



Callings and organizational behavior

A.R. Elangovan^{a,*}, Craig C. Pinder^a, Murdith McLean^b

^a Faculty of Business, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada V8W 2Y2

^b Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada V8W 2Y2

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ABSTRACT

Current literature on careers, social identity and meaning in work tends to understate the multiplicity, historical significance, and nuances of the concept of calling(s). In this article, we trace the evolution of the concept from its religious roots into secular realms and develop a typology of interpretations using occupation and religious orientation as core dimensions. We offer a definition of calling that emphasizes action, a convergence of selves, and a pro-social intention. Next, we identify a number of key conditions necessary for discovering a calling, explore the relevance of callings to a range of organizational behavior phenomena, and offer suggestions for future research.

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1. Introduction

The ancient concept of callings has been resurrected in recent organizational behavior literature and continues to garner growing attention from researchers and practitioners. Traditionally seen as “a meaningful beckoning toward activities that are morally, socially, and personally significant” (Wrzesniewski, Dekas, & Rosso, 2009, p. 115), researchers and theorists have rekindled efforts to understand the key features and qualities of a calling (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Novak, 1996; Weiss, Skelley, Haughey, & Hall, 2004), the circumstances under which a person may discover a calling (Levoy, 1997), the experiencing of a calling (Dobrow, 2004), the notion of a “callings orientation” (e.g., Bellah, Sullivan, Tipton, Madsen, & Swindler, 1996; Wrzesniewski, 2003), the importance of having a calling relative to a career (Dobrow, 2004; Hall & Chandler, 2005), and the relationship between a calling and career development (e.g., Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007). Other, related concepts have also received increasing attention, such as finding personal meaning and purpose in work and life (Grant, 2007; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Ray, 2005; Steger & Frazier, 2005; Wrzesniewski, 2003). Practitioners such as career counselors have invoked the idea of callings to help their audience critically assess their own jobs and careers and guide them towards better and more satisfying career choices (e.g., Hall & Chandler, 2005; Webber, 1998). There is something about the concept of calling that has heretofore been mystical and amorphous. Our purpose in this article is to bring attention to this idea in a disciplined way that, we hope, will stimulate more scholarly inquiry.

The renewed interest in callings is both important and interesting. The idea of a calling is so central to one’s identity and connection with his or her work (see Dik & Duffy, 2009; Hall & Chandler, 2005) that it could cast a deeper and different light on a range of work-related behaviors. For example, emerging research on callings has collectively highlighted that the motivation, satisfaction, career self-assessment and development of people with a sense of calling tends to be different from those who view their daily work merely as a job (Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Wrzesniewski, McCauley,

* Corresponding author. Address: University of Victoria, Faculty of Business, PO Box 1700 STN CSC, Victoria, BC, Canada V8W 2Y2. Fax: +1 250 721 6067. E-mail addresses: arelango@uvic.ca (A.R. Elangovan), cpinder@uvic.ca (C.C. Pinder), mmclean@uvic.ca (M. McLean).

Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). A sense of calling was correlated with lower levels of stress and depression (Treadgold, 1999) and is claimed to foster the acquisition of meta-competencies (e.g., adaptability) which ultimately improve individual and organizational performance (Hall & Chandler, 2005). Also, a sense of personal mission, purpose-in-living and an element of service towards others characterizes people who are pursuing their calling (Dobrow, 2004), which has implications for citizenship behaviors in organizations. But most extant models and theories of work behavior are limited in accommodating or explaining many elements of work-related behaviors and attitudes (cf. Pinder, 2008). We believe that a deeper inquiry into callings and related dynamics could significantly enhance our understanding of work motivation, career choices, job satisfaction, employee stress, commitment, citizenship behaviors and other organizational phenomena.

Accordingly, we have four major objectives in this article. First, we propose a definition of the concept of callings. Second, we explore the evolution of the concept over time, variously taking on religious or secular meanings, resulting in a typology of interpretations. Third, we address the conditions necessary for discovering a calling. We conclude by highlighting areas of research in organizational science in which the concept of callings may shed new light and advance both theory and practice.

2. A definition of calling(s)

While the term callings has been used in different ways over time, three fundamental features have stayed constant across these interpretations. First, all interpretations suggest an orientation toward action. Second, they feature a sense of clarity of purpose and personal mission. Third, all imply pro-social intentions as perceived by the individual with the calling. We highlight each of these as we propose our definition of callings.

2.1. Action orientation

First, callings always suggest a call to action; the emphasis is on *doing* rather than simply *being*. Specifically, a calling refers to a course of action. For example, Raatikainen (1997) viewed a calling as a “service task” – an activity to be done. Whether one is called to a specific way of life by divine design or by a sense of self-awareness and an inner compass, the implicit focus is on what one *does* (Grant, 2007). Thus while beliefs, attitudes and values are essential and ever-present, the concept of callings, *per se*, focuses on the actions they motivate.

2.2. Sense of clarity of purpose and personal mission

Second, callings suggest a certain sense of clarity of purpose, direction, meaning and personal mission (Dik & Duffy, 2009) such that the one who is called identifies fully with the course of action. Several researchers have noted how the notions of self-concept, purpose, action, identity and callings are intricately intertwined. For example, Norton (1976) suggested that those who have found their calling derive their sense of identity from what they do; *viz*, you are what you do. Likewise, Dobrow (2004) stressed the coming-together of the identities of the person and his/her work as a facet of the experience of having a calling. Bolman and Deal (2001) voiced a similar sentiment in their observation that authenticity is achieved only when life and livelihood meld into one. Pratt and Ashforth (2003) have also noted that an integration of various aspects of oneself, including identities, and its connection to one’s work is a key aspect of fostering meaningfulness.

Aristotle’s ideas regarding living one’s self-truth or personal truth is consistent with the notion of callings marking one’s true identity (Norton, 1976). Similarly, much of Levoy’s (1997) analysis seeks to link the possession of a calling to following an “authentic life” as does Norton’s (1976) emphasis on “being where one must be, and doing what one must do” (p. 198). These ideas stress a certain clarity of purpose, meaning, and direction inherent in the notion of a calling that is more than a just a mere sense that one needs to find or do something – the latter reflects more the *search* for a calling rather than *having* a calling *per se*. As Duffy and Sedlacek (2007) noted, the presence of a calling was strongly associated with self-clarity.

Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) offers a theoretical underpinning for conceptualizing this facet of callings. The premise of this theory is that the behaviors and actions of individuals can be explained by recognizing their urge to reduce the discrepancies among their multiple selves – what they would like to do (*ideal self*), what they think they should do (*ought self*), and what they currently do (*actual self*). Discrepancies among these multiple selves cause dissonance, which in turn serves as the motivation to engage in certain dissonance-reducing behaviors. For our purposes, being engaged in one’s calling can be seen as the convergence of the actual, ideal, and ought selves. In other words, in following his or her calling, the individual would be able to state: *viz*, “I *am* what I *want* to be and *should* be.” Such a convergence of selves would promote the clarity, direction and sense of meaningfulness that is considered central to feeling called (Dik & Duffy, 2009).

2.3. Pro-social intention(s)

The third salient characteristic of our conceptualization of callings is pro-social intention – a desire to make the world a better place. In other words, not only is there a sense of personal purpose in a calling, but that purpose is, to varying degrees, other-focused (Bellah et al., 1996; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). There is considerable convergence of views on this aspect of callings. For example, Buechner (1973, p. 95) described a calling as “the place where your deep gladness . . . and the world’s hunger meet.” Similarly, Raatikainen (1997) associated callings with serving others altruistically. More re-

cently, Grant (2007) wrote that “employees who see their work as a calling want their efforts to make the world a better place, whereas employees with other orientations toward work usually do not” (p. 393), while Dobrow (2004) stressed a similar sentiment in discussing a sense of meaningfulness (in terms of making the world a better place) as one of seven facets of the experiencing of a calling. In his writings on meaning, Frankl (1984) noted the importance of “personal dedication to a cause greater than oneself” (p. 17). Similarly, Weber noted that Calvin’s view “makes labor in the service of impersonal social usefulness appear to promote the glory of God and hence to be willed by Him” (Ch. IV), thus explicitly linking a pro-social intention with the notion of a (divinely inspired in this case) calling.

We emphasize that whether or not an act is pro-social depends on one’s values, perceptions and beliefs. In some cases, the road to hell is, indeed, paved with good intentions; a calling is not defined by the attributions of others towards the actor, but by the actor him/her self.

2.4. Our definition of calling(s)

Combining the three foregoing salient features, we define a calling as “a course of action in pursuit of pro-social intentions embodying the convergence of an individual’s sense of what he or she would like to do, should do, and actually does.”

While the concept of calling seems similar to that of self-actualization (Maslow, 1954), the two concepts are not identical. Self-actualization refers to the optimization of all that one *could* do and refers to the achievement of one’s complete potential. Being engaged in one’s calling however, implies only the convergence of the actual, ideal and ought selves but not necessarily the “could” self. In other words, one can be engaged in one’s calling without achieving a state of self-actualization. The concept of self-actualization, however, complements the concept of callings since the possibility of being all that one *could* be (self-actualizing) could serve as an incentive and motivating force for those engaged in their callings.

3. A typology of perspectives on callings

The different perspectives on callings that have emerged over time underscore the nuances inherent in the concept. It is not our intent to present an exhaustive history of the use of this concept but, rather, to selectively highlight time periods and developments that rendered distinct interpretations of it. The typology we generate on the basis of our historical sketch is not a typology of callings per se, but a typology of *perspectives* on or interpretations of callings.

3.1. Two underlying dimensions: Religious vs. secular, occupation related vs. non-occupation related

The origin of the concept of calling lies in the religious framing of experience. Theologians interpret a calling as “the summons to Christian life and discipleship” or as “man’s outward station in life . . . to which he is assigned by divine providence” (cf. Harner, 1960, p. 17). The religious tradition that has most clearly influenced thinking in the Western world on this subject is Christianity, with its roots deep in Judaism and echoes resonating in Islam (Hermansen, 2004). However, Hall and Chandler (2005) argued that although the callings concept has roots in religion and that some individuals may indeed pursue a calling out of religious beliefs, “such a set of beliefs is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for having a calling” (p. 161). They noted that more recent thinking has “moved away from a religious connotation toward a broader secular view characterized by an individual doing work out of a sense of inner direction – work that would contribute to a better world” (p. 160). Duffy and Sedlacek (2007) arrived at a similar conclusion in their summary of prior research. A second element of Hall and Chandler’s (2005) discussion that is particularly relevant for our purposes is their observation that callings, in one way or another, relate to people’s work. These two assertions can also be seen in other descriptions (e.g., Dik & Duffy, 2009; Webster’s Dictionary, 1974), and the various perspectives, in general, rest their explanations on two underlying dimensions: (i) whether or not callings imply religious connotations and (ii) whether or not callings imply occupational connotations.

Regarding the first dimension, notwithstanding the association in many people’s minds between callings and divine forces and sources, many individuals with a sense of calling are spurred and directed by secular causes such as world peace, environmentalism, education, public health, etc. The volunteer work of countless people worldwide is motivated by the achievement of secular interests. In short, a calling may (or may not) be instigated by religious interests and may (or may not) result in the pursuit of religious causes. On the second dimension – the connection between callings and occupations – we propose that a calling need *not* necessarily be related to an occupation. We argue that in the same way that a career is not necessarily bounded by organizations (Tolbert, 1996), a calling is not necessarily bounded by occupations.

When combined, the two dimensions serve as a framework for making sense of the numerous and varied viewpoints on callings. Accordingly, we propose a fourfold typology of *perspectives* on callings that uses these two dimensions and enables us to trace the movement over time from one perspective to another.

3.1.1. A religious, non-occupation-related perspective on callings (Cell 1)

As noted earlier, the earliest reference to the notion of calling is grounded in the Judeo-Christian tradition. The Hebrew and Greek verbs translated as “call,” the adjectives translated as “called,” and the nouns rendered as “call” or “vocation,” occur frequently in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. The act of naming someone or something is linked, in the Biblical tradition as in others, to the notion that the name itself indicates a particular mission for the individual – the one who is

called. This idea of summoning to a mission or destiny is the developed, technical sense of “calling” in the Biblical tradition (Thornton–Duesbery, 1957). For example, Moses is “called” to the burning bush and his mission is to free captive Israel (Exodus 3:4), and James and John are “called” by Jesus to be disciples (Mark 1:20). There is a strong sense of connection between being called and being chosen or selected.

