WHAT DOES YOUR CAREER MEAN TO YOU?
UNDERSTANDING INDIVIDUAL CAREER AND WORK BEHAVIORS THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE MEANING OF CAREER

What does your career mean to you? Just decades ago when hearing this question, individuals would only be prompted to reflect on how they experience their jobs. Today, with the shift of responsibility for careers from organizations to individuals and with careers becoming increasingly important for individuals’ identification in the work context, this question encourages deeper reflection by individuals about what matters to them in their careers. While individuals’ career-related meanings have been comprehensively addressed in studies of individual career success, little is known about their consequences for individuals’ career and work behaviors. To address this issue, this thesis explores how the meanings that individuals ascribe to their careers guide their career and work behaviors through four empirical studies. The findings demonstrate that individuals’ career-related meanings are multidimensional and dependent on the context, and these meanings shed a unique light on individuals’ behaviors in the work context, contributing to the success of individuals and organizations. The results further reveal that those individuals who are self-directed and who are driven by (other-oriented) values in their career development and those who have a calling tend to proactively develop their careers and engage in proactive work behaviors that bring change and innovation in organizations.

BIO
Evgenia I. Lysova is an Assistant Professor of Careers and Organizational Behavior at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, where she also worked on her PhD dissertation. She holds a MSc degree in Business Administration from the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and a 5-year university degree in Economics and Management (Cum Laude) from St. Petersburg State University of Film and Television. Evgenia’s main research interests are calling, the meaning of work, self-directed career management, and proactive work behaviors.