



Complexifying Calling: Exploring the Multifaceted Nature of Calling



April 28, 2022 | 12:00 PM - 12:50 PM | Room 606

Steven Zhou, John Aitken, Linda Montañaño, and Lauren Kuykendall

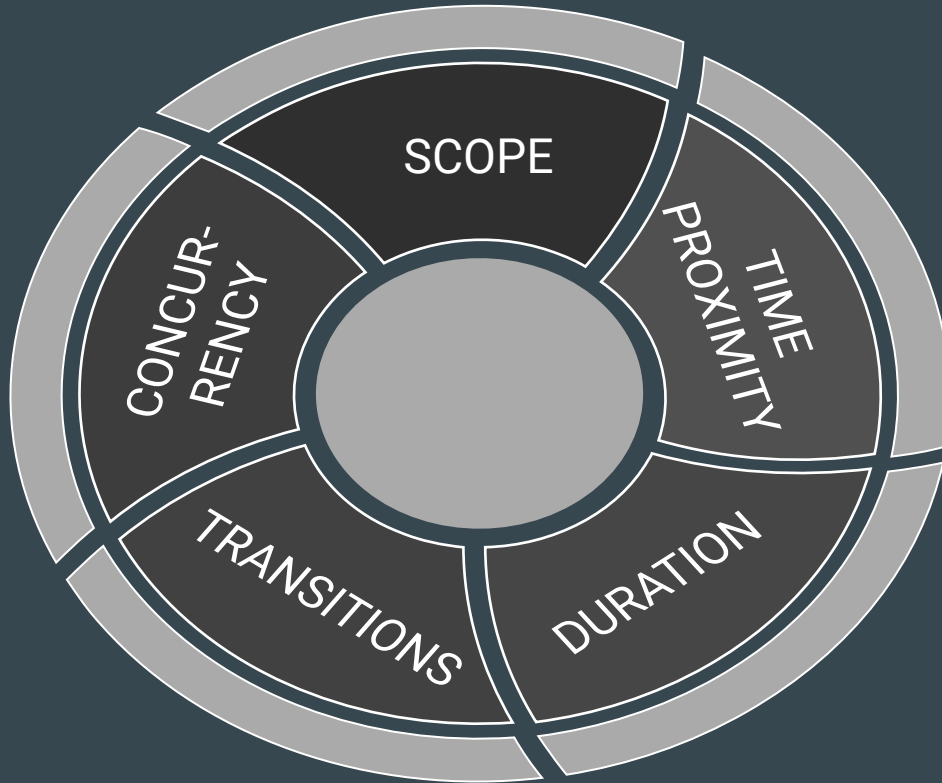
Background

- Calling has been defined in multiple ways
 - Work orientation transcending objective career success
 - Meaningful summoning to prosocial action
 - Encompassing all legitimate (paid and unpaid) work
 - Perceiving vs. living a calling
- Positive outcomes and negative outcomes have been observed
- Typically, measurement assumes calling is **unidimensional** and a matter of **degree**
 - Continuous measures assume higher scores = stronger calling
 - Dichotomous measures are unable to explain change in calling over time
- Missing from this literature is the notion that **calling may differ as a matter of kind** (e.g., via indices of shape, form, dynamics)

Our Initial Proposal

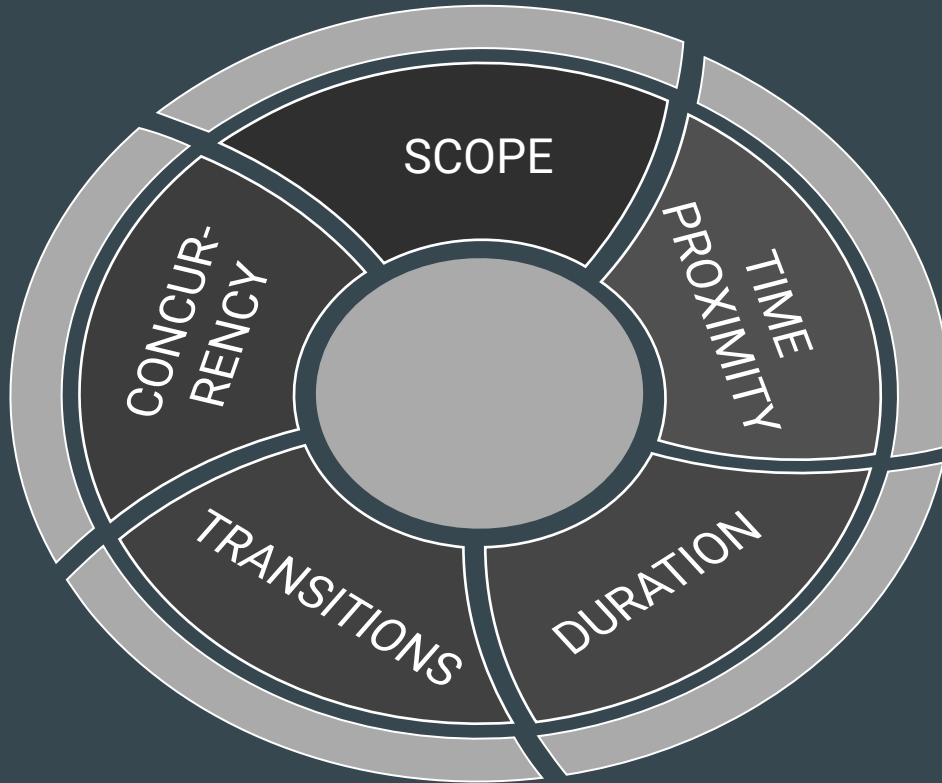
- Different *kinds* of calling exist
 - One *kind* of calling might lead to a positive outcome under certain contextual conditions but negative outcomes under a different set of conditions, while another *kind* of calling might lead to opposite results under the same conditions
 - This could explain the “double-edged sword” of calling found in prior studies
- We propose five “facets of calling”, but we hope this research incubator will help our field flesh out the literature’s still-nascent conceptualization of calling

