM) associated with items and the test were utilized as indices of item adequacy. To be included in the final scale three separate item criteria were utilized, which included (a) nonsignificant probability levels ($S-\chi^2$), (b) a very high level of discrimination (α), and (c) a high level of information (IIF) across the greatest range of the latent construct.

Results

The IRT analysis used in this study requires that the assumption of unidimensionality be met prior to estimating item parameters. Therefore, a factor analysis with unrotated principal components extraction was used to assess dimensionality of the new SWB scale. The first three eigenvalues were 5.73, 1.16, and 0.81. A ratio of three to one, wherein the first eigenvalue is three times greater than the second, is a rule of thumb for unidimensionality (Morizot, Ainsworth, & Reise, 2007). Results support unidimensionality and, therefore, subsequent IRT analyses were warranted.

Next, the three aforementioned criteria were applied. The chi-squared item fit index ($S-\chi^2$) resulted in a total of six items with nonsignificant probability levels ($p > .05$; see Table 1). Conventional standards for the

Table 1
Graded Response Model Goodness-of-Fit Statistics for Initial Relational-Interdependent
Self-Construal With Supervisor (RISCS) Items

Item		χ^2	df	Prob.
1	**My relationship with my supervisor is an important reflection of who I am.**	63.16	64	.507
2	**When I feel very close to my supervisor, it often feels to me like that person is an important part of who I am.**	50.7	51	.487
3	I usually feel a strong sense of pride when my supervisor has an important accomplishment.	118.58	77	.002
4	I think one of the most important parts of who I am can be captured by looking at my supervisor and understanding who they are.	86.57	58	.009
5	**When I think of myself, I often think of my supervisor.**	58.73	58	.450
6	If a person hurts my supervisor, I feel personally hurt as well.	86.25	76	.197
7	**In general, my supervisor is an important part of my self-image.**	56.35	51	.281
8	Overall, my supervisor has very little to do with how I feel about myself.	171.75	86	.000
9	My supervisor is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am.	263.77	95	.000
10	**My sense of pride comes from knowing whom I have as a supervisor.**	74.95	66	.210
11	When I establish a close friendship with my supervisor, I usually develop a strong sense of identification with that person.	102.81	69	.005

Note. $N = 526$. Bolded items represent those that met all three criteria (i.e., χ^2, item discrimination, item information) for inclusion in the final scale and therefore are those used as a composite scale score in Study 2. Prob. = Probability.

strength of discrimination parameters (α) suggest values of 0.01 to 0.24 are very low, 0.25 to 0.64 are low, 0.65 to 1.34 are moderate, 1.35 to 1.69 are high, and more than 1.7 are very high (Baker, 2001). All items displayed a very high level of discrimination (see Table 2). Of the remaining items, only one (i.e., Item 6) displayed uniformly low information across all levels of theta (see Table 3). The resulting five-item scale is highlighted in Table 1. These items displayed an internal consistency estimate of .92.

The RISCS scale correlated in the expected direction with previously validated scales. RISCS correlated positively with group identification, $r = .46$, $p < .01$, organizational identification, $r = .62$, $p < .05$, positive affect, $r = .36$, $p < .01$, work-related contentment, $r = .30$, $p < .01$ and enthusiasm, $r = .33$, $p < .01$, work-related meaningfulness, $r = .39$, $p < .01$, and WAMI, $r = .46$, $p < .01$. All internal consistency estimates and correlation coefficients are shown in Table 4.

