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**The Paradoxical Processes of Feminisation in the
Professions: the case of established, aspiring and semi-
professions**

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1. Introduction

The past decade has seen increasing claims concerning the feminisation of labour markets with particular attention being paid to certain sectors and professions. The mass entry of women to the workplace and a renewed interest in the 'soft skills' associated with the feminine has led to a relatively unchallenged prediction that women and 'women's ways' will be one of the major influences on work in the 21st century, with particular impact on the professions and areas of work that typically exclude women, especially in the higher ranks. These claims are supported by a wide range of labour market statistics, covering a broad spectrum of professional and other white collar occupations along with high profile media coverage of particular women 'cracking the glass ceiling' (Carvel (2004)). There seems little doubt that women have, indeed, made huge progress; numerically dominating areas of the labour market and entering and succeeding in previously male dominated occupations and professional groups.

For instance, feminisation has certainly made an impact on the legal profession, traditionally a bastion of male privilege. Women were allowed to access the profession only in the 1920s (Sugarman (1995)). This is a century after the creation of the Law Society! Furthermore, despite the removal of formal entry barriers, their presence remained marginal throughout most of the 20th century. As late as in the mid 70s, for instance, women barely represented 5% of the population of practicing solicitors in England and Wales. Yet, in the 1970s a process of feminisation began to unfold. The number of female solicitors in the UK quadrupled in the 70s, roughly trebled in the 80s and doubled again in the 1990s (SRU Law Society (2003)). Indeed, over the last 30 years, the number of women in the legal profession expanded by a staggering 2,400% and today, women represent 40% of practicing solicitors. These trends are likely to continue in the foreseeable future, as in 2002 over 60% of new trainees; new law graduates and new acceptances on university law degrees were women.

Whilst solicitors, as a traditionally male dominated professional group, may provide us with the most striking example of feminisation, similar trends are reproduced across a range of liberal professions, including medicine and accountancy as well as other white collar occupations. The case of management is particularly interesting, given the rising power of this occupation and its centrality in the reorganisation of global capitalism. From the early establishment of 'management' as a skilled occupation, it has always been seen as a male domain requiring specific sets of skills and until the latter part of the 20thC women constituted a small minority of the management workforce. However, labour force statisticsi indicate how, today, women represent a third of this occupational category (Wilson (2005); Office of National Statistics (2005)). This is the result of a long process of feminisation, which has seen the percentage of women managers rise steadily from less than a fifth in the late 70s (Davidson and Cooper (1993)). The National Management Salary Survey which focuses on a smaller sample of 350 large corporations suggests an even more dramatic improvement from 1.8% in 1974 to 31% in 2004 (Chartered Management Institute and Remuneration Economics). This is comparable with trends experienced in the legal profession and indicates how women constitute a sizeable and growing minority of the managerial class.

The 1990s have also provided a series of historical firsts including women at the top of both the Bar and the Law Society, a series of female managing partners in leading city practices, the first female high court judge, in 1997 the first female CEO of a FTSE 100 company and in 2003 the first woman to head the London Stock Exchange. Whilst these 'firsts' could be dismissed as tokenism (Kanter (1977)), there is a growing sensation in some quarters (Carvel (2004)) that the mass entry of women to traditionally male turfs such as management and law, may be providing evidence of shattering glass ceilings and progressing the cause of gender equality. This is seen as a particularly relevant development, as feminisation is likely to challenge and redefine existing occupational relationships, values and practices. In particular, the soft skills which are

traditionally attributed to women are embraced as encouraging a more participatory and consensual working culture and a more empathetic approach to management (Fondas (1997); Quacquarelli (2003); Peters (1990); Saunders (2000)) and lawyering (Pierce (1995); Sommerlad, (2003)). Increasingly a clear business case for gender equality as emerged as women are seen to offer the necessary 'people' skills to improve firm performance, service provision and attract the growing army of women who, along with their growing numbers in the labour market, have new consumer power.

Despite the apparent strength of, and the prevailing enthusiasm for, the feminisation argument this paper seeks to challenge the predictions of shattered glass ceilings and to explore the associated assumptions linked with the feminisation of work. It will do this by focusing on three professional groups: law, management and teaching and using a broad array of historical information, which is annually collected by the Office of National Statistics (Labour Force Survey (2005)), the Law Society of England and Wales (SRU Annual Reports, 2004), the Department of Education and Skills (Statistics of Education: School Workforce in England), the Higher Education Statistics Agency and the Chartered Management Institute / Remuneration Economics (National Management Salary Survey). These quantitative data sets will be integrated with other survey material and with qualitative insights offered by existing literature in order to examine what lies at the heart of feminisation processes in the professions.