Five Facets of Calling



- Scope: how narrow or broad one perceives their calling to be in terms of the ways it can be met or achieved
- Time Proximity: how far into the future one perceives their calling to be in terms of the timing of when it will be met or achieved
- Duration: how long or short the calling is perceived to last

Five Facets of Calling



- Transitions: callings can change over time, and individuals might experience transitionary processes differently
- Concurrency: callings can occur simultaneously, individuals might be pursuing more than one calling at the same time

Today's Research Incubator — Overall Questions

- How might we conceptualize calling's multifaceted phenomenology? Are these proposed facets adequate?
- If so, then what are the implications of these facets for how a person may experience positive and negative outcomes?

Breakout Groups: Scope

- Scope: how narrow or broad one perceives their calling to be in terms of the ways it can be met or achieved
 - Based on your research or experiences, does the distinction of *scope* (broad vs. narrow) make sense? Why or why not?
 - Does the distinction of scope help us understand and research calling?
 - How might a *broad* calling lead to different outcomes compared to a *narrow* calling?
 - What other questions may be important to ask about this proposed facet?

Breakout Groups: Time Proximity

- How far into the future one perceives their calling to be in terms of the timing of when it will be met or achieved
 - Based on your research or experiences, does the distinction of *time proximity* (immediate vs. farther into the future) make sense? Why or why not?
 - Does the distinction of time proximity help us understand and research calling?
 - How might a *more distant time proximity* calling lead to different outcomes compared to a *sooner proximity* calling?
 - What other questions may be important to ask about this proposed facet?

Breakout Groups: Duration

- Duration: how long or short the calling is perceived to last
 - Based on your research or experiences, does the distinction of *duration* (long-lasting vs. momentary) make sense? Why or why not?
 - Does the distinction of duration help us understand and research calling?
 - How might a *long-lasting* calling lead to different outcomes compared to a *momentary* calling?
 - What other questions may be important to ask about this proposed facet?

Breakout Groups: Transitions

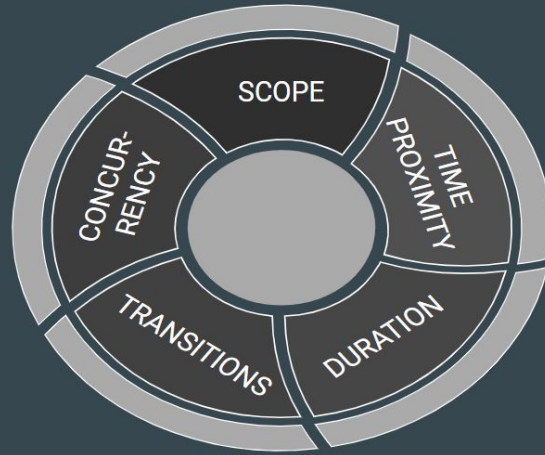
- Transitions: callings can change over time, and individuals might experience transitional processes differently
 - Based on your research or experiences, does the distinction of *transitions* (change over time) make sense? Why or why not?
 - Does the distinction of transitions help us understand and research calling?
 - How might a *changing* calling lead to different outcomes compared to a *steady* calling?
 - What other questions may be important to ask about this proposed facet?

Breakout Groups: Concurrency

- Concurrency: callings can occur simultaneously, individuals might be pursuing more than one calling at the same time
 - Based on your research or experiences, does the distinction of *concurrency* (multiple simultaneous callings) make sense? Why or why not?
 - Does the distinction of concurrency help us understand and research calling?
 - How might *plurality* of calling lead to different outcomes compared to a *single* calling?
 - What other questions may be important to ask about this proposed facet?

Breakout Groups: Reporting

- One person from each group reports on their group's discussion including
 - Perceived usefulness of facet and its proposed definition for understanding calling
 - Implications of the facet for how a person may experience positive and negative outcomes
 - Thoughts and questions that could guide further development or directions



Summary Discussion

- Perceiving one's calling and living it out has been associated with positive outcomes for individuals, organizations, and society, although negative outcomes also have been observed
- A better understanding of the multifaceted nature of calling may provide insight for navigating the perils of calling and achieving the benefits
- Our hope in this session on complexifying calling is to inspire more research and garner insights that may prove useful in practice, especially for those engaged in career advising, counseling and coaching

Thank you for participating in this research incubator!

Want to follow up? Contact Steven at szhou9@gmu.edu or Twitter @szzhou4!