Women teachers and policemen: different career transition paths to becoming lawyers

Edgar Burns[1]

Abstract

Within a larger study of career transition to law, a number of individuals were identified as having come from two occupational clusters, policing and teaching. These interviewee occupations were for the most part each composed of one gender only - policemen and women teachers. These two groups are compared here across a series of points that illustrate ways that gender discourses both constitute and reflect social reproduction even within processes of social change. Aspects of personal experiences of these career changes that are briefly explored in this discussion include: origins of the two groups in terms of social class and education; gender and recent historical change; the differing connections to law of these two groups; subdued narratives of police changing to the 'dark side' to become lawyers; and differing teaching career sequences, including family care, on the pathway towards transition into law; law school and beyond.

Keywords

Career transition, feminising professions, gender relations, lawyer, midcareer, policemen, sex segregation, women teachers

Introduction

Within a research project studying career transition into law, the presence of two distinct occupational groups, one masculine one feminine, raises the question: how does gender problematize and disturb neutral descriptions of career change? As Ibarra (2004: p. 11) has observed, 'all of us approach the possibility of career change with different motivations, different degrees of clarity, different constraints, different stakes, and different resources'. To say this, however, is not to believe each person's career transition is so individual and unique that it cannot be examined in comparison with

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[1] Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University, Australia, arxione@gmail.com

other transitions and career paths. Rather, it points to the need for caution about grand theories or too-wide generalisations across cultures and even within individual societies. Nevertheless, there is still ample space for research, theorising and interpretation of workforce patterns, discourses and contemporary changes.

This article compares interview accounts by *women* teachers and police*men* describing their career shifts to become lawyers part way through their adult lives. It does not discuss school/university-to-work transitions (Hodkinson, 1998) except in relation to these later career shifts. Nor is the school/university transition into *law* the focus (Costello, 2005; Schleef, 2006). The discussion here explores accounts of professionals previously employed in teaching or law enforcement sectors for greater or lesser periods of time. These two occupational groups of people, one feminine, one masculine, were identified amongst a variety of other occupations within an interview research programme, and provide contrasting windows into the process of career transition into law.

How and why these two contrasting gendered groups came to make the transition to law are thus questions that face two ways. On the one hand the experiences of these individuals contribute to a larger picture of contemporary career transition that varies internationally. At the same time, the details of career transition inscribed in these two groups, and the contrasts discernible in their feminine-masculine differences localises and particularises macro-theories of career and career change. This helps avoid projection from the experience of one national context onto different structural and cultural configurations of other national communities, with less than ideal correspondence (Burns, 2008).

Career theorising

Mid-twentieth century career development and transition theories were commonly derived from social science disciplines such as education, psychology and subsequently management. These theories often continued/continue to exercise important influence in career development fields long after social and cultural theory domains had discounted them or the assumptions implicit in them. Super's model of 'planful' career stages emphasised specific developmental stages of career (Super, 1953; 1957) and relied too heavily on educational child developmental theory. This approach also reflected the United States' career environment in large organisations as well as implicitly gendered cultural beliefs about the importance of career as evidence of personal efficacy at that point in American national history. Holland's (1959) approach stressed the centrality of half a dozen job-related personality traits, locating career change within the individual, rather than contextual elements. Neither of these models originally incorporated social class, race or gender in their formulations, ignoring the power of such discursive and structural framing of career opportunity. Constant revision has not satisfactorily rescued these models. Sociology of professions theory long ago moved on from such uncritical use of functionalist trait theory (Freidson, 1970; Johnson, 1972).

A stream of more recent management theory following Louis' (1980) attempt to establish career transition typologies has also been of limited success. More productive from this period has been the processual approach, although still not without theoretical limitations in terms of its ahistorical treatment of career transitions. Key figures in this area are Bridges (1980) and Schlossberg (Goodman et al, 2006). Their models both continue to be useful analytical constructs in business and counselling settings through iterations from the original concepts, in offering interpretations of the sequence of steps by which individuals experience transition processes.

More recently, Ibarra (2004) consciously engages these previous ideas of 'planful' careers and the essentialising 'myth of the true self' to propose instead a model of career development and transition that recognises (1) a much more provisional 'test and learn' process, and (2) applies Markus and Nurius' (1986) idea that individuals have 'multiple selves' rather than just one (see Table, p. 39). This more layered or multi-level approach to explaining career transition fits better with other sociologically informed perspectives such as Willis (1977), Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) or Ezzy (1996). Engagement with issues of sense-making, cultural discourse, agency, identity and narrative, without retreating to a structuralist kind of sociological analysis, is of particular importance for theoretical advance in this field (Evetts, 1992; 1994).

Changing society

The background for all participants in this comparative study of occupational gender contexts is made up of these wider cultural practices and process of modernisation of paid employment and domestic roles for men and women, and ideas about what is late modernity. While Giddens (1990) offers a macro-scale vision of risk and reflexivity in high modernity, the more grounded reflexivity seen in Smith's (1999) analysis better integrates in gender terms the complex pressures of gender re-inscription in work and family life in naming processes of cultural reproduction in end-of-century gender relations.