In all of this, being “called” or having a “calling” is linked with one’s ultimate mission or destiny, or in the later Christian understanding, one is called to a new life in Christ. For example, in Paul’s letters to the Romans, the predominant meaning of a calling was to summon people to “a life in Christ” and discipleship. Hence, in its earliest form, this interpretation of a calling is rooted in religion, both in terms of the source of the calling and the nature of activity, but is independent of one’s occupation. This was true even when the idea of being called to Christ was interpreted as embracing life as a monastic since the monastic life was not seen as occupation or profession. In other words, there was no association suggested with being directed to a particular occupation or form of employment (Davies, 1983a).

3.1.2. A religious, occupation-related perspective on callings (Cell 2)

It was not until later in the development of the institutional Church when notions of callings became associated with concepts of one’s occupation. The modern notion of a calling, which was declared by Weber to be “a product of the Reformation” (Weber, 1996), began when Luther rejected the ecclesiastical understanding of a calling. He interpreted I Corinthians 7:20: “Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called” (RSV) as an injunction against the notion prevailing in his time that responding to one’s call meant abandoning one’s previous way of life and taking on the life of a religious nature or a member of the clergy. Instead, he insisted that living out one’s vocation means living out faithfully the responsibilities of whatever “office” or “station” in life one finds oneself in. Luther maintained “that all stations in which it is possible to live honestly are divine vocations” (Davies, 1983b, p. 601). In the terms of the typology, these developments signify a movement from Cell 1 toward Cell 2.

John Calvin, the great consolidator of Reformation thought (McGrath, 1999), reinforced the new work ethic evident in Luther’s writing. According to Calvinists, God orders the world, including human society, in such a way that conscientious service, in whatever station we are placed, not only serves our fellow humans but also glorifies the Creator. This notion, not absent in Luther, is far more fundamental and influential in Calvin. The Calvinist emphasis therefore implies not just an acceptance of the station we are called to, but a diligent carrying out of its demands. According to Weber, here lie the origins of the “protestant work ethic,” and at the heart of that ethic lies a new understanding of calling. Thus, the Christian concept of a calling came to assume the elements inherited by later secular understandings: one’s place in life, notably one’s occupation, is to be seen as significant, something one is intended for, because it places one’s activity in a scheme of serving greater ends.

Arguably, the Calvinist shift goes deeper than this. Hardy (1990) argued that the dramatic change that went on in the interval between Luther’s life and experience and that of Calvin and his successors, had profound consequences for the concept of calling. For Luther, stations of life were divinely ordained and could be seen as vocations. But changes in economic life, urbanization, technology and political organization meant such stations were no longer assumed to be God-given by Calvin’s successors. In a move anticipated by Calvin, but fully developed by his Puritan heirs, stations in life were seen as potential containers of corruption and within the reach of choice to amend or reject. Hardy noted: “Whereas for Luther our vocation is discerned in the duties of our station in life, for the Calvinists it is derived from our gifts” (1990, p. 66). The notion of *choice* in vocation, thus, entered the picture in relation to life placement and not just the call to discipleship. Smith (1999) reflected these layers in the Christian understanding of vocation by distinguishing among three levels: the general call to a Christian life of fellowship with Jesus; a more particular call to a specific mission, which includes but is not confined to occupation; and a yet more specific call to immediate tasks and duties. So the idea of occupation as a component of calling also emerged as a feature of the Christian outlook on vocation.

In summary, the perspective in Cell 2 explicitly couples the notion of callings with occupation-related choices and adds two important twists to the religious facet of callings. First, while callings continue to be thought of as ordained by God or divinely inspired, the nature of the activity inherent in the calling itself is not considered to be necessarily religious in nature. Second, the concept of choice in response to one’s vocation comes to be applied to one’s “station in life,” which comes to include one’s occupation insofar as that could be distinguished from station. Both shifts were crucial, and both were inherited by later perspectives on callings.

3.1.3. A secular, occupation-related perspective on callings (Cell 3)

Cell 3 represents the modern and currently most prevalent interpretation of callings. This perspective marks the decoupling of the notion of callings from religious or divine underpinnings and puts forth a secular connotation. While callings are considered to be explicitly connected to occupations and seen as an enactment of one’s personal values and sense of duty, they are not seen as being divinely inspired. Rather, an inner urge to remain true to one’s conscience and to do the right thing or make the world a better place or pursue a worthy cause through one’s occupation is seen as the primary driver and genesis of the calling.

The interpretation of callings as relating directly to a person’s daily work has been part of Western culture for many years. Bellah et al. (1996) noted that respondents in their study differentiated among different concepts associated with work – namely jobs, careers and callings. While a job was viewed as a means to earn a living and enjoy economic success and security, a career was perceived as a sequence of jobs that brings a sense of achievement, advancement, self-esteem and social

standing. By contrast, a calling was considered to be work that becomes morally inseparable from the person's very life. "It subsumes the self into a community of disciplined practice and sound judgment whose activity has meaning and value in itself, not just in the output or profit that results from it" (p. 66). The critical point here is that the notion of callings is clubbed together with the concepts of jobs and careers, thus underscoring the direct association with daily work and occupations.

The second facet of this perspective on callings (Cell 3) is the secular nature of the *source* of a calling and its inclusiveness of different *types* of activities or work. While there is often a sense of righteousness experienced by the individual in pursuing the specific line of work or course of action that comprises a calling, such a sentiment is not necessarily deemed to be divinely inspired. For example, Hall and Chandler (2005) noted that pursuing a calling could be the result of a sense of inner direction to do work that would contribute to a better world; Dik and Duffy (2009) made a similar observation. The individual is merely convinced that he or she is doing the "right thing" and experiences minimal or no internal conflict or questioning. Drawing from the ancient Vedantic school of thought, Bogart (1994) labeled this as engaging in one's *dharma* or a central life task that is close to one's conscience. The essence here is that each individual is "meant" to engage in certain actions and behaviors (including work) during his or her lifetime but this call to action could be understood as a product of personal conscience and judgment. Further, this viewpoint embraces the entire range of work activities that exist in society and does not limit *dharma* to religious activities or a way of life.

3.1.4. A secular, non-occupation-related perspective on callings (Cell 4)

As indicated earlier, while researchers seem to agree that the notion of callings may rest on either divine or secular foundations, they have been less attentive to the connection between callings and occupations. Part of the problem stems from the conventional assumption that callings essentially represent daily work with certain special facets such as a passion for one's work, a full-time consciousness that engulfs the person, domain-specific self-esteem, etc. We contend that callings could transcend occupations and take shape as orientations toward certain causes that is pursued outside of one's occupational role. Cell 4 of our typology represents a perspective that is both secular and non-occupation related in nature. For example, we can read about Mahatma Gandhi's finding his calling in leading a country to freedom and uplifting the downtrodden of society as a social activist and humanitarian, even though his training and initial occupation were that of a lawyer. Another example would be volunteers in numerous non-profit organizations who make the cause (could be saving the environment, childhood education, fight against diseases) their mission in life even while earning their living doing other jobs.

