

National Research University Higher School of Economics

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Beloborodova Polina

**Motivational and Personal Premises of
Life Calling**

PhD Dissertation Summary

for the purpose of obtaining academic degree
Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology HSE

Academic Supervisor:
Doctor of Psychological Sciences, Professor
Dmitry Leontiev

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH

Relevance of the study

Modern people find themselves in a situation of freedom unthought-of before. Victor Frankl emphasized that when humans lost their base instincts they have forever forfeited their unity with nature, but gained a capacity of choice. In recent times another source of regulation, traditions, is also waning (Frankl, 2006). Modern people have to make their choices and construct their lives on their own. At the same time the lack of opportunities for self-realization and meaningful interaction with other people transforms this freedom to unbearable uncertainty and leads to a phenomenon called “an escape from freedom” by Erich Fromm (1994). Also, contemporary world is constantly changing, and modern people are experiencing challenges in navigating the endless flow of events and information. People need something to guide them and sustain coherence in life, but at the same time leave space for creativity and change. This role can be played by an ancient idea of calling or vocation that recently seems to have regained interest of general public, as well as research community. A range of self-help books on the topic have been published in Russia and internationally, mostly in the last five years. Also many in class and on-line courses aimed at helping to find one’s calling have been created. Unfortunately, all those initiatives are not supported by research and are based mainly on their authors’ personal experience. Only a handful of studies in Russia have specifically addressed the phenomenon of calling despite a long intellectual and spiritual tradition and extensive research on related constructs, such as personal meaning (Leontiev, 2013).

Extent of previous research

In recent years we are witnessing a resurgence of interest to the concept of calling among psychology, management and counseling professionals. The number of academic articles on the topic published from 2007 to 2017 increased sevenfold compared to the number of articles published before 2007 (Dik & Shimizu, 2019). It has been demonstrated in many studies that a sense of calling is associated with a range of positive outcomes at

work and in life in general (Duffy & Dik, 2013). The idea of calling is relevant for a substantial share of people throughout their whole lives: for students (Duffy, Dik, & Steger, 2011), working adults (Duffy, Allan et al., 2013), unemployed (Duffy, Bott et al., 2015), and retired (Duffy, Torrey et al., 2017). At the same time after 20 years of research the authors did not reach an agreement on the very definition of calling (Myers, 2013). This situation demonstrates the complexity, as well as dynamic nature of the phenomenon of calling (Wrzesniewski, 2012).

Additionally, relevance of the idea of calling and potential positive outcomes that it can yield on both individual and organizational level make calling-based interventions a promising field of research and practice. So far, only a few studies empirically examined interventions dedicated to help the participants to discern the domain of their calling and enhance the sense of being called in their current activities (Dik, Sargent, & Steger, 2008; Harzer & Ruch, 2016; Dik, Steger, Gibson, & Peisner, 2012). On the other hand, practitioners' literature on the topic is abundant and diverse (e.g. Wu-Pong, 2015; Dik & Duffy, 2012; Dreher, 2008).

The idea of calling is particularly salient for students, a group which typically belongs to the emerging adulthood stage of life. Exploration of their possible callings might help them in the process of identity formation or exploring and identifying with alternative values, lifestyles, friends and partners, social groups, and occupations (LaGuardia & Ryan, 2002; Marcia & Archer, 1993).

Aim of the research – to explore the phenomenon of calling as it manifests among Russian students, personal characteristics of the individuals in search for calling, and psychological mechanisms for the discernment of calling.

Object of the research – the phenomenon of calling.

Topic of the research – personality characteristics of individuals in search for calling, the process of the discernment of calling.