Alvesson and Billing (2001: pp. 54-65) sketch a history of work in terms of gender hierarchy and separation constituted discursively and structurally. Bourdieu's notion of habitus provides an over-arching framework for considering how layered aspects of gender dispositions and practice, along with other elements in culture, fuse into wider multiple-gendered logics of personal and social practice (Bourdieu, 1990). However, the aim here is not to theorise these relations and societal processes more broadly but instead to draw on quite specific experiences of individuals to provide a contrast between two occupational groups. Their accounts implicitly, and at times self-consciously, address these larger societal processes of change. All of these individuals have made midcareer transitions into law, but the differently gendered contexts and expectations from which they come and into which they move constitute individually different career experiences for what on the surface may appear to be similar career transition processes.

Two contrasting historical-empirical processes can be seen embedded in the three occupations that form part of the discussion here. First, the theoretical focus in sociology of work and professions concerns the feminisation of the labour force, particularly professions, in ways that before the mid-twentieth century were barely conceivable (Adams, 2005: Carlin, 2007). Politically, this can be argued as part of the 'rise in egalitarian values and institutional reforms [as] a distinctive feature of modernity and postmodernity', as Charles and Grusky (2004: p. 3) do. Yet on the other hand these authors recognise the obvious diffusion of the 'triumph' of women's new participation in law and other professions. This triumph is not in fact as straight-forward as it first appears but is 'coupled with equally spectacular forms of resistance to equalization, especially within the workplace'. Patterson (2006) describes an Australian example of this in the legal profession.

Second, the corollary concept is that of gender segregation. All three of these occupational workforces have historically been highly gender segregated, including law, the goal and destination of these career transitioners from teaching and policing. Law was almost exclusively a male profession in these countries until recent decades. Specifically, in terms of the legal environment in Australia and New Zealand, participation of women as lawyers through the course of the twentieth century can be graphed, and divides into two distinct periods. From around 1900 to 1970 the percentage of women lawyers in both of these two nations moved from zero to about two per cent in New Zealand and six per cent in Australia. At around the 1960s-1970s period a 'hockey stick' inflection in the graph line shows an explosion in the number of women entering law, resulting in a straight line increase in proportion to over a third by the end of the century, and continuing upwards in the first decade of the twenty-first century past forty per cent towards nearly half of all lawyers. Although there is a greater attrition rate and part-time participation during their careers by women in relation to men because of taking on primary family care roles, women currently occupy about two thirds of law student places in university courses in these two countries (Patterson, 2006).

Theorising the professional career shifts of these women teachers and policemen thus constitutes a multi-conceptual problem: massive and continuing feminisation of the legal profession to which these participants are heading, modest re-gendering percentages in teaching and policing which, however, are still seen as proto-typically feminine and masculine occupations in the social imagination (Taylor, 2004). These occupationally gendered workforce stabilities – or is this resistance to change? – are nested within wider occupational and cultural changes occurring well beyond simply lawyers (Crompton and Lyonette, 2007). This means that both (1) changes within each of these occupations and between them and other occupations, as well as (2) the insignificant amount of gender change or limited amount of change - despite present-day formal occupational openness and equality - are important problems sociologically and economically.

Contrasting gendered workforces

Alvesson and Billing (1997: pp. 24) describe the insufficiency of imagining that recognising gender as a variable adequately theorises gender. 'Gender-as-a-variable' may simply be a re-inscription of essentialist gender binaries. Here, identifying two contrasting gendered occupations simply serves as a starting point to opening up more nuanced investigation of identity construction that encompasses complexity and contradiction in how gendering functions sociologically. As Halford, Saks and Witz (1997: pp. 190) found in their study of banking, nursing and local government professionals, 'These empirical findings certainly undermine any universalist assumptions about women and men, and seem to offer more in the way of highlighting the complexities and uncertainties of both women's and men's career narratives'. They then reiterate the importance of this new statement in relation to possible misunderstanding: 'However, and we must make this clear, we are not claiming that career narratives are ungendered'. Differentiating gendered discourses and motivations from masculine or feminine behaviour is basic to the discussion.

Police forces have in the past been typically regarded as masculine occupational environments, though this has begun to change in recent years. Teachers, especially at pre-school and primary school levels in Australia and New Zealand are predominantly women. At secondary school level this is much more evenly mixed between men and women, though women still outnumber men. The literature reflects the gendered configurations in each of these workforces. Police identity is central for Fitzsimmons (1998); Martin (1999) investigates the differences between police as a force and policing as a service using masculine-feminine categorisations; Moore (1999) describes police traits and identities in a 'masculine organization'; Miller et al (2003) push diversity in the police further than simply gender distinctions in examining straight/ non-straight identities.

Numerous studies of gendered dimensions of teaching institutions such as schools, unions, and training, have been produced in recent decades as part of second wave academic feminism that has named inequitable treatment in both financial and cultural senses in relying on inscribed gendered positioning of women teachers, alleged 'feminine' cultural characteristics, or analysing normative discourses about 'appropriate' roles or work (Weber and Mitchell, 1995). Whitehead (2003; 2007), for example, sketches developments in gendering the Australian teaching workforce through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Cooper et al. (1999) explore the experience of individual women educators in Australia, as recent gender changes in the educational sector continue to work though the age cohorts in the decades since these changes began to be seen in the Australian and New Zealand workplace. Over the course of the twentieth century Australian women's participation in the paid workforce overall has changed from twenty per cent to sixty (Baird, 2006: p. 44).