A closer analysis of the essence of callings as posited by prior research actually supports our contention that callings are not confined to occupations. For example, Bellah et al. (1996) noted that people with careers (linked to an occupation-focus in this case) lose their sense of *meaning* (emphasis added) when they fail to succeed according to the definitions of success such as "making it to the top." A person with a calling however, continues to pursue whatever it is, even if he or she is not the best at doing it, and define him/herself in its terms. In other words, occupational roles may end or change but a sense of calling may supersede such shifts since it is not expressly tied to them. Thus, Hall and Chandler's (2005) contention that an individual's calling may arise from a sense of inner direction "to contribute to a better world" (p. 160) underscores the possibility that it may pertain to a cause (e.g., ending poverty, saving the environment) or principle (e.g., freedom of speech) or value (e.g., justice, truth), even though it may not be pursued through an identifiable occupation (e.g., nurse, social worker). Similarly, Wrzesniewski (2002) argued that people with a sense of calling would continue to work toward the goals associated with their callings even if they were not paid for their work. This point is central to a complete understanding of the concept, illustrating that callings are not necessarily occupation-related or necessarily rooted in religious beliefs or convictions. We recognize, however, that an occupation may reflect a certain worthy cause and represent a means to or be viewed as part of pursuing that calling. For example, if one's calling were to promote the health and well-being of the disadvantaged in society, then being a nurse, doctor, social worker, pharmacist or other types of health care worker are all occupations that could potentially offer a means to answer that call (this would then fall into Cell 3 discussed earlier).

In summary, the secular non-occupation-related perspective on callings (Cell 4) merits future attention as it challenges the common implicit assumption that callings are necessarily intertwined with occupations. De-coupling callings from occupations not only opens up the possibility that they may be oriented towards causes rather than being solely associated with tangible occupational labels, but it also removes occupation-related conceptual boundaries in trying to capture the essence of callings.

4. Differentiating callings from related concepts

The combination of the three features outlined in the previous section – action orientation, convergence of selves, and pro-social intention – differentiates callings from concepts such as work (energy expended for productive use), jobs (non-permanent financially driven work), occupations (ways of obtaining material rewards and providing financial support for oneself and others), and careers (the sequence and combination of work and non-work roles held by an individual over time). These concepts have the action orientation in common with callings but do not require the convergence of selves that adds unique meaning to one's life or the pro-social intent that underpins one's actions. Further, jobs and careers are generally described using tangible occupational labels or roles (engineer, accountant, nurse, etc.), while callings may transcend these labels (see Cell 4 in our discussion above).

Similarly, the concept of callings differs from a values-driven life (Rokeach, 1973) in two ways. First, a calling refers to a specific course of action (what one does) that could be one of many components or outcomes of leading a values-driven life, which is a much broader concept. Schwartz and Bilsky (1990) defined values as concepts or beliefs pertaining to desirable end-states that transcend specific situations and guide selection of behaviors and events. A calling – a course of action – can be seen as one such choice stemming from an attempt to be true to those values. Second, our definition of calling has pro-social intention as a core feature, which is one of several value domains highlighted by researchers (e.g., Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990). This would suggest that while the individual course of action and sense of purpose may rest on certain stable, personally meaningful values, these values would need to be pro-social in nature to serve as the foundation for a calling.

It is also important to differentiate the concept of calling from eudaimonic well-being which has been defined as an individual's state of being when he/she is realizing his/her true potential (Ryff, 1995; Seligman, 2002), or more broadly, as reflecting self-realization, personal growth, expressiveness, human flourishing, and the fulfillment or realization of one's true nature (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005). The key emphasis here is on achieving one's full potential – “striving for perfection” as Ryff (1995) put it. This perspective is closer to the *could*-self and not necessarily the convergence of the *ideal*, *ought*, and *actual* selves that callings entail (i.e., what one wants to do and thinks should do may be set well below one's potential). Callings may signify the path or course of action to realizing this potential, which may result in eudaimonic well-being, i.e., pursuing a calling could be the means to that end. Similarly, the concepts of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) and work engagement (Kahn, 1990) are temporary episodes of an individual having the “optimal experience” or expressing his/her “preferred self” unlike the long-term, stable nature of the callings construct.

Our conceptualization of callings has much in common with Dik and Duffy's (2009) definition such as the emphasis on a sense of purpose and meaningfulness (framed as the outcome of the convergence of selves in our conceptualization) and the pro-social or other-orientation. However, in contrast to their notion of callings being a “transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self” (p. 427), our definition is also open to an internal origin for callings. Consistent with this perspective, Hall and Chandler (2005) noted that callings may stem from an internal motivation and Raatikainen (1997) viewed it as a deep internal desire; similarly, Palmer (2007) observed that “any authentic call ultimately comes from the voice ... within” (p. 30). Our emphasis is on the sense of surety – a “meant to do” conviction – that individuals experience which drives them to act regardless of the source. Whether it is an external summons or internal impetus, it is experienced as a deep inner impulse to act that is characterized by the features outlined earlier. Also, we define a calling as a course of action to be followed rather than just the summons to it.

5. Discovering a calling

Thinkers from various backgrounds have attempted to address questions regarding how one discovers a calling. Does one “find” a calling such as a cause or a purpose that is somehow “out there” in an ontological sense, or does the existence of a cause somehow become apparent or suggestive to the individual under certain circumstances? Or, is there an interactive effect that is interpreted by the individual as a cause – a calling – worthy of consideration and possible pursuit? Most research to date posits that a somewhat deliberate process is involved (e.g., Weiss et al., 2004). As Dik and Duffy (2009) noted a calling “... do(es) not reflect something a person discovers once and for all but rather involves an ongoing process of evaluating the purpose and meaningfulness of activities ...” (p. 429). Similarly, Novak (1996) argued that it is not easy to discover one's calling and doing so may require some antecedent conditions. A broad reading of prior research suggests that initiating the search for one's calling and discovering it requires the presence and confluence of four antecedent conditions. These conditions enhance the likelihood that an individual's search is not limited to selecting any occupation or course of action but rather that the search results in a choice that is imbued, regardless if it is through an occupational or a non-occupational role, with a sense of personal identity and meaning (convergence of the selves) and a pro-social intention – the hallmarks of a calling as per our definition.