Research design and hypothesis. The present research contains two studies and a report on the practical application of the research findings. Study 1 constitutes a qualitative exploration of Russian students' secular conceptions of calling. The general hypothesis is that calling is a relevant construct for Russian culture in general and student population in particular, but Russian students' conceptions of calling differ from the conceptions of calling of students in other countries. Given its exploratory nature, no empirical hypothesis was developed for this study. Study 2 was aimed at investigating how three levels of engagement with calling (presence of, search for and living calling) linked to each other and proximal variables (life meaning and three dimensions of personal life position: agency, awareness, and authenticity) over time among university students. It was conducted in a form of a longitudinal study with measurements at two time points, with the following hypotheses:

1. T1 life meaning and personal life position would predict T2 presence of calling over and above T1 presence of calling.
2. T1 life meaning and personal life position would predict T2 search for calling over and above T1 search for calling.
3. T1 life meaning and personal life position would predict T2 living calling over and above T1 living calling.
4. T1 presence of calling would not predict T2 life meaning and personal life position over and above T1 life meaning and personal life position.
5. T1 search for calling would not predict T2 life meaning and personal life position over and above T1 life meaning and personal life position.
6. T1 living calling would not predict T2 life meaning and personal life position over and above T1 life meaning and personal life position.
7. T1 search for calling would predict T2 presence of calling over and above T1 presence of calling.
8. T1 presence of calling would predict T2 living calling over and above T1 living calling.

The report on practical applications contains general recommendations for practitioners, a report on the results of a preliminary test of an intervention aimed at helping university students to discern their callings, as well as an investigation of personal characteristics of the individuals in active search for calling (participants of the intervention) in comparison with overall students' population.

Characteristics of sample. The empirical part includes three studies. The first study has been conducted on a sample of 104 students of National Research University Higher School of Economics and National Research Nuclear University MEPhI who filled in a questionnaire on their understanding of the concept of calling and the actions they undertook in order to discern and implement it. The second longitudinal study has been done on a sample of 61 students of NRU HSE who filled the questionnaire at both Time 1 and Time 2. The final study aimed at investigating personal characteristics of individuals in active search for calling was conducted on a sample of 386 students of NRU HSE, including 37 students who participated in the intervention and 349 students representing general students' population (Study 2 sample at Time 1).

Theoretical and methodological basis. Since a unified theory of calling does not exist yet, we did not prefer any of the existing concepts to the others. Hence, in Study 1 we approached the phenomenon under investigation in an open-minded manner by employing an inductive qualitative research design that allows deriving theory from data. The results showed that the concept of calling could be approached from the perspective of existential psychology (Victor Frankl, Dmitry Leontiev), as well as self-determination theory (Richard Ryan, Edward Deci). In our study those approaches complement rather than contradict each other. Those findings also coincided with the results of the theoretical analysis, leading us to build on those approaches further research (Study 2), as well as practical applications.

The following **methods** were employed in the research:

Study 1: Qualitative document analysis (Altheide, Coyle, DeVriese, & Schneider, 2008)

Study 2:

- Brief Calling Scale (Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy, 2012)
- Living Calling Scale (Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012)
- Noetic Orientations Test (Leontiev, 2000)
- Personal Life Position (Leontiev & Shilmanskaya, 2019)

Scientific novelty. Despite the abundance of research on constructs related to calling, such as personal meaning, research on calling in the context of Russian culture is very limited. Study 1 was aimed at filling this gap. Additionally, to date longitudinal studies on calling have been scarce which informed Study 2. Finally, intervention research on calling included mainly brief interventions (with the exception of Wu-Pong, 2015), whereas Dik and Steger (2008) suggest that such stable constructs as calling take more time to change. In response to this claim, we designed and tested a comprehensive course aimed at helping individuals to discern their calling that can be further used in institutional setting, as well as individual counseling.

Theoretical importance. The research addresses a few gaps in the literature on calling. First, it makes a contribution in cross-cultural research on calling by examining possible differences between Western and Non-western concepts of calling. Also, there is a shortage of longitudinal studies investigating the process of the discernment of calling. The present study demonstrates that the sense of calling can be cultivated with deliberate actions and is linked with life meaning and the sense of harmony between oneself and actual course of one's life.

Practical importance. As result of the theoretical investigation of the phenomenon of calling, as well as the qualitative exploration of Russian students' concepts of calling, a university elective course dedicated to help students to discover their callings has been developed and tested. The results of the present study may also be used by counseling psychologists and coaches in individual career counseling, as well as by university career centers and psychological support services.

Validity and reliability of the results are based on psychometric characteristics of the methods, as well as observing statistical procedures of hypothesis testing. Data were

collected via survey administration application Google Forms developed by Google LLC (<https://docs.google.com/forms>) and open source application 1KA developed by the Centre for Social Informatics, at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana (<http://www.1ka.si>). Mathematical processing of data was conducted in MS Excel 2019 and RStudio 1.1.456.

