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In God's name: calling, gender and career success in religious ministry

Running title: Calling, gender and career success

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In God's name: calling, gender and career success in religious ministry

Abstract

This article uses a gender lens to examine how people with a calling conceptualise what career success means to them, that is, what work-related outcomes they seek to accomplish in their career. Qualitative data were gathered from ministers of religion working for the Church of England, an organisation where gender discrimination is deeply embedded. The findings show that people with the same calling may conceptualise their own career success in quite different ways. Many of the male and female ministers who took part in the study conceived their own career success in a way that reflected the gendered context of the Church of England. This suggests that gender is important for understanding how a calling is pursued in the workplace.

Keywords: Calling; Career; Career Success; Gender; Religious Vocation

Introduction

There is a growing literature on calling, related to the view that calling is a significant vocational construct associated with positive personal and organisational outcomes (e.g. Duffy & Sedlacek 2007; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Conway, Clinton, Sturges & Budjanovcanin, 2015). An important focus of calling research has been to explore links between the existence of a calling and individuals' careers. Previous studies have associated the presence of a calling with engagement in career development, characterised by career confidence, career decision making and career planning (Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Hirschi, 2011; Praskova, Hood & Creed, 2014). While this research has confirmed important links between calling and career adaptability at the beginning of the career (Sturges, Clinton & Conway, 2019), much less is known about how a calling is pursued in a career and the career outcomes of calling (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Schabram & Maitlis, 2017). The aim of the research reported in this article is to address this gap in the calling literature, by investigating how people with a calling conceptualise their own career success, that is, what 'desirable work-related outcomes' (Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom, 2005) they seek to accomplish in their career.

In this article, a gender lens is explicitly used to examine what career success means for women and men with a calling. This approach is taken because the ways in which women and men pursue their calling and the career outcomes that they value are likely to be gendered (Parker & Chusmir, 1992; Sturges, 1999; Dyke & Murphy, 2006). As discussed below, a calling is often pursued in work contexts where masculine values, for example, such as a desire for hierarchical advancement and extrinsic reward, prevail (Gherardi, 1995; Duffy, Manuel, Borges & Bott, 2011; Greene & Robbins, 2015; Cohen,

Duberley & Smith, 2018); a small number of studies have suggested that women with a calling work in more junior roles (Greene & Robbins, 2015; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Clarke & Knights, 2018) and lower status occupations, compared with men with the same calling (Cardador, Dane & Pratt, 2011). Treating the concept of calling as gender neutral therefore is likely to limit understanding of how a calling is pursued by women and men (Dik & Duffy, 2009).

The data used in this article were gathered from a sample of ministers of religion who work for the Church of England, an organisation where gender discrimination is deeply embedded (Bagilhole, 2003; Greene & Robbins, 2015; Dean & Greene, 2017): its structure, culture, customs and practices, like those of other masculinised occupations, reflect the longstanding power of men in the church (Bagilhole, 2006; Greene & Robbins, 2015). Women could not be ordained as ministers of religion until 1994; the first female Bishops were ordained in 2015, after a long struggle within the Church to achieve acceptance of this. During the past 25 years, many women have embraced their calling and been ordained as ministers of religion: 27% of full-time paid ministers in the Church of England are now female. Previous studies have shown female ministers generally report finding their work satisfying and fulfilling (Greene & Robbins, 2015) and have work-related values as strong as those of male ministers (McDuff & Mueller, 2002). Nevertheless, women ministers' careers are still constrained by a 'stained glass' ceiling, both in the UK (Peyton & Gattrell, 2013) and elsewhere (McDuff, 2001): they tend to occupy lower status, subordinate positions in the Church of England and they are more likely than men to work in smaller parishes or on an unpaid basis (Bagilhole, 2003; Greene & Robbins, 2015). Their experiences as ministers are shaped by their lack of

power in the church: the process of selecting people to be trained as ordained ministers is perceived to be gendered, favoring male candidates (Greene & Robbins, 2015); and women receive discriminatory treatment from male ministers and members of their congregation (Greene & Robbins, 2015; Dean & Greene, 2017). This is tolerated by female clergy on the basis that it is part of the sacrifice required to pursue a religious calling (Peyton & Gatrell; Greene & Robbins, 2015).

The article makes three contributions to calling theory. Firstly, it shows that people with the same calling seek different career outcomes; secondly, it indicates that the concept of calling is not gender neutral, but that careers based on calling are gendered in a way that reflects the power and status of men; and, thirdly, that objective criteria for success are more important to those with a calling than has previously been suggested.