5.1. An urge to find meaning in one's life

The motivation to find meaning in one's life (including work) is a critical factor in initiating and maintaining the search for and identifying one's calling. In his exposition of logotherapy, Frankl (1984) noted the importance of evoking an individual's *will to meaning* from a state of latency. Such a “call of a potential meaning waiting to be fulfilled” (p. 127) highlights the role of an overwhelming urge to find meaning as a key driver of the search process. This urge may be a consequence of a reaction to a growing sense of dissatisfaction with one's current state of work or life conditions, or a response to critical events that jolts one's perspectives. Bolman and Deal (2001) noted that such signs of restlessness are widely prevalent and that a vague emptiness haunts a significant portion of the modern workforce. Similarly, Frankl (1984) pointed to a sense of existential frustration or emptiness that is often a precursor to a longing to find a purpose or meaning in one's life.

Critical incidents or life-events can also be instrumental in prompting one to identify and pursue a calling (Dik & Duffy, 2009). Wrzesniewski (2002) described how many people, particularly in New York, changed directions in their careers to find work that was more meaningful to them following the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the city. “It seems that the tragedy recast how people were thinking about their work and how they were spending their work lives and in particular, the roles they were playing on the wider stage of the world” (p. 231).

Yet not all urges to find meaning may need to be rooted in a sense of dissatisfaction or a jolt from a critical incident. For example, Steger and Frazier's (2005) found that religiousness could lead to finding meaning in one's life but also suggested that counselors look for alternate mechanisms for helping clients find meaning if they are non-religious – thus, underscoring the presence of multiple factors that may drive this search for meaning. Wrzesniewski (2003) suggested that some individuals might possess a “callings orientation” that induces them to view their work as wholly enriching and meaningful. She also posited that such an orientation might be associated with optimism, mastery and conscientiousness, and generally a more positive outlook on life. While these traits may aptly complement an urge to find meaning in one's work and life, the desire to find meaning is not limited to those with such traits. Thus, regardless of whether the search is prompted by positive curiosity, a growing sense of dissatisfaction, a critical event, or religiousness, it is necessary for the individual to experience a compelling urge to find meaning in one's life or work to initiate and sustain this process. Further, such an urge needs to be autonomously motivated (Deci & Ryan, 1985), even if the spark that prompted it was external such as a critical incident, to sustain the intensity and duration necessary to overcome fluctuations in extrinsic rewards. In the absence of such a motivational force, efforts to find one's calling are likely to be limited to endless loops of ruminations, moments of quiet frustration, short-lived aspirations, half-hearted attempts and sporadic progress.

5.2. *Attentiveness*

A second factor necessary for searching for and identifying one's calling is attentiveness on the part of the individual. Levoy (1997) suggested that an individual be in a state of readiness or acuity to cues that may constitute a call. Such vigilance is essential since a call may vary in its intensity, salience or tangibility; it may come in a variety of forms (including feelings and epiphanies) and have idiosyncratic meaning for the person in question. Attentiveness enables the individual to recognize the opportunity, modify it if necessary, or enact it into a form that is meaningful (Weick, 1979). Silence and introspection play an important role in constructing this attentiveness. For example, Weiss et al. (2004) stressed the need for a process of introspection or discernment to discover one's right path or calling. Similarly, Hall and Chandler (2005) noted that identifying a calling involves introspection, reflection, meditation and relational activities (discussions with friends, family members). Part of the art here may lie in our capacity to listen to and make sense of our own restlessness, and to construct meaning and purpose by elaborating cognitively and engaging in a dialogue with others regarding the “call” one may have “heard” in introspective silence. Buchanan and Carr (1999) observed: “Every specific vocation begins with disciplines that cultivate a capacity to listen to our restlessness . . . Silence allows us to embrace . . . voices as clues to what we care about most deeply, clues to our vocational paths” (p. 40).

In sum, callings can occur in many forms and guises but in order to take hold, a person must be vigilant to their possibility. The discerning of a calling is contingent on the willingness and the ability of the individual to be attentive to the (potential) call. Introspection, cognitive elaboration and social discussion foster a state of attentiveness, especially when grounded in the context of an overwhelming urge to find meaning, that allows the individual to spot, interpret and act on the signals constituting the call.

5.3. *Willingness to experiment with new paths*

Another factor that plays a critical role in individuals being able to discover their calling is a willingness to experiment with new paths. Novak (1996) asserted that an openness to finding one's calling is a pre-condition to having one, while Weiss et al. (2004) stressed the importance of undertaking trial activities and persisting in one's efforts. Both observations address the possibility that while attentiveness is useful for narrowing down the options for callings, it may not be sufficient to clearly pinpoint the actual course of action that constitutes the calling. Therefore, in some situations it may become necessary to “test” a calling to see if it is appropriate or “true” (to use the common parlance). To some degree, we may enact a calling if we believe there might be one confronting us by engaging it or testing it, responding to the signals that come back (Weick, 1979). If the experiment is successful, the search ends; if not, a growing understanding helps evaluate the experiment and renewed attentiveness leads to the next experiment. It is important not to underestimate the uncertainty and stress that may surround this aspect of the search for a calling, given the strong links to identity and the repeated deconstruction and reconstruction of it (Furey, 1997; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). Such experiences could irrevocably alter one's identity and shake up one's grounding, thus prompting a reluctance to pursue the path or experiment any further. Identifying a calling and testing its fit may require a willingness to sacrifice some stability and embrace some uncertainty; as Levoy (1997) put it, individuals typically do so when the pain of not doing it exceeds the fear of doing it.

5.4. *Growing understanding of the self*

Lastly, a growing understanding of the self is a necessary factor for identifying one's calling. As noted earlier, the notion of self-identity and the development of the self are central to the concept of calling. Pratt and Ashforth (2003) observed that callings involve roles, identity and meaningfulness, and that the “path” to meaningfulness is through identity. Our definition of callings as the convergence of the ideal, ought and actual selves implies that one first needs to be aware of one's actual self and have a good grasp of the ideal and ought selves before one can strive for the convergence of the three and create harmony with one's actions (e.g., Grant, 2007).