Research results and thesis submitted to defense:

1. Calling is a salient concept for Russian students; they see it as something more than a mere job, are intrinsically motivated to find it and dedicate themselves to it, and associate it with the usage of their abilities;
2. A sense of authenticity, or harmony between oneself and one's actual course of life contributes to the increase in the sense of calling, as well as perceived realization of calling over time;
3. Perceived deficit of meaning in life is one of the main factors motivating individuals to actively search for their callings;
4. Discernment of calling is possible through an intervention which involves exploration of strengths, values and sources of enjoyment, followed by synthesizing those three aspects in a personal mission statement and finding opportunities to implement it in the real world.

Structure and volume of the dissertation. The dissertation consists of introduction, three chapters, conclusion, list of references, and appendix. The main text takes 103 pages. The list of references comprises of 207 sources, including 191 in English, 15 in Russian, and one in French. The dissertation includes 20 tables and one figure. Overall volume is 150 pages.

Approbation and discussion. The results of the theoretical investigation of the concept of calling, as well as the results of the pilot test of the intervention were presented at the 21st and 22nd International Symposiums "Psychological Problems of the Meaning of Life and Acme" (Moscow, 2016, 2017). The results of qualitative exploration of the concept of calling among Russian students were presented at the 9th European Conference on Positive

Psychology (Budapest, 2018). Finally, the results of the intervention testing were presented at the summer school “Quality of Life in the Conditions of the Global Transformation of the Mankind” (Gorno-Altaysk, 2018), 20th April International Academic Conference on Economic and Social Development (Moscow, 2019), as well as 16th European Congress of Psychology (Moscow, 2019). The results of the research are presented in four publications, including two articles in Scopus and Web of Science indexed journals, and one article in Higher School of Economics’ “white list” journal.

MAIN CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

In the **Introduction** we justify relevance of the research, define its aim, object, topic, hypothesis, scientific novelty, theoretical and practical importance, as well as validity and reliability, and we state the research results and theses submitted to defense

In the first chapter “Theoretical analysis of the problem of life calling” consisting of two paragraphs we review the history of the idea of calling and modern research on this phenomenon.

The paragraph 1.1 “Development of the concepts of calling” is dedicated at tracing the development of the idea of calling from ancient times to present day. Prevalent modern views of calling in the West are rooted in the Christian tradition. However, ideas related to Christian calling can also be found in other religious and spiritual traditions: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. Calling also features in various philosophical concepts and is reflected in the works of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Feuerbach, Dewey, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Jaspers, Ortega y Gasset, Mounier, and Bourdieu. In psychology, the idea of calling could initially be found mainly in philosophical reflections in psychoanalytical and existentialist schools in the works of Fromm, Jung, and Frankl, as well as in Russian developmental psychology and pedagogy (Vygotsky; Rubinstein and Ignatiev). A few empirical studies on calling were carried out in the 1980’s and 1990’s, followed by a rapid growth of this research area from the beginning of 2000’s onwards.

Interestingly, the components that were considered integral to calling in the not so distant past (i.e. moral duty and religious base) are barely present in modern empirical studies.

In the paragraph 1.2 “Modern research on calling” we summarize main concepts of calling, distinctive features of this phenomenon, the connection of calling to related constructs, positive outcomes of having and living a calling in work and life, as well as its “dark side.” We also consider research on calling in non-Western samples, the ideas of calling in Russian culture, and the results of intervention research. Although the body of research on calling continues to grow, there is still a lack of agreement regarding the very definition of calling. To date, there are several approaches to conceptualizing calling: (1) calling as divine directive, (2) calling as suitability to a particular work, (3) calling as work orientation, (4) calling as transcendent summons, (5) calling as passion towards a domain, (6) calling as experience. There are also several instruments intended at measuring the sense of calling: Work-life Questionnaire (WQL), Brief Calling Scale (BCS), Calling and Vocation Questionnaire, (CVQ), Calling Scale (CS), Multidimensional Calling Measure (MCM), and Living Calling Scale (LCS). Theoretical analysis of the concept of calling, as well as the results of empirical investigation indicate that it is connected with, but cannot be reduced to such constructs as meaning, spirituality and religiosity, intrinsic motivation, self-concordance and authenticity, prosocial motivation, engagement and flow, as well as abilities and character strengths. Calling has been found to correlate positively with meaning in life, life and work satisfaction, engagement, intrinsic motivation, and the usage of character strengths, as well as mitigate burnout, among other positive outcomes. There is also a “dark side” to calling, including decreased receptivity to potentially useful feedback, proneness to sacrifices and worsening of relationships outside of work, as well as risk for exploitation at work. Calling may have various sources; it can be narrowed down to professional activity or seen more globally as embracing life as a whole; it may also change throughout life. The process of the discernment of calling and its development remains rather obscure, with only a handful empirical (mostly qualitative) studies. On the other hand, practitioner literature on finding calling is abundant and diverse, with books ranging from