The distinctively gendered nature of these two occupations is merely the start of applying theoretical gender perspectives to the transition into law. The historical shift enabling women to enter previously male professions can be seen in the opening

findings citation below. Ongoing feminisation processes in the legal profession, are evident throughout the project interview data. But the countering processes of resistance and containment of feminine 'encroachment' and participation on this male preserve are much less open to observation. Nor does this account deal with parallel – and equally contradictory – processes of the feminisation and resistance in the two originating professional groups discussed here, teaching and policing.

Each professional group responds in both of these ways to the over-arching historic-cultural gender discursive shifts, and each of these groups respond in different ways specifically to one another in how these larger shifts are played out. Women teachers interact less with women colleagues in becoming lawyers, policemen may interact more with women colleagues than as policemen. It is more complicated that just seeing gender shift moving up the age cohorts. This discussion traces a small part of the complexity of such change by reporting on differently gendered experiences of what is from one external perspective a career shift into law for all of them. The process of career transition itself can be traced in learning about what it means to the participants and others, and identifying key silences in the narratives of these events.

Research method

The research procedure can be briefly outlined as follows. Fifty-three interviews were conducted as part of a mixed-methods research strategy investigating career transition into law. These semi-structured interviews provided approximately hour-length conversations recounting each individual's career and other life-course experiences and observations/reflections at their present stage in life. Three selection parameters guided a purposive snowball sampling procedure Babbie (2004: pp. 183-184). Participants were drawn (1) in approximately equal numbers between men and women, (2) between Australia and New Zealand, and (3) a mixture of mostly urban but some regional city participants as well. The group of ten women teachers was slightly older at an average of fifty-eight years of age (ranging 45-65 years), while the six police men averaged fifty-two years of age (ranging 47-62 years).

The present article draws information from this rich body of narrative data from members of these two groups within the overall study population. The six men interviewees were all members of the New Zealand police force; one other policewoman was interviewed. The cluster of ten women teachers was split half and half between Victoria, Australia and New Zealand; one other male teacher formed part of the larger interview population. The subject of gender did not form an explicit part of the written semi-structured questions on which the interviews were based. Each conversation began with an invitation for interviewees to describe what they did when they left school, and over the course of the conversations steps, stages and experiences were explored as well as interpretive and evaluative comments on life in general and individuals' career paths leading to their transitioning to law.

Research findings

The six sections below do not attempt to explore the overall dynamics of career transition into law. Rather, the discussion is restricted to points of comparison for these two groups' career paths and entry into becoming lawyers. The deeply implicated and interleaved nature of gendering well beyond enumerating the masculine and feminine occupational personnel of these two groups is a constant theme in the following discussion sections. First, comparison of the groups in terms of social class and educational factors in their careers and career change process is made. Second, these experiences are positioned within a gendered historical context. A third section provides a brief exploration of how the two groups are connected to law in order to assist understanding how becoming a lawyer fits with what C. Wright Mills (1943) would call their 'vocabularies of possibility'. Fourth, other interesting contrasts are found in the prevailing discourses in the wider culture that penetrate the work sector in which these men and women find themselves. Section five sketches contrasting organisational and career sequences for these two groups. Sixth, a final section briefly considers what kind of law career sequence is unfolding for these career transition lawyers.

Social class and education

Overall, the group of women teachers had a greater proportion of professional backgrounds than the policemen. Their range of occupational backgrounds of immediate parents and grandparents went from someone with both parents being medical doctors, or from business or farming families, through to having a factory manager father and home-maker mother neither of whom had much education. This group represents a transitional generation of women moving out from occupying traditionally feminine professions such as teaching, social work and nursing. Some of their battles against being discounted, denied seniority, or being paid less than men, are also paralleled in experiences of other women undertaking law. Today as contemporary social expectations continue to change and women are involved in many professions and tertiary education, the gendered landscape of professional careers is permanently different.

> My last year at school was 1970, and I thought I wanted to be a lawyer but I was convinced not to by my father. He was a doctor and my mother was a doctor, so they were used to professional women, but I think he felt that the culture of the legal profession at the time was very male, that I would have very few career prospects.

Another example of a woman teacher's professional family background:

> I've tried both my parent's professions. Though when I first left school, I went into teaching, I didn't last very long. I did nursing longer, eight to ten months I tried as a nurse. And then I dropped out.

This woman went on to complete an arts degree, then started a law degree but let it go after receiving a job offer that led her into a career of academic teaching.

The men by contrast, with one exception whose father was an accountant, and who started at law school as a young man before dropping out, tended to come from working class families without previous educational backgrounds. Inquiring into wider family origins further largely confirmed this, although in one instance a window-design father had come from wealthy farming family the generation before. Another man said:

> I left school with only one aim, and that was to join the army. To be a soldier - and that's what I did. ... I didn't have the attitude at the time. ... I came from a lower decile high school. And I wasn't guided very well, in my younger days, when you look at what's happening today. There was no guidance, so and I wasn't encouraged a lot. So I was quite lazy. I did what I needed to do, and I still do! (laughter). I did what I needed to do to get in the army. So I didn't concentrate on getting high marks or anything like that. I needed three years in secondary school, so that's what I did. I left school as soon as I could. I worked, bummed around, doing odd jobs until ... I was old enough to join up, and then joined, at the youngest age, seventeen and a half. I had my eighteenth birthday on my basic [training course].