The three professional groups of law, management and teaching have been chosen as they represent various forms of professionalism and differing degrees of feminisation and thus constitute very interesting grounds for a comparative analysis of professionalisation projects and gender. Law is clearly an established profession; traditionally male and middle-class it is experiencing a process of feminisation as part of strategic attempts to develop more profitable modes of organisation, characterised by salaried employment and elongated professional hierarchies. Thus, feminisation emerges primarily as a defensive mechanism mobilised by embattled male elites to retain established privileges and rewards in a context characterised by rising institutional and economic difficulties (Bolton and Muzio (2006)). Management can be classed as an aspiring profession where increasing numbers of women are seen to bring the necessary people skills that are required by commercial success within the workings of a vigorous but 'soft' capitalism. Thus, here, feminisation assumes a functionalist connotation and is connected with a clearly economic logic linked with performativity. Teaching is very different to law and management in that it has long been recognised as a semi-profession. It is female dominated and associated with public sector vocationalism it, therefore, continues to struggle to be accepted as a professional group. This is reflected in its autonomy, status and rewards. Teaching is an interesting group to use in a comparative analysis of feminisation as it provides an indication of how gendered occupational projects are not necessarily supported by numerical representation but how feminisation may fuel patterns of gender exclusion, stratification and segmentation which is clearly highlight by teaching's male dominated senior hierarchy.

The occupations of law, teaching and management offer very different scenarios of professionalisation and the place of women within the enactment of such developments. They do, however, all have a common and recurrent theme – a continual process of masculinisation. Indeed, this analysis reveals that, whether it is an established, semi or aspiring profession, men dominate senior positions and lucrative/ high status specialisms whilst women perform 'women's work' in front-line lesser status positions and areas of practice. This, we argue, reflects the gender codes of professionalism that have been forged in historical processes that rely on cultural conceptions of masculinity. Such an emphasis celebrates and sustains a masculine vision of what it is to be a professional and soft skills – mostly (but not exclusively) performed by women are marginalised and the work that they do is devalued, ignored and unsupported. Thus, masculine gender lay at the heart of professional formation and maintenance projects. This paper, by analysing three very different professional groups at differing points of professionalisation and with different cultural histories, displays how some professional groups may be numerically feminised but that to attain and maintain the status of a professional remains an inherently masculine project. In this context, we expose the paradox that the mass entry of women does not represent a drive towards equality or a process of professionalisation but that it can clearly be connected to processes of intra-professional polarisation and may be responsible for the downgrading or proletarianisation of whole areas of professional activity.

2. The Professions: Established, Semi and Aspiring

A great deal of work on the professions has historically been dominated by the attempt to provide universal definitions of what constitutes the foundations of professionalism and professionalisation. However, these 'check list' type of analyses are increasingly unfashionable. Gerry Hanlon, for example, defines this approach as sterile and laments the ink that has been wasted on semantic nuances (1999); after all, professionalism is not a static concept but *the product of a dialectical relationship with its environment'*, (Hanlon (1999: 3)). Accordingly, there has been a progressive tendency (Dingwall et al. (1988); Freidson (1994); Hanlon (1999); Brock et al. (1999); Watson (2003)) to bracket this whole debate and to simply treat as professions occupations which are commonly seen as such. This paper endorses a similarly broad stance by focusing on three occupations: law, management and teaching, which respectively act as examples of established, aspiring or new, and semi professions, indicate different levels of professional accomplishment and provide us with a broad representation of the full professional continuum. Though positioned at different stages in their respective professionalisation projects, these three occupations present some core aspects of professionalism and are experiencing comparable structural and cultural developments including a process of feminisation and its associated patterns of gender exclusion, subordination and discrimination.

Law represents the archetypal model of the liberal profession. It presents the formal traits traditionally associated with professionalism, including an esoteric and systematised body of knowledge, formal training and certification, self-regulation and a publicly spirited ethos (Millerson (1964)). Furthermore, it has historically enjoyed a robust jurisdiction (Abbott (1988)), an effective closure regime (regulation of the production of producers) and a solid grip on professional practice (regulation of the production by producers) (Abel (1988); (2003)). Law has provided an authoritative example for occupations embarking on professionalisation projects and it has been used by sociologists as a benchmark of professionalism (Etzioni (1969); Johnson (1972)).

