

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**A Gendered Undertaking:
The Feminisation of After-Death Work
in Aotearoa New Zealand**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

Massey University
Palmerston North
Aotearoa New Zealand

Bronwyn Watson
2005

Abstract

Long after women have successfully entered many other occupational fields once considered to be ‘men’s work’ they have remained a small minority in after-death work in the funeral industry in Aotearoa New Zealand. Women and their contributions to the funeral industry have been excluded, marginalised and devalued. In the last decade, however, there has been a marked increase in the numbers of women funeral directors and embalmers. In the same decade, the occupational specialism of funeral celebrant, comprising a large majority of women, has been established to fulfil a growing demand for non-religious funeral ceremonies.

This thesis examines the means by which men have excluded and marginalised women from the funeral industry in Aotearoa New Zealand. More importantly, it examines the ways women are successfully overcoming exclusion and marginalisation by men. To this end I analyse research material from a range of sources. These include: unstructured interviews with funeral directors, embalmers, celebrants, clerical workers and members of clergy; my observations from previous funeral industry research and fifteen years’ experience as organist in the industry; plus data from the association magazines of the Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand.

To develop a theoretical framework with which to explain how women are surmounting exclusion and marginalisation, I draw on two strands of literature that highlight different aspects of women’s involvement in paid work. The first strand includes theories of gendered occupational control, focusing on both practice-based and discursive-based strategies of gendered closure. This strand reveals women’s exclusion from, and their strategies for entering, the funeral industry. The second strand of literature focuses on theories of gendered organisational structures, culture and power, uncovering women’s marginalisation within the funeral industry.

There are five analytical chapters. The first two are largely historical, examining the masculinisation and commercialisation of after-death work, and the ways women and their contribution to after-death work have been devalued and made invisible. The third and fourth analytical chapters investigate men’s and women’s closure strategies in after-

death work. The fifth is a discussion of the ways women promote and position their contribution to after-death work by claiming that, as women, they bring different values from men to after-death work. In this, they adopt discourses of new professionalism; resistant discourses invert the masculinist discourses of the old model of professionalism, valorising long denigrated 'feminine' attributes.

I argue that the hierarchical gendered boundaries in the funeral industry stem from the early development of funeral firms in Aotearoa New Zealand as family firms, plus their failed attempts, throughout the twentieth century, to achieve professional status. In this, they reflect the patriarchal power of the masculinist projects of modernity, the society in which funeral director leaders established their professional project. Further, I argue that the failure of their professional project has, paradoxically, facilitated the men's continuing discrimination of women by leaving access to education in the industry's control. I also argue that the recent rise of women in the funeral industry reflects the growing feminisation of the public sphere, with a subsequent increase in women funeral industry clients, who bring different expectations and needs from those of men clients. Women after-death workers claim to facilitate the needs of women and men clients: they are able to do the work equally as well as men, while also drawing on skills they have learned from their experiences as women.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank all those who have generously helped me in so many ways throughout the journey of this thesis. First, my abiding and heartfelt thanks to my chief supervisor Dr Allanah Ryan, who could somehow see where I was trying to go even when I could not and has had a major impact on the final shape of the thesis. I thank her very much for her warm and kind support when it was needed, her always prompt and astute critique of each draft, and her knowledge of, and skill at negotiating, the systems. My thanks are also due to Dr Martin Tolich for his supervisory encouragement and enthusiasm before he moved away. I am most grateful, too, to Dr Avril Bell for generously agreeing to read a draft and especially for her suggestions regarding aspects of the theory chapter.

The thesis would not exist without the generosity of the research participants, celebrants, clergy, clerical workers, embalmers, and funeral directors, who so readily and openly shared their experiences, knowledge and views of the funeral industry. It was a privilege to meet them. I thank them all. To Mary Hancock, my appreciation for her insights into the development of celebrancy. My grateful thanks also go to Massey University for supporting me with a Doctoral Scholarship, the New Zealand Vice Chancellors' Council for a Shirlcliffe Fellowship and the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work at Massey University for support and for generous funding, particularly during the data-gathering period. Special thanks to Heather Hodgetts and Mary Roberts for their assistance with library interloans, maintaining the transcribing machine and cassette recorders, and booking airline tickets and conference registrations. Thanks also to Tessa Lyons of Massey University Disabilities Services for arranging tape transcriptions when my arms failed me.

I have been fortunate to have some wonderful friends who have helped keep me motivated over the long haul. We call it the Friday Group, even though our weekly meetings have been on any day except Friday for several years. Maxine Anderson and Ann McClelland are occasional members who arrive with a breath of fresh air and a new perspective. Peter Russell has been the most generous IT support person anyone could wish for, making countless trips from Flaxmere to Napier to install software,

solve problems and offer advice on how not to lose a thesis. He has also been the provider of many funeral industry newspaper articles and endured countless hours of discussions on ‘wiftly waffly’ qualitative sociological issues when he would far rather have been discussing strictly rational, objective, scientific, quantitative psychology. Edgar Burns started it all. I will never be able to thank him adequately for his constant involvement and support, his generous discussions of all things sociological, his sharing of books, articles and ideas, particularly on the theory of professions and organisations, interviewing an out of town funeral director, and above all, his belief that I could do this.

I thank my parents, Joan and the late Doug Davies for instilling the love of books and words, and Mum for insisting on feeding me a ‘proper’ meal nearly every Saturday noon for the past eleven years. Huge thanks to my sisters, Kathy for being there, for taking on family celebrations because my dining table has been my office, for listening and all her support and encouragement in a myriad ways, and Margaret for sending intriguing books and articles from far away places on all aspects of after-death work. Finally, I thank my darling daughters, Jenny, Heather and Hayley – for their love and support and for being excited about my study. I thank Jenny for the final meticulous proofing and formatting of this thesis, which she unhesitatingly fitted in when she was snowed under with work. Heather for a million encouraging emails and for finding the software I needed when my ‘borrowed’ version disappeared, taking with it three years’ bibliographic data. Hayley for accepting my absence at times when she has needed my presence, for her hospitality whenever I was interviewing in her area, and for making phone calls on my behalf. For everything I thank them. I dedicate this thesis to them as young women, each in her own way working through the issues discussed here, at once equal to men while also contributing different skills learned through their experiences as women.

Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Contents	vii
Chapter One Undertaking: A Gendered Introduction	1
Vignette One	1
Vignette Two	2
The Research Background	3
The Research Aim and Scope	10
Overview of the Thesis	11
Chapter Two Theorising Gender Boundaries in After-Death Work	15
Introduction	15
Gender, Theory and After-Death Work	16
Occupational Control: Professional Projects and Gender	22
Theorising Professional Projects: Functionalist and Neo-Weberian Approaches	23
Occupational Closure Strategies and Gender	26
Feminist Poststructuralism and Gendered Discourses as Strategies of Control	31
Gender Difference and/or Equality?	33
Masculinist Professional Discourses	37
Professional Projects 'Old' and 'New': A Gendered Discursive Strategy at Work	38
Gender Boundaries in Organisations	42
Gendered Bodies in Organisational Culture	44
Gendered Power in Organisations	47
The Socialisation of Emotion and the Emotions of Control	51
Conclusion	55
Chapter Three Undertaking the Gendered Research Design	57
Beginning the Undertaking	57
Research Methods	60
Finding the Research Participants	62

Analysis	64
Validity	65
Triangulation	68
Representation	70
Ethical Considerations	73
Confidentiality	74
Insider/Outsider Researcher Issues	75
Research Participants	78
Funeral Directors and Embalmers: The Women	78
Funeral Directors and Embalmers: The Men	79
Celebrants: The Women	79
Celebrants: The Men	80
Clerical Workers	80
Women Outside the Industry	80
Chapter Four The Masculinisation of After-Death Work	83
Introduction	83
Undertaking: Male Commercialisation of After-Death Work	86
Funeral Directing in New Zealand: A Gendered Professional Project	88
Social Respectability and the Professional Project	90
Neutralising the Stigma of After-Death Work	94
Controlling Emotionality and the Socialisation of Emotions	98
Professions, Semi-Professions and the Funeral Director	106
Professionalism at Work: Organisation of the Funeral Firm	108
Family Business to Management Model: Gendered Structures in the Funeral Firm	108
A Masculine Business: The Funeral Firm as a Gendered Culture	113
Marginalised Women: Gendered Power in the Funeral Firm	115
Conclusion	118
Chapter Five Women's Strategic Absence from After-Death Work	121
Introduction	121
Women's Historical Role in After-Death Work	122
Women's Strategic Absence from the Professional Project	124
Death Medicalised and Commercialised: Excluding Women	125
Marginalising Women's After-Death Work in Historical Records	127
Devaluing Women's Work	130
Theorising Women's Absence from After-Death Work	133
Pollution: Women and Death	134
Women's Relational Acts: Disappearing Work	135
Women's (Strategic) Reappearance in After-Death Work	137

Feminisation of the Public Sphere	138
'Ladies in a Men's World': Women in the Funeral Firm Today	143
Conclusion	146
Chapter Six 'It Was Very Closed Door': Men's Closure Strategies in After-Death Work	149
Introduction	149
Men's Exclusionary Strategies	151
'No'	152
FDANZ Control of Credentialing and Registration	153
The 'Token' Woman Funeral Director and Embalmer: Male Culture as Exclusion	158
Male Discourses as Strategies of Closure	160
'Against God's Word'	161
'The Hours are Not Suitable for a Woman'	162
'The Work is too Dirty for a Woman': Visible and Invisible Dirty Work	163
'The Work is too Heavy for a Woman': Equipment and Techniques	166
'Lady Funeral Directors'	167
Men's Demarcationary Strategies	170
'Office Ladies'	171
Women Celebrants	175
Conclusion	180
Chapter Seven 'Sheer Persistence': Women's Closure Strategies in After-Death Work	183
Introduction	183
Women's Inclusionary Strategies	184
'Growing the Job': Buying the Firm	184
'Yes, I Can Do It': Establishing a Funeral Firm	185
'Working for Nothing': Attaining Credentials	187
'Honorary Men': Fitting into a Man's World	189
Women's Discourses as Strategies of Resistance	191
'The Hours are Not Suitable for a Woman': 'Nurses Have Always Worked Shifts'	191
'The Work is Too Heavy for a Woman': 'Men Have Only One Back Too'	193
'It's Too Expensive to Send Two on Removals': 'It Looks Nicer to Send Two'	195
Women's Closure Strategies	196
'Never Takes a Joke': 'Office Ladies' and Token Women Funeral Directors	197

‘Very New-Age’: Women Funeral Directors Excluding Celebrants	201
‘A Professional Service’ or ‘Taking Advantage’? Women Celebrants and JPs	204
Conclusion	206
Chapter Eight ‘A Point of Difference’: New Professionalism and the Feminisation of After-Death Work	209
Introduction	209
Dismantling the Hierarchies: Towards a Shared Expertise	211
‘Give Your Worries about Death to the Funeral Director’	212
Offering Choices	214
Sharing Power	215
Valuing Both Formal and Informal Knowledge	217
Interdependent Client/Professional Relationships	218
Developing Non-Competitive Collegial Relationships	219
‘Accounting’ for Success	221
‘The Whole Womanly Touch’: Embodied Care Work	222
‘Dignity and Respect’: Caring for the Corpse	223
Women as Mothers and Nurses	225
‘A Woman’s Presentation Skills’: Women’s Tacit Skills	227
‘Men Won’t Talk about how You Feel’: From Emotions of Control to Expression of Emotions	229
Conclusion	236
Chapter Nine Conclusions: Connecting Closure and Difference	239
Appendix 1 Letter to Research Participants	251
Appendix 2 Information Sheet	252
What the Study is About	252
What the Study Will Entail	253
Ethical Issues	253
Appendix 3 Question Prompts	254
Appendix 4 Consent Form	255
1. Your Rights	255
2. Consent Statement	255
Appendix 5 Transcribers’ Statement of Confidentiality	257
References	259

Chapter One

Undertaking: A Gendered Introduction

Vignette One

The celebrant, Ted,¹ stands in the chapel entrance waiting for his cue. The funeral director settles the bereaved family into the front row of the chapel and withdraws. Ted buttons the jacket of his dark grey suit, gives his tie a twitch and ‘shoots’ his shirt cuffs. Standing a little straighter, he marches along the aisle to the front of the chapel. There he pauses, with bowed head, at the coffin, which is topped by a large, formal sheaf of flowers. After a moment, Ted moves to stand behind the lectern. Without waiting for the organist to bring the music to a close, he clears his throat and introduces himself to the gathered mourners:

Good morning. For those of you who do not know me I would like to introduce myself. My name is Ted and I am a retired hospital chaplain. We are here today in the presence of God to remember Gwen, to give thanks to God for her life and to comfort and support those who mourn. Let us begin by standing and singing together the first hymn printed on the inside of your service sheets.

At the end of the hymn, Ted recites a prayer, reads a passage from the Bible and recounts a brief, chronological history of Gwen’s life and her achievements. Next, Ted structures the proceedings. Making an invitation to the mourners to speak about Gwen, he announces:

It was early on Saturday morning that I learnt of the death of Gwen and was asked to officiate at this very important service. I never knew Gwen so at this point I will step back and there will be an opportunity for those of you who did know her to say a few words about Gwen. But first, a few ground rules. Do not just stand where you are to talk. Come forward and speak into the microphone. Introduce yourself clearly, not everyone knows who you are. Do not repeat what someone else has already said, and be brief – do not go on and on and on and on and on.

There is a small, strained titter as Ted steps back from the lectern. But this is followed by a tense pause before a nephew of Gwen’s stands, climbs over the legs of those beside him and moves forward. Hesitantly at first, he formally introduces himself as Thomas, which is odd, as he is always known as Tom. Tom begins to tell a story about Gwen. He captures himself mid-sentence, saying, ‘I mean Aunt Gwen.’ He then tells of

¹ Names of vignette characters and research participants have been altered.

Gwen's generosity, warmth and always open house. As he sees nods of recognition and encouragement from others in the chapel, he relaxes and moves on to tell several amusing anecdotes of childhood holidays spent with Aunty Gwen. He finishes and returns to his seat, amid quiet chuckles and chatter, as Arthur, one of Gwen's cousins, moves forward to take his place. By the time Arthur has told several more hilarious tales of escapades achieved with Gwen's complicity, the gathered mourners are laughing openly. The evident strain has gone.

As Arthur returns to his seat, an older woman, Gwen's neighbour of twenty years, rises, climbs across the others in her row and starts to walk forward. But when she reaches the aisle, she sees that the celebrant is occupying the lectern. The woman blushes and retraces her steps to her seat. Once more Ted clears his throat. He waits, silently scanning the room until the woman is seated and the chatter has completely subsided before saying:

Death is not easy to cope with, especially for those close to the one who has died. I want you to know that it is all right for you to feel sad today. It is all right for you to cry here. If no one else wishes to speak, let us proceed with the service.

The warmth and camaraderie radiating from the mourners after the stories of Tom and Arthur immediately evaporate. It is as if the emotional outpouring of Gwen's gathered friends has been expressed and neatly contained. In the stillness and silence, Ted has celebrated a good funeral.

Vignette Two

The funeral director guides the bereaved family to their seats in the front row of the chapel as Lynette, the celebrant, threads her way through the crowd of mourners standing in the back of the chapel to stop beside the organist. She smiles and gives a nod to the organist to indicate that she is about to start. The organist slides into a final verse of *Beautiful Isle of Somewhere* as Lynette walks to the front of the chapel, where she pauses briefly, with her hand on the coffin, to take in the profusion of flower posies, framed photos and two beautifully dressed porcelain dolls. Lynette then turns towards the front row of people. Stooping, she shares a smile and a few words with the elderly man sitting between his adult children in the middle of the front row. After touching his shoulder she steps to the lectern, just as the organist brings the music to a close. Lynette

settles her books on the lectern before looking up smiling, first at those in the front seats and then around the gathered crowd. She begins:

Good afternoon and a very warm welcome to you all. I'm Lynette, a funeral celebrant. Thank you for attending this service in which we remember and celebrate the life of Nell. Most of you will know that Nell died peacefully on Tuesday, surrounded by her family who have cared for her so lovingly during her recent illness. Your presence and support over the past months and in coming here today help carry her husband Bill, daughters Beverley and Delwyn and son Graham and their partners and children through this very sad time.

Nell called me six months ago to arrange this service and I have since come to know her and her family as friends during my visits. For this reason, we have been able to all work together to make this their special occasion, in which they are hoping you will feel welcome to participate. First, Beverley will accompany her son Ben as he sings a tribute that he has written especially for his grandmother. Following this, Beverley, Delwyn and Graham will come forward to talk about Nell, as they knew her.

When they have finished they would love to hear from anyone who feels able to come forward to add to their picture of Nell. It is not an easy thing to do, but be assured we will be with you. Don't feel it has to be a speech. Any, even tiny, memory or anecdote will enrich all our memories of Nell. I know, as you introduced yourselves to me at the door, that among you are teaching colleagues of Nell's, members of her bowling club, porcelain doll club and garden club, cousins, friends, some from many years ago, and neighbours. You each know a different aspect of Nell's life and your stories of her will be long treasured.

The Research Background

These two vignettes are constructions, each an amalgam of the features of several events. They are not about Ted and Lynette. Neither are they simply about funeral services. They are about men and women in the funeral industry in Aotearoa New Zealand. The funeral services experienced in churches and chapels, on marae, in community halls and at family homes every day are the public expression, perhaps culmination, of several days of intensive after-death activity involving numerous workers. Ted and Lynette represent different styles of professional after-death work. I know this because, as organist, I was invited to play music at many hundreds of funerals like these. In Ted's service, he sets 'ground rules', and in that we find a containment of emotion, the process controlled by an expert professional. Lynette is also a professional. She seeks neither to control the process of the funeral, nor to contain emotion. Instead, her aim is to facilitate the family's choices and to allow expressions of emotion to emerge.

Twenty years ago in Aotearoa New Zealand, there was little opportunity for choice in funerals, either in who organised them or in the form of service. For much of the twentieth century, funerals were considered a male domain. As Pringle and Alley (1995: 107) maintain,

It was considered unladylike for women to be involved in the organisation of funerals or to go to the graveside. Funerals were men's business with women's participation organised around the image of the grieving widow.

Usually, with minimal input from a male relative of the deceased, a male funeral director would take control of the dead body. In most cases he would embalm the body – there are claims that in Aotearoa New Zealand as many as 99.9 percent of bodies are embalmed (Aldridge, 2002: 1) – and arrange the funeral service and the burial or cremation of the corpse. The funeral director, in turn, would most often contact a male member of clergy, either active or retired, to conduct the funeral service in a church or funeral firm's chapel. A standard funeral service format set down by any one of the mainstream Christian churches would be followed, irrespective of whether the deceased or their families were church members. For many churchgoers, such a funeral offered great comfort, both spiritually and through the sense of being gathered into the care and support of the church community. For those who were not regular churchgoers, however, these services became increasingly perfunctory and meaningless. And brief. By the early 1990s, twenty minutes was the 'standard' at the various venues where I played.²

Some did not last that long. At the funeral service for Amy, a young child, exactly seven minutes after the priest strode into the funeral chapel the curtain had been drawn in front of the casket, the service was over and he had left. There had been no input from family or friends; no comfort, apart from a terse religious message offered to the patently deeply upset young parents, reminding them of God's will and mercy. Amy's name had been inserted into the spaces marked 'n' in the priest's funeral liturgy. But otherwise there was nothing to connect Amy's grieving parents, or gathered grandparents, aunts, uncles or friends to the reality of her lost life and imagined future. There were no stories of Amy's place in their lives, of the love shared, or the agony of suffering at bedside vigils. There were no reminders to keep Amy's presence alive by

² In parts of Britain the time allotted for services held at crematoria was fifteen minutes. As one family was being ushered out the back door, the next was being led through the front door (Walter, 1990).

talking about her and what her life had meant to them, not even reminders to care for each other through the coming months and years.

The funeral service for Amy was at the nadir of my fifteen years of funeral experiences. While no sudden improvements followed, and I have since attended too many desolate, arid occasions, there was never another as starkly shocking, never another where the entire gathering of mourners has sat in such overwhelmingly stunned, grief-stricken despair. Instead, very gradually and discontinuously, changes have quietly slipped in. And many of the differences we see in funerals twelve years later can be traced to experiences of the emptiness and meaninglessness of such funerals as Amy's.

Some years after Amy's funeral service, I spent three months at a funeral firm. I was gathering data for an ethnographic study on emotion management for a graduate term paper on sociological research methods. The results of that research were published: Watson and Tolich (1998) *Acquainted with Grief: Emotion Management Among Death Workers*. It was while I spent those three months following the funeral firm workers as they went about their daily work that I became aware for the first time of the gendered division of labour and the hierarchical nature of the gender relations within the firm. At first I wondered if the gendered hierarchy was specific to this one family firm. With hindsight, I realised that it had been the same at the other firms where I had played the organ over the years. Quite simply, men were the funeral directors and most often the embalmers, and men were the officiating clergy at the funeral service. Women worked in the office. The men's work, the reason for the firm's existence, was valued more highly than the women's work, which was viewed as supporting the men. Men were full time workers and women were more likely to be part time workers. At two of the firms, women had worked as embalmers. In both cases the women were employed on a casual basis, filling in when the men were too busy, and frequently requiring a 'top up' payment from Social Welfare, as they did not receive a living wage.

