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Parents' subjective sense of calling in childrearing

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PARENTS' SUBJECTIVE SENSE OF CALLING IN CHILDREARING

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Certification

I, Justin Christopher Coulson, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the School of Psychology, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Justin Coulson

July 2011

Acknowledgements

While my name is the only one to appear as author of this document, it would be inappropriate to claim that this project was completed wholly through my own efforts. More people than I can adequately acknowledge have contributed to the development of ideas and the accumulation of knowledge that this dissertation represents.

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Publications From This Thesis

Published Manuscripts

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A 30 page summary of this research is also included in an edited, peer reviewed book scheduled for publication in 2012:

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The work represented in this thesis has undergone peer review from the following journals:

- Parenting: Science and Practice (2010)

- Journal of Humanistic Psychology (2010)

- Journal of Positive Psychology (2011)

Some of the work presented in this thesis has also been presented at the following conference:

2nd Australian Positive Psychology and Well-being Conference (2010). Melbourne: Australia.

In all cases of publication and work that has been presented, the greater part of the work is directly attributable to me, as a Ph. D. candidate. Supervisors have enacted their role in discussion of concepts, design, and analysis. They have also been involved in the editing of manuscripts. But the investigations and reporting have been carried out solely by me, in keeping with the requirements of my candidature.

Abstract

To possess a calling is to have a strongly held belief that one is destined to fulfil a specific life role, regardless of sacrifice, with an attitude that in so doing, his or her effort will make a meaningful contribution to the greater good. This dissertation investigates calling in childrearing, a previously unexplored domain of calling. In a series of four studies utilising qualitative and quantitative methods, the applicability and the function of calling in childrearing was explored. Study One utilised interpretative phenomenological analysis to investigate the relevance of calling in the parental domain, and explored the experience of this calling through qualitative semi-structured interviews with 11 mothers and fathers. Each parent's definitions and experiences of calling were consistent with conception and experience of calling in previous research. Study Two reports on the development of a scale designed to measure parents' subjective sense of calling in the childrearing role. Using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, two studies revealed a three-factor, eleven item scale that measured calling in childrearing. Parental subjective sense of calling in childrearing was positively associated with authoritative parenting style, importance of parenting, pleasure of parenting, parenting satisfaction, presence of meaning in life, satisfaction with life, savouring, and positive affect. The calling scale showed a negative relationship with age, income, and the sense that parenting is a burden. This study indicated that calling in childrearing is similar to calling in a career context, and appears related to optimal outcomes for those who possess it. Study Three extended that research by considering how parental sense of calling related to wellbeing in their teenage children. Thirty four early adolescents and their parents completed a suite of questionnaires. The wellbeing and engaged living of adolescents were positively related to parent's calling, over and above any effects of parent's satisfaction with life or parenting style. Study Four used a model of job crafting that has been shown to increase calling, in a pilot study, attempting to develop a sense of calling in 142

parents. Participants completed a suite of questionnaires, and carried out one activity each week for two weeks with their children. They then completed the questionnaires a second time. No significant main effects of time or group were obtained in the data, although a significant group by time interaction was obtained. Implications for calling development and future research were discussed. Calling appears to be a salient and useful construct in childrearing, demonstrates consistency in function across domains, and is related to optimal child wellbeing.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Background

The idea that a person would view his or her work as a 'calling' has existed for centuries. Calling has a sacred history (Dreher & Plante, 2007; Steger, Pickering, Shin, & Dik, 2010). In early usage, calling referred to work related to ministry or the spread of religious belief (Weber, 1958). Luther is generally credited with broadening the meaning of having a calling (Hardy, 1990). Prior to Luther's theology of work, work was considered an unwanted but necessary intrusion in life that impeded people's ability to live a spiritual contemplative existence. Luther's theory of work argued that such a contemplative life was not Godly, but that *work* was a God-given requirement. He stated that work presented people with an opportunity to use their God-given endowments of strength, capacity, and talent in such a way as to improve life for others. In so doing, one would fulfil his or her calling. Luther argued that virtually any work could be considered a calling with one key proviso: that it was a service to others. Luther's view of work as a calling required everyone to serve in their 'station' for the betterment of the greater good. Calvinistic tenets altered this perception of calling somewhat, arguing that one's station, defined by social structure and family circumstance, should not determine one's calling. Instead, Calvin claimed that a calling had to be discovered through the identification of strengths, gifts, and talents. It was then up to the individual to find the best way to put those capacities to use in the service of others. Such work would provide fulfilment, enlightenment, and purpose, and be that person's calling.

Conceptions of calling have remained fairly consistent since Luther and Calvin (Hardy, 1990; Weber, 1958) until the past few decades where interest in having a professional calling has enjoyed renewed attention, with a marked increase in scholarly research on the topic. Since this calling revival, the attributes that comprise calling have been subject to ongoing

consideration as calling has been refined and redefined (Baumeister, 1991; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Hardy, 1990). The idea of having a calling has shed it's religious connotation and it's notion of being God-directed (Steger et al., 2010). This has been accompanied by an increase in the secular acceptance of having a calling, and a led to a greater openness to that sense of calling being derived from alternative transcendent sources (Steger et al., 2010).

In recent years, there has been a small surge in scholarly work related to having a calling, specifically emphasising the meaning that can be derived through being called to a particular work (Dik, Sargent, & Steger, 2008; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Markow & Klenke, 2005; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Wrzesniewski, Rozin, & Bennett, 2003). Calling has also begun to be considered as a useful description of roles outside of traditional vocational or career pursuits (Seligman, 2002; Super, 1980), such as in childrearing (Baumeister, 1991; Oates, Hall, & Anderson, 2005; Sellers, Thomas, Batts, & Ostman, 2005).

Popular culture also illustrates the relevance of calling to childrearing. In the 2001 film *Riding in Cars with Boys* a teenage girl conceives a child, proceeds with the pregnancy, and gives birth to a son. While her son is still very young the girl leaves her drug-addicted boyfriend (who was also the boy's father) and raises her son alone. As the movie reaches its climax her now-adult son argues with his mother about the way their lives have turned out. He claims that her parenting has resulted in poor psychological outcomes for him. As his blame and accusation reaches its zenith, the following exasperated exchange ensues:

Beverly D'Onofrio (Mother) - When does this job ever end?
Jason (Son) - You call it a job?
Beverly D'Onofrio - Well, what do you think it is? A calling?

This altercation suggests that some parents may indeed consider the role of raising a child to be a calling. Others may feel less purposeful about the role or be less committed and engaged, seeing their role of caregiver as 'just another job to be done'.

In addition to calling in childrearing beginning to appear in scholarly literature and popular movies, evidence of the secularisation and mainstreaming of calling exists in the publication of popular books written about parenting being a calling, generally with a religious bent (Fields, 2008; Maggart, 2003). Religious leaders have similarly emphasised that being a parent is a calling (Hales, 1999; Perry, 2004). One statement representative of many will suffice here - former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and President of a large Christian denomination, Ezra Taft Benson (1987) said: "Fathers [and certainly mothers too], yours is an eternal calling from which you are never released. … It is a calling for both time and eternity." Even parenting seminars have been designed around the idea that parenting is 'the highest calling' (THC Parenting, 2003).

1.2 Motivation for thesis

Despite the general acceptance of the term 'calling' (Hunter, Dik, & Banning, 2010), including the substantial increase in research about careers and calling (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Hirschi, 2010) and the mainstream and religious acknowledgement of having a calling to be a parent, almost no research on calling and childrearing exists (two notable qualitative exceptions exist which will be discussed in later chapters: Oates et al., 2005; Sellers et al., 2005). Research in calling and careers has provided a clear understanding that having a calling at work is related to optimal occupational and life outcomes (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Dik, Duffy, & Eldridge, 2009; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). Such relationships are yet to be explored in parenting. Furthermore, this dearth of research persists even after calls from scholars to examine how

family life can be optimised using constructs that align with positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), such as those constructs that comprise having a calling. Therefore, this dissertation addresses the following general questions in relation to having a calling in childrearing:

1a. What is a calling?

1b. Can calling apply in contexts beyond career – specifically childrearing?

2. If so, can calling in childrearing be measured?

3. How does calling relate to the wellbeing of those who possess it?

4. How does a calling to be a parent relate to children's wellbeing?

5. Can calling be developed or enhanced via intervention?

1.3 Structure of thesis

A series of studies were conducted from 2009-2011 by the author of this dissertation to answer the questions described above. All but one of these studies have been written as articles for submission to peer-reviewed journals in psychology. They have either been published, reviewed and resubmitted for publication, or are presently under review. The current dissertation provides each of these articles in a slightly edited form (to allow for continuity and to reduce repetition of definitions and construct elaboration) in the following order of chapters:

Chapter Two describes the conceptual, theoretical, and empirical underpinnings of the calling construct. In responding to the first general question about calling that this dissertation emphasises, this chapter explains the multi-disciplinary history and development of calling with reference to origins (Baumeister, 1991; Elangovan, Pinder, & McLean, 2010; Hardy,

1990; Weber, 1958), theorists (for example, Dik & Duffy, 2009; Hardy, 1990; Hirschi, 2010; Steger et al., 2010), and modern empirical evidence (for example, Dik & Steger, 2008; Dobrow, 2006; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) that describes and supports the notion of calling as a meaning-base in many people's lives. The chapter specifically emphasises various definitions of calling and provides a foundation for a broad, integrated, multidimensional construct of calling. This chapter also outlines the optimal outcomes that are experienced in the lives of those who perceive that they are called. Much of Chapter Two is an expansion of the material under review in the Journal of Positive Psychology at the time of the submission of this dissertation. (The manuscript has been reviewed and the resubmission is undergoing further consideration by the reviewers).

Chapter Three comprises a qualitative investigation that considered the relevance of calling to childrearing. Specifically the study was developed to investigate whether calling in childrearing is perceived in a manner that is conceptually consistent with previous definitions of calling in a work environment. The results of this study form the basis of the definitional approach to calling that is carried throughout the dissertation. That is, parents' subjective sense of calling in childrearing is comprised of a strong sense of identification as a parent, a feeling that childrearing is the person's destiny or life purpose, recognising the role as meaningfully contributing to the good of the community, willingness to sacrifice, continuous awareness of the parental role, and feeling passionate about the role (see Chapter Three, Table 2). This Chapter is a slightly edited version of the publication listed previously in the Journal of Humanistic Psychology.

The second question this dissertation addresses is whether calling in childrearing can be measured. This question is answered in Chapter Four. A substantial quantitative investigation involving some 800 parents is described. The various samples provided data

that were used for exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses as well as internal consistency. The multi-faceted definition of calling described in Chapter Three was refined, simplified, and condensed into a three sub-scale measure of calling. The development of this scale incorporated calling as a Life Purpose, a role that demands Awareness, and one that invokes Passion. A satisfactory fit was obtained for the model, which led to the development of the 11-item Subjective Sense of Calling in Childrearing Scale (SSCCS). This scale was used for all subsequent data collection in relation to parents' sense of calling.

Previous research has demonstrated that a possession of a calling (in career contexts) is associated with optimal levels of wellbeing and performance when compared with alternative orientations to work (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Chapter Five reviews the relationship between wellbeing and calling. The sample described in Chapter Four provided data in relation to parenting satisfaction, parenting styles and dimensions, meaning in life, positive and negative affect, and satisfaction with life. Chapter Five contains an analysis of these data and explores the manner in which calling in childrearing is associated with parenting and wellbeing variables. The material presented in Chapters Four and Five is presently undergoing review as a manuscript with the Journal of Positive Psychology.

If calling is associated with optimal outcomes for parents, an important consideration is the relationship that parental calling shares with child outcomes. The work in Chapter Six considers this relationship. Thirty-four children, aged in their early to mid adolescent years, whose parents participated in the larger childrearing sample described in Chapters Four and Five completed measures of wellbeing, affect, and engaged living in youth. Chapter Six is presently being reviewed by the Journal of Child and Family Studies.

Finally, Chapter Seven describes an intervention designed to explore whether calling can be developed or enhanced for parents, with a view to maximising optimal outcomes for parents and children. Chapter Seven contains a report on the quantitative aspects of this intervention. Chapter Eight reviews the findings of the above studies, discusses implications for calling in childrearing with respect to the present contribution, and suggests future directions for further research into callings for parents and those who care for children.

CHAPTER TWO: DEFINING CALLING

2.1 History

Calling was originally described in Biblical writings. An individual was called, or chosen (Elangovan et al., 2010; Hardy, 1990), to a Gospel-centred mission to spread the Word of God. The term evolved to describe a calling to change one's life from unrepentant sinner to a follower of Christ. A calling was considered a Godly summons to preach and live a religiously oriented life (Weber, 1958). Occupational roles were not invoked in the original form of calling. Rather, a calling was an indication of a person's eternal destiny as a Christian disciple. The term identified a responsibility to serve and bless others, and an opportunity to do a work with eternal consequences.

The Christian concept of calling changed with Lutheran ideological influence (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Hunter et al., 2010; Weber, 1958). Luther's conception of a calling was that to be 'called' was a commitment and a contribution. But one's calling was not necessarily to the traditional 'work' of the Gospel through proselytising or living a new life as a Christian. Rather, the calling was to the work of building the Kingdom of God through magnification of one's station and societal role. Thus a person should be content with his or her divinely bestowed societal position and was called to make the most of his or her Heavenly-endowed station, magnifying it in service for the good of others and the furthering of the Kingdom of God. Luther argued that almost any *work* could be viewed as a calling from the Divine, so long as the work was legitimate. Prostitution, usury, and the cloistered life of monks were not considered to be beneficial to the greater good, and Luther indicated that such occupations were not viable as a calling (Hardy, 1990). Luther's position led to a generally accepted belief that as long as productive work, faithfully executed, was completed

in such a way as to contribute to society's improvement then that work was a calling (Weber, 1958).

This Lutheran change to the meaning of calling evolved in a subtle manner with Calvin's philosophy and theology of work. Calvin argued that a calling was not based on what a person may be born into (his station in life). Calling was instead viewed as something to be discovered and developed through reliance on God-given capacities, talents, and abilities (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Elangovan et al., 2010; Weber, 1958). One's calling was to be found in using these gifts in the service of others. Similar to Luther's theology of work, service and building the Kingdom of God and His Glory were the principle reasons for a calling. The idea that a calling would be used for self-gratification or self-actualisation was never proposed, nor entertained by either Luther or Calvin. But, according to Calvin, to possess a calling required a process of discovery and the use of strengths in order to bless others.

A calling, in these historical traditions, was always obtained in a transcendent manner, always required activity on the part of the called, and was always related to doing good to others in aid of enhancing God's work. The use and magnification of one's station and skills (Lutheran) or talents and gifts (Calvinist) was central in effectively magnifying a calling. Furthermore, the Calvinist perspective held that individuals experience unique combinations of Heaven-endowed gifts, talents, and abilities, and so callings became unique and personalised under Calvin's philosophy. As a person magnified his or her calling, not only were others served through that calling, but the person with the calling was enabled to fulfil the measure, or purpose, of his or her creation.

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2.2 Current theoretical positions

The idea that a person can have a calling as an integral part of life, providing meaning and responsibility has, according to Weber (1958), been broadly accepted by society such that to have a calling is considered normal by both the religious and secularly minded. Recent theoretical and empirical evidence supports this view (Dobrow, 2006; Elangovan et al., 2010; Steger et al., 2010). Modern-day discussions of calling are generally linked to Bellah et al. (1985). This seminal work has been followed up with an increase in calling-related research during the past decade (and particularly in the past three years). The resultant discrepant definitions and operationalisations of the construct have led to a number of attempts to clearly and unilaterally define a calling (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Dobrow, 2004; Elangovan et al., 2010). Certain dimensions of calling appear consistently (Hirschi, 2010) and these will be discussed below. Nonetheless, questions surround the inclusion of other components of calling. Table 1 provides a simplified summary of central definitions from the recent burgeoning of calling research.

2.3 Callings and meaning

There is universal agreement that the work one feels called to must be meaningful. Historically, meaning was derived through participation in work that built up the Kingdom of God and contributed to the good of society. That is, fulfilling a calling was meaningful to both the individual and society because of the contribution it made. Some scholars retain this historical perception that the work must be meaningful to society (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Dobrow, 2006; Hardy, 1990; Markow & Klenke, 2005; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Weiss, Skelley, Haughey, & Hall, 2004), while others indicate that

Table 1

Comparison of Previously Established Constructs Comprising Calling

	Bellah et al. (1985)	Hardy (1990)	Wrzesniewski et al. (1997)	Dik & Duffy (2009)	Dobrow (2006)	Elangovan et al. (2010)	Hirschi (2011)
External Call	✓	✓		✓			
Meaning/Purpose	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Contribution (to self, other, or society)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Passion/Action Req'd	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Identity	✓	✓	✓	✓ *	✓		✓
Destiny	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Longevity		✓		✓ *	✓		
Engulfs Consciousness			✓		✓		
Domain Specific Self Esteem		✓	✓		✓		✓ **
Sacrifice	✓	✓					
Introspection/Work		✓		✓ *	✓		

* latent construct not explicitly stated. Element exists beyond precise definition, but not clearly within the definition.

** In one group this was not the case, and in fact, these people with a calling possessed negative views about the self. (See Hirshi, 2011 for more).

personal meanings derived from the work are sufficient to claim that one is called. In general, there has been a recent shift away from responsibility to serve society and contribute to the greater good (for more on this theme, see Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). That is, the present emphasis is more directed toward personal meaning obtained from fulfilling a calling. Ironically, personal meaning obtained through following one's calling is often found through service to a greater cause (Seligman, 2002; Steger, Kashdan, & Oishi, 2008). Nevertheless, self-sacrifice has become subordinate to self-discovery in some descriptions of calling. The moral imperative to make a meaningful contribution (Hall & Chandler, 2005) is still acknowledged in all definitions, but the focus on responsibility seems diluted by the emphasis on personal significance.

Davidson and Caddell (1994) emphasised that the nature of called work demands that it not be done for a materialistic end, but rather that the work be meaningful because of the specific contribution it makes to the common good. Likewise, Weiss et al. (2004) argue for a conception of calling that is aimed purposefully at the service of others. In 435 qualitative interviews, Hunter, Dik, and Banning (2010) found consensus in perceptions of calling among college students that a calling would require an altruistic, service focus. Grant (2007) described a key aspect of calling as having a desire to improve society. Dik and Duffy's (2009) view of calling similarly invokes prosocial ends and meaningful contributions beyond the self. So too does Bunderson and Thompson's (2009) qualitative research with a large sample of zookeepers.

While still emphasising meaning, Bellah et al. (1985) reported a shift away from the communal good, and a shift toward personal meaning derived from having a calling. Bellah et al. suggested that a calling was the strongest pathway to meaningful work but the benefit of the meaningfulness was more self-directed than the historical definition. The work may

indeed make a valuable contribution to society, but this is not where the emphasis lies in terms of having a calling. This theme is recurrent in some subsequent definitions of calling. Baumeister (1991) described the passion that someone with a calling will have, and the deep personal meaning that is obtained from a calling. He emphasised the self-actualising components of calling, though having a calling is no guarantee of an actualised life (Elangovan et al., 2010). Hall and Chandler (2005) described the pursuit of one's purpose in life as a calling, arguing that personal meaning is most likely to be obtained through that pursuit.