Management fits very well the prototype of the 'new' or aspiring profession (Goode (1969)). Its role is legitimated by an increasingly vast body of knowledge and set of techniques whilst the development of managerial degrees and, particularly in the USA, the rise of the Master and Doctor of Business Administration (MBA, DBA) qualification, offer increasing opportunities for professional closure, especially with regards to access to more senior positions. Moreover, managers are supported in their occupational ambitions by an increasing number of professional associations, both generalist and specialists, which are actively and explicitly engaged in professionalisation projects (Larson (1977)). Perhaps, most crucially, this group has certainly accomplished professional status in terms of its current prestige, power and financial rewards, which often eclipse those of the established professions. Managerialism and the rise of the global corporation have projected professional mangers in a position of unprecedented influence and autonomy.

Teachers too present many of the structural and organisational traits usually associated with check-list or trait-based approaches to professionalism. Yet, these traits are not as developed in comparison with their peers in law or medicine. Historically, teaching has developed as part of a state sponsored political project, thus it has traditionally enjoyed less autonomy over its work, less control over its knowledge base and weaker forms of professional association and governance. Furthermore, teachers are employed in bureaucratic settings, they are subjected to external control and, crucially for the purposes of this paper, they constitute a largely female occupation (Lortie (1969); Hearn (1982)). Teaching, unlike law or management, has always been a feminised profession with such processes dating as far back as the 19th century expressing a strong societal belief in a natural and obvious relationship between teaching and the nurturing disposition usually associated with women (Ackers (1995); Nias (1999)). This is especially the case in teaching younger children where the emphasis is less on the acquisition of technical skills than on creating effective social citizens. The equation teacher, women, mother is a powerful one (Steedman (1985)) and is clearly represented where 85% of primary school and 55% of secondary teachers are women (Statistics of Education (2004)). In line with other 'feminine professions', such as nursing, the emphasis on the 'caring' and nurturing' aspects of teachers' work has ensured it remains a semi-profession (Etzioni (1969)). As a consequence, a very significant status and income gap separates teaching from the liberal and managerial professions.

Thus, as examples of established, aspiring and semi professions, law, medicine and teaching present an opportunity for interesting comparative analysis. These are three very different occupational groups who, for various reasons, are at different stages in their respective professional projects and have experienced different patterns and degrees of feminisation but which, despite obvious structural differences, share a core characteristic – that is a masculinisation process which, we argue, is an inherent part of any professionalisation project (Witz (1991)). Professionalism, it seems, continues to be rooted in a male cultural project, which devalues and marginalises women's work whilst, paradoxically, relying on increasing female participation for its own expansion and survival.

3. The Gender Codes of Professionalisation

As a means of understanding the paradoxes inherent in the feminisation processes of three very different professional groups the notion of 'gender codes' is a potentially effective device. It allows gender to be understood as an active and continuing process that has both material and symbolic dimensions. Though individuals 'do' gender and draw on symbolic representations of femininity and masculinity, it is a situated 'doing' accomplished through the lived experiences of women and men within interactional and institutional arenas (Davies (1996); New (1998); Segal (1987); West and Zimmerman (1987)). That is, gender is treated not as an adjective but as a verb and in doing so it emphasises that both men and women actively 'do' gender sharing the same space and cultural resources. This is clearly seen in the way contemporary professionalisation projects, particularly of the aspiring and semi professions, are built on a combination of gender codes – caring and control, discipline and devotion, rationality and relationality. Thus, gender codes do not represent binary oppositions of male and female, a sort of his and hers of symbolic resources, but as a set of social relations that shape our lived experiences as both men and women. As Davies (1996: 665) explains, gendered codes can be understood as *'pathways'*: *'The two pathways take the form of A & B rather than the binary from of A and not B'.*

It is necessary, however, to note that the two 'pathways' do not share the same authority or access to institutionalised arrangements, such as the labour market and the professions. Women, and the stereotypical gender codes of femininity which are assigned to them, are often excluded and their contributions devalued precisely because the world of 'work' is still defined in terms of men's experiences of productive labour (Tancred (1995). Using gender codes as a device it can be seen, for instance, how the contemporary notions of professionalism clearly represent the ideological image of the 'rational man' in its reliance on certain characteristics: individualistic, competitive and predictable. In order to maintain this image, the 'masculine cultural project' of professionalisation (Davies (1996)) implements systems and structures that produce control, accountability and performativity, but above all, the exercise of exclusive skill and knowledge in professional practice. Such an emphasis celebrates and sustains a masculine vision of what it is to be a professional and ensures that a very particular gender code dominates.

