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Is the Concept of Calling still Relevant to Career Decision Making in Norway?

Validating the Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ) with Norwegian Career Counsellors

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Abstract

The concept of calling has been developed to recognise that much career decision making does not follow a rational model. Many people feel 'called' to an occupation in a way that transcends an analysis of capabilities and opportunities. Dik and Duffy (2009) have argued the concept of calling is comprised of transcendent summons, purposeful work, and prosocial motivation and that can be measured using the Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ). In this study we attempted to validate the CVQ with a sample of 143 Norwegian career guidance practitioners. We found that the CVQ did not meaningfully describe and measure calling for this group and were therefore not able to revalidate the instrument for the Norwegian context. However, we argue that the concept of calling remains interesting and that the revalidation has provided firstly, important insights on the process of cross-cultural validation. And, secondly that it has identified a need to enrich the vocabulary of Norwegian career theory. The article concludes by hypothesising the value of building a culturally relevant concept (tentatively called meningsfull karriere) which could capture a more indigenous Norwegian sense of calling and setting out a programme of quantitative and qualitative work that could support the development of such a new concept.

Keywords: calling, Norway, validity, career development, career choice, cross-cultural

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Introduction

The idea that there is a job that we are ideally suited to, where we will be able to best use our potential and live our best life, is a seductive one for both career theorists and individuals struggling with career choices. For Parsons (1909) this process of finding your place in society was one of 'true reasoning' whereby knowledge about the labour market was put together with self-knowledge. This rational model of career decision making has been influential throughout the history of career studies. It reached its high point in Holland's (1997) theory of vocational personalities and work environments which provided a scientific method which could underpin Parsons' call for rationality in career decision-making.

Yet, there have always been a range of critical voices which have viewed the positivism of matching theories as problematic. This has led a host of researchers, writers, and theorists to highlight alternative approaches which variously emphasise the importance of the narrative (Savickas, 2012), values (Cochran, 1983), social structures (Roberts, 1977) and a range of other factors. But even these explanations still seem to miss something out, particularly for people who have a strong dispensation to follow a particular career path, often from a young age. Such people appear to be responding to something deep and fundamental to their identity. Dik and Duffy (Duffy & Dik, 2013, Dik et al., 2009) and their colleagues, noted the similarity to the idea of a religious calling in such cases and began to explore the idea that the concept of 'calling' might offer further insights into career decision making.

Career as Calling

The concept of 'calling' is found in a wide range of cultures, with some research suggesting that it may be stronger in non-Western cultures (Cahalan & Schuurman, 2016; Vianello et al., 2022). Such research traces how concepts of calling are often strongly connected to deep-seated cultural and religious traditions, which have the

potential to shape the nature of and understanding of calling in important ways. The cultural variation of the concept of calling is only just beginning to be understood and it is a discussion to which this paper focusing on calling in the Norwegian context hopes to contribute (Ahn et al., 2021; Autin et al., 2017; Beloborodova & Leontiev, 2019)

In the Christian religious tradition, calling describes a metaphysical state characterised by a feeling of how things should be, coupled with a compulsion to act (Proctor, 2005). We are called to do things in ways that we cannot easily understand, or sometimes even explain. Yet, calling is not the same as compulsion; in the Christian tradition it is also combined with the idea of discernment, which is the process of figuring out what the calling means and how you should respond to it. Calling may exist as a constant guiding light, or as a slow burn, its implications may be obvious or opaque, but many people have felt it and used it to inform their career decision making. Importantly, despite its religious foundations and associations, it is not only religious people who have experienced calling.

Steger et al. (2010) argue that as interest in the idea of calling, and its secular cousin vocation, has grown, it has loosened its religious anchoring and engaged with secularised concepts which also explore ideas of personal self-realisation and the attachment of meaning to occupational and career choices. Such a process is not purely one of secularisation, but also bound up with multiculturalism and inter-cultural exchange in which many people increasingly look for meaning in their life and work drawing on a range of religions, non-religious forms of spirituality and a range of other moral and ethical bases for meaning making (Benefiel et al., 2014; Friedmann, 2017; Kinjerski & Skrypnek, 2008).

Duffy et al. (2013) view calling in psychological terms and make the distinction between 'neoclassical' definitions which emphasise the idea of

destiny and of making a positive contribution to society (Baumeister, 1991; Bunderson and Thompson, 2009) and 'modern' definitions which focus on an inner passion for self-realisation and personal happiness. Duffy and Dik (2013) draw on both neoclassical and modern thinking to offer a more comprehensive definition of calling characterised by three components. The first is the perception of an 'external summons' where the individual feels 'called' to a particular type of work. The 'caller' can be a deity or other kind of spiritual force, but can also be social, cultural or familial in nature. So, an individual could perceive an external summons to be a medical doctor because it is what God wills, because it is what Norway needs, or because it is their family's destiny to be medics.

The second component is that a person's relationship to work is seen in relation to his or her general understanding of the purpose of life. This can be described as the 'meaningful work' component. This dimension illuminates individuals need to find personal meaning in the way they conduct their career and suggests that people will feel 'called' to careers where they can achieve an alignment between their values and beliefs and the activities and aims of their work. Such an alignment allows an individual to view their work and their career as an integrated expression of the purpose that they perceive in their life.

The third component is that the person's career is pro-socially oriented. This means that the individual can help others or promote a greater social good through their career. Such a recognition that career is more than just the fulfillment of individual needs or desires is an important element and one which marks Duffy and Dik's concept of calling out from many more individualistically focused career theories.

This combination of the three components: external summons; meaning and purpose; and a prosocial motivation distinguishes the concept of calling from related concepts such as work commitment (Loscocco,

1989), work involvement (Kahn, 1990), and meaningful labor (Rosso et al., 2010).

