Encyclopedia of
CAREER
DEVELOPMENT

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directly to increase the individual’s self-efficacy within that specific domain. Specifically, counselors can work with clients to increase self-efficacy by ensuring mastery experiences, providing successful models, reducing anxiety, and providing support and encouragement. Likewise, if a client’s personality seems particularly well suited to certain interests and those interests are not apparent, the counselor may want to ascertain whether there have been environmental limitations, such as racism, sexism, or poverty, that have limited exposure to potential interests. Moreover, high-ability clients who have the confidence to pursue a range of career options may need reassurance to follow their interests/personality fit with careers rather than choosing careers that are prestigious or would please their parents. Finally, the understanding of these three constructs will be useful for adult clients who may be underemployed or unemployed or seeking to change jobs within their organizations.

The dynamic use of P-E fit is essential in successfully transitioning from one career to the next. In America’s mobile society, it is not uncommon for an adult to shift careers based on the needs of the individual as well as demands of the environment. A person may develop additional interests or choose to emphasize different interests based on consideration of salary, family-friendliness of an occupation, or needs of the family. Older adults may seek out fresh new challenges, greater flexibility, or more independence. Adults may leave careers after a few years despite feeling confident, because they may find the tasks associated with the career a poor fit for their personality and interests. Vocational counselors need to provide P-E fit information to adults at these critical junctures when career appraisal is necessary.

Research is accumulating on the intersection of critical person factors in P-E fit. Though interests provide the foundation, building a successful career demands more than the identification of preferred activities. Future vocational researchers and counselors alike may want to adopt an integrationist perspective. This will allow for the expansion of the field’s knowledge of how interests, personality, and self-efficacy interrelate in both experimental and applied settings. It is imperative that vocational professionals in both arenas work to inform each other of their accumulated knowledge. This will allow research to inform practice and practice to inform research.

—Lisa M. Larson and Donna C. Bailey

See also Career exploration, Holland’s theory of vocational choice, Person-environment fit (P-E fit), Social cognitive career theory

Further Readings and References


CAREER AS A CALLING

The new era of organizational life has ushered in critical changes in how people conceive of their careers and how organizations think about the work trajectories of their employees. Trends toward shorter relationships between individuals and the organizations in which they work have forced revised ways of thinking about the structure of careers. While the bells that toll to mark the end of the traditional career may be premature, it is impossible to ignore the need to envision different ways to define what constitutes meaningful narratives of work lives as individuals navigate a changed terrain of careers. Because individuals, rather than the organizations they work for, are responsible for their own career directions, the role of personal
values has received more attention as a way to understand what guides individually directed careers.

The concept of a career as a calling speaks to the potential for congruence between individual values and the meaning derived from the various components of work that constitute a career path. Individuals who view their work as a calling see the work they do as an end in and of itself and thus are more committed to their work and less reliant on traditional career markers such as advancement and financial rewards as measures of success. Seeing one's career as a calling offers a different model for how individuals interact with structures of work to create meaning and craft work trajectories that are based on the actual work they do, rather than on the markers of success that are traditionally associated with careers and career progress. This suggests that calling-oriented employees are more motivated and better equipped to craft their own career paths despite the complexities evident in the changing employment climate.

THE CHANGING SHAPE OF CAREERS

Changes in organizations have made linear, intra-organizational careers less common, leading organizational researchers to study the ways individuals in a range of occupations might adapt to the accompanying changes in career structures. Sociologists, psychologists, and organizational theorists have proposed that organizational changes foretell the end of the traditional career. In its place, scholars have offered models of the protean career, the boundaryless career, careers of achievement and the "new" career. Most revised models of careers suggest that employees must now improvise, enact, and construct their careers across and outside organizational boundaries. In the popular press on careers, the free agent reigns; job hopping is more common; and taking time out for reeducation and training is essential. There has been appreciably less written about how employees' own values and goals for working operate within this context of careers and how much, if at all, employees have adapted to the changing times.

Traditionally, organizational careers have been represented by models that assume movement up a hierarchy within a single organization, with increasing responsibility and financial gain. While these linear careers may never have been as common as was believed, their decline over the past few decades has left employees in a position to create their own work trajectories to fulfill superordinate career and developmental goals. Many career scholars have argued that employees have become more entrepreneurial as a result, piecing together work experiences that focus on increased skill and a sense of control over their work experiences, while focusing less on promotions, advancement, and increasing status. Employees in this environment may seek career guidance from a wide network of relationships that are not dictated by organizational boundaries.

These changes in careers are believed to be caused by changes in organizational structures and in the psychological contracts between organizations and employees that result. Just as corporations are continually reorganizing in response to economic demands and global competition, the nature of work in organizations has become flexible to the point of becoming fragmented. Although research has suggested that individual action can affect the arrangements between employees and institutions, less is known about what guides individuals' actions as they carry out their careers. There are primarily two schools of thought: first, that the individual can adapt to changing career structures because they match the individual's preexisting career goals or, second, that the individual must work to adapt to career models offered the organization. A third option, in which individuals shape their own work lives through the ways in which they make meaning of work, is relatively unexplored but is gaining attention. In effect, this view suggests that in the wake of the weak situations created by organizations, with few guides for individual action, individuals are freer to enact their careers as their own creations because there are no longer strong models with clear structures to direct their career trajectories. Under such conditions, individuals are more likely to use their values, experience, knowledge, and networks to guide their work lives over time. Specifically, the values that individuals bring to their work and the subsequent meaning they make of their work is an important source of influence on how individuals think about their careers.

