



Examining predictors and outcomes of a career calling among undergraduate students



Ryan D. Duffy*, Richard P. Douglass, Kelsey L. Autin, Blake A. Allan

University of Florida, USA

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 24 June 2014

Available online 22 August 2014

Keywords:

Calling

Well-being

Life meaning

Longitudinal

ABSTRACT

The current study examined predictors and outcomes of a career calling among 292 undergraduate students at two time points over a three-month period. Using structural equation modeling, a model was tested that examined the extent to which calling, life meaning, the search for life meaning, vocational clarity, and personal growth at Time 1 would predict these same variables at Time 2. Results showed that calling was a significant predictor of personal growth and life meaning and that life meaning, the search for life meaning, and vocational self-clarity significantly predicted the presence of a calling. Although findings demonstrating calling as a predictor variable are consistent with previous research, these results also demonstrate the potential reciprocal relation of calling to proximal work and well-being variables over time. Implications and future research directions are discussed.

© 2014 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Research on the study of work as a calling has burgeoned over the last ten years. In a recent review article, [Duffy and Dik \(2013\)](#) note that feeling a calling has been consistently linked to healthy career development and well-being across dozens of studies. However, the majority of this research has been cross sectional and to date only a handful of studies on calling have used longitudinal methods ([Duffy & Dik, 2013](#)). Of this group, only four published studies have examined calling at multiple time points with undergraduate students ([Bott & Duffy, in press](#); [Hirschi & Herrmann, 2012, 2013](#); [Praskova, Hood, & Creed, 2014](#)). This limits knowledge of what predicts, and is predicted by, calling over time among this population and represents a critical gap in the literature. The current study seeks to provide an important contribution to this literature by testing a comprehensive, longitudinal model of calling among undergraduate students. This study is unique by focusing on both vocational *and* well-being variables as they relate to calling, by only including variables that have previously been linked to calling over time, and by improving on the limitations of past studies which have suffered from low sample sizes and high attrition rates. If the ultimate goal from an intervention perspective is to help individuals feel a calling and reap its benefits, results from this comprehensive model may be informative in deepening our conceptualization of the construct and providing guidance for practitioners seeking to grow a calling among undergraduate students.

1.1. Conceptualization and theory

As research interest has grown, scholars have proposed different definitions of calling, including both unidimensional (e.g. a passion for one's work; [Dobrow, 2013](#)) and multidimensional (e.g., internal/external summons, work as a source of meaning, work as prosocial; [Dik & Duffy, 2009](#); [Elangovan, Pinder, & McLean, 2010](#)) conceptualizations. In their review of these definitions, [Duffy and](#)

* Corresponding author at: University of Florida, Department of Psychology, Gainesville, FL 32601, USA. Fax: +1 352 392 7985.
E-mail address: rduf@ufl.edu (R.D. Duffy).

Dik (2013) recommended that calling is best understood as a multidimensional construct, because this conceptualization maintains the original usage of the word and differentiates calling from other related constructs such as passion, meaning, and prosocial motivation. Accordingly, in the current study we define a calling as, “a belief that one's career is a central part of a broader sense of purpose and meaning in life and is used to help others or advance the greater good in some fashion” (Duffy & Dik, 2013; p. 429), often arising from an internal or external summons. The fact that calling can arise from an internal or external summons is a key component of the definition, in that it suggests that individuals can feel called internally (e.g., by the self), or externally (e.g., family legacy, higher power, and the needs of society). Furthermore, this definition of calling aligns with the historical notions of calling dating back to the 16th century by acknowledging that a full range of occupations can be viewed as a calling, not just those with an external summons (e.g., a higher religious power; c.f., Dik & Duffy, 2009; Duffy & Dik, 2013 for a detailed review of the conceptualization of calling).