Interest in the concept of calling has grown in recent years with the Journal of Vocational Behavior publishing a special issue in 2019 called 'Calling and careers: New insights and future directions' (Lysova et al., 2019). This issue emphasises that calling has become an important emerging topic of study in vocational psychology and organisational behaviour and draws attention to the key domains of calling research including the conceptualisation of calling, the emergence and development of calling, positive and negative effects of calling and the theoretical development of the concept. It also makes the point that there are various definitions of calling in the literature and emphasises the importance of being flexible in how we define the concept and not being constrained by the existing categories of Modern or Neoclassical calling. Rather we need to recognise that perception of calling can be individually conditioned, and that an occupational context can shape how individuals perceive their calling.

This article will focus in on Duffy and Dik's (2013) models of calling and explore how it can be used in a Norwegian context.

Calling in Norway

Like many other career theories, the concept of calling, as a psychological theory which can be applied to career development, has its roots in the USA. The grounding of the concept in the culture of the USA raises important questions as to whether it will transfer in a meaningful way to Norway or to other countries. Different countries have very different working cultures, welfare systems, cultures and religions, within which we might anticipate that the idea of calling might operate differently. For example, less than a fifth of Norwegians view religion as 'very important' while more than half of Americans do (Pew Research Centre, 2018).

Despite this there are a range of reasons for believing that the concept of calling might be useful in a Norwegian context due to the historical tradition of the concept especially in the public welfare professions. While religion is less likely to serve as an external summons for Norwegians, this may have been replaced with a belief in contributing to the needs of society or the nation. Kjærgård (2018) argues that the search for individual meaning and the desire to help others and career in a socially useful way are important underpinning values for Norwegians careers. This raises the question as to whether external summons is a weaker aspect of calling in Norway than meaningful work or pro-sociality, or whether the external summons is simply identified as coming from a different source.

Various Norwegian welfare services such as schools and health have long historical roots in the church (Kjærgård, 2012). The concept of calling also has long roots in Norway and can inevitably be found as an explanation for those Norwegians who chose religious careers (Eskilt, 2005). But the concept also has been mobilised more widely and can be variously found articulated in the work of Ibsen (Leland, 1986) and expounded by the nineteenth century Norwegian polymath Hans Nielsen Hauge as part of his movement for populist and democratic reforms of Norway's religious orthodoxies and social and economic system (Grytten & Liland, 2021).

After the Protestant and philanthropic movements of the 19th century, psychological and scientific factors for career choice emerged. Psychometric tests then became common, and had a great influence on peoples career decision making. The role of the counsellor as an expert and administrator of psychometric tests increasingly minimised the role of calling in favour of more scientific explanations of how careers should be chosen (Plant, 2009). Alongside this technical and ideological shift, Norway was also in the process of building a secular welfare state which reduced the influence of the church and increasingly disrupted

the religious anchoring of vocations (Kjærgård, 2012). Despite this, the concept of calling continues to be widely used and understood in the country.

In the recent past, the concept of calling has been used to describe individuals' motivation for choosing a profession, particularly within the Norwegian welfare state. Tveit (2008) has pointed to a tradition of using the concept of calling within the nursing profession. Lingås (1998) and Messel (2013) have been concerned with the concept within the social work profession, and Gronseth et al. (2020) have looked at calling within the Norwegian medical profession. Caspersen (2005) has used the concept to investigate motivation and professional socialisation within both nursing and teaching, noting that the motive to enter these professions resembles an altruistic calling. Such discussion suggests that the concept of calling might be useful for understanding career decision making more broadly in Norway, especially in the other professions of the welfare state. However, at present these arguments remain fragmentary and confined to the decision making related to individual professions, rather than having been articulated as a general theory of Norwegian calling. In other words, the concept of calling remains relevant in contemporary Norway, even if it would be difficult to produce a single and scientific definition of it. It is to this discussion that the current article hopes to contribute.

In 2014 Norway established its first Master's program in career guidance, effectively inaugurating career guidance as a new profession within the welfare state. This master's program recruits students from the social, educational and health sectors. Many have already worked as teachers, social workers, or nurses, and are now motivated to acquire a new competence within career guidance. In this context, we wanted to investigate to what degree Master's students in career guidance relate to the concept of calling in their choice of the career guidance profession. We were curious as to whether the concept of calling could still be relevant

for them in their choice to pursue career counselling. More broadly we were interested to see whether the concept of calling could be broadened out from its usage in the traditional occupations of the Norwegian welfare state and to explore whether Dik and Duffy's model of calling provides a useful way of measuring calling within a Norwegian context.

Globally Travelling Concepts

The loan of theoretical concepts and models are welcome in a small academic field and in small countries such as Norway, where the field of career guidance remains emergent. However, we need to be careful about implementing these concepts without a thorough investigation of their validity in the new geographical, cultural and historical environments. So, if we are going to use the psychological concept of 'calling', as developed in the USA, in Norway and to make use of associated psychometric measures, we need to explore their cultural relevance.

Dik and Duffy's model was developed empirically using psychometric methods. The main ambition was 'to address a gap in the literature by developing and establishing psychometric support for a multidimensional measure of calling rooted in a clear definition of the construct' (Dik et al. 2012, p. 258). Their conceptualisation of calling is based on three main elements, firstly, motivation from an external source (transcendent summons), secondly, motivation through a sense of purpose or meaningfulness (purposeful work), and thirdly, socially oriented goals as primary sources of motivation (prosocial motivation) (Dik & Duffy, 2009). The concept of calling differs from the concept of vocation first and foremost due to the first part of the definition: transcendent summons (Dik et al., 2012).

Dik and Duff also argue that in an exploration of calling we can differentiate between what individuals feel has been important to them in their career so far (presence) and what they are looking for (search) (Dik et al., 2012, Dik & Duffy,

2009). So, some people can perceive a present calling in their daily life, whereas others are actively searching for one. Dik and Duffy's development of the multidimensional Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ) and the Brief Calling Scale (BCS), provides instruments that can be used to assess whether, and to what extent an individual has experienced a calling. Importantly it can also help people to navigate the multi-dimensional nature of calling tracing how transcendental summons, purposeful work and prosocial motivations combine and to clarify whether calling is present or something that an individual is searching for.