Calling and gender

A calling may be defined as ‘a transcendent summons...to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented towards demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation’ (Dik & Duffy, 2009, p. 427). The fundamental characteristics of calling can be summarised as passion for a specific work domain, experiencing work as profoundly meaningful, a focus on others rather than self, intrinsic motivation and a desire for personal fulfilment (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Elangovan, Pinder & McLean, 2010). It is important to note that many of these values associated with calling could be described as stereotypically feminine: ‘feminine’ work values have been shown to include a desire for self-fulfilment (Parker & Chusmir, 1992; Sturges, 1999), a focus on intrinsic reward

(Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Lechner, Sortheix, Obschonka & Salmelo-Aro, 2018) and an inclination to seek purpose and meaning in life (Beutel & Marini, 1995; Cech, 2015).

While some callings manifest themselves in feminised professions, such as nursing, (Cardador et al., 2011), teaching and psychology (Dik, Eldridge, Steger & Duffy, 2012), many are pursued in traditionally masculinised occupations, for example, religious ministry and medicine (Greene & Robbins, 2015; Duffy et al., 2011), where masculine work values, such as a desire for hierarchical advancement and extrinsic reward, predominate (Gherardi, 1995; Maier, 1999; Greene & Robbins, 2015; Cohen et al., 2018). Thus, when women and men pursue their calling, they may need to find a way of resolving the dissonance between the stereotypically feminine values associated with calling and the corporate masculinities of the workplace (Madden, Bailey & Kerr, 2015; Greene & Robbins, 2015). The approach they take to doing this is likely to be gendered, since gendered meanings pervade practices, procedures and role identities in all kinds of organisational settings, shaping individual beliefs and behaviour in ways that reflect the power and status ascribed to men (Ridgeway, 2009; Crompton & Lyonette, 2011; Pringle, Harris, Ravenswood, Giddings, Ryan, & Jaeger, 2017).

The view that the way in which women and men pursue a calling will be gendered is supported by studies conducted in different kinds of occupations where a calling might be expected to exist (McDuff, 2001). In religious ministry, women ministers are subjected to stereotypically gendered expectations that they will take responsibility for ‘caring’ pastoral and child ministries (Stewart-Thomas, 2010; Bagilhole, 2003). Research has thus suggested that women carry out religious ministry differently from men, for example by being more likely than men to take on roles in hospitals and

universities (Bagilhole, 2006) and by being more inclined than men to encourage their congregation to carry out social service programmes (Stewart-Thomas, 2010). In medicine, female doctors have been found to be more likely than men to espouse social values associated with calling, such as making a contribution to society (Hamberg & Johansson, 2009). Male doctors occupy a greater number of higher status roles and a larger number of positions in more ‘masculine’ specialties, such as surgery, compared with female doctors (Crompton & Lyonette, 2011); more female doctors than male, on the other hand, are found in the ‘caring’ specialties of psychiatry and paediatrics (Taylor, Lambert & Goldacre, 2009). Fulfilment of calling also appears to be gendered in feminised occupations, such as school teaching and nursing, where men have been shown to emphasise the masculine aspects of their job and are more likely to work in more ‘masculine’ specialisms, such as accident and emergency medicine (Simpson, 2004). Male nurses advance up organisational hierarchies more rapidly than women (Simpson, 2004) and dominate senior positions in organisations (Whittock, Edwards, McLaren & Robinson, 2002). The situation is similar in the teaching profession, where women are under-represented in promoted posts (Moreau, Osgood & Halsall, 2008), especially senior management positions (Devine, Grummell & Lynch, 2011); recent UK statistics show that, while just 38% of teachers in UK secondary schools are male, men hold 64% of headteacher posts (O’Conor, 2015).

There have been calls for studies to examine explicitly how the experience of calling may differ for men and women (e.g. Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007); however, much research to date has only used student samples to examine a potential association between calling and gender (e.g. Dik et al., 2012; Praskova, Creed & Hood, 2015). Most of these

studies have failed to find any such association; a very small number (e.g. Dik et al., 2012) have shown that female students are more likely to have a calling than male students. Little is therefore known about gender and calling in the context of the workplace.

Career success in a calling

In career theory, desirable outcomes that individuals seek to attain at work are conceptualised as career success, defined as ‘the positive psychological or work-related outcomes or achievements one accumulates as a result of work experiences’ (Seibert, Crant & Kraimer, 1999, p. 417). Career success has been shown to consist of both objective and subjective criteria. Objective success criteria are based on factors external to the person: traditionally, they have been seen to comprise pay and hierarchical status (Heslin, 2005). More recently, it has been shown that people may also value other kinds of objective outcomes from their career, for example, the achievement of factual contributions, such as performance and organisational influence, (Lee, Lirio, Karakas, MacDermid, Buck & Kossek, 2006; Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Dries, Pepermans & Carlier, 2008; Ituma, Simpson, Ovadje, Cornelius & Mordi, 2011) and validation by others through recognition of achievements (Sturges, 1999; Lee et al., 2006; Hennequin, 2007; Dries et al., 2008). Subjective success criteria are conceptualised as ‘reactions to the unfolding career’ (Heslin, 2005, p. 114) which are experienced internally. Research has shown that such criteria include career satisfaction, life satisfaction, personal fulfilment, enjoyment, self-development and work-life balance (Sturges, 1999; Heslin, 2005; Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Ituma et al., 2011). The two types of criteria are seen to be interrelated,

in that achievement of objective success may lead to feelings of subjective success and satisfaction with a career can over time lead to greater objective success (Abele & Spurk, 2009; Arthur et al., 2005).