Novak (1996), Wrzesniewski and her colleagues, (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003) and Dobrow (2004, 2006) similarly argue that personal meaningfulness is readily obtainable to those who discover their callings. Novak (1996) stipulates that a calling is unique and should fit a person's talents, but that they should receive personal enjoyment through it, be energised by it, and love to do it. In each of the cases described, there is recognition of a calling contributing to the common good. The issue is really one of emphasis. In contrast with other conceptualisations of calling that emphasised meaning derived from service to a greater cause over meaning for self, these scholars acknowledge contribution to the greater good, but appear to have shifted their emphasis to recognise a calling's contribution to personal meaning. This has led to the evolution of a more self-oriented conception of calling than historical formulations (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Contribution to community and contribution to self are not mutually exclusive, but some emphasise personal meaning that is derived from making a contribution via one's calling rather than good that is provided to others through the calling. Notably, while Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) emphasise that work should be about personal fulfilment, they also acknowledge that calling-oriented work makes a societal contribution

and improves the world in some way (see also Wrzesniewski, 2003), in addition to being personally fulfilling. Thus, while some researchers emphasise one perspective over the other, there are several who acknowledge the dual meanings that callings can have for an individual, both in relation to personal meaning and fulfilment, and in terms of contribution to something far greater than self.

2.4 The source of a calling

A further point of contention relates to the source of the calling. Dik and Duffy (2009) differentiate between calling and vocation by stipulating that a calling must derive through a "transcendent summons" (p. 427). A vocation lacks this element in its definition. Dik and Duffy's conceptualisation resonates with historical views of calling, notwithstanding the use of 'transcendent' being kept intentionally vague. The transcendent source may be God, or it may be fate, family, or perceived needs in the community. Substantial contemporary research contends that the subjective nature of calling lends itself to this secular idea that a calling is discovered with or without the presence of religious influence (Baumeister, 1991; Bellah et al., 1985; Dobrow, 2006; Elangovan et al., 2010; French & Domene, 2010; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Hirschi, 2010; Steger et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003).

2.5 Other components of calling

In recent research, although disagreement exists in relation to meaning and the source of a calling, there are several elements of calling where consensus is present. Agreement on the degree of personal identity intertwined with calling is substantial (Dobrow, 2006; Hirschi, 2010; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). So too is concurrence related to the sense of mission, destiny, or purpose a person feels in relation to a calling (Baumeister, 1991; Dobrow, 2006;

Elangovan et al., 2010; Hunter et al., 2010). Researchers generally agree that finding a calling requires introspection, self-awareness, or work (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dobrow, 2006; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Novak, 1996; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Weiss et al., 2004). The use of strengths is regularly invoked in keeping with classical formulations of calling (Dreher & Plante, 2007; Hunter et al., 2010; Novak, 1996; Oates et al., 2005; Weiss et al., 2004) and a passion for the calling is commonly cited as necessary (Baumeister, 1991; Dobrow, 2006). There is less consistency in relation to the degree of personal sacrifice a calling might require (Baumeister, 1991; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Elangovan et al., 2010; cf. Hirschi, 2010). This is to be expected given the contrast between emphasis on personal versus social significance of a calling in the classical and current definitions of the construct.

The lack of conceptual clarity in defining calling may, in part, be related to the samples used to provide qualitative data for a conceptual understanding of the construct. To illustrate, Hirschi (2010) obtained data from undergraduate students aged 23 years on average, whereas Bunderson and Thompson (2009) spoke with zookeepers who had many years of experience in their careers. Dobrow's (2004, 2006) longitudinal work on calling began with qualitative data obtained from expert musicians undergoing the transition from high school to college. Hunter et al. (2010) gathered data qualitatively from 435 undergraduate students. As a result, definitions have been informed by a combination of history, experience at work, and an arguably youthful ideology among participants. The varied sources from which the many calling definitions derive have led, unsurprisingly, to the present lack of specificity in defining calling.

2.6 Summary

Having a calling appears to mean different things to different people. Nonetheless, several themes consistently dominate calling definitions. These include; a subjective sense

that the calling is an integral component of an individual's identity; that it provides a significant and meaningful contribution to self and/or the broader society; that one's destiny or life purpose is encompassed by the calling; and that there is something transcendent about the calling (whether borne within or from an extrinsic societal or supernatural cause). Other regularly invoked aspects include the notion that the calling will require substantial sacrifice, that a sense of passion will be invoked with reference to the calling, and that strengths, gifts, or talents will be used in pursuing and fulfilling the calling. For the purposes of this research, and building upon the literature that has been reviewed in this chapter a calling will be defined throughout the remainder of this dissertation as 'a strongly held belief that one is destined to fulfil a specific role, regardless of sacrifice, with an attitude that in so doing, his or her effort will make a meaningful contribution to the greater good.'

CHAPTER THREE: CALLING IN CHILDREARING

3.1 Introduction

Until recently, the idea that a parent might feel 'called' to be a parent has been principally in the domain of religious writers of pop-psychology books (Fields, 2008; Maggart, 2003). Most current research on calling has centred within a career context. However, there is a general acceptance that calling is a term suitably applied to domains beyond careers (Baumeister, 1991; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Seligman, 2002; Super, 1980), with some specifying the role of rearing a child as being an important and salient role in which one might feel a sense of calling (Baumeister, 1991; Seligman, 2002). Baumeister (1991) highlighted the childrearing role as an example of calling beyond the traditionally researched vocational domain, indicating a noble and respected calling is that of 'housewife and mother' (p. 126). Moreover, both quantitative (Hirschi, 2010) and qualitative reports (Hunter et al., 2010; Oates et al., 2005; Sellers et al., 2005) suggest that relationships and childrearing are life roles that lend themselves to the notion of being called.

The variables that comprise calling are each applicable to childrearing. Substantial research indicates that the parental role-identity is consistently at the top of a person's role hierarchy (Burke & Tully, 1977; McBride & Rane, 1997; Stryker, 1968; Thoits, 1992). Parents derive substantial meaning from their role (Baumeister, 1991; Seligman, 2002; Sellers et al., 2005). There is evidence that some parents can be passionate and heavily invested in their role as parents (Bradley, Whiteside-Mansell, Brisby, & Caldwell, 1997; Coplan, Hastings, Lagace-Seguin, & Moulton, 2002; Corwyn & Bradley, 1999, 2002; Greenberger & O'Neil, 1993). Less is known about parents' sense of destiny or personal mission in relation to their childrearing, though there is substantial agreement regarding the sacrifices they make, willingly or otherwise (Baumeister, 1991; Maccoby, 1992).

While theory and limited evidence place childrearing and calling together, the role of the parent is significantly different to that of employee or worker – the domain where calling has traditionally been emphasised and researched. The role of parent makes demands of people that fall beyond the scope of traditional work and career roles. Rossi (1968) made several important points regarding the uniqueness of childrearing: (a) there exists considerable social pressure for a person to assume the role of parent. Cultural and societal expectations are such that upon inception of the parent role, this title and role remain a part of identity throughout life; (b) a re-creative (rather than a pro-creative) act may have led to the inception of the childrearing role. Therefore not all parties are guaranteed to be willing participants in the childrearing role; (c) the role of parent is irrevocable in that once commenced there are few, if any, socially sanctioned ways of relinquishing the role; and (d) there is little preparation available for those preparing to embark on the childrearing journey. Conversely a traditional work role is something that not everyone is expected to participate in, especially for the term of their natural life. Those who participate in employment generally do so by making a conscious decision to be involved. Retirement is both socially acceptable and expected. It is also socially acceptable to leave employment if a more promising alternative appears or if work becomes dissatisfying. There is also training for almost every job, with many careers requiring many years of training before considering people to be considered sufficiently competent to participate in a given profession.

3.2 The Present Study

It is important to be clear that extending a construct into the role of childrearing that is generally associated most intuitively with work is not to suggest that childrearing and work are the same. Yet our language and social interactions, coupled with recent evidence (and even popular culture), suggest that the "work" of rearing children may be viewed as a calling.

In scholarly research, only the qualitative work of Oates et al. (2005) and Sellers et al. (2005) has investigated the experience of calling in childrearing, and in both cases the emphasis was on motherhood. These authors specifically investigated Christian mothers who felt dually called to both work roles and childrearing. While making useful contributions to understanding calling for mothers who also felt called to their academic roles within a university institution, neither researcher clearly defined calling, nor deeply investigated calling in the parental context exclusively as either a construct or a process. Thus, the study described in this chapter was designed to discover how parents describe calling, whether parents can experience calling in the childrearing domain and, if so, what that experience is. Specifically, the first research question this project sought to address was to discover whether participants' descriptions of calling would be consistent with the themes and theory put forward by previous researchers. Second, it was of particular interest to understand how calling-oriented parenting would be described and what outcomes parents would experience in relation to such an approach to childrearing.

Method

3.3.1 Participants

A total of 12 parents were interviewed for this study; five fathers and seven mothers. Participants were recruited through advertisements placed in child-care centres in suburbs on the outskirts of Sydney, and through notices promoting the study at the University of Wollongong. Data were discarded for one mother of a child less than two years of age due to the participant's inability to grasp the subject matter or discuss it in any meaningful way.

All parents identified as Australian with the exception of one mother (of two primary school-aged children) who identified as Indonesian-Australian. Two fathers and two mothers

were parents of children who were approximately in their late teens and early twenties. Two fathers and four mothers were parents of children of primary school age (aged between 4 and 12 years), and one father was a parent of a child under two years of age. The mean age for fathers was 39.4 years ($SD = 9.94$). The mean number of children for fathers in this sample was 2.60 ($SD = 1.34$). Mothers' mean age was 37.5 years ($SD = 6.47$). The mean number of children for mothers in this sample was 3.17 ($SD = .75$).

A purposive sampling method was utilised, with the aim of seeking maximum variation in recruiting participants for interviews (Patton, 1990). Specifically, both fathers and mothers who were in very different childrearing life-stages were sought in order to better understand the calling concept and experience across the most active years of the parental role for each gender.

3.3.2 Procedure

All participants provided informed consent prior to interviews being conducted. Face to face semi-structured interviews with participants were conducted. The audio of these interviews was recorded and transcribed verbatim. To avoid the occurrence of priming bias within the interview setting the emergent themes and constructs from previous research were not introduced by the interviewer. Rather, respondents were required to develop and communicate their own ideas without prompting or preparation.

Participants were invited to provide basic demographic data and discuss their family situations generally. Three key questions guided the interview and analysis process, namely: "What is a calling?", "Does calling apply to childrearing?", and "How do parents experience calling in their lives?"

A total of 11 interviews were completed. After approximately six interviews saturation was understood to have occurred. Some qualitative researchers have argued that as few as four interviews may be necessary before data saturation is obtained (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Beyond the initial six interviews that provided data to a saturation point, an additional five interviews were carried out, recorded, transcribed, and analysed to gain confirmatory data across the various age and gender categories selected. Further participants were not sought following the completion of 11 interviews.

3.3.3 Analysis

A comprehensive review of the transcribed data was conducted to ensure accuracy of the transcriptions by reading over the script while listening to each interview. The 11 interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999). IPA was chosen due to the integral focus on participants' personal meaning, process, and experience, while acknowledging that such qualitative work necessitates an interpretative, and therefore, subjective process in data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Smith et al., 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2003; Willig, 2001). The purpose of this analysis was to understand the calling concept from the point of view of everyday parents.

Each interview was listened to, read, and analysed separately. Data were given unique codes for each new concept that was extracted. Codes were grouped according to themes, both explicit and implicit. Transcripts were revisited as themes were developed and refined. Questions such as, "What does the participant really mean?" "What am I missing?" and "How is personal bias or theory interfering with my interpretation of this interview?" guided the analysis (Brymer & Oades, 2009). Once themes emerged, they were assessed to delineate connections or subthemes. The process was repeated until unique themes were finalised which not only made sense from a definitional perspective (to the researchers), but were

consistent with the experiences provided by participants. While IPA is centred on the lived experience of the participant, those who contributed to this study regularly invoked not only their own experiences but also their observations of others they felt exemplified the points being made.

Results and Discussion

3.4.1 Themes

Parents' descriptions of their conceptualisation of calling, and their observed and actual experiences with calling in childrearing were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Six themes emerged from the IPA. They are listed and briefly described in Table 2.

3.4.2 Identity

Consistent with previous research described by identity theorists (McBride & Rane, 1997; Thoits, 1992), the parental identity was consistently rated as the highest and most central role (alongside spousal roles) in the life of each participant. Hirschi (2010) emphasised that calling must be related to who a person perceives him or herself to be; that it is an integral part of identity (see also Dobrow, 2006; Elangovan et al., 2010). This research supported this view. The identity theme, while strongly endorsed, was often latent when parents described the process and experience of calling in childrearing for themselves. However, when describing observations and others' experiences, participants explicitly expressed that higher sense of calling would be associated with greater identification with the parental role. Participant 8, a 35 year-old father of two primary school-aged children, said "I can't see myself not being a parent. I feel that I was called to be a parent". Another father, 37 years-old and parent to a school-aged daughter and a toddler, emphasised the centrality of

Table 2

Themes Identified as Elements of Calling

Theme (with sub themes)	Description
Identity	Parents who feel called see the childrearing role as central to their lives to the point where it defines them.
Sacrifice	Parents who feel called are committed to the role to the extent that they relinquish opportunities to pursue a preferred activity to better fulfil the parental role.

Meaningful contribution
 	
  − Positive development of self
 	
  − Contribution to child
 	
  − Contribution to community
	Subjectively meaningful contribution to self improvement, and to the development of the child and positive future society.

Passion	Deep absorption in, and enjoyment of, the task of childrearing.
Destiny	A sense that the individual is doing what he or she was "born to do", is destined to do, or feels he or she *has* to do.
Awareness	The childrearing role and associated work are highly salient, and constantly present in the person's awareness.

fatherhood in his identity by stating "I couldn't imagine not being a dad now that I am"

(Participant 11). A 27 year-old first-time father of an infant reflected, "Yeah, I guess it's

something I've evolved into. You know, it's who I am now" (Participant 4).

Not all parents personally felt that the childrearing role was always central.

Participant 7, a 33 year-old mother of two school-aged children, while admitting that the role

of mother was one of her highest priorities, also stated, "I know it's part of me as a mother to

look after the kids but it wasn't like a whole entire focus and, you know, I have other things

to do." The fact that this mother acknowledged motherhood was part of, but not central to,

her identity is highly relevant. This mother indicated that her role was one of the important

things to *do* but she did not see it as more than that – that is, she did not perceive her maternal

role as something that she *is*. This mother participates in childrearing but is not attempting to

be a mother. An alternative view may be that motherhood was one of several roles she had

taken on simultaneously and that it was not her only priority. In either case, Participant 7

suggested that her calling was not in being a mother to her children, and her focus on that role

is easily diluted through competing roles and tasks.

3.4.3 Sacrifice

Participants consistently stated that parents who feel called are committed to the

childrearing role to the extent that they willingly relinquish opportunities to pursue a

preferred activity in order to better fulfil the parental role. Participants strongly endorsed the

theme of sacrifice as a component of calling in childrearing, but also consistently reinforced

that the sacrifice was worth the effort, despite decrements in immediate pleasures and

happiness. That a calling requires sacrifice and makes unwanted or difficult demands is noted

in classical and current reviews of calling (Baumeister, 1991; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009)

though the more current conceptualisations of the construct are somewhat silent on the issue

(Dik & Duffy, 2009; Elangovan et al., 2010; Hirschi, 2010). This is perhaps related to the personal significance of calling attached to modern descriptions, potentially to the detriment of the societal contribution that once was a focus of having a calling.

Participants emphasised the ongoing effort of taking care of children, with mothers in particular describing the routine of schooling, cooking, teaching, and generally "taking time to be there. If you're going to dedicate yourself to being called to be a mother and a parent you have to be prepared to give a portion of your life in time" (Participant 1, mother of four boys in their late teens and early twenties). Participant 6, a 32 year-old mother of five children aged from 10 years to newly born commented, "It's probably what my parents did, a lot of forsaking of yourself to raise these little ratbags into decent human beings (laughs). My parents gave up a lot for us. Very giving." A 45 year-old father (Participant 9) of four teenagers who had either gained or are gaining independence, remarked that calling oriented parents are "almost selfless I think." He indicated that the sacrifices parents will make for their children are significant, "because I think most people, you know, your kids, you'd give them an organ, you'd do whatever, you'd push them out of the way of a car… you'd do all those things."

The theme of sacrifice was perhaps best illustrated when Participant 3, a 34 year-old mother of two school-aged children and a toddler, suggested that parents who feel called to be parents may make tremendous sacrifices, but these are not the sacrifices that most appropriately demonstrate calling. Indeed, the "small" sacrifices may, at times, be the most difficult, and thus the most important, sacrifices.

"For me it's a very constant top of mind thought process of putting my children first, of putting aside the things that frustrate me and that I want to do often in order to meet the needs that they have. And it's often mundane little things during the day. I'm

tired but I need to get up, and I need to get up with a smile on my face so that the kids can have a nice morning, so that they can go to school and have a good day. Days like that are good days for me because I know that despite the fact that I want to stay in bed and I'm probably cranky I am choosing consciously to put that aside and show them a happy face."

Baumeister (1991) links calling with Maslowian actualisation (cf. Elangovan et al., 2010) and argues that the most important component of calling is the connection it provides to an individual's values-bases. In the childrearing context, if a parent feels a high sense of calling towards the childrearing role, she or he will endow that work with values-based labels indicating it is important, the right thing to do, and worthwhile. In association with this labelling, feeling a high sense of calling should also dictate that the parent will willingly undergo risks and hardships, and pay whatever costs are necessary to live in harmony with those values the role is imbued with. To rear a child can be unappealing. Studies abundantly demonstrate that as a result of childrearing subjective well-being is decreased (Angeles, 2009; Glenn & McLanahan, 1982; Kahneman, Krueger, Schkade, Schwarz, & Stone, 2004; McLanahan & Adams, 1987). The role-demands require that time be sacrificed, income abandoned or reduced, and sleep, careers, and various other aspirations and pursuits are similarly impacted. Significant sacrifices are made, yet childrearing is perceived as being right, good, and necessary, and it is deeply tied to values bases, or "deeper satisfactions" (Baumeister, 1991, p. 126).

It should be noted that Baumeister's linking calling with self-actualisation is questioned by Elangovan et al. (2010). Self-actualisation (Maslow, 1954) describes a person's success in achieving an ultimate, optimal state in which he or she has become all that it is possible to be. This fulfilment of potential is likely to be a motivator for those who

feel a calling in life, but it is not necessary to achieve that potential in order to claim a calling. To the contrary, a calling connotes a progression towards fulfilment, rather than the achievement of that end.

3.4.4 Meaning

Three sub-themes were evident as parents discussed how experiencing calling creates a sense of meaning. First, parents were mindful of the *personal meaning* associated with a sense of calling. Participant 11 felt that deep levels of meaning were available to parents,

> *"Just the way your girls look at you. Look up and they, they love you. You walk in from work and they run up and hug you. Or in the morning when you're about to go to work and they go and stand at the door and say you're not allowed to go to work today... How good is this? (Laughs). It doesn't get any better than that... I can only say for me, I just feel lucky to be a dad."*

When asked whether it was possible to say 'no' to a calling Participant 6 said "I think you can, but whether you'll reach fulfilment I don't know." Participant 6 also noted that through calling "I think you learn a lot about yourself." Such a focus on meaning and fulfilment appear heavily humanistic in their bent. Parents indicated that for those who feel called, childrearing is likely to direct people internally towards obtaining fulfilment, meaning, and satisfaction. Participants 3 and 9 indicated that the sense of meaning and personal growth associated with a sense of calling promote a deep gratitude, "it's a privilege…. They'd see it as a… gift that we're given" (Participant 9). Participant 3 suggested a calling-oriented mother "would find nobility in it and an appreciation of the gravity and importance of the role…" Such a parent would feel "privileged". At this point Participant 3 began to weep as she reflected on the meaningfulness and privilege she felt in her role as a parent. She continued,

"I think she would feel like it's the most important thing she could do and it was very well worth the sacrifices that might be involved to fulfil that calling well." Such a statement on childrearing indicates that the called parent sees the role as so personally meaningful that he or she would go well beyond the everyday demands that many associate with childrearing. Consistently, participants indicated that parents who were called would gain joy, happiness, or satisfaction from the meaning associated with the role.