Several researchers have underscored the critical role played by such self-awareness and understanding. For example, Novak (1996) noted that it is not easy to discover one's calling and that it takes much reflection, trial activities, and dialogue, all of which serve to clarify one's identity and self-concept. Aristotle's idea of living one's self-truth and the Jungian notion of "living in truth with your inner daimon" (Norton, 1976) both highlight the need to understand one's self as a preliminary step. Pratt and Ashforth (2003) observed that meaningfulness (the "why am I here" question) is intricately intertwined and often preceded by the construction of an identity (the "who am I" question). Similarly, Bolman and Deal (2001) emphasized the importance of an "inner journey" and the discovery of one's true self as a key step to connecting life and livelihood and infusing work with meaning. In a similar vein, Duffy and Sedlacek (2007) found that the presence of a calling correlated strongly with self-clarity which suggests a growing awareness of the self would be part of the process and search. Hall and Chandler (2005) also noted that a calling is shaped by "knowing why" investments that involve self-knowledge, clear identity, and an understanding of one's needs.

While the process of understanding one's self may be influenced by a range of factors (e.g., life experiences, one's roles, one's social memberships) (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003) and continually change and evolve, our point is that discovering one's calling must be grounded in one's understanding of the self. Identity exploration needs to give way to identity commitment – "identity achievement" status according to Erikson's (1963) ego development theory where identity has been constructed rather than conferred (Marcia, 2006). One needs to know who one is for the search for a calling (or the recognition of one) to bear fruit, and conferred identities – "identity foreclosure" as per Erikson's status classification – may not stand the test of critical self-reflection and crises. The discovery of a calling can, in turn, continue to influence and refine one's sense of self. While the interplay between one's sense of self and calling is probably reciprocal, a sufficient understanding of the self is a prerequisite for discovering one's calling.

In summary, these four conditions – an urge to find meaning in one's life, attentiveness, willingness to experiment with new paths, and a growing understanding of the self – are necessary for an individual to discover a calling but not sufficient to guarantee success in doing so. It is possible that one's search may never end or one may misidentify one's calling.

6. Implications of callings for organizational behavior

The concept of callings holds significant promise for enriching our understanding of a range of organizational phenomena. In this section, we highlight some of these implications to set the stage for future research in these areas.

6.1. Work motivation

The notion of callings may provide some of the impetus sought in recent years for fundamentally new insights into the theory and application of work motivation concepts (Pinder, 1998; Steers, 2001). Focusing on the energy and direction components of motivation (Pinder, 2008), we note that callings clearly instigate focused energy (the action orientation in our definition) and provide guidance to a person's choices for directing that energy. In addition to the accompanying extrinsic rewards available for goal achievement, the individual with a calling would be strongly motivated both by merely engaging in the acts that the calling requires and by the value that accrues from success experiences (see Staw, 1976 for a similar three-part categorization of motivational forces). The extra devotion to pro-social causes is also likely to enhance both the intensity of motivated work effort as well as strengthen its resolve in the face of setbacks. From a self-determination theory perspective (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2008), the motivation underlying the pursuit of a calling is likely autonomous in nature in which the individual identifies with the activity's value, integrates it into his/her sense of self, and endorses his/her own actions. Confirming such a link would extend the applicability of self-determination theory while adding a unique insight into the types of motivational forces at work in those who feel called. In short, the energetic force, direction, intensity, and resilience associated with the pursuit of a calling may operate independently on an individual's work motivation over and above those caused by other extrinsic factors in the work context, and are likely separate in nature from traditional motivational constructs.

6.2. Career choices

An advanced understanding of the calling phenomenon could also offer fresh insights into career-choice and career-making decisions. Unlike traditional career choice models such as Holland's (1966, 1973) RIASEC approach or work adjustment theory (Lofquist & Dawis, 1969), callings concepts do not rely on assessments of people's personalities, abilities or the environments found within specifically-defined occupational groupings. On the other hand, Holland's (1966) focus on action and motivation inherent in an occupational choice and his suggestion that such choices require a person to have insight into him/her self is similar to elements of the callings concept. That said, these two approaches are not redundant or isomorphic. First, the areas of overlap apply only to callings found in Cells 2 and 3 of our typology. Second, our definition implies pro-social intentions and goals on the part of those who hold them; whereas Holland's (1973) model is predicated on the concepts of people's attempts to match themselves with specifically-defined, real-world jobs such as those listed in his assessment instruments. Third, whereas our conceptualization of callings implies motivational forces that promote clarity, passion and a sense of personal mission, these considerations are not integral to the sort of person-job matching and career progress

orientation characteristic of Holland's model, nor of other, similar models such as the theory of work adjustment (Lofquist & Dawis, 1969). Finally, the callings approach does not assume knowledge on the part of an individual of the requirements and rewards available through a large, finite set of specifically-defined *à priori* job categories, as does Holland's RAISEC model, a limitation of that model, if only because it does not cover all occupational titles in today's work world (Deng, Armstrong, & Rounds, 2007). In short, a callings approach is bound to augment, rather than displace, two traditional models of occupational choice and work adjustment.

6.3. Job satisfaction

Being engaged in one's calling may have contradictory implications for an individual's job satisfaction. On the one hand, pursuing one's calling represents doing what one wants to do most, making the effort deeply fulfilling. For example, Wrzesniewski (2002) noted that those who view their work from a callings perspective reported greater life satisfaction and enjoy more satisfaction from their work than from their leisure. They also enjoy more positive mental health, as reflected in a variety of dimensions and displayed lower rates of absenteeism (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Likewise, Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, and Damon (2001) claimed that work is most meaningful when it is a calling and that a sense of meaningfulness, in turn, is associated with psychological and physical health (cf. Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Wrzesniewski, 2003). Dik and Duffy (2009) argued that approaching one's work as a calling may lead to higher levels of intrinsic satisfaction. Further, those engaged in pursuing their calling may value the resulting sense of fulfillment and the opportunity to make a difference in society so much that they may even be willing to settle for less than their ideal in others aspects of the job (e.g., financial gain, promotion, comfort) (Hardy, 1990).

On the other hand, being engaged in a calling can be all-consuming and never ending. While one may draw tremendous satisfaction from pursuing one's calling and be fully immersed in the activities, he/she may also be plagued by a chronic sense of dissatisfaction prompted by what is *not* being achieved. This may stem from constantly shifting the goalposts as to what is possible even as one continues to achieve pre-set targets. As noted in our section on the definition of callings, this is the impact of the "could" self – what could be done or what is possible – that drives one toward ever-higher levels of performance. In other words, those engaged in their callings are likely to be constantly "hungry," never fully content, and always pushing for the next higher standard. Such a state could also result in a permanent state of dissatisfaction – not with one's activities but with one's performance.