My next research (Watson, 1999) involved reading the sixty years' issues of *The New Zealand Funeral Director (NZFD)*. *NZFD*, first published in 1939, is the quarterly association magazine of the Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand (FDANZ),³

³ FDANZ was established in 1937 as the New Zealand Federation of Funeral Directors Inc, only changing to FDANZ in 1970. However, to avoid confusion I refer to them as FDANZ throughout. They and the two other funeral directing associations in New Zealand are discussed in more detail in later chapters.

the largest funeral director trade association in Aotearoa New Zealand. Reading the magazines, I quickly noticed that nearly every action of many of the leaders among the funeral directors was based on their desire to gain state recognition of their occupation as a profession. I became completely absorbed in following and making the connections between the traits, listed by functionalist theorists such as Pavalko (1971) as evidence of a group's professional status, and the actions of the funeral directors. Even though I had become aware of the gendered nature of relations within individual funeral firms, and issue after issue of *NZFD* revealed a much wider pattern of gender inequality, it was not until after I had completed that second research project that I fully connected the relevance of those gendered relations to the funeral directors' professional project. That is, the funeral directors' professional project was a product of modernity. And modernity itself, as Witz and Marshall (2004b: 23) so clearly express it, was a masculinist, gendered project, designed specifically to establish male dominance and control of the public sphere, confining women to the private sphere of the family home.

Thinking of the gendered nature of modernity and the funeral directors' professional project I reread the *NZFD*. While there were a few 'ladies' and 'wives' mentioned, women, as active workers on an equal basis with men, were missing. Funeral directors' wives might appear as a footnote in descriptions of firms in which all the men, whether family or non-family, sometimes for generations, were named. The infrequently named women were referred to as supportive, although very much appreciated, helpers. One example occurred in 1976, in the profile of FDANZ member Watney Sibun. After a full history of the firm and description of the funeral director's achievements and activities, there was a photograph of 'the present staff'. Pictured were thirteen men, each named with first and last names. At the end of the three-page profile was a note: 'Absent' and a list of five women, identified by title, surnames and first initials only (*NZFD*, 1976, 21-4). In 1979, in the profile of another member firm, after a full description of the men and their funeral directing, social and community activities and successes, the only mention of a woman was in the final line: 'June, Ron's better half, acts as part-time receptionist as required' (*NZFD*, 1979: 30). A further example appeared in a commemorative FDANZ booklet *1937-1987 A Golden Anniversary History* in which author Jack Ninness, a former *NZFD* editor, included a half page under the heading 'Ladies in a Men's World'. His brief description began:

Funeral Directing, like many another occupation, has traditionally been a masculine dominated profession. The wives were very much in the background, but were often the mainstay of the business in their supportive role (Ninness, 1987: 27).

A little later Ninness concluded with a typical tribute to the wives:

Having paid tribute where it is due, history demands that recognition be accorded to the unsung heroines of this Association, the wives of funeral directors. Our debt to them is huge. Our tribute to them is loving recognition of their support (ibid).

In the March 1975 issue, the cover of *NZFD* bore a photograph of Tresnor Fountain, 'New Zealand's Very First Registered Lady Funeral Director'. The accompanying article described Tresnor Fountain as 'the managing director of her husband's business' (*NZFD*, 1975: 3). There had been a few other women participating as funeral directors, sometimes wives working alongside their husbands, sometimes taking over the work after the death of their husbands (Ninness, 1987: 27). Although two other women had received the Presentation and Preservation (embalming) Certificate before Tresnor Fountain received hers in 1973, what made her different was that she had successfully pursued registration with FDANZ, even though she had apparently not received the requisite Certificate in Funeral Directing (see Ninness, 1987: 48). It was not until 1997 that Tania Faithfull became the first woman to be elected to the FDANZ executive committee (Redgrave, 2002: 194).

As Figure I demonstrates, in 1976 women comprised 6 percent (18) of the total number of full time funeral directors and embalmers (294).⁴ In the same year, 4.2 percent of veterinarians were women, 9.4 percent of lawyers, 18 percent of general practitioners (GPs) and 17.2 percent of pharmacists. By 1991, the percentage of women veterinarians had risen to 22.6 percent, lawyers to 23.8 percent, GPs to 28.4 percent, and pharmacists to 44.8 percent (Norris, 1997: 25). In 2001, women represented 36.5 percent of veterinarians, 36.3 percent of lawyers, 36.8 percent of GPs and 52.6 percent of pharmacists (Statistics New Zealand, 2005). By 1991, the percentage of women funeral directors and embalmers, on the other hand, had fallen well behind these other 'masculine dominated professions' (Ninness, 1987, cited above). Women had risen to only 11 percent of the total numbers of funeral directors and embalmers. However, by 2001, the latest Statistics New Zealand figures available, although women funeral

⁴ 1976 was the earliest data available for 'undertakers and embalmers'. Figures for the two occupations are combined, possibly because in New Zealand funeral directors have tended to do their own embalming.

directors and embalmers still lagged behind the numbers of women in the other groups above, there was an almost 14 percent increase, with women funeral directors and embalmers reaching nearly 25 percent. Moreover, while between 1976 and 1986 women accounted for only 27 percent of the 78 *new* funeral directors and embalmers, in the last ten years, 1991-2001, 55.5 percent of the 162 new funeral directors and embalmers were women (Statistics New Zealand, 2004).⁵

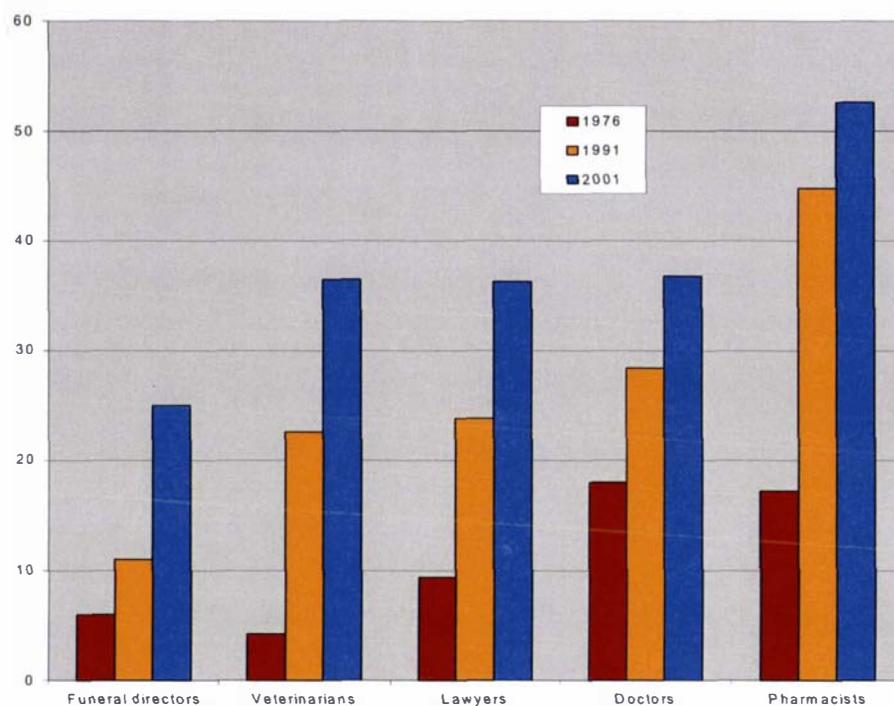


Figure 1: Women as a percentage of funeral directors and embalmers in comparison with women in some professions⁶

In fifteen years I played the organ for five funeral firms, for some years at a rate of more than 200 funerals a year. In those firms, I worked for nineteen funeral directors, all of whom were men. I observed and listened to countless members of clergy from a wide variety of denominations officiate at funeral services, following a standard Christian funeral service liturgy. Only four of those funeral officiants were women. Some

⁵ There is no census data available for funeral celebrants. This is unsurprising, as funeral celebrancy was only established as an occupational specialism in 1995, with the opening of the Certificate in Celebrancy Studies course at the Auckland Institute of Technology (AIT), now known as the Auckland University of Technology (AUT). Prior to that, the member of clergy or Justice of the Peace (JP) who officiated at the funeral service for an honorarium was known as the 'officiant'. Some firms still use the term officiant. Unless specifically referring to clergy and/or JPs, I use the term celebrant throughout.

⁶ Sources: Norris (1997: 25); Statistics New Zealand (2005).

funerals were wonderful, some clergy, men and women, warm and kind. I looked forward to their services. I loved hearing stories from family and friends, some moving me to tears and others making me swallow hard not to laugh out loud and draw attention to myself. But they did not happen often enough. Sometimes I felt angry at a clergy member's attitude, sometimes just bored and sad at the seeming waste of time.

Then, in the late 1990s a change occurred. A non-clergy woman arrived to take the service. A few weeks later, there was another. They moved so easily among the gathering mourners and spoke so intimately with the family during the service that, at first, I assumed they were family friends. They stood back to allow families and friends to take the spotlight, but moved forward to help when it was needed. One woman appeared at several services and was then rarely asked back. The other appeared frequently for a longer period, but the frequency diminished as a male chaplain was increasingly brought in to replace her. The women and I chatted as we waited for the mourners to arrive. I learnt that they had recently trained as civil celebrants at a new course, established and run since 1995 by Mary Hancock, first at the Auckland Institute of Technology, now known as the Auckland University of Technology (AUT), and since 2002, as demand grew, also at AUT in Christchurch.⁷ The ideas for their funeral celebrancy work were not new. They were an extension of earlier work by Marian Barnes (1982, 1985, 1991) a pioneering Auckland celebrant who, following changes in 1975 to the 1955 Marriage Act in Aotearoa New Zealand, and along with a growing number of men and women elsewhere (e.g. Gorer, 1965; Walter, 1990, 1996), had seen the need for new forms of non-religious funeral service.⁸ I also learnt that there were several more graduates from the same course in my region and many more in Auckland and other regions. They were establishing themselves as a new occupational specialism, and the large majority were women.⁹

Thinking of the difference between the women's services and so many I had seen, I wondered why women were not more fully involved in the funeral industry. I began to wonder about the male dominance of the industry, the absence of women as funeral

⁷ The Certificate in Celebrancy Studies includes modules on a range of ceremonies including weddings, funerals and naming ceremonies (Mary Hancock, personal communication, 2002).

⁸ Mary Hancock, personal communication, 2005.

⁹ In 2005, with men never representing more than 25 percent of course numbers (and sometimes 0 percent), women still form the large majority of celebrancy graduates (Mary Hancock, personal communication, 2005).

directors, the casual basis of women embalmers' employment, and, rather belatedly, about the women clerical staff at the bottom of the gendered hierarchy. Here was a caring profession, and in our society women have been considered the carers. And then I suddenly realised the implications of both the growing success of the celebrancy course and the sharp increase shown in the census data of women's entry as funeral directors and embalmers over the last ten years. Women were apparently successfully overcoming the long established gender barriers. Intrigued, I mulled over the idea of meeting more women working in the industry. I thought that by hearing about their experiences I might be able to understand how this occupational gender reversal was happening.

I was still just wondering when a funeral director asked if I had decided on the topic for my doctoral research. I replied that I was thinking of writing about women in the funeral industry. He stopped and thought for a moment before saying in a puzzled voice, 'But there aren't many of them. Would it be enough for a thesis?' I answered, 'There are several celebrants around here for a start.' His astonished response confirmed my belief in the need to explore women's means of breaching the hierarchical, gendered underpinnings of the funeral industry. In a voice of utter bafflement, the funeral director said, 'Celebrants? But they're not part of the funeral industry.'

The Research Aim and Scope

The aim of this thesis, then, is to examine the means through which women are prevailing over gendered exclusion and marginalisation in after-death work in the funeral industry in Aotearoa New Zealand.

To this end, I write about the views of men in the funeral industry, men like Ted in the opening vignette, and about how they have for so long dominated and controlled all aspects of after-death work as the expert professionals. The main focus of the thesis, however, is on the experiences of women working in the field of after-death work. Some, like Lynette, are part of the steadily growing group of funeral directors, embalmers and celebrants moving into the funeral industry with a different view of what professionalism means. Others are women working in the industry in what have been considered as 'traditional women's work' – the clerical roles. I bring to the fore

all these women's views and experiences of entering and working in what has been jealously guarded as a man's arena. In doing so, I uncover gendered boundaries created by gendered closure strategies, gendered discourses and professional projects, and the women's claims to be making a difference as they increasingly move into this male world. After fifteen years as a funeral organist, I can say that I see changes occurring in the way after-death work is performed within the funeral industry. The changes are based on gender difference and on the right of the bereaved to make choices.

Throughout the thesis, my interest is in the gendered relationships surrounding those in the commercial sector who work with the bereaved family and the corpse, as it is prepared for the funeral service and burial or cremation.¹⁰ By after-death workers in the funeral *firm*, I mean the funeral directors, embalmers, clerical staff, and, occasionally, post-funeral visitors. When referring to the funeral *industry*, I include, along with the funeral firm workers, the funeral celebrants and clergy who perform funeral services. They are all referred to by their occupational titles, or as after-death workers. There are many other funeral firm and funeral industry workers. Some larger funeral firms, for example, may employ cleaners, gardeners, caterers, and crematorium workers if they have their own crematorium. The wider funeral industry, too, includes a far more diverse range of workers. Just a few are sextons, gravediggers, and crematorium workers; casket, embalming fluid and other funerary equipment manufacturers and distributors. In Aotearoa New Zealand, these workers are unlikely to be involved closely with the bereaved family during the period leading up to the funeral, so they have not been included in this research.

Overview of the Thesis

To achieve the research aim, the thesis begins with an examination of literature that contributes to an understanding of gender boundaries in after-death work. For this, I take a two-pronged approach. First, I examine occupational control literature on professions and gendered closure strategies, including both practice-based and

¹⁰ I do not include women in such groups as the Palmerston North Women's Homedead Support Group and others who perform after-death care work 'for no or modest payment' (see Jean Hera (1995: i) *Reclaiming the Last Rites (Rights)*). Although these women are outside the scope of my study, I wish to acknowledge their contribution to the growing re-evaluation of issues, including rituals, surrounding after-death processes and whose choices matter.

discursive-based strategies. Second, I move to a study of literature that examines gender boundaries within organisations. The reason for taking two approaches is that the first enables a focus on gendered occupational closure strategies and discursive strategies of control, while the second perspective addresses organisational gendered structures, cultures and power relations. Together, the approaches offer insights into the gendered boundaries, hierarchy and power relations at work among after-death workers.

I begin by an exploration of the literature on occupational control and professional projects to examine how the industry has developed and maintained a gendered, hierarchical structure. An examination of neo-Weberian theories of occupational control focuses on Witz' (1992) fourfold model of gendered closure strategies, used in the development of professional projects.¹¹ This brings to light a range of practice-based exclusionary and inclusionary strategies, used by both men and women in their struggle for control. Feminist poststructuralist literature, on the other hand, reveals the ways gendered discursive strategies have also been adopted as exclusionary and inclusionary tools by professionalising groups. The literature forming the second approach to understanding the gender imbalance in the funeral industry examines the gendering of organisational structure. Here, the particular focus is on Halford and Leonard's (2001) model of explaining gender relations in organisations by developing a multi-dimensional approach to understanding power. In this way the complex and contradictory nature of gendered cultures and structures that create gender boundaries within the funeral industry begins to emerge.

Next, Chapter Three is a discussion of the qualitative and snowballing aspects of the data-collection methods used in the research. It defines the limits of generalisability and problems of confidentiality caused by a small sample size from a very small occupational field (particularly when gender is considered), in a small population such as Aotearoa New Zealand. It also highlights the research participants in each of the occupations of funeral director, embalmer, clerical worker and celebrant.

Chapters Four and Five are the first of the analytical chapters. Based largely on secondary sources, including literature on the funeral industry and the FDANZ trade magazine *NZFD*, these chapters present a historical background to the gender divisions

¹¹ The term 'professional projects' was introduced by Magali Larson (1977) to explain that professions are the outcome of conscious effort and particular actions by occupational groups.

in the funeral industry. First, Chapter Four focuses on the masculinisation of women's informal, but structured, community after-death work, through processes of male commercialisation and professionalisation of the work. I discuss how the removal and control of the corpse from the private sphere of the home to the public sphere of the funeral 'home' placed the expression of emotion under the control of male funeral directors. Next, I examine the ways male funeral directors developed a professional project to attempt to raise their social status. Finally, I show that they have used both their professional project and the development of the funeral firm as a family business as means of excluding women from equal participation in after-death work.

While Chapter Four brings men's activities to the fore, Chapter Five then moves to look more closely at women, at the variety of after-death work activities they have performed and at the ways they have been written out of historical records as actors. Following discussion of the historical exclusion, marginalising and devaluing of women's after-death work, I then suggest reasons for women's more recent entry to the funeral industry.

Foregrounding data from the research participants' stories, Chapters Six and Seven are also divided along gender lines. In Chapter Six, the focus is on the closure strategies exercised by male funeral directors to ensure a male dominance of the funeral industry. The strategies here mirror the combination of Witz' (1992) fourfold model of gendered closure strategies and poststructuralist discursive strategies, discussed in Chapter Two. As men are the dominant group, their closure strategies against women include exclusionary and demarcationary strategies as well as discursive control strategies. Still with Witz' model of gendered closure strategies and showing that women also pursue their own professional projects, Chapter Seven then moves to data from the research participants to explore the ways countervailing inclusionary strategies are used by women to enter the funeral industry, and to examine closure strategies used by some women to exclude or marginalise other women. Following this, Chapter Eight looks at how the women's accounts of doing after-death work differently (and better) than men reflect the discourses surrounding the model of new professionalism, as outlined by authors including Hugman (1991), Williams (1993) and Davies (1995).

Finally Chapter Nine briefly draws the research findings together and I present my conclusions. I argue that as women after-death workers increasingly overcome men's

exclusionary strategies, they show that women are equal to men and also contribute different skills, learned through their experiences as women.

Chapter Two

Theorising Gender Boundaries in After-Death Work

Introduction

Throughout the twentieth century, the funeral industry in Aotearoa New Zealand was perceived to be a 'man's world'. Male funeral directors, although often helped unobtrusively by their wives and families, dominated the industry as they tried, through processes of professionalisation, to develop and control an occupational field, the disposal of the human corpse. Even into the twenty-first century, the industry has maintained stereotypical 'masculine' structures and cultures, with a hierarchical gendered division of labour in which women tend to have difficulty gaining entry into men's jobs, and in which women's jobs tend to be valued less highly than men's. The last decade, particularly, has seen a small but significant increase in the numbers of women entering into the previously male-dominated roles of funeral director, embalmer and celebrant. In spite of this, women still do not find admission to these jobs easy and the gendered hierarchy abides.

The aim of this chapter is to develop a theoretical framework with which to explain the gender boundaries in after-death work. Gender boundaries are apparent in women's historical exclusion from the funeral industry, women's continuing struggles to enter the industry, their more recent entry and experiences in the industry, and even in women's assertions of how they 'do' death-work differently from men. The barriers to entry faced by women, and the strategies they have used in their attempts to surmount them, are not confined to the funeral industry. Rather, they reflect women's position in other occupations and organisations and are linked to wider social and historical issues of gender boundaries underlying contests for power and occupational control. For this reason, I begin by outlining understandings of gender that inform and underpin my discussions on gender issues. I then briefly introduce the two strands of literature around which the theoretical framework for the thesis revolves, before moving into a fuller discussion of each strand.

Gender, Theory and After-Death Work

Gender is the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the set of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social practices (Connell, 2002: 10).

In his definition of gender, above, Bob Connell incorporates several important points. The first is a reminder to focus, not on differences between men and women, but on 'social relations within which individuals and groups act' (ibid: 9). This is significant because, although differences between men and women clearly do exist in gender relations, gendered hierarchies cannot be reduced simply to 'male/female differences.' To do so ignores other gender patterns within organisations. Examples are 'hierarchies of power among men' (ibid), in an organisation such as the army, and among women, in organisations such as hospitals and kindergartens. It also ignores the social 'nature' of gender more generally. The second point in Connell's definition is that social patterns do more than 'simply "express" bodily difference' (ibid). For example, some social practices, such as distinctive men's and women's clothing, separate women's and men's sports teams, and single-sex schools, emphasise biological difference. Connell's third point is that 'there is no fixed biological base for the *social process* of gender' (ibid: 10, my emphasis), but we still tend to make judgements and assumptions about each other's social capabilities, based on our biological/reproductive differences. For example, in the funeral industry there is an assumption among many male funeral directors that, unlike men, women will have family responsibilities interfering with their ability to fulfil night rosters. However, as Connell rightly remarks, although social structures tend to make gender relations and patterns appear to be unchanging and, therefore, natural, they continually shift as part of a wider set of shifting social processes (Connell, 1987: 6). Furthermore, multiple cultural and social understandings and differing rates of change mean that gender relations will remain a complex, contradictory and shifting site of social action.

One useful method of addressing the complexity of gender relations is by taking care to separate understandings of men and women from ideas of masculinity and femininity. In *Gender and the Professional Predicament in Nursing* (1995), Celia Davies seeks to escape the feminist dilemma of whether to declare that women are equal to men because they are the same, or that women are different from men and have unique, innate,

special qualities.¹² Davies (1995: 20) and others, including Mills (2002b: 303), suggest that the way to examine inequity in paid work organisations is to focus on gender rather than women. We need to analyse gender in organisations because social institutions, including paid work organisations, are structured by gender. Vital to such an analysis, is the need to distinguish between real men and women on the one hand, and masculinity and femininity on the other (Davies, 1995: 20). This is because masculinity and femininity are not traits that all men and women just naturally have, but neither are they simply 'scripts' that we have learned. In addition, as Davies (ibid: 21) argues, masculinity and femininity, rather than being *separate and complementary* are cultural codes or representations of gender, which can only be understood *in reference to each other*.