Second, childrearing became meaningful because of the potential for creating positive and lasting change in the lives of one's children. Much has been written about creating a legacy with one's children and the associated meaning this can create (Baumeister, 1991; Brotherson & White, 2007). Participant 5, a 35 year-old mother of two school-aged children, was positive about that prospect that "I can make a difference in their life." Participant 8 recognised that "when I'm spending time with my family and I can see that I've made a difference in my children's life or I saw that something I did taught them something... I think to myself, you know this is really important." Thus personal meaning was obtained for self through contributing to his children's development. He reported that "if you have a calling you feel that you can actually contribute something to the world or something to a person." And participant 11 (a father of two young girls) strongly endorsed the principle that meaningfulness in childrearing was centrally based on creating a positive life for his children: "I have this opportunity to, I feel like I can give them a lot. And not materially, but I can give them a lot more than, I don't know, emotionally, just life skills."

Thirdly, parents who feel called, according to some participants in this study, felt an obligation to raise children well because of the potential impact those children may have on society more generally. Participant 6 emphasised the personal meaning developed from a belief that effectively raising children benefits society by asking: "what's the outcome of my

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energy? What am I creating? What's the posterity I'm leaving on the earth? Rather than 'I'm just here for a good time.'"

This third point is particularly salient in relation to defining calling. One of the most consistent aspects of calling from its beginnings to current conceptualisations is that a calling should promote prosocial intentions and behaviours (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Elangovan et al., 2010; Grant, 2007; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Hardy, 1990; Hirschi, 2010; Hunter et al., 2010; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Weber, 1958; Weiss et al., 2004). The consistency with which this element is reinforced is given further validation by this group of parents, many of whom also recognised the meaningful contribution that their childrearing makes to society.

3.4.5 Passion

Parents who feel called to be parents and who desire to be the best possible parents for their children are passionate about their role and associated tasks in a similar way to those called to other vocations (Baumeister, 1991; Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Dobrow, 2006; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Novak, 1996). Participant 1 stated, "Passion. They're passionate, they're dedicated, they're enthusiastic. They're determined, they're focused… they're just totally engrossed in what they're doing." Contrasting to those who feel called as parents with those who do not, Participant 5 observed "obviously the one that doesn't think that it's very important, they won't really concentrate on the – on anything, I suppose. If they don't think it's important why would they do their best? There are obviously other things that are important to them and they'll be more concentrating on that other thing." Participant 9 (father of four emerging adults) spoke of parents he felt were called, as possessing

"Passion, commitment, it's what they were meant to do. And I see that as very similar whether it is that line of saving the world or the environment or looking after these people. The motivations and what they portray as far as their passion and what they want to do."

3.4.6 Destiny

Parents regularly invoked the concept of a "need" to be a parent as associated with calling, or a sense of destiny. "They have a sense of 'this is the right thing for me'" (Participant 1). "I think you show it, you sort of go towards, you flow towards whatever your calling is" (Participant 2, 53 year-old male and father of four teenagers). Calling reflects being "drawn towards something" (Participant 10, a 48 year-old mother of three teens). Participant 9 spoke of the birth of his daughter. "It's a very emotional time and I don't know with every father but when she was born my thought was 'That's why I'm here.'... I did cry at the time… I thought 'this is what life's about." This father wept openly while discussing this experience as he reflected on his sense of destiny, and the implicit need he felt compelled to carry out to be the best father he could to his children. His emotions emphasised the powerful sense of meaning he ascribed to his role as a father, and the sense of calling that he experienced as a father who felt it was his duty, purpose, and destiny to fulfil this role. Participants reflected a "feeling" or "sense" that those called to any domain, including childrearing, felt that they "needed" to fulfil that call as part of their life's mission. This construct appears to be the essence of the phrase "doing what I was born to do" that can be associated with the calling concept.

The sense of destiny that was apparent in this research is somewhat unique in calling research (though see Bunderson & Thompson, 2009 for supporting evidence of the theme).

While an unanswered empirical question, it may be that destiny is more likely to be cited when the sacrifice demanded by the calling is greater.

3.4.7 Awareness

The final theme that was strongly represented as parents spoke about the way calling and childrearing co-exist was the all-consuming nature of the role for those who feel called. Parents acknowledged that much of the awareness that they felt in relation to their children revolve around general busy-ness and looking after the children, "if you're passionate about something I think that, what you feel your calling is, it's always on your mind" (Participant 8). The idea that parents are "always there" was also reflected in most participants' ideas about parents who feel called. "They just spend a lot of time thinking about the issues at hand" (Participant 1). Participant 1 described her husband's relationship with his mature step-son who lived 1000 kilometres away from the family. She indicated that "he is to the point of obsession with his son… he's always thinking about him in the back of his mind." And Participant 3 was aware that while much time is devoted to general care of her children, "if I'm not physically caring or being with them then quite often I am doing things that lead to that end. They are a constant topic of conversation."

The idea that a calling is all-encompassing is strongly reflected in Dobrow's (2006) thesis (see also Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Few other definitions of calling explicitly emphasise this aspect of the construct (for example Dik & Duffy, 2009; Elangovan et al., 2010; Hirschi, 2010). An ongoing pre-occupation in parents' consciousness of the child as a person, and of associated childrearing responsibility is perhaps unsurprising. However, the way in which participants indicated the positive association between continual mental presence of the child and the person's sense of calling was quite strong. The final picture of how the present data fit with previous research is shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Comparison of Previously Established Constructs Comprising Calling

	Bellah et al. (1985)	Hardy (1990)	Wrzesniewski et al. (1997)	Dik & Duffy (2009)	Dobrow (2006)	Elangovan et al. (2010)	Hirschi (2011)	Coulson et al. (2010)
External Call	✓	✓		✓				
Meaning/Purpose	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Contribution (to self, other, or society)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Passion/Action Req'd	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Identity	✓	✓	✓	✓ *	✓		✓	✓
Destiny	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓
Longevity		✓		✓ *	✓			✓
Engulfs Consciousness/Awareness			✓		✓			✓
Domain Specific Self Esteem		✓	✓		✓		✓ **	
Sacrifice	✓	✓						✓
Introspection/Work		✓		✓ *	✓			

* latent construct not explicitly stated, or described beyond definitions

** In one group this was not the case, and in fact, these people with a calling possessed negative views about the self. (See Hirshi, 2011 for more).

3.4.8 Limitations, and Cultural and Religious Challenges

Of the eleven participants in this study, eight indicated that they were comfortable with the

calling concept, its historical roots, and the sense of destiny it suggests. Two of the three

participants who were not comfortable with the calling term were male, while one was

female. Of the three who were uncomfortable with "calling", all three cited religious

antipathy as a concern. One of these male participants also indicated strong opposition to the

idea of calling due to his perception that a calling took away his ability to choose his life

path. Each of these responses will be considered, by participant, below.

Participant four, a 27 year-old father of an infant, suggested that he was only vaguely

familiar with the term calling, given that "I'm not very religious or anything like that." He

commented that "I assume it's like when you mean you're destined to do something or you,

you know, you feel like you're born into the world to do something. That'd be my

understanding of it anyway." While his statement is not necessarily religious, he consistently

indicated that the religious underpinning of calling was not consistent with his life philosophy

and this made the term somewhat unattractive to him. This participant was capable of

discussing how a calling might work, including the passion someone who is called would

exhibit. He was also willing to concede that callings did not demand religiosity or spirituality.

However he maintained a negative demeanour when discussing the calling concept. As the

discussion continued, he explained that "I think I'm quite responsible for my own destiny.

"There's outside influences but at the end of the day I make my own decisions on where I

want to go." For participant four, to be called meant a loss of self-determination, freedom, or

autonomy in relation to his life path. When questioned about the extent to which this might

be true, he reluctantly acknowledged that a person who feels called to a particular life role,

"well, they do make their own decisions." He maintained, though, that to claim to be

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following a calling was still infringing on his ability to be his own man. This participant, and participant eleven, did not regard environmental or other factors as impediments to their ability to determine their own lives. They are, in their minds, masters of their destiny.

Participant ten, a mother to three children in their late teens, was cautious in speaking of calling. While being interviewed, this participant was quite willing to go along with the general concept of calling. Outside of the recorded interview, however, she disclosed a discomfort with calling because of its religious derivation. During the interview this participant initially avoided linking calling and religion, instead defining origins of calling as being when an individual is

"drawn towards doing something. But I think some people think that comes from nowhere but I think that comes from various experiences you've had as you've grown up and it puts a familiarity into some areas of your life and you can feel a need to be in that area. I think a lot of people think it comes from, it's just something that's automatically somehow got there, but I don't think that's right. I think if they look back into their past and you look at what they're doing and where they've been they actually feel like they should head that way because of the experiences they've had when they've been younger."

Participant ten conceded that "you think immediately of people who go into religion, that have a calling to God." She then indicated that she perceived those who pursue such a religiously oriented "calling to God" were "sort of more selfish in some ways." No justification for this view was articulated despite probing. Nonetheless, the religious notions attached to calling appeared to create within this participant a feeling that calling was a uncomfortable concept. In spite of this, Participant ten clearly articulated what calling means, gave excellent examples of paragons of calling, and when asked whether someone could feel

called to be a mother or a father, she responded "Oh definitely." Her sense was that while

calling is not a term she felt comfortable with, the subjective nature of a calling is such that

she felt comfortable with others who perceive a sense of calling in their own lives. Further to

this, Participant ten's suggestion that experience or environment might contribute to a sense

of calling remains consistent with present theoretical positions of some scholars (Elangovan

et al., 2010; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Hirschi, 2010).

Participant eleven, a 37 year-old father of two children (one in school and one in pre-

school) stated, "Yeah, that term to me like, it's almost like a religious thing to me, which I

don't have a bar of. Life is life, and I feel very lucky just the way it's panned out for me just

with work and family and what not." He added that "I hear it all the time but it's just not

something I buy into." Participant eleven was instantly defensive when having a calling was

raised and immediately linked the term to religion and spirituality. He spoke of his role as

father, and his subjective sense of fortune, as opposed to calling, in the progress of his life.

"And so for me it's not a calling. I was presented with choices along the way and I made

choices. And I would have loved to have changed some things or other things, but if I hadn't

have done all the things I've done I wouldn't be at this point now happily married with two

kids enjoying my job, all that sort of thing. So, yeah for me it's not a calling. It's just, these

are the cards I was dealt and I played them."

Participants four and eleven reflect concerns with both religion and self-determination

related to calling. Participant eight, a 35 year-old father of two children at school, also raised

the issue in his response to calling but from a different perspective. He suggested that to be

called was "maybe something we're destined to do." When queried about the concept of

destiny and how it might impact on choice, his response was that "I believe we have choices

in everything. But I also believe that sometimes we're given opportunities, and you know,

there's been a few times when a good opportunity has been right there and we can choose to take it, or not to. Or run with it." Participant eight's remark indicated that autonomy is not diminished through the sense that one may have a calling. Rather, the willingness to follow this subjective sense would be useful to "reach your potential", perhaps actually enhancing a sense of autonomy and self-determination. Similar sentiments surrounding achieving fulfilment and actualisation were made by Participants three, six, and nine. Each participant suggested that a calling might be necessary to lead a fulfilling and meaningful life. In other words, while Participant four indicated that to follow a calling might attenuate autonomy, several participants felt that such a response to calling might lead to greater opportunities to choose, and that enhance authentic living and happiness (Seligman, 2002).

Of note, participants who contribute data to childrearing investigations are often likely to respond in a socially desirable manner (Morsbach & Prinz, 2006). This may particularly be the case when describing qualitative personal experiences to an interviewer enquiring about optimal moments. Moreover, social pressure to perceive childrearing as positive certainly exists. While not reported, participants were also asked to describe their experiences when not living up to their 'ideals' as described by their definitions of calling. Respondents were frank and open with the interviewer, suggesting that while social pressure may exist, participants were willing to disclose both good and bad personal information during their interviews. The candour with which participants expressed their dislike for certain aspects of "calling" further suggests that socially desirable responding did not occur in this research, even if it was after the recorder was turned off!

At no time did participants suggest that a person might consistently meet the high standard of thought and behaviour that could be considered representative of a parent high on the calling continuum. To the contrary, participants indicated their own shortcomings in

fulfilling a calling in childrearing, primarily at a behavioural level, and generally in concert with failure in affective and cognitive domains. In every case, the failure to maintain this sense of calling was perceived as negative for both parent and child.

One important consideration is that the term 'calling' was used in interviews with these participants. To have used this term suggests a slight variation on true interpretive phenomenological analysis. While variance in responses was good, and demand characteristics have been described in the preceding paragraphs, social desirability challenges are still possible in any face to face interview, and particularly one about parenting. It is still possible that parents wished to be viewed primarily as though they were calling oriented parents. It is worth speculating, in hindsight, that had the term 'calling' not been used in the interview process (or particularly at the beginning of the interviews), that responses about optimal parenting may have differed. In particular, the religious and self-determining concerns raised by three of the participants may have been nullified, and could have led to more nuanced themes emerging in this project. It should be recognised, however, that any attempt to study perceptions of calling without stating the topic or exploring the concept may also have led to no result at all, as the term, while recognised, is not one that is commonly used in the childrearing domain.

3.4.9 Conclusions

Participants were unequivocally positive in their statements regarding being a parent. Each parent saw the childrearing role as part of his or her identity, requiring sacrifice, and contributing meaning. Each of these themes may be considered relevant for parents who are called or not called. The themes of passion, being destined to, or needing to be a good parent, and the high levels of awareness appeared to be consistent with participants' perceptions of what a calling oriented parent would be like. Participants responded to questions regarding

both the definition and experience of calling in a manner highly consistent with previous research. In particular there exists a perception that a calling orientation to childrearing is associated with optimal experience for parents in the childrearing domain.

This previously under-researched population (with the exception of Oates et al., 2005, and Sellers et al., 2005) identified each of the core constructs (or themes) from previous research on callings in their interviews. While not all themes were as dominant as those from previous research, each was present to some degree. In addition, the participants indicated the theme of sacrifice as one of the most salient themes for parents who are called. This theme lacks emphasis in published research (cf. Baumeister, 1991; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Such a potentially difficult theme suggests that calling is not a "Pollyanna"-ish concept developed to enshrine positive emotions like joviality, cheer, delight, and joy as supreme. While parents in this study described positive experiences with children as being associated with a high sense of calling, there was little to suggest that happiness was all that they sought in family life. The desire to experience meaning through contribution, and the desire to sacrifice conveyed a willingness to endure setbacks, failures, disappointments, and challenges. Parents in this study did acknowledge that while challenges are seldom celebrated, they are arguably the most enriching and meaningful parts of our lives. Family life offers adversity and its attendant opportunity for growth and development. While there is an expanding literature on the many and varied ways we might promote happiness (Ben-Shahar, 2007; Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2009; Gilbert, 2006; Haidt, 2006; C. Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005; Seligman, 2002; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005; Snyder & Lopez, 2002), the focus on meaning through calling may provide more stable architecture in family life. The family is a place of great struggle, challenge, and turmoil. It is a place of growth, experience, development, and difficulty. And

perhaps that is why family is a place of so much *meaning*. Clearly childrearing is one such role that those who feel called are required to make significant sacrifices for, and a role to which some may experience a sense of being called to.

There was also a sense of relatedness between responsibility for one's parenting and calling. This is significant because responsibility in the role (or perhaps even commitment to the role), which was strongly emphasised by several of the participants may be an equivalent of calling without the religious overtones. This is important and interesting from the perspective of theological underpinnings evolving from the definition of calling, as described in Chapter Two. In an increasingly secularised society, meaning through contribution, purpose, identity, sacrifice, and a belief in having a destiny to fulfil a life-task may describe a calling devoid of religious meaning. While explicit questions did not follow at the time of the interviews, an interesting corollary to this was that there appeared to be some kind of positive relationship between sense of calling and participants' expression of religious leaning. The findings from this study suggest that regardless of whether parents experience calling as such, they can still profit within the family context through the demonstration of calling-related constructs. This qualitative research supports the use of the term, 'calling', in childrearing. A logical next step is to develop a method for measuring the construct.

CHAPTER FOUR: DEVELOPMENT OF A SCALE TO MEASURE CALLING

4.1 Introduction

Searches of PsycINFO and Web of Science suggest recent growth in scholarly attention directed to calling. Using the topic terms "calling" and "career", Web of Science indicates a steady increase in publications and citations for calling, with the number of publications peaking in 2009, and citations peaking in 2010. The upward trend in both publications and citations demonstrates an increasing level of active research into the notion of calling. Nonetheless measurement of the construct remains challenging. This is, in part, due to the definitional challenges related to calling, as well as the complicated, multi-dimensional aspects of the construct. Few measures of calling presently exist. Those that are presently in use are described below.

Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) measured calling based on a vignette describing one person's orientation toward his or her work role. This vignette presented several elements that comprise calling and respondents rated their level of agreement or disagreement on a four-point scale.

> *Mr. C's work is one of the most important parts of his life. He is very pleased that he is in this line of work. Because what he does for a living is a vital part of who he is, it is one of the first things he tells people about himself. He tends to take his work home with him and on vacations, too. The majority of his friends are from his place of employment, and he belongs to several organizations and clubs pertaining to his work. Mr. C feels good about his work because he loves it, and because he thinks it makes the world a better place. He would encourage his friends and children to enter*

his line of work. Mr. C would be pretty upset if he were forced to stop working and he
is not particularly looking forward to retirement.

How much are you like Mr. C?

The measure is broad, applicable in the vocational domain only, and reduces the measurement of calling to a single item. This measure of calling is the most widely used index of the construct.

Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) also used an 18-item instrument that asked about work attitudes consistent with a job-career-calling model of work orientation. Most of these items appeared in the single-item vignettes. While not used as regularly as the single-item vignette, the 18-item measure has been used by several researchers since its publication. In some very recent studies (Leana, Appelbaum, & Shevchuk, 2009; Park, 2010), this measure has been reduced from a 'work-orientation' scale (with 18 items measuring job, career, and calling) into a calling scale comprising seven items such as "My work is one of the most important things in my life" and "My works makes the world a better place." Each of these items is taken from the vignette and single-item scale that Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) originally composed. Responses range from 1 (not at all like me) to 4 (a lot like me). There is evidence that the scale performs reliably and is psychometrically valid.

The Brief Calling Scale (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Steger et al., 2010) is another measure of calling at work. This scale is high on face validity and does not deal with the constituent components of calling. Participants receive a preface to the scale with the following instructions:

Broadly speaking, a "calling" in the context of work refers to a person's belief that
she or he is called upon (e.g., by God, by the needs of society, by a person's own
inner potential, etc.) to do a particular kind of work. Although at one time most

people thought of a calling as relevant only for overtly religious careers, the concept

is frequently understood today to apply to virtually any area of work".

Participants then review the scale which comprises four items divided into two subscales, each having two of the four items. The subscales measure the search for a calling (e.g., "I am trying to figure out my calling in my career", and "I am searching for a calling as it applies to my career") and the presence of a calling (e.g., "I have a calling to a particular kind of work" and "I have a good understanding of my calling as it applies to my career"). Responses are recorded on a scale from *1* (not at all true of me) to *5* (totally true of me).

The Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ) developed by Dik, Eldridge, and Steger (cited in Duffy, Dik, & Steger, 2010) is the most current measure of calling. This questionnaire is described as a career-oriented questionnaire related to contribution, identity, and sense of destiny. Duffy, Allan, and Dik (2010) utilised the CVQ in a study of 312 undergraduate students. This questionnaire comprises 12 items that detect the presence of calling in a participants' life. Example items include "I was drawn by something beyond myself to pursue my current line of work", "I see my career as a path to purpose in life", and "Making a difference for others is the primary motivation in my career". Responses are collected on a four-point scale (*1* = not at all true of me, *4* = absolutely true of me). The measure appears to assess calling in a manner more in keeping with the authentic history of the term than the measure described above from Wrzesniewski et al. (1997). It possesses satisfactory psychometric properties. The CVQ remains unpublished at time of writing this dissertation.