Table 2
Graded Response Model Item Parameter Estimates for Initial Relational Identification Self-Construal With Supervisor (RISCS) Items

Item			Item parameters		
	α	β_1	β_2	β_3	β_4
1	3.33 (0.24)	−1.13 (0.09)	−0.10 (0.06)	0.49 (0.06)	1.53 (0.09)
2	4.80 (0.39)	−0.85 (0.08)	.022 (0.05)	0.84 (0.06)	1.61 (0.09)
3	2.28 (0.16)	−1.36 (0.11)	−0.31 (0.07)	0.33 (0.07)	1.57 (0.11)
4	3.85 (0.29)	−0.79 (0.08)	0.21 (0.06)	0.81 (0.06)	1.61 (0.09)
5	3.84 (0.30)	−0.33 (0.06)	0.63 (0.06)	1.17 (0.07)	1.88 (0.11)
6	2.14 (0.16)	−0.89 (0.09)	0.10 (0.07)	0.93 (0.08)	2.11 (0.15)
7	4.76 (0.40)	−0.41 (0.06)	0.56 (0.06)	1.06 (0.06)	1.73 (0.10)
8	1.52 (0.13)	−0.41 (0.09)	1.05 (0.10)	1.77 (0.14)	2.69 (0.23)
9	1.47 (0.13)	−0.64 (0.10)	0.79 (0.09)	1.39 (0.12)	2.31 (0.19)
10	3.08 (0.23)	−0.49 (0.07)	0.50 (0.06)	1.01 (0.07)	2.01 (0.13)
11	2.92 (0.21)	−0.78 (0.08)	0.16 (0.06)	0.74 (0.07)	1.91 (0.12)

Note. $N = 526$. Standard errors are represented in parentheses. IRT = item response theory; α = discrimination parameter; β_1, β_2, β_3, and β_4, = threshold parameters.

Study 2

Sample

Participants were recruited via an online advertisement (using a University alumni association e-mail list) to participate in an unpaid survey research study regarding employment and well-being. A total of 1,342 completed the survey in its entirety, resulting in a final total of 1,050 cases of complete data for the Study 2 sample. Racial composition of respondents included Caucasian or White (90.745%), African American or Black (6.3%), Mexican

Table 3
Graded Response Model Item Information Functions for Initial Relational Identification Self-Construal With Supervisor (RISCS) Items

Item				θ			
	−3	−2	−1	0	1	2	3
1	0.022	0.546	2.834	3.191	2.419	1.586	0.081
2	0.001	0.091	5.081	4.601	5.549	2.633	0.029
3	0.117	0.794	1.438	1.576	1.319	1.045	0.187
4	0.003	0.138	3.178	3.512	3.814	2.227	0.070
5	0.001	0.024	0.971	3.191	4.238	3.556	0.192
6	0.049	0.355	1.188	1.350	1.323	1.238	0.516
7	0.000	0.012	1.208	3.528	6.323	3.803	0.052
8	0.043	0.174	0.484	0.652	0.701	0.720	0.580
9	0.063	0.228	0.522	0.623	0.674	0.652	0.433
10	0.004	0.090	1.363	2.287	2.740	2.469	0.415
11	0.013	0.226	1.944	2.366	2.144	2.127	0.323

Note. $N = 526$. θ = Estimated theta parameter.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between All Variables in Study 1

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender	1.51	0.50	—											
2. Education	4.21	1.34	-.01	—										
3. Social class	2.55	0.76	.00	.25**	—									
4. RISCS	2.37	1.00	-.02	-.05	.18**	(.92)								
5. Group identification	3.70	0.88	-.02	-.06	.20**	.46**	(.96)							
6. Org identification	3.22	1.05	.05	.00	.24**	.62**	.65**	(.93)						
7. Positive affect	3.23	0.83	-.04	-.07	.21**	.36**	.50**	.50**	(.92)					
8. Negative affect	1.60	0.66	-.02	-.01	-.06	-.07	-.27**	-.21**	-.31**	(.92)				
9. Contentment	4.29	0.98	-.05	-.05	.16**	.30**	.45**	.38**	.54**	-.67**	(.89)			
10. Enthusiasm	4.48	1.01	-.02	.00	.18**	.33**	.53**	.48**	.69**	-.65**	.79**	(.89)		
11. Meaningfulness	4.19	1.14	.01	.00	.24**	.39**	.56**	.58**	.72**	-.50**	.69**	.82**	(.91)	
12. WAMI	3.42	1.06	.07	.12**	.23**	.46**	.54**	.70**	.54**	-.25**	.39**	.52**	.68**	(.95)

Note. $N = 526$. RISCS = Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal With Supervisor (RISCS); Org = organizational; WAMI = Work and Meaning Inventory.
** $p < .01$.