Previous research has established important differences between men and women's conceptualisations of success: men have been shown to focus more on objective success criteria whereas subjective success criteria seem to be more important to women (Parker & Chusmir, 1992; Sturges, 1999; Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Ituma et al., 2011). A fundamental reason for such differences is that the success criteria that women and men use are influenced by gender norms and gendered organisational practices regarding promotion, reward and recognition (Maier, 1999; Ridgeway, 2009). Women often achieve less objective success than men in organisations: they tend to earn less (Magnusson, 2016) and commonly occupy lower status roles in organisations (Crompton & Lyonette, 2011). They are therefore likely to adjust their own success criteria to match what they believe is acceptable and achievable.

Since calling is characterised by intrinsic motivation and a desire for personal fulfilment, it has been suggested that people with a calling will conceptualise career success principally in terms of psychological, rather than material, success (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Heslin, 2005; Mize Smith, Arendt, Lahman, Settle & Duff, 2006; Praskova et al. 2014). This has led some to argue that calling represents the 'ultimate form of subjective career success' (Hirschi, 2011, p. 60). However, the view that subjective criteria are central to meanings of career success for people with a calling does not take into account the issue of gender. If many callings occur in masculinised occupations, and the way in which women and men pursue their calling is gendered, then

how they define career success for themselves may also be expected to be influenced by gender norms and gendered organisational practices. While a very small number of studies have linked presence of a calling to the subjective success criteria of career satisfaction (Zhang, Hirschi, Herrmann, Wei & Zhang, 2015) and life satisfaction (Praskova et al., 2015), to date there has been limited empirical investigation of what career success may mean to women and men with a calling.

This article aims to address the following research questions:

1. How do male and female ministers of religion conceptualise the kind of career success that they seek to achieve?
2. What similarities and differences are there between male and female ministers in terms of how they conceptualise what career success means to them?
3. How does the gendered context of the Church of England influence how male and female ministers conceptualise what career success means to them?

Method

As discussed in the introduction, the research was conducted using a sample of Church of England ministers of religion. Religious ministry was seen as an interesting setting for the study, since ministers have a distinctive calling, a religious vocation to serve God. The Church of England employs 8,000 full-time paid and 2,800 unpaid ministers, working in 42 dioceses (Archbishops' Council, 2016). Dioceses operate as regional, administrative units; each diocese is responsible for different aspects of the Church's work, including selecting candidates for ordination and fostering ministerial development. In this article, ministers who are in full-time stipendiary (paid) posts are

studied, since their careers might be expected to be similar to those of people working in other paid occupations where callings are likely to occur. Most stipendiary ministers work in parishes, where they are responsible for ministering to and running one or more churches. The main activities that stipendiary ministry involves are administration and organisation, leading church services, preaching and teaching, and engaging in the pastoral care of their parishioners (Conway et al., 2015). A career in the Church of England is distinguished by a lack of opportunity for hierarchical advancement, especially for women: at the top of the Church of England hierarchy there are 105 bishops, of whom only 22 are women, and 116 archdeacons, of whom 36 are women.

The research reported in this article was part of a larger study commissioned by the Church of England's Ministry Division to investigate contemporary ministerial careers. To fulfil their own requirements for this study, the Ministry Division wished to recruit similar numbers of male and female full-time, paid ministers running parishes in three dioceses that were representative of different contexts in which Church of England ministers work. Diocese A was an urban and rural diocese in the North of England; Diocese B was an urban diocese in the South of England and Diocese C was a rural diocese in the South of England. The recruitment of participants to take part in the research was carried out by the head of ministerial development in each diocese. Dioceses A and C arranged a timetable for their volunteers to be interviewed at their diocesan offices; diocese B passed on names of volunteers to the researcher, who arranged interviews with them either at their church or at the researcher's university. Since Diocese C only managed to recruit four participants, Diocese B was invited to recruit additional participants to increase the sample size. A final sample of 18 male and

17 female ministers was achieved. Their average age was 52, which reflects the age profile of full-time, paid Church of England ministers (Archbishops' Council, 2016). As ministers running parishes, they were all at a similar level in the Church of England hierarchy. Demographic details of the participants and their pseudonyms used for the study are shown in Table 1.