Dobrow (2006) measured calling using a model that integrated seven themes from calling theory and research (see Table 1, Chapter 2). Limited psychometric data is available in Dobrow's dissertation, and the survey instrument is placed uniquely in the musical context.

That is, it measures sense of calling to pursue a career as a musician. Other authors (Serow, Eaker, & Ciechalski, 1992) have determined presence of calling through the labelling of factor analytic output, or in general or loosely defined ways related to qualitative-styled research (Bellah et al., 1985; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; French & Domene, 2010; Hunter et al., 2010; Oates et al., 2005; Sellers et al., 2005). In all cases the scales designed to measure calling have related to the vocational context only.

Measurement of calling has been problematic and instruments continue to be developed as enquiry into calling expands. None of the instruments clearly and specifically capture the multidimensional attributes of calling. While each is quite brief, face validity is particularly high on most of them which may encourage socially desirable responding. Moreover, in spite of the widespread acceptance that calling is relevant beyond the vocational context, there is presently no way of measuring calling in any domain except the workplace, and to date there has been no attempt to quantitatively understand or measure calling in childrearing. Therefore, building on the historical, theoretical, and empirical foundations laid in Chapter Two, and the qualitative research described in Chapter Three, the purpose of this chapter is to describe the development of a scale for measuring parent's subjective sense of calling in their childrearing role. In so doing, this dissertation makes a unique contribution to the field of calling research given the relatively small number of measures of calling, the limited context to which they apply, and the fact that few contain subscales to detect the subtle variations in elements that comprise calling.

As described previously, a calling in childrearing is defined as 'a strongly held belief that one is destined to fulfil the role of parent, regardless of sacrifice, with an attitude that in so doing, his or her effort will make a meaningful contribution to the greater good.' Each of the relevant variables that comprise calling coalesces in this definition. A transcendent sense of personal mission is a key component of the description. The meaningfulness focus of the

definition is broad, and beyond self. The definition also designates aspects of identity, sacrifice, and an awareness of the calling, as necessary elements.

4.2 Aims

The present chapter reports on two studies that developed an initial measure of calling in childrearing. The aim of Study 1 was to develop a measure of caregiver's subjective sense of calling in childrearing, and to obtain preliminary psychometric evidence for the reliability of that measure using factor analytic and associated techniques. Therefore this study will provide preliminary data for the Subjective Sense of Calling in Childrearing Scale (SSCCS). Study 2 provides confirmatory factor analytic evidence for the SSCCS.

Method

4.3.1 Item Selection

Items were developed through qualitative interviews related to calling and childrearing (see Chapter Three of this dissertation, and Coulson, Oades, & Stoyles, 2010). The interviews were, in part, focused on parents' perceptions of paragons of calling in childrearing. Previous theoretical and empirical descriptions of calling also guided the item generation process. The items were developed with core calling themes in mind, including identity (e.g., Being a parent doesn't define me), passion (e.g., I am passionate about parenting), sense of destiny and life purpose (e.g., I've always known I would be a parent), sacrifice (e.g., The demands of being a mum/dad are too great), meaningful contribution (e.g., Raising my child well is good for the broader community), and awareness of the parenting role (e.g., I don't let my children interrupt my thoughts). After an extensive review of calling-related literature, two clinically trained psychologists (each with Ph. D's) who specialise in

working with parents reviewed the items. A total of 63 items were developed for initial investigation.

It is important to emphasise that an intentional decision was made to avoid the use of the term "calling". Participants in previous research indicated discomfort with religious connotations implied by the notion of calling (see Chapter Three of this dissertation. Some parents were also uncomfortable with their own conception of calling as something that takes away autonomy and freedom to choose one's life path. While those parents' conception of calling is technically inaccurate, that perception provided the rationale of excluding any mention of the term 'calling' in scale items.

4.3.2 Sample A

Sample A (*N* = 11) was drawn from previous research (see Chapter Three of this dissertation, and Coulson et al., 2010). The sample consisted of five fathers (*M* = 39.4 years, *SD* = 9.94 years) and six mothers (*M* = 37.5 years, *SD* = 6.47 years). Two fathers and two mothers were parents of children who were aged in their late teens and early 20's (one married couple was included here). Two fathers and four mothers were parents of children of primary school age (between 4 and 12 years, and one father was a parent of a child younger than 2 years. The mean number of children for the fathers in this sample was 2.60 (*SD* = 1.34). The mean number of children for the mothers in this sample was 3.17 (*SD* = .75). The average age of the children of those surveyed was 9.93 years (*SD* = 5.99). No incentive was provided.

Participants reviewed the 63 items developed for this study, and provided feedback regarding the clarity of items, their meaning, and their wording. They also sorted the items into calling-related themes of identity, destiny/life purpose, meaningful contribution, sacrifice, awareness of the calling, and passion. As a result of this review the item pool was

reduced by 24 items, to 39. The 24 items that were removed had been viewed as either ambiguous, inconsistent with perceptions of calling (and therefore lacking in face validity), or inconsistent with theoretical definitions of calling. The 39 items resulting from this process were retained with greater than 90% consistency. Participants indicated retained items were clear and succinct.

4.3.3 Sample B

Sample B comprised a convenience sample of 19 parents who were contacted through email snowballing to review the 39 items. Thirteen participants (68.42%) were female. The average age of participants was 36.21 years (*SD* = 7.80). Participants had an average of 3.00 children (*SD* = 1.11), with an average age of 7.23 years (*SD* = 7.21). Participants received no incentive for participation.

Sample B reviewed the 39 items retained from Sample A. The procedure was identical to that utilised by Sample A. Twenty-three items were identified as consistent with calling sub-themes by the 19 participants in Sample B. The remaining 16 items were discarded due to perceived ambiguity, wording, or disagreement among participants regarding the face validity of the item. The retained 23 items received an inter-rater reliability score of 84% or higher. The research team removed three further items due to theoretical incongruity or ambiguity, resulting in a finalised 20-item scale. The items removed were "I wish I could get my children out of my head" "How I raise my children makes little difference to society", and "Being a good parent affects society as a whole". Twenty items were retained for analysis in the scale entitled the Subjective Sense of Calling in Childrearing Scale (SSCCS). The inter-rater reliability cut-off was relaxed from 90% to 84% between Sample A and Sample B to provide a slightly larger number of items to be used by Sample C.

4.3.4 Sample C

Participants from Sample C were recruited via snowballing methodology utilising online social networking sites. Brief advertisements for the study were placed on various parenting blogs (e.g., www.kidspot.com.au), as well as Facebook. Two hundred and ninety seven parents completed the finalised 20-item survey. Participants' average age was 38.91 years ($SD = 6.45$). Females comprised 66.8% of the sample ($n = 199$). The average number of children of each participant was 2.39 ($SD = 1.08$). Average age of children was 9.01 years ($SD = 5.60$). No incentives were offered. Interested parents were directed to an online survey containing the 20-item SSCCS and demographic questions related to age, gender, and child information. Socially desirable responding is less likely to be found when parenting surveys are completed online (Morsbach & Prinz, 2006) and as such, this was considered appropriate for data collection.

Results and Discussion

4.4 Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 20 item SSCCS using principal components analysis for extraction, and promax rotation to allow factors to correlate (Field, 2005). In order to determine the most appropriate factor structure, the variance accounted for by each factor (as well as the overall variance for all factors), and the degree to which factors were theoretically interpretable were considered. Additionally, a parallel analysis was used to provide further confirmation regarding the number of factors chosen beyond scree plot analysis and eigenvalues.

Following the factor analysis, seven items were removed due to low communalities or low factor loadings ($< .4$). A second exploratory factor analysis required one further item to

be removed due to low loading on a factor (< .4). A final factor analysis was conducted for the remaining twelve items. Scree plot analysis suggested only one principal factor was present in the data, however three factors presented with eigenvalues greater than 1 and these were retained. Parallel analysis confirmed that the three factor solution was appropriate. Comparison of eigenvalues obtained from participant data with eigenvalues obtained from randomly generated data comparisons were as follows: Factor 1: 4.98; 1.34, Factor 2: 1.41; 1.25, and Factor 3: 1.24; 1.18. The fourth eigenvalue generated from random data was 1.12, exceeding the eigenvalue of the fourth factor obtained through PCA (.83). The variance accounted for in the three-factor solution was 63.60%, with factor one accounting for 41.50% of variance, and factors two and three accounting for 11.76% and 10.33% respectively. The measure of sampling adequacy ($KMO = .914$) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < .001$) remained excellent (Field, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001).

Items in the three-factor solution loaded unambiguously onto their relevant factors. The three extracted factors were named "Life Purpose", "Awareness", and "Passion'. Life Purpose consisted of six items that mapped onto the central themes of calling, namely destiny and purpose in life, meaningful contribution, as well as identity with the called role. The items within the Life Purpose subscale fitted neatly with the idea that 'one is destined to fulfil a specific life role that will make a meaningful contribution to the greater good'. Awareness reflected parental awareness of his or her children and their needs, and mirrored the conscious awareness of 'sacrifice' that calling entails. Passion described the 'strongly held belief' the calling promotes that childrearing is what the individual is called to do.

The three factors correlated positively with one another and with the overall scale; Life Purpose and Awareness, $r = .50$, Life Purpose and Passion, $r = .51$, and Passion and

Awareness, $r = .37$. Internal consistency for each sub-scale was good: Life purpose, $\alpha = .85$; Awareness, $\alpha = .71$, and Passion, $\alpha = .71$. The reliability for the 12-item scale was $\alpha = .87$.

The purpose of this study was to provide item development and factor structure to measure a parent's subjective sense of calling in childrearing. Evidence obtained from exploratory factor analysis and parallel analysis indicated that a three-factor solution was the most theoretically appropriate and interpretable result. The three factors, Life Purpose, Awareness, and Passion were found to be clearly distinguishable factors that presented good internal consistency, and were consistent with theoretical descriptions of calling in childrearing in that they reflect the strong sense of identity, destiny, purpose, meaningful contribution, sacrifice, awareness, and passion that entail calling.

Study 2

4.5 Aims

The purpose of Study 2 was to replicate the findings consistent with the three-factor solution described above, and through a confirmatory factor analysis to provide validity for the scale.

Method

4.6.1 Participants and Procedure

The 509 parents in this study ranged in age from 19 years to 60 years ($M = 38.03$, $SD = 7.70$). Females comprised 87.3% of the sample ($n = 445$). The average number of children each participant had was 2.36 ($SD = 1.11$). The average age of children in this sample was 8.34 years ($SD = 5.84$). Participants were recruited via advertising in school newsletters, newspaper advertisements, and online parenting forums. All participants

received a free e-book about childrearing, and a chance to win one of four shopping vouchers worth AUD\$250, \$100, \$100, or \$50. Participants were directed to an online survey where they were able to review information about the survey and complete it in their own time.

4.6.2 Materials

Participants provided their age, gender, number of children, and age of children as well as completing the 12-item SSCCS which was described in Study 1.

Results

4.7.1 Exploratory Factor Analysis and Internal Consistency

An exploratory factor analysis revealed the same three-factor solution as obtained in study one, with one exception. One item from the 'Passion' factor ("I would sacrifice my life for my children") had a low communality (.15) and loaded below .4 on its relevant factor (.26). This item was discarded, and the subsequent factor analysis revealed the previously obtained three-factor solution (eigenvalues of 5.51, 1.01, and 1.00), accounting for 69.01% of the variance in the obtained data (see Table 4 for items, factor structure, communalities, and factor loadings). The KMO measure of sampling adequacy (KMO = .90) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < .001$) remained excellent. Internal consistency was good for each subscale. Coefficient alphas for each scale were .88 (Life Purpose), .81 (Awareness), and .75 (Passion). The overall reliability for the scale was .90.

4.7.2 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In order to validate the three-factor model of subjective sense of calling in childrearing, the data were assessed for goodness of fit in a confirmatory factor analysis (using Amos v17.0).

Table 4

Study 2 Factor Loadings and Descriptive Statistics for items in SSCCS

	Communalities	Factor Loading	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Factor 1 – Life Purpose (Eigenvalue = 5.51; 50.1%)								
Being a parent is my destiny	.786	.86	1	4	2.65	.85	-.02	-.65
Being a parent is my natural purpose	.747	.80	1	4	2.82	.81	-.18	-.55
One of the main reasons I am on earth is to be a parent	.713	.79	1	4	2.89	.83	-.26	-.64
My child is my contribution to the world	.519	.75	1	4	2.68	.78	.04	-.54
Being a mum/dad is who I am	.688	.69	1	4	2.79	.81	-.20	-.57
Being a parent is central in how I think about myself	.464	.54	1	4	3.16	.72	-.47	-.19
Factor 2 – Awareness (Eigenvalue = 1.10; 9.95%)								
I am always thinking about my children	.823	.86	1	4	3.06	.83	-.40	-.73
Even when my children are not with me I am thinking about them	.696	.78	1	4	3.35	.66	-.57	-.49
I put my children first	.633	.78	1	4	3.40	.63	-.56	-.62
Factor 3 – Passion (Eigenvalue = 1.00, 9.03%)								
I am passionate about being a mum/dad	.781	.82	1	4	3.39	.62	-.54	-.35
I can't wait to spend time with my children	.751	.82	1	4	3.16	.68	-.44	-.01

The 11-item scale was assessed using multiple indices (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Marsh, Wen, &

Hau, 2004; Muthen & Muthen, 2008). While somewhat generous, Browne and Cudeck

(1993) suggest that scores below .10 are considered acceptable for the root mean square error

of approximation (RMSEA). For the present model, the 11-item scale achieved a good fit on

this index. Standardised root mean square residuals (SRMR) were calculated. The obtained

SRMR scores were well below .05. Such small values are also consistent with acceptable fit

(Hu & Bentler, 1999; Muthen & Muthen, 2008) and demonstrate small levels of error. The

comparative fit index (CFI) provides an indication of how well a model fits in comparison to

an independence, or baseline model. Higher scores indicate better fit, with scores $\geq$ .95 to .96

considered acceptable. The current result is indicative of good relative fit in such a

comparison. All fit indices are provided in Table 5.

Table 5

Goodness of Fit Index for Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	N	χ^2	GFI	AGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR
3 factor solution	509	157.48	.95	.91	.95	.94	.96	.08	.04
1 factor solution	509	512.66	.84	.76	.82	.79	.83	.15	.07

Discussion

4.8.1 Review

The evidence obtained from two large studies into the construct of calling in childrearing

supported a three-factor model of subjective sense of calling in childrearing, consisting of

Life Purpose, Awareness, and Passion. These subscales reflect both historical and more

recent empirical work into having a calling. They reflect the belief that a person has a destiny

to fulfil a given life role with which they strongly identify. They indicate that sacrifices and passion are required, and that a general awareness of the calling and attendant responsibilities are necessary. Specifically, Life Purpose items reflected a sense that parenthood was the participant's *raison d'être*, and that in satisfying this role the person would experience something not just purposeful and meaningful, but would fulfil his or her destiny. Awareness represents a mindful attention to the requirements of the childrearing role, and an alertness to what the offspring of the parent were doing at all times. Passion suggests the parent is highly motivated to participate in childrearing. The scale and its subscales, derived through exploratory factor analysis and parallel analysis, were demonstrated to be valid through confirmatory factor analysis. The SSCCS presents good reliability overall and within each subscale.

It is interesting that the Life Purpose subscale contains a far greater proportion of items than either of the other two subscales. Empirically, these items clustered neatly together and provided for approximately two thirds of the variance. This is more than double the variance explained by the other two factors. Such an outcome may indicate that a sense of destiny and life purpose aligned with the parental role may be more central in the idea of calling than passion, awareness, or any other variable described in previous literature.

4.8.2 Implications

The SSCCS is an important step in developing better measurement of calling, specifically in the childrearing domain. Attempts to measure calling have been few and far between, and not without criticisms. They have been solely centred on the employment and career context. This measure offers a structure that considers the broad aspects of calling in three subscales that include items related to meaning, identity, contribution, sacrifice, destiny, and awareness. The new measure is brief, and possesses acceptable reliability and validity.

The SSCCS also importantly provides a foundation for future research into having a calling in childrearing.

Research potentialities that may be considered include longitudinal perspectives on calling, which would provide insight into the degree to which calling in childrearing is a state or trait. Such research may highlight how transitions within parenting alter perceptions of calling. For example, is calling amplified or attenuated during times of greatest hardship in childrearing (such as toddlerhood and adolescence)? Parents who are caring for a particularly ill or infirm child may also be a useful population to draw data from to better understand how sacrifice impacts on sense of calling. It would also be particularly interesting to investigate other populations that may provide insight into calling, childrearing, and wellbeing such as adults who are not the biological parents of the children in their care (e.g., foster carers or adoptive parents). Understanding how having a calling relates to performance, behaviour, and satisfaction in childrearing when not biologically influenced provides an interesting link between calling at *work* and calling in *childrearing*. (Many would justifiably argue that work and childrearing are inseparable). Foster parents are a population who are paid to rear children. Furthermore, some evidence supports the view that adoptive parents (while not being paid to raise their children) may invest more in childrearing than do biological parents (Hamilton, Simon, & Powell, 2007). Sense of calling may be an important construct in these relationships.

One interesting pathway for future research is the interrelation of those who sense a calling in both occupational and childrearing domains. It would be interesting to discover whether someone who feels called to a purposeful vocational endeavour is able to balance their work with their calling in family life. The concept of work-life balance is a popular arena of research and is certainly relevant to the current subject (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw,

2003; White, Hill, McGovern, Mills, & Smeaton, 2003). The prospects of competition between two roles to which a person feels called may hinder, rather than help, in the delicate balance required to make life meaningful, and to maintain a feeling of wellbeing. Qualitative research has demonstrated that callings can buffer stress in Christian mothers who feel called to both their work and their children (Sellers et al., 2005), but quantitative research on a more general population would provide more conclusive answers to such questions.

An important implication of this research relates to whether calling can be developed. In the career domain evidence exists that employees have 're-crafted' their work and, in doing so, shifted toward a calling orientation (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Suggestions for promoting a sense of calling at work have also been made by some researchers, though evidence of their effectiveness is yet to be obtained (Dik et al., 2009). Future research might develop these ideas further, with a view to developing or increasing sense of calling in parents. Emphasis on purposeful parenting, developing a passion for parenting and increasing awareness related to childrearing may enhance calling. Despite the precedent provided in vocational research and literature, this remains an empirical question in the childrearing domain.

In addition, the consideration of the relationship between parental calling, parent's wellbeing and children's wellbeing, sociality, or academic performance could provide insight which may serve to underscore the importance of calling in childrearing. Such research would inform practitioners' development of calling in parents in order to optimise child outcomes in addition to improving parental wellbeing.

4.8.3 Limitations

The samples used in this study were principally convenience samples, with a predominant female bias. The range of childrearing attitudes and sense of calling may be broader than that displayed in this sample, particularly for fathers. Caution should be exercised concerning the generalisability of the data. Future research could specifically consider data from fathers. Research has shown that men interpret calling differently to women, with a more pragmatic and cognitive approach to women's principally affective sense of calling (Phillips, 2010).

Participants were self-selecting and were likely to be people who are interested in parenting. These people may be more likely than those who are not interested in their role as parent to be on websites and parenting forums that were utilised to recruit participants. A total of 9.2% of participants scored lower than 25 (of a possible 44) on the SSCCS with a mean of 33.35, however this may not be a result of self-selection. Similar to other measures of wellbeing such as the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), the PWI (Lau, Cummins, & McPherson, 2004), and the PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988), it seems that most people tend to score well above the mid-point in the scale, providing a negative skew on such variables.