American (0.6%), Asian (0.4%), and a small number of other races. Age ranged from 21 to 72 with an average of 43.99. Most respondents were married or partnered (75.6%). The majority of respondents were employed full-time (94.8%) and employed in their current position for more than two years (82.5%). Most were employed in education (30.0%), health services (13.8%), manufacturing (10.2%), and financial (6.0%) fields.

Measures

Relational identification. The five-item RISCS scale validated in Study 1 was utilized (see Table 1). The scale displayed an internal reliability estimate of .85 with the current dataset.

Supervisor communication. Three measures of communication with one's supervisor were utilized. These have previously been referred to collectively as forms of social support. They included positive communication, negative communication, and nonwork related communication. Three assessments consisting of four items each were utilized positive communication at work, negative communication, and nonwork related communication (Beehr et al., 1990). An example positive communication item includes, "My supervisor and I share interesting ideas about our profession." An example negative communication item includes, "My supervisor and I talk about how we dislike some parts of our work." An example nonwork related communication item includes, "My supervisor and I talk about off-the-job interests that we have in common."

Social status. The Barratt Simplified Measure of Social Status (BSMSS; Barratt, 2006) is an ordinal scale that updates a widely used measure of social status. Specifically, the measure extends Hollingshead's (1975) four factor index of social status. The four factor scale asked respondents to answer questions regarding marital status, employment status (if retired, most recent employment), education, and occupational prestige. Occupational categories were rated based on the researchers' (Davis, Smith, Hodge, Nakao, & Treas, 1991) calculation of occupational prestige ratings from the 1989 General Social Survey. Total BSMSS score ranges from a potential 8 to 66 and are comprised of a combination of occupational and educational attainment of oneself, one's spouse, and one's parents (Barratt, 2006).

Subjective well-being. Three measures used in Study 1 were again utilized in Study 2. These included work-related contentment, enthusiasm, and meaningfulness. Employee *contentment* was measured with a form containing adjectives related to contentment, or the lack of anxiety (Warr, 1990). This measure asked respondents, "Thinking of the past few weeks, how much of the time have you felt each of the following during work?" Descriptor

choices included tense, uneasy, worried, calm, contented, and relaxed (first three items are reverse-scored). This scale has internal reliability estimate of .76 (Warr, 1990). To assess *enthusiasm*, the same format as the contentment items but the adjectives were depressed, gloomy, miserable, cheerful, enthusiastic, and optimistic (first three items are reverse-scored). This scale displays an internal reliability estimate of .80 (Warr, 1990). The meaningfulness measure asked respondents the same question. Descriptor choices included meaningful, valuable, purpose, irrelevant, personally fulfilled, and trivial. This scale has an internal reliability estimate of .91 (Monnot & Beehr, 2014).

Analysis. Hypotheses 1 and 2 identify a set of relationships that constitute a conditional process model. In the proposed conditional model a moderated mediation effect is hypothesized, wherein the second stage indirect effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable through the mediator is moderated (Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007; see Figure 1). Significance values and coefficients were calculated using the PROCESS SPSS macro (Hayes, 2013). In addition to individual path coefficient estimates, an overall test of model significance is provided by an index of moderated mediation, which is used to assess Hypothesis 1 (Hayes, 2013). The index of moderated mediation provides a bootstrapped significance test wherein significance indicates there is a nonzero effect. To test the hypothesized (Hypothesis 2) moderating effect bootstrapped values of the interaction between status and relational identification were analyzed. Significant moderating effects where probed using the pick-a-point approach (Bauer & Curran, 2005), wherein regression lines are plotted at the 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th percentile values of the moderator to confirm the hypothesized direction of the moderating effect.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations of variables in Study 2 are listed in Table 5. Positive communication with one's supervisor is significantly related to contentment ($r = .249$, $p < .01$), enthusiasm ($r = .440$, $p < .01$), and meaningfulness ($r = .492$, $p < .01$). Nonwork communication was positively correlated with contentment ($r = .165$, $p < .01$), enthusiasm ($r = .2.40$, $p < .01$), and meaningfulness ($r = 2.72$, $p < .01$). Likewise, negative communication was positively correlated with meaningfulness ($r = .113$, $p < .01$) and relational identification with one's supervisor ($r = .262$, $p < .01$), but not significantly correlated with contentment, enthusiasm, or general social status.