religion to self-help. Research findings and practitioners' insights converge in a few key points. They presume that discerning a calling is an active process that involves exploration of one's strengths and talents, interests, and values, and then matching them with concrete opportunities to contribute to the world.

So far, the majority of the studies have been performed on Western samples of students and working adults. As for research on non-Western samples, it is still in its infancy, with only a few studies conducted in Asia and Africa. In Russian culture, the idea of calling is rooted in Orthodox Christianity and manifests itself on three interconnected levels: universal human calling, messianic calling of the Russian people, and personal occupational calling. In recent years the latter seems to have regained interest with growing number of published books, as well as in class and on-line courses on finding calling, which unfortunately are not supported by research.

The first chapter ends with **conclusion** which aggregates the theory and defines main tendencies in the development of scholarship on calling. The majority of the religious and philosophical concepts of calling distinguish between general callings, applying to all people, and particular callings for specific individuals. Additionally, different concepts of calling touch upon spiritual, moral, existential, and pragmatic aspects of calling. Religious concepts comprise mainly the spiritual and moral aspects; philosophical concepts are varied and emphasize different aspects, with some of them relating calling to religion and faith, and others treating it as a secular idea. Currently, research on calling focuses mainly on its pragmatic and existential aspects, while moral and spiritual aspects lost their importance. This could be an indicator of increasing secularization and individualization of the society or a function of preferences of the researchers.

The second chapter “Empirical investigation of the phenomenon of calling” consisting of two paragraphs illuminates the results of two empirical studies and their interpretation.

In the paragraph 2.1 “Exploratory qualitative study” we present the results of Study 1. The aim of the study was an initial exploration of the phenomenon of calling in Russian

culture. Sample, research design, and methods are described. Data were collected from 104 university students aged 17 to 31 ($M = 18.9$), 77.9% female. An online survey with open-ended and closed questions on the concept of calling and actions that the participants undertook to find and implement it was administered. The responses to open-ended questions were analyzed using qualitative document analysis which allows to derive categories inductively from the data (QDA; Altheide, Coyle, DeVriese, & Schneider, 2008). Each response was coded with labels which were subsequently divided into categories or themes. Themes, labels and examples of participant responses were presented in the “Results” section of the paragraph.

In the analysis of the responses to the open ended question about the definition of calling, we identified six main themes: Intrinsic Motivation, Success, More than a Job, Dedication, Ability, and Energy Influx. The most prominent theme Intrinsic Motivation reflects interest and an urge towards a calling domain, as well as sense of fit and positive affect. It is notable that positive affect was the most frequently coded label, and no negative aspect, such as burden or sacrifice was ever mentioned by participants in the present sample. The second theme Success, or attaining a desired result or getting positive feedback, often without considerable effort, was frequently referred to as an indicator of calling. The third theme More than a Job reveals the tendency to see one’s occupation as a source of self-realization and a personally meaningful project which can potentially span the whole life. The next theme, Dedication, reflects the desire to give: invest resources, contribute to the other people’s well-being, sometimes even without material incentives. The next theme, Abilities, was less prominent, but still noticeable. It emerged from responses stating that calling provided opportunities to employ inborn or cultivated abilities. The final theme, Energy Influx, amalgamated the idea of deriving energy from calling-related activities, rather than spending it.