4.8.4 Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to provide inroads into the development of a scale to measure subjective sense of calling in childrearing. The Subjective Sense of Calling in Childrearing Scale is the first quantitative measure of calling to empirically assess the factor structure of calling (in childrearing) and therefore provides a novel, useful, and valuable contribution to both calling and childrearing research.

CHAPTER FIVE: VALIDITY OF THE SSCCS

5.1 Introduction

A calling orientation correlates positively with wellbeing and satisfaction in the lives of those who hold such an orientation. Bellah et al. (1985) found that calling can yield positive life outcomes and optimal wellbeing. Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) compared participants who experienced calling in their vocation with participants who perceived their work as either a *job* (something they felt compelled to do in order to get by) or a *career* (something they did to achieve status, advancement, or extrinsic accolades and success). This study demonstrated that people who experienced calling enjoyed significantly greater life and job satisfaction in comparison to those with an alternate orientation. Seligman (2002) claimed those who feel called are more likely to experience levels of gratification and a sense that work is satisfying, perhaps enjoying 'flow' – total absorption in a task where one loses track of anything beyond the task itself – (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) from time to time, to a degree more substantial than those who do not experience calling. Recent research by Peterson, Park, Hall, and Seligman (2009) found moderate correlations between having a calling and possessing work zest and satisfaction with life. In their study work satisfaction was strongly correlated with calling (see also Steger et al., 2010).

The positive correlates of a calling appear to generalise across various workplace contexts and to all levels of the organisational hierarchy (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). Positive correlates of calling have been obtained in classroom settings, where teachers whose behaviours and attitudes were consistent with definitions of calling demonstrated elevated levels of commitment at work in comparison to those without a sense of calling (Serow et al., 1992). In an undergraduate student sample, Duffy and Sedlacek (2007) demonstrated that students who reported a sense of calling reported higher levels of

satisfaction with their choice of career, and greater clarity in that choice compared to students without a sense of calling. Compared to students without a sense of calling, these calling-oriented students were also more likely to believe that their career was important and meaningful in the way it might contribute to the overall good. Similarly, Duffy and Sedlacek (2010) indicated that among students, sense of calling was positively associated with life satisfaction and life meaning.

Researchers have discovered that people with a calling are less likely than those without a calling to suffer from stress or depression (Treadgold, 1999). Christian mothers who felt dually called to their academic careers and their role as parent indicated that having a calling provided buffering from the stress and conflict normally associated with the challenge of finding work-life balance (Oates et al., 2005). In short, people who have a calling experience more optimal outcomes than those who do not.

Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) identified an important correlate of having a calling was that of optimised work performance. The question of optimal childrearing 'performance' was salient for this work investigating calling in childrearing. If calling is a generalisable construct, applicable in a wide variety of life roles beyond careers, will it operate in the same manner in the lives of all those who experience it, whether at work or otherwise?

As has been discussed at length throughout this dissertation, employees and others with a calling at work experience greater commitment, work and life satisfaction, wellbeing, productivity and output, and less absenteeism than those without a calling (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). The purpose of this chapter is to explore the manner in which calling may influence the lives of parents, and to better understand the correlates of calling for parents. That is, are parents with a calling more or less likely to endorse optimal – authoritative – parenting style (Baumrind, 1980; Coplan et al., 2002; Darling & Steinberg, 1993), and will

parents who endorsed a calling orientation experience greater parenting satisfaction (Halverson & Duke, 2001) when compared to those who do not experience calling in the childrearing role? These questions speak to the validity of the SSCCS by demonstrating convergent validity. Evidence supporting these contentions will show the SSCCS measures what it purports to measure. Supportive results will also provide empirical support for calling in a novel context – that of childrearing.

It was hypothesised that calling would be correlated with optimal outcomes in the lives of those experiencing it in the same way that previous cross-sectional studies have shown. Specifically, a significant positive relationship was anticipated between calling and parenting satisfaction, parenting importance, and parenting pleasure, thus providing convergent validity for the SSCCS. A significant negative relationship was predicted between calling and parenting burden. It was also anticipated that discriminant validity would be demonstrated through significant positive relationships between calling and parent's satisfaction with life, positive affect, the presence of meaning in life, savouring, and authoritative parenting. While positive relationships were expected, they were not anticipated to share significant variance with calling in the way that parenting satisfaction and its related subscales would. Finally, discriminant validity was also expected through the lack of relatedness of calling with one's search for meaning in life, negative affect, and the less effective parenting styles of permissive and authoritarian parenting.

Method

5.2 Participants and Procedure

The 509 parents in this study were the same as those described in Study 2 from Chapter Four of this dissertation. These participants ranged in age from 19 years to 60 years

($M = 38.03$, $SD = 7.70$) with 87.3% of the samples being female. Parents in this sample had, on average, 2.36 children ($SD = 1.11$) with an average age 8.34 years ($SD = 5.84$). Recruitment of a self-selecting convenience sample came through newspaper advertisements, advertising in school newsletters, and online parenting forums. A free e-book about childrearing was provided to each participant with a chance to win one of four shopping vouchers worth AUD$250, $100, $100, or $50. Responses to the survey were collected online.

5.3 Materials

Demographic Questionnaire

Participants provided their age, gender, number of children, and age of children. They also completed a suite of additional questionnaires, described below.

Subjective Sense of Calling in Childrearing Scale (SSCCS; Coulson, Oades, & Stoyles, under review)

This 11-item scale measures the degree to which parents feel their childrearing role is a calling. Three subscales comprise the scale; life purpose contains six items (e.g., one of the main reasons I am on earth is to be a parent), awareness is made up of three items (e.g., I'm always thinking about my children), and passion is comprised of two items (e.g., I am passionate about being a mum/dad). Responses are measured on a four-point scale (*1 =* Strongly Disagree, *4 =* Strongly Agree). The scales performed reliably in this research project, with life purpose Cronbach's alpha = .88, awareness α = .81, passion = .75, and reliability for the entire scale, α = .90.

Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988)

The PANAS is a widely used, well-validated measure of affect in adults. Participants were asked to what extent they have experienced ten positive (e.g., interested, alert, active)

and ten negative (e.g., nervous, guilty, disinterested) emotions in the 'past few weeks'. Responses range from very slightly or not at all (*1*) to extremely (*5*). The current study provided reliability alphas of .91 and .87 for positive and negative scales respectively.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985)

The SWLS consists of five statements assessing a participants' assessment of his or her life (e.g., in most ways my life is close to ideal; I am satisfied with my life). The SWLS has demonstrated good reliability and validity (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Responses range from Strongly Disagree (*1*) to Strongly Agree (*7*). In the present study Cronbach's alpha was excellent for the SWLS, $\alpha = .91$.

Savouring Beliefs Inventory (SBI; Bryant, 2003)

The SBI was used to assess the extent to which parents savour their experiences, whether in the past (e.g., I enjoy pleasant events in my mind before they occur), present (e.g., I know how to make the most of a good time) or future (e.g., I enjoy pleasant events in my mind before they occur). Each temporal dimension consists of eight items, four of which are scored positively, and four which are reverse-scored. Participants respond on a Likert scale where one is anchored to strong disagreement and seven reflects strong agreement. Reliability for past present and future were, respectively, $\alpha = .82$, $\alpha = .87$, $\alpha = .85$. The overall internal consistency for the scale was .93.

Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ; Steger, Frazier, Oishi, & Kaler, 2006)

Participants completed the 10-item MLQ in order to assess the extent to which they believe they have found a purpose, or meaning, for their lives, or the degree to which they are still searching for one. Responses are collected on a scale from absolutely untrue (*1*) to absolutely true (*7*). The MLQ has demonstrated strong psychometric properties including internal consistency, temporal stability, and both convergent and discriminant validity (Steger

et al., 2006). The present study revealed excellent internal consistency scores of .91 for 'presence' of life meaning, and .92 for 'search' for meaning.

Parenting Satisfaction Scale (PSS; Halverson & Duke, 2001)

The PSS consists of 30 items that combine to provide an overall parenting satisfaction score. Three items stand alone while the additional 27 items are divided into three subscales that provide data in three satisfaction domains; pleasure of parenting (8 items), burden of parenting (10 items), and importance of parenting (9 items). Participants responses are measured on a seven point Likert scale (*1 = Always Disagree, 7 = Always Agree*). Internal consistency in the present study was $\alpha = .88$ (pleasure), $\alpha = .89$ (burden) and $\alpha = .90$ (importance).

Parenting Styles and Dimensions Questionnaire (PSDQ; Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen, & Hart, 1995)

The PSDQ measures parenting styles consistent with the typologies identified by Baumrind (1975, 1978, 1980); namely authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive styles. The PSDQ comprises 62 items that measure the three major styles, but also the various dimensions that underlie each. For example, authoritative parenting style (27 items) includes subscales of warmth and involvement, reasoning/induction, democratic participation, and good natured/easy going. The authoritarian style (20 items) comprises subscales of verbal hostility, physical punishment, and punitive strategies/non-reasoning. The permissive style (15 items) identifies self-confidence, ignoring misbehaviour, and lack of follow-through. Participants rated their agreement on a Likert scale with scores ranging from never (*1*) to always (*5*). Internal consistency scores were as follows: authoritative $\alpha = .91$, authoritarian $\alpha = .88$, permissive $\alpha = .79$.

Results

5.4.1 Descriptive Statistics and Relationship with Demographic Characteristics

Mean scores for each scale are summarised in Table 6. Correlations between the final SSCCS subscales (and the overall scale) and other variables are also shown in Table 6. While not included in the table, it is noteworthy that parents' sense of calling in childrearing was significantly negatively related to age ($r = -.28$, $p < .01$), and bore no relationship with the number of children in the family ($r = .03$, $p = .54$). It was also interesting to observe a negative relationship between calling and both income ($r = -.12$, $p < .01$) and education ($r = -.18$, $p = <.01$) indicating that as income and education increase, parent's sense of calling lessens.

To further test these findings, a series of t-tests were performed using a median split on each of the variables of age, income, and education. Parents aged 38 years and older were significantly less calling oriented than their younger counterparts, $t(507) = -6.23$, $p < .001$. Parents with a bachelor's degree or higher were significantly less calling oriented than parents who had less education, $t(507) = -2.45$, $p = .01$. And parents who had incomes greater than AU$101, 000 had significantly lower scores on calling than did parents who earned $100, 000 or less each year, $t(507) = -2.00$, $p = .046$.

5.4.2 Convergent Validity

Table 6 also shows that predictions of convergent validity were supported. Strong relationships were observed between calling and satisfaction with parenting. Calling theory indicates that there should be strong relationships between calling and satisfaction. Therefore, the strength of these relationships is unsurprising, and demonstrates that those who feel a sense of calling as a parent are likely to be highly satisfied with their work, in the same way

that those with a sense of calling for their employment are (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Hardy, 1990; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Parents' sense of calling correlated positively with pleasure, importance, and satisfaction of parenting, and negatively with burden of parenting. Parents' subjective sense of calling in childrearing positively correlated with optimal parenting behaviours and attitudes, specifically authoritative parenting style.

5.4.3 Discriminant Validity

Consistent with a view that presence of a calling would suggest that a meaningful pursuit of life purpose has been satisfied, SSCCS scores were uncorrelated with search for meaning. The lack of a relationship with negative affect is also consistent with expectations and demonstrates discriminant validity. Furthermore, calling did not correlate with less effective parenting styles, again demonstrating its discriminant abilities, emphasising those with a calling are able to implement effective parenting while those without a calling are significantly less invested and effective as parents.

While positively associated with calling, the SSCCS discriminates itself from other wellbeing measures including satisfaction with life, positive affect, savouring, and presence of meaning in life. As expected, significant positive relationships were observed, but the size and strength of those relationships clearly delineates calling as a construct entirely separate from wellbeing, affect, meaning, or savouring. The Awareness factor was least likely to correlate with wellbeing factors, but besides this finding, all factors performed similarly in relation to other variables. These findings demonstrate convergent and discriminant validity between the SSCCS, parenting styles, satisfaction, and wellbeing.

Table 6

Means (SD's) and Correlations Between SSCCS Subscales, Parenting Scales, and Wellbeing Scales from Study 2

Subscale	Mean	SD	Life Purpose	Awareness	Passion	Total SSCCS
Life Purpose [a]	16.99	3.78	1			
Awareness [a]	9.81	1.80	.61***	1		
Passion [a]	6.55	1.19	.55***	.46***	1	
Total SSCCS [a]	33.35	5.83	.95***	.79***	.70***	1
Satisfaction with life [b]	25.02	6.66	.26***	.09*	.36***	.27***
Positive Affect [c]	35.04	7.76	.19***	.11*	.38***	.24***
Negative Affect [c]	19.52	7.02	-.04	.01	-.19***	-.06
Presence of Meaning in life [b]	25.96	6.20	.29***	.07	.37***	.28***
Search for Meaning in life [b]	18.84	7.67	-.02	.08	-.10*	-.01
Savouring [d]	131.96	21.46	.16***	.07	.29***	.19***
Pleasure of parenting [b]	45.77	6.75	.47***	.33***	.62***	.53***
Burden of parenting [b]	52.05	10.55	-.47***	-.31***	-.60***	-.52***
Importance of parenting [c]	48.00	9.20	.69***	.52***	.63***	.73***
Satisfaction with parenting [d]	145.45	24.26	.61***	.43***	.67***	.66***
Authoritative parenting [d]	108.79	12.34	.30***	.33***	.34***	.36***
Authoritarian parenting [c]	38.91	8.83	-.04	.01	-.20***	-.07
Permissive parenting [c]	30.41	6.51	-.01	.02	-.14**	-.03

Note. Not all participants completed all measures, thus sample sizes differ. [a] n = 509. [b] n between 500 and 509 . [c] n between 490 and 499. [d] n between 480 and 489. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Discussion

5.5.1 Review

The nomological net used to provide construct validity was an important consideration in this project. Convergent validity was demonstrated through the use of parenting satisfaction and its constituent elements: parenting importance, parenting pleasure, and parenting burden. Significant and strong relationships were obtained for each of these variables and their relationship with parental calling, ranging from -.52 to .73. This tidy coalescence of variables demonstrates that calling and satisfaction in parenting are certainly similar constructs, but there is no evidence of collinearity or singularity, suggesting variance beyond satisfaction is accounted for by calling. Specifically, calling should be seen as both important and even pleasurable. A calling typically is both of these things (Bellah et al., 1985; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Dik et al., 2009). Importantly, calling is positively correlated with authoritative parenting style, which has been consistently described as optimal (Baumrind, 1991b; Bugental & Goodnow, 1998; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987).

Researchers have shown that life and career satisfaction, as well as career outcomes, are positively related to having a calling (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003). Positive relationships were evident with various wellbeing factors as previously described. Correlations were much lower than those obtained for convergent validity, in these instances accounting for no more than 12% of variance, and suggesting that the SSCCS clearly discriminates between satisfaction with life, positive affect, savouring, and parenting styles. An important discriminative relationship was found between calling and presence of meaning in life. As discussed previously, calling should be related positively to meaning in life. By

definition one cannot have a calling that is devoid of meaning. That the SSCCS discriminates between a general measure of meaning and calling in childrearing emphasises the validity of the measure, and the multi-faceted aspects of calling that stretch beyond a uni-dimensional monolithic meaning-based construct. There was no relationship between the SSCCS and a participant's search for meaning. While the search for meaning subscale itself may be slightly unclear existentially (that is a person may not possess meaning, but may not actively be searching for it either, perhaps due to indifference), the fact that no relationship existed between possession of a calling and participants' search for meaning adds further validity to the construct.

Some unexpected findings arose in relation to having a calling and various demographic characteristics. Age and calling were significantly negatively related. T-tests confirmed that older parents possess significantly lower sense of calling than do younger parents. This result has been replicated in Study 1 and Study 2 as reported here, and in Chapter Seven – a study consisting of close to 200 parents. One interpretation of this finding is that over time parents become less involved with their children (Brotherson & White, 2007; Erikson, 1982; Noller & Callan, 1991), if not emotionally then at least on a functional level. With decreased involvement in the childrearing role there may be a sense that the childrearing is completed and the parent may become engaged and committed to alternative activities. There is evidence of dual callings for those with more than one role that provides them with purpose, meaning, and opportunities for contribution (Oates et al., 2005; Sellers et al., 2005). Alternatively, as parenting becomes harder during adolescence (Baumrind, 1991a; Lieberman, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 1999; Noller & Callan, 1991), there may be a shift in sense of calling. Parents experiencing significant challenges in their parenting efforts, combined with adolescent's push for autonomy, may diminish or at least call into question

the notion that "I am doing what I am meant to be doing". If parental confidence drops, questions about identity, purpose, or meaningfulness may result. Put another way, this relationship suggests that calling is developmentally influenced. In one sense this is a healthy response to the role. It indicates that parents recognise that their participation in the role *is* time limited. Once the child reaches adulthood, a healthy childrearing process should have appropriately prepared the child to be independent. Unhealthy childrearing is displayed when the parent is unable to, or chooses not to, relinquish this role.

Another interesting finding was the negative relationship between calling and both income and education. Perhaps parents who feel driven to achieve financially place their emphasis and attention on vocational aspirations to the detriment of family. While not reported in the results, parenting satisfaction also shared a significant negative relationship with education in this sample, though not with income. Using a median split, t-tests revealed that parents whose income and education was greater than the median were indeed less calling oriented than their counterparts whose educations and incomes were below the median. These results may indicate that the more education and income a parent obtains, the more they direct attitudes delineating life purpose and passion away from family and towards other pursuits that are, perhaps, more personally gratifying. An alternative explanation is that for parents with a calling, education and income do not matter. Childrearing as a calling is independent of these variables and acts as a calling beyond any other pursuits or ideals.

5.5.2 Implications

Beyond the implications that were discussed in the previous chapter (using the same sample), this measure considers the broad aspects of calling in a brief format that possesses acceptable reliability and validity, and provides a foundation for future research. The overarching practical benefit offered by the SSCCS is an indication of how well a parent may

be coping the in the domains of wellbeing and childrearing. Parenting style, parenting satisfaction, and wellbeing appear to be valuable correlates of calling. If a parent is found to possess high calling, these data suggest that parents are likely to be having optimal life and childrearing experiences. In a time-scarce psychological environment this strength is an important applied implication of the SSCCS.

5.5.3 Limitations

Naturally with cross-sectional correlational data caution is needed and it should be recognised that the wellbeing and behavioural correlates of calling are not necessarily caused by the subjective sense that one is called. It may be that wellbeing, satisfaction, and effective parenting practice are promoting a sense of calling in parents, rather than the reverse. Nonetheless, the relationships between constructs are positive, indicating that when one is high – and therefore good – so is the other. Future research might utilise quasi-experimental, longitudinal paradigms to determine causality in relation to calling and correlates. Other limitations are acknowledged in the previous chapter that utilised the same sample.

5.5.4 Summary and Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to provide inroads into the development of a scale to measure subjective sense of calling in childrearing, and consider correlates of parental calling in terms of both parenting and wellbeing. The Subjective Sense of Calling in Childrearing Scale is the first quantitative measure of calling to empirically assess the factor structure of calling (in childrearing), as well as the manner in which the measure correlates with other regularly assessed context specific variables, as well as more commonly used wellbeing variables.

CHAPTER SIX: PARENTAL CALLING AND CHILD WELLBEING

6.1.1 Introduction

People with a calling believe that they are destined to fulfil a specific life role that will make a meaningful contribution to the greater good (Bellah et al., 1985; Coulson et al., under review). Chapter Five provided new evidence that calling applies in childrearing and that the correlates of calling in childrearing are consistent with those in the career context. That is, possession of a calling is positively correlated with positive wellbeing, satisfaction, and optimal behavioural indices. The role that a parent's subjective sense of calling in childrearing plays in *child and adolescent* wellbeing has not been previously investigated. The purpose of this chapter is to examine how parental calling relates to children's personal wellbeing and engagement in life by examining these variables in a sample of early adolescents.