Another description by a policeman of his family background:

> I'd left school at the earliest time, halfway through the fifth form. (Question: so education wasn't a thing at home?) No, there was no incentive at home. ...we were a very poor working class family. Ten kids. And I'm the only university graduate, even now. And that's just the way it is. All my brothers and sisters are basically intelligent people, um, but there was never an incentive to go on and do education. (Question: it's not what the family thought of as the next step?) No, they were just working people. You got on with earning a dollar. And that was it. They didn't have that concept of higher education, and advancing in that sense, but came from working stock, and that was how they thought.

In summary then, with some over-generalisation since there are examples of the opposite, these two groups, were made up respectively of professional women and unqualified men, from these historically gender-segregated occupational groups. Nevertheless, members of both groups described having investigated or desired a variety of career choices. For these younger women in their initial career choices their options were predominantly, though again not exclusively, a repertoire of female-gendered professions, even while at the same time new opportunities were being discussed in some schools and media and by careers advisors. However, some parents, of both sexes, expressed the view that education of a girl was a 'waste of time', and focus should instead be on getting married.

Gender and historical change

The simple numerical calculation from the data of the average age and age-range of these two gendered occupational groups provides significant information about the 'ruling relations' of gender (Smith, 1999: pp. 73-95) at specific points in time in recent Australasian labour market history. Both these groups entered law in a period of change characteristic of the second half of the twentieth century and sharply different from cultural expectations and legal and regulatory structures in the first half of the century in these nations.

As was discussed in the earlier section about changing society, increased numbers of women entering law is an immense change worthy of study both as to its causes and the manifold consequences still being worked through today. It is equally important to investigate the 'donor' professions of teaching and policing in the same ways. Immediately such inquiry commences the apparent clarity of changed gender ratios disappears in the cultural complexity by which the historical changes have come about. The personal interactions in these accounts correspond to these macro-social meta-narratives of change but not necessarily in a linear fashion, and great caution in generalising beyond the individual and local contexts is necessary (Odih, 2007: pp. 87-97).

Thus, in the case of these women teachers, their initial young-adult career decisions, as was seen in the first example of the last section, were on the cusp of a fundamental shift in women's participation as lawyers. That young woman's situation was the personal expression of this wider socio-cultural shift occurring. Her father's advice, presumably in love and care, was based inductively on the earlier historical evidence, and hence his counsel against pursuing law. Her older self reflects that he was half right, but because he did not read the changes then happening he was also half wrong. Later she made her own decision to do law.

In the case of this group of policemen, on average about six years younger, the previous section outlined their gravitation towards policing as a typically masculine occupation for unqualified young men, but having something to offer them more than factory or unskilled work. Most of them, although not all of them, describe their career choices as more accidental than planned. In contrast to the women who describe at considerable length the battles they had in teaching, and to some extent continue to have even with their switch to law, the men undertaking law degree study did not have the same consistency of first-hand experience of gender protocols constructed against them.

Previously in a highly masculinised police force, and committed to the positive opportunity of embarking on study and a new phase of life, some of them construed the cultural reframing of gender equity relations as belittling if not hostile. At law school they could do little to define or constrain new and different prevailing gender rules.

> I did family law as a university paper. But too stressful [to practice family law] and I would get too emotionally involved in it, I think. So - I don't need the stress. ... It was very anti-male in the university. [Mentioned a woman professor] Yes. I just basically

gave her what she wanted, and moved on. It became clear pretty quickly that if you argued you weren't going to get anywhere. I wrote which she wanted, bit my tongue. Gave her what she wanted, got the mark. See you later. (Question: a certain pragmatism?) Yes, there was. You had to figure that one out pretty quickly. There were a couple of guys in our class that tried to fight, and you could see them losing big-time. They were never going to win, and I don't think they passed either, from memory.

Thus the pressure of a changing political and professional environment, the presence of large numbers of women, and ongoing research newly examining gender inequality, made for a confrontation with previously held values. Another interviewee who specifically avowed conservative and traditional values described his experience in a different city school as 'law school is pretty 'Left'' relative to his own stance on most social issues.

It is worth noting that today a further change appears to be occurring with evidence of numbers of young, newly qualified lawyers applying to become police. This new trend may be the harbinger of further changes in police professionalization. Although too early to fully assess, it is worthy of further research. The 1960's saw a proliferation of courses in United States' colleges and universities in what was then anticipated to be a surge in police professionalization, but this represents a different kind of professional positioning.