Results of the first conditional process model are presented in Table 6. This model includes a second stage moderated mediation model. Social status is hypothesized to moderate the effect of relational identification on

Table 5
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between All Variables in Study 2

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. PC	3.18	1.00	(.92)							
2. NW	2.90	0.94	.407**	(.94)						
3. NC	2.23	0.81	.621**	.591**	(.84)					
4. RISCS	3.18	1.32	.392**	.393**	.262**	(.85)				
5. Status	53.09	5.79	.095**	.034	.037	−.046	—			
6. SWBc	3.35	0.70	.249**	.165**	−.025	.095**	−.004	(.88)		
7. SWBe	3.94	0.68	.440**	.240**	.037	.151**	.086**	.666**	(.88)	
8. SWBm	3.83	0.72	.492**	.272**	.113**	.213**	.104**	.547**	.748**	(.91)

Note. $n = 1,050–1,865$. PC = positive communication; NW = nonwork-related communi-
cation; NC = negative communication; RISCS = Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal
With Supervisor; Status = social status; SWB = Subjective Well-Being; SWBc = Content-
ment; SWBe = Enthusiasm; SWBm = Meaningfulness.
** $p < .01$.

meaningfulness at work. First, the index of moderated mediation does not
include zero, which indicates that the indirect effect of positive commu-
nication on meaningfulness through relational identification is moderated
by general status. This offers support for Hypothesis 1. The conditional
indirect effects suggest that the socially supportive (i.e., positive) effect
of communication with one's supervisor diminishes and becomes non-
significant for those of higher social status (see Table 6). The index of
moderated mediation (see Table 6) suggests that for every one unit
increase in status there is a .0008 decrease in the indirect effect of positive
communication on meaningfulness through relational identification. Fi-
nally, the second stage interaction between supervisor relational identi-
fication and social status on meaningfulness is statistically significant
($\beta = −.006$, $p < .01$). A probe of this interaction (Figure 2) shows
confirms the hypothesized relationship (Hypothesis 2), wherein the pos-
itive relationship between relational identification and meaningfulness at
work is attenuated by social status. Specifically, the conditional indirect
effect through relational identification was present between positive com-
munication and meaningfulness only when general social status was
status low (i.e., 10th, 25th percentile).

   Results of the second conditional process model are presented in
Table 7. Again, this model includes a second stage moderated mediation,
wherein social status moderates the effect of relational identification on
meaningfulness. The index of moderated mediation does not include zero,
which indicates that the indirect effect of positive communication on
meaningfulness through relational identification is moderated by general
status. This offers support for hypothesis 1. The index of moderated
mediation (see Table 7) suggests that for every one unit increase in status
there is a .001 decrease in the indirect effect of positive communication

Table 6
Conditional Model Results for Positive Communication on Meaningfulness, Mediated by Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal With Supervisor (RISCS) and Moderated by Social Status

	β	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
			First stage			
Intercept	1.551	0.132	11.786	.000	1.293	1.809
PC	0.127	0.010	12.935	.000	0.108	0.146
Model R^2	0.144					
			Second stage			
Intercept	1.304	0.486	2.685	.007	0.351	2.257
RISCS	0.343	0.139	2.474	.013	0.071	0.615
PC	0.086	0.006	15.419	.000	0.075	0.097
Status	0.026	0.009	2.828	.005	0.008	0.043
Int term	−0.006	0.003	−2.395	.017	−0.011	−0.001
Model R^2	0.239					