Psychometric measurements, including career assessments, are culturally embedded, and cannot be simply redeployed in new cultural contexts (Watson et al., 2011). However, this does not mean that it is impossible to use tools from different contexts but rather means that they need to go through a process of validation and, potentially, adaption to the new context (Einarsdottir et al., 2020). There is a rich literature exploring the concept of validation which notes both a range of approaches and types of validation that can be used as well as more theoretical questions about the aims of validation, where it fits into analytical processes and what its explanatory limits are (Hughes, 2018). Simpler discussions of validity focus primarily on whether an instrument is capable of measuring a particular phenomenon or psychological process by using a range of tools such as face validity, construct validity and criterion validity. But cross-cultural studies inevitably open questions about whether validation problems are technical (i.e. the instrument is not working) or conceptual and theoretical (i.e. what is being measured does not exist in this context or operates in a very different way).

In this article we describe a pilot study with Norwegian career counselors using Dik and Duffy's questionnaire on calling and vocation (Dik et al., 2012). We decided to import the model without change and attempt a construct revalidation using a

Norwegian population. As we will show, this proved to be a far from straightforward process and raises some important theoretical questions about what calling is in a Norwegian context and the process of cross-cultural validation.

Methodology

To investigate calling in Norway we sought to revalidate the CVQ (Dik et al., 2012) with a Norwegian population. In addition, this study provided an opportunity to present the concept of work as calling to the field of career guidance in Norway and to explore whether it offered a useful way to expand the vocabulary and concepts available to the careers field in Norway. The survey was conducted in accordance with guidelines from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD), in regard to how the survey was produced and distributed, and how the data were collected and secured. This included securing ethical approval, not collecting identifying information, and using a regulated data collection and storage tool.

The questionnaire was distributed as an anonymous Internet-based survey. We determined to focus on Norwegian career practitioners, with most of the sample drawn from students and recent graduates at two universities. Participants are mainly adult experienced practitioners engaged in continuing professional development and therefore our sample differs from Dik and Duffy's which are mainly focused on younger undergraduates. However, we decided to use guidance students as a convenience sample, to ensure a informants interested in career and work issues. A link to the questionnaire was sent

out to our students and to career centres in all regions. An information letter was attached, providing a short description of Dik and Duffy's multifaceted concept of calling.

It proved hard to translate all the nuances in the original CVQ from English to Norwegian, and after some discussions we concluded that the best way to ensure the scientific validation of the instrument was to use the original questionnaire in English. In the information letter we welcomed feedback after filling out the questionnaire. A few of the respondents did give some feedback revealing that they struggled a bit with grasping all these nuances in English, but also noting that it had been interesting to be challenged to reflect on these concepts, and what they could mean in a Norwegian context. Most were happy to complete the survey in English as the standard of English language skills amongst professional workers in Norway is generally high.

The CVQ is comprised of 24 statements relating to aspects of calling e.g. 'I believe that I have been called to my current line of work'. Respondents are invited to indicate whether each of the statements is true of them using a Likert scale in which 1 = Not at all true of me, 2 = mildly true of me, 3 = moderately true of me, 4 = mostly true of me, 5 = absolutely true of me. Item 8 ('I do not believe that a force beyond myself has helped guide me to my career') was reverse coded. Higher scores therefore indicate the item better described how the respondents felt. Figure 1 breaks down how the items mapped onto Dik and Duffy's components.

Figure 1
Items and components in the Calling and Vocation Questionnaire

<p>Presence-transcendent summons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe that I have been called to my current line of work. • I do not believe that a force beyond myself has helped guide me to my career. (Reverse) • I was drawn by something beyond myself to pursue my current line of work. • I am pursuing my current line of work because I believe I have been called to do so. 	<p>Search-transcendent summons</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm searching for my calling in my career. • I yearn for a sense of calling in my career. • I am trying to figure out what my calling is in the context of my career. • I'm trying to identify the area of work I was meant to pursue.
<p>Presence-purposeful work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My work helps me live out my life's purpose. • I see my career as a path to purpose in life. • My career is an important part of my life's meaning. • I try to live out my life purpose when I am at work. 	<p>Search-purposeful work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am looking for work that will help me live out my life's purpose. • I intend to construct a career that will give my life meaning. • Eventually, I hope my career will align with my purpose in life. • I want to pursue a career that is a good fit with the reason for my existence.
<p>Presence-prosocial orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most important aspect of my career is its role in helping to meet the needs of others. • Making a difference for others is the primary motivation in my career. • My work contributes to the common good. • I am always trying to evaluate how beneficial my work is to others. 	<p>Search-prosocial orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am trying to find a career that ultimately makes the world a better place. • I want to find a job that meets some of society's needs. • I am trying to build a career that benefits society. • I am looking to find a job where my career clearly benefits others.

In addition to the 24 statements, the questionnaire also collected demographic data: gender, age group, number of years working, and number of years in higher education. Descriptive statistics for these are presented in Table 1. The sample comprised 119 females and 24 males. Respondents were most typically in the 40-49 years age group (52 respondents), with 40 respondents in the 30-39 years age

group and 35 respondents in the 50-59 years age group. Ten respondents were aged between 20 and 29 and 4 were aged over 60. Accordingly, most respondents (133) had been working for more than 5 years. Most respondents (87) also had more than five years of higher education, with 54 respondents having received 3-5 years of higher education and only 2 respondents with 1-2 years of higher education.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of the sample

Variable	Categories	Number of respondents
AGE	20-29 years	10
	30-39 years	40
	40-49 years	54
	50-59 years	35
	60+ years	4
GENDER	Female	119
	Male	24
NUMBER OF YEARS WORKING	Less than 1 year	1
	1-2 years	1
	2-4 years	8
	More than 5 years	133
NUMBER OF YEARS IN HIGHER EDUCATION	1-2 years	2
	3-5 years	54
	More than 5 years	87
FORMAL EDUCATION IN CAREER GUIDANCE	Completed 30 credits of further education	15
	Completed a masters degree	7
	No formal credits	10
	Studying for 30 credits of further education	39
	Studying for a masters degree (more than half-way)	13
	Studying for a masters degree (less than half-way)	51
	Other forms of education	8

Dik & Duffy (2012) reported several measures of internal consistency and reliability for their scale. Internal consistency reliability coefficients for CVQ subscales ranged from .85 for Presence-Transcendent Summons to .92 for Search-Prosocial Orientation. Test-retest coefficients for total scores of the CVQ were $r = .75$ for CVQ-Presence and $r = .67$ for CVQ-Search.