Moreover, despite gender being a lived process that is open to continual re-negotiation and change, the masculine cultural project is embedded in the institutionalised structures of the professions – it is a code that defines what it is to be a professional and as part of the protective strategies and professionalisation projects it is continually reproduced by those who hold power in these institutions – white, male, middle-class (Cockburn (1998); Davies (1996); Segal (1987)). To step outside of the norm, as the case studies below will show, can be a distinctly uncomfortable experience. As Zimmerman and West point out in their analysis of 'doing gender', to do gender is not always to live up to normative conceptions of femininity or masculinity, it is to engage in behaviour at the risk of gender assessment and, in the case of the professions, being deemed to be 'unprofessional.' As Davies (1996: 673) succinctly summarises: *'what contemporary professions profess is masculine gender.'*

4. The Paradoxical Processes of Feminisation

The strength of 'gender codes' as a conceptual tool is its ability to display the dominance of masculine forms of knowledge and the resultant devaluation of the gender codes which are typically associated with the feminine. As the close examination of structural processes within three very different professional groups show numerical feminisation of the traditional, aspiring and semi professions of law, management and teaching have both symbolic and material consequences.

4.3   Law

Optimistic prognoses of gender emancipation are somewhat challenged when we consider on what terms women are included in the legal profession. The mass entry of women to the legal profession has been characterised by patterns of vertical stratification and horizontal segmentation. Women solicitors are more likely to be in subordinate salaried positions, to work part time, to practice in less prestigious and remunerative firms and legal specialisms and more generally to attract lesser terms and conditions. There is a clear pattern of vertical stratification whereby a growing cohort of predominantly female subordinates are confined to *'a (frequently transient) proletarian role'* (Sommerlad (2002: 216)) and deployed to support the earnings and privileges of a relatively prosperous and autonomous elite of predominately male partners. Today, examples of outstanding and extremely successful women lawyers remain the exception. Women, despite representing a growing majority of salaried solicitors (55%) and new entries to the profession, still constitute less than a quarter (22%) of partners (Bolton and Muzio (2006)) and the average female solicitor enjoys markedly less than half the chances of a male colleague to progress to partnership (21.6% against 47.2%) (Law Society Gazette (2003)).

In addition, women are more likely to practice in a series of overwhelmingly female specialisms. The classic example is family law where women spend twice as much time as their male colleagues whilst other examples are, to a lesser extent, provided by employment, housing and probate law. These areas are defined in terms of allegedly female traits such as empathy, consideration and personal support and are contra-posed to traditionally male domains such as the cut-throat world of corporate law, with its cold calculating logic and it emphasis on masculine traits such as ruthlessness, assertiveness and endurance (Bolton and Muzio (2006)). Thus, borrowing from Heinz and Lauman's terms (1983), femininity is associated with the personal hemisphere of the law whilst masculinity is related to the corporate hemisphere.

It is worth emphasising how a significant income and status gap separates these areas of practice and for this reason (in a telling example of how vertical stratification and horizontal segregation are intertwined with each other) female specialisms offer lesser opportunities for career progression (Bolton and Muzio (2006)). Thus, we are witnessing a marked segmentation between largely feminine, personally orientated and relatively underpaid specialisms on one side and male dominated, corporate orientated and remunerative practice areas on the other. As might be expected, these patterns of vertical stratification and horizontal segmentation create financial repercussions. As indicated by recent survey data female trainees earn 7% less than their male counterparts (Law Society (2003)), assistants can expect 27.5% less whilst female partners earn 40% less than men (Law Society (2004a)).

There have been attempts to explain the current place of women in the profession on the basis of functional considerations such as the actual skills, career choices and lifestyle decisions of women solicitors. A comprehensive critique of the 'human capital' (Hakim (1995)) argument is beyond the scope of this paper (See Sommerlad and Sanderson (1998)). However, the analysis presented here suggests a rather different scenario, connecting stratification and segmentation to the effects of powerful ascriptive biases which lie at the heart of the profession's closure regime and which sanction processes of gender exclusion, subordination and marginalisation. Thus segregation is not a matter of straightforward choice but pervasive

processes of gender-typing and discursive closure which imply that female solicitors are expected to do women's work. For instance, Law Society survey data (2004b) indicates how women do not elect to practice in certain female specialisms as much as they are expected to do so. 45% of women law graduates aspire to practice in corporate law but only 33% manage to secure their career ambitionsii. Similarly, powerful gender bias operates at the heart of the promotion and career progression system. This is particularly true in the context of an increasingly commercialised version of professionalism (Hanlon (1998)), which has implied a downgrading or taking for granted of established promotion criteria such as seniority and technical competence and the prioritisation of new values such as commercial acumen and managerial ability. Today's prospective partners are expected to bring in clients, exceed billable hours' targets, and, most crucially, generate three times as many revenues as their salaries (Hanlon (1997)). These seemingly neutral criteria have not been beneficial for women solicitors. Women are excluded, or exclude them-selves, from many business opportunities venues, which tend to centre on male dominated arenas, ranging from the golf course to the local mason's club from the rugby ground to night outs involving heavy drinking with predominantly male clients (Sommerlad and Sanderson (1998)). The pull of domestic and parental responsibilities inhibit women from embracing the new culture of 'presenteeism' and rising billable targets (up to 1800 hours per annum in large city practices) which characterise contemporary legal practice. Women are thus seen as less committed to an essentially masculine vision of the profession (hard-hitting, hard-playing and hard-drinking) and are relegated to a subordinate and frequently transient role. Thus apparently neutral criteria such as billable targets and revenue generation acts as powerful exclusionary mechanisms and reinforce a masculine code of professionalism.