		Conditional indirect effects			
Status	Percentile	β	SE	LLCI	ULCI
45	10th	.008	.004	.002	.016
49	25th	.005	.003	.000	.010
53	50th	.002	.002	−.002	.006
57	75th	−.002	.002	−.006	.003
60	90th	−.004	.003	−.010	.002

	Index of moderated mediation		
Index	SE	LLCI	ULCI
−.0008	.0003	−.0014	−.0002

Note. Bootstrap samples for bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals = 10,000. Level of confidence for all confidence intervals is 95%. Conditional Indirect Effect represents the indirect effect of PC on Meaningfulness through RISCS at the 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th percentile of Status. n = 995. PC = positive communication; RISCS = Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal With Supervisor; Status = social status; Int Term = Interaction term of status and RISCS; LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = bootstrap upper limit confidence interval.

on meaningfulness through relational identification (see Figure 3). Therefore, the conditional indirect effects suggest that nonwork communication acts as a form of social support only for lower status employees. Specifically, the socially supportive effect of communication with one's supervisor diminishes and becomes nonsignificant for those of higher social status (see Table 7). The second stage interaction between supervisor relational identification and social status on meaningfulness is statistically significant ($\beta = -.007$, $p < .01$). A probe of this interaction (Figure 2) shows confirms the hypothesized relationship (Hypothesis 2), wherein the positive relationship between relational identification and meaningfulness at work is attenuated by social status.
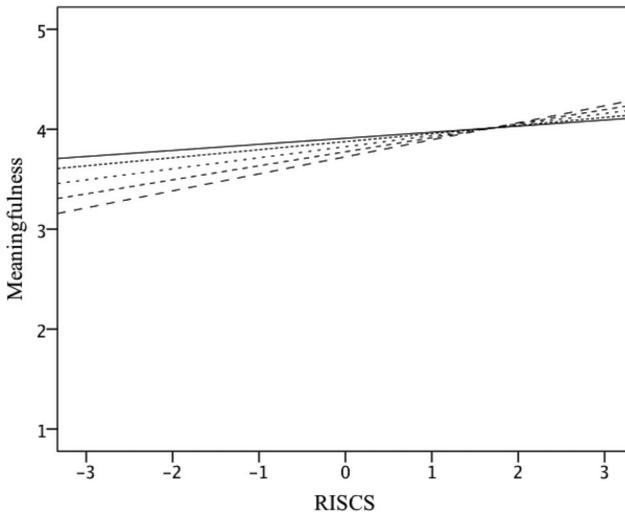
Figure 2. Simple slope probe of second stage moderating effect of social status. Simple slopes are shown for the 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th percentile of the general social status variable. Simple slope lines are shown in decreasing continuity, from solid black (90th percentile) to dotted line (10th percentile). The *x*-axis values represent mean-centered standardized values; *y*-axis values represent scale response options. RISCS = Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal With Supervisor.

Finally, negative communication with one's supervisor was tested as a primary antecedent in the hypothesized conditional process model. The index of moderated mediation does not include zero, which indicates that the indirect effect of negative communication on meaningfulness through relational identification is moderated by general status. This offers support for hypothesis 1. The index of moderated mediation (see Table 8) suggests that for every one unit increase in status there is a .001 decrease in the indirect effect of negative communication on meaningfulness through relational identification. Plots of the conditional indirect effects of each type of communication at different levels of social status can be viewed in Figure 3. As with the previous models, the conditional indirect effect suggests that negative communication acts as a form of social support for lower status employees. Specifically, the socially supportive effect of communication with one's supervisor diminishes and becomes nonsignificant for those of higher social status (see Table 8). The second stage interaction between supervisor relational identification and social status on meaningfulness is statistically significant ($\beta = -.090$, $p < .01$). A probe of this interaction (Figure 2) shows confirms the hypothesized relationship (Hypothesis 2), wherein the positive relationship between relational identification and meaningfulness at work is attenuated by social status.