Analysis of responses to the question about the activities involved in the discernment of calling elicited three themes: Behavior, Processing, and Nonspecific. The first two themes involved experimentation with different domains followed by self-reflection. The majority

of the respondents were actively engaged in their search for calling; however, a small share indicated that they were not doing anything at the moment, or just “lived their lives”, which was included in the theme Nonspecific.

Four themes were identified in the responses about the content of participants’ callings: Specific Domain, Other-oriented Calling, Self-oriented Calling and I Don’t Know. Only a handful of the respondents provided a specific domain, such as mathematics or sport dance. The majority described their callings in abstract terms, such as helping, contributing or self-development, or indicated that they did not know what their calling was. We also asked the respondents how they implemented their callings in their lives. The analysis produced two themes: Doing Something, or active behavioral involvement with calling domain, and Doing Everything/Nothing, or the lack of specific actions. The majority of the respondents reported such activities as practicing, studying, development and communication.

These results are largely in line with similar findings in other cultures. One striking difference of our findings from the analogous studies in the USA and China (Hunter, Dik, & Banning, 2010; Zhang, Dik, Wei, & Zhang, 2015) was that Russian respondents did not refer to a guiding force, such as God, destiny, society or family, as a source of calling.

The paragraph 2.2 “Longitudinal study” is dedicated to presenting the results of Study 2 whose goal was to examine the relationships between three levels of engagement with calling (searching for, having, and living it) and two proximal constructs: life meaning and personal life position, the latter consisting of three dimensions: awareness (being mindful about one’s life as a whole), agency (deliberately acting rather than “going with the flow”), and authenticity (feeling harmony between oneself and actual course of one’s life). Additionally, we aimed at investigating the directionality of the relationships between those constructs.

Hypotheses:

1. T1 life meaning and personal life position would predict T2 presence of calling over and above T1 presence of calling.

2. T1 life meaning and personal life position would predict T2 search for calling over and above T1 search for calling.
3. T1 life meaning and personal life position would predict T2 living calling over and above T1 living calling.
4. T1 presence of calling would not predict T2 life meaning and personal life position over and above T1 life meaning and personal life position.
5. T1 search for calling would not predict T2 life meaning and personal life position over and above T1 life meaning and personal life position.
6. T1 living calling would not predict T2 life meaning and personal life position over and above T1 life meaning and personal life position.
7. T1 search for calling would predict T2 presence of calling over and above T1 presence of calling.
8. T1 presence of calling would predict T2 living calling over and above T1 living calling.

Data were collected from 383 Higher School of Economics' students at Time 1 (T1). The participants' mean age was 19.97 years ($SD = 2.71$, range = 17–43). The majority of the participants (78.75%) self-identified as female. The academic statuses of the participants were as follows: freshman (38.83%), sophomore (24.54%), junior (13.92%), senior (6.23%), postgraduate (master or doctoral level; 15.75%), alumni (0.73%). The participants' fields of study were humanities (20.15%), social science (19.05%), economics (15.38%), management (11.36%), law (11.36%), computer science (8.42%), communication (6.59%), engineering and technology (4.40%), mathematics (2.2%), and education (1.1%).

Invitation to participate in the study was placed at the login page of the university's internal system. Students volunteered to participate in the study to receive feedback on their responses to calling and life meaning questionnaires; no credit was given for completing the survey. Out of the initial sample of 383 students 263 provided their e-mail addresses to receive the invitation to participate in the survey at T2, and 78 of them filled it (20.3% of the initial sample). Additionally, two observations at T1 and 15 observations at T2 were

excluded due to the lack of responses to the primary scales, resulting in the final sample of 61 students.