Individuals have been found to vary greatly in the kinds of meaning they derive from their work. Even within the same occupation, the personal meaning that different individuals attach to their work has been found to vary in ways that are systematically related to changes (even minor changes) in how they define the jobs they do. Importance is thus placed on the individual's narrative of the work, imbued with meaning
and representing a personal orientation toward work that helps to make sense of a complex career environment. One such narrative grows from the meaning individuals glean from their work when they view what they do as a calling.

**CAREER AS A CALLING**

The idea of viewing one's work as a calling came into common usage with Max Weber's concept of the Protestant work ethic. While a calling originally had religious connotations and meant doing work that God had "called" one to do, a calling in the modern sense has lost this religious connotation and is defined here as consisting of enjoyable work that is seen as making the world a better place in some way. Thus, the concept of a calling has taken on a new form in the modern era and is one of several kinds of meanings that people attach to their work. These meanings, which may be considered more broadly as work orientations, guide the process by which individuals select work, as well as how they perform the tasks included in their jobs.

The concept of work orientation is derived from a set of arguments in sociology that claim that work is subjectively experienced by individuals in one of three distinct ways: as a job, a career, or a calling. These three categories represent three different work orientations, defined as the ways in which work relates to one's sense of oneself. Work orientation guides the types of goals individuals strive to meet through working, encompasses beliefs about the role of work in life and, as such, is reflected in work-related feelings and behaviors. The goals associated with work orientation have implications for how individuals conduct themselves in relation to their work. Therefore, work orientation is a useful lens through which to understand what individuals are searching for in their careers. Prior research has shown that each type of work orientation can be found both across and within various occupations and that individuals are unambiguously in reporting that they experience their work as a job, career, or calling. To address the implications of seeing one's career as a calling, it is first necessary to define and explore job and career orientations to work.

Each work orientation is associated with the kinds of goals individuals pursue in their work lives. Thus, those with a job orientation toward work are primarily interested in the material benefits from work and do not seek many other types of rewards from it. The work is not an end in itself, but instead is a means for acquiring the resources needed to enjoy time away from the job. In essence, the main goal of those with job orientations is to make an income, and leisure is kept separate from work.

In contrast to those with a job orientation, employees with a career orientation are more personally invested in their work and tend to mark their achievements not only through monetary gain but also through advancement within the occupational structure. This advancement often brings higher social standing and self-esteem, as well as increased power within the scope of one's occupation. Thus, the goal of the career oriented is to increase income, social status, power, and prestige in their occupations, whether within or between organizations. For example, a career-oriented middle manager may strive to become a vice president, or a young attorney may strive to make partner in a law firm.

By contrast, a calling-oriented middle manager or attorney works not for advancement but for the fulfillment that the work brings. Specifically, people with a calling orientation tend to view their work as inseparable from the rest of their lives. Individuals with callings are not working for material rewards or career advancement but instead view the work as an end in itself. The goal of those with callings is to gain deep fulfillment from doing work that they view as having a positive impact on the wider world. Most popular examples of calling orientations come from the arts or helping professions (e.g., medicine, social work), as many individuals in these occupations are compelled to do expressive work or to be of service to others. Traditionally, job and calling orientations have been thought of as representing opposite extremes of the same dimension. If one has a strong calling orientation, it is unlikely that a strong job orientation would also be present, given the focus on intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation to perform one's work.

The notion of a career as a calling is supported by research that shows that any kind of work can be viewed as a calling. Work orientation is essentially the frame of meaning applied to the work one does; thus, it is possible to do the same work and view it quite differently based on which orientation is applied to the work. For example, a computer programmer can view the work as a way to make a paycheck (job orientation), as a way to move into project management and infrastructure design on the way to securing a director-level position (career orientation), or as a way
to carry out the enjoyable, fulfilling work of program-
ing that is seen as contributing to knowledge man-
agement and creation in the wider world (calling
orientation). The calling-oriented programmer is
much more likely to thrive in a work world in which
career structures are increasingly complex, sequential,
and unpredictable, because a calling orientation pro-
vides a life narrative to the work that is both deeply
meaningful and less reliant on the external career
structures of the organization. Thus, calling-oriented
individuals are more protected from the episodic and
uncertain nature of career progression in organizations,
whereas those with career orientations are perhaps
most exposed to the changes in organizations that make
advancement less certain. Like the calling oriented, the
job oriented are also protected from both traditional and
modern career structures in organizations, for they are
working for pay and little more and thus do not need
to impose broader goals for advancement on the work
they do. However, in contrast to the job oriented, calling-
oriented individuals gain a deeper source of mean-
ing and fulfillment from work, which creates a deeper
bond to the work itself. Although those with calling ori-
rientations value doing work for the meaning that the
work represents, clearly, the financial rewards of work
hold some importance for them. However, these
rewards are subordinate to the meaning that doing the
work itself brings to the person. Work orientations are
not mutually exclusive, but instead represent the rela-
tive importance to individual employees of their rea-
sons for working.