We argue here that the legal profession has embarked on a new professionalisation project based on numerical feminisation. This, in the context of the profession's current difficulties and of its consequent structural reorganisation, is assuming an increasingly strategic dimension, as an embattled profession turns to feminisation to maintain profitability. Therefore, the position of women in the legal profession has to be understood in the context of the profession's recent reorganisation, whereby feminisation emerges as a defensive mechanism which is deployed by predominantly male elite in pursuit and defence of established privileges and rewards. Confronted by a deteriorating institutional, ideological and economic climate the profession has sought to develop new and more profitable modes of organisation, which feature the reworking of professional closure regimes, the elongation of professional hierarchies and the increasing reliance on the surplus generated by an increasing number of (predominantly female) salaried solicitors. Typical of this has been a shift from external closure mechanisms, which sanction access to the profession, to internal ones, which regulate progression through the ranks and control access to the most prestigious and rewarding positions (Muzio and Ackroyd (2005)). This process is encouraging the emergence of a gendered division of labour, as the ascriptive biases and informal criteria which pervade internal closure regimes, tend to reproduce patterns of gender based discrimination and subordination. On the terms of the dominant gender code of the legal profession, the entry of women has clearly folded along a subordinate 'pathway' which is slower, more strenuous and fraught with uncertainty. Thus a clear paradox follows since although this particular professional project clearly cannot survive without the increasing contributions of women solicitors, patterns of gendered stratification and segmentation suggest that the legal profession remains far from feminised.

4.3   Management

Despite rhetorical claims of a new feminine approach to management, a similar pathway of stratification and segregation characterises the inclusion of women managers. As with the situation in other professional and semi-professional occupations, it is clear that women occupy the lower reaches of a managerial career, are often relegated to less prestigious 'female' specialisms, and are confronted by lesser terms and conditions. Stratification emerges clearly from the consideration of National Management Salary Survey data (Chartered Management Institute

and Remuneration Economics (2004)). Today, women may account for a third of all mangers (but let us not forget how this severely under-represents their overall labour market participation) however, they are also overwhelmingly confined to junior roles and less authoritative positions. For instance, whilst women constitute almost 40% of the lowest managerial position of section leader, they represent only 13% of directors (a finding which is corroborated by the membership records of the Institute of Directors – where women are 12% of all members). Furthermore, after years of sustained expansion, it seems that growth in the most influential managerial positions of director, function head and department head, has recently stalled. The percentage of female directors has, for instance, declined from almost 15% in 2002 to 13% in 2004 whilst over a similar period of time the number of function heads has declined from 20% to 17.5%. Overall there is a clear pattern of stratification whereby women have failed to challenge men's monopoly over the control of large corporations. A report from the Equal Opportunities Commission (2005) suggests how in 2003 only 9% of FTSE 100 directors were women, and, furthermore, how only 4% of these had executive status whilst only one woman had made it to the top position of CEO. Despite recent progress, almost two thirds of FTSE 100 companies have still less than 10% female board members

Stratification is accompanied by patterns of horizontal segregation, as women managers tend to practice in female specialisms which, as in the case of the legal profession, offer less pay, prestige and career promotion opportunities. As we can expect, women clearly dominate the HR/Personnel specialism (69%), which is traditionally associated with allegedly female skills such as communication, organisation and support (Chartered Management Institute and Remuneration Economics (2004)). Similarly, women are a growing majority (50.5%) of marketing mangers, and represent almost half (47.5%) of actuarial, insurance and pension managers, which is again a specialism which calls on the supportive and welfare role associated with women. Conversely women are a minority in all other areas. This is particularly so in specialisms which have a strong technical component, such as production (5%), research (8%), distribution (8%) and IT (12%). This situation perpetuates the notion of gender codes as binary opposites: the association of women with 'soft'/personal skills and men with hard or technical competences. Another very significant finding is the low ratio of female general mangers (11%), (which incidentally is also one of the most remunerative managerial specialism) and furthermore the fact that this has actually declined over recent years. This is particularly significant in the context of the generalist character of British management (Ackroyd (2002)), which implies that general management is on of the principal routes into more senior positions. Again, this provides an example of how patterns of vertical stratification and horizontal segregation are intertwined with each other.

