Finding your calling: History, research, and applications

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Do YOU have a calling?

What is your calling?

Does your calling fit with your current career?
What is a calling?

Definition

- Christianity: monastic order
- Luther & Calvin: widened scope of occupations
- Secular definitions
- Dik and Duffy (2009)

“A transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation” (p. 427).

- Externally motivated
- Fulfills purpose/meaning
- Fulfills pro-social values

Continuous variable, ongoing process, search for vs. presence of
Brief Calling Survey (BCS) (Dik, Sargent, & Steger, 2008)
Correlates of BCS

- To score, add questions 1 and 2 to get “presence” and 3 and 4 to get “search”.
- 312 undergraduate students
- **Presence** ($M = 6.41$, $SD = 2.47$): life satisfaction (.21), service motivation (.46), academic satisfaction (.37), meaning in life (.59), career decision self-efficacy (.49), work hope (.39)
- **Search** ($M = 5.51$, $SD = 2.30$): academic satisfaction (-.15), meaning in life (-.14), search for meaning in life (.39), work hope (-.26)
Who is calling relevant for?

- Is calling a privileged problem?
- Our definition is consistent with students’ common definition.
  - Moreover, about 40% report having a calling and 30% say they are searching for one.
- Callings are reported in equal proportions by people with different occupations, pay scales, and religious affiliations.
The research on calling characterizes people with callings as hard-working, dedicated, self-aware, and altruistic.

Adults with callings: have more work zest, have higher income, are more educated, seek challenging work, have greater job security, take fewer sick days, have higher organizational commitment, have higher career self-efficacy, and expect more from organizations.
Calling and work outcomes: Students

- Students with callings are more mature about their career paths.
- They: are decided and comfortable in career choice, view future career as important, are intrinsically motivated, are academically satisfied, and are aware of their vocational interests.
Calling and well-being

- People with callings tend to be happier with life in general as well as in specific areas.
- People with callings report: lower levels of stress, lower levels of depression, greater life satisfaction, greater academic satisfaction, greater job satisfaction, and greater meaning in life.
But everything is correlational!

I used to think correlation implied causation.

Then I took a statistics class. Now I don't.

Sounds like the class helped. Well, maybe.
Controlled studies

- Major need for future research. Only two studies in this area:
  - Thompson & Feldman (2010): 10-week university course designed to develop life meaning and vocational calling. Effective in increasing both.
    - ...but no control group.
  - Dik & Steger (2008): Randomized trial comparing two sessions of P-E fit or calling-infused workshop. Both improved CDSE compared to the control.
Cultivating a calling

- So, evidence is slim, but what are some ideas?
  - Calling is likely not categorical. Rather it is a continuous process of evaluating one’s career.
  - Elangovan, Pinder, & McLean (2010): will to meaning (Frankl), critical events, religiousness, attentiveness, openness, growing understanding of self.
  - Exploring the aspects of calling.
  - Others: strengths.
Predictors of Calling Among Undergraduate College Students: A Longitudinal Study
(Bott, E. M. & Duffy, R. D.)

- Optimism
- Mindfulness
- Personal Growth
- Life Meaning

- Search for and presence of calling
Our current research

- Calling and Medical Student Career Maturity and Well-Being: A Longitudinal Study
  (Duffy, R. D., Borges, N. J., Manuel, R. S., & Bott, E. M.)

- Physicians’ Experience of Calling: A Qualitative Study
  (Duffy, R. D., Borges, N. J., Bott, E. M., Allan, B.A., & Torrey, C.)
Our current research

- Investigating calling as a mediator of signature strengths use and well-being
  (Allan, B.A. & Duffy, R.D.)
- Moderators and mediators of calling and life satisfaction: meaning in life and academic satisfaction; core-self evaluations.
  (Duffy, R.D., Allan, B.A., & Bott, E.M.)
- The presence of a calling and academic satisfaction: Examining potential mediators
  (Duffy, R.D., Allan, B.A., & Dik, B.J.)
1. Do any findings strike you as particularly interesting or powerful?
2. Within your position, how can you use today’s learnings to guide your work with students (more specifically, improve career maturity and well-being of students)?
3. a) Are there any obstacles that may prevent you from using career calling as tool in serving the population with whom you work?  
   b) Time to brainstorm! How can these obstacles be overcome?
4. What future research on calling would be most beneficial to your work with college students?