Connection to law: daily versus rarely

Whereas half of these women wanted to do law originally, only one of the men did. It is possible to frame the career transition data gathered about the contact point these people had with law, lawyers, or the legal sector, in terms of the concept of propinquity. This term, meaning nearness or proximity, has been used in anthropology and sociology for over a hundred years. It originally referred to nearness of relationship in kinship groups, and also received considerable use referring to literal closeness of urban residence and the effect on friendship and marriage rates, before being gradually extended (Marvin, 1918; Calhoun, 2007). Here the idea of occupational propinquity describes the career path of the men into law, but a different kind of propinquity applies to the women. For these policemen law and lawyers and legal institutions, their own included, were everyday components of their career. From one vantage point they knew a lot about law. For these women teachers, law and lawyers were not part of their everyday world. None were married to lawyers, but some had lawyers in the family constellation.

A senior woman teacher described the process of seeking out a new career since returning from child-rearing to teaching as a reliever proved less than satisfactory. Having grown up and worked in Australia and New Zealand, she described her midcareer job options in terms of an experience that occurred while living for a period in the United States.

The other possibility [than doing Information Technology] was, we had got involved with some lawyers in [the US] with subdividing our property, and I thought they were hopeless. And I also got involved in negotiations when our property was sold - and I ran the negotiations. The real estate agents were hopeless. And I thought to myself, 'I think I can do as well as these lawyers that I'm hiring. And so why don't I investigate that. I might like it'.

In another example a deputy principal had been caught in a political controversy within a secondary school in a regional town, eventually having to take the school to the Employment Tribunal to force them to acknowledge improper treatment and pay compensation for their treatment of her. This experience, although a victory, caused her to return to a childhood inclination to take law as a career.

Having observed that the legal sector these policemen were already occupied in was an important factor in their choosing to do law, at least one of them made this career transition as part of his focus on accident investigations stemming originally from his brother's death in a vehicle many years earlier and his bother being blamed for that accident. Though not as personally central in the way the previous example threatened the woman deputy principal's career, the legal issues around the earlier event of misconstrued fatality linked this man to the performance and adequacy of legal process.

Here is another more typical policeman example. After outlining the earlier stages of his working life and police career, he says:

I then transferred to a Detective Sergeant's job. And I remained there for about three years. At that stage I decided it was time for me to have more challenges in life, because I'd arrested everyone, from being drunk in a public place, which was a defence under the Police Act 1927, right through to murders. I'd run a number of enquiries, including murder enquiries… So it was time for me to have a change. I was sick of the police as a career. I just wanted to do something different. I wanted to stay with the law. I liked the law and I wanted to learn more about it, so I decided I wanted to go to university. The police at that time weren't prepared to allow me to take study leave and do the degree. So I left.

In other situations police had the blessing of the hierarchy to study law, or they did it in their own time while continuing to work.

In summary, policemen's proximity to law and lawyers contrasts markedly with the intermittent connections for women teachers which was primarily through family members or acquaintances, or more singular salient events occurring in the course of their lives.

Policemen 'going to the dark side'

One matter was a big issue for police, but irrelevant for teachers. Police often colloquially expressed the essence of their job as 'putting the bad guys inside'. Thus, even stating the intention or possibility of becoming lawyers evoked reaction from colleagues. In Anglo-

Saxon law jurisdictions a formal adversarial relationship is constituted between legal parties. Accusations may be expressed about 'selling out', or 'going to the dark side' in Darth Vader imagery (from George Lucas' *Star Wars* movies). For the most part, respondents downplayed this issue. But then they would, as they were the ones who had become the objects of such remarks. Interviewees justified their lawyer roles in terms of simply setting out the law, or being involved in keeping police honest.

One erstwhile policeman, in pursing his interest in accident investigation got close to the point of making a career shift. In contemplating this he reported,

> if I had to make a decision, if I was going to do something about the crash side of it, and keep it alive, I knew realistically, the only place to do it, was on the other side. On the dark side. Which meant doing a law degree and everything. So that I could get up and challenge these guys in court.

In another instance the respondent was asked directly if he got reactions from other policeman that he was selling out to the lawyer side.

> Yes, yeah. Some say it in a jovial way. 'Shit, I hope I don't come up against you!' or, 'I'll call you if I need your help, straight away'. But there is an understanding there.

He expanded on this last sentence, 'there is an understanding there' in a way that echoed responses from other interviewees. The main meanings of such changing police-to-police relations were beyond the present conversations. The elaborate carefulness in the way that this topic was referred to suggested important underlying issues of maintenance of corporate solidarity and potential deviance from group norms, some though not all of which are undoubtedly understood in masculine terms similar to football teams, alcohol consumption, and other pursuits.

At one level it is possible to say these responses were down-playing the possibility of being labelled, even this far away from the events, with 'turncoat' or other language that implied letting the side down or being traitorous to one's 'mates', to the group. Other levels of analysis can also be applied. In terms of seeking their own further career development or change, having come from inside the police force, which like any large complex institutional sector, has its share of underperforming or unsuitable members, these policemen had come to see law and the role of lawyers in a new light. As one interviewee expressed it in commenting on a review of a police complaints organisation, 'It wasn't seen to be doing its job of holding the police to account'. Another repeated several times in different ways the importance of the legal process, not just the charging and prosecuting role of the police, 'One phase is evidence gathering. Another one is in applying the law, and utilising the evidence to prove the elements of the particular case'.