Of course, women have achieved great successes in management – their representation on boards of directors has increased from less than 1% in the early 80s to the current figure of 13%. (Carvel (2004)) and they are proclaimed to be the 'new heroes of the business world' (Bradser, 1999; Peters, 1990) displaying qualities of trustworthiness and delegation (Saunders (2000)). Nevertheless, it is notable how their every success hits the headlines indicating it remains a relative rarity for women to reach high profile senior management positions and there are still few enough women in senior roles for them to be seen as 'tokens' (Kanter (1977)). Moreover, though the professionalisation project of management claims to draw on a combination of gender codes, the fact that women are clustered in certain low-profile segments of managerial work and are in sparse numbers on the boards of FTSE 100 companies would suggest that women's (perceived) virtues remain materially undervalued; indeed a hefty 28% income gap separates women mangers from their male counterparts (Chartered Management Institute (2005); Wilson (2005)). In this context women are, at best, *'applauded only with the hypocrisy of cheap sentiment'* (Segal (1987: 5)). In addition, recent claims that women are taking on the *'old-boy'* network by creating their very own *'new girl'* network (Carvel (2004)), actually serves to define their position as 'other' and highlight a distinct lack of integration and acceptance into the managerial profession.

It seems little has changed. Commentaries on women in management have long proclaimed that women *'can make it if they have what it takes'* (Bowman, et al. (1965)) and it seems what it takes is to be a man. Much like law, management sets a punishing pace with 60 hour working weeks being the norm: long days followed by heavy drinking sessions as a means of letting off steam sorts the men from the boys (or women) (Wilson (2005)). This 'boys club' is further confirmed when we see women's magazines, aimed at professional women, citing research stating that women are taking hormones to raise their testosterone levels in an effort to boost their

career (Binkworth (2003)). It seems that the gender codes of management's professionalisation project are very transparent and women are in little doubt that they need to comply with masculine norms if they are to break through the glass ceiling. In what has been described as the *'Tootsie effect'* (Cunha and Cunha (2002)) the so called feminisation of management practice merely serves to reinforce the prevailing masculine assumptions. This highlights the central paradox in management's claims to feminisation as a route to professionalisation. Ample qualitative evidence suggests women do not proudly claim to draw from feminine gender codes and symbolic resources but refer to themselves in male terms with statements such as 'I'm still my own man' and adopt male patterns of working and socialising whilst entirely absenting themselves from any form of domestic role as either mother or partner (Seenan (2001); Wajcman (1998)). Thus, the paradox here is that, whilst management appears to have embraced 'feminine' skills as a strategic resource to be deployed in its occupational project, gendered segmentation and stratification tell a different story of exclusion, subordination and devaluation. And, in order to succeed in the masculine cultural project of the professionalisation of management, women draw excessively from masculine norms of conduct and exceed the cultural norms of managing like a man. However, rather than being deemed as strong and rational, they remain excluded as a parody of a male manager – a *'she-male'* (Grant (1988)).

4.3   Teaching

Teaching stands apart from the established profession of law and aspiring profession of management in that it is, and always has been, a clear example of a feminised profession. It is numerically dominated by women and its ethos of vocationalism, dedication and nurturance delineates it as 'women's work' drawing on stereotypically feminised gender codes of caring. This has rather important implications for its professional ambitions and actual rewards. In line with other feminine professions, the strong and enduring gender code that creates the powerful ideological image of the teacher, most especially, that of primary aged children, as a nurturing, maternal figure has ensured that teaching remains a semi-profession (Etzioni (1969)).