In the present study 147 survey responses were returned, however 4 responses were removed due to incompleteness. The remaining 143 were cleaned and used for the analyses which were conducted in SPSS 28. Four sets of analyses were conducted. In the first set descriptive statistics on the survey items were conducted to establish measures of central tendency and dispersion. Secondly, the factor structure proposed by Dik et al (2009) was used as a basis for examining differences in responses across the three primary aspects of calling: (1) transcendent

summons, (2) purposeful work, and (3) prosocial orientation. A third set of analyses sought to answer the research question of whether Dik & Duffy's original theoretical model was upheld by our data, or to put it another way, would our data fit the Dik & Duffy proposed factor structure? A final set of analyses was conducted on the factor structure which our Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) analyses suggested was the most parsimonious fit for our data.

PAF is an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) approach which produces parsimonious representation of observed correlations between variables by latent factors. Using PAF allows us to identify whether Dik & Duffy's model is an accurate explanation of our data, or whether the factor structure they proposed is an inaccurate explanation. If it is the latter, PAF can be used to explore alternative factor structures which are better able to explain our data. We ran multiple PFA tests, removing items as test output suggested until we arrived at

the most parsimonious factor structure which could accurately explain our data. This final, parsimonious model, was then tested, as is customary, using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) - a statistical technique used to verify the factor structure of a set of observed variables.

Results

This section presents descriptive statistics (measures of central tendency and dispersion) on responses to the items in the survey. Following this the process of exploring the factor structure of responses is described with the results of this presented. Finally, the models which were tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis are presented.

Data were entered into SPSS with the 24 survey items being treated as numeric data. Respondents with missing items were removed from analyses leaving a sample of 143 responses. Descriptive statistics were calculated for the 24 items from the survey tool; means and standard deviations for each item are presented below in Table 2.

Also included are means and standard deviations for each of the six factors proposed in Dik & Duffy’s theory (item scores were added together to calculate ‘total’ scores. Table 2 indicates that the items respondents agreed with most strongly (items 12 and 20 for example) were typically related to prosocial elements of work and those which were least strongly agreed with were those related to them feeling that there had been a transcendental summons to their work, (items 11 and 23). SDs across items ranged from 0.73 (Item 12 – making a difference to others is a primary motivation) to 1.23 (item 8 – I do not believe that a force beyond myself has helped guide me). The largest SDs were typically for the Transcendental Summons items as can be seen when looking at the SDs for the factors. There was greater variability within the Search Transcendental Summons factor (SD = 3.19) compared to other factors such as variability in scores within the Present Transcendental Summons factor (SD = 2.63), with perhaps the exception of Search for Purposeful Work (SD = 2.8).

Table 2
Factors and survey item means and standard deviations

	Factor	Mean	Std. Deviation
PTS	Presence transcendent summons	8.05	2.63
STS	Search transcendent summons	8.85	3.19
PPW	Presence purposeful work	10.76	2.44
SPW	Search purposeful work	10.94	2.8
PPO	Presence prosocial orientation	10.85	1.98
SPO	Search prosocial orientation	11.53	2.47
	Survey Item		
PPO	9. The most important aspect of my career is its role in helping to meet the needs of others.	2.94	0.75
PPO	12. Making a difference for others is the primary motivation in my career.	3.1	0.73
PPO	17. My work contributes to the common good.	3.12	0.76
PPO	22. I am always trying to evaluate how beneficial my work is to others.	2.73	0.83
SPO	5. I am trying to find a career that ultimately makes the world a better place.	2.65	0.94
SPO	7. I want to find a job that meets some of society’s needs.	3.13	0.75
SPO	10. I am trying to build a career that benefits society.	2.85	0.77