The concepts of masculinity and femininity also need to be examined to show that there are many possible forms of masculinity and femininity and that, like understandings of gender they, too, are shifting and socially constituted. As Jeff Hearn (1994, 2002) points out, although most organisations and organisational cultures are men's, their masculine culture has been neither theorised nor problematised in much of the organisational literature. In other words, masculine organisational cultures and identities are seen merely as 'cultures' and 'identities', and men are not named as men (Hearn, 2002: 43). Hearn argues that there is a need to examine axiomatic men's organizational cultures and identities. The reason is that, as long as men's cultures continue to be treated as a monoculture, it is too difficult to break patterns of men's dominance. He writes:

Where it is confidently asserted there is only one way of this or that identity or only one way of doing, developing, analysing or even challenging this or that particular organisational culture, the attempted reproduction of men's organisational power is rarely far away (Hearn, 2002: 49).

Yet, as will be discussed further in the section Gendered Bodies in Organisational Culture (p. 44), it is not only women who are disadvantaged by the presence of a stereotypical 'masculine' monoculture in organisations. As David Wicks and Pat Bradshaw (2002: 155) find, organisational cultures continually reproduce ideas of masculinity and femininity and prompt their workers in the appropriate ways to act. The outcome is that 'formal organisations are the sites of harmful cultural practices that

¹² For a discussion of these debates see Carol Lee Bacchi (1990) *Same Difference: Feminism and Sexual Difference*.

unfairly discriminate against men not displaying “masculine” traits and characteristics, and women, “feminine” ones’ (ibid: 154).

In developing a theoretical framework with which to explain gender boundaries in after-death work, I draw on two strands of literature. Each strand is part of the ‘structure of social relations’ (Connell, 1987: 10) that produces and constructs gender. As such, each highlights different aspects of women’s involvement in paid work. My first focus is on theories of gender and professions, while the second focus is on theories of gender in organisations. Problematically, professions and bureaucratic organisations have often been viewed as diametrically opposed, with the declared characteristics of each necessarily excluding the other. Yet, as Davies (1996: 672) points out, ‘through organisational forms that are controlled and controlling and through interpersonal relations that are distant and emotionally detached’, the social organisation of each is premised on a promotion of masculine and repression of feminine values. From within each of these strands, the literature that approaches gender as shifting, complex and socially constituted offers the most nuanced background for discussion of gendered after-death work boundaries. It is on this that I focus.

The first strand of literature considered is about *occupational control*, particularly that focusing on professions, professionalisation and gender. Funeral directors are not, strictly speaking, professionals, because the state has never granted them the necessary legal recognition (Watson, 1999). However, the literature on the gendered nature of professional projects relates directly to the funeral directors’ attempts, throughout much of the twentieth century, to achieve professional status. This literature also addresses the ways in which the funeral directors’ project has contributed to the gender boundaries underlying the exclusion of women from after-death work.

The literature addresses relations *between* different professions, between professions and the state, between professionals and their clients, and between professionals and ‘others’, including relations between professional men and women as ‘others’. Of particular interest is how these interrelationships are connected to, and affected by, the professions’ desire for monopoly and control of their sphere of work, and for status. A significant starting point for my work is Anne Witz’ *Professions and Patriarchy* (1992), which theorises the gendered underpinnings of professional projects and, in doing so, brings to light women’s difficulties in entering ‘men’s’ jobs and women’s own

professionalising projects. In discussing Witz' conceptual model of occupational closure, I examine the use of gendered exclusionary and inclusionary strategies by those engaging in professionalising projects. Following discussion of structural analyses of gendered closure strategies, I also draw on feminist poststructural analyses of gendered discursive strategies of control. These poststructural theories give greater depth to understanding gendered control processes by showing how both men and women employ discursive strategies as means of exclusion and inclusion in their tussles for power.

My second focus is on theories of gender relations in organisations. These theories interrogate women's relationship to the hierarchical gendered power structures and cultures, which together form gender boundaries present *within* funeral firms. In other words, organisational theory allows examination of site-specific features of gendered power. This literature tends to be about relationships and work in large, multi-layered, hierarchical organisations and bureaucracies, where there are career paths and promotion possibilities. Nevertheless, I suggest that organisational theory applies to smaller organisations such as funeral firms as well. Although funeral firms do not offer such clearly defined promotion paths within each occupation, their organisation is based on a gendered division of labour with a hierarchical demarcation between occupations within the firm. Funeral firms can also be seen to incorporate many other organisational features, particularly the relationships between organisational structures and cultures, gender and power.

The second strand of literature, then, focuses on gendered relations *within* organisations as sites of paid employment. Along with issues of gendered bodies and organisational cultures, hierarchical gendered power structures within organisations, including the socialisation of emotions and emotions of control in organisations, will be addressed. The current literature on emotions tends to examine their place within organisations rather than in relation to occupational control. For this reason it is addressed in this second strand of literature. However, issues of emotions in relation to gendered power are equally relevant to occupational and professional control and I examine them, both here and in the analytical chapters, in this light.

Running across the two strands of literature are several different theoretical perspectives. These include feminist neo-Weberian, structural and poststructural

perspectives of gender and power in relation to paid work. Some poststructuralist theorists (e.g. Jean-François Lyotard, 1984), taking a 'strong' poststructural approach (McLennan, 1995: 22), go so far as to contend that there can be no grand narratives but only little, local and contingent narratives (Sarup, 1993: 146). Others, including Jacques Derrida (1967), use poststructural deconstruction to critique such linguistic practices as the binary thinking in Western society that is a major part of the grand narratives that are the basis of our social structures. The strong version of poststructural theorising can appear to exclude the idea of patriarchy as a dominant social structure in capitalist society, therefore making it impossible to use Witz' or Hearn's theories of the relationship of patriarchy to professions alongside poststructural discourse theories.

However, feminist poststructuralist theorists discussed throughout this thesis take a more 'moderate' approach. Accepting that women's lives are constrained by structural inequalities, they apply poststructural critique to rethink modernist dichotomies. One example is the issue of whether to argue for a fairer deal for women based on women's superior qualities (gender difference), which may invert, but nevertheless maintains, the modernist dichotomy; or whether to argue for women's similarity to men (gender equality), which tends to ignore women's existing structural inequalities. In rethinking this particular modernist binary opposition, moderate poststructuralists focus on why gender difference has translated to inequity for women. They tend to view structures such as patriarchy, as neither metanarratives nor fixed, stable realities, but as institutionalised sets of discourses that have, over time, assumed an aura of taken for granted realities with their own enshrined sets of rules for appropriate behaviour.

A further reason for drawing on a range of theoretical perspectives lies in their different approaches to power. While feminist neo-Weberian, structural and poststructural perspectives each offers a different understanding of power in relation to gender in organisations, in any organisation the different forms of power may all be experienced simultaneously. Furthermore, because each perspective offers only a partial picture, employing both allows us to 'see' more of the workings of gendered power in the social world. Thus, drawing together the insights of the different perspectives opens a way to understanding the gender boundaries created by the complex and contradictory gender relations at work in organisations such as funeral firms.

In the interests of clarity, the discussion in this chapter largely separates theories of gendered work into *either* those on professional control, *or* those on gendered organisations. The reason for this is that the first group have tended to focus on relations between professionals and outside ‘others’, while the second group have more often examined gender relations among those working within organisations. Nevertheless, no clear distinctions exist, either between professions and organisations or within the more recent theoretical debates.

Functionalist theories of professions (e.g. Carr-Saunders and Wilson, [1933] 1964; Parsons, 1954; Goode, 1957) articulate a clear, hierarchical distinction between professions and other occupations. However, there have always been anomalies in trying to create such a distinction. For example, while, according to functionalists, one of the distinctive attributes of professions has been their supposed autonomy, their status as professions has been granted by the state. The state has, paradoxically, then maintained control over professions through, for example, equity laws that govern such aspects as access to education. Funeral directors and others who have not been granted professional status through state recognition, while lacking control over who can purchase or establish a business, or the standards of service provided, have more easily avoided state controls over open and equitable access to credentialing. This, in turn, has enabled them to exert much control over entry to their occupational group.

Critique of functionalist theories of professions (e.g. Johnson, 1972) shows, also, that the concept of professional autonomy is nothing more than a myth that rests on misrepresenting and undervaluing the work of others (Davies, 1995: 60). Today, with changes, including the development of large group medical practices and the bureaucratisation of medicine on the one hand, and on the other hand a tendency towards the ‘professionalisation of everyone’ (Wilensky, 1964), the notion of any clear distinction between professions and organisations is increasingly patently spurious. For example, while an organisation may depend on the services of professionals, such as lawyers to negotiate and sign contracts, professionals, in turn, are increasingly bound by organisational rules.¹³

The blurring of distinctions between professions and organisations is equally apparent in the two strands of literature addressed. This will become especially clear in the

¹³ My thanks to Edgar Burns for pointing this out.

discussions of the more recent literature on gender power in organisations, as these tend to subsume professions under organisations. Similarly, as mentioned above, the literature on emotions, which tends to focus on organisations, is also relevant to an examination of professionalisation. Bearing these connections in mind, there is, nevertheless, sufficient divergence in focus to make the separation a useful device for the purposes of this analysis.

Next, I turn to the first strand of literature on occupational control for insights into the relationship between professionalisation and gender boundaries.

Occupational Control: Professional Projects and Gender

Women wishing to enter the funeral industry in any other than 'traditional' women's roles have frequently found their way blocked by a seemingly impenetrable barrier of male funeral directors. Historical analysis of *NZFD* shows that the men first set about trying to establish funeral directing as a profession in the 1930s as a means of gaining 1) social status, 2) a monopoly for their services, and 3) occupational control, of both their own and others' occupational activities. These are all processes that Terence Johnson (1972) argued were engaged in by developing professions. Johnson's argument that professionalisation was pursued with the aim of developing 'institutionalised forms of control ... [and as] a means of controlling an occupation' (ibid: 45) is thus reflected in the funeral directors' actions.

What also becomes apparent is that, since the beginning of their professionalisation project, one of the major forms of occupational control exercised by the funeral directors has been the mobilisation of a collective, though largely unacknowledged, campaign to keep women out. To understand the men's actions and women's responses, in this section I look at literature on occupational control in professions. It is possible to identify two distinctive sets of control processes, which are significant in terms of women's experiences in the funeral industry. The first set of control processes are explained by neo-Weberian *practice-based* theories of strategies of social closure and the second by poststructural theories of *discursive-based* strategies of social closure. In the first section, I briefly discuss the functionalist trait approach to understanding professions before examining neo-Weberian explanations of professions as a particular mode of occupational control, with a particular focus on Parkin's fourfold

conceptual model of occupational closure strategies. From there, I move to focus on Witz's (1992) feminist neo-Weberian concept of professionalisation as a gendered process achieved through gendered closure strategies. This is followed by a discussion of poststructuralist theories of gendered discursive strategies of closure. The section concludes with a focus on the discursive strategies apparent in the promotion of a 'new' model of professionalism and its comparison to the 'old' modernist model of professionalism.

Theorising Professional Projects: Functionalist and Neo-Weberian Approaches

Until the early 1970s, the functionalist theorists presented the most influential sociological perspective on professions. Their approach was to judge whether occupations were professions by comparing them with a list of traits or attributes.¹⁴ The occupations deemed to be professions were those that were seen to adhere to most of the traits. As mentioned above, one of the distinctive traits said to separate professions from other occupations has been state recognition of professional status. Although funeral directors have never received the requisite state recognition, trait theories have an important bearing on the position of women in the funeral industry because male funeral directors clearly set such a list of traits as a benchmark in their quest for professional status, thus excluding women who have not historically been considered to possess these characteristics. Moreover, the newly professionalising women celebrants are in the process of following similar criteria, working towards achieving the list of professional traits to ensure recognition of their 'professional' status. Jan Williams (1993: 8) rightly notes that the traits have varied from one profession to another and changed over time. With this in mind, I include a summary of a generic list of traits held by Ronald Pavalko (1971) to distinguish the qualities of professions from other occupations:

- expertise based on complex knowledge with a systematic body of theoretical, abstract and esoteric knowledge
- relevance to the values important to society
- the provision of lengthy, specialised, symbolic and ideational training

¹⁴ For example, see Carr-Saunders & Wilson, [1933] 1964; Parsons, 1954; Goode, 1957; Etzioni, 1969a; Pavalko, 1971.

- an altruistic service ethic and a sense of ‘calling’ or commitment not self-interest should be the main motivations
- autonomy, self regulation and self-control over performance, fees, training, and access to the group through legal codes with state recognition
- a sense of community with common identity and values, control over members, control over selection, behaviour and socialisation through a professional association and magazine
- adherence to a self-administered professional code of conduct (1971:19-26).¹⁵

In the functionalist model, because professionals were understood to be using their expertise to help society, any rewards such as status and income were regarded as naturally deserved. Functionalist theorists, therefore, did not consider discussing dominance as an issue because professional power was seen as ‘legitimate authority’ (Tully and Mortlock, 1999: 166), used for altruistic purposes. Other theorists, such as Eliot Freidson (1970) using a symbolic interactionist approach and Johnson (1972) using a Marxist approach, argued for a critical examination of the effects of professional dominance and power. Their critiques show the need for a focus on how the development of a profession can be seen as the means for a group to gain and maintain control of an occupational field. Following Johnson, and critical of the ahistorical nature of the functionalist approach, Magali Larson (1977) situates the development of professions in a specific historical, social and economic context. Significantly, Larson introduces the concept of the ‘professional project’ to show that professions are not just social facts, and did not happen ‘by accident’ (ibid: xvii) but that, on the contrary, the professionalisation of occupational groups has been achieved through conscious effort, as the result of particular actions.

Historically contextualising the development of professions, Larson (ibid: 4-5) notes that the first three groups recognised as professions, divinity, law and medicine, were established by the beginning of the nineteenth century while most other professions

¹⁵ Each of these traits needs examination – e.g. professions may claim to be motivated by altruism rather than self-service, yet have been among Western society’s highest earners; Larson (1977) points out that what is meant by ‘lengthy’ training is not explained; control of members’ behaviour has allowed professions to hide behaviour and actions treated as criminal in other sections of society; Hugman (1991) argues that a service ethic is not possible while the client is treated as a passive object of the professional’s work. But, this is not the place for such a discussion. Instead the traits that are relevant to issues surrounding women’s place in professions will be discussed as they arise. The point here is that claiming the possession of these traits is an important part of professional discourse.

became established over the period between 1825 and 1880. Larson points out that the development of professions from the nineteenth century initiated a new social and economic mode of structural inequality. Whereas previous inequalities were based on either an aristocratic hierarchy or capitalist enterprise, Larson argues that professions brought instead an occupational and social hierarchy based on specialist education.

Larson writes:

[In this] occupational hierarchy ... the central principle of legitimacy is founded on the achievement of socially recognised expertise, or, more simply, on a system of education and credentialing ... [which] attempts to translate one order of scarce resources – special knowledge and skills – into another – social and economic rewards (Larson, 1977: xvii).

To explain the development of professions, Larson applies Weber's theory that social status is gained by a group's collective use of power to separate themselves from other groups. The aim of professions, she contends, is to gain monopoly of expertise for their particular services in the market and monopoly of social status in their field (ibid: xvii). Developing professions, then, had to create distinctive commodities or services and markets while convincing those markets of the exclusiveness and superiority of their specific training and expertise because 'where everyone can claim to be an expert, there is no expertise' (ibid: 31).

Frank Parkin (1979) also used Weber's theories. He argued that, 'as social collectivities seek to maximise rewards by restricting access to resources and opportunities to a limited circle of eligibles ... through a process of subordination' (1979: 44-5), so professions use exclusionary strategies such as credentialism as a means of social closure (ibid: 54). Professionalisation is thus an exclusionary strategy, a means of raising the value of a group's occupation in the market place. Through activities, including setting entry requirements and educational levels, professionalising groups maintain control over both numbers and standards of their members by the use of social closure. In this way, they aim to raise the status of their occupation and the demand for their services, thus increasing their power and enabling them to charge more for their services. As Parkin points out, such actions by groups trying to achieve dominance are unlikely to go unchallenged. It is, therefore, 'hardly possible to consider the effectiveness of exclusion practices without due reference to the countervailing actions of socially defined ineligibles' (Parkin, 1979: 45). With this in mind, Parkin argues that professionalising groups use four main strategies of social closure in their attempts to achieve increased power, prestige and profits. The four closure strategies are

exclusionary, inclusionary, demarcationary and dual closure and are identified in terms of whether the group exercising the strategy is dominant or subordinate, and whether the control sought is *intra*-occupational or *inter*-occupational – i.e. within an occupation or between different but related occupations (Ryan et al., 2003).

Exclusionary strategies are intra-occupational strategies used by dominant groups to restrict access into an occupation. An exclusionary strategy in the form of a credentialist tactic has been used by male funeral directors in Aotearoa New Zealand to block women's entry to training, thus decreasing their chances of entry as funeral directors. Inclusionary strategies are those used by subordinate groups in their attempts to overcome exclusionary strategies to gain access to an occupation. The strategies used by women trying to enter the funeral industry fit into this category. Demarcationary strategies are inter-occupational strategies used by dominant groups to control those in related professions. Funeral directors use this form of strategy to limit the aspects of after-death work controlled by celebrants. Dual closure strategies involve the use of both inclusionary and exclusionary strategies by subordinated groups. For example, some women, who have used inclusionary strategies to become funeral directors, then use exclusionary strategies against women celebrants trying to enter the industry. Together, these strategies are central to the following discussion and will be discussed further below.

Parkin's model of occupational closure helps explain the shifting interrelationships between male funeral directors and the clergy (and, to a lesser extent, between funeral directors and the medical world) throughout the twentieth century. Although I have applied gendered examples to illustrate Parkin's concepts, Parkin's approach neither considers nor accounts for the gendered source of the funeral directors' power, or the way occupational exclusion has been achieved on the grounds of gender as much as on credentialism. It is Ann Witz' (1990, 1992) development of the concept of strategies of occupational closure that draws attention to the gendered nature of the funeral directors' actions.

Occupational Closure Strategies and Gender

Although neither Larson nor Parkin considers the implications of the gendered nature of professional projects or of closure strategies, Larson does mention that divinity, law and

medicine were the first occupational groups recognised as ‘*gentlemanly* professions’ (1977: 4, my emphasis). Early sociological analysis of professions examined professions in relation to capitalism, with even most feminists largely ignoring their equally important relationship to patriarchy, the patriarchal structures embedded in Western modernity, and the development of professions as a patriarchal process (Hearn, 1982: 186). As Witz (1992: 2) writes, mainstream analyses of professions ‘have rarely gone beyond a simple equation between gender and the status, rewards or degree of autonomy enjoyed by practitioners.’ Illustrating both the theorists’ and the professions’ basis in the ‘utter and explicit *masculinity* of modernity’ (Witz and Marshall, 2004b: 21, emphasis in original), literature on professions prior to Hearn and Witz was likely to emphasise links between professions and esoteric and scientific expertise coupled with rationality, objectivity and impartiality. These are all qualities considered since Enlightenment times to be *masculine* attributes possessed by men but not by women, who were accorded *feminine* attributes of irrationality, subjectivity and being prone to emotional outbursts. Because women were presumed not to possess the appropriate skills, the professional world, like the public sphere, was obviously a man’s world, a place for men to organise and access power that was denied to women, who were relegated to the private sphere (Witz, 1990: 677). Therefore, Witz states:

The generic notion of profession is also a gendered notion. This is because it takes what are in fact the successful professional projects of class-privileged male actors at a particular point in history and in particular societies to be the paradigmatic case of profession (1992: 39).

Witz (1992) points out that the more critical theories of professions tended to consider the ways that occupational closure has been used to achieve and maintain higher social status for professionals. That is, the concern was over how professional occupational closure was used to create a class distinction. But, as Rosemary Crompton and Kay Sanderson (1990: 3) contend, a problem with many class theories (not just those relating to professions) is that they have been ‘gender blind’. In his discussions on professions, Hearn (1982) asserts that we can only understand professions through their relationship to patriarchy and gendered relations. Witz takes this a step further by arguing that as well as aspiring to a higher social status, those seeking professional closure have the particular aim of keeping professions gender specific. Perrott (2002: 22) points out that, to do this, ‘Some professions, notably medicine, redefined practices, such as obstetrics,

as scientific rather than caring in order to enable them to fit a more masculine notion of professional competence.’ As Elliott (1972 cited in Hearn, 1982: 190) says, professions were like clubs in which ‘only *gentlemen* of independent means needed to apply for membership’ (my emphasis).¹⁶ In the case of the funeral directors, upward social mobility was a stated aim of their professional project (Watson, 1999) and their closure strategies were intended to achieve this aim. Because of the impact of their actions on women, an analysis of their activities that does not include gender presents an incomplete, partial account.

Crompton (1987: 421) makes a connection between professionalism, credentialism and gendered exclusionary strategies. She links barriers to women’s education and the growing demand for educational qualifications to a wider process limiting women’s employment opportunities. Her argument is that credentialism has been ‘overlaid by gender exclusion’ and that what may seem to be individual exclusion tactics are plainly in large part collective, organisational practices. Moreover, Crompton and Sanderson (1990) point out that, when men continue to exclude women who do gain the requisite credentials, *men* are behaving *irrationally*, which, ironically, is one of the traits applied by men to women as grounds for exclusion from professional status. They write:

If women have, historically, been kept out of occupations by virtue of their lack of qualifications (either because of overt gender exclusion, or through simply not getting them), then when women do acquire the qualifications in question, the logic of credentialist exclusion suggests that access to the occupations is likely to follow. If it does not, then the legitimacy of the qualification will be undermined... Women, by proving themselves to be the intellectual equals of men, have revealed discrimination on the basis of sex alone as *irrational* (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990: 65, my emphasis).