Yet another, countered a question that for a certain number of police, lawyers are very much, 'them', frustrating the good work police were doing.

Well, I know of people who do think like that. But I don't. For me it's people have a right to be represented, and they have the right to test the prosecution. And that's really what they should be doing. The defence lawyers should be testing the Crown case. That's how I see it. And I don't view them as the enemy. I know that they are adversaries. But adversaries bound by certain rules. … It's just a matter of working with people, and they've got a function to perform. I understand that. They do that. For me, there's no problem, nothing is personal. That's why I don't say that there is a 'them' and 'us' mentality. Well, certainly for me. Because that's the structure. It doesn't advance anything.

Law has a 'dark side' in another way than that experienced by these former police personnel. Just as women police officers contend with sexist attitudes amongst their male colleagues, the law profession, too, has parallel issues in finding a place for women. This aspect of the conversation takes the discussion out beyond the present comparison between women teachers and policemen who subsequently transition into law. In this changed gender environment, however, it has become as significant matter in its own right (Patterson, 2006).

For these women teachers an important discourse of such change was the freedom to aspire to and achieve this high status legal qualification to practice as a lawyer. For half of this particular group, this was expressed in terms of re-reading their career and identifying an earlier point prior to or at early adulthood career decision-making where they had wished to study law. Some expressed this more strongly than others. For other teacher respondents it was described as one of several somewhat inchoate aspirations for adult life, that did not initially eventuate but instead they began teaching. It must be remembered that this group reached young adulthood just as the option of women entering the work force as lawyers was opening, but ninety-five per cent of lawyers were still men. Thus, their experience must be distinguished from (1) other similar age cohorts of women who did make law their first career choice, and (2) a younger generation of women lawyers for whom it was a more obvious possibility.

Sequences in women teachers' career shift to lawyer

There are different organisational infrastructures in educational and law enforcement sectors. Teaching is not a single organisation as the police force is in Australia and New Zealand, even acknowledging divisional differences between youth offending, criminal and civil law. In police training the central teaching college is tightly tied in with the police force itself in contrast to teacher qualifications being earned at universities, and formerly separate teachers colleges, outside direct influence of schools at whatever level, in private or state systems.

One teacher described how in the late 1960s as a new teacher, having got married, she was deemed to be outside the Education Department rules that banned married women. She objected that she still had more of her student bond to pay back, and was happy to continue working. The Department, however, insisted. She resigned but immediately got a job at the secondary school she had attended as a girl. Several months

later at the start of the new school year the Department telephoned wanting to know what had happened to her, only to be told with some asperity by her mother that she had got another job. Such trials of a by-gone era were the source of considerable ironic laughter in recounting tales such as this.

Several of these women teachers had risen to deputy principal positions or heads of department positions within their schools. Their descriptions of these steps include stories of exclusion in structural or discursive ways that formed part of the career battles in which they had no option but to engage. Formal discrimination on gender grounds is today legally prohibited in Australia and New Zealand, but as in the legal profession itself, other occupational groups show persistent gender imbalances and 'glass ceiling' effects. This is not just a matter of the internal logics of these occupational groups but also the intersection within them of resistant cultural beliefs and practices.

Despite such teacher success, a variety of reasons accounted for their career shift. With changing circumstances in life, half of them found the prospect of returning to or continuing in teaching unattractive, not simply through taking time out for primary child care. Most of the women responded to questions about child care with the same sort of studied carefulness that the policemen discussed the issue of switching to the 'dark side'. All but one of the women had children, and she commented, while acknowledging her parents were in favour of education:

> I think both my parents did expect us to marry, have children, raise a family. ... Yeah, and that being women, that our careers would probably take second place to the mothering role in the house and the wife role. Um, but I didn't do that.

This absence of full discussion nevertheless revealed important relations between career and child care. This was the era when popular media began talking about 'super mum', the idea that women could 'do it all', even if men were reluctant to participate more in domestic or child care roles. It can be noted, en passant, that contemporary versions of this concept tend to be less heroic and more self-orientated, as heard in popular media phrases such as 'You *can* have it all!' Such language can easily repeat or create new patterns of gender entrapment.

Perhaps the first observation on interviewees' studied neutrality in describing family can be understood simply in terms of the explicit purpose of the interviews, namely to discuss *career* transition into law. Initial conversation casting a wide net over life and work sometimes led to the comment that 'we had better get down to the topic'. For the interviewer, however, such elaboration and self-commentary was of first-order value in trying to establish context and multiple influences causally involved in career transition.

Second, given culturally gender-resistant discourses, even prior to the 'super mum' narratives of women 'wanting' to be allowed to be professionals, 'pushing' to gain entry into previously debarred workplaces, these women have spent their life-times subtly fighting implicit 'put-downs' and imputations of being favoured that are carried in cultural and professional discourses. By working harder than ever, they could at one

level, attempt to combat these story lines. Put another way, their apparently casual descriptions of the assumption of child care responsibilities appeared to be the price they were paying to counter charges that they were gaining one thing (careers) and potentially failing to do their 'proper' work or fulfil their traditional roles.