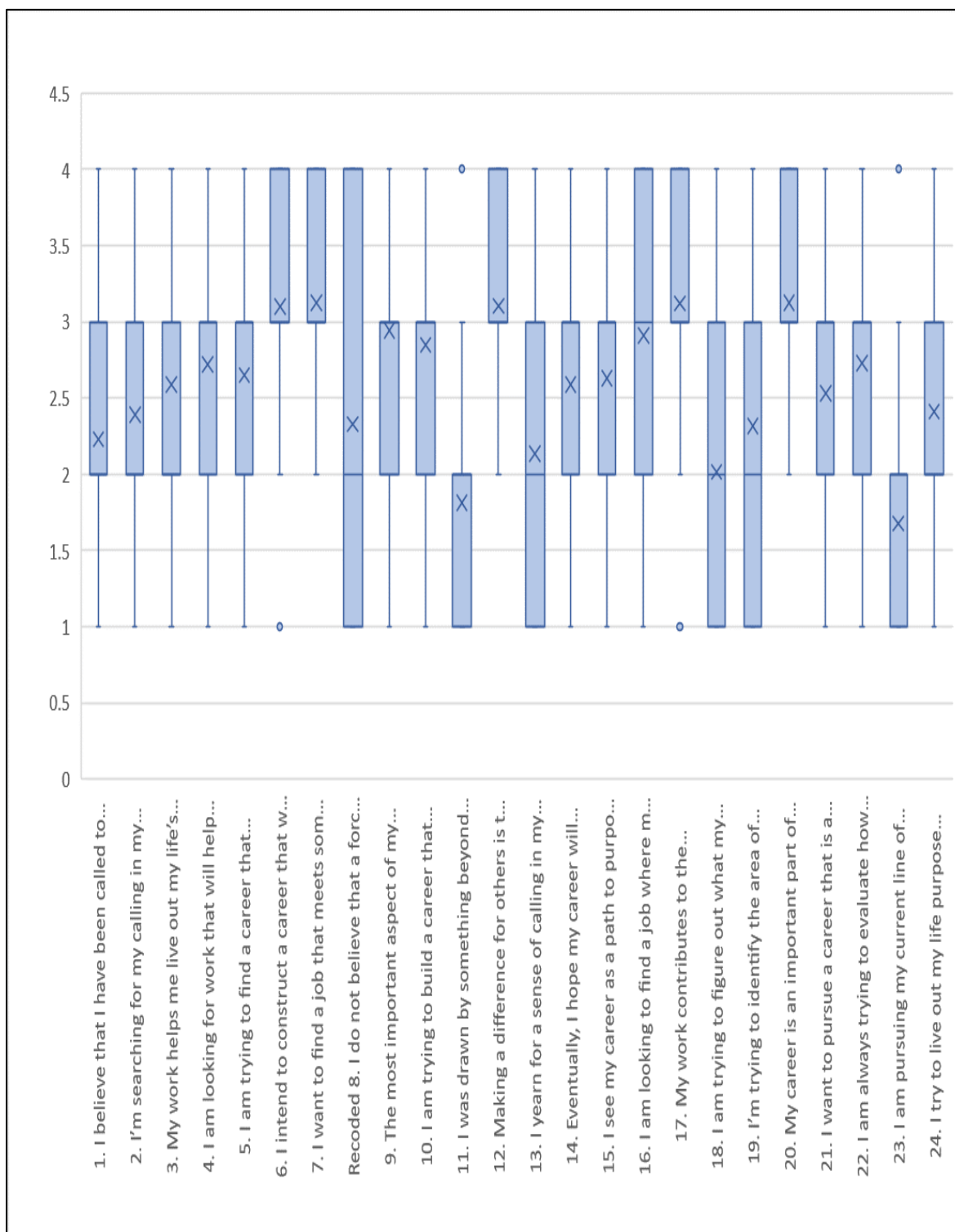
	Factor	Mean	Std. Deviation
SPO	16. I am looking to find a job where my career clearly benefits others.	2.91	0.83
PPW	3. My work helps me live out my life's purpose.	2.59	0.77
PPW	15. I see my career as a path to purpose in life.	2.63	0.84
PPW	20. My career is an important part of my life's meaning.	3.13	0.82
PPW	24. I try to live out my life purpose when I am at work.	2.41	0.84
SPW	4. I am looking for work that will help me live out my life's purpose.	2.72	0.95
SPW	6. I intend to construct a career that will give my life meaning.	3.1	0.8
SPW	14. Eventually, I hope my career will align with my purpose in life.	2.59	0.95
SPW	21. I want to pursue a career that is a good fit with the reason for my existence.	2.53	0.97
PTS	1. I believe that I have been called to my current line of work.	2.23	0.82
PTS	8. I do not believe that a force beyond myself has helped guide me to my career.	2.33	1.23
PTS	11. I was drawn by something beyond myself to pursue my current line of work.	1.81	0.89
PTS	23. I am pursuing my current line of work because I believe I have been called to do so.	1.68	0.78
STS	2. I'm searching for my calling in my career.	2.39	0.96
STS	13. I yearn for a sense of calling in my career.	2.13	0.99
STS	18. I am trying to figure out what my calling is in the context of my career.	2.01	0.9
STS	19. I'm trying to identify the area of work I was meant to pursue.	2.31	1.03

Box plots were produced for each item (see Figure 1) to display the first and third quartiles (the boxes) minimum and maximum (the bars) and the median score (represented by the X). The items with the greatest variation in responses were 8, 13, 16, 18 and 19, all of which assess the transcendental-summons aspects in the CVQ other than item 16. Item 16 enquires as to whether respondents are searching for a job that clearly benefits others. Items 11 and 21, both related to transcendental-summons, show floor effects with three quartiles of respondents disagreeing. Items which show ceiling effects were associated with having career that either has personal meaning or benefits society.

To explore the ways in which the respondents had scored on Dik & Duffy's theorised six factors, mean scores for each factor were calculated (see Table 2). Each factor is comprised of four survey items

with the response scale ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) through to 4 (absolutely true of me). This means scores can range from 4 to 20. Recognising that we have assigned these numbers to the responses in the scale (and this is done arbitrarily), a score of 4 to 8 would indicate no or little belief that the factor is representative of them, 9-15 would indicate moderate agreement that the factors are representative of them and 16 to 20 would indicate that the factors are mostly or completely representative. Mean scores ranged from 8.05 to 101.53 indicating overall low to medium levels of agreement. The data suggested that respondents were more likely to agree with those factors concerned with purposeful work or prosocial orientation than they were with those factors concerned with transcendental summons.

Figure 2. Boxplots for Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ) items



Factor Analysis

Having examined the responses to the survey items, we then explored the extent to which the theorised six factor model was a good fit for this data. Dik & Duffy (2012)

applied Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) for their Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to identify the factor structure for their CVQ. There are no absolute thresholds for sample size requirements with EFA because the minimum sample size is dependent on factor loadings, number of variables per factor, and the number of

factors (Winter, Dodou & Wieringa, 2009). Winter et al’s study showed that a small sample size of less than 50 can yield reliable results when factor loadings and number of variables are high but the number of factors is low. Bearing this in mind, following Dik & Duffy’s approach, we conducted an EFA using PAF (since we were not aiming to develop an instrument to be used with other data sets in the future,

and some of the data violated normality of distribution; Costello & Osborne, 2005, Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum and Strahan, 1999). Unlike Dik & Duffy, we used a direct oblimin rotation (as recommended by Costello & Osborne, 2005) since using orthogonal (as was used by Dik & Duffy) results in loss of valuable information if the factors are correlated (as is the case here – see Table 3).