We used the following measures:

- Brief Calling Scale (BCS; Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy, 2012)
- Living Calling Scale (LCS; Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012)
- Noetic Orientations Test (NOT; Leontiev, 2000)
- Personal Life Position (PLP; Leontiev & Shilmanskaya, 2019)

Descriptive statistics (minima, maxima, means, medians, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis) for calling-related, as well as additional variables pointed out that there was considerable variability in data, with subjects leaning towards lower and higher ends of the scales. Additionally, the results of Wilcoxon Rank Sum Tests suggest that none of the variables significantly changed between T1 and T2. Analysis of preliminary bivariate Spearman's correlations coefficients for all variables at T1 and T2 showed that presence of calling at T1 was significantly negatively correlated with search for calling ($r = -.34$) and positively correlated with living calling ($r = .72$), life meaning ($r = .39$), and authenticity dimension of personal life position ($r = .26$). At T2, presence of calling significantly positively correlated with living calling ($r = .65$), life meaning ($r = .39$), as well as all three dimensions of personal life position: awareness ($r = .37$), agency ($r = .30$), and authenticity ($r = .32$). We also found significant positive correlations of living calling at both T1 and T2 with life meaning ($r = .51$ at both time points) and authenticity dimension of personal life position ($r = .48$ at T1 and $r = .50$ at T2).

In order to determine whether four variables at T1 (life meaning, awareness, agency, and authenticity) predicted T2 presence of, search for, and living calling, over and above T1 presence of, search for, and living calling, we conducted hierarchical multiple regressions. In all cases autoregressive paths (calling at T2 on calling at T1) were entered into an initial block (Model 1), followed by life meaning in a second block (Model 2), and three dimensions of personal life position (awareness, agency, and authenticity) in a third block (Model 3). In order to test whether successive models were better at predicting the outcome,

we conducted analysis of variance (ANOVA), comparing the performance of the autoregressive model (Model 1) against a model without predictors, then Model 2 against Model 1, and Model 3 against Model 2.

Our analyses revealed that full model for presence of calling performed significantly better than autoregressive model and model with only life meaning as an additional predictor. Authenticity was sole significant predictor of T2 presence of calling, on top of T1 presence of calling. The model for search for calling with added life meaning performed significantly better than autoregressive model, and life meaning was a significant predictor of T2 search for calling. The performance of the full model was not significantly better, and none on the predictors were significant. Finally, the model for living calling with all predictors did not perform significantly better than simplified models. However, in the full model authenticity was the only significant predictor of T2 living calling, in addition to T1 living calling.

In order to examine the directionality of the relationships between three levels of engagement with calling and proximal variables (live meaning and three dimensions of personal life position: awareness, agency, and authenticity), we conducted additional regression models with each type of calling experience and one of the proximal variables at T1 as predictors and the same proximal variable at T2 as outcome. The results revealed that all autoregressive paths were significant (each proximal variable at T1 significantly predicted itself at T2), while none of the calling-related paths were significant. In other words, none of the calling experiences (search for, presence of, or living calling) at T1 predicted life meaning, awareness, agency, and authenticity at T2 over and above those same variables at T1.

Finally, we tested the remaining two hypotheses on the relations between searching for, presence of, and living calling. First, we tested if T1 search for calling would predict T2 presence of calling over and above T1 presence of calling. The results of the regression analysis did not support this hypothesis. In other words, students who were searching for a calling at Time 1 did not succeed in finding it nine weeks later, at Time 2. The hypothesis that T1 presence of calling would predict T2 living calling over and above T1 living calling

was not supported either. That is, students who claimed having a calling to a particular domain were not likely to actualize it to a higher degree after nine weeks.

In summary, we hypothesized that each level of engagement with calling (searching for, having, and living it) would be predicted by proximal variables: life meaning and three dimensions of personal life position: awareness, agency, and authenticity. Those hypotheses were confirmed. Life meaning significantly predicted search for calling; the relation was negative, i.e. higher life meaning precluded students from searching for a calling, while students with lower life meaning were more likely to indicate that they were searching for a calling. Inverse relation did not hold: search for calling did not significantly predict life meaning. This finding leads us to the conclusion that search for calling might be one of the ways out of a generalized deficit of meaning in life. Our next finding was that both having and living calling were predicted by authenticity. Again, the inverse relationship was not significant: neither having, nor living calling predicted authenticity. Those results suggest that experiencing an activity or a domain as a calling could be a part of a broader sense of harmony between oneself and actual course of one's life. Moreover, it can be derived from our findings on temporal relations between calling and proximal variables that calling is developed rather than discovered. Although in most studies calling is treated as an antecedent of various positive outcomes, it might as well be their derivative.