Previous research has demonstrated that children of authoritative parents experience optimal outcomes in comparison to the children of authoritarian or permissive parents (Baumrind, 1991b; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Dornbusch et al., 1987). Similarly, research has demonstrated an intergenerational transfer of affect, with happy parents typically raising happy children (Ben-Zur, 2003; Casas, et al., 2008). Therefore, any relationship between calling and children's wellbeing should control for parenting style and parent happiness.

6.1.2 The Current Study

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between parent's sense of calling in childrearing and their children's wellbeing and engaged living. Because of the positive relationship between parent's calling and both happiness and authoritative parenting, it was anticipated that the effects of calling would promote optimal wellbeing in the next

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generation. Specifically, it was hypothesised that positive relationships would exist between parents' calling in childrearing and the wellbeing and engaged living of their early adolescents. It was also anticipated that parent's sense of calling would be a significant predictor of variance in adolescent's wellbeing and engaged living over and above that which is predicted by parental satisfaction with life, positive affect, and authoritative parenting style.

Method

6.2.1 Participants

A total of 509 adult participants from the study described in Chapter Four and Chapter Five were contacted via email and asked if they had children between the ages of 12 and 16 years who would participate in a short survey. Thirty four positive responses were received from parents who spoke with their children about the study, confirmed the voluntary and confidential nature of the research, and mutually agreed to participate. A AUD$150 gift card raffle was offered to all children who completed the survey.

Children: Thirty four children completed the survey. Exactly half of the participants were male. The mean age of participants was 13.88 ($SD = 1.41$).

Adults: Data from children were matched with data previously provided by parents by using email addresses which had been collected in the initial parent study (Coulson et al., under review). The age range of parents was from 33 to 55 years ($M = 43.47$, $SD = 5.60$). Females comprised 73.5% ($n = 25$) of the sample.

6.2.2 Materials

Subjective Sense of Calling in Childrearing Scale (SSCCS; Coulson et al., under review)

Parent's sense of calling was measured using the 11-item SSCCS. Responses are scored from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 4 (*Strongly Agree*). The SSCCS is comprised of three subscales; life purpose (6 items, $\alpha = .83$), awareness (3 items, $\alpha = .75$) and passion (2 items, $\alpha = .57$). The low internal consistency score for passion may be related to the scale only possessing two items and the small participant sample obtained for use in this study. The total internal consistency score for the 11-item measure was $\alpha = .89$.

Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule – Children (PANAS-C; Laurent, et al., 1999)

The PANAS-C was used to measure positive and negative affect in children. The measure required participants to identify to what extent they had felt specific negative and positive emotions in 'the past few weeks' (*1* = Very slightly or not at all, and *5* = Extremely). Negative affect was assessed with 15 items such as feeling upset, nervous, or afraid. Reliability for negative affect was .88. Positive affect was assessed with 12 emotions such as interested, excited, or strong. Internal consistency for positive affect was .87.

Personal Wellbeing Index – Children (PWI - SC; Cummins & Lau, 2005)

The PWI contains seven items measuring children's life satisfaction. Each item corresponds with a specific domain (e.g., health, personal relationships, personal safety). Children were asked how happy they felt about life in each domain and responses are scored on an 11-point scale. Scores for this scale are averaged. Scores range from *0* = Very Sad to *10* = Very Happy. Internal consistency for the 7-item scale was .82.

Engaged Living in Youth Scale (ELYS; Froh, et al., 2010)

This 15-item scale measured the degree to which adolescents are passionate about helping others (social integration; nine items) and completely immersed in activities (engagement; six items). Participants responded on a 6-point Likert scale (*1* = Definitely not like me, *6* = Exactly like me). Froh et al. (2010) reported acceptable psychometric properties for this measure, including reliability and validity. The measure is suitable for use with children as young as 10. From data obtained in the present study, Cronbach's alpha for these scales was: social integration α = .83, and engagement α = .72.

6.2.3 Procedure

Children were invited to participate in the survey by their parents. The voluntary, confidential nature of the study was made explicit in the invitation to parents, and in the Participant Information Sheet for the children. Children were provided with a link to an online survey. Responses were collected online over a one week period.

Results

6.3 Analysis

Descriptive statistics were obtained for each measure for both parents and children to ensure assumptions were met for statistical tests. Pearson's correlations were used to investigate the relationship between parent's calling and children's wellbeing and engaged living. Partial correlations were used to control for parent's authoritative parenting style, satisfaction with life, and positive affect. Table 7 provides descriptive statistics for each scale. Correlations between parent's sense of calling and child wellbeing were as anticipated. Significant positive correlations were observed between parent's calling and children's scores on personal wellbeing, engaged living, and positive affect. Negative affect appeared to trend

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Early Adolescent's Personal Wellbeing, Engaged Living, and Affect and the Wellbeing of their Parents.

	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
Adolescence								
Personal Wellbeing Index	5	10	8.39	.96	-.72	.40	.89	.79
Engaged Living (Social Integration)	24	53	40.00	7.05	-.57	.40	.11	.79
Engaged Living (Engagement)	19	36	29.18	3.91	-.43	.40	.06	.79
PANAS-C (Positive Affect)	33	59	46.59	6.28	.16	.40	-.64	.79
PANAS-C (Negative Affect)	16	48	25.85	7.74	1.16	.40	1.17	.79
Parents								
Satisfaction With Life	10	35	26.42	5.81	-1.00	.41	.93	.80
PANAS (Positive Affect)	27	47	37.53	5.12	-.06	.40	-.40	.80
PANAS (Negative Affect)	10	30	18.24	5.32	.57	.40	-.55	.80
Authoritative Parenting	88	133	107.79	12.44	.44	.41	-.65	.80

in the same direction, though the strength of the relationship was not significant (see Table 8).

Table 8

Correlations and Partial Correlations Between Parent's SSCCS Scores and Early Adolescent's Wellbeing, Engaged Living, and Affect.

	SSCCS Total (Correlations)	SSCCS Total (Partial Correlations)***
Personal Wellbeing Index (School Children)	.37*	.48**
Engaged Living (Social Integration)	.35*	.47*
Engaged Living (Engagement)	.29*	.52**
PANAS-C Positive Affect	.40*	.07
PANAS-C Negative Affect	.21	.28

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ *** Partial correlations control for parent Satisfaction with Life, Positive Affect, and Authoritative Parenting Style

A series of partial correlations examined the extent to which parent's sense of calling accounted for variance in children's wellbeing, positive affect, and engaged living over and above that which is contributed by parent's satisfaction with life, authoritative parenting style, and positive affect. Results are shown in Table 2. Data indicated that children's scores on wellbeing and engaged living measures were greater in terms of the amount of variance accounted for when controlling for parent's satisfaction with life, positive affect, and authoritative parenting style. Calling no longer predicted positive affect in children however. The relationship between calling in parents and negative affect in early adolescents increased although it remained non-significant.

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Discussion

6.4.1 Review

Over the course of the past three decades researchers have emphasised the important role that parents play in the wellbeing (Ben-Zur, 2003; Casas et al., 2008) and socialisation (Baumrind, 1975; Bugental & Grusec, 2006; Maccoby, 1992; Schneider, Atkinson, & Tardif, 2001) of their children. Happy parents are more likely to have happy children than are unhappy parents (Ben-Zur, 2003). Those parents who practice an optimal parenting style and socialisation practices are more likely to have children who experience optimal outcomes in their own lives when compared with parents who are less effective or who possess less-than-ideal parenting styles and socialisation practices.

While calling has been clearly shown to relate to positive outcomes for those who possess it, researchers have not previously examined how possession of a calling might correlate with the experiences of those who spend substantial time with someone who feels "called". Evidence obtained in this study indicates that such a positive orientation towards being a parent is linked with valued wellbeing indicators in children. As parents' sense of calling increases, so too does children's sense of personal well-being, beyond that which would be predicted by the parent's own happiness and parenting style. The strongest indicator that a child would have high levels of wellbeing was the parent's sense that childrearing was his or her ultimate purpose in life, and a central component of identity. The more a parent indicated feeling like the caregiving role was a transcendent call linked with life purpose, the greater the likelihood that the child felt happy with health, relationships, the community, and the future.

Children's experience of positive affect was also positively related to parental calling. However, this relationship was significantly diminished when accounting for the happiness and parenting styles of parents. This data therefore offers support for Ben-Zur (2003) and Casas et al. (2008) who likewise found that wellbeing and positive affect may transfer from one generation to another. This evidence supports the view that parental attitudes and practices are clearly related to child outcomes, and in particular, that parental happiness and children's happiness are related.

This study also extends the recent positive developmental research on the Engaged Living in Youth Scale (Froh et al., 2010) and demonstrates that calling oriented mothers and fathers have children who are more passionate about the world around them, and who are actively engaging with both their environment and the people in it. Compared to less engaged youth, such adolescents are happier and more satisfied with life, more hopeful, prosocial, grateful, and academically successful (Froh et al., 2010).

One interesting and unexpected finding was the positive relationship between negative affect in children and parent's sense of calling, meaning that the more a parent feels it is his or her calling to be a parent, the more negative affect a child may experience. While the effect was not a significant one, it is a peculiar finding amid an otherwise uncomplicated and predictable story. There is an enormous body of theory and research that confirms adolescence as a challenging time for teens as they begin to assert themselves, develop their independence, and resist parent's socialisation efforts (Baumrind, 1991b; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Erikson, 1982; Kohlberg, 1969; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; Piaget, 1965). One explanation for this finding may be that during this time of conflict children's negative affect increases. There are undeniable biological/hormonal changes that are noted to influence negative affect (C. C. Peterson, 2010). Arguably, regardless of parental sense of calling, early

adolescents experience negative affect as a normal developmental process, even while maintaining a strong sense of wellbeing.

This research provides an innovative insight into intergenerational wellbeing related to childrearing orientation. It is important to highlight that parent's sense of calling contributed to teen's wellbeing beyond any contributions made by their satisfaction with life, and beyond their parenting style.

6.4.2 Limitations and Future Research

The correlational design and the modest homogenous sample (consisting of mostly middle-class children from intact families) limit the scope for applying this research. Based on previous longitudinal research with large samples (Heaven & Ciarrochi, 2008; Lieb, et al., 2000; Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates, & Criss, 2001), directionality is most likely from parent to child. Of course, this study does not allow conclusions to be drawn in terms of direction. It could well be that happy, engaged early-adolescents promote positive cognitions about being a parent, and a sense that the childrearing role is a calling. Or it may be that calling leads to happier teens. The longitudinal studies cited above suggests that parenting orientation matters. Of course, the relationship may also be bi-directional with parents influencing their children and vice versa. Future research utilising multiple time points and groups-based data will provide greater clarity on this issue.

The majority of these participants were ensconced in-tact marriage and family relationships. Voluminous bodies of research demonstrate that marriage makes happier adults (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999; Haidt, 2006; Mastekaasa, 1994; Seligman, 2002) and children (Amato, 1994; Carlson & Furstenberg, 2006; Carlson & McLanahan, 2006). Thus the homogeneity of the sample is a strength, but may reduce the generalisability of the

results. So too does the manner in which parents were originally recruited for the study, via parenting websites, school newsletters, and blogs (see Chapter Four). Self-selection may increase the likelihood of obtaining parents who are already interested, and likely effective, in childrearing.

6.4.3 Summary

While the results observed in this study are limited, they are not inconsequential. That these relationships were able to be observed with such a modest sample is valuable. The study offers promising possibilities for future research into the question of how parenting orientation relates to children's wellbeing and development. According to this study, a calling orientation provides strong positive links with wellbeing in children's lives.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CAN CALLING BE DEVELOPED?

7.1.1 Introduction

Given the substantial volume of research investigating calling and wellbeing correlates in personal and work-related domains, it is surprising that there have been few, if any, documented interventions aimed at increasing sense of calling. This chapter will describe two models aimed at increasing calling in careers. The first is a model described by Dik et al. (2009), who speculated that a calling can be identified and developed via a conceptual overview of how a calling intervention might be constructed. The second was described some years ago by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), who proposed a model of job crafting that may also develop a sense of calling. Each of these models/proposals will be briefly discussed. Given that they are professionally oriented, this chapter will discuss both their career application, and expand the concepts to consider their relation to calling in childrearing. The models will also be utilised, in a harmonised way, as a foundation for an intervention for parents to increase their sense of calling in childrearing.

7.1.2 Promoting Meaning and Calling in Childrearing

Dik et al. (2009) suggested a tri-dimensional approach to creating a calling. As a foundation, this approach used Dik and Duffy's (2009) definition of a calling as

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

Dik et al. (2009) suggested that in counselling sessions, clients and counsellors can explore the degree to which they feel transcendently drawn to a particular career, and

consider the meaning they experience as a result of the chosen career path. Further, participants should look for ways in which their career choices provide opportunity for service to the broader community or society. In so doing, meaningful work is likely to result and employees will experience a heightened sense of calling. These suggestions (or adaptations of them) might be useful for building meaning, purpose, and a sense of calling when applied to childrearing. Parents can be encouraged to consider whether childrearing represents a path of transcendent destiny for them, look for ways to find greater meaning and purpose in their relationships and tasks associated with childrearing, and pursue pro-social ends to the extent that they improve the community through their own, and their child's, contribution. Such an approach may be particularly useful in a counselling context as described by Dik et al., but may be difficult to incorporate into a larger-scale study involving larger numbers of participants.

In consideration of Dik et al.'s (2009) first suggestion regarding the transcendent nature of a calling (Coulson et al., 2010), some participants in the qualitative study described in Chapter Three, and in Coulson et al. (2010) indicated a strong concern with the potentially religious aspects of calling. Dik et al. (2009) similarly acknowledged that the aspects of transcendence or divinity associated with a calling are less applicable to the population than other aspects of calling. Nevertheless, more inclusive, broadened meanings of calling may offer a sense of meaning or a call to duty based on family, societal, or even personal needs and purpose (Dobrow, 2006; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Treadgold, 1999). An intervention to enhance calling in parents (or to create and develop it) could promote thoughts and activities that engage parents in considering the extent to which they feel that what they are doing is what they are "meant to be doing", why they do it, and where that feeling comes from.

The second suggestion Dik et al. (2009) make for the development of calling is to encourage meaning-making, or purpose in the work role. Meaning is a central component of calling (Bellah et al., 1985; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Coulson et al., 2010, under review; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Hardy, 1990; Steger et al., 2010), and is strongly correlated with wellbeing (Coulson et al., under review; Steger et al., 2006). Research has consistently demonstrated that being a parent is a central part of most parents' identities (Burke & Tully, 1977; Coulson et al., 2010; McBride & Rane, 1997; Stryker, 1968; Thoits, 1983, 1992), linking this role with their life purpose. Therefore, at an initial level the role is already meaningful. Given the undeniable importance of parenting on the socialisation of children (Baumrind, 1975, 1980; Bugental & Goodnow, 1998; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Greenberger & Goldberg, 1989; Maccoby, 1992) and their wellbeing (Amato, 1994; Ben-Zur, 2003; Casas et al., 2008), parents who find greater levels of meaning in this role (and see it as a calling, or at the very least experience it as one even if it is not identified as such) may not only be happier but may also be more effective and have greater wellbeing (Coulson et al., under review). For a role (such as that of parent) to be meaningful, it is necessary to have experiences from which to draw meaning. Therefore, promoting meaning should be part of any intervention designed to increase calling. Similarly, such an intervention should provide opportunity for meaningful experiences to be reflected on (Bryant, Smart, & King, 2005). By creating meaningful moments between parent and child an intervention might offer an anchor by which meaning can be harnessed and secured. Such experiences might then augment meaning-making by parents with respect to the childrearing role (Dik et al. 2009).

The third suggestion from Dik et al. (2009) relates to promoting prosocial values in order to foster meaning and build calling. From an interventionist perspective, parents might benefit from activities that make the social implications of their childrearing salient. As an

example, participating with a child in an activity such as helping or serving others in need, volunteerism, or similar prosocial activities may foster meaning through aiding those who need help, and by socialising a child toward reaching out and helping others. Another prosocial aspect to childrearing may simply be a parent who sees positive changes in their children's development. This observation may potentially increase perceptions that their parenting is making a meaningful contribution to the common good, and being of benefit to society through their children's positive development. At a more fundamental level, by acting prosocially towards their children, parents may sense that they are making a positive and prosocial contribution, thus increasing their sense of calling.

7.1.3 Job Crafting in Childrearing

An alternative model that may promote calling in parents is that proposed by Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001). These researchers proposed a model of job crafting that explained changes to employees' perceptions of the meaning of their work, and changes to those individuals' work-identity. Both elements are central in definitions of calling, and contribute to a person's sense of calling. According to Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) increases in work-identity and work-meaning can be obtained by changing three aspects of the work environment. A person has the capacity to change the *task, cognitive*, and *relational* boundaries of their work. Wrzesniewski and Dutton provide multiple mini case-studies as examples of how work-identity and meaning have improved as each of these boundaries has been adjusted. They also provide a comprehensive work-based literature review that offers empirical support for the various aspects of their model.

This job-crafting model can be applicable in the childrearing domain. The following paragraphs describe how parents might craft their job by adjusting the task, relational, and cognitive boundaries associated with their role as parents.

Changes can be made to task boundaries by altering the number or the type of tasks involved in the work. Task boundaries might be crafted to better prioritise children's needs over tasks that are perceived as important but are actually less so. Parents who see their role as a calling may be more likely to time their work in such a way that it impacts less on time with children. Deciding to mow the grass and wash the car during the week so as to focus on and enjoy the time with children on the weekend provides a simple example of a father who adjusts his task boundaries in a manner that might enhance or develop a sense of calling. Similarly, adjustments to work and other commitments might be made by some parents to reflect their sense of calling in childrearing. Of course some task boundary changes could be counter-productive. Skipping work consistently to attend every school assembly, sports event, and excursion may create greater stress in other areas of life. Wisdom, prudence, and balance are needed. Moreover, changes to task boundaries (or any boundaries) should not be prescriptive. Not all families will benefit from an intervention that prescribes that parents leave the dishes in the sink until all children are in bed. Such prescription may benefit one family, but may mean another family misses out on an opportunity to do dishes together. For one family, time at the kitchen sink may be an opportunity to bond and spend time together. For other families completing such tasks may intrude on bonding and meaningful moments.

Alterations can be made to cognitive boundaries by modifying thoughts related to the work or by reframing the jobs that comprise the work as contributing to a greater purpose or mission. Thus cognitive boundaries might be adjusted through reframing the role of parent with a strong emphasis on the purpose or meaning that can be derived through the role. A parent who constructs a system of meaning around childrearing, may be more likely to feel a sense of calling in comparison to a parent who considers being a parent a simple day-to-day task that will be finalised upon the child becoming independent. As another example, a parent

who does not value her role, or sees her child as difficult or troublesome (or simply inconvenient) may find that reframing such thoughts can increase reflection and understanding, perhaps influencing and improving overall orientation toward childrearing, which may in time create a sense of calling.

Changes can be made to the relational boundaries of the work by varying the nature of interactions or by adjusting the extent to which particular interactions occur. Relational crafting is limited in some respects. It is not socially acceptable for a parent to change relational boundaries by refusing to associate and develop a relationship with her child (Rossi, 1968; Rossi & Rossi, 1991). Nonetheless, there are ways that parents might change the set of people they interact with. By interacting with individuals who can provide support, advice, or positive company, a parent may develop a better relational environment in which to foster positive parent-child relationships. The greater possibilities related to relational crafting, however, lie in the way that interactions take place between parent and child. Theoretically, sense of calling may be increased as parents think about the nature of their relationship and interactions with their children. Discovering ways to create meaning in the relationship or even spending additional time together can provide relational changes within the dyad. There are opportunities here for parents to reframe what their relationship with their child is about, with emphasis on being a guide and model versus policeman, lawyer, judge, housekeeper, and servant. Parents may reconsider their manner of engagement with their children, their relationships with the other parent (where applicable), and even the child's aunts, uncles, grandparents, and so on. Contemplating, and changing, the interactive nature of the range of relationships associated with the parenting role constitutes job crafting, and could have implications for calling in childrearing.