But, these important insights, as Witz (1992: 43) points out, also need to be historically contextualised by being linked to the development of professions in relation to the construction of gender in patriarchal modernity. Witz argues for a model of professions and professional projects that recognises that closure strategies, such as credentialist tactics, are used for maintaining gender exclusion as much as for class exclusion. This means, Witz says, that it is necessary to ‘gender the agents of professional projects... within gender relations of domination and subordination ... [and] within the structural and historical parameters of patriarchal capitalism’ (Witz, 1990: 676).

¹⁶ And I would add that ethnicity also needs to be considered here – i.e. only *white* males need apply – although this is an aspect of closure that I have not examined in this thesis.

Witz, then, takes Parkin's fourfold conceptual model of strategies of occupational closure, described above, to show that these are explicitly gendered strategies, used in the development of professional projects. In doing so, Witz attempts to expose the historically gendered nature of professional projects. Furthermore, she maintains that, by using this model to examine professional projects, it is possible to show that subordinate, as well as dominant, groups have participated in strategies of occupational closure. Men, Witz says, have used exclusionary and demarcationary strategies to exclude women from particular occupations and confine them to other segregated occupations in a more subordinate position (ibid: 197). These are the strategies often used by male funeral directors in their attempts to keep the funeral industry a male domain and so achieve professional status. Through the use of dual closure strategies in particular, women have engaged in their own occupational closure, in their own professional projects in fields such as nursing and midwifery (ibid: 117). In the same way, individually, women funeral directors and embalmers can be seen to have used inclusionary strategies, while, collectively, celebrants are likely to have used dual closure strategies, as they try both to gain a foothold in the industry and to edge out older, less credentialed Justices of the Peace (JPs). Therefore, although men's professional projects have had a strong advantage over women's, because men have had more access to resources of power (ibid: 192), women have not been utterly powerless, but have exercised agency both to resist the men's closure strategies and to develop their own.

Nevertheless, the gendered power inequalities remain. As Hearn (1982) points out, the 'professions' resulting from the women's projects have in reality been considered as merely subservient 'semi-professions', under the control and management of the men in full professions. Because semi-professions, such as nursing, midwifery and social work, are occupations where women are numerically predominant, it has been important for men to maintain control, and the more 'fully professional' the women's occupations become, the more, in fact, they are dominated by men. In other words, 'professionalisation is merely a shorthand term for a variety of processes by which men move into and increase their influence on the semi-professions' (Hearn, 1982: 197).

Witz focuses on gendered groups as *collective agents* employing specific exclusionary and inclusionary strategies to gain or maintain market monopoly and increased social

status. As a way of examining the relationship of women to power in paid employment, Witz' approach is relevant to groups such as nurses and midwives who have acted collectively within an occupation to try to raise the status of that occupation. The increasing numbers of women seeking to become funeral directors and embalmers, and the similarity of their inclusionary strategies, indicate the influence of wider social discourses of gender equality. Nevertheless, although the newly professionalising women celebrants are consciously working together as a group, the women seeking to become funeral directors and embalmers have never acted collectively as they have not considered themselves to be part of a group. Rather than working through collective agency to raise the status of an occupation they are in, they tend to be individuals outside an occupation trying to get in, or gendered individuals inside an occupation trying to achieve gendered equality.

Witz, then, has provided a helpful tool for bringing a gender focus to theories of professions, showing that while professions were developed as men's projects, women in predominantly women's occupations have used collective agency to develop their own professional projects. In spite of this, there are two problems with Witz' gendered closure theory. The first is that it does not examine the situation of women as individual actors. Because Witz does not attend to women who do not work collectively, she fails to give an adequate explanation that can be applied to understanding women's difficulties in entering male-dominated fields, such as after-death work, in any except supporting roles.

The second problem is that closure theory does not account for the concealed inclusion of work women do within professions that furthers professional goals. As Davies (1996) contends, far from being excluded from professions, women's participation is integral to professions, as they are currently constructed. While Witz shows that women in professions have been segregated or marginalised into subservient work, the point that Davies makes is that as well as being segregated, women's work in professions tends to be hidden and unacknowledged. She explains:

Focusing on women's (unacknowledged) inclusion draws attention to the deeply contradictory nature of the struggles in which women engage when they seek change in the world of paid work and perhaps in the public world more generally. Women are asking for inclusion in a system of relations already predicated on a hidden form of their inclusion, a form, moreover, that does not work without this inclusion (Davies, 1996: 672).

What is needed, Davies argues, is analysis of how gendered discursive strategies are used as part of professions and the professionalisation process. Rather than focusing on the *exclusion* of women in an attempt to understand gender and professions today it is more important to examine the reasons for 'their routine *inclusion* in ill-defined support roles' (ibid: 661, my emphasis) and the ways this work is 'masked in a discourse of gender that lies at the heart of professional practice' (ibid: 663). Similarly, Joyce Fletcher (1999), in her study of women in design engineering, argues for the need to focus on the ways women in professions, with exactly the same qualifications as their male colleagues, are channelled into performing relational work, work which is then discursively devalued and made invisible.

I suggest that the two approaches to the gendered nature of professions are, nevertheless, not incompatible, and that the way to link them is through a feminist poststructural analysis. While women's *inclusion* in support roles has been vital to the success of the funeral industry, it has, indeed, been devalued and made invisible, and this will be discussed further in both the following section and the one on gender boundaries in organisations. On the other hand, there is no doubt that there has been, simultaneously, a systematic *exclusion* of women from the more highly visible and valued jobs of funeral director and celebrant. Moreover, men have discursively justified their structural and practical exclusion of women. Through incorporating a feminist poststructural analysis it becomes possible to examine both women's individual agency, missing from Witz' closure theory, and the discourse of gender in professions that is used to render women and their contributions invisible, the issue raised by Davies. This is because, by emphasising the social context and construction of the production of meaning in discourses, feminist poststructural analysis reveals the fluid, fragmented nature and complexities of power. Next, then, I examine how poststructuralist theories of the interrelationship between professions and gendered discursive strategies of control also contribute to an explanation of women's exclusion from, and attempts to enter, the funeral industry.

Feminist Poststructuralism and Gendered Discourses as Strategies of Control

As a means of understanding and helping to break down the patriarchal system of power that creates and maintains gender boundaries and inequalities in professions, it is useful to add a feminist poststructural analysis that emphasises the gendered nature of the

relationship between power, the creation of knowledge, and whose voices are heard or not heard. Fletcher (1999) argues for a feminist poststructural analysis in her research into the ways women's work is made to 'disappear' in male-dominated professions such as design engineering. She writes:

Poststructuralist inquiry calls attention to the way knowledge is produced and to the relationship between knowledge, power and discourse. It focuses on how some voices in the discourse are heard and counted as knowledge, while others are silenced, marginalised, or excluded. Poststructuralist critique gives voice to these marginalised perspectives and calls attention to the systems of power that have marginalised them. Feminist poststructuralism adopts these same principles but with a focus on the gendered nature of knowledge production and the way it maintains and reinforces power relationships between the sexes. Thus, the goal of feminist poststructuralist inquiry is to add a specific marginalised voice to organisational discourse – women's voice – and, by doing so, disrupt a particular system of power: patriarchy (Fletcher, 1999: 21).

In the funeral industry, as in other male-dominated areas of work, what has been heard is a particular discursive construction of men's and women's roles. This has been articulated largely through men's definitions and descriptions of the industry, its aims, culture and values, how the work should be done, and who are, or are not, appropriate workers. The male funeral directors' constructions have been heard through their association magazine, through representations in the media as the public face/voice of the industry, and as the public face/voice for clients within the industry. However, women, too, participate in diverse gendered discursive strategies of inclusion and exclusion.

In order to understand better how women use gendered discourses as inclusionary strategies to counteract the dominant men's exclusionary strategies, the next section moves to an examination of three aspects of poststructuralist analysis relevant to this study. Highlighting an important dilemma facing women in the funeral industry, the first section details feminist 'difference versus equality' debates. Next is a discussion of gendered discourses and their uses as exclusionary and inclusionary strategies. This is followed by examination of a particular example of a gendered discursive strategy – the claims for a 'new' or 'democratic' model of professionalism as an improvement over the 'old' professionalism, illustrating the potential power of the poststructural perspective in exploring women's experiences in the funeral industry.

Gender Difference and/or Equality?

When occupational exclusion and inclusion strategies are based on grounds of gender, they are, in fact, based on grounds of gender *difference*. In Western society 'the point of reference is always "man"', which means that women are judged as *different from* a 'masculine norm' (Bacchi, 1990: x). Feminists confronting this issue have tended to take one of two positions. The focus in the first position is on *difference* – the contention here is that through either innate or socialised differences women are different from men and have better qualities than men for particular occupations, especially those where nurturing and emotions may be involved. The focus in the second position is on *equality* – the assertion is that women are the same as men and, therefore, equal to them. Women entering the funeral industry are faced with this dilemma. They are divided over whether to claim to be equally as capable as men of performing after-death work, or whether to claim that, as women, they bring superior understanding and nurturing skills. Because of the bearing the debate has on the choices made by the women in the funeral industry, I next present discussions of feminists who try to avoid the either/or discourses and whose ideas, I suggest, together help provide an understanding of the women's dilemma.

Michèle Barrett (1987) points out that the 'difference' or 'equality' dilemma is a long-standing problem that continues to cause a deeply divided tension within feminism. She contends that the dilemma amounts to a debate over which of two possible courses of action would better improve women's position. The first way is to aim for an androgynous equality, by working to eliminate the differences on which women's position rests. The second way is to work to achieve greater recognition and material rewards for doing those activities considered 'naturally' women's occupations. Barrett argues that, at the heart of this division, is the understanding of where differences lie, and that this stems in part from a failure to agree on the meaning of the term 'difference'. For some feminists, the differences are simply between men and women, whether seen from an essentialist or social constructionist perspective. As Barrett (1987: 29) writes, a poststructuralist deconstruction of the two categories 'women' and 'men' shows that allegations of a division between the categories are spurious: there are as many differences *within*, as between, the two categories and also *within* the specific social existences of each.

Women have made many political gains by asserting that they are not different from men. Yet, because of both their biological and their social roles, women still have interests, responsibilities and challenges that *are* different from men's. Davies (1995) goes some way towards explaining why the dichotomy has not been resolved when she writes about the dilemma for women in using discourses that focus on *either* difference *or* equality. To focus on difference risks the charge of essentialism and of perpetuating the idea that, if women are different from men, they are naturally inferior to men. On the other hand, as Davies points out, if women say that they are different because they have been socialised to be so, then women are in danger of being seen as perpetrators and willing victims of their own oppression (ibid: 20). These are issues confronting women, both within, and trying to enter, the funeral industry. As women, they are assumed to be physically weak and emotionally expressive, suitable for doing nurturing work in the private sphere of the home, but not suitable for professional work. With the recent shift in emphasis in the funeral industry to after-death grief care, women could be considered more fit for the work than men, who are assumed to be physically strong, but rational rather than emotionally expressive. The problem is that, although men concede there is a demand for more expressiveness at funerals, they want to contain and control the emotion while also remaining at a distance from it.

In examining the implications for women of the 'equality versus difference' debate among feminists, Joan Scott (1988: 38) argues that it is an example of 'meaning expressed in a politically self-defeating way'. The reasons for this, Scott points out, can be found by using a poststructuralist discursive analysis to look at how the concept of 'difference' is used in Western thinking. Doing so shows how the issue for women of believing that they need to choose between arguing for *either* equality *or* difference, stems from the way meaning, in Western thought, is made through contrasting one concept to another in the form of a binary opposition – e.g. men/women, presence/absence, and unity/diversity. In these oppositional pairs the left or 'leading' side of the pair is represented as superior and its partner as weaker and derivative; the second is merely what the first is not. Scott argues that, on the contrary, the first of the pair of terms depends equally on the second for meaning, making the second term also 'generative of the definition of the first term' (ibid: 37). Or, as Jane Flax (1987: 628) writes, 'each part can have no meaning or existence without the other'. Drawing a line between the pair of concepts creates two distinct, unitary categories, which disguises

and ignores the interdependence between the two. Understanding the interdependence of the two sides of the binary pairs means that feminists do not need to be tied to accepting the validity of arguing for *either* equality *or* difference because 'equality is not the elimination of difference, and difference does not preclude equality' (Scott, 1988: 38). Therefore, while defending the historical arguments of feminists, observing that they have indeed tried to reconcile and overcome the problems inherent in separating the two strands of thought, Scott believes that, to be effective, critical feminism needs to follow two moves. She explains:

The first [move] is the systematic criticism of the operations of categorical difference, the exposure of the kinds of exclusions, inclusions – the hierarchies – it constructs, and a refusal of their ultimate 'truth'. A refusal, however, not in the name of an equality that implies sameness or identity, but rather (and this is the second move) in the name of an equality that rests on differences – differences that confound, disrupt, and render ambiguous the meaning of any fixed binary opposition. To do anything else is to buy into the political argument that sameness is a requirement for equality, an untenable position for feminists (and historians) who know that power is constructed on and so must be challenged from the ground of difference (Scott, 1988: 48).

To eliminate inequality based on gender difference, then, requires us both to reveal exclusionary practices based on gendered differences and, by showing the falsity of the notion of fixed gender binary opposites, to insist that differences do not preclude equality.

Carol Lee Bacchi (1990) is concerned about how debates over sameness or difference ignore and obscure underlying causes of inequality. Like Scott, she notes that feminist debates over the merits of professing either sameness or difference in relation to men are *historically specific* and change in response to current social conditions. This connection to shifting social conditions, Bacchi argues, shows that the problems facing women are political and 'infinitely more complex than asking if they are the same as or different from men', because to look no further than this 'avoids all the real issues, such as how families are to be cared for' (Bacchi, 1990: 244). Focusing on sameness or difference thus loses sight of the more important questions of hierarchy: if women are different from men, how has this difference been constructed as inequality, and if women are the same as men, what has led to the power differential? Theorists, Bacchi believes, need, instead, to be examining the structures that convert women's *difference* from men to women's *disadvantage* (ibid: xvii), an issue of central concern to understanding the position of women in the funeral industry. Furthermore, for Bacchi the way for feminists to escape the dilemma of a sameness/difference framework is to

raise political awareness of the issues that trap women into such dualistic alternatives. She writes:

The way to stop the 'pendulum swing' between 'same as' and 'different from' ... is to confront the changes required to allow all people to live fully human lives. ... Women try either to mimic the 'male' model or to accept a sex-specific role ... or, as most women do, try to balance these roles. ... A way has to be found to provide social supports for the commitments of day-to-day living and to allow women and men to share these commitments. A social model which *includes* women in the human standard could achieve this goal. In this model it will be possible to speak of women as women, in their own right, and not as 'not men' (ibid: 265-6, emphasis in original).

Tracey Adams (2003) reflects these ideas of Scott and Bacchi in a recent study of dental hygienists in Ontario. In the study Adams explores the impact of gender on the attempts of women in semi-professions to gain admission to 'full' professional status. She explains that women in professions are trying to redefine professionalism to match their own ways of working, thus turning their gender into an asset rather than a liability. Adams writes:

To attain professional status, many professional leaders [in predominantly women-staffed occupations] believe that they have to identify and challenge the gender inequities inherent in the system of professions. Interestingly, however, rather than seeking to eliminate gender as an element in the definition of professional work, these leaders seek to change its significance. The fact that they are women is not *irrelevant* to their professional project, but *central* to it. Influenced by feminism, occupational leaders argue that women have particular traits and abilities that make them good professionals. Thus, while traditionally being in a female-dominated occupation has been an impediment to professionalisation, current leaders try to turn femininity into an asset. In the end, the professional project of female-dominated professions ... attempts both to imitate the model of professionalisation established by classic male-dominated professions and to challenge that model; female professionals seek to redefine what it is to be professional, so that they can acquire that designation for themselves (Adams, 2003: 268, my emphasis).

Adams' discussion is important for two reasons. First, by showing that women have identified and refused to accept gender inequalities based on gender differences she exemplifies the arguments of Scott and Bacchi for an approach that allows gender differences *and* gender equality. Second, Adams illustrates how women have, as Scott (1988: 48) suggests, disrupted the meanings of fixed modernist binary opposites. By inverting the binary oppositions, the women have used them as gendered discourses of resistance. In doing so, they demand the right to gender differences and equality to further their women's professional project.

In the following section, I examine ways men's modernist, professional discourses have been used as gendered, discursive closure strategies to establish and validate patriarchal

realities and power systems as the norm, while situating women as the excluded 'other'. I then turn to a particular example of an inverted gender discourse to see how the discourse of a 'new' professionalism, countering the discourses of the 'old' model of professions, is argued by Davies, Adams, Richard Hugman (1991) and others to be a necessary step towards solving the equality versus difference dilemma.

Masculinist Professional Discourses

Hearn (1982), Crompton (1987) and Witz (1990, 1992) link professionalisation to patriarchy. They contend that, as well as being a deliberate project, professionalisation of an occupational field has been intentionally gendered with a firmly gendered, hierarchical segregation of tasks within each profession. Furthermore, women's subordinate position in a patriarchal society has enabled men's professional projects to be more successful than women's, with the result that most professions are male-dominated. What Hearn, Crompton and Witz¹⁷ do not discuss explicitly in connection to the gendered segregation in professions is the relationship between discourse, power and knowledge and how this has contributed to the greater success of the men's projects.

By contrast, Hugman (1991), without naming it as such, gives a good example of the power of dominant discourses. He argues that professionalising groups which comprise a majority of women and are often called the 'caring professions' (including teaching, nursing and social work), have been labelled semi-professions because their work is deemed to lack 'scientific knowledge' and to be based on 'skills rather than knowledge', or, rather than being autonomous, they are managed by men (Hugman, 1991: 2, 185). In other words, an occupation is called a semi-profession if it is lacking one or more key professional traits, 'or if – which is empirically more frequent – one or more of these qualities are not fully developed' (Toren, 1969: 144). Hugman correctly argues that men have been the beneficiaries of 'the social construction of caring professions as women's work [which] has had the effect of legitimating their lower status' (1991: 185). Hugman, like Hearn, Crompton and Witz, makes the point that women's subordinate occupational status is the outcome of their position within patriarchy (ibid:

¹⁷ It is, however, implicit in Witz' (1992) discussion of the gendered battle for control in radiography and radiology, especially pp. 179-80.

186), but does not make the further point that women's positions within both patriarchy and the paid work force are the result of unequal gendered discourses.

Scott describes discourses as 'historically, socially, and institutionally specific structures of statements, terms, categories, and belief' (1988: 35). The discourses constructing professions are examples of what Scott (*ibid*: 43) refers to as 'a political field'. Weedon (1997) also points to the political nature of discursive fields. By defining discourses as 'competing ways of giving meaning to the world and of organising social institutions and processes' (1997: 34), Weedon identifies the manner in which professional discourses have been used to establish their own reality and patriarchal power systems.

Social theorists have used a variety of theoretical perspectives to analyse professions, and these, too, have become part of the discursive field of professions. The list of traits used by the early functionalist theorists to define professions still play an important part in gendered professional discursive strategies, both exclusionary and inclusionary, as well as in the power relationship between professionals and consumers of their services. As Witz and Marshall (2004b: 22) argue, 'Sociological texts themselves become the sites for the constitution rather than simply the passive representations of gender difference and gender relations'. Any analysis of professions, therefore, needs to consider these gendered discursive strategies, because the claim to, and recognition of, possession of the traits has entitled groups to gendered occupational control and status. To this end, the next part of this discussion focuses on how subordinate groups, more specifically women, and particularly in the caring professions, are resisting modernist masculine exclusionary discourses and developing inclusionary discursive tactics by creating new discourses that often invert or reverse the values of the old ones. What becomes apparent is that many women are questioning the values inherent in the traits, and offering what they suggest are preferable alternatives in the form of a 'new' professionalism.

Professional Projects 'Old' and 'New': A Gendered Discursive Strategy at Work

As mentioned above, the foundations of the list of requisite traits in the modernist professional model are historically situated in the late eighteenth to mid nineteenth centuries. They can be seen to reflect the desire of the professions for acceptance in the

rational, scientific world of modernity. In keeping with the beliefs of the time, this model holds a hierarchical relationship between the 'expert' professional and the client whose knowledge and experience are ignored or denied. The form of relationship that exists,

positions the professionals as 'experts' whose power and status is maintained by their claim to specialised knowledge. The emphasis is on a one-way transmission of knowledge from the professional as expert to the client as lay person (Tully and Mortlock, 1999: 169).

Williams (1993: 11) suggests that there is also an emphasis on client compliance and a belief that knowledge is absolute, objective and value-free, and, 'where applied to practical and personal problems, [should be] applied in a rational and detached manner' (Hoyle, 1982, cited in *ibid*: 9). These assertions are borne out by functionalist William Goode, who writes of the professional that:

He [sic] takes some time to teach these norms to his clients. Indeed, fellow professionals will judge him partly on the basis of how effectively *he keeps his clients under control*. Some of these norms are: the professional should not become emotionally attached to his client; he ... *should not even be seduced by the client's description of his own needs* into following procedures that run against his real needs (1969: 299, my emphasis).