Table 7
*Conditional Model Results for Nonwork Related Communication on Meaningfulness,
Mediated by Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal With Supervisor (RISCS) and
Moderated by Social Status*

	β	*SE*	*t*	*p*	LLCI	ULCI
			First stage			
Intercept	1.586	0.126	12.593	.000	1.339	1.833
NW	0.135	0.010	13.210	.000	0.115	0.155
Model R^2	0.149					
			Second stage			
Intercept	1.331	0.532	2.502	.013	0.287	2.375
RISCS	0.456	0.152	3.002	.028	0.158	0.754
NW	0.039	0.006	6.043	.000	0.026	0.051
Status	0.034	0.010	3.464	.006	0.015	0.054
Int term	−0.007	0.003	−2.579	.010	−0.013	−0.002
Model R^2	0.087					

		Conditional indirect effect			
Status	Percentile	β	*SE*	LLCI	ULCI
45	10th	.017	.005	.009	.025
49	25th	.013	.003	.007	.019
53	50th	.009	.003	.004	.014
57	75th	.005	.003	−.003	.011
60	90th	.002	.004	−.005	.009

	Index of moderated mediation		
Index	*SE*	LLCI	ULCI
−.0010	.0004	−.0018	−.0003

Note. Bootstrap samples for bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals = 10,000. Level of confidence for all confidence intervals is 95%. Conditional indirect effect represents the indirect effect of PC on meaningfulness through RISCS at the 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th percentile of status. n = 997. PC = positive communication; NW = nonwork-related communication; RISCS = Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal With Supervisor; Status = social status; Int Term = Interaction term of status and RISCS; LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = bootstrap upper limit confidence interval.

Discussion

The results of the current study suggest that relational identification is one way that some employees find meaningfulness at work. It appears that status is a key resource in this process. Through relational identification with one's supervisor lower social status subordinates experience greater levels of meaningfulness at work. The current study contributes to previous findings relating physical (e.g., Kuper & Marmot, 2003; Syme & Berkman, 1976) and psychological (e.g., Martikainen et al., 2003; Stansfeld et al., 1998) well-being to social status, by showing status is also related to meaningful experience of work.
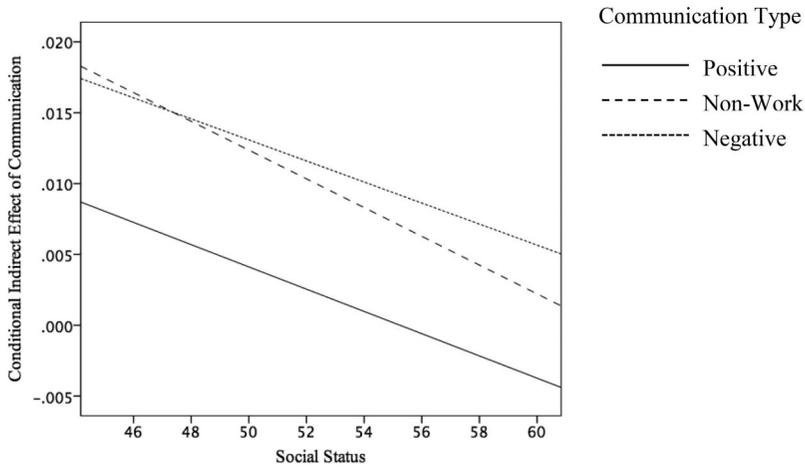
Figure 3. Conditional indirect effect of communication through relational identification on meaningfulness at work. Simple slope lines are shown for positive communication (solid black), Nonwork communication (broken), and negative communication (dotted). The *x*-axis values represent the 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th percentile of social status for the observed range of scores; *y*-axis values represent conditional indirect effects of communication with supervisor through relational identification with supervisor on meaningfulness at work. *n* = 983. Status = general social status.