INSERT TABLE 1 AROUND HERE

A qualitative approach was taken to data gathering and analysis, since the exploratory research questions aimed to uncover the participants' own conceptualisations of what career success meant to them (Cassell & Symon, 1994). In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data: each interview covered the same specific areas of questioning, but allowed participants to 'shape their own narrative' (Arthur & Nazroo, 2003) and talk in depth about what career success meant to them on their own terms. The interviews included the following areas of questioning (but not necessarily in this order): 1) what were the most important aspects of the participants' working lives to them; 2) what did they hope to accomplish from their ministry; 3) what would it mean for their vocation to be fulfilled; 4) how would they sum up their achievements as a minister of religion; 5) at what points in their career had they felt most successful; 6) what did career success mean to them on their own terms. At appropriate points in the interviews, participants' responses were restated and summarised, to confirm the validity of the data.

Each research participant was interviewed for approximately one and a half hours. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. Data analysis followed the framework analysis approach recommended by Ritchie & Spencer (1994). Framework analysis involves five interconnected steps: 1. familiarisation with the data; 2. identifying a

thematic framework; 3. data indexing; 4. data charting; and 5. development of concepts and typologies through mapping and interpretation of data (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). The strength of this approach is that it offers an organised yet flexible approach to analysing qualitative data, providing a system for the researcher to compare and contrast data across as well as within individual cases (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid & Redwood, 2013). In order to analyse the data gathered in this study, the author first immersed themselves in the data in order to identify recurring themes relating to different kinds of career success criteria. Based on this familiarisation with the data, together with reference to relevant literature, an initial thematic framework based on career success criteria was derived. The thematic framework was modified, to accommodate new themes, as the data were indexed, which involved identifying what corresponded to a particular theme. Next, the indexed data were charted, that is, were positioned in the thematic framework. This allowed the salience and relevance of career success criteria mentioned to be examined and links between different themes and categories to be explored. Finally, career success criteria were integrated and interpreted in order to develop a typology of conceptualisations of career success. The analytical process did not follow these stages in a wholly linear fashion but was more iterative. As the thematic framework was being developed, it was compared with relevant literature, to enable further clarification, prompt insights and strengthen the reliability of the findings (Eisenhardt, 1989). Interview data were constantly reviewed during the analysis process to confirm the salience and integrity of emerging themes and definitions, as well as explore potential contradictions in the data.

Findings

Five conceptualisations of career success were identified by the data analysis – leading, ministering, evangelising, influencing and balancing work and family. Each conceptualisation was based on a distinctive combination of success criteria. It is interesting to note that there was commonality in some of the categories of criteria that were central to the five conceptualisations: some form of impact was a success criterion in all of the conceptualisations, except for balancing work and family; recognition of some kind was a success criterion for three of the conceptualisations, leading, ministering and influencing. Nevertheless, within these general categories of impact and recognition, the specific forms of impact and recognition identified as part of each conceptualisation were highly distinctive. Focusing on such distinctions is important for highlighting the differences between female and male ministers in terms of the kind of career success that they espoused. Women were less inclined than men to value define their own success in terms of leading, and were more likely than men to define their own success in terms of ministering and influencing. This is discussed in detail in the following sections and supported by the examples given in Table 2. Table 2 presents the five conceptualisations, together with descriptions of criteria on which they are based, illustrative examples and the names of participants who subscribed to each conceptualisation. As Table 2 shows, all but four of the participants subscribed to one of the conceptualisations of career success identified.

INSERT TABLE 2 AROUND HERE

Leading

For nine men and one woman, career success meant successfully leading their own parish. Making an impact on the organisation of the parish that they ran - in terms of leading change, introducing new management structures and increasing the congregation size – was central to their conceptualisation of career success. Crucially, members of this group attributed this kind of successful change and parish growth to their leadership:

‘The church is growing quite significantly – it’s more than doubled in size. It’s had a huge number of changes...they have been negotiated in such a way that no one has left and the church is happy about it. And (the parishioners’) perspective is that this was to do with the way that I’d led the church.’ (Tim)

Members of this group talked about how they led their parish using terminology borrowed from the world of business: running a parish posed ‘a managerial challenge’, which required ‘reform’, ‘planning’ and ‘organising’; it involved them formulating ‘vision statements’, implementing ‘strategies’ and ‘a hierarchy of objectives’. In line with this managerialist approach, getting recognition of their achievements in their parish through positive feedback was a second important success criterion, ‘a good kind of barometer of success’, because it helped to affirm the successful performance that their leadership had achieved. Members of this group also defined their career success in terms of building effective organisational relationships within their parish, because this helped them to lead the implementation of their parish strategies and projects effectively. As such, being a parish minister was described in masculine language, ‘like carrying the captain’s armband on the football pitch...you’re trying to lead a group of people’, ‘a volunteer army’. Therefore, while leading could mean collaboration and ‘bringing about

consensus', especially to Tina, the one woman in this group, more often it was described in more autocratic terms:

'In order to do a change of this nature, I've actually had to be fairly organised and of course that doesn't suit everybody... I encourage people to develop ideas and for themselves, but when you're going through a transition, sometimes you've just got to say, this is what we're going to do.' (Robert)

Tim, who ran a large, well-attended church, linked his focus on career outcomes associated with leading to what he saw as his personal talents, 'using the gifts that you've got'. This belief that ministers sought career outcomes which reflected their personal competences was not supported by the female participants' accounts of what had shaped their careers. They described their career development as being framed not by their 'gifts' but by the gendered context of the Church of England in which their careers unfolded. Large, well-resourced parishes and churches were generally seen to be the preserve of male ministers: one woman, Fay, who had been appointed to run such a parish, admitted that she was 'surprised to be offered it'. This gendered context, where women had fewer opportunities to take on large, flourishing parishes and experienced persistent prejudice, made success in terms of leading a parish much more difficult for female ministers to achieve.