Yet, despite men's under-representation, most especially in primary school teaching, a masculine cultural project is clearly at play. This is again born out by processes of stratification and segregation which even in this most female of professions, relegates women to a lesser career pathway. In all areas of teaching (whether nursery and primary, secondary or special needs) men, despite being a minority, are more likely to occupy the more senior positions. This gender stratification pattern is particularly noticeable in nursery and primary schools, where men, who represent only 15% of the entire teaching population, account for 37% of all school heads (Department of Education and Skills (2004)). Another look at these statistics, reveals that whilst 23% of men working in these schools are principals, only 7.5% of women make this grade. Similar trends characterise secondary teaching where men are again overrepresented at the top of the occupational hierarchy (more than two thirds of school principals are men, whilst only 45% of all teachers are male). Overall, in all grades of teaching men are roughly three times more likely to occupy the top slot than women. A similar, but somewhat less intense pattern affects intermediate positions (deputy heads). This gender differential is being progressively reduced; however despite recent improvements women are still confined to a secondary role and have considerably lesser career progression prospects than their male counterparts. Ample case studies support claims that men gain great advantage from being a numerical minority. Unlike women, who struggle to be defined as 'women' in male dominated arenas (Cockburn (1998); Wajcman (1998)), men are treated as 'special', are given more challenging work, are offered more developmental opportunities, and are thus able to ride a 'glass escalator' rarely available to women in either male or female dominated occupations (Hultin (2003); Macleod (2005); Williams (1995)).

Teaching also conveys a strong picture of occupational segregation. Women represent an overwhelming majority of primary school teachers (85%), a small majority of secondary teachers (55%), before becoming a minority (47%) in further education, and finally falling to 35% of full time academic staff in higher education (Hesa (2004)). Thus, a clear trend emerges; as the technical and academic content of teaching increases women's participation steeply declines. Conversely, women dominate primary school teaching (and even then they are under-represented

in positions of authority), where the emphasis is not so much on the technical skills required by the transmission of academic or vocational knowledge but on the relational skills which are required for the development of basic social and civic competences. This not only perpetuates traditional distinctions between soft and hard skills, between nurturing and educating, in short, between women's and men's work, it has also clear material implications. The soft skills involved in successful primary teaching practice are assumed to be natural and fundamental to what it is to be a woman, hence not recognised as a skill or duly rewarded as such (Bolton (2004), (2005); Tancred (1995)). Thus, income, prestige and autonomy, all of which are hallmarks of professionalism, clearly rise as we gradually move from the predominantly female area of primary school teaching to the predominantly male area of academia. Even if we restrict our analysis to the world of primary and secondary school teaching, where women, after all, do represent an absolute majority, a 10% income gap separates women from their male colleagues (Department of Education and Skills (2004)). This differential is of course considerably less than in law and management but it is still particularly relevant in a public sector profession which is accepted as a feminine profession.

Despite some small increase in men in the profession overall and more women entering management positions within teaching, the vigour of the male cultural project appears to be increasing. Recently, a combination of apparently contradictory forces - an emphasis on accountability and control of the teaching profession and the teachers' own professionalisation project – has meant that not only are the higher echelons of the teaching hierarchy dominated by men but what was always seen as the 'women's work' of teaching, i.e. the caring work of teachers, now draws on an apparently masculinised code of caring and is couched in terms of procedural efficiency (Woods et al. (1997)). Commitment to care of a pupil remains central to conceptions of good teaching but it is no longer what many teachers have identified for decades as the caring elements of their work – nurturance, warmth and love (Nias (1989), (1999); Ackers (1995)). This would be seen as a too narrow and exclusive categorisation of caring work and, of course, due to its association with feminine knowledge and the private domain, it does not meet professionalisation criteria or match the language of 'quality' teaching.

Teachers, via the 'competent teacher' or the 'standards teacher', should conform to an instrumental, objective and procedurally focused account of teaching. Thus caring in teaching work is being subject to the public/ private divide – with the public, in association with masculine codes of knowledge, being accepted as ordered, competent and effective and the private, in association with feminine codes of knowledge, being marginalized as chaotic, disordered and inefficient. There is a central paradox in this professionalisation process. The accepted masculine codes of knowledge that make up the 'competent' and 'professional' teacher contradict the profession's fundamental reliance on feminine codes of knowledge such as nurturing, caring etc. The masculinised professional project resolves this paradox by attempting to shape the feminine code into a masculine form – the integrated caring and curriculum model.

The devaluation of the caring elements of teachers' work according to feminine codes of practice is reflected in the way that the caring work that cannot be shaped into the rational form is delegated to 'non-professionals' such as the growing army of learning support assistants (LSAs) who are dominantly female. At one and the same time, teaching is undergoing a process of professionalisation and de-professionalisation as its practices are split into the masculine/ public (professional work) and the feminine/ private (support work). In effect, teaching, broadly defined as 'women's work', is classified and controlled by a 'masculine cultural project' of professionalisation. The additional irony of this paradox is that without the attachment to the rational, objective, goal-centred masculine model of professionalism, teaching will remain a semi-profession and women teachers will be forever consigned to the role of surrogate mother rather than of a professional educator; and yet, the embracing of a masculine vision of professionalism will inevitably reproduce patterns of gender subordination and marginalization.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

There is little doubt that many reforms have created new opportunities for women in the professions and such a statement is numerically supported by the sheer numbers of women

entering previously male dominated areas such as law and management. Further evidence suggests that women are also being embraced as a means of feminising the profession in qualitative ways, adding a soft dimension to the professional image. Of course, both quantitative and qualitative moves towards professionalisation are supported by a fundamental economic logic. Women and women's ways have been linked to improved performance, increased productivity and a broadening of the customer base. The symbolic resource of 'woman' has become the newest source of advantage for contemporary professionalisation projects. It would appear that feminisation is proving to be a successful strategy leading to a win:win situation including advances in gender equality and economic benefits.