A feminist poststructuralist analysis shows that, increasingly, the values inherent in some of these traits are being examined and questioned. Writers, including Oakley (1984), Hugman (1991), Williams (1993), Davies (1995), and Tully and Mortlock (1999) are concerned about the relevance for nurses and other predominantly female semi-professions in continuing their unsuccessful struggle for autonomy or professional status in the modernist or 'old' model of professionalism. Tully and Mortlock (1999: 169) sum up the argument when they state that, rather, what is needed is a 'new' or 'democratic'¹⁸ model of professions more appropriate for today's changing relationship between professionals and consumers. Although these concerns are about such predominantly female occupations as nursing, midwifery and social work, they also have important implications for the predominantly male occupation of funeral directing. The most obvious reason is that the funeral industry has been recasting itself as a 'caring' profession – a point noted by Pavalko (1971: 19).

¹⁸ Hugman (1991) prefers to use the term 'democratic' professionalism to connect professions to a wider struggle for political participation and social equality. Tully & Mortlock (1999) also prefer democratic. They believe that the 'old' and the 'new' should not be cast as binary oppositions because one has not been replaced by the other; they exist simultaneously and professionals may use aspects of both.

Using reverse discourses, in which values denigrated in the modernist binary opposites of old professional discourses are instead honoured, those calling for a new model of professionalism suggest several changes. One is that professionalism should work as a partnership between professional and client. Another is that 'caring' work needs to be revalued. Williams (1993: 9), for example, argues that professional status is built, and power and control maintained, on a basis of 'purveying' specialised, expert knowledge. Professions offer a service and the contention to be qualified to offer that service rests on the claim to specialised knowledge. Moreover, by treating knowledge as absolute rather than socially constructed, and value-free rather than value-laden, professionals have placed themselves in a position to impose their ideas and values on their clients, thus exerting social control (ibid). Examining the old professional discourses shows that professionals, then, while alleging in their list of attributes that their work has relevance to the values of society, have tended, instead, to be educating society to fit their own values. Today, both theorists and lay people challenge such knowledge claims of professionals. They argue that, because the claims are not socially contextualised, they fail to take the clients' needs, knowledge and experience into account (Williams, 1993: 11). Williams is not suggesting that theoretical knowledge is unnecessary, but, rather, that it is also necessary to develop professionals' personal and interpersonal skills. Professionals need to understand that knowledge is socially constructed and value-laden and respond to clients in partnership, as equals, respecting their worldviews and experience. In this way, it is hoped that power will rest with the client, rather than with the professional body (ibid: 12-14).

While these valid arguments offer the beginning of a way out of the current problems, Williams, unfortunately, makes hers a gendered, exclusionary discourse. By changing from writing in a gender-neutral language when referring to professionals in the old model of professions, to using consistently the pronoun 'she' in reference to professionals working in the new model, Williams implies that it is only women who will be making these changes. As she is writing on health and welfare, fields predominantly staffed by women, this might almost be a legitimate assumption, except that it appears to exclude minority male health and welfare workers from participating in the new professionalism. However, in making new professionalism a female activity, Williams runs the risk of turning the idea of a new professionalism into a female discourse, in opposition to the old male discourses. Rather than making this a valid

discourse for all professionals, it tends to suggest that women in caring professions will provide a new and better way of being professional, just because they are women. Her use of language also points to the importance of a poststructural critique, which emphasises the role of language in giving meaning to experience.

In focusing on the gendered nature of the relationship between power and knowledge, a feminist poststructural critique draws attention to the gendered origins of discourses such as those of professionalism and, therefore, to whose voices have been permitted to speak. For this reason, there is importance in the view of Hugman (1991) and Tully and Mortlock (1999) that new professionalism does not represent a complete break from old professionalism, but rather, builds 'from the ashes of the old' (Davies, 1995: 152). As Davies argues, for a new model of professionalism to present a way forward, it must acknowledge 'the cultural baggage of masculinity that the old model of professionalism has contained' (ibid: 151). In other words, it is by examining the masculinist origins of old professional discourses, that the rationale behind the discourses becomes clear. Thus, it becomes possible to see that it is old professionalism's grounding in a 'cultural code of masculinity' that has allowed men to denigrate activities involving care work and the expression of emotion, rather than any inherent inferiority in the activities themselves.

As Davies contends, there is a need for 'revalorising' care and caring work in professional practice so that they are no longer hidden or denigrated, but recognised as legitimate, important aspects of professional work. What a poststructural perspective shows is that the way to escape the cultural code of masculinity of old professionalism is by critically examining the masculinist discourses to reveal the origins and nature of their gender exclusion. But then, rather than attempting simply to invert the gender balance of power, as Williams appears to suggest, the better approach, following Scott (1988), is to aim to break down fixed gender binary opposites and the resulting gender boundaries. This may be achieved through resisting and reversing the masculinist discourses while assuming that both women and men will be equally involved in providing the new professional qualities.

Drawing on the two streams of occupational control literature, then, reveals two aspects of women's efforts to enter the paid work arena on equal terms with men. An examination of neo-Weberian closure strategies brings to light the consciously gendered

nature of practice-based strategies employed by dominant groups, such as male funeral directors, in their efforts to gain and maintain market exclusivity, status and rewards. Similarly, it reveals women's agency in the countervailing practice-based strategies used by subordinate groups, including women seeking to enter the funeral industry. On the other hand, a poststructural analysis reveals the power of the use of discursive-based strategies, particularly as inclusionary strategies by subordinate groups such as women trying to break through exclusionary barriers and break down masculinist exclusionary discourses, to gain entrance to employment on equal terms with men. Whereas the occupational control literature discussed gender boundaries preventing entry *into* occupations, in what follows I move to discuss a stream of literature that focuses on gender boundaries and inequalities *within* organisations.

Gender Boundaries in Organisations

The previous section discussed theoretical perspectives that examined the gendered power relations and boundaries between men in professions and women trying to enter or establish professions. To do this, I examined gendered strategies of closure and inclusion, both structural and discursive. Theoretical tools for understanding the maintenance of the gendered hierarchy and boundaries *within* the organisational sites of the funeral industry are found in recent literature on organisations. Analyses of paid work organisations reflect and impact on historical and social changes in attitudes and understandings, both in what are considered to be matters worthy of discussion, and in the ways these are approached.

Just as theories of professions were gender blind, so, too, much organisational theory has treated organisations as gender-neutral institutions, ignoring the impact of gendered boundaries and inequities. As Hearn and Parkin (1983: 219-20) and Mills (1988: 351) point out, until the 1980s gender issues in organisations were almost entirely neglected, including by feminist writers, except indirectly.¹⁹ Moreover, not all organisational theory since the 1980s has considered the issue of the gendered nature of organisations

¹⁹ See Etzioni (1969b) for an example of approaches where workers and management are largely, and openly assumed to be unproblematised 'neutral' males. For a discussion of perspectives that tend to ignore gender and an overview of the minimal examination of gender in organisations by the early 1980s see Hearn & Parkin (1983). Calás & Smircich (1996) and Halford & Leonard (2001) offer comparative analyses of how feminist perspectives have approached gender issues in organisations.

(Aaltio and Mills, 2002: 5), and when it has, it may merely, as Witz and Marshall (2004a: 9) suggest, be to refer to 'gender' when they are talking about 'women'. As recently as 1992, noted organisational theorist Edgar Schein's discussion of gender consists of a fleeting concern about different genders (i.e. women?) as 'subcultures'. He writes: 'in US organisations there is a growing issue surrounding diversity and the possibility that *different* racial groups and genders are forming subcultures around their particular career concerns' (1992: 274, my emphasis). Similarly, when writing of organisational cultures Majken Schultz (1994) does not mention gender, sex, men or women at all, but remains carefully 'gender neutral' throughout. However, there is a strand of organisational theory that does examine gender issues and the impact of neglecting them. It is this literature that I examine here.

In particular, I am interested in the work of more recent authors, exemplified by David Wicks and Pat Bradshaw (2002) who argue for an examination of the gendering of structures and cultures within paid work organisational contexts:

[We need to] clarify how organisations differentially encourage gender-specific attitudes and behaviours and subsequently hinder the accomplishment of a wide range of equity and anti-discrimination goals... [We need] to clarify the specific *behaviours* and *values* that women and men are rewarded for showing, how organisations themselves socialise women and men differently and thus help shape gender identities in society at large. In short, understanding the gendered nature of organisational culture requires a more in-depth analysis of specifically *what types of behaviours and attitudes* are produced and reproduced through organisational cultures and *how embedded gender-based assumptions and values* can both enable and constrain organisational members. This requires assessing the dualistic nature of gender and culture that examines not only the way cultures impose expectations on organisational members but also how organisations prescribe notions of 'proper' behaviours of women and men more broadly (Wicks and Bradshaw, 2002: 138, my emphasis).

Applying the approach of Wicks and Bradshaw to the experience of women in the funeral industry draws attention to the importance of the accepted norms of masculinity and femininity within funeral firms: how the norms have become established and then embedded into organisations; how they have been used by both men and women to establish gendered occupational boundaries; and how the effect of these boundaries has largely been to disadvantage women. Like the occupational control literature, this second body of literature draws on a range of theoretical perspectives, including again both structuralist and poststructuralist approaches.

A further important feature of the literature aimed at gendering organisations is a focus on problematising the concept of gender. The occupational control literature, such as

Witz (1990, 1992),²⁰ is correctly concerned with the need to bring women into the discussion. However, apart from some notable exceptions, including Hearn (1987) and Davies (1995), the notion of gender tends not to be problematised. On the other hand, this is remedied in the literature on the gendering of organisations. Here, a useful focus is on how gender is embodied in the processes of organisations, in gendered structures and cultures, and how those, in turn, shape the gendered lives, working conditions and promotional possibilities for both women and men.

In examining gendered organisational literature, I focus on three main issues. The first looks at how gendered hierarchies are made possible through the establishment of cultures which privilege and validate attributes linked to masculinity and a particular form of male *embodiment*, while proscribing any forms of femininity and female embodiment that do not conform to the patriarchal stereotype of the submissive, nurturing supporter of men's business. The second issue I examine is that of the multiple forms of *gendered power* at play in organisations, while the third issue is the role of *gendered emotions* among professions and organisations, too often held to be emotion-free zones.

Gendered Bodies in Organisational Culture

There are several closely related reasons for examining the gendering of organisational cultures, each of which has a strong bearing on the research participants' experiences in the funeral industry. One reason stems from understanding gender as a cultural artefact: organisations, also cultural phenomena, both reflect, and impact on, wider social values, including attitudes and mores surrounding gender (Mills, 1988: 366). A second reason is that a gender-based study of organisational cultures shows how organisations create and maintain discriminatory practices and behaviours through gendered cultural mechanisms (Wicks and Bradshaw, 2002: 140). This can be seen in the ways funeral firms maintain both a clear distinction between what are suitable masculine and feminine behaviours, plus a gendered hierarchy of jobs: the job of funeral director, considered to be men's work, is most highly valued; women's work, most often clerical and reception work, tends to be treated as support for the funeral director, just what

²⁰ In her work on gender in organisations and bureaucracies, Witz examines forms and, especially, embodiment of gender – e.g. see Halford, Savage and Witz, 1997; Witz, 1998, 2000; Witz and Marshall, 2004.

women do ‘naturally’, rather than skilled work. A third reason for studying gendered organisational cultures is that doing so avoids the problems caused by a focus on a notion of a universal patriarchy, which misses the complexity and contradictions in gender patterns and the ways organisations carry gender meanings, practices, values, languages and logic that may enable or constrain both the men and the women working there (Alvesson and Billing, 1997: 4, 9).

An analysis of the *embodied* nature of gender relations that creates the gendered cultures in organisations provides a key feature of gendered organisation culture that is relevant to my study. It throws light on the way male funeral directors have, for so long, maintained a hierarchical, gendered division of labour in an occupation that has deliberately worked to shift its image from a business to a professional ‘caring’ model. Such an analysis recognises the ways in which organisations privilege a modernist definition of the male body that presumes an objective, rational masculinity (Acker, 1991; Halford et al., 1997; Witz and Marshall, 2004; Witz, 1998) – that is, organisations privilege the same male body and version of masculinity that forms the basis of the functionalist model of professions.

Witz and Marshall have argued that, unfortunately, early studies of professions and organisations did not examine men or women as embodied subjects, and therefore ignored the effects on real men and women of expectations of appropriate norms of masculinity and femininity. While ‘women figured most frequently as a *strategic absence* ... masculinity, by contrast, figures as an *absent presence* – always there, but largely unarticulated’ (Witz and Marshall, 2004b: 21, original emphasis). The particular attributes that are linked to men’s bodies and masculinity are the ones that have been privileged in organisations. Because the attributes form an invisible, disembodied and abstract ideal type, the embodied reality of men’s lives is ignored, thus placing unrealistic expectations on men and disadvantaging those who do not fit the ideal type (Hearn, 2002). Witz explains further:

It is the male body that has been presumed and normalised within modern organisations although, paradoxically, male embodiment *per se* is rendered invisible within rationalist and disembodied discourses of organisation. ... Nonetheless, it is vital to realise that organising has traditionally been constructed not on the basis of *the* male body, but on a *version* of male embodiment (1998: 58).

Although Witz warns against the danger of women’s bodies being further excluded by male theorists’ recent concerns over ‘the *abject* male body’ (2000: 2, original

emphasis), it is apparent that the absent presence of masculinity does place stress on organisational men's lives. They are under constant pressure to fit the modernist model that denies the existence of difference, or a life and responsibilities outside the organisation.

Witz (1998: 58) rightly argues that women's bodies have not been considered valid in organisations because they should be at home in the private sphere rather than in the public sphere of organisations. Furthermore, she asserts that, combined with the representation of women as a strategic absence, 'it is the disciplined concealed male body that provides the embodied underpinnings of organising activities and the standard against which women must strive to be "the same"' (Witz, 1998: 60). I would add that there is a further problem for women compounding that of not being the same as men. That is, there is the paradox that while women's embodiment has been strategically absent, women's actual presence has been constrained to fit an organisational construction of a version of femininity, every bit as particular as that of organisational masculinity. The culture of organisational femininity, epitomised by the funeral firm, demands not a *woman* but a *lady* who is a supportive helpmeet, discreet, compliant, nurturing and, above all, mostly invisible. And it is this that has contributed to the continued male dominance in many organisations, making it seem natural that these are places for men, not women.

In her study of Scandinavian organisations, Yvonne Billing (1994) found that equality flourishes in firms where gendered cultures are downplayed, where there is no gendered division of labour and where hierarchy is minimised in favour of empowerment and egalitarianism. On the other hand, in funeral firms where gendered cultures and division of labour are part of a gendered hierarchy, the hierarchy may be enforced by women as well as by men, with women office workers at times actively supporting male funeral directors over women funeral directors, and women funeral directors supporting male clergy ahead of female celebrants. It can be seen then, as Halford and Leonard (2001) argue, that multiple forms of power may operate simultaneously in organisations, necessitating any analysis of organisations to include a focus on the relationship of gender to power. My aim in the next section is to examine different ways in which the operation of gendered power is seen to create or resist inequities in organisations.

Gendered Power in Organisations

The occupational control literature discussed at the beginning of this chapter tends to take professions as the occupational model. In the first section on closure strategies, where gender is considered, its focus is likely to be on a patriarchal, structural model of power in which the concept of gender presumes a 'societal-wide system of gender relations of male dominance and female subordination ... in which male power is institutionalised within different sites of social relations in society' (Witz, 1992: 11). In other words, power, while perhaps resisted, tends to be seen as residing at the top in male professionals. This model avoids discussion of where or how, in a system of patriarchal power, women, such as those in the funeral industry who are not working as a collective, can obtain agency for resistance and their own professional projects. In the second section on poststructural discursive strategies, power is not seen as emanating from on high, but is more likely to be argued to be diffuse and infinitely mobile, linked to language, in attempts to create or change meanings of 'truth' through language, and in limiting possibilities which reproduce power through language (Halford and Leonard, 2001: 32-3). This model tends to overlook the oppressive nature for individuals, such as women in the funeral industry, of systemic power structures.

What Halford and Leonard (2001) find is that structural and poststructural approaches to gender in organisations both see gendered inequality as the 'outcome of the operation of power, in which men – individually, collectively or through discourses which privilege the masculine – wield power over women' (ibid: 26). But, while each perspective takes a different view of how power operates in relation to gender, Halford and Leonard argue, the different forms of power can be seen to 'operate simultaneously within contemporary work organisations, acting to constitute gendered experiences and to gender organisations in a range of diverse and even, sometimes, contradictory ways' (ibid: 35). As will be discussed in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight, analysis of interviews with the research participants in the funeral industry finds that this tends to reflect the women's experience – that is, the two forms of power can be seen to be operating simultaneously in the funeral industry. Therefore, next will be a brief overview of how feminist structural and poststructural theories of gendered power in organisations are relevant to the position of after-death workers.

The structuralist view of gendered power in organisations sees social relations between people in organisations as part of wider social structures of inequality, which have been constructed in the interests of powerful groups, such as (wealthy, white) men, to maintain their dominance (Halford and Leonard, 2001: 13-14, 50). The success of the structures of dominance lies in achieving the appearance of a self-evident reality. Structuralists believe that bureaucratic organisations are designed to serve the interests of dominant men, by enhancing men's careers through a patriarchal culture that systematically oppresses and constrains women. Because they see an inherent relationship between gender and social structure, some structuralists also believe that gendered power is used by the dominant to manipulate the subordinate (ibid: 221).

There are three main organisational features argued by structuralists as contributing to gendered inequalities in organisations. They are: 1) the system of job appointments; 2) the grading or valuing of jobs; and 3) the organising of hours of work, all of which structural theorists argue work to disadvantage women (ibid: 51-6). In the funeral industry 1) there is a strong assumption that men are better suited to be funeral directors; 2) the 'men's' jobs are valued more highly than the 'women's', which are regarded as help or support; and 3) although some women with family responsibilities are precluded from the work because of the need for funeral directors to be on call through the night, not all women have such family responsibilities, and yet it is assumed that *no* women are able to work at night.

An example of a structuralist approach to gendered power in organisations that helps explain many of the issues faced by women in the funeral industry is found in Cynthia Cockburn's (1991) study of gendered relations in four organisations. Cockburn finds that power in organisations is heterosexual male gendered and systemic (Cockburn, 1991: 13). Organisations are crucial to the production and reproduction of men's power and 'masculine' social characteristics in organisational cultures (ibid: 221). Because men's power is built into organisational structures as structured inequalities, and maintained through social interactions of (men's) dominance and (women's) subordination, women (and also some men) are disadvantaged. Cockburn finds that although there may now be gender equality policies in place, they are often resisted by men using institutional and cultural means. Moreover, she argues, 'when women are

employed it is precisely because they are women: employers are never sex-blind' (ibid: 24).

A further instance cited by Cockburn that impacts strongly on women in the funeral industry is the way that women tend to be employed as part time or casual labour. This enables employers to pay women at lower rates and offer no job security, while giving the women little chance of promotion (ibid: 43). Fletcher (1999: 25-8), while taking a more poststructural position, with the aim of uncovering how and why organisational structures evolved into gendered power structures, makes the point that gendered organisational structures effectively devalue caring work and relational work (which she calls 'disappearing acts'), work that is traditionally more likely to be performed by women – as is evident in the attitudes to women's clerical and reception work in the funeral firm.

Women's increasing numbers and developing role in the funeral industry, in spite of men's closure strategies, show that, even when faced with seemingly insurmountable structural inequalities, women have not been passive victims of a higher power. Poststructuralist perspectives of gendered power in organisations draw attention to subordinate individuals and groups as actors, rather than as mere victims. They have three basic tenets of power:

First, power is understood as to circulate between *all* social actors, rather than being restricted in the hands of a dominant few. Second, power is understood to operate through the construction of 'truth' through language and discourse. Third, the way power operates through discourses of truth shapes how each of us perceives ourselves, others, and the world around us (Halford and Leonard, 2001: 32, original emphasis).

Power in organisations, then, poststructuralists argue, is not a male possession and does not belong to a particular social group. Rather, it is a diffuse, constantly shifting network in which all men and women are both subjects and bearers of power relations. Power and language work together because of the power inherent in the uses of language and discourses to create meanings in organisations (ibid: 33). And it is through gendered organisational discourses of difference that men and women working in organisations understand what is meant by the categories 'woman' and 'man', 'masculine' and 'feminine', and thus how to act 'appropriately' (ibid: 21-2). However, because of the fluid nature of power, while some discourses may for a time dominate, the possibilities for 'resistance, reinterpretation and change [are] ever present and there for the taking by individuals' (ibid: 23). In the organisational setting of the funeral

industry, gendered professional discourses operate in the same way. For example, rather than using the more defensive 'women are the same as and, therefore, as good as men' discourse, which has seen women trying to 'act like men', some of the women now use the discourses of new professionalism to reposition their role and value as women.

In the study by Saija Katila and Susan Meriläinen (1999), of how female researchers construct their professional identities in a male-dominated scientific community, the authors use a poststructuralist approach to examine the operation of gendered power in organisations. They do this by analysing the role of gendered discourses in the creation and maintenance of gendered hierarchies in organisations. While a structuralist approach focuses on the ways women's disadvantage is built into organisational structures, Katila and Meriläinen (ibid: 163) argue that although gendered inequalities are not fixed, they are continually negotiated and socially constructed. This occurs both in social interactions between individual men and women and in the discourses within which those interactions occur. Discourses, then, 'not only constitute meanings for terms and practices, but they also engender personal identities' (ibid). In this way, Katila and Meriläinen write, although contemporary society may profess gender neutrality in organisations, women still tend to be constructed discursively as *different* from men, who represent the *norm*, and the difference seen as women's weakness. By looking at the ways the difference is constructed, it is possible to uncover the ways men may actively reproduce the prevailing patriarchal value system and discourses which disadvantage women (ibid: 171). Katila and Meriläinen rightly suggest that equality ideology has made sex discrimination more 'subtle, concealed and often unconscious' (ibid: 172). But looking for discursive reasons for inequality allows marginalised groups the possibility of achieving change instead of being forever victims of fixed structural 'realities'.