Ministering

For a group of six women and three men, career success was conceptualised in terms of ministering, caring for and helping members of their church congregation and the wider community in their parish. The most important success criterion for this group was having an impact through making a difference to peoples' lives. There were two

ways in which they tried to make a difference, through pastoral work and through empowering other people to achieve their own success. Pastorally, making a difference to individuals' lives involved giving support to people at difficult times of their life, such as bereavement, or helping those in need. Here, Olga describes how making a difference to someone's life made her feel:

‘Recently, I’ve been working with someone who... she’s very elderly and frail and she needs an operation which is quite dangerous and I, through the course of talking with her, she’s finally come to the conclusion that the quality of the life she has matters more than just having life, being alive, and so she decided to go for this operation and if she died having it, that would be okay, and I think that’s a big and very brave moment to come to... I think those are sort of wow moments really.’

Helping other people to achieve their own success involved empowering individuals to realise their potential, ‘to spread their wings’ and take on new responsibilities, such as leading church worship or running voluntary church groups. This was often seen to involve the ‘unlocking’ of talents of those who might previously have been considered to be low achievers:

‘Just the way that she's grown in the last four or five years has been brilliant, just to watch her blossom has been absolutely brilliant.’ (Penny)

Sometimes, members of this group wanted to extend the impact they had on individuals' lives to making a difference to the whole of their parish area because ‘that transformation that we work towards in the human heart on an individual basis is very apparently needed in the whole community’. They did this through engagement in activities such as working with local schools, running after-school clubs and establishing

street pastor schemes. Participants who saw career success as ministering did not actively seek recognition for the support that they gave others; however, when the people that they helped showed their appreciation by saying thank you in writing or words, this contributed to their feelings of success.

Conceptualising career success as ministering might be considered consistent with the 'feminine' values of a religious calling, for example, serving others through pastoral care. However, it also reflects longstanding, gendered expectations that women ministers' 'gifts' make them better suited to pastoral ministries (Bagihole, 2006). It is interesting to note that two of the three men in this group discussed how their approach to enacting their calling had been shaped by their own experience of poverty and deprivation in their childhood, when the church had supported families like theirs. Henry's ministry had been devoted to helping disadvantaged young people, in the way that the church helped his father after his mother left the family:

'They put themselves out for us, they cared for us; one curate came and visited my dad every week...and I suppose it was seeing people behave like that... it was inspiring.'

Some participants' conceptualisations of career success could not be categorised either as leading or as ministering: three women, Linda, Anna and Una, defined their own career success in terms of both leading and ministering. While leading was important to these women, they did not believe that this would make them feel successful unless they were also making a difference to peoples' lives.

Evangelising

Five ministers, two women and three men, conceptualised career success as evangelising, bringing people to the Christian faith. An important criterion of success for members of this group therefore was impact on church attendance, ‘getting bums on pews’ and increasing the number of people who attended church services. This criterion differed from the kind of impact on parish organisation that those who conceptualised career success as leading sought to make, in that it was limited to growing the congregation. Furthermore, all the members of the evangelising group also deemed congregation size on its own to be a less significant criterion of their success than drawing people in from the ‘fringes’ to experience a stronger Christian faith and become more involved in the church:

‘I think it’s seeing fruit... You can grow an apple tree, and it can be an absolutely wonderful tree, a big tree, and lovely green leaves and that’s great and a lot of people would say, isn’t that a brilliant tree. But if it’s an apple tree, unless it’s got any apples on it, then no it isn’t.’ (Nick)

Deepening the faith both of newcomers to their church or of those who already attended was therefore the principal criterion of career success for members of this group. While this ‘inchoate growth in faith’ was deemed ‘much harder to evaluate’, ministers believed that they were able to observe it. Members of this group also sought to make a difference to peoples’ lives through pastoral care but, unlike those who conceptualised career success as ministering, they viewed helping people as a means to an end: through pastoral care and assistance, they aspired to develop the faith of those whom they helped:

‘I think the pastoral thing for me is more than a kind of sticking plaster, it’s wanting to help people to see how God is working through all the different things that are going on in their lives.’ (Carl)

Influencing

Four women conceptualised career success as being able to have an influence on the Church of England at a national or regional level. Their chief criterion for success was therefore making an impact on the institution’s policy and practice.