The current study contributes to the extant literature on social support (Beehr et al., 1990, 2003, 2010; Chen et al., 1999; Monnot & Beehr, 2014; Stephens & Long, 2000). Simple correlations suggest a positive relationship between all forms of communication with one's supervisor (positive, nonwork related, and negative) and meaningfulness at work. Likewise, results of conditional process models suggest that relational identification with one's supervisor mediates the effect of communication on meaningfulness for some employees. This suggests that frequency of communication may be one way to drive relational identification between supervisors and lower status subordinates.

Previous findings suggest that talking about positive or nonjob related aspects of work with one's supervisor is related to higher levels of well-being (Beehr et al., 1990, 2003; Monnot & Beehr, 2014; Stephens & Long, 2000), whereas talking about the negative aspects of work with one's supervisor is inversely related to individual well-being (Beehr et al., 2003; Monnot & Beehr, 2014; Stephens & Long, 2000). However, talking about negative aspects of work with one's supervisor has been shown to positively relate to satisfaction with one's supervisor (Beehr et al., 1990) and meaningfulness at work (Monnot & Beehr, 2014). Current results suggest that this positive effect of negative communication on meaningfulness may be due to the

Table 8

Conditional Model Results for Negative Communication on Meaningfulness, Mediated by Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal With Supervisor (RISCS) and Moderated by Social Status

	β	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
			First stage			
Intercept	2.156	0.118	18.257	.000	1.924	2.388
NC	0.112	0.012	9.034	.000	0.088	0.137
Model R^2	0.082					
			Second stage			
Intercept	1.335	0.549	2.430	.015	0.257	2.413
RISCS	0.555	0.157	3.527	.000	0.246	0.863
NC	0.012	0.008	1.641	.101	−0.002	0.026
Status	0.039	0.010	3.799	.002	0.019	0.059
Int term	−0.090	0.003	−2.897	.004	−0.014	−0.003
Model R^2	0.056					

		Conditional indirect effect			
Status	Percentile	β	SE	LLCI	ULCI
45	10th	.019	.004	.012	.028
49	25th	.015	.003	.010	.021
53	50th	.011	.002	.007	.017
57	75th	.007	.003	.003	.013
60	90th	.005	.003	−.001	.011

	Index of moderated mediation		
Index	SE	LLCI	ULCI
−.0010	.0003	−.0017	−.0004

Note. Bootstrap samples for bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals = 10,000. Level of confidence for all confidence intervals is 95%. Conditional indirect effect represents the indirect effect of PC on meaningfulness through RISCS at the 10th, 25th, 50th, 75th, and 90th percentile of status. $n = 983$. PC = positive communication; NC = negative communication; RISCS = Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal With Supervisor; Status = social status; Int Term = interaction term of status and RISCS; LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = bootstrap upper limit confidence interval.

mediating role of relational identification and moderating effect of social status.

Specifically, simple bivariate correlations suggest a positive relationship between negative communication and meaningfulness, whereas a moderated mediation model suggests a conditional indirect effect. Results show that the positive effect of negative communication on meaningfulness through relational identification is conditional on one's social status. The effect is attenuated for those of higher social status and is nonsignificant for highest status individuals. This positive indirect effect for lower status employees is hypothesized to be due to the theory that a greater degree of relational identity with a supervisor affords higher

levels of experienced meaningfulness because of the status differential. Justification for the theory that status differential is the underlying mechanism of this effect is further supported by moderating effect of social status.

The second stage in the current meditational model, or the path between relational identification and meaningfulness, was moderated by general social status. A probe of the moderation effect of social status on the relational identification and meaningfulness relationship displayed a crossover interaction (see Figure 2). The relationship was positive for all levels of social status; however the relationship was attenuated for those of higher status. Although results of the conditional model are similar for each form of communication (i.e., positive, nonwork, and negative), it does help explain the potentially counterintuitive finding that even negative communication is associated with greater meaningfulness.

Taken together, the conditional process model results suggest that communication with one's supervisor is positively associated with meaningfulness through relational identification for lower status employees. However this conditional indirect effect becomes nonsignificant for those employees of highest general social status. Thus, for lower social status employees, it appears that borrowing the higher status of one's supervisor is one means toward a more meaningful experience at work.