Third, such primary family care roles were also the culmination of their own girlhood socialisation. Each of these elements, along with others, helps round out this notable feature of interviewees' restrained depiction of their professional-family care-giving career intersections as women, something not necessarily restricted to teaching. Even though a subsequent generation of women constitutes their paid careers in different ways to this group, how these women under-represent their paid work-life-transition linkages in the interviews speaks to intersections of paid *and* domestic divisions of labour (Halford, Saks and Witz: 1997: pp. 191-227).

For policemen there is a sequential career process starting with initial basic training, but also in ongoing courses, especially if any promotion is aimed for. Every promotion and specialist skill-set meant further study and tests to be passed. Most policemen in the present study found, regardless of their background, that they could do these courses well, and gradually developed a self-belief despite lacking the social capital from their family or community backgrounds. Their career sequence, then, was a parallel process of courses and promotions; more if they wanted to do detective work. They developed a year-on-year sequence of doing exams, whether by correspondence, going to national police college, or doing extramural or internal university courses. Closeness to a university law school was said to be of importance by two of the respondents, one travelling each week during study then returning to family, the other shifting cities to attend law school classes while continuing working as a policeman.

None of these men spoke of career gaps in terms of primary child care roles, except one after he left the police. In this respect, quite apart from the fact that this group is all men, or the masculine environment of the police force, the gendered spousal roles in terms of child care, talking time away from paid employment and other family and household labour practices fit traditional patterns with little change. Two of these policemen have been divorced, a recurring occupational theme in discussions of long and broken hours in police work.

As was seen in the final example in the previous section on connection to law as part of the causal chain of career transition into law, this section also outlined multiple gendered 'logics of practice' in identifying the sequence of career change and progression. These were not unlike the traditional linear career trajectories spoken of in mid-twentieth century career development literature for the policemen, but represent a departure in high-level strategic and tactical behaviour by women undertaking new professional roles and continuing family care responsibilities (Halford, Saks and Witz, 1997: p. 189). Contemporary theorising needs to also recognise new institutional patterns in domestic divisions of labour, and dual temporal responsibilities of women. A generational cohort later than these women have changed again in how they link paid professional work and family care work.

Later transition processes: law school and after

Each of these two groups, in different and gendered ways, found that they were 'bright enough' to do law, and that they 'could do it'. Both groups had a mix of people who studied part-time and others who stopped their previous career and committed to full-time university. Study strategies varied from following a friend's advice to 'Treat it like a job', to keeping weekends for families. In both groups some adopted a plan of just getting through, 'no-one ever asks you what marks you got' to determination to prove oneself. One woman came top of her year, and several excelled with very high marks. At the same time, the reality of primary care responsibilities complicated women's ability to give full attention to study.

> (Question: so somewhere in that time of bringing up children, you started thinking about law? Or you start thinking about other things?) (laughs) I used to look in the newspaper, and I'd think, 'There's nothing I could do here. And nobody wants anyone with a degree from years ago. What can I do?' In fact, actually, my English degree comes in very useful. I'm always editing people's work for them (laugh).
>   But I didn't give enormous attention to my law degree. Enough to get through (laughter). Working on the principle, as somebody said to me, when I was first a student, 'Anything over fifty per cent is so much wasted effort' (laughter).
>   (Question: Yes - so you're raising children as you started? Did you start part-time?) Oh yes, I did the whole thing part-time. And I... (Question - with youngsters?) Yeah. I had two years, and then I was offered a job, and so I had a job part-time, and I did the law degree, and I had the kids! I mean, you know...
>   (Question: so when you got the job, the kids were starting to be at high school, or...?) No, they were in primary school. Some were, some weren't. (Question: so that's a bit of juggling to fit children around, or the fact they were at school?) Oh, yes. No, I did it, I just did it when they weren't around. I did it in the evenings sometimes. I didn't, as I say, give it enormous attention (laughs). (Question: and in terms of your husband's time, and your time in the evening? You obviously need to do some study? For that period of years?) Ahh, yeah. I was quite good at cramming at the last minute (laughs).

The statement, 'I had a job part-time, and I did the law degree, and I had the kids! I mean, you know...' was offered as a summary and a closure of that conversation, though she was later happy to talk about grandchildren. Such accounts of juggling family care/child-raising, study, and in a number of cases paid work, were repeated for other women in this study.

The men did not offer accounts of fitting in child care arrangements except in one instance where going through a process of divorce with a former partner who had health difficulties meant extra responsibilities in housing and two school-age children. Another reported:

> Actually I found being an ex-cop at law school [a bit difficult], but there was quite a few of us there, about twelve at the time that I was there. ... [Law school] was a

snobby sort of outfit. It was, if you were police, you're on the wrong side of everything.

While statements such as this can be seen in occupational terms, reading them in gender terms given the masculine identity and values in many police settings, helps locate implicit gender discourse even when not explicitly expressed as such. The very term 'ex-policeman' or 'ex-cop' has resonance of an identity that cannot or is unlikely to be fully expunged, at least in popular imagery, and to some degree in self identification. Although not explored in detail here, the subsequent career paths fit with law being a 'new take' on career rather than a rejection of former values and identity. This resistance to police identity found at law school is not unconnected to the inscribed masculinity of the police force even when not expressed in those terms.