‘So, success is being involved in the bigger decisions, so being involved in the strategy, being involved in the... I think for me success is, in a nutshell, being asked to be part of ‘key thinking’...this whole thing about influence is very, very important to me.’ (Diane)

The members of this group were distinctive, in that they had all been ordained in mid-career after working at a senior level in other professional occupations. Behind their desire for influence was a belief that the Church of England needed to change, to ‘go forward and be stronger, be more accessible, more relevant’; members of this group wanted to be involved ‘in moving aspects of our church along’ and helping to change its culture, ‘breaking down some of the power claptrap, punching balloons and being more human’.

A crucial means to achieving influence and helping to bring about change was seen to be membership of important committees and boards, such as the Church of England’s governing body, the National Synod. To believe that they had a meaningful influence on the Church of England, members of this group sought recognition of their contribution (or potential to contribute) by senior ministers in the Church of England,

such as Archdeacons and Bishops. This was therefore another important criterion in their conceptualisation of career success. They likewise saw hierarchical advancement as a criterion for career success, since moving into a more senior role in the Church of England would put them in a position where they could have greater influence on the organisation:

‘Well we’re all trained not to think of it as terms of career and so the default button you press when someone asks you is ‘oh, well I just go where the Lord leads me’, but I don’t really think like that if I’m truthful.’ (Ellen)

Conceptualising career success as influencing seems to represent another response to the gendered context in which women ministers’ careers develop. In seeking success in terms of influence and impact, the members of this group wanted to achieve power in the Church of England outside the gendered parish environment, thereby circumventing the prejudice and career barriers that this could present. Furthermore, their concept of influence involved changing the Church of England, modernising and ‘moving the Church’ forward, changing its culture, its behaviour and its attitudes to women.

Balancing work and family

For three of the ministers, two men and one woman, career success was conceptualised as being able to achieve a balance between their work as a minister and the rest of their life. For members of this group, the importance of achieving work-life balance overrode the value placed on any other success criteria, such as having an impact on a parish or making a difference in peoples’ lives, in their conceptualisation of career success. The chief criterion for career success used by members of this group, therefore, was that they did not sacrifice their personal and family life for their ministry:

‘If I got through my ministry without any great damage to my health or my family’s health...that’s where I suppose my definition of success is’. (Brian)

This conceptualisation of career success reflects an awareness that the consuming nature of religious calling can have negative, as well as positive effects (Clinton, Conway & Sturges, 2017). Achieving a balance between ministerial work and life outside work was not seen to be easy to achieve. Ministerial work could easily absorb all a person’s time, so it was very difficult to know when to stop working and where to draw a line between work and life outside work. The sacrifice that a calling demanded was exacerbated by the fact that parishioners were seen to have ‘no concept that you may have life outside the parish’. This kind of success was therefore often assessed in small achievements:

‘I think at the moment my success criterion would be how I personally am performing each week in terms of have I have I been able to have my rest day... it’s about getting that right balance of work and life’. (Mary)

One participant, John, did not align with any of the five conceptualisations of career success. Instead he defined his own career success purely in terms of a single criterion, personal fulfilment, ‘a sense of fulfilment, in the sense that you’re called to something, you are in a relationship with God that you seek to respond to’. The fact that just one participant defined career success in this way is perhaps surprising, as the literature (e.g. Hall & Chandler, 2005) suggests that people with a calling, such as ministers of religion, will experience career success subjectively as personal fulfilment. Indeed, many of the success criteria that comprise the ministers’ conceptualisations of career success, for example, factual contributions such as impact on parish organisation

and making a difference to people's lives, and validation by other people, such as recognition of parish achievements and recognition of contribution to the Church of England, might be considered to be external, objective criteria for success (Dries et al., 2008); only two success criteria identified, sacrificing family for work and personal fulfilment, might be considered to be subjective, that is experienced internally. Table 2 illustrates how important criteria were to all but one of five conceptualisations of career success, balancing work and family.

Discussion

The aim of the research reported in this article was to investigate how people with a calling to be a minister of religion conceptualised their own career success, that is, what 'desirable work-related outcomes' (Arthur et al., 2005) they sought to accomplish in their career. In doing so, it addressed a specific gap in the calling literature: while there is a growing body of research on calling that explores links between calling and career development early in the career (e.g. Hirschi, 2011; Sturges, 2019), little is known about how a calling is pursued in a career. A gender lens is used to address this issue, since there is good reason to expect that the career outcomes that women and men seek from their calling will be gendered (Gherardi, 1995; Greene & Robbins, 2015; Crompton & Lyonette, 2011; Pringle et al., 2017).