None of these crafting opportunities is mutually exclusive. Altering one's task boundaries is likely to interact with relational and cognitive boundaries, and vice versa. A parent who determines to spend more time with her child is going to be altering task boundaries, relationship boundaries (both in the dyad and external to it), and cognitive elements of the relationship. For example, a father who chooses to alter his task boundaries by staying off the Internet during the evenings will likely see that decision impact on relational boundaries due to additional time being available for interaction with family. He will also potentially change his cognitions regarding time with family as his interaction with them increases. While job crafting has been successful in the career context (Leana et al., 2009; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), there is presently no evidence that such an approach will yield enhanced levels of calling in parents.

There is crossover between these two models, or theories of building a sense of calling. Dik et al. (2009) present a unique aspect to building calling by considering the individual's sense of a transcendent call. Beyond this, however, both Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) and Dik et al. (2009) suggest a consistent coalescence of ideas. Calling can be promoted, they suggest, through changing our thoughts, relationships, and behaviours. Using a hybrid version of these two approaches may be useful in promoting calling in any given role, but specifically in childrearing. That was the aim of the present study.

7.1.4 The Present Study

The present study was designed to determine whether a short, self-directed intervention increased calling in childrearing. The intervention utilised a combination of the two models described above (Dik et al., 2009; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). It was hypothesised that, relative to a control group, participants who were involved in the intervention group would experience increases in their sense of calling. Furthermore, as

calling has consistently been associated with positive wellbeing outcomes, increases were predicted to occur beyond any variance accounted for by satisfaction with life and positive affect. Significant increases were also predicted for both positive affect and satisfaction with life for the intervention group.

Method

7.2.1 Participants

Parents were recruited from local swim-schools while waiting for their children to complete swimming classes. Participants had to be Australian residents and be the parents of at least one child of primary school age (5-12 years). This was due to the negative relationship between calling and age, and the fact that this particular age is an active time for parents. Mothers comprised 86.6% of the total sample of 142 parents ($n = 123$). The average age of participants was 38.89 years ($SD = 4.95$). The vast majority of parents were married ($n = 108$, 76.1%) with 14 participants living in a partnered (or de-facto) relationship and 20 parents indicating single status (either through separation, divorce, being un-partnered, or widowed). The most common sized family consisted of two children ($M = 2.28$, $SD = .79$). As an incentive for completing the study participants received a CD recording of an interview with the author of this dissertation about parenting principles.

7.2.2Measures

Each of these measures has been used previously in other studies described throughout the dissertation. Therefore, only brief descriptions of these instruments are provided below.

Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988)

Participants were required to indicate to what extent they experienced ten positive (e.g., interested, alert, active) and ten negative (e.g., nervous, guilty, disinterested) emotions in previous weeks. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure responses (where *1* = very slightly or not at all, and *5* = extremely). Across both time-points, the PANAS provided good internal consistency with alphas ranging from .91 (Time 1) to .92 for the positive scale and .87 (Time 1 and Time 2) for the negative scale.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985)

The SWLS consists of five statements related to a participants' cognitive appraisal of his or her life (e.g., in most ways my life is close to ideal; I am satisfied with my life). As one of the most widely used measures of life satisfaction, the SWLS is psychometrically sound (Pavot & Diener, 1993). Participant responses may range from *1* (Strongly Disagree) to *7* (Strongly Agree). In the present study Cronbach's alpha for Time one and two respectively were α = .89, and .92.

Subjective Sense of Calling in Childrearing Scale (SSCCS; Coulson et al., under review)

This 11-item scale has been described at length throughout this thesis. The scales performed reliably. Life purpose internal consistencies for Time 1 and Time 2 respectively were α = .89 and α = .91, awareness α = .78 and α = .80, and passion α = .54 and α = .75. Overall reliability for both administrations of the scale was .91.

7.2.3 Procedure

Participants were informed of the nature of the study, including the voluntary and confidential aspects of data collection. Those participants who agreed to participate completed a pen and paper version of the survey to serve as baseline data. This was completed during their children's swim class. They also provided basic demographic

information (age, gender, marital status, and number of children) and an email address in order to complete remaining components of the study so that Time 1 data could be matched with Time 2 data.

Participants were randomly assigned to either the intervention group or the control group. The day following administration of the first survey each participant in the intervention group received an email containing instructions to complete one activity in the coming week, and another activity the following week. The control group received no correspondence. Utilising the job crafting model (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) in concert with suggestions from Dik et al. (2009), participants in the intervention group were invited to complete two activities with their children aimed at creating meaningful experiences upon which to anchor their feelings about parenting. Specifically, instructions to parents were as follows:

> Pick a **day** and **time** this week when you can take an hour or two and do something with your children. Make sure that you can definitely take the time to do this activity. It is the **MOST important part** of the study.

> Once you have a day and time for this week, think of a day and time next week when you can do something as well. It might be best if it's the same day and time one week apart.

> Some people prefer to make Saturday mornings their uninterrupted parent/child time. Other people prefer to make it a Monday night after dinner. Whatever time you pick, make sure you can be 100% available and involved with your child. Turn your phone off, leave your email behind, and just focus on your time with your child.

*Now, think of an **activity** that you can do **with** your child/ren. It should be something that you will both enjoy, and that takes you away from the regular things that you do.*

***IMPORTANT:** It should **<u>not</u>** involve tv, electronic gaming, internet, or movies. It should only involve immediate family members but no one else (no friends, relatives, etc. Just keep it between parents and children).*

A list of approximately 20 suggestions was made for parents to consider, including indoor and outdoor activities, as well as the option to choose activities for themselves. Participants were asked to identify and write down (type) the activity they would do with their child, which day the activity would occur, the time it would occur, where it would occur, and the amount of time that would be taken in participating in the activity. They were also asked to identify any barriers to the activity and plan solutions to ensure the activity went ahead.

Participants received activity reminder emails each Friday for the two weeks of the intervention as it was assumed that the majority of activities would take place on the weekend. At the end of the two weeks, participants were asked to report on their activities via an online survey site. They were asked what their activities were and how they had accomplished them. They were also asked to describe their feelings about how the activities had affected them and their family. Participants then completed the PANAS, SWLS, and SSCCS a second time.

Results

7.3 Analysis

Because age has been shown to negatively correlate with sense of calling, t-tests were performed to ensure there were no significant differences between the groups due to age, $t(140) = -1.95$, $p = .053$. There were no significant differences between the intervention groups on any of the baseline measures: SSCCS, $t(140) = .98$, $p = .33$; SWLS, $t(135) = 1.57$, $p = .12$; and PANAS (Positive Affect), $t(135) = .90$, $p = .37$. A significant difference emerged for the negative affect comparison at baseline, with the intervention group experience significantly higher levels of negative affect in comparison to the control group, $t(134) = -3.09$, $p < .01$. Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 9. All assumptions were met for parametric statistics to be conducted.

It was hypothesised that a significant increase in calling would be experienced by the intervention group as a result of the activities carried out between parent and child. Only one of the participants indicated that she did not carry out the activities with her children. The remaining 70 respondents confirmed their participation in two activities, with 14 participants further extending the requirements of contact with their children due to the satisfaction they received from their experience. Eight participants indicated that they had neither negative or positive experiences during the activities, and one participant had a negative experience as a result of attempting the intervention. The negative activity experience was due to the parent's sense of over-controlling the cooking experience with her daughters, and then having extra children (visitors) during the second activity.

Results of a 2 (group) x 2 (time) mixed ANOVA showed no main effect of time, $F(1, 140) = .20$, $p = .66$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$, or group $F(1, 140) = 1.50$, $p = .22$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$ on parents sense of calling. The interaction between group and time was in the anticipated direction but was also non-significant, $F(1, 140) = 3.12$, $p = .08$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$.

(Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 9). Figure 1 illustrates this result.
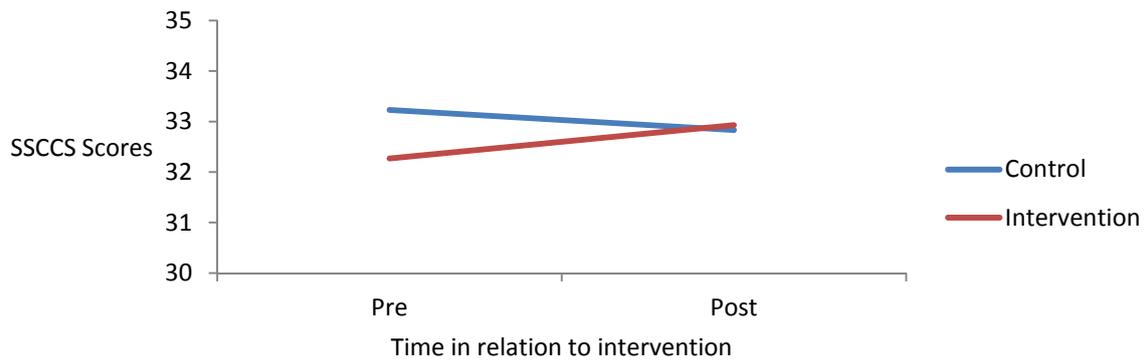
Figure 1. Results of a 2 (group) x 2 (time) mixed ANOVA on SSCCS results from pre- to post-intervention.

When the analysis was run a second time using parent's satisfaction with life and positive affect as covariates, results were replicated. There was no main effect of time, $F(1, 128) = .03$, $p = .86$, partial $\eta^2 < .001$, or group $F(1, 128) = .01$, $p = .95$, partial $\eta^2 < .001$ on parents' sense of calling. The interaction between group and time provided a marginal result, but was also non-significant, $F(1, 128) = 3.56$, $p = .06$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$.
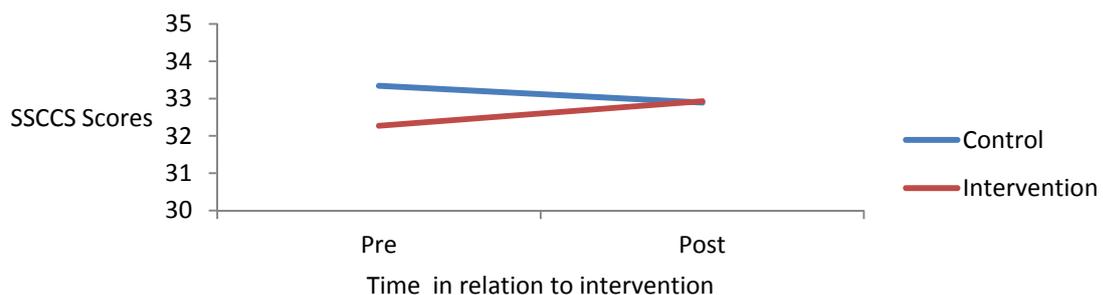

Figure 2. Results of a 2 (group) x 2 (time) mixed ANOVA on SSCCS from pre- to post-intervention, with parent's satisfaction with life and positive affect used as covariates results.

Table 9

Means (SD's) at Baseline and Post Intervention for the Control and Intervention Groups

	Control		Intervention	
	Mean *SD* *(Time One)*	Mean *SD* *(Time Two)*	Mean *SD* *(Time One)*	Mean *SD* *(Time Two)*
Age	38.08		39.69	
	4.80		5.01	
Number of Children	2.31		2.25	
	.08		.79	
SSCCS	33.23	32.94	32.27	32.93
	6.04	*6.24*	5.59	*5.70*
SWLS	25.47	25.39	23.71	24.28
	5.50	*5.40*	7.37	*7.56*
PANAS (Pos)	35.74	35.16	34.65	34.70
	6.91	*7.24*	7.27	*7.37*
PANAS (Neg)*	17.72	17.87	20.94	19.44
	5.54	*6.08*	6.54	*6.19*

Note. * p < .01 at Time 1. ** *Significant change from Time 1 to Time 2 for intervention group.*

The final hypothesis predicted that a significant increase in both positive affect and satisfaction with life would be experienced by the intervention group from Time 1 to Time 2. This hypothesis was not supported. Parent satisfaction with life was not significantly different from pre-intervention to post-intervention, $t(70) = -1.18$, $p = .24$. Similarly, positive affect was not significantly changed, $t(70) = -.09$, $p = .93$. It is noteworthy, however, that a significant decrease was observed in negative affect between Time 1 and Time 2, $t(70) = 2.25$, $p = .027$.

Discussion

7.4.1 Review

The aim of this study was to develop a basic intervention for developing or increasing parental sense of calling for childrearing. Using principles from Dik et al.'s (2009) suggestions for promoting meaning (and calling) at work, combined with elements of Wrzesniewski and Dutton's (2001) job crafting model, it was anticipated that a simple intervention for parents would increase their sense of calling through infusing experiences of meaning with their children. Such experiences were predicted to increase calling by changing task, relational, and cognitive boundaries relevant to childrearing, and by offering meaningful, prosocial experiences to parents in relation to their children. It was expected that this short-term increase in meaning and sense of purpose surrounding childrearing would lead to elevated levels of calling in the intervention group when compared with a control group. Results did not support this hypothesis.

A significant change did occur in relation to negative affect, with the calling intervention group experiencing less negative affect over the course of the intervention. This was an unexpected result and is challenging to explain. In previous research described in this dissertation (see Chapter Five), negative affect showed no relationship with calling. Yet for those parents in the intervention group a significant, albeit small, change was experienced in that their experience of negative affect was reduced. Qualitative data obtained from participants may help to explain this change. In over 75% of cases, participants in the intervention expressed that the activities which they involved themselves in with their children were enjoyable, that they appreciated meaningful one-on-one time with their children, and that participating in the activities reminded them of the things they felt they

should be doing with their lives. Therefore, to some extent, these activities may have contributed to the reduction in negative affect reported by these participants. If this is the case, it seems counter-intuitive that activities that are perceived as positive, enjoyable, and meaningful would decrease negative affect but not have, at the very least, a marginal impact on either positive affect or satisfaction with life, both of which have been shown to be easily altered via intervention (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2009; Bryant et al., 2005; Gilbert, 2006; Haidt, 2006; Seligman, 2002; Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, 2006; Snyder & Lopez, 2007). While such results were not obtained here, engagement in the activities is arguably the most plausible cause for the decrease in negative affect for intervention participants. It might also be argued that negative affect decreased among the intervention group simply because they started somewhat higher on negative affect and may have regressed to the mean over the course of the intervention.

There is a somewhat more complex, alternative explanation. There is a negative relationship between having children and experiencing happiness, with various reasons given for this decrease including the burden of children, and the banal duties that childrearing demands (Angeles, 2009; Glenn & McLanahan, 1982; Kahneman et al., 2004; McLanahan & Adams, 1987). Parents who spent meaningful, quality time with their children may have seen a reduction in negative affect because of the nature of their interactions with their children. Rather than seeing them as an unwelcome impediment in an otherwise well-structured life, these parents involved themselves in meaningful experiences with their children. Perhaps positive affect was not altered because things were generally 'good'. But it seems that positive and meaningful experiences replaced what may otherwise have been neutral or negative experiences. This could have reduced the experience of negative affect for these

parents. It is also possible that the result may have been an artefact of the data and represent a Type I error.

7.4.2 Limitations

There are several reasons as to why this experiment was unsuccessful in developing or increasing parents' sense of calling. First, the intervention was partially based on a model of job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) that, while supported with strong theoretical and empirical examples, resides in a domain significantly different to that of childrearing. Participants in the intervention were asked to do something meaningful with their children. In so doing, task boundaries and relational boundaries were changed. Task boundaries were changed by participants' engagement in novel tasks that promoted positive parent-child interaction beyond what was normally experienced. Relational boundaries were altered through increased interaction in the novel positive environment created through new task boundaries. Such changes might also impact on cognitive boundaries related to childrearing as parents perceived their children more positively, viewed time together as meaningful, and instilled a sense of purpose in the role. These changes, assuming they occurred in the way they theoretically should, may have simply been too short-lived to impact in any meaningful way on sense of calling. Changes to calling that occurred in workplaces generally appeared to develop over time rather than as a result of an overnight change to task, relational, or cognitive boundaries (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). New habits and patterns may need to be formed. Therefore, the continuation of this type of job crafting intervention in parents for a period longer than two weeks may have yielded a different result.

The intervention was further supported by recommendations based on theory for career counselling contexts, designed to promote greater meaning in work and career

decisions (Dik et al., 2009). The suggestions from Dik et al. were implicitly incorporated into the intervention (except for the exploration of the transcendent summons). Dik et al. (2009) offer a model of promoting calling through counselling intervention, which was not part of this research. The Dik et al. (2009) recommendations, in concert with Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), seemed to have minimal impact on parent's sense of calling in the way they were implemented.

One additional consideration is that calling may be a trait-based construct. No present research or theoretical position explicitly confirms this, likely due to ongoing measurement challenges associated with calling. However, the consistency of scores in both groups across the two weeks showed little change. Longer timeframes, potentially over several years, may be useful in determining the long-term temporal stability of having a calling, and offer useful information related to the nature of the construct. Based on the various definitions and descriptions of calling, in concert with present findings, the argument that a calling is a trait is plausible. Given the stability of traits (Caspi & Roberts, 2001; Caspi, Roberts, Roberts, & Shiner, 2005; Hampson & Goldberg, 2006; Roberts & Del Vecchio, 2000), attempts to intervene in order to enhance a calling must do more than simply shift a participant's state temporarily. Further to this, there is currently only a small collection of evidence from which to launch interventions that develop calling. Thus, even if traits can be manipulated (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2009; Reivich & Gillham, 2003; Seligman, Reivich, Jaycox, & Gillham, 1995; Snyder & Lopez, 2002), the challenge that remains is to develop an intervention that will successfully generate a stronger sense of calling in parents, or even sense of calling in people generally. It may be that people require a longer time period than two weeks to consider their parenting role and relationship with their children, experience an increase in meaning, identity and so forth, and cognitively appraise it as such.

7.4.3 Future Research

Both models used as a basis for this intervention have strong theoretical underpinnings and fit well in the career domain. Based on theoretical considerations, it was anticipated that the models for elevating calling at work could be just as effective in the childrearing context. However, the results of this study did not support this. From a methodological perspective, certain improvements to the intervention may have brought about different results. As was previously stated, a lengthier timeframe coupled with more activities (even if only on a weekly basis) may have been more effective. For calling to change, it makes sense that more experiences might magnify the sense of meaning and purpose attached to the childrearing role.

With the exception of one participant who found the intervention to be negative, parents enjoyed the intervention. Calling may have been enhanced by adjusting task boundaries in more practical ways that have day-to-day impact. Such changes might include reading stories to children each night rather than cleaning up the house, or eating dinner at the table together as a family rather than watching television throughout the meal, and so on. A flow-on to relational and cognitive boundaries may eventuate and present a more profound impact on sense of calling than a once-a-week activity that lasts one or two hours at best. Such changes are also likely to be more in line with changes made in job crafting, where regular routine tasks were changed in order to facilitate greater meaning, purpose, and calling at work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Therefore, task boundary adjustment that requires parents to find ways to work with their children on a day-to-day basis – perhaps washing dishes together, reading stories together, or cooking meals together – may be more effective in producing change over time in comparison to one-off events with children.

In aligning the intervention to the recommendations of Dik et al. (2009), inviting the participants to engage in some form of telephone counselling to discuss the parenting role from a calling perspective may also have been useful. Brief telephone interventions have been shown to be effective in increasing compliance and bringing about change in other contexts as part of broader interventions (Oades, et al., 2008). Some form of telephone discussions and coaching might therefore be useful in future research. These could include topics related to the potential transcendent sense of calling some parents may feel, or to discuss how changing task, cognitive, and relational boundaries might promote greater meaning. Coaching could also cover prosocial aspects of childrearing, use of strengths in parenting, and cognitive reframing in terms of the banalities of the role. Coaching could be useful in a pilot study where micro-level change can be observed in a small number of participants before taking a large-scale intervention to a broader population.