Contrary to our expectations, there were no significant connections between any of the levels of engagement with calling and two remaining dimensions of personal life position: awareness and agency. Awareness is a cognitive dimension of personal life position, an ability to distance oneself from one's life and reflect on it. Possibly, the sense of calling is a more intuitive and felt experience. Additionally, neither of calling experiences was predicted by the conative dimension of personal life position: agency, or actively navigating one's life rather than going with the flow. This finding might be explained in the following ways: first, research shows that the experience of calling is rather widespread; second, respondents with various degrees of connection with the concept of calling and varying degrees of motivation typically fall into samples (some may contend with modest job and leisure crafting, while

others strive to build their lives around their callings and demonstrate higher levels of agency).

In the **conclusion** for the second chapter we argue that overall our findings on the concept of calling in Russia in Study 1 converge with previous research results on calling in Western and non-Western samples in the following key points: (1) calling is a salient concept for Russian culture, (2) sense of calling is grounded in personal meaning and other-oriented motivation and is related to positive affect, (3) calling spans from a specific occupation, domain or life role to general life experience, (4) discernment of calling requires experimentation with different domains followed by self-reflection. The results of Study 2 demonstrated that searching for, perceiving and living a calling are rather pervasive experiences which are not contingent on demographic characteristics. The sense of calling appears to be a stable construct, like meaning, that did not change over the period of nine weeks. The analyses also revealed that search for calling was negatively related to life meaning, and presence of calling was positively related to authenticity. Finally, the examination of the directionality of that relationship point out that the development of calling is a part of a broader process of self-investigation, rather than a momentary event.

The third chapter “Some practical applications” consisting of two paragraphs is aimed at providing practitioners with recommendations and tools for exploring the idea of calling with their clients. Additionally, results of the investigation of personal characteristics of individuals in active search for calling are presented and discussed.

The paragraph 3.1 “General recommendations for practitioners” illuminates specific points that career counselors in educational institutions and private counseling may discuss with clients and challenges that may be encountered in the counseling process. Those points include relevancy of the idea of calling for the client, their definition of calling, discussing client’s sources of positive emotions, abilities and signature strengths, values system, and ways of contributing to others’ lives. As a result of this work a broad understanding of possible callings may emerge; it is important to lead the client to look for concrete opportunities to engage with possible callings in a professional setting,

volunteering, education, leisure, personal life and others. Challenges that can be encountered in counseling work with calling include expectation of success without considerable effort and lack of awareness of negative aspects of calling. In view of this it is advised to introduce the client to a more realistic picture of what it means to have and live a calling and discuss challenges that may arise on the way toward discerning and implementing one's calling, as well as ways to mitigate them.

We also sought to develop and test an intervention designed to helping individuals to find occupations perceived as their callings. The intervention was grounded in the exploration of strengths, values, and sources of enjoyment, followed by synthesizing them in a personal mission statement and finding opportunities to implement it in the real world (hypothesis of calling). It included eight 1.5 hour classes taught on a weekly basis. In order to test the intervention we conducted two pilot tests in National Research University Higher School of Economics. The first pilot test involved a group of 15 students who volunteered to participate and provide their feedback. After the trial, the students filled a feedback questionnaire and participated in a discussion session which resulted in a number of modifications to the syllabus and organization of the course. The second pilot test was carried out during the next academic year. The course was registered as an elective course which was available to all students irrespective of their academic program and year of study. Students could receive credit for course completion. Out of 96 applicants 57 students were invited to the course on the basis on their motivation letters, and 23 of them finished it. Feedback was collected in a form of a final essay where they were asked to write about their current understanding of the concept of calling, results that they obtained during the course, and their plans for the future. As result of the second pilot test, a few minor modifications were made to the syllabus. After pilot testing, the course was included into the university's pool of open elective courses available not only to the students, but also to general public.