Practical Implications

Enhancing the meaningfulness of employees' work lives is an inherently practical endeavor. Greater meaningfulness is associated with a host of individual (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Dobrow, 2006; Locke & Taylor, 1990; Spreitzer, 1996; Treadgold, 1999; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) and organizational (Bain, 2007; Grant, 2012; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Wrzesniewski, 2003) outcomes. Therefore, the suggestion that supervisors can increase meaningfulness at work simply by increasing frequency of communication, and subsequent relational identification, should be of utility to practitioners.

The finding that all three types of communication in the current study act as an antecedent of relational identification and meaningfulness may not be as instinctive to supervisors. In fact organizational leaders tend to, on average, use as much as four times more positive compared with negative words in their typical dialogue even though positive tone has no impact on effectiveness (Yuan, Clifton, Stone, & Blumberg, 2000). Therefore, basic supervisor-based interventions are relevant to the current findings. It has long been understood that supervisor communication is an

integral part of work design that enables meaningful experience of work (Hackman, & Oldham, 1980). Further facilitating this process by way of interpersonal communication supervisor training may be one way to enhance this effectiveness of communication frequency in facilitating meaningfulness. And because both positive and negative communication types have beneficial effects it may be advantageous to focus on simply improving the quality of communication, such as accuracy, understanding, and focus. Researchers have found, for example, that supervisor interpersonal communication training combined with combined with mental practice leads to subsequent higher likelihood of transfer of communication skills (Morin & Latham, 2000).

Limitations and Future Research

The findings of the current study should be interpreted in light of limitations. First, there are several limitations related to measurement. Social status is a social construct as such is observable, and perhaps defined by, other people. Although the current study does not deviate from the convention of measuring an objective form of status, it would likely be beneficial to also collect self- and other-ratings of status. This would allow a constructivist view of one's relative social standing, which is perhaps more salient to the proposed model. Subsequent research would benefit from collection of other-ratings data as it relates to social status. A second measurement issue involves the use of positional status in general (i.e., supervisor as referent), however measurement at the dyad level would allow a more detailed look at the phenomenon. Third, and related to the second measurement issue, the measurement of additional variables would allow for a more robust analysis. For example, if data was collected at the dyad level then supervisor characteristics could be assessed. Control variables (e.g., length of reporting relationship, level, number of direct reports) could then be used to clearly identify the magnitude of the relationship between independent variables and identification.

Finally, social status is certainly not monolithic and is unlikely to be captured in its entirety using one index. Most indices assess educational status, occupational prestige, and income. Specifically, the concept of intersectionality posits that social groups are not homogeneous, that people should be considered in relation to the social structures that capture implied power relations, and that the effects of status are unique and nonadditive (Stewart & McDermott, 2004). Findings related to intersectionality show that effects of social class and status are indeed nonuniform (APA, 2006). Future research would benefit from understanding the intersectional of social status as it relates to meaningful experience of work.

Conclusion

An understanding of the underlying mechanism through which individuals imbue their working lives with purpose and coherence is of importance in its own right. However, the meaning of work should also be of interest due the individual and organizational benefits. First, work that provides a sense of meaning and fulfillment is a benefit in and of itself in that it provides higher job and life satisfaction (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997), is associated with reduced strain (Locke & Taylor, 1990; Treadgold, 1999), and more empowerment (Spreitzer, 1996), among numerous other positive individual outcomes. Also, organizations benefit from perceived meaningful work by way of employee engagement (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004), reduced absenteeism (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), individual performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Wrzesniewski, 2003), and the sacrifice of one's own pay, time, and comfort (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Providing work that is perceived as meaningful should not be a difficult process. In fact employees often cognitively reframe their work as serving a meaningful purpose even in lieu of such an explicit purpose (Berg et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

Results of the current study further our understanding of the connection between relational identification and meaningful experience of work. It is important to note that the employee work experience can become instilled with meaning simply by the socially supportive process of supervisor communication. In the employee search for meaning it appears supervisor relational identification is an important pathway.

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