One example of such a discursive change used by women in after-death work is found in the new professional discourses that focus on the expression of emotion. Here, in the new discourses, as part of the women's strategies of resistance of the hierarchical gendered power structures, the values of old discourses are inverted: the expression of emotions, which was not valued, has become revalued. Old professional discourses have deemed emotion to be out of place, unprofessional and destructive of the rational

objectivity required for proper professional conduct and for maintaining the appropriate distance between professional and client. In the same way, earlier organisational discourses have also considered the organisational setting to be neutral, objective and emotion-free (e.g. see Etzioni, 1969b).

The increased movement of women into the public sphere, and their revaluing of the expression of emotions, creates the problem for professional and organisational men, of how to allow increased emotional expressiveness into their domain while still maintaining control. Confounding the problem is the way that the emotions that are part of the men's control, the 'emotions of control' (Fineman, 2000: 7), are ignored or 'written out' (Witz and Marshall, 2004a: 4). Because the control of socialisation of emotions and the emotions of control are aspects of gendered power that have an important bearing on gender boundaries within organisations, including the funeral firm, I next turn to a discussion of these.

The Socialisation of Emotion and the Emotions of Control

In western societies since antiquity concepts of the emotional self have routinely been gendered. One of the pivotal concerns around which gendered notions of emotions are structured is that of the importance of mastery and self-control. ... [T]he ideal of self-control and self-containment has emerged as dominant in late modernity. Mastery of the body/self, as well as mastery over others, has traditionally been constructed as an ideal to which all individuals should aspire but which men rather than women are more likely to achieve. ... A major binary opposition in discourses on emotion is that of the 'emotional woman' and the 'unemotional man' (Lupton, 1998: 105).

In keeping with such long-held views of gendered emotionality, early models of professions and organisations were depicted as male domains, rational, controlled and emotion-free. The focus was on how professionals and managers, including doctors and funeral directors, maintained a detached dignity while controlling inappropriate, non-rational outbursts of emotion from their clients or subordinates that might interfere with decorum and managerial control, or impede the professional's ability to treat the client (see Nettleton, 1995).

Like all other behaviours, the performance of emotions, what they mean, how and when they are expressed, and what is considered appropriate, are socialised activities and understandings. *Expression* of emotions, in both the professional and organisational models, has been considered women's domain and relegated to the private sphere of the home. It is in the private sphere, largely under women's control, that we are most likely

to learn the expression of appropriate emotional responses expected in particular situations. On the other hand, *control* of emotions in the public sphere has been men's responsibility. In professions and organisations, it has most often been men who have set and enforced the rules demanding the control of emotions. Expression and control of emotions, then, are each gendered aspects of the *socialisation of emotions*.

A further aspect of socialisation of emotion is discussed by Fineman (2000: 7-8) who argues that, in focusing on control of others' emotions, social theory has ignored the equally important *emotions of control*. That is, the feelings involved in controlling others, such as subordinates or clients. In other words, Fineman reminds us that maintaining a detached dignity, far from being emotionless, involves a deliberate emotion management, through a conscious 'presentation of self' (Goffman, 1959). And, while professional men may allege to have been 'trained from childhood to suppress their feelings' (Levinson, 1973, cited in James, 1989: 38), inherent in the processes of suppressing emotion, and of gaining and maintaining power and control, are emotions such as 'fear, humiliation, pride and achievement' (Fineman, 2000: 8), 'passion, drive, enthusiasm, sacrifice and workaholism' (Mulholland, 2003: 92). Furthermore, such emotions are neither more nor less rational than the emotions, including fear or grief, those in power aim to control in subordinates and clients.

Focusing on the control of emotions of clients and subordinates has effectively written out the emotions of the professionals and managers. It has also written out how we learn what are appropriate emotions and how to express them, the socialisation of emotions. Hearn (1982) raises the issue of control of socialisation of emotions when he argues that professions, monopolised by men, now perform activities previously most likely to have been carried out by women in the private sphere. The activities, including healing, nurturing and conflict mediation, are those associated with reproduction, both biological and social, 'where emotions were especially likely to be unleashed' (Hearn, 1982: 188). With the rise of capitalism, these activities were taken over by men, who removed them from the private sphere of the home to the public, profit-making sphere. In the case of the funeral directors this, ironically, involved removing the control of emotion from the bereaved, in the private sphere of the private home, to funeral directors, in the public sphere of the funeral 'home.' Hearn states:

Typically these tasks involve the management of social conflict and tension, including illness... Typically such tasks are raised in status with their transfer from the private to

the public arena; and from women to men... The mediation of disputes and the management of life and death ... are a major material basis for the expression of emotions. Thus in this sense the development of professions is also intimately bound up with the social organisation and control of emotionality (ibid: 189-90).

Capitalist patriarchy works on a *rational* model while needing to shift the control of the creation and structure of *non-rational* emotionality from domestic labour to socialised caring labour (ibid). The problem is that, even though control over emotions surrounding such events as birth, illness and death has been shifted from the private to the public realm, caring work and the socialisation of the expression of emotions still tend to be considered women's work. As Davies (1995: 187) argues,

Masculinity fears and feminises dependency. It handles vulnerability and indeed any emotional expression by handing it over to women and repressing and denying the need for any discussion of such matters in the 'rational' forum of a public place or space.

Men have achieved control of the process of care and emotion work while remaining aloof from it, largely by using women in the semi-professions such as nursing, teaching and social work to perform the socialising labour under the supervision of male managers.

Thus, while male professionals and managers may define the limits of emotionality for their subordinates and clients, it is women who are left to deal with the problems involved in controlling these (Hearn, 1987). Furthermore, the 'emotion labour' involved, while indeed the commodity Hochschild (1983: 14) suggests, is not valued as productive or skilled work. It is often not recognised at all. Nicky James (1989) found that trained nurses believed the most valuable work at a hospice was that performed by the auxiliary staff, who spent time 'close to the patients', yet only the cleaners were paid less than the auxiliaries. James writes:

Where emotional labour is employed but unrecognised, its value in maintaining the social regulation of emotions is obscured. Since the skills are merely 'housewives'' skills, based on women's domestic work, the organisation, training, and reward systems which reinforce 'valued' practices, are minimal or nil (1989: 36).

The attitude that emotional labour is unskilled, women's work leads to contradictions surrounding the integration and control of emotions and emotional labour in the public sphere of professions and organisations. For example, women may be employed for their 'people skills' but are not then given credit for those skills, or men, such as psychiatrists (and funeral directors), may spend time and money during their professional training courses learning how to manage their own and others' expression

of emotion, but then employ untrained, poorly paid women to perform the work (James, 1989: 37).

Ironically, as with psychiatrists (James, 1989) and design engineers (Fletcher, 1999), in the funeral firm, it is the men and their firm who gain credit and gratitude for their care and understanding, while the women who perform the emotion work become invisible. James explains:

Well remunerated, often male, professionals, have years of training to learn to manage emotion as part of their job. These professionals, for instance psychiatrists, get the prestige for their work in 'emotional control', when the bulk of the work is carried on unrecognised, unrecorded, low paid, and usually by women. Where men are associated with such work in the public domain, they are more likely than women to move away from it... The emotional work still has to be done, but even if the work is recognised, it is secondary work, integrated into the labour process through 'gendered jobs' (James, 1989: 37-8).

Diana Adams (1996) found a similar pattern of behaviour in the police force in Aotearoa New Zealand. She describes how the police have used the integration of women into the formerly male occupation of patrol work to fulfil the new demand for a more caring response from police. When there is a call to the police to resolve a potentially violent domestic situation, both a man and a woman police officer are dispatched. The male police officers have continued to take firm control of the situational emotions while leaving the female police officers to undertake the emotion labour of pacifying and offering sympathetic support to upset women and children.

A feminist poststructural analysis of the expression and control of emotions and the socialisation of emotions examines the roles of language and social experience in constructing emotionality. By seeing emotions as constituted through language and social interaction it becomes possible to reveal the underlying gendered power relations that have facilitated the 'writing out' of the emotions of control in social theory and the devaluing of the expression of emotions. Moreover, because a feminist poststructural analysis also draws attention to the complex and shifting nature of power relations, it enables us to observe the growing presence of women in the public sphere and the ways they are adopting reverse discourses in their attempts to shift the balance of power.

Conclusion

To conclude, then, as a way of explaining gender boundaries in after-death work I have drawn on two distinct approaches to the understanding of gendered power in paid work. First, occupational control literature with a focus on the gendered nature of professional projects enables an examination of the gendered boundaries faced by women wishing to enter the funeral industry. This strand of literature brings to light the ways in which funeral directors' desire to increase their social status and sphere of control through the development of their professional project has impacted on women's position in after-death work. It also raises questions about men's exclusion of women from jobs at the top of the hierarchy in after-death work, while they simultaneously rely on women's inclusion in less valued clerical and relational work for the success of their project. Further, the occupational control literature posits two kinds of gendered closure strategies found in after-death work. The first are practice-based. They involve such activities as limiting access to credentialing and refusing to employ women except as clerical workers, often on a part time basis only. The second kinds of closure strategies are discursive-based. These involve the use of gendered discourses that focus on women's difference from men as reasons why women would not make suitable after-death workers. Importantly, occupational control theories also offer an interrogation of *women's* utilisation of both practice- and discursive-based closure strategies. These theories raise awareness of how women enter after-death work by working unpaid during the training period or by accepting a minor position with the aim of 'growing the job'. A particular example of a discursive strategy employed by women is their use of discourses surrounding the 'new' model of professions. Here the literature draws attention to how, in identifying with the new professional discourses, the women are resisting the old masculinist discourses. They are inverting the modernist binary oppositions to revalue their own worth and contributions.

Where the first strand of literature brings a focus to women's exclusion from after-death work, the second strand of literature enables an examination of the inequality of women within the funeral industry. Gendered organisational theory opens a way to understand the gendered boundaries of organisational structures and cultures, and the simultaneous operation of multiple forms of gendered power at play in organisations. Finally, the organisational literature raises issues surrounding the gendered socialisation and use of emotion, a central concern of work in the field of death and grief. It allows examination

of the gendered nature of both permissible forms of emotion expressed and who is entitled to control such expression.

In the five analytical chapters that follow Chapter Three, the two strands of literature are drawn on to examine different facets of gender boundaries in after-death work. In Chapter Four, with the focus on the historical actions of men, as collective agents, the occupational control literature provides a means of understanding the gendered nature of men's commercialisation and professionalisation of after-death work and how these actions have led to the exclusion and marginalisation of women. Here, also, the organisational literature allows insights into the historical and current organisation of funeral firms with their gendered structures, cultures and power. In Chapter Five, the focus shifts to women, with an overview of their changing relationship to after-death work. Together, the two strands of literature offer understanding of how women's position today is the result of their historical exclusion and marginalisation from both after-death work and from the wider social sphere. Chapters Six, Seven and Eight with their bases in data from accounts of the research participants, then draw on the two strands of literature to examine both practice- and discursive-based closure strategies. The strategies discussed are used, firstly, by men to exclude women from an equal position in after-death work, secondly, by women to enter the work, and, thirdly, by women to establish and develop a role for themselves, as women, in what still tends to be considered a man's occupational sphere. Next, however, Chapter Three is a discussion of the research design.

Chapter Three

Undertaking the Gendered Research Design

Beginning the Undertaking

In Chapter One, I mentioned that my first sociological study of funeral firms was an ethnographic study on emotion management. The study was based on three months of participant observation in a small family firm in provincial Aotearoa New Zealand. For more than ten years, as I sat at the organ watching the funeral directors at work, I had wondered how the funeral directors and embalmers coped with death and grief as a daily part of their occupation. Having a fear and dread of the sights and smells of viscera and death, I took care to hold my breath, avert my eyes and hurriedly scuttle past any open caskets on my way to and from the organ. Recently widowed, I was often upset by the sights and sounds of grief at funeral services. Unlike the regular funeral home workers, though, my encounters with the bereaved were brief and occasional. I assumed that the funeral home workers must, also, at some time, each have had their own experience of death and grief. It was difficult to understand how they could, apparently, put aside their own losses, while facing others' every day.

One day as we chatted while we waited for the mourners to arrive, my employer asked how my university studies were going. When I mentioned that I was looking for a location for a three-month participant observation study, he suggested his funeral home. I laughed, assuming that, knowing of my squeamishness, he was joking. He was not joking and later, too late, I learnt that he had, indeed, noticed my squeamishness. While appreciating the funeral director's generosity, I was very hesitant about embarking on such a project. In class a few days later, I had to announce my chosen participant observation location. With no other viable options, I tentatively suggested the funeral home, expecting a negative response from my lecturer.

There was no negative response. Instead, we were given a lecture on the difficulties and importance, in ethnographic research, of 'getting in'. It seemed that I had, unwittingly, succeeded in getting in to a field notoriously difficult to enter. Obviously, no serious sociology researcher could possibly refuse such an opportunity. And so, with

trepidation and the squeamishness that almost overcame me at times and never entirely dissipated, I embarked on a journey no one would surely include in a 'Things I must do before I die' list. It had never occurred to me that I might spend three months 'hanging out' with funeral directors and embalmers, going on removals to collect accident victims, assisting at embalmings, visiting the city morgue and assisting in the removal of an autopsied corpse, and even lifting embalmed corpses with my bare hands.

At the time of the research, the employees at the firm were three full-time male funeral directors/embalmers, a part-time male crematorium worker, a part-time female embalmer and two part-time female clerical workers. One of the two clerical women described her front office role as 'secretary/receptionist.' The second, who worked fewer hours, described her backroom work as 'doing the accounts.' My intention was to observe and interview the funeral directors and embalmer. It was only after my study was well under way that I began to realise the full extent of the pivotal role of the women in the office, particularly the secretary/receptionist. We briefly exchanged greetings every time I arrived. But I had not considered her relationship to the dead and the bereaved, or whether she had a need for emotion management strategies. Then one day I arrived to find her upset. She had just begun telling me that the morning's service was for a close family friend, when she was interrupted. The funeral director organising the service slid open the glass door connecting the reception area and the chapel entrance, where he had been setting out the order of service sheets. He asked me to please come through to the chapel. Once the door was closed, he explained that the receptionist was inclined to forget her place as a paid employee and should not be encouraged to chat during working hours. As a result, I sought permission from my employer and the two office women to also interview them and observe their activities much more closely.

Because of time constraints, because the funeral director had agreed to a study of emotion management, and because of concerns about causing problems in the firm for the workers and myself, also an employee, emotion management remained the focus of my study. Nevertheless, the more closely I became involved, the more I noticed the strictly gendered and hierarchical division of labour and the patriarchal power structures operating. Moreover, the industry magazines, which I began reading during my

participant observation period, reinforced my observations, revealing the gender hierarchy to be industry-wide, rather than centred within one family firm.

When it was time to choose a dissertation topic, I was keen to examine the reasons for the gendered inequities and why there were so few women working as funeral directors and embalmers. I was convinced that participant observation would be the best way to uncover the complexities of the underlying causes. I believed, though, that I would have difficulty in gaining permission from male funeral directors for such a study. Therefore, I decided, instead, to examine the impact on the funeral industry in Aotearoa New Zealand of the arrival in 1995 of Stewart Enterprises, one of the 'big five' North American funeral industry conglomerates, who eventually bought twenty-two New Zealand funeral firms (Dekker, 2002: 25). I was interested in their use of economies of scale to rationalise processes, such as creating a central embalming facility rather than each firm duplicating costly equipment.

Doubtful that the dramatic price increases and Americanisation or 'McDonaldisation' (Ritzer, 1996) of the industry predicted by the media (see e.g. Macdonald, 1996; *The Dominion*, 1996; *New Zealand Herald*, 1996) were taking place, I hoped an examination through a sociological lens might provide some insights. When I contacted their New Zealand manager in March 2001 to seek his permission, he very politely suggested that such a study would not be useful, even though I tried to assure him that my intention was positive rather than negative. Some time later, I learnt that the increasing value of the New Zealand dollar and the refusal of New Zealanders to buy expensive American-style caskets meant that Stewart Enterprises in Aotearoa New Zealand were unable to return enough profit to their shareholders back in the US. In August 2001, they sold their interests here to an Australian company (Bone, 2003: 32). With my plans thwarted, my dissertation topic had to take a change in direction.

There had been a slow, but noticeably increasing, trend towards changes in funeral services, with, for example, more family participation, more requests for non-religious services, more secular music and the ritual placing of flowers on the casket during the service. I was puzzled as to the underlying causes of the changes, wondering whether they were influenced more by wider factors, such as Maori tangi practices, or by external global factors, through such avenues as the media, international travel and immigration. I wanted to spend time with funeral directors and to use my legitimate,

but unobtrusive, presence as organist at funeral services to observe, more specifically, the changes that were happening. Also, I was interested to find out whether the changes were led more by the industry or by clients. But, this time I ran into an ethical problem. The university human ethics committee would allow me to spend time with funeral directors but would not permit me to gather quantitative data at funerals, of such details as numbers attending, length of service, the kinds or quantities of flowers, hymns, music, and whether the service was religious or secular. It was suggested that it would be more ethical for me to arrange to interview the bereaved six months after a funeral and thus gather my information openly. I did not want to intrude on the bereaved in this way. Therefore, another change in direction was forced on my dissertation topic.

It was around this time that the new women celebrants had begun conducting 'non-denominational' services previously taken either by clergy, practising or retired, or by retired Justices of the Peace (JPs). I realised that many of the recent changes I had been noticing were coming together in the services these women were conducting. Their personalised services, involving family and friends, seemed more intimate and less formal. Chatting before the bereaved began arriving for services, the women willingly talked about their aims and experiences. When, in the middle of 2001, I asked how they would feel about participating in a study looking at women in the funeral industry, they responded positively. Some weeks later, I was still trying to think through issues of framing a sociological research question that neither presupposed nor suggested an anti-male bias, whether it would be possible to find sufficient women to interview and how my thesis supervisors would respond to yet another change in topic. And then I had the conversation with the male funeral director in which he declared that celebrants were not part of the funeral industry. At that moment, I knew I had found a topic that needed exploring.

Research Methods

Davidson and Tolich (1999: 116) write, 'Qualitative research allows you to investigate small areas in a great deal of depth.' The funeral industry in Aotearoa New Zealand is a small occupational field, and the women in the industry a smaller part of that. Sending out a survey questionnaire to all the funeral firms listed in the telephone directory had the possibility of reaching women throughout the country, but because of women's

marginalised position in the industry the chances were too slim of the questionnaire being passed to sufficient women to make a worthwhile quantitative investigation. Moreover, using qualitative rather than quantitative research uncovers 'relationships, processes and contradictions' (Cynthia Cockburn, 1991: 4), while drawing out otherwise hidden complexities of people's lives in a specific field of research (Davidson and Tolich, 1999: 116).

More specifically, I was interested in the *gendered* nature of the hidden complexities of women's lives. I had been observing the gendered inequities and power struggles in the funeral industry, and knew that women were a marginalised minority. Through reading and experience, I saw that women had largely been written out of histories and analyses of the funeral industry, except as background helpers. According to Witz and Marshall (2004) and Arni and Müller (2004), women in other fields have been equally marginalised and their contributions also written out of historical accounts of their fields. Furthermore, in writing women out of historical accounts, men have erased any contestation the women may have made against the setting up of the field into the men's domain it has become. As Arni and Müller write:

It is not only the 'social annihilation' of women as possible subjects and objects of the discourse on the social, but also the 'historical annihilation' of the *contested foundations* of a masculinised sociology that belongs to the history of the 'disciplining' of sociology (2004: 96, my emphasis).

Harding (1987: 5) writes of feminist research on women as victims of male dominance. She rightly warns that a potential limitation of 'victimologies' is in creating the impression that women are unable to act effectively as social agents. In interviewing women working in the funeral industry today, my intention was to bring to the fore women's role and contributions in the industry. I hoped to uncover the historical reasons for women's marginalisation, and explore their countervailing actions against the male domination of after-death work and their more recent contributions in the industry. In this way, I aimed to show that, although women have been marginalised, they have not been helpless victims. To do this, I wanted to hear from the women about their experiences of exclusion from, and getting into, the funeral industry, why they had wanted to enter the work and their experiences within the industry. This was not detail that could emerge in depth from a quantitative approach.

Finding the Research Participants

Statistical data showed that women were actively participating as funeral directors and embalmers. Unless women were owners of funeral firms or their photographs appeared in advertisements, an infrequent occurrence between late 2001 and early 2003 when the interviews took place, it was difficult to find where they all were. Embalmers, who are not promoted in advertising material, were especially difficult to find.

Because the funeral industry has been so staunchly dominated by men, I was wary of my motives being misunderstood and of causing a gender backlash by writing to men owners of funeral firms requesting permission to interview any women who might be working in their firms. I was concerned that men funeral director bosses might feel threatened by their women employees talking to an outsider about funeral firm and industry business. If the men had any such fears, they might turn me away before I had a chance of finding out whether women were interested in participating. Once an employer had said no, I could not return. I decided that my best approach to finding participants would be through the snowballing method.