The article contributes to the calling literature in three ways. The article's first contribution is to show that people with the same calling can value and pursue quite different career outcomes, investigated in this article in terms of how they conceptualised career success for themselves: the findings identified a total of five different

conceptualisations of career success amongst the sample of ministers that participated in the research. Each conceptualisation was based on a distinctive set of success criteria. While there was commonality in some of the categories of criteria, such as impact and recognition, different and specific forms of impact and recognition were identified as part of the different conceptualisations. This confirms the conclusion drawn by a small number of previous studies, that what appears to be the same calling can in fact be performed in multiple ways (Schabram & Maitlis, 2017; Duffy, Foley, Raque-Bodgan, Reid-Marks, Dik, Castano & Adams, 2012). There may be a number of explanations for dissimilarity in the career outcomes of a particular calling, for example, challenges individuals may face in trying to pursue it (Schabram & Maitlis, 2017; Cohen et al., 2018). The research findings presented here suggest that gender is an important factor that influences variation in how callings are enacted. While two conceptualisations of career success, evangelising and balancing work and family, were endorsed by equal but small numbers of male and female ministers, more men than women defined career success purely in terms of leading, whereas women were more inclined than men to conceptualise their own success in terms of ministering and influencing.

The article's second, and chief, contribution, therefore, is to confirm that calling is not a gender-neutral construct, but that many callings are pursued in a manner that reflects the gendered work context in which they are enacted, despite the feminine work values associated with calling (Clarke & Knights, 2018). Men were more likely to value making an impact on the organisation of their parish and getting recognition of this achievement; women were more inclined to value making a difference to people's lives through pastoral work or wanted to achieve an influence over how the Church of England

was run. Many male and female ministers thus conceptualised their own career success in a fashion that reflects the continuing power and status of men in the Church of England (Bagilhole, 2003; Greene & Robbins, 2015), a context where men have traditionally been seen to have ‘gifts’ that make them good leaders, women have been viewed as better suited to looking after parishioners, and where a change in this situation is seen as overdue (Bagilhole, 2006). The gendered context of the Church of England is not dissimilar to that of other masculinised professions, such as medicine, to which people might also be expected to experience a calling; the pursuit of such callings and the career outcomes that men and women seek from them might be therefore expected to be gendered in a similar way (Taylor et al., 2009; Hamberg & Johansson, 2009). Indeed, the gendering of calling may not be limited to masculinised contexts: men also dominate senior positions in callings in more feminised occupations, such as nursing and teaching, (e.g. O’Conor, 2015), which suggests that the pursuit of a calling in such contexts may also be similarly gendered; research is needed to explore this further.

The article’s third contribution is to clarify what career success in a calling means. Previously, it has been suggested that subjective success criteria, especially personal fulfilment, will matter most to people with a calling (Hirschi, 2011; Praskova et al., 2014). Our findings rather surprisingly show that subjective success criteria were not central to most participants’ conceptualisations of career success. On the contrary, as summarised in Table 2, most of the criteria that the clergy draw on in their definitions of career success are based on factors external to them and, as such, may best described as objective (Heslin, 2005). While clearly specific to the church context, criteria such as impact on a parish, impact through making a difference to people’s lives, and impact on

Church of England policy and practice might be considered to be forms of objective, external contribution similar to factors such as influence and making a contribution, identified in previous studies of career success (Heslin, 2005; Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Dries et al., 2008; Ituma et al., 2011). Likewise, criteria such as recognition of parish achievements, recognition of personal support provided and recognition of contribution to the Church of England are comparable with forms of objective, external validation by others, expressed as recognition and appreciation, identified in earlier career success research (Dyke & Murphy, 2006; Lee et al., 2006; Hennequin, 2007; Dries et al., 2008). One explanation for this unexpected finding may be that it reflects the close, reciprocal relationship between objective and subjective career success identified in previous studies (e.g. Abele & Spurk, 2009). As proposed in Hall and Chandler's calling model of career success, the achievement of objective success in a career may be a necessary precursor to experiencing in the longer term the kind of subjective 'psychological' success associated with calling (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Peyton & Gattrell, 2013; Green & Robbins). Again, it is important to note that the same objective success criteria were not always valued by men and women. Some objective success criteria, such as impact on parish organisation and recognition of parish achievements, were more likely to be valued by men than women; others, such as impact through making a difference to peoples' lives, impact on the Church of England's policy and practice and recognition of personal support provided, were more important to women than men. This reflects the gendered work context of the Church of England, where women ministers' careers are constrained by a 'stained glass' ceiling and their experiences as ministers are still shaped by prejudice and

lack of power in the church (Peyton & Gatrell, 2013; Greene & Robbins, 2015; Dean & Greene, 2017).