Our analysis, however, reveals patterns of gendered segmentation and stratification within the feminised professions. Law and management present similar scenarios. Numerical feminisation has taken place with women now comprising a sizeable minority but certain patterns of vertical stratification and horizontal segregation occur, consigning women to positions of lesser authority and status thus attracting fewer material benefits. It would seem that the influx of women into the professions has not actually led to a process of feminisation. Paradoxically, women are embraced as a strategic resource, yet the very skills they are asked to deploy define them as 'other' in relation to the dominant gender code of masculinity which runs at the heart of contemporary professionalisation projects.

As close examination of women's structural position in each of the established, aspiring and semi professions presented here highlights, the masculine codes of control, discipline and rationality, which results in a goal oriented, systematic approach to professionalism, are emphasised and brought to the fore of contemporary professionalisation projects despite claims of feminisation. What a comparative analysis of apparently very different professional groups such as this shows, is the paradoxical processes of feminisation and the distinctly uncomfortable position women occupy. Women are warmly embraced for the 'new' skills and surpluses that they bring to the professions but at the same time, they are being asked to conform and adapt to the dominant masculine cultural project which undervalues them as 'women'. Whether this can be claimed to be an accident of patriarchy or a masculine project of exploitation and control the exclusion/ inclusion of women has strategic significance for professionalisation projects (Bolton and Muzio (2006)). Using teaching as a comparative case clearly highlights that the recourse to women's special skills and virtues is more likely to lead to proletarisation than professionalisation – hence teaching's status as a semi-profession. Little wonder that all three professionalisation projects remain a masculine cultural project that, despite claims of feminisation, repress, oppress and subordinate gender codes associated with the feminine (Davies (1996)) as they attempt to attain and retain professional status according to the prevailing male paradigm.

However, in making claims concerning the subordination of women in the professions and a dominant masculine cultural project we need to be wary of assigning women to a static cultural category caught up in a gender system that involves an endless reproduction of the same (Butler (1993)). Women are not passive, powerless or unprofessional and increasingly this is being recognized. The very real danger for any professionalisation project is the limitations of recognising women only for their 'feminine' qualities when there is hard evidence to suggest that women need not be any more of a caring, weak, or inefficient legal advisor, manager or teacher than a man or, indeed, that men may not draw on feminised gender codes and present the caring face of the professions. In turn, this highlights that the symbolic resource of 'woman' does not stand alone, female experience (as diverse as it is) shares the same space and cultural resources as the male and will have an impact upon it (Martin (1987); New (2001); Segal (1987)) thus showing how even the smallest acts may have implications for ongoing processes of feminisation. Masculine and feminine identities, therefore, are not fixed but fluid and gender codes are an ever shifting, continually contested domain (McNay (2000); Pollert (1996); Segal (1987)) thus highlighting the contradiction and continually shifting dynamics involved in 'doing' gender. Nevertheless, gender is far more than a cultural construction, gender codes and the lived realities of being male or female are historically and socially embedded, shaped by lived experiences in different domains. Women remain the central care-givers in society and still carry the largest load of domestic responsibilities. It becomes, therefore, a physical impossibility for them to commit to the long hour cultures, the extended drinking sessions and the weekend entertainment of clients involved in 'being professional'. Thus the dynamics of gender have both symbolic and material qualities that constrain women's experiences as professionals and enhance their potential as a

strategic resource. Rather than witnessing the feminising of the professions it could be stated that we are observing the masculinisation of feminised and feminising professions. It would seem, therefore, that women have attained numerical equality in some segments of the labour market without fundamentally challenging existing gendered social relations and the primordial beliefs which sustain them.

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[i] Data on management is less reliable than information on solicitors since management lacks a licensing and certification system and definitions of management itself are quite fluid.

[ii] Male are much more likely to realise their career ambitions, with 58% practicing in corporate law against 61% share of trainees who expressed a desire to do so (Law Society (2004b)). Conversely whilst only 7% express a strong desire to work in family law, 19% of women actually practice this stereotypically female specialism