Table 3
Mean, SD and inter-factor correlations (Spearman's Rho)s on the six factors theorised by Dik et al (2009)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Presence-transcendent summons	8.05	2.63	----					
2. Search-transcendent summons	8.85	3.19	.473**	----				
3. Presence-purposeful work	10.76	2.44	.360**	.315**	----			
4. Search-purposeful work	10.94	2.80	.287**	.568**	.588**	----		
5. Presence-prosocial orientation	10.85	1.98	.353**	.283**	.496**	.334**	----	
6. Search-prosocial orientation	11.53	2.47	0.156	.273**	.424**	.508**	.573**	----

The findings of this EFA were then examined to see if the sample size was adequate given factor loadings and to test the structure of the CVQ (Dik et al., 2012). Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity ($p < .001$) and the KMO index (.80) both passed threshold

requirements, making the data suitable for factor analysis. Consultation of the eigen values revealed six factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1 (Table 3) and this model accounted for 63.2% of the variance.

Table 4
Eigenvalues for EFA using PAF and direct oblimin

Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	6.817	28.406	28.406
2	2.760	11.500	39.906
3	1.747	7.281	47.187
4	1.649	6.872	54.059
5	1.157	4.820	58.879
6	1.037	4.323	63.202

The direct oblimin pattern matrix is displayed in Table 4 whereby emboldened loadings indicate the factor the item loads on to. Several items returned low value loadings (<0.50) – item numbers 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 16 and 17. There is also unequal distribution across the six factors of items, for example factor two is comprised of only one item. This is an initial indication that the model posited by Dik & Duffy (2012) is a poor fit for the data (Field, 2018).

Importantly, there were several low factor loadings and according to Winter et al. (2009) when factor loadings are at the 0.4 level and with 6 factors, a sample size of between 249 and 977 would be required. However, the low loadings, unequal distribution of items across the factors and low communalities (five items were below 0.4 with several more scoring below 0.5) suggested that several items had little in common with the other variables and should be considered for elimination.

Table 5
Model 1 (all 24 items)

	Factor						Communalities
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
1. I believe that I have been called to my current line of work.	- 0.017	- 0.323	0.099	0.447	0.102	0.180	0.423
2. I'm searching for my calling in my career.	0.180	0.143	- 0.033	0.158	0.456	0.058	0.472
3. My work helps me live out my life's purpose.	0.130	- 0.192	- 0.051	0.188	- 0.152	0.581	0.538
4. I am looking for work that will help me live out my life's purpose.	0.937	- 0.049	- 0.027	0.002	0.184	0.041	0.797
5. I am trying to find a career that ultimately makes the world a better place.	0.311	0.255	0.458	0.147	- 0.131	0.106	0.564
6. I intend to construct a career that will give my life meaning.	0.435	0.041	0.068	- 0.115	0.099	0.316	0.487
7. I want to find a job that meets some of society's needs.	0.177	0.076	0.723	0.003	- 0.079	- 0.191	0.534
8. I do not believe that a force beyond myself has helped guide me to my career.	0.055	0.078	- 0.255	0.430	0.041	- 0.048	0.261
9. The most important aspect of my career is its role in helping to meet the needs of others.	- 0.027	- 0.173	0.475	- 0.003	0.038	0.023	0.277

10. I am trying to build a career that benefits society.	-	0.039	0.758	-	0.035	-	0.529
	0.061			0.011		0.053	
11. I was drawn by something beyond myself to pursue my current line of work.	0.024	0.070	0.120	0.644	0.093	-	0.521
						0.046	
12. Making a difference for others is the primary motivation in my career.	-	-	0.500	0.004	0.036	0.182	0.343
	0.119	0.050					
13. I yearn for a sense of calling in my career.	0.051	0.293	0.139	0.124	0.556	-	0.632
						0.087	
14. Eventually, I hope my career will align with my purpose in life.	0.088	0.745	-	0.126	0.202	0.150	0.769
			0.017				
15. I see my career as a path to purpose in life.	0.079	0.305	0.027	0.069	0.108	0.556	0.575
16. I am looking to find a job where my career clearly benefits others.	0.188	0.010	0.456	0.068	0.071	0.038	0.354
17. My work contributes to the common good.	0.052	-	0.456	0.042	-	0.194	0.347
		0.006			0.045		
18. I am trying to figure out what my calling is in the context of my career.	0.016	-	-	0.142	0.832	-	0.720
		0.088	0.040			0.001	
19. I'm trying to identify the area of work I was meant to pursue.	0.043	-	0.002	-	0.829	-	0.602
		0.041		0.068		0.015	
20. My career is an important part of my life's meaning.	0.090	-	0.093	-	0.065	0.593	0.428
		0.042		0.154			
21. I want to pursue a career that is a good fit with the reason for my existence.	0.070	0.220	0.143	-	0.140	0.545	0.580
				0.024			
22. I am always trying to evaluate how beneficial my work is to others.	-	0.107	0.487	-	0.107	0.128	0.366
	0.085			0.005			
23. I am pursuing my current line of work because I believe I have been called to do so.	-	0.005	0.126	0.748	0.100	0.085	0.680
	0.071						
24. I try to live out my life purpose when I am at work.	-	0.141	0.088	0.298	0.009	0.567	0.574
	0.039						

Several items had communalities under 0.4. To determine whether removal of these would reduce the number of factors an EFA would produce and render our sample size appropriate, we continued to run PAF EFA with Direct Oblimin, removing items with initial communalities lower than 0.4 from analyses (we used initial communalities and not extracted communalities since initial estimates may be helpful in deciding whether a data/variable set is suitable for factoring). A final analysis that recorded factor loadings

of close to 0.6 or higher with all communalities over 0.4 was produced with 14 items (see Table 5) and this met the requirements set out by Winter et al. (2009) for conducting EFA with small sample sizes.

In this final solution, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p < .001$) and the KMO index (.80) both passed threshold requirements making the data suitable. The total model explained 67.68% of the variance with four factors identified with eigenvalues of over 1 (Table 5).