Therefore, I began by contacting women celebrants in several centres listed in Telecom New Zealand's *Yellow Pages* under the heading 'Funeral Celebrants' and those listed as 'Celebrants' where they had specified performing funeral services. Celebrants had the advantage of being independent of funeral firms and readily identifiable. I wrote them a letter (Appendix 1) and included my Information Sheet (Appendix 2) outlining my research aims. A few days later I phoned, further explaining my aims and requesting an interview. Thanks to a very warm response from those initial celebrants, interviews quickly snowballed, spreading to further celebrants, and also to funeral directors, embalmers and clerical workers.

I also contacted 'Elaine', a woman funeral director I knew, to ask her advice. Elaine was at first hesitant, worried about future employment repercussions if it was thought that she was criticising the industry. She told me to post my Information Sheet and that she would think about it. Four days later, she rang to say that she had phoned several other women who worked in the industry throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, to gauge their responses. The consensus was that they were keen to talk to me about their experiences. They felt it was time 'people out there' knew what it was like for women in the funeral industry, because so far only men's versions had been told. As well as

offering to participate herself, Elaine had permission to send me a list of addresses of her friends who were interested. The response was so encouraging that I was then able to use snowballing to find women from three centres in the South Island and eleven in the North Island.

After such a heartening response, I phoned and called into funeral firms with my Information Sheets whenever I was away from home interviewing participants and again received nothing but helpful responses. In the end, my research sample was limited only by time and cost constraints as no funeral directors I approached, either men or women, turned me away. Some women even found me. One of these was Tess Redgrave, who was told of my research by a participant. In *Good Grief*, an article about women funeral directors for *Next* magazine, Redgrave (2002), included my name and address for anyone who might be interested in talking to me about their experiences in the industry. The only response was from a woman, seeking a career shift, who thought I might be able to help her enter the funeral industry.

Despite my awareness of the inequity of the position of the women clerical workers, it was never my intention to interview them. I felt that, as women in 'traditional' women's roles, they would not have encountered the same difficulties entering the work as the women funeral directors, embalmers and celebrants – although, ironically, early twentieth century women had struggled equally to enter secretarial work (Walby, 1990: 53; Wilson, 2001: 464). It was contrary to my purpose, then, that when I arrived at firms to interview women in the non-traditional roles, office workers also volunteered to participate. The first time it happened, the funeral director I had arranged to interview had been called away on a removal. The office manager invited me into the staff-room for a cup of coffee while I waited. We chatted for a few minutes about my interviews and how she came to be doing her work. She asked to see my Information Sheet and then excused herself for a moment. On her return, she announced that she would also like to participate by being interviewed 'properly', and that the owner of the firm had given his permission. Taken by surprise, I did not know how to tell her that her story was not relevant to my study, so we settled ourselves at the table, turned on the cassette recorder and the interview began. A similar process occurred several times, yielding an unexpectedly rich source of data.

Analysis

Analysis is about the representation or reconstruction of social phenomena. We do not simply 'collect' data; we fashion them out of our transactions with other men and women. Likewise, we do not merely report what we find; we create accounts of social life, and in doing so we construct versions of the social worlds and the social actors that we observe (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996: 108).

Analysis of the data was a slow and tortuous process. Because, as Coffey and Atkinson, (ibid), allude, analysis is not merely repeating the data, it involved many hours of reading the data, both interviews and secondary data such as the *NZFD*, discussions with my supervisors, and exploring the existing literature on issues surrounding gender and work. Where possible, as discussed in the Ethics section below, I transcribed the interviews myself as a way of immersing myself in them. Each transcript was set out in a table, with the participant's words in a wide column on the left, while on the right, in a much narrower column, were notes to myself of possible themes and ideas missed to be followed up with the next interview. At the beginning of each transcript I wrote a brief description of the participant, her or his background, occupation and points of interest from my observation notes. At the end of each transcript I wrote a fuller description of ideas to be followed up and issues raised during the interview that might become themes.

After just a few interviews there was a long list of themes as each participant raised a range of different issues. However, some overarching themes quickly began to emerge. These included such issues as men's exclusion of women from working as funeral directors and embalmers, the problems celebrants were facing in trying to get work, women's difficulties in accessing funeral director and embalming training, the marginalisation of women within the funeral firm, and the similarities in strategies used by the women to enter the industry.

My intention had been to use a qualitative computer analysis system. Having purchased the programme, I installed it and set it up, creating a series of codes. Within each of the codes I grouped together passages of text on related themes, copied and pasted from the interview transcripts. However, I became concerned at the way the women's stories were being removed from their context. It felt as if I was losing touch with the women as subjects and instead dealing with a series of 'issues' or objects. I abandoned the software programme. Instead, using the established codes, I returned to my original transcripts, reading them again and again, becoming familiar with how the stories fitted

together, and how, although the women were working as individuals, their stories and actions often followed remarkably similar patterns.

In concert with conducting and transcribing the interviews I was reading the literature around the themes that were arising. As Coffey and Atkinson (1996: 110) suggest, 'We use ideas in the literature in order to develop perspectives on our own data, drawing out comparisons, analogies, and metaphors.' The reading in turn, forced me to return to the interview data, as it raised new issues that I would suddenly realise the women had been discussing. Repeated weaving back and forth between the literature and the data continued right through the data collection and writing up periods. This process kept the data alive as it opened new insights into what the research participants had said.

I began with Witz' (1992) *Professions and Patriarchy*, with her neo-Weberian theory of gendered occupational closure strategies. But several other authors' ideas gave me 'eureka moments' that sent me dashing excitedly back to the data. These included Richard Hugman's (1991) *Power in Caring Professions*, with his discussion of new or democratic professionalism; Joyce Fletcher's (1999) *Disappearing Acts: Gender, Power and Relational Practice at Work*, showing the importance of a feminist poststructural approach for revealing marginalised voices – the women's voices had been marginalised; Celia Davies' (1995) *The Professional Predicament in Nursing* for explaining how the marginalised subvert and invert dominant discourses, revalorising their own denigrated attributes; Susan Halford and Pauline Leonard's (2001) *Gender, Power and Organisations*, gave permission to draw on seemingly disparate theoretical approaches to power by demonstrating how multiple forms of power may be present simultaneously. In addition, Kate Mulholland's (2004) *Class, Gender and the Family Business* provided a framework for discussing how the funeral industry's beginnings as family firms had affected women's position in the industry.

Validity

'The strength of qualitative research lies in its validity' (Davidson and Tolich, 1999: 34). Claims for reliability and generalisability with any small sample size are more difficult to sustain. One method of seeking validity in qualitative research comes through unstructured, in-depth interviews, in which the participants' voices are permitted to speak for themselves, rather than being manoeuvred to fit preconceived

ideas of the researcher. Davidson and Tolich (1999: 220) write: 'The researcher guides the respondent into particular areas, but what path is actually followed is usually decided by the person doing the talking.' To allow the participants' voices to be heard, it was important for the interviews to be as unstructured as possible. While I had prepared a general question guide (Appendix 3), like Anne Opie (1999: 224) I found that, 'In general, my interviews covered most of the issues on the guide, but the order, the specific focus on certain questions, and the nature of the responses varied considerably.'

My aim, wherever possible, was to follow the participants rather than lead them, letting them set their own agendas. Therefore, I opened by asking the participants to tell me about why they had chosen to work in the funeral industry, how long they had been in the industry, how they had got started, what training they had done, and about their experiences in the industry. These issues were mentioned in the Information Sheet sent to each research participant. I found that most women had considered the issues and were well prepared to discuss them when the interviews began and needed little prompting. The questions on access to education and FDANZ membership were included after their importance to the women became apparent during early interviews – although most of the later women also mentioned them, without being asked. The interviews, lasting between one and three hours yielded a wealth of stories, experiences and insights from the participants.

It was in the early stages of data analysis that I found permitting the participants' voices to speak for themselves the most difficult process to follow. In an initial reading of the interview transcripts, many of the women appeared to be uncomplainingly accepting of their position at the bottom of the labour hierarchy within the funeral industry. Or, as Iiris Aaltio (2002: 211) describes it, the women were 'speak[ing] themselves "away" from any ... assumption on the interviewer's part'. It seemed that I had been so successful in not prompting the women, that they had said little of 'sociological' importance. I was afraid that I had come to a dead end, with insufficient useful data for the basis of a thesis. My dismay and frustration were met with no sympathy from my supervisors. Instead their advice was to 'go back to the data' and 'let the data speak for itself.'

Hera (1995: 73), discussing the relationship between validity and theory in qualitative research, writes,

It is important to guard against theoretical imposition. The contribution of the participants should inform the process of theory production rather than the researcher's theoretical position moulding the data.

I did not begin the research process from any strongly held theoretical position that I was aiming to prove or disprove. It was my intention to let the data speak for itself. Prior to beginning the interviews, I had read Witz' (1992) conceptualisation of professional projects as gendered strategies of occupational closure. From that, plus my previous experience and research into the funeral industry, I expected that I would hear stories of how the women had been excluded from the industry and of strategies they had used to enter. And, indeed, there were many such examples, far more than I had expected.

What I had not expected was that I would become emotionally involved in the women's stories to the point where I was engaging in righteous anger on their behalf. During the transcription process, as the patterns of exclusion and marginalisation began to emerge, I became angry over what I was learning. I expected that the women, too, should have been angry, but there was very little evidence in their transcripts of anger. It seemed inconceivable that they could be so immersed in their work in the funeral industry that they could speak lightly and with no apparent rancour of the struggles they had often made to get there.

One woman, for example, had worked unpaid for more than three years for a funeral firm so she could train to become a funeral director and embalmer. She did so on the understanding that there would be no work for her at the firm once her training was completed because, she was told, the firm had no need for another funeral director. Nevertheless, at the completion of her training period, the firm paid a male to do the work that she had been doing unpaid. During her interview, the woman said that she was grateful to the funeral director, both for enabling her to achieve her goal and for not employing her, as she was now working in much better conditions than if she had been able to stay.

I could not believe that the women were not angry and felt that my failure as an interviewer had stopped them from being able to express their justifiable anger. As

Opie (1999: 225) reminds us, 'Quality qualitative research relies on quality interviewing.' Rereading and rereading the transcripts, I came to realise that the women were living their lives and doing their work. Overcoming closure and marginalisation to enter their occupation of choice was merely a part of the larger reality of their lives. They dealt with it as with any other issues that arose, and then moved on. As a researcher, I was seeing a pattern of such stories. Most of the women were not angry and my thesis was about the women's views and experiences. What I had to do was disengage sufficiently to hear what the women were actually saying, rather than what I had come to want them to say.

Triangulation

The participants' stories each provide their own validity. However, because they are a small sample from an occupational field there is difficulty in suggesting that alone they provide validity for the wider group. According to Evans and Gruba (2002: 91), combining data from a variety of research methods heightens the possibility of achieving validity through the process of triangulation. Therefore, in seeking to understand the position and experiences of the women across the funeral industry I have gathered data in several ways.

Added to the data from the formal interviews are notes from my research journal of observations and informal conversations as I was going about my work as organist, in the course of visiting funeral firms, and when participants phoned. As Haggis (1990: 76) writes, 'No one voice can be privileged without risking the slighting of another'. Therefore, although by far the greater focus is on women, because this research is about correcting the absence of women as actors in the funeral industry and about women's experiences, I have included men's voices. To this end, the research incorporates material from my previous studies in the funeral industry. Included is data from formal interviews with male funeral director/embalmers and clergy, female office workers and a female embalmer who had all signed consent forms giving permission for data from their interviews to be used in future research. Previous research material also includes notes of informal conversations and observations from my three months of participant observation, plus data from the sixty years' of the funeral industry association magazine *NZFD*.

The research, then, draws on data from formal interviews with thirty-eight women. They included nine funeral director/embalmers, seven funeral directors, five embalmers, nine celebrants, and eight female clerical workers. The men who participated in formal interviews were three funeral director/embalmers and one member of clergy. Most formal interviews with funeral directors, embalmers and clerical workers took place in offices, staff-rooms or interview rooms at funeral firms, although some women preferred to talk in their own homes. The interviews with celebrants took place in their homes or in an office at their chapel, except for one woman whom I met in the busy office where she worked as a volunteer. These unstructured interviews tended to last between one and three hours, and all were audiotaped.

There were also less formal conversations with women throughout the research period. Some women, for example, rang after our formal interviews to tell me a story or news that they thought might be of interest – two examples were the passing of a certificate course and the inclusion of an unfair clause in an agreement permitting a woman to work unpaid during her training period. Four male funeral director/embalmers and two male celebrants in different centres participated in informal discussions about their work and views. One male funeral director was especially helpful in providing data on the minutiae of laws and regulations surrounding funeral work and embalming. On hearing of my research, a further three women who had tried unsuccessfully to become funeral directors contacted me, two by phone and one at my place of employment, to tell me about their experiences. These conversations were not audiotaped but, with their permission, notes taken and added to my observation journal. I was also privileged to be invited to attend several social gatherings of celebrants.

A further source of data was a number of radio and television programmes about death and death workers over the research period. These included interviews with a New Zealand embalmer and an American funeral director on Radio New Zealand and documentaries on after-death workers and funerals on Television New Zealand (TVNZ). The television drama series *Six Feet Under*, which screened on TVNZ during the research period, created much interest in funeral firms around the country (it was referred to by most participants) as well as raising issues and awareness of the funeral industry among the wider community. In turn, this public awareness and interest led to a wide range of newspaper and magazine articles about after-death work and workers in

Aotearoa New Zealand, which I draw on. These include articles with such catchy titles as 'Life's Little Rituals' and 'Behind the Scenes at the Crematorium' (Aldridge, 2001, 2002); 'Working at Death's Door' and 'Embracing a Grave Subject' (Bain, 2001, 2002); 'Grave Decisions' (Boland, 1995); 'Profit From Loss' (Bone, 2003); 'Seriously Rich, and in the Gun' (BRW, 2005); 'Death Choices' (Consedine, 1997); 'The Young Undertakers' (Dekker, 2003); 'Dying to Make You Laugh' (James, 2002); 'The Pinebox Inquiry' (Macdonald, 1996); 'Death in the Family' (Manning, 2002); 'Death Watch' (Martin, 2001); 'Grief Trade Finds a Zest for Life' (Matterson, 1993); 'What are They Doing to Our Loved One?' (NZ Lottery Grants Board, 2002); 'Good Grief' (Redgrave, 2002); 'Ashes to Ashes' and 'Offering Something New' (Sargent, 2002a; 2002b); 'The New Undertakers' (Sperber, 2003); 'What a Way to Go!' (*That's Life NZ*, 2002); and 'Dig This' (Wichtel, 2002).

Telecom New Zealand's *Yellow Pages* were an unexpected fund of information as comparisons of advertisements even between 2001 and 2005 showed evidence of women's increasing participation in the funeral industry. In 2003 and 2004, covertly, as a member of the public, I attended popular and informative 'open days' at a city crematorium (see *Hawke's Bay Today*, 2003). A further source of information was quantitative data supplied by Statistics New Zealand on the numbers of women and men funeral directors and embalmers from 1976 to 2001, and the comparative numbers of women in other caring or service fields which have also been considered male domains.

Representation

By its very nature, qualitative research cannot engage to represent the views of all. The small number of male participants exemplifies this. I believed that it was time for women to be presented as actors in analyses of the field of after-death work. To that end, I was interested in raising awareness and questions about the roles and position of women in the funeral industry. There is a long history of presentation of men's views on their role in after-death work, as I show throughout the thesis. To cast women as actors, I decided that it was necessary to hear their views and experiences of both getting into and within the industry. Therefore, I did not seek to interview men formally. Like the office workers, a few men informally offered opinions and information as I went about my research. I sought out others, whom I knew, to fill gaps in my knowledge. But the men whose voices appear in this research are in no way

representative of the general population of male funeral directors. The most notable example of this is that not one I have spoken to grew up in the industry, where family firms were for so long the norm. It was only in the late stages of writing up the thesis that I fully realised the partial nature of men's perspectives. Suddenly doubting my decision to focus so closely on the women, I considered seeking a wider group of male participants. Then, once again I went back to my data and back to my research aims. This research is about women's experiences. It is partial, but its intention is to begin redressing a long history of overlooking a view of the industry from the perspective of the women. Now it has begun, the next step may be to enrich the story by including in-depth interviews with a far wider range of male and female funeral directors, embalmers, clerical workers and celebrants.

Even though the funeral industry in Aotearoa New Zealand is small, and the numbers of women working in it are a small minority, it has not been possible to interview them all, or even a sufficiently large proportion to be able to claim that the ideas and opinions presented here represent those of all women working in the industry. Each woman spoke for herself of her personal experiences and opinions. Moreover, the experiences the women discussed were those they had encountered up to the time of the interview. Like the participants in William Whyte's ([1955] 1993) *Street Corner Society*, the lives of the participants in this research have not frozen in time since their interviews. They have continued with new experiences and new understandings and views of their work and their world. Some of the women have since moved to new work outside the funeral industry, while others have moved to new appointments within the industry. What I have carefully attempted to do is to avoid 'violating the reality of the participants' (Hera, 1995: 73). I have done this by representing their words accurately and in the spirit in which, in my view, they were uttered.

It has not been possible to ensure a proportional representation of the views and experiences of different ethnic or cultural groups within Aotearoa New Zealand because of the snowball nature of participant 'selection'. For example, of the forty-two women participants only one identified herself as Maori. The rest, like myself, were Pakeha New Zealanders. This is not representative of a population in which approximately 15 percent identify as Maori. Since my data collection ceased, I have heard of other Maori women funeral directors. As I do not have figures for the numbers of Maori women in

the funeral industry, I have no way of knowing whether the industry profile fits the general population ratio. Because there was only one Maori woman, for reasons of confidentiality the data drawn from our interview is that which focuses on her account of herself as a woman in the industry, rather than as a Maori woman. Patently, a study focusing equally on Maori women's stories of their experiences as Maori women in the funeral industry would have enriched the data presented here. The father of one Maori woman funeral director, who was not a participant in this research, briefly recounted her story in *Tumatamui: The Experience of a Group of Maori Funeral Directors* (Taurima and Cash, 1999). This is a start, but greater depth of understanding of their position and experiences could be achieved by foregrounding the voices of Maori women.

Awareness of the full complexities of women's position in the funeral industry grew as the research process developed. I have already discussed the late inclusion of clerical workers. There is a further group of funeral industry women whose experiences as a group are missing from this research. I had read in *NZFD* of the supportive role of funeral directors' wives/partners in family firms and realised that women had played a greater role in funeral work than was recognised in histories. Even so, when I was seeking research participants my focus was on finding women funeral directors, embalmers and celebrants – the 'professionals'. It was only as I came to analyse the data that I realised that I, too, had excluded wives/partners of male funeral directors' as a group of workers. Some participants are the wives/partners of funeral directors, but I stumbled on them by good fortune rather than by design. Very few of these were not themselves funeral directors. There were insufficient to separate 'wives/partners' as a 'category' of workers for discussion, particularly in view of the ethical issue of internal confidentiality, discussed below. Therefore, although the work of funeral directors' wives/partners in family firms has been acknowledged and discussed, the data is from secondary sources rather than the participants' interviews. The stories of women who are the wives/partners of funeral directors are of their work as women in the funeral industry, not as wives/partners in family firms. The focus of the thesis has remained on the recently increasing numbers of women as paid workers in the funeral industry, particularly as funeral directors, embalmers and celebrants. Nevertheless, particularly in light of the gradual disappearance of family firms, I believe that an important piece of Aotearoa New Zealand history will be lost without a study of the experiences and contributions of wives/partners in family firms in the funeral industry.

Ethical Considerations

‘This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Protocol 01/37’.

In order to ensure informed consent, the participants were each given an Information Sheet introducing the researcher and outlining the aims of the research and what their participation would involve (Appendix 2). Opportunity was given for questions and discussion and the participants assured of their rights: to withdraw from the research at any time, to refuse to answer any questions, and to have the audio tape recorder turned off whenever they wished. Participants were then asked to sign the Consent Form (Appendix 4).

The audiotapes were subsequently transcribed, most by myself as soon as possible after the interviews. Because I encountered unexpected health problems during the research process, some tapes were transcribed by outside transcribers arranged by the Massey University Student Disabilities Centre (for Transcriber Confidentiality Form, see Appendix 5). Outside transcription caused an unforeseen ethical issue. My concern had been with protecting the confidentiality of the research participants, so all names and identifying features on the tapes had been altered. I had gradually become partially desensitised to the topics being discussed – to the words surrounding the topics, though not the sights and smells. What I had not considered, along with Anne Opie (1999: 227), was possible negative impact on transcribers.

One day the intermediary who arranged the transcribers, phoned me to ask if the interviews had taken place in the morgue because the transcriber was bothered by the source of certain background noises. Two interviews in my first study in 1997 had, indeed, taken place in a funeral firm’s mortuary and a further participant observation in a hospital morgue. However, I transcribed those tapes and typed up my field notes myself. Moreover, stricter health and safety regulations mean that it is now not possible for anyone other than mortuary workers to enter a mortuary or morgue.²¹ In this instance, I was able to assure the intermediary that the interviews had all taken place in either an office, an interview room or a private home. Thereafter, concerned for the

²¹ Cahill (1999) shows that access to mortuaries has been more strictly controlled in the US.

emotional safety of the transcribers, I asked that transcribers be informed of the topic of the interviews and where they had taken place, so they could refuse the work if they wished.