The findings reported in this article are subject to limitations that result from the study design and the data gathered. The research was conducted in one organisation, whose members have a distinctive, divine calling, to be a minister of religion. Ministerial work and careers are unique, as is the Church of England context. Further research in different contexts, using different methods, is therefore needed to explore the gendered nature of calling further. Future studies should explore different kinds of callings, in feminised professions where callings might be expected to occur, such as nursing, in other typically masculine professions characterised by calling, such as medicine, and in areas of work where some people experience a calling but others may not (Duffy & Dik, 2013). They should also examine whether and how conceptualisations of career success may change with age and in a career.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the practical implications of the findings. A calling has been shown to be associated with positive career benefits, such as greater levels of work and career satisfaction, personal fulfilment and well-being (Duffy & Dik, 2013). If women potentially are unable to pursue their calling in the same way as men because of a gendered work context, it is possible that they may not experience these positive outcomes to the same extent as men. It also means that their organisation is not maximising its human resources. It is important, therefore, that the potentially gendered nature of organisational practices, such as recruitment, selection and promotion systems, that may discriminate against women is acknowledged and addressed in traditionally masculinised organisations. Informal barriers, such as prejudice, stereotyping and lack of

support also need to be eroded through training and development. This is necessary to ensure both that women and men are to enjoy the potential benefits of a calling equally and that organisations can unlock the full range of talents available to them. It is not satisfactory for either party that such inequity is tolerated on the basis that they are part of the sacrifice required to pursue a calling (Greene & Robbins, 2015).

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Table 1: Research participants

Name	Diocese	Age	Children under 18
Anna	A	41	
Barbara	A	49	
Cathy	A	52	x
Diane	A	57	
Ellen	A	41	
Mary	B	34	
Nina	B	35	
Fay	A	55	
Gill	A	53	
Helen	A	45	
Isabel	A	50	
Olga	B	52	x
Penny	B	56	
Karen	A	63	
Linda	A	62	
Tina	C	65	
Una	C	63	
John	B	47	x
Ken	B	48	
Arthur	A	33	x
Brian	A	36	x
Carl	A	37	x
Luke	B	47	
Mark	B	51	x
Daniel	A	40	x
Edward	A	48	x
Frank	A	57	
Tim	A	51	
Nick	B	65	
Owen	B	65	
Paul	C	62	
Robert	A	65	
Gordon	A	65	
Henry	A	64	
Ian	A	65	x

Table 2: Research participants' conceptualisations of career success

Conceptualisation of career success	Pseudonym	Success criteria	Illustrations
Leading	Tina Arthur Luke Mark Daniel Edward Frank Tim Robert Ian Linda Anna Una	Impact on parish organisation (objective)	'Virtually every aspect of church life has had to be looked at and modified because some things weren't working, some things were just very old fashioned, and things needed to change...someone made a list of new activities or things that have happened in the last ten years, and there were 73.' (Tim)
		Building effective organisational relationships (objective)	'We've got quite a disparate group of people in the parish...just to get them working together...that's where I would see success, bringing about a sense of consensus and some kind of united purpose.' (Luke)
		Recognition of parish achievements (objective)	The congregation's opinions matter to me, are a success criteria. (Mark)
Ministering	Nina Gill	Impact through making a difference	'I think for me it revolves around

	<p>Isabel Olga Penny Karen Owen Paul Henry</p> <p>Linda Anna Una</p>	<p>to peoples' lives (objective)</p> <p>Recognition of personal support provided (objective)</p>	<p>people...at quite serious stages of their life...the time I took a funeral for teenager...the time, I just helped somebody in a really, really difficult pastoral situation. (Isabel)</p> <p>'...I came in and opened the envelope and it was a thank you note from a lady to say thank you for way in which you conducted the funeral service of her husband... things like that...it's when people say thank you...it's a recognition that they value you. (Gill)</p>
Evangelising	<p>Fay Helen Carl Nick Gordon</p>	<p>Impact on church attendance (objective)</p> <p>Deepening parishioners' faith (objective)</p>	<p>'I think growth is one of the key sorts of areas for me, that's growth numerically, the church growing. (Carl)</p> <p>'When you see people having a relationship with God that is developing...seeing people grow and develop in their faith with God. (Helen)</p>
Influencing	<p>Barbara Cathy Diane Ellen</p>	<p>Impact on Church of England's policy and practice (objective)</p>	<p>I'm now on General Synod...I am very capable and intellectual and</p>

		<p>Recognition of contribution to C of E. institution (objective)</p> <p>Advancement (objective)</p>	<p>articulate and I need a place to put that... to contribute at that level, I love contributing at this level...I need to contribute at that level...so that's really important. (Cathy)</p> <p>'...that I am taken very seriously by the hierarchy in the diocese, by the senior staff team, particularly by the bishop, who thinks I'm marvellous.' (Ellen)</p> <p>'Maybe I was in a position of seniority then that would give me the ability to have more impact in terms of the things that I feel are important. (Cathy)</p>
Balancing work and family	Mary Brian Ken	Not sacrificing family for work (subjective)	The danger of my job is that everyone gets the best of me, but my wife and my children don't. And that's wrong to me... that's where I suppose the definition of success is, that I find that balance, so that both of those things happen. So that I actually find the time and the energy and the resources for

			my own family and my own ... but also find the time, the energy and the resources for the stuff that comes with ministry. (Brian)
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