IMPLICATIONS OF A CALLING
ORIENTATION FOR MODERN CAREERS

Viewing one’s work as a calling has been shown to
be related to a number of positive outcomes for both
employees and their employers. Calling-oriented indi-
viduals report higher job and life satisfaction, even
after controlling for income, level of education, and
occupation, than people who view their work as jobs
or careers. These employees also report higher work
motivation and are less likely to regret their choice of
occupations. Individuals who feel called to perform
their work also report greater occupational commit-
ment and enthusiasm and are more likely to create new
tasks, responsibilities, and approaches to their work.
Such new approaches to the work infuse the work
with deeper meaning and may help organizations to
more effectively meet their goals.

Individuals with callings appear to be at an advan-
tage given today’s changing career environment.
Modern careers require individuals to interact with
changing career structures to fulfill their goals for
working. Thus, work orientation, specifically a calling
orientation, offers continuity to work trajectories at a
time when work histories are more fragmented. Calling
orientations endow both the individuals who adhere to
them and the organizations that employ such individu-
als with positive outcomes that flow from a deeper
connection to the work and a stronger passion for the
activity of performing job tasks. Thus, a calling orien-
tation provides a possible answer to the question of how
narratives of identity and life history will be derived in
a changing society in which careers are increasingly
made up of episodes and fragments. For individuals
with calling orientations, a relatively stable set of goals
can be pursued in their work that could be expected to
persist within, between, and beyond specific jobs.

In this sense, a calling orientation shares some ele-
ments with the factors that constitute a protean career
orientation, such as the extent to which decisions
regarding one’s careers are based on personal values
versus financial or other extrinsic factors. It follows
that individuals who are more attached to the intrinsic
nature of the work itself, those with a calling versus
job or career orientation, are more likely to take what-
ever steps are necessary to continue along their pre-
ferred paths, what scholars have referred to as the
“path with a heart.” Indeed, ongoing research in the
area of careers has begun to focus on the role of mean-
ing and values in the context of changing career
structures. The promise of career as a calling is but one
direction that this work has taken, offering an alterna-
tive path for understanding the responses individuals
could have to a work world in which careers are the
responsibility of the employee.

—Amy Wrzesniewski and Jennifer Tosti

See also Boundaryless career, Protean career, Work ethic,
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CAREER CENTERS

The comprehensive college and university career center is a uniquely American phenomenon that has evolved over the past 100 or more years in response to changing educational, economic, political, and social conditions. This entry identifies several historic events in the evolution of the career center, outlines the core functional elements, enumerates the behavioral objectives, and provides a brief summary and look to the future.

Prior to the passage of the Morrill Act, also known as the Land Grant College Act, in 1862, higher education in the United States was a privilege to which a relatively small percentage of the population had access. Students entering higher education did so largely with a view to entering the professions, and there was little need for career assistance that could not be provided by faculty who took a natural interest in the career development and aspirations of their students. The Land Grant College Act changed all that. With the passage of the Morrill Act in 1862, the nation entered an era of unprecedented public support for higher education. Prior to that, the majority of those who entered college were generally more concerned with accumulating credits and acquiring licenses than with learning any particular skill while enrolled. The passage of the Morrill Act signaled a sea change in the national philosophy toward and resource commitment to public higher education and redefined higher education as a means by which the masses could acquire not only knowledge but also marketable skills and professional preparation to enter the workforce.

The Truman Commission Report of 1948 acknowledged the economic significance of higher education for the first time, determined that half or more of the American public was capable of completing a baccalaureate degree and, more important, that the public had a “right” to expect that public support of higher education would put a bachelor’s degree within reach of any American who had the ability to secure one. Essentially, higher education became a “right” rather than a privilege, and a massive resource influx from the GI Bill and other sources propelled public higher education to unprecedented growth. With this rapid growth and the necessity to meet the needs of huge, diverse student bodies, higher education was forced to specialize. Faculties were no longer able or willing to provide for myriad out-of-class needs of students, giving birth to a new classification of professionals called “student affairs.” The offices that evolved to provide for the career development needs of students were called “placement offices,” the early forerunners of career services.

By the end of World War II, public higher education had become a major societal force whose raison d’être had become so integrated with that of business and government that some critics began to refer to the educational/military/industrial complex in a derogatory way. The single-purpose placement office that had done little more than assist students in finding their first jobs was no longer adequate to meeting the increasingly complex career development needs of students and the greater society.

At the same time that public higher education was experiencing massive growth, the world of work had shifted from being primarily agrarian to manufacturing and was now moving into the postindustrial era: The “knowledge revolution” had begun. With these changes came the recognition that the work of the career center was more than simply finding jobs for students, a