Based on the final essays as well as immediate feedback from the participants, the course was generally successful in achieving the intended result. They developed a more tangible and realistic concept of calling. Many of them mentioned that their idea of calling

ceased to be grand and esoteric and transformed into a set of concrete steps. The course also appeared to have broad impact on the participants in terms of self-awareness, motivation, and self-esteem. The majority of the students found a few potential callings; many of them started to take action during the course. Some students also mentioned that they developed goal setting and planning skills. Often, the students wrote about the importance of feedback from their peers. The realization that they are not alone in their search for calling, was also helping. Some students mentioned that they sought support in their pursuit of calling from their friends and family. It should be noted however that evaluation of the intervention in the form of final essays can be considered only as a preliminary step, as it does not allow to measure intervention effect. In the future, intervention effect could be measured with random assignment experimental study with control group and several posttests. The intervention could be tested on subjects of other age groups: high school pupils and older individuals.

At the beginning of the second pilot test the participants were asked to fill a survey similar to the one we used in Study 2. The data were used to compare demographic and psychological characteristics of individuals actively searching for a calling and those who just find the idea of calling relevant (Study 2 participants). Participation in the study was anonymous, voluntary and did not affect the final grade. Out of 57 course participants, 42 filled the questionnaire. Five observations were removed due to the lack of response to the primary scales, resulting in the sample of 37 students which was compared to Study 2 Time 1 sample with 349 observations.

Course participants' mean age was 22.06 years ($SD = 5.73$, range = 18–43). The majority of them (84.85%) self-identified as female. The academic statuses of the participants were as follows: freshman (12.12%), sophomore (15.15%), junior (27.27%), senior (15.15%), postgraduate (master or doctoral level; 21.21%), alumni (9.09%). The participants' fields of study were social science (27.27%), economics (27.27%), humanities (21.21%), management (9.09%), law (6.06%), communication (6.06%), and mathematics (3.03%). Course participants did not significantly differ from Study 2 participants with respect to gender ratio and fields of study; there was significant difference in age and

academic status. Course participants were slightly older than other students ($M = 22.06$ years vs. $M = 19.97$ years), however, the difference was less than one standard deviation in the whole sample ($SD = 1.67$). They were also more advanced in terms of academic year.

We further assessed course participants' same psychological characteristics as in Study 2: search for, presence of, and living calling; life meaning; and three dimensions of personal life position: awareness, agency, and authenticity. The results revealed that course participants and other students groups' means of calling-related variables significantly differed according to the Mann-Whitney U Test¹ in terms of BCS Presence ($d = 0.17$, $p = .001$), BCS Search ($d = 0.13$, $p = .01$), and LCS ($d = 0.20$, $p = .0001$). Course participants had a less clear understanding of their callings, than other students, and were less likely to actualize their callings in their lives, but at the same time they were more inclined to searching for a calling, which was probably why they decided to enroll in the course. There was no significant difference between the two groups with regard to life meaning ($d = 0.08$, $p = .12$), awareness ($d = 0.08$, $p = .14$), and agency ($d = 0.06$, $p = .21$). However, course participants group was significantly lower on authenticity ($d = 0.11$, $p = .03$). Thus, one answer to the question of what draws people to actively search for calling is the lack of harmony between themselves and their actual lives. This outcome is in line with the results of Study 2 which point to the connection between calling and authenticity as well.

In the **conclusion** for the third chapter we emphasize the importance of extending the results of research on calling to practical applications. The presented course can be conducted in its entirety, or the concept of career calling, as well as elements of the course may be included in the career orientation seminars in order to encourage students to think about their future work not only in terms of career perspectives and future earnings, but also as path to self-actualization and serving greater good.

In the **overall conclusion** we emphasize the importance of continuing interdisciplinary, as well as cross-cultural research on calling. Fortunately, steps are already being made in

¹ Mann-Whitney U Test has been used to account for small sample size.

both directions. In 2013 a conference uniting prominent religious and secular scholars has taken place in Kent, Great Britain, and in 2014 and 2016 the Institute of Ecumenical and Cultural Studies in Collegeville, Pennsylvania carried out a study analyzing and comparing the concepts of calling in various religious traditions. Calling is being studied not only in Western, but also in other cultures. The present study contributed to this line of research. Intervention research on calling is also relevant and timely since there has been an upsurge of interest in the concept of calling in recent years. In the present study we tested an intervention for college students which integrated the results of research studies and practitioners' insights and demonstrated that it is possible to discover one's calling through deliberate actions. In future research the intervention can be adjusted for younger audience and tested on samples of high school pupils to help them understand their interests better and find ways of contributing to the world.

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