Confidentiality

An important ethical issue was one of maintaining confidentiality in such a small industry. I had learnt in my first study how easily confidentiality could be betrayed on two levels, both externally and internally (Tolich, 2004). Some of my colleagues in my life outside the funeral firm were nursing tutors, using as a course text *Social Science Research in New Zealand* (Davidson and Tolich, 1999), in which an excerpt from my field notes was published. On reading my notes, just by knowing me my colleagues were able to identify the funeral firm, the hospice and some of the individuals described, thus breaching external confidentiality. At the same time, even though I had changed the names of the funeral workers, my descriptions of their roles in the very small firm meant that they were able to recognise each other's words and actions, thus breaching internal confidentiality.

Awareness of the impossibility of maintaining internal confidentiality and possible future impact on the participants and their relationships with each other, also led to an ethical responsibility for the researcher: the need for great care in the selection of data for discussion in the research. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 280) write,

One should refrain from publishing anything that will cause embarrassment or distress to the people studied if it is not central to the research or if its importance does not outweigh such consequences.

With the relatively large number of interviews, and time and cost constraints, I have not returned transcripts to the participants for editing. Instead I have chosen not to include some information which might have caused negative impacts and as far as possible to distance the participants from their statements.

The interviews for the current research took place in eleven centres and fifteen funeral firms throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, rather than only one. Most celebrants worked for two or more funeral firms, enlarging the field even further. Nevertheless, as I began the process of writing up the research, I increasingly realised that the distinctiveness of each firm in such a small industry means that both internal and external confidentiality remain important researcher responsibilities to resolve. For example, those in the

industry know the limited number of women only firms; they know the very few firms owned or managed by women, or by husband and wife teams; they may also know of firms employing a lone woman funeral director among a group of men.

As well as changing all names, therefore, I have altered or dislocated from the women's stories other identifying features such as location, previous occupation and position. The words themselves were all said by research participants, but the stories have been broken up to disguise their origins. As a further precaution, I have created a cast of 'characters' each representing several women's words and experiences. In other words, each research participant's words have been attributed to several different characters and I have attributed to one character, say, Joanna, the comments of several women. My intention is that no one should point to Irene, or Natalie, or Alison, or Megan and claim to know who she is, because none is a representation of any one person. This thesis is my representation of the position of women in the funeral industry in Aotearoa New Zealand, as I have come to understand it through the stories of the research participants.

Insider/Outsider Researcher Issues

Underpinning the formal research are my observations and knowledge that come from my position as both sociologist 'outsider' researcher, and as 'insider' with more than fifteen years of experience in the industry. There are advantages to straddling both positions. Those who do are in the position of looking 'in from the outside while also looking out from the inside' (Minh-Ha, 1991, cited in Cram, 2001: 47). As a sociologist and researcher, I found that male funeral directors tended to treat me differently from the way they treated the women clerical workers. I was treated more as an 'honorary man' (Mulholland, 2003), albeit a promising junior who needed to be fully informed. In a sense this had the effect of emphasising my outsider status, thus helping me to look and listen with outsider eyes and ears. Yet, it was my insider status that enabled me to regularly spend periods backstage in an industry well known for its reluctance to admit outsiders (e.g. see Howarth, 1993). As an insider, I have been able to observe the power structures within the funeral firm and day to day interactions among the workers in a more natural, less stage managed way than if I had arrived as a stranger seeking to observe for a finite period.

With the women research participants, my insider/outsider relationship worked differently. As mentioned in Chapter One, although I have worked for nineteen funeral directors, they have all been men. To most of the women, then, I was first an unknown outsider sociologist with a superficial knowledge of their industry. Because of my thesis working title of *Women in the Funeral Industry in Aotearoa New Zealand*, some women were initially concerned that I might have an anti-male agenda. They were anxious not to be suspected of being disloyal to their industry, their employers, or to men in general. But I was interested in hearing their stories rather than focusing on a set of questions. I was also asking them to talk to me for about an hour and not asking to observe them at work.

Beverly James (1986, cited in Kirkman, 2001: 55) found her research shaped by differences of education and occupation between herself as researcher and the women research participants. This was not my experience. I found that once the women were sure of the parameters of their participation, they quickly accepted me as an insider on several levels. The first was simply that, as women, we had many similar experiences and understandings – in particular, as daughters, wives, partners or mothers whose work, whether paid or unpaid, was often not valued as work in our patriarchal society. The second was that I shared with them a position as a worker in the funeral industry. Although, as organist, I was in a far more peripheral role than most, I had some insider understanding of the satisfactions and problems associated with the work. For some of the women, including many of the celebrants, the precariousness of my position as an organist who may or may not be invited to work from one funeral to the next enabled them to talk about the insecurity of their own positions. The third was that the women, in contrast to the tendency among the men, have often moved to the industry from occupations where they have had some form of tertiary education. And the fourth was that, as a woman working in a male dominated industry, I shared with them a marginalised position. This is especially so with women such as the celebrants, clerical workers and contract embalmers who are not always considered part of the funeral industry. But women owners of funeral firms have also found themselves marginalised and treated as outsiders within the industry. This makes me on one level an insider in the industry, and on another an insider among outsiders – i.e. I share a place among women who have tended to be treated as outsiders by males in the industry.

Along with Kanuha (2000), I am aware of problems in writing as an insider. As she writes:

For each of the ways that being an insider researcher enhances the depth and breadth of understanding a population that may not be accessible to a nonnative scientist, questions about objectivity, reflexivity, and authenticity of a research project are raised because perhaps one knows too much or is too close to the project and may be too similar to those being studied (Kanuha, 2000: 444).

Particular problems for insider researchers include not prompting participants to answer questions fully or finish sentences or explain terms because the researcher already thinks she knows what the participant means or is going to say (Kanuha, 2000: 442). In my role as participant observer during my first research into the funeral firm, I quickly established myself in the patriarchal firm as the wide-eyed academic student, there to be taught by the expert males, who, I found, were observing my reactions as closely as I was observing theirs (Watson and Tolich, 1998). This had the advantage of distancing myself from the insider role, while enabling me to ask questions whose answers I might already at least partially know – sometimes if we do not have some knowledge of the answer, we do not think to ask the question.

By the time I came to look anew at the funeral firm as a background for this research, my work as organist had dwindled. The reason for this was partly due to less demand for an organist's services. Increased secularisation of funerals meant fewer hymns were sung, while personalisation of funerals allowed people to bring their own choice of recorded music. Then, from early 2004 other work commitments meant that I was unavailable to play the organ. This meant that for the final writing up of the research I was no longer employed in the industry. Although there had been an almost complete change of workers in 'my' firm since my first research, I believed that the difficulty of maintaining both external and internal confidentiality remained even more cogent than with women working in other firms. Therefore, for ethical reasons, I deliberately made no requests to interview the current workers in relation to gender issues. Nevertheless, throughout the initial research period they obligingly continued to answer my many questions in relation to health regulations and the nature of their individual roles.

Research Participants

The voices of the women participants illustrate women's experiences in the funeral industry as funeral directors, embalmers, celebrants and office workers in a wide range of settings. There were those who were owners, managers and employees of firms, large and small, in metropolitan and provincial centres. Some women were funeral director/embalmers, other women were funeral directors who did no embalming, and others did just embalming. While some women worked full time, others worked part time, some worked under contract, others as casual labour, and some made a living working as a locum moving from centre to centre where the work took them. Some worked as a lone woman funeral director among a group of men, while others worked in firms where there were only women. While the majority of clerical workers were in full-time employment at the time of their interviews, most had begun as part-timers. Some celebrants had all the work they required, while others did not. Some were able to command a fair recompense for their work, while others were paid an honorarium. Some funeral celebrants were clergy, some were JPs, and the majority were trying to establish themselves as workers in the new occupational specialism of celebrancy.

Funeral Directors and Embalmers: The Women

The women's ages ranged from late teens to mid-sixties and all except three had moved to after-death work from experience in another occupation or occupations. Examples include such fields as nursing, teaching, policing, hairdressing and a variety of clerical and service occupations outside the funeral industry. Several of the younger women did not have children, but at the time of the interviews most women either had, or had previously had, children at home. Some had waited until their children were 'older' (i.e. mid-teens) before taking up the work, but others had fitted in early childcare with after-death work. Of those who came to funeral directing after their children were older, several had had a break from paid employment while they raised their children. Eight of the sixteen women funeral directors were also trained embalmers, but three of those were doing little or no embalming. In this they differed from male funeral directors who were much more likely also to do embalming.

Several of the women funeral directors entered the job by 'helping' or working for a funeral director as cleaner or office worker then growing the job, eventually buying the firm or setting up her own firm. Some worked unpaid for a funeral director to meet the

prerequisite for attending the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) polytechnic training course, then subsequently gained paid work, though none with the funeral firm where they had worked unpaid during their training. A few had married male funeral directors and subsequently also became funeral directors.

Funeral Directors and Embalmers: The Men

The male participants all came to funeral directing from other occupations, three of which were distinctive enough that identifying them would breach confidentiality. Several had worked in sales. Except for two who were older, they were in their mid-late thirties, married with young to teenage children when they began the work. All of the men did embalming as well as funeral directing. None of their wives/partners was also a funeral director, and although several wives were 'business partners', their role in the firm was as the supportive helpmeet – primarily taking care of the children and the home, but also answering the phones, and perhaps doing some office work, supporting the bereaved, trimming caskets, applying cosmetics and styling the hair of the embalmed, catering and cleaning when no one else was available.

Celebrants: The Women

Nine women celebrants participated in formal interviews. They tended to be a little older than the women funeral directors and embalmers when they started working in the industry, but, like them, had often moved to the work after a break from paid employment for caring duties, of either children or elderly or ill parents. Several had participated in community volunteer work. Apart from the member of clergy, the women had all attended the celebrancy course in Auckland, although some had been acting as celebrants, either as JPs or through chaplaincy work, prior to attending the course. Some celebrants attended the celebrancy course after being denied entry to funeral directing, while others heard about the course through friends, or saw it advertised. Although several women entered the work hoping to make it a full time occupation, they had been disappointed in this ambition and were making ends meet by portfolio working – fitting celebrancy around other work. Most women stated that they would not consider more than two to three funerals a week, because of the intensity and high emotional level of the work. Many also believed that they were underpaid for the professional, individualised work they offered and the hours of work each service took.

Celebrants: The Men

The male celebrant participants were either current or retired funeral directors or clergy. None had attended the celebrancy course. Unlike the women, some men considered five or six funerals a week, even two or three a day, to be an acceptable workload.

Clerical Workers

Eight participants were women who were office workers. Two, although employed part time in funeral firms at the time of their interviews, have since moved to full time work outside the industry. They were known variously as 'secretary', 'receptionist', 'office manager', 'office administrator', and 'accounts manager'. Two women entered the work hoping it would lead to becoming a funeral director, while others were returning to paid employment after raising children or finding themselves suddenly sole parents.

Women Outside the Industry

Three women who participated through untaped conversations had previously unsuccessfully applied for work as funeral directors or embalmers. After hearing of my interest in women in the funeral industry, they approached me. They thought that I might be interested in hearing of the closure they had encountered on trying to enter the funeral industry. One, having decided that funeral directing was what she really wanted to do had unsuccessfully tried to persuade several funeral directors to allow her to work unpaid while she did her training. The other two had not realised until our conversation that this was an avenue used by women to enter the industry. Unlike those who turned to celebrancy as an alternative after being turned away by funeral directors, none of these women saw herself in the role of celebrant.

The interviews with the women raised a wide range of issues. They were all important, but were too numerous to cover here. The problem became not how to find enough data to fill a thesis but what would have to be left out. The women spoke of attending fatal accident scenes and the collegiality towards them of other professionals, such as police and members of the fire service, also involved in after-death work. They spoke of the reactions of members of their families and friends to their 'line of work' – sometimes highly supportive, sometimes horrified, sometimes curious or puzzled, but seldom

disinterested. They told of dealing with unpleasant events, of struggling to cope, of sad occasions and heart-warming occasions. There is so much more to tell. In the end, because this is about why women have been visibly absent from after-death work for so long and how they are now moving into the industry, I have chosen five major themes that focus on gender relations within the funeral industry as a way of revealing the reasons for women's absence from, and more recent entry into, after-death work.

The five themes are the basis of the following five analytical chapters. The first is the male theme of masculinisation, commercialisation and professionalisation of after-death work. It sets the historical background for the second theme, which is women's absence from after-death work and their more recent entry. From there I move to examine, firstly, closure strategies used by men, then closure strategies used by women, and finally, to a discussion of how women believe their way of caring for the dead and bereaved differs from men's.

Chapter Four

The Masculinisation of After-Death Work

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to explore the development of after-death work in Aotearoa New Zealand as a male-dominated occupational field. The funeral industry in Aotearoa New Zealand was not established in isolation. Rather, through dissemination of trade and association magazines, visits from industry sales representatives, immigration and overseas travel, the early funeral director leaders closely followed trends in Britain and the United States of America (US). At the same time, while the modernist ethos underlies most of their actions, they have been influenced by shifts in wider social trends, including attitudes to grief and the expression of emotion. Therefore, it is necessary to situate the actions of New Zealand funeral directors in the wider context. To this end, I include an outline of the very early development of undertaking as an occupational specialism in Britain and the US through masculinisation and commercialisation. This is a story of men and their deeds where much of the literature assumes that it was men alone who participated in the development of the specialisation of undertaking. From there I move to a discussion of funeral directors in Aotearoa New Zealand, to continue the story through professionalisation to the control of after-death work. Here I examine how the gendered nature of the men's professional project and the establishment of funeral firms as family firms contributed to women's absence from after-death work.

There is a difficulty in presenting historical background in social research. Examining the ways some public sphere activities had become dominant over some private sphere activities, Hearn (1994) discovered that his research could be only partial. The reason, Hearn argues, is that the research 'was gathered from what might be called conventional patriarchal historical sources in a fairly conventional patriarchal way' (ibid: 55). Hearn's insight is useful when it comes to thinking about the historical background of the funeral directing industry in Aotearoa New Zealand and elsewhere. This is because what we know of the development of the funeral industry has largely been written by

men, recording men's versions of events and actions, as seen through men's eyes and from men's experiences.²² Similarly, Kate Mulholland in her book *Class, Gender and the Family Business* (2003) argues that historical records, directories, newspaper reports, biographies and studies of family businesses in Britain need a gender analysis because they ignore women's economic contribution in the form of dowries, marriage settlements or labour. They focus instead on inherited wealth through the male line or on individual successes through discourses of the 'self-made man' (ibid: 14-15). Furthermore, Mulholland observes, 'Characteristically, there is a silence about women's absence' (ibid: 12).

In literature on the funeral industry, the lives and participation of women have, on the whole been invisible, and their views, actions and experiences ignored. For example, Brian Parsons, in his article 'Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: The Lifecycle of the UK Funeral Industry' (1999), mentions that funeral firms in the UK since the seventeenth century have been family businesses. Where many theorists ignore gender and women completely, Parsons devotes two paragraphs under a heading 'Women in funeral service' to the recent increase of women into the industry into work other than part time office duties involving 'administration and contact with bereaved families necessitating tact, sympathy and the performance of emotional labour' (ibid: 140). Otherwise, Parsons writes in gender-neutral language. Ironically this makes it difficult to know whether he is referring to men only or equally to women and men, so still making women invisible.

Even recent works by women on the funeral industry, as well as tending to focus on men working in the industry, are likely to represent uncritically men's historical perspectives of the background of the industry. Because of the male focus and authorship of the historical records available, the women have not been able to provide women's perspectives of their experiences of trying to enter the industry or their participation within the industry over the last century. Rather than critically examining the silence and invisibility of women in the histories, they tend to assume that there has

²² See e.g. Fulton, 1961; Habenstein, 1962; Habenstein and Lamers, 1981; Litten, 1991, 1997; Iserson, 1994; Cahill, 1995; Pine, 1995; and the *New Zealand Funeral Director 1939-2002*. Griffin and Tobin, 1997, are an exception, although their section on women tends to focus on the development of women-only firms, missing the contribution of women in male-dominated firms.

been a complete male takeover of this work previously managed by women.²³ They thus inadvertently contribute to the perpetuation of the myth of the funeral industry as an entirely male domain as well as to the continuation of women's invisibility in the industry – and therefore to prolonging the difficulties for women in gaining acceptance as funeral directors, embalmers and funeral celebrants.

Next, then, is a brief outline of the early commercialism of after-death work and the development of funeral directing as an occupational specialism. Following this is the story of the funeral directors' professional project in Aotearoa New Zealand, based largely on material from *The New Zealand Funeral Director (NZFD)*, the quarterly magazine of the funeral directors' occupational association, the Funeral Directors' Association of New Zealand (FDANZ).²⁴ Here the male narrative continues as the men, intent on raising their social status and power, make a collective effort to provide a specialist service over which they have a monopoly, while also working to cast off the stigma of working with the dead in order to gain the necessary social respectability. I argue that in funeral firms, so often begun as family businesses, women's contributions have been considered supportive helping rather than work. Moreover, the family women have often been complicit in this marginalisation of women's work.

Next, I argue that the professionalising efforts of the men have led them into a position where their occupation today, rather than fitting the model of a profession, more closely resembles a semi-profession, the model more usually associated with a predominance of women. Finally, I examine the organisation of the funeral firm today. This includes discussion of the gendered structures, cultures and power that contribute to the continuing gendered hierarchy and inequities faced by women in the funeral firm.

²³ E.g. Gittings, 1984; Hera, 1992, 1995; Adams, 1993; Hockey, 1996; Bradbury, 1999. However, Howarth, 1992, 1996, 2000b; Pringle and Alley, 1995; and Cline, 1997 are notable exceptions.

²⁴ Fulfilling the attribute of a national association required for their professional project, the Funeral Directors' Association of New Zealand (FDANZ) was originally established in 1937 as the New Zealand Federation of Funeral Directors from the amalgamation of several regional funeral associations. Although the name change only occurred in 1970, to avoid confusion I use the more recent FDANZ throughout. It is not the only funeral industry trade association in New Zealand, but is the longest standing and claims 85 percent of funeral firms as members.

Undertaking: Male Commercialisation of After-Death Work

From the middle ages, funerals of the aristocracy in Britain were organised by the College of Heralds. These were lavish, complex, and full of ritual (Howarth, 1992). For everyone else at this time, care of the dead and disposal of the body was a process managed by members of the extended family, friends and community (Hera, 1995: 165). A female neighbourhood layer-out helped the women of the household wash and prepare the body for disposal while a local male carpenter built a coffin and would often 'undertake' to use his horse and cart to transport the body to the place of disposal (Fulton and Metress, 1995: 466). By the late seventeenth century in Britain this dual role of coffin maker/transporter was gradually turned by a few into the occupation of 'undertaker', one who specialised in providing after-death care (Habenstein and Lamers, 1981: 103). These developments in after-death work were aided by social changes in attitudes to death and ritual, the rise of the belief in individual rather than communal responsibility, and the early development of capitalist entrepreneurialism.

By the end of the nineteenth century there was a shift to the undertakers themselves playing a major role in the widespread adoption of many of the costly rituals of the aristocracy (Gittings, 1984). Having seized control of funerals from the College of Heralds, one of the first things the British undertakers did was to copy many of the ritual aspects of the aristocratic funerals the College of Heralds had organised (Howarth, 1997: 132). Funerals in Britain, for those who could afford them, were then often turned into expensive, elaborate occasions, involving swathes of black draperies, hired mourners and transport for the chief mourners in the funeral cortège (Howarth, 1992).

The fear of dissection and of shame at a pauper's burial, plus growing distaste at the sights and smells of putrefaction, contributed to the poorer working classes increasingly joining the middle classes in using the undertakers' services. The greatest cost for bereaved families had been the provision of food for those attending the wake. Coinciding with the Puritan view that such feasting extravagance was wasteful, the undertakers decided that if the poor were going to spend large amounts of money on funeral costs it might as well be on goods the undertakers provided – such as draperies and hired mourners (ibid: 98). To capitalise on this, undertakers shifted the central focus of the after-death social ritual from the wake to the funeral procession.

The funeral directors' cause was also aided by rise of scientific interest in anatomy, which had led to a flourishing market in corpses for dissection. The corpses were supplied by two main means. The first was through grave-robbery and the second was the bodies of criminals²⁵ and indigents unable to pay for a 'decent' burial (Richardson, 1989: 105). Families' fear for the loss of their immortal soul if they were dissected meant they were afraid of dying in the poor house and of being unable to provide a 'decent' funeral. If they died in the poor house their bodies were handed directly to the dissecting anatomists (surgeons). The cheaper, flimsier coffins of paupers, likely to be buried in an overcrowded common grave, were more accessible to the bodysnatchers or 'resurrectionists' (ibid: 110). These fears led to the development of 'funeral insurance' provided by funeral or friendly societies. Families joined a society where they paid a sum of money each week to ensure an undertaker's services (ibid: 117). This created the working class poor as a new market for undertakers' services.

Therefore, by the middle of the nineteenth century, with industrial capitalism in full swing and a growing market for their services, the entrepreneurial British undertakers were in an ideal situation to expand and commercialise their services and improve their status (Richardson, 1989: 117). In North America, on the other hand, undertaking as an occupational specialism was much later developing. According to Cahill (1995), funerals in North America had long 'ranged from austere to opulent' (ibid: 119) among those of European descent. There, as in early Britain, cabinetmakers, upholsterers and 'livery stable keepers' had begun to offer coffins, both pre-made and custom made, among their wares. They were less entrepreneurial than their British counterparts though. It was only from after the time of the American Civil War in the 1860s that the title