Table 6
Final solution with eigenvalues

Factor	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.136	36.685	36.685
2	1.877	13.411	50.096
3	1.272	9.087	59.183
4	1.190	8.499	67.682

Although the model suggested four factors, the items were not equally distributed across them. The four factors (see Table 6) showed some overlap with those proposed by Dik & Duffy but did not map across cleanly. The key differences were that only one factor mapped on to the concept of search (factor 4) and this contained items related to the idea of having a ‘calling’ to

work (desire for calling). Factor 1 speaks to actively searching for a career that gives you purpose and meaning (planning for purpose). Factor 2 concerns the notion of needing a career that benefits others and society (social orientation). Factor 3 contained items related to both external summons and desire for meaningful work (alignment with purpose).

Table 7
Model 2 (14 items)

	1	2	3	4	ICs*
2. I’m searching for my calling in my career.	.245	-.088	.091	.598	.532
4. I am looking for work that will help me live out my life’s purpose.	.657	.012	-.179	.318	.554
5. I am trying to find a career that ultimately makes the world a better place.	.429	.588	.120	-.044	.518
6. I intend to construct a career that will give my life meaning.	.625	.093	-.127	.083	.437
7. I want to find a job that meets some of society’s needs.	.032	.758	-.128	.031	.408
10. I am trying to build a career that benefits society.	-.064	.722	.109	-.016	.418
11. I was drawn by something beyond myself to pursue my current line of work.	-.056	.061	.592	.269	.414
13. I yearn for a sense of calling in my career.	.082	.120	.011	.684	.547
15. I see my career as a path to purpose in life.	.617	-.028	.279	.033	.497
18. I am trying to figure out what my calling is in the context of my career.	-.050	-.029	.132	.828	.629
19. I’m trying to identify the area of work I was meant to pursue.	.000	.004	-.013	.737	.535
21. I want to pursue a career that is a good fit with the reason for my existence.	.591	.099	.244	.009	.480
23. I am pursuing my current line of work because I believe I have been called to do so.	-.053	.047	.677	.232	.490
24. I try to live out my life purpose when I am at work.	.425	.024	.574	-.110	.496

Discussion

The study finds that the Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ) is not well supported by the data here. Some aspects such as purpose and meaning and a career that has wider benefit to society were present in the data, but it was harder to extract a notion of calling that was 'transcendental' or indeed to differentiate between present and future callings. Our sample of Norwegian careers professionals were unlikely to report that most of the items in the CVQ were true of them. Furthermore, it was very challenging to find clear patterns in the responses across the sample, suggesting that respondents either did not recognise the items as relevant to their experience or that different respondents responded in different ways. In other words, the test does not seem to be meaningfully describing and measuring calling for this group of Norwegian counsellors.

There are a range of reasons as to why we were unable to validate Dik and Duffy's model of calling. The first and most important is that the data used for the validation was limited. We were working with 143 complete responses – there is no agreed minimum sample size for factor analysis however Mundfrom, Shaw & Ke (2005) explored appropriate sample sizes whilst considering the number of variables, factors and the level of the communalities produced. When there are low communalities and there is a variable to factor ratio of 5 (as there is in the initial PAF with 6 factors and 24 items) they suggest that a good sample size is 200 and when there are wide communalities the minimum suggested sample size is 140. Our further analyses met the requirements of Winter et al. (2009) but the data was not a strong fit and so the sample size here is on the small size and may have impacted the findings. Given this it is important to continue to work with the CVQ and to test it with a larger sample.

Secondly it is important to recognise that the population used in this study pose additional challenges for the CVQ. The original factor structure for the CVQ was identified in relation to undergraduate

students (Dik et al., 2012) who were largely at the start of their careers. However, the current study is conducted with older career counsellors who are well established in their career. These very different career and life stages may explain why the searching and presence dimensions proved to be difficult to validate. These items address respectively career satisfaction and career planning and exploration, and it is reasonable to conclude that there may be big difference for people who are generally in mid- to late-career rather than early-career.

Thirdly and most substantially there are substantial cultural differences between the USA and Norway that may account for challenges in validation. Other attempts at cross-cultural validation of the CVQ have produced mixed results, raising questions as to whether calling is a concept that can be seen unproblematically cross cultural (Autin et al., 2017; Kim, 2015). While it is very likely that most cultures, particularly those with differentiated vocational structures, may recognise concepts like calling, this does not mean that they are mediated through the same cultural and psychological processes. There are other examples where cross-cultural validation of the CVQ has been more straightforward (Kim et al., 2017) and as stated above, it would be worth experimenting further with larger sample sizes, different samples (e.g. using an undergraduate or early career population) and translation into Norwegian to see these approaches produce a more straightforward revalidation.

However, from these findings it would be possible to hypothesise that while the meaningful work and pro-sociality elements of calling may translate, the transcendental summons items may be less likely to garner agreement from Norwegian participants or to validate. Given this, a tentative conclusion is that the US concept of calling, with its (partial) basis in religion and spirituality, is problematic in a more secular Norwegian context. Other cultural differences may also create challenges for the existing concept of calling. The different work, welfare and

educational contexts may mean that Norwegians believe that they have a greater right to meaningful work and a greater expectation that this will involve making a contribution to wider society (Bakke, 2021). In addition, there may be other cultural features such as the 'the law of Jante: you shall not believe that you are someone significant in the community' which still holds a strong position in some parts of Norway (Schei & Gelfand 2018) and which may be impacting on respondents response to the concept of calling. It is possible that the idea that you are 'called' may be viewed as hubris, inviting respondents to view themselves as special. All of these cultural issues may be in play, along with others and serve to reduce the likelihood that the CVQ can be simply revalidated in Norway.

The current study does not provide us with sufficient information to isolate what cultural differences might be intervening in Norwegian respondents thinking about calling. However, it is reasonable to suggest that these substantially cultural differences relating the centrality of god, the role of the state and the position of the individual within the community, may be important in shaping Norwegians thinking about calling.