Not one theoretical model has been developed to examine why calling links to proximal work and well-being variables. Although a handful of studies have drawn on existing vocational theories (see Duffy & Autin, 2013; Praskova et al., 2014), many studies have been atheoretical, making it difficult for researchers to conceptualize how calling develops and relates to other variables. In the present study, akin to Praskova et al. (2014), we primarily draw from Hall and Chandler's (2005) work, which proposed the calling theory of psychological success. This model draws from Hughes's (1958) theory of subjective career success as well as well-established goal-setting theories. In his model of subjective career success, Hughes (1958) argued that, although many prior conceptualizations of career success focused solely on objective variables (i.e., income, status, etc.), much of career success is dependent upon people's own conceptions of what makes a “good” job. Factors that contribute to subjective success include variables such as job satisfaction and meaning derived from work. Inherent in the sense of a calling is passion, enjoyment, and subjective satisfaction. Thus, Hall and Chandler (2005) suggest that feeling a calling may be one of the deepest forms of subjective career success. Moreover, they suggest that viewing one's work as a calling provides the individual with “metacompetencies,” such as adaptability, that allow the individual to find satisfaction even when they are not experiencing objective success. These metacompetencies also promote self-directed career planning and goal setting, behaviors that help individuals prepare for difficulties they might face in achieving goals related to their calling.

A distinct aspect of this theory is that it proposes a *dynamic relation* between calling and related variables. That is, although metacompetencies facilitate goal-directed behaviors that create the conditions for subjective and objective success, there is a cyclical relation in which positive outcomes of living a calling (e.g., job satisfaction) reinforce and bolster one's sense of calling. In other words, calling can be conceptualized as both a predictor and outcome variable. To date, the majority of studies on calling have positioned it as a predictor variable (Duffy & Dik, 2013). Specifically, researchers have hypothesized that college students and working adults develop a calling which in turn leads to increased vocational self-clarity and academic satisfaction for students, increased work meaning and career commitment for adults, and increased life meaning and life satisfaction for both groups (Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Bott, 2013; Duffy, Allan, & Dik, 2011; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Hirschi, 2012; Hirschi & Herrmann, 2013). Unlike adults in the workforce, calling is theoretically conceptualized as a motivating force for college students (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007). As they have yet to start living out their calling, feeling a calling for future work might boost feelings of vocational clarity, meaning, and satisfaction in the present. Yet these directional hypotheses can only be treated as tentative given a lack of longitudinal data. Indeed, this lack of data may be a key reason why a unified theoretical model on calling have not been developed, highlighting the importance of this type of research.

1.2. Calling among undergraduate students

Despite the lack of a single theory, researchers have completed a number of studies examining how calling functions among undergraduate students. In the following sections, we first review results from cross-sectional research and then more extensively highlight the limited longitudinal research that has been completed with this population. The majority of this research has utilized either the Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ; Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy, 2012) or the Brief Calling Scale (BCS; Dik et al., 2012). In order to prevent students from simply equating calling with an interest in a specific major the directions that accompany the CVQ and BCS instruct students to “Please respond with your career as a whole in mind,” and describe calling as “a person's belief that she or he is called upon to do a particular kind of work.”

1.2.1. Cross sectional research

Research with undergraduate students has demonstrated that calling is a salient construct among this population. Duffy and Sedlacek (2010) found that in a sample of over 5000 incoming college freshmen, 44% of these students believed it was mostly or totally true that they perceived a career calling, and 28% of the sample felt they were currently searching for a calling. Another study revealed that 68% of college students found calling to be relevant in their career decision-making process (Hunter, Dik, & Banning, 2010). Given that many undergraduates endorse the concept of calling, scholars have often investigated how feeling a calling links to career and well-being outcomes in this population.

A survey of more than 3000 first year college students highlighted that the presence of a calling positively correlated with career choice comfort, career decidedness, self-clarity, and choice-work salience (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007). Further research has demonstrated that calling moderately links to occupational self-efficacy (Domene, 2012), along with greater levels of career decidedness, positive work attitudes, positive work-related outcome expectations, increased work enjoyment, and intrinsic work motivation (Dik, Sargent, & Steger, 2008; Steger, Pickering, Shin, & Dik, 2010). In regard to well-being outcomes, calling has been shown to weakly to moderately correlate with life meaning, life satisfaction, and academic satisfaction (Duffy, Allan, & Bott, 2012; Duffy, Allan, et al., 2011; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010; Steger et al., 2010).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/886844>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/886844>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)