6.4. Stress

Pursuing or not pursuing a calling may also have a bearing on an employee's stress and well-being. One study found that working in occupations to which one has a sense of being called is associated with lower levels of stress and depression, greater clarity of self-concept and greater facility with coping (Treadgold, 1999). Some writers have postulated that failure to answer a call can end in disaster, or at least alienation from ourselves. That is, if we consciously elect to ignore a calling, according to Levoy (1997) (citing the Sufi poet Kabir), our lives become pointless, we may become depressed and turn anger inward on ourselves.

Frankl (1984) described the negative consequences for mental health among people who lack a sense of meaning or purpose in their lives, a condition he referred to as *existential frustration* (p. 123). He noted that people who lack a sense of meaning, not about the meaning of life per se, but about the meaning and purpose of their own particular lives, are unfulfilled and prone to mental illness (particularly depression), substance abuse, and even suicide. There appears to be a connection between being engaged in one's calling and well-being, and future research on stress should include orientation towards work (Wrzesniewski, 2003) as a moderator. Having a callings orientation, in contrast to a job- or career-orientation, may lower the impact of work-related stressors both by prompting the individual to view them as positive challenges as well as distracting attention from the possibility of failure to the joy of doing the task itself.

6.5. Escalation of commitment

Research on escalation of commitment (e.g., Staw, 1981; Whyte, 1986) has noted that psychological, social, and structural factors often drive decision-makers to commit to a course of action even in the face of continued negative assessment of chances of success. To date, there has not been much focus on whether the decision-maker's orientation towards work (as a job, career or calling) affects such escalation of commitment to a losing course of action.

We posit that those who are pursuing their callings are more likely than others to escalate their commitment in the face of setbacks and negative forecasts for at least two reasons. First, for those pursuing a calling, engaging in action related to a calling may be as, if not more, stimulating and important than the outcome itself. Winning or succeeding may be seen as secondary to the actual doing for they feel compelled to answer the call regardless of the cost involved or the likelihood of success. Second, it is likely that those engaged in their callings may over-estimate the benefits associated with a course of action (toward a goal that is believed to be pro-social), while under-estimating the risks involved, and display a very high tolerance for acknowledged risks. In such cases, the individual may assume that, given the inherent nobility of the goals and intentions involved, the ends may justify means that are costlier than what would normally be deemed acceptable. If our premise in this regard is valid, the extra willingness of people to persist in the face of setbacks may be an advantage that

fosters greater or more-frequent success, or it may be a disadvantage that registers as stubbornness, over-confidence and even hubris when altering course could be a more rational choice. In summary, the pursuit of callings may induce myopia when it comes to decision-making in situations with potential for unwarranted escalation of commitment. Future research should examine the added explanatory value of a callings orientation over and above that of the other factors known to affect escalation.

6.6. **Organizational** citizenship behavior (OCB)

One of the hallmarks of those pursuing their callings is their complete devotion to the activities that encompass their calling – activities that may go beyond assigned goals, expectations and rewards. The effort and behaviors of those pursuing their calling are not limited to official requirements and prescribed targets. People with a calling tend not to differentiate between work-life and non-work-life (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) and their all-consuming passion for their calling often drives them to perform over and above the call of duty (at least as defined by organizational, if not personal, standards). For example, Serow (1994) found that teachers with a sense of calling were more likely to make personal sacrifices and devote extra time to their job. However, such a blurring between work and non-work-life does not necessarily suggest that those pursuing their callings would work excessively long hours but only that they willingly engage in activities that are not within their formal job description and go the extra mile (e.g., focus on excellence, extra attention to detail, level of rigor, thoroughness). It is reasonable then to expect a positive association between organizational citizenship behavior (Organ, 1990) and being engaged in one's calling.

However, it is possible that such willingness to volunteer and contribute over and above one's normal work duties may be limited only to those activities that are part of or associated with a person's calling (as opposed to other work duties unrelated to the calling). For example, a graphics designer who views his/her work as a calling may be willing to devote weekends and late-nights to design training sessions for new employees, organize competitions, track down industry trends, and keep his/her colleagues updated even though these activities may not be part of his/her job description, but may not be interested in other activities (e.g., team-building exercises, culture-building retreats) that the organization may deem important. So having employees with a callings perspective could be a mixed blessing for the organization – these employees would be passionate about their work but not necessarily about the organization.

6.7. *Organizational commitment and employee turnover*

The concept of callings adds an interesting nuance to our understanding of organizational commitment and turnover. While having employees with a callings orientation has its benefits for the organization in the form of better engagement and motivation, Dobrow (2004) hypothesized that the pursuit of callings may also have some potentially dysfunctional effects for organizations. People pursuing callings in jobs or organizations that are not capable of providing the variety and types of contexts fertile for callings may have difficulty in accepting realistic goals for themselves or in aligning their work goals with those of their organization. Indeed, work behavior motivated to some degree by the pursuit of a calling in such contexts may result in employee dissatisfaction and frustration resulting in the typical consequences for the organization – turnover or withdrawal behavior in its various forms. Similarly, Pratt and Ashforth (2003) highlighted an interesting trade-off between meaningfulness *in* work and *at* work, which is relevant here. They noted that meaningfulness in work, which is a critical feature of a calling, "... may involve a disengagement from the organization, as it is the task itself – not where it is done – that is of ultimate importance" (p. 325). Accordingly, organizations that undertake to generate a sense of calling among its employees are well-advised to ensure that they also provide work contexts appropriate for their employees to pursue those callings, otherwise the newly-called individuals may go elsewhere that is more promising to achieve their goals. The pursuit of callings in the workplace can thus have both beneficial and detrimental effects on people's relations with their organizations.

In general, this degree of alignment between one's callings and the organizational context is also likely to moderate the relationship between feeling called and other organizational phenomena such as satisfaction, citizenship behavior, motivation, etc. When the mission and operations of the organization are aligned with the employee's calling, the positive impact is likely to be enhanced and benefits mutually shared; in the absence of such alignment, however, the impact might be diminished as the employee tries to "work around" the organization or pursue his/her calling despite the organization's emphasis on other priorities. Such a situation is also likely to prompt the employee to search for other opportunities and organizations that may be more supportive of or be in line with his/her calling.