This discussion exploring comparative career transition elements into law of these two occupational clusters is not completed at the point at which they become lawyers. More than the cultural inscriptions of gender inequality that pervade work, family and social life, mutating modes of both reproduction and practices of resistance to such discourses occur not just in the transition to lawyer, but continue in the practice of their new profession. These practice within law called forth the report on discrimination noted earlier (Patterson, 2006). Such practices are reported in other countries in which women have become lawyers in significant numbers. The emergence of numerous women lawyer groups and personal/career women lawyer support websites reflects a perceived need for new solidarities to counter the continuance of longer-term masculine ones. See as just one example, the Australian Association of Women Lawyers at <http://www.australianwomenlawyers.com.au/>.

After qualification as lawyers different post-degree career trajectories can be seen in these two groups, the ex-police group having more in common with one another compared to the more diverse range of legal roles followed by the former women teachers. While in some instances the women found an educational 'angle' in a law environment, for example, running professional association training courses, training and induction in a large law firm, or managing a community law centre. But they also went in other directions unrelated to teaching. The policemen, on the other hand, found legal work as follows: three as government Crown prosecutors, two in other semi-statutory roles linked to policing, and one in a political position also linked to law and order. Thus, all of these former policemen have found a role that is allied to their previous careers of law enforcement in some way or another. Examples outside this group are, however, known to have gone into law firms and other forms of legal practice.

Conclusion

It is important to avoid over-stating the causes and consequences of these individuals making career transitions into law. It is also important to avoid over-stating the contrast between the two groups of policemen and women teachers, treating gender as simply 'gender-as-a-variable'. Alvesson and Billing (1997: pp. 24-51) point to two further levels of

analysis, the discursive, and an intermediate 'critical-interpretive' position they adopt that recognises the interplay of discourse and structural conditions. It has been possible here, to draw a number of points of comparison in the career paths they have followed, even allowing for individual differences. As midcareer professionals, these men and women share characteristics associated with a relatively similar point in the time-flow of their life trajectory and consequent career variations within law (Burns, 2009), even allowing for markedly different experiences they have each had as men and women.

The results discussed here are derived from Australia and New Zealand. Though considered first world societies with modern rational-legal infrastructures, not all of these patterns transfer to other societies. While similar processes of feminisation of professions can be seen in countries elsewhere, caution in extrapolating is gained from considering earlier Australasian history, when attempts to reproduce European type occupational and social class hierarchies repeatedly failed. Even today's range of wealth has not recreated identical institutional and social stratification patterns or corresponding cultural expectations. Further, Australian and New Zealand positioning in the contemporary global division of labour is different from Europe or the United States and hence limits generalisation of the results.

A different, methodological, limitation in interview research is specially 'flagged' by the two areas of conversation in which the interviewees were cautious. These were the discussion of 'going to the dark side' and occupational solidarity for the policemen, and discussion of the complexities of career-domestic divisions of labour for the women teachers. This did not appear as a strategy or intention to avoid discussion, but as a positioned response to the career transition path they had undertaken. The interviewer brought outside knowledge both to pose questions around these topics and to interpret the significance of the minimal discussion of these matters. While fascinating as data on the one hand, such informational lacunae create a limitation that invites further research to more fully explore the social experiences and social mechanisms involved, on the other.

For these 'now become lawyers', just as there had been more than one possible aspiration *as young people* making newly-adult career decisions, so too, *at the point* of deciding to switch to law, other opportunities were available, of greater or lesser salience. Further, even *after completing the switch to law*, even here, the legal role must not be conceived of as singular, essentialised, simply the ground of identity for men and women. Each of these people spoke of identity in an incidental way, perhaps more accurately reflecting what Ibarra (2004) found about the experimental nature of discovering one's further career path. These people acted with practical rationality: think, decide, apply, get in, do some papers, will I pass?, will I find a job? At each step a practical provisionality of whether something would work out, and be successful prevailed in the minds and descriptions of these individuals.

One might assign this pragmatism to maturity in terms of age and experience of these law students and emerging lawyers, except for evidence from Hodkinson (1998) that young people, too, often apply a solid rationality, albeit within the terms and repertories of opportunities they can see or conceive. These include gendered cultural

imaginaries (Taylor, 2004) at multiple levels of social and career action. For instance, popular notions of gender equality, formally true today in Australia and New Zealand, in turn generate an unrecognised gender identity location for women in paid professional work such a law. Research projects such as that of Halford, Savage and Witz (1997) across multiple occupations and organisations, if conducted in Australia and New Zealand, as indeed elsewhere in the world, would continue to extend the comparative depth and insights into the complex re-gendering occurring today. It may be that change needs to come from career theorists and experts to more accurately and empirically measure and 'see' what it is that individual men and women who make significant career decisions are actually doing and thinking. This may open a more layered recognition of multiple causes and influences in career transition.

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Edgar Burns has taught at the Eastern Institute of Technology in Napier, New Zealand 1993 to 2006, most recently splitting his time between his roles as Faculty Research Mentor and Senior Lecturer teaching sociology and research papers across business, counseling, social work and psychotherapy degree student groups. He is currently a PhD candidate in the Sociology Program of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, researching profession-to-profession career transitions.