Embedding theory in the Norwegian context

While vocational psychology has made a substantial contribution to the field of career guidance internationally, in Norway career guidance has drawn its roots mainly from the field of teaching and pedagogy (Haug, 2018; Kjærgård, 2012; Norendal, 2018). However, this tradition has not been as inventive in developing theories, vocabulary and concepts that can be used in supporting individuals' career development. The Norwegian career development vocabulary is somewhat 'sparse' when it comes to models and concepts career practitioners can use regarding motivation for work. For example, the concept of vocation would often be translated to "yrke", but the word "yrke" does not cover Dik & Duffy's

definition of vocation 'as an approach to a life role consisting of derivation of purpose or meaningfulness and other-oriented values or goals' (Dik et al., 2012, p.244).

Borrowing theories from American and other traditions offers one approach to enrich the theories and concepts available to Norwegian career development. However, it is also important to develop new theory for Norway which draws on the country's culture to nourish emergent career theories and practices and to accurately describe Norwegian's experience of career. But there is also a middle ground which considers how Norwegians can engage with and adapt the theories that have developed elsewhere. Da Silva et al. (2016) describes this as a process of inter-cultural dialogue that recognises multiple epistemic traditions and seeks to ground them in the lived experience of the communities that are being worked with. The tensions in this process of inter-cultural dialogue are traced by Arulmani et al. (2014) who argue that as career concepts travel into contexts outside of where they are born they need to go through a process of redefinition and alignment into the new culture. A similar argument is made in the context of Norway by Bakke (2021) who argues that the career concept sits uneasily in Norwegian culture and that for it to resonate there needs to be a process of education and redefinition.

In general, this process of inter-cultural dialogue around career-related concepts has not been common in Norway in the past. Much theoretical work has either just been adopted directly from other countries or translated without a broader process of cultural embedding (e.g., the work of Amundson, 2001 and Peavy, 2005). It is only recently with the work of Dalene (2022) that we have seen more systematic attempts to ground international theories in a Norwegian context. Dalene focuses on Norwegian career counsellor's experiences and understanding in the use of Life Design Counselling and provides proposals for how the concept could be rethought in the context of Norway.

Our findings provide empirical support to the idea that there are serious epistemic dangers in uncritically attempting to import new career theories into Norway without taking the time to embed them. Nonetheless the concept of calling continues to be interesting. And while the CVQ does not currently seem to capture the multi-dimensional essence of calling in Norway, there is reason to continue to explore this further.

Our initial findings with this pilot group would lead us to pursue alternative ways of thinking about calling within the Norwegian context. Watson et al. (2011) make a distinction between attending to cultural validity (does a particular instrument remain valid when used in a different cultural context to the one in which it was originated) and attending to cultural specificity (does an instrument recognise the concepts that are culturally important and meaningful). So far it seems that the answer to the question on cultural validity is 'no', which leads us to make the argument that there is a greater need to attend to cultural specificity.

The inability to validate the US calling instruments does not mean that Norwegians experience career and career decision making as a series of entirely rational calculations about either salary or happiness. We think that it is very likely that Norwegians are attracted to careers based on 'gut' feelings about what is the right thing to do and through a desire to do something worthwhile with their life and career. Indeed, as discussed, there is research that suggests that calling, or something very like it, is certainly functioning for those Norwegians who enter work in some of the main occupations of the Norwegian welfare state. But such forms of 'calling' may need new theorisation in the context of Norway and may be more usefully described with alternate terminology. We might tentatively suggest *meningsfull karriere* (meaningful career) as the basis for a new concept which sheds calling's association with religion.

This then raises the question as to what constructs might be included within the concept of *meningsfull karriere*. Bakke (2021) suggests that the Norwegian concept of career is defined by various cultural features including horizontal individualism (which connects autonomy with equality), work centrality (which suggests that Norwegians are 'called' to engage in paid work) and a reciprocal relationship between the individual and the (welfare) state. Such an account might suggest an alternative starting point for a theorisation of *meningsfull karriere* in Norway. Of course, this is just one possible basis for theorising a Norwegian version of what a meaningful career might be, but it would be a culturally embedded one. The research presented in this article also gives us reason to pursue the ideas of purposeful work and prosocial motivation from Dik and Duffy's model in future research, even if it gives us less reason to pursue the idea of transcendent summons. Responses to items tapping into present transcendental summons and future transcendental summons were distributed quite differently to items assessing present/future prosocial and present/future purpose and meaning. The latter were normally distributed. The former were positively skewed; most respondents indicated these items were not representative of their beliefs. However, 20 respondents' scores indicated that transcendental summons were at least somewhat true for them, and more interestingly, 46 respondents indicated that future transcendental summons was at least somewhat true of them. A subsection of Norwegian society may therefore find, at least for future work, that there is a transcendental calling.

Next steps in the exploration of calling or *meningsfull karriere* in Norway

While it is useful to start with a culturally embedded theory such as that provided by Bakke, it is important to go further in grounding thinking about *meningsfull karriere* in Norwegian culture. Given this, a good next stage would be to undertake qualitative work with a diverse sample of Norwegians exploring the concepts of

meningsfull karriere, calling and vocation. This could then help to generate new concepts which could potentially be transformed into new items and tested psychometrically.

Further psychometric research could take this forward, comparing a newly proposed model to the Dik and Duffy model with a larger sample size. This would allow both instruments to be tested through validation and as well as the opportunity for exploratory analyses that might combine the items from the two instruments.

This study shows us the need to contextualise the concepts and instruments that are imported in Nordic career development. The Norwegian culture, understanding of society and the welfare system have a great influence on how we understand and value work and this makes it difficult to import ideas like calling from outside of the region. The study suggests that Norwegian career counsellors are concerned with finding a meaningful career, but that the concept of calling, with its basis in religion does not successfully capture this. We therefore need further studies in what it means to have a meaningful career in a Norwegian context.

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Data availability

The raw data required to reproduce the above findings are available on request from the authors.

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