7. Discussion

In this section, we highlight some methodological and substantive issues to further encourage fresh investigation of the concept of callings. The three features in our conceptualization of calling – action orientation, convergence of selves and pro-social intention – offer the detail and specificity that Dik and Duffy (2009) called for to guide reliable and valid measurement. Further archival and qualitative enquiries need to be conducted to flush out these features of callings and then proceed with the usual scaling procedures employed in social science research, recognizing that callings have affective and cognitive

elements (cf. Dobrow, 2004) as well as active, behavioral elements. This means that measurement will require more than self-report instruments; observation by second-parties may be required to detect behavioral indicators that appear to exhibit and express tell-tale signs of pursuit of a calling. Eventually, multivariate techniques such as those employed by Liu (2008) in the development of her new scale of spirituality could be applied to demonstrate construct validity (cf. Schwab, 1980) as well as criterion-related validity against appropriate, theory-generated criteria.

7.1. Early substantive questions to be addressed

As noted earlier, research on callings can augment traditional perspectives on career development and occupational choice. The emphasis on a sense of purpose and meaning as well as on a pro-social intention not only complements the traditional focus on abilities and person-job match (e.g., Holland, 1966; Lofquist & Dawis, 1969) but raises some interesting questions. Similarly, questions around selecting occupations come to forefront when viewed in light of the notion that callings do not need to fit neatly within occupational labels and roles.

First, is it possible that some people may have more than a single calling, either simultaneously or in sequence? Addressing this question would have important implications for career counselors and notions of employee-job fit in organizations. The possibility that a person can have more than one calling at different stages of his/her life adds a temporal element to assessing and placing employees and eases the pressure on finding the “one right calling.” Rather than expending significant resources to do so, employees and human resource departments may come to acknowledge the importance of a person-job-time fit.

Second, does being engaged in one's calling necessarily imply excellence or effectiveness? In other words, does one have to be effective or successful in his or her calling for it to qualify as a calling? Our conceptualization of a calling emphasizes the merging of the actual, ideal and ought selves that may not necessarily or automatically translate to excellence in performance. For example, an individual may follow his or her calling to save the environment but not be very effective in his or her contributions or impact. One might argue that it is the engagement in the calling that is more important for the individual than the level of success or performance achieved. However, extreme levels of continued incompetence may prompt the individual to question whether he/she wants to or should pursue this course of action (i.e., may raise doubts in one's mind about his/her ideal self and ought self). On the other hand, those who are engaged in callings will likely strive constantly for improved performance to achieve their maximum potential and would, more often than not, be reasonably competent. So while it is likely that high task-specific competence is generally associated with engaging in a calling, it is not a requirement. However, an individual pursuing a calling may deem him/herself to be highly competent at it even though in reality the actual competencies might be modest. Alternatively, high levels of performance or success in a certain activity or job need not necessarily imply that it is that individual's calling. Future research is needed to study the link between being engaged in a calling and effectiveness to understand associations with ability and skill development. A de-coupling of effectiveness from engaging in a calling would have implications for career planning and placement since it would suggest that proficiency and aptitude may not be the only important determinants for selecting employees and maximizing the person-job fit.

Third, is it possible to develop a typology of callings? Although we have proposed a typology of *interpretations* of callings, we have refrained from attempting to categorize callings per se. One approach would be to recognize and build on the link between callings and values that serve as the foundation for the sense of purpose and meaning underlying that calling. The classification of values (Rokeach, 1973) or motivational domains of values (e.g., Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990) could serve as a starting point for developing a typology of callings. Although only one of the seven value motivational domains tested by Schwartz and Bilsky (1990) is explicitly labeled “pro-social”, it would be too narrow an interpretation to dismiss the other domains as being inapplicable to the concept of callings. A pro-social intention or flavor can permeate some of the value domains, especially the ones that are relatively more collective in their focus such as maturity, security and restrictive conformity. For example, maturity involves the appreciation and understanding of others (besides the self) which has an other-orientation that fits well with our conceptualization of callings being pro-social. Similar arguments could be made for other value domains as well.

Fourth, it will be necessary to address the issues involved in identifying callings in other people. Is the identification of a calling to be done only by the individual to be called or can career counselors play a role in helping others discover their calling? Career counselors generally guide career choices of those who come to them on the basis of their aptitudes, interests and track records, with significant emphasis placed on providing information about careers and vocational training opportunities (Shiel & Lewis, 1993). What would be the reference points for identifying another's calling, especially if aptitude or proficiency is not a pre-condition for a calling? Drawing on our conceptualization of callings, we can envision “callings counselors” focusing on guiding and framing the reflections of those seeking their help to clarify goals, understand their ideal and ought selves, and highlight pro-social intentions. Research on intrinsic aspirations or life-goals in the self-determination tradition (Deci & Ryan, 2008) can help us go beyond steps such as assisting clients gain clarity regarding their sense of meaning and purpose (which could happen through constructing narratives, open-ended writing exercises, etc.) by focusing on factors necessary to foster autonomous motivation. In counseling sessions, this could include steps such as highlighting internal locus of causality to clients, stressing availability of choice to mark volition, and drawing connections between potential courses of actions and the degree to which the clients' basic needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness would be satisfied.

Fifth, what is the cultural context in which callings emerge? Is the search for meaning, identity and sense (integral parts of the callings construct) a natural human endeavor that cuts across cultures as implied by most thinkers in this area (e.g., Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Frankl, 1984; Haidt, 2006; Seligman, 2002)? Examples of the Dagara culture in West Africa where a person is defined by his/her purpose in life and is named accordingly (Somé, 1998), the concept of *dharma* in ancient Vedantic philosophy (Bogart, 1994), and the importance of silence to listen to the call by the 13th century Persian poet Rumi (Rumi, 2001) all point to the prevalence of the callings construct across cultures. Dik and Duffy (2009) hypothesized that callings are a cross-culturally relevant construct but how it is expressed may vary across cultures (e.g., more emphasis on meaningfulness in individualist cultures vs. more emphasis on social contributions in collectivist cultures). Studies that explore the role of culture in the search for and the presence and expression of callings are needed to broaden our understanding of this construct.

The foregoing list is meant to be only suggestive of the issues we hope our study of callings may generate for organizational scholars as well as practitioners. We hope this paper stimulates further inquiry into the identification and dynamics of callings concepts, their antecedents and their effects on various individual and organizational phenomena. We believe that there are interesting implications of the concept for theory, research and practice in relation to phenomena such as work motivation, satisfaction, stress, commitment, citizenship behavior, and decision-making. What's old (the concept of calling) may become new again and inform our understanding of organizational behavior with fresh insights.

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