7.4.4 Summary

In an attempt to promote a sense of calling for parents, an intervention was developed that required parents to set aside time for special one-on-one time with their children once a week for two weeks. It was expected that this activity would change task, relational, and cognitive boundaries around the childrearing role sufficiently to promote a greater sense of meaning, purpose, passion, and calling for the parents toward that central life role. The statistics that reflect sense of calling, positive affect, and satisfaction with life may not have been significant, but when considering a potential trait, we should only expect incremental change. This was achieved. Qualitative experiences recorded by the participants offer evidence that the activities *did* make a difference for families who participated in the intervention group. They considered it valuable. Despite this, no significant effects were found over the two week period for either the intervention group or the control group except

those who participated in the intervention experienced less negative affect after their

participation.

CHAPTER EIGHT: GENERAL DISCUSSION

8.1 Introduction

There is broad agreement that a calling is relevant in any life role (Hardy, 1990). With two qualitative exceptions (Oates et al., 2005; Sellers et al., 2005) no previous research has considered the calling phenomenon outside of the careers domain. Over ten years ago, at the birth of the modern positive psychology movement, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) argued that positive psychology is the science of what makes life worth living. They indicated that positive psychology should have research into personal, organisational, and family wellbeing as its primary focus. While the former two domains have received substantial attention, comparatively little research has centred on the family. This dissertation is a response to the relative lack of research into what makes family life 'worth living'.

The research described in this thesis represents a unique and novel contribution to the current psychological literature. Calling is represented in a relatively recently popularised and expanding milieu of projects, focused almost exclusively in the work context. Both historical (Hardy, 1990) and current descriptions (Baumeister, 1991; Elangovan et al., 2010; Hunter et al., 2010) of calling acknowledge the importance of having a calling, and specific reference has been made to being called to the role of parent. This dissertation's original contribution is that it represents a view of calling in childrearing never previously investigated in psychological (or any other discipline's) research. The previous qualitative work of Sellers et al. (2005) and Oates et al. (2005) must be acknowledged. This prior work, however, neglected to focus on calling for parents and instead considered the relationship between having a calling at work and a calling at home. The experience of calling in childrearing was never clearly enunciated in either project. Neither researcher provided clear and succinct

descriptions of calling, particularly as relevant for childrearing, and the sample in each case comprised a small cluster of white Christian mothers working in academia or similar roles within a university. In building upon this preliminary work, the present thesis adds substantially to the literature on childrearing and calling. First, in developing a description of calling in childrearing a general sample of parents were interviewed, some overtly non-religious and others quite religious, to understand the nuances of calling beyond a straight Christian population. The research demonstrated that calling is equally applicable in Australia as it is in the United States. The studies provide qualitative and quantitative support to calling being relevant in childrearing.

Second, this thesis represents the first quantitatively derived measure of calling in childrearing, and one of the first measures of calling derived through factor-analytical methodology. The creation of this measure has provided answers to questions related to calling and wellbeing correlates for parents. It has also facilitated answers to questions that surround the possible impact that having a calling may have on other people. Obviously the correlational nature of the research does not allow determination of causality. Nonetheless, no previous research has attempted to answer such questions, even in terms of basic assocations.

8.2 Review

The general questions that the research programme was designed to answer were as follows:

1a. What is a calling, and

1b. Can calling apply in contexts beyond career – specifically childrearing?

2. If so, can calling in childrearing be measured?

3. How does calling relate to the wellbeing of those who possess it?

4. How does a calling to be a parent relate to children's wellbeing?

5. Can calling be developed or enhanced via intervention?

The following paragraphs emphasise the specific ways that this research programme achieved these objectives:

1a. What is a calling? Through the use of an extensive literature review accompanied by qualitative research methods a clear definition of a calling was organised. This definition argued that a calling is a strongly held belief that one is destined to fulfil the role of parent, regardless of sacrifice, with an attitude that in so doing, his or her effort will make a meaningful contribution to the greater good. This definition emphasises the critical components of identity, destiny, contribution/service, sacrifice, prosocial ends, and passion. The definition is as much a confirmation and summation of historical, theoretical, and empirical views on calling as it is a representation of the views of the parents interviewed for this study. Parent's 'lay-definitions' and experiences of calling were generally in harmony with historical and empirical definitions of the construct. While the definition explicitly states that the role in question is the role of parent, the definition is not bound to, or isolated by, the role type. It is the elements of the calling, not the role itself that determines the extent to which a role may be perceived as a calling. Thus, the first aim of this study was met through the organisation of a clear definition of calling consistent with previous work on the construct.

1b. Can calling apply in contexts beyond career – specifically childrearing? This research offers a resounding 'Yes!' to this research question. While most researchers would accept the premise that calling can apply to any station (Baumeister, 1991; Bellah et al.,

1985; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Hardy, 1990; Hunter et al., 2010; Steger et al., 2010), no previous empirical evidence existed to confirm that this was the case. The current thesis explored this question rigorously, and qualitative and quantitative methods clearly demonstrated that parents agree childrearing can be a calling, and respond favourably to questionnaires that describe the constituent elements that comprise calling in a childrearing context.

The second overarching research question of this dissertation was: can calling in childrearing be measured? Measurement of calling has been problematic for over a decade. Wrzesniewski et al.'s (1997) single-item measure of calling was the only measure of the construct for many years and is still the most used measure of calling in research. It has recently been adapted (Leana et al., 2009) for use as a multi-item measure of calling but remains workplace-oriented. There are other recent measures of calling in the workplace including the Brief Calling Scale (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010; Steger et al., 2010), the Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ) developed by Dik et al. (cited in Duffy, Dik et al., 2010), and Dobrow's (2006) thematically integrated model that built upon her qualitative research with musicians. Each of these measures of calling is designed for use in work contexts.

This research puts forward a quantitatively constructed measure of calling in childrearing. Using exploratory factor analysis, parallel analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis, a highly reliable measure of calling in childrearing was developed (overall Cronbach's alpha was consistently around .90). The measure demonstrated temporal stability with a control group of some 71 parents whose responses remained consistent over a (brief) two week interval. Containing three subscales that reflect dimensions of calling including life purpose/destiny, meaningful contributions, passion, and identity, the scale measures the degree to which a parent feels a sense of calling for the role of childrearing and has an

awareness of the role and its responsibilities and requirements. Two of the three subscales offer excellent internal consistency. The passion subscale appears to be satisfactory, although a little bit unstable with alpha levels in the mid .50-.60 range on two occasions, but within satisfactory parameters at all other administrations.

The question of the generalisability of the correlates of calling was then able to be addressed as the third main research focus of this programme. How does calling relate to the wellbeing of those who possess it? By considering convergent and discriminant validity of the SSCCS, a picture of whether calling operated the same way in childrearing and workplaces was able to be investigated.

The Subjective Sense of Calling in Childrearing (SSCCS) scale provided good levels of convergent and discriminant validity. Significant relationships existed between sense of calling and parenting satisfaction. Importance of parenting and pleasure in parenting, as well as overall parenting satisfaction were strongly positively related to calling. Burden of parenting was significantly negatively related to calling. As calling increases so too do parenting satisfaction and pleasure, the role is seen as important, and the challenges associated with childrearing feel less burdensome. Significant positive relationships were also obtained for the relationship between calling and presence of meaning in life, satisfaction with life, savouring, and positive affect. Each of these relationships demonstrated low enough correlations to clearly demonstrate discriminant validity between calling and the respective constructs, but also offered evidence of the generalisable nature of calling into the childrearing domain. Similar relationships between calling and job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and other wellbeing measures have been obtained in the workplace context (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Dik & Duffy, 2009; Dreher & Plante, 2007; Hall & Chandler, 2005; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Wrzesniewski et al., 2003).

The correspondence between previous research and data obtained through use of the SSCCS indicates that the SSCCS is indeed measuring the sense of calling parents feel, and that calling functions similarly across both vocational and childrearing domains.

Previous research has not examined how one person's calling can influence those with whom the called person interacts with. This is a particularly important consideration in childrearing, given the powerful influence a parent has on his or her children (Bugental & Goodnow, 1998; Bugental & Grusec, 2006). Thus, the fourth research question investigated in this dissertation was: how does a calling to be a parent relate to children's wellbeing? Unfortunately in a sample of over 500 parents only 34 had children who fit the age criteria and were willing to participate in this investigation. Nonetheless, the modest sample size still provided interesting confirmatory responses suggesting that the wellbeing of early adolescents correlates positively with parent's sense of calling. From an applied perspective, this particular finding may be the most important contribution that this research makes. Parents who feel it is their calling to be parents have children who experience high personal wellbeing and engaged living even after controlling for the happiness of the parents and their authoritative parenting style. The implications of this will be discussed below. Given the nature of the research there is no way of knowing the direction of influence in the relationships discovered. This preliminary research highlights an important insight that clearly shows that parental attitudes or orientations toward their role are directly linked with the wellbeing and engaged living of their children.

The final research question that this research programme aimed to answer related to whether a calling in childrearing can be developed or enhanced. While the research conducted herein failed to produce an outcome in line with previous research and theory in work contexts (Dik et al., 2009; Leana et al., 2009; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001),

methodological shortcomings may explain this outcome. Therefore, rather than demonstrating that calling cannot be increased in a parenting population, this thesis described several ways future research can improve upon existing research to better understand the challenging process of creating an intervention that develops and enhances calling.

8.3 Considerations

Calling research shows significant development, particularly in the three years since this research program commenced. At that time, the bulk of studies that have become influential in contemporary calling research were unpublished. Only a few 'seminal' works were published. Calling was still loosely defined and few measures of calling were available. Progress has been substantial, and yet there are still significant challenges and considerations for calling researchers.

The first consideration is that defining calling remains problematic. Various definitions have been put forward (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Dobrow, 2006; Elangovan et al., 2010; Hirschi, 2010), including in this research, but each fails in one way or another to concisely encapsulate the complexity of this mutli-faceted construct. To effectively progress calling research unanimity is required, thus ensuring that researchers are exploring from a mutually agreeable foundation. This will aid in the measurement attempts, validity of the construct, generalisability of findings, and research effectiveness.

Further to this issue, various researchers have constructed differing definitions, in part, due to empirical considerations from their own research. As an example of this, the idea that a calling is somehow destined, fated, or beyond the control of an individual has appeared strongly in the research conducted in this dissertation. However, there are very few other examples of this being so clearly articulated and experienced by participants (see Bunderson

& Thompson, 2009; Dobrow, 2006). It seems that callings that invoke high levels of destiny may be those that also demand significant sacrifice on the part of the person who senses that calling. Musicians (Dobrow, 2006), zookeepers (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), and parents (Coulson et al., 2010) are all required to make substantial sacrifice in order to perform their work at a high level. Indeed, it may be that destiny is more likely to be used as an explanation by these people as they seek to describe why they sacrifice so greatly. Such an explanation (destiny, fate, a feeling of compulsion from a divine source) could assist in remaining cognitively consistent about the degree of sacrifice and why it matters. While an empirical question, it may be that destiny may not feature as strongly in careers and occupations that require less sacrifice.

A natural flow-on from issues with definition of calling is the second challenge for researchers: the measurement of calling. While clear progress is being made, measuring calling remains problematic. This ostensibly stems from the definitional challenge outlined in the previous paragraph. Limited information is presently available regarding the CVQ (Duffy, Allan et al., 2010; Duffy, Dik et al., 2010), as it has not been published at the time this dissertation was written. And Leana and colleagues' (2009) adaptation of Wrzesniewski et al.'s (1997) has only been used in one report, though it suggests promising progress. Other recent measures of calling have been simplistic and very high on face validity (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Steger et al., 2010), domain specific (Dobrow, 2006), or have been part of a broader range of measures related to work orientation (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). The measurement of calling, like the defining of calling, requires ongoing refining and replication to overcome these challenges. Replicating findings using a broader range of measures, correlates, contexts, and participants will add to the signature of evidence supporting specific

definitions and instruments over others, and will help to identify those who possess a calling and those who presently do not possess one (or even feel a need for one).

A third consideration stemming from this research program relates to interventions designed to promote greater meaning, purpose, and calling. Limited data presently exist in this nascent area. It follows that challenges in defining and measuring a construct make interventions to develop that construct potentially premature. There are important practical implications associated with being able to promote conditions and decisions that will enhance a sense of calling (to be discussed in the next section), and so continued attention should be directed towards models and theories that provide appropriate recommendations for augmenting a sense of calling in any life domain.

8.4 Practical Implications and Applications

In appraising research into calling, the most practical application of the construct is in its relation to wellbeing (Dreher & Plante, 2007; Lopez & Snyder, 2003; Seligman, 2002; Snyder & Lopez, 2002, 2007). Previous research resoundingly describes positive associations between possession of a calling and optimised living, whether in terms of life satisfaction (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2010; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) or other happiness measures (Wrzesniewski et al., 2003), zest and enthusiasm for work (C. Peterson et al., 2009), passion (Dobrow, 2006; Weiss et al., 2004), psychological success (Dobrow, 2004; Hall & Chandler, 2005), commitment (Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Duffy, Dik et al., 2010; Serow et al., 1992), work satisfaction (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) and career choice satisfaction and decidedness (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007). Callings are also negatively related to unwanted outcomes such as stress and depression (Treadgold, 1999), and lack of work-life balance (Oates et al., 2005).

The discoveries this research programme puts forward add to this largely positive picture. Calling in childrearing relates to the wellbeing of parents and children in positive ways, as well as with optimal parenting behaviours. With such a considerable list of positive correlates, the practical implication is clear. It is in the interest of individuals, families, communities, and society in general to promote meaning-making and purposeful work endeavours, and to encourage exploration and internalisation of callings as broadly as possible. The promotion and increase of calling orientations in various life roles may raise the collective wellbeing of all those who experience it.

A brief caveat is noteworthy. Dobrow (2006) highlighted that calling may have a dark side. She suggested that too much passion for a role, regardless of how meaningful and pro-social it may be, may create imbalance in a person's life. A person who feels like his life calling is in a particular vocation may sacrifice everything including his health and relationships for his calling. A parent who feels that her calling as mother supersedes any other role or commitment in life may become overprotective, over-invested, and inattentive to other priorities in life, including her own needs. To date there does not appear to be any evidence that offers support for this contention. To the contrary, meaningfulness and purpose in one life role appear to generate a greater sense of balance and priority in other areas of life which correlates with greater wellbeing. The qualitative research by Oates et al. (2005) and Sellers et al. (2005), combined with the research discoveries of this thesis would argue that a calling orientation appears to be a universally positive phenomenon.

All of the research above is cross-sectional and consideration should be given to the direction of effects. It could be argued that people who feel good about life and career decisions they've made are more likely to experience calling. The fact that callings are experienced at all levels of organisations and in a diverse range of employment

(Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) may call this line of reasoning into question, however, to date there is no satisfactory empirical evidence to clearly support one direction of causation over another.

8.5 Future Research

Callings-based research is a fertile field for ongoing psychological inquiry, particularly in the area of childrearing. One of the most compelling prospects for future research is a longitudinally-based study that follows the trajectory of calling over time. It would be valuable to discover whether calling is a stable trait or whether it is influenced by various developmental milestones in parents or their children. For example, does calling increase when a decision is made to have a child, when conception occurs, or when a baby is born? Are certain periods in a child's life more, or less, likely to enhance or reduce sense of calling for her parents? Or does calling orientation remain stable irrespective of normal development?

A simpler, briefer study that would add to the results provided in this dissertation relates to age and calling. It was clearly shown that age of parent was negatively associated with sense of calling. T-tests using a median split on the variable of age supported the assertion that older parents are less calling-oriented than younger parents. Future research might consider whether the average age of children in a family (or the age of the eldest or youngest child) might be a predictor of parental sense of calling.

Some recent findings suggest calling is perceived differently based on gender (Phillips, 2010). There was some evidence of differences in calling between genders in some research presented in this dissertation. Research in parenting suggests some gender differences in parenting socialisation practices (Bugental & Grusec, 2006; Greenberger &

Goldberg, 1989; Holden & Miller, 1999; Maccoby, 1992; Maccoby & Martin, 1983; G. W. Peterson & Hann, 1999). It would be valuable to discover whether these differences exist due to differences in calling conception and experience.

The role of religion may also play a part in parent's sense of calling. While there is a growing argument for calling as a secular construct (Steger et al., 2010), the historically religious roots of calling seem inescapable (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Coulson et al., 2010; Hardy, 1990). Future research into the relationship between sense of calling and religion could speak to their association. With explicit reinforcement of childrearing as a calling being found in some religious writing (Benson, 1987; Fields, 2008; Hales, 1999; Maggart, 2003; Perry, 2004) there may be a greater disposition toward having a calling among the religious. Investigating the impact that religiosity has on parenting style and wellbeing in comparison to a non-religious population may provide a clearer picture of who has a calling in childrearing, who doesn't, and whether the presence of a calling in childrearing is influenced by religiosity in some way. There is clear evidence that the religious history and connotation of calling impacts on some parents and discourages them from identifying with a calling in any way (Coulson et al., 2010).

Obtaining data from a more generalisable population may add to the signature of evidence being collected that argues for calling as a positive phenomenon in the lives of those who possess it. Do parents who are in distress, or struggling with wayward teens hold that childrearing is their life purpose and a meaningful pursuit? The self-selecting convenience samples comprised mainly of white middle-class families may limit the generalisability of the findings from this dissertation. Future research should aim to collect an array of data from a wider population to better understand whether calling is applicable across society, and whether it functions consistently throughout the community.

A salient area of investigation relates to the way that calling may differ in childrearing based on the nature of the relationship between the caregiver and the child. Are adoptive parents more or less likely to feel a sense of calling than natural parents? What kind of variation in calling exists in foster carers, and do previous findings in calling research generalise into these contexts? The issue of foster carers may be particularly interesting because this specific population is at the intersection of paid work and parenting. Foster carers are remunerated for doing the 'work' of caring for children. It would be valuable to understand the sense of calling these people feel for their work, and the meaning and purpose they put into it or derive from it. In so doing, the SSCCS may become an effective screening tool to help determine which foster carers may or may not be the most effective and helpful nurturers for the needy children placed in their care.

Finally, what distinguishes people who develop a calling from those who do not? Further investigation into antecedents of calling should be undertaken to better understand what it is that promotes the sense of destiny and purpose, passion and meaning, identity and sacrifice that a calling connotes. Is a calling orientation due to natural biological desires to be a parent, or socialisation, or a literal transcendent summons? Or is calling a trait that people either have, or do not have? While careers literature suggests calling can be developed, future research in the childrearing context is needed. By better understanding such antecedents we may be better able to construct pathways and interventions to developing and building a sense of calling in parents.

8.6 Concluding Remarks

This dissertation represents a contribution to calling literature in that it expands the work-dominated purview of calling related research, offers a new measure of calling specifically in the domain of childrearing, demonstrates the generalisable way that calling works across contexts, and illustrates relationships between one person's calling and another person's wellbeing. It further offers substantial ideas for future research related to developing interventions aimed at producing greater sense of calling in parents. A calling is a strongly held belief that we have a purpose in life, a *raison d'être*. To have a calling in childrearing means that the parent feels his or her destiny is intertwined with the responsibility of raising a child (or children). In so doing, the called parent not only feels a sense of commitment, but contribution.

A calling means making a difference in whatever station of life a person may be in (Hardy, 1990; Hunter et al., 2010). As parent's sense of calling increases so too does their wellbeing, effectiveness as a parent, and satisfaction with being a parent. Importantly, so too does the wellbeing of their children, suggesting that having a calling does make a difference to at least two people; the parent with the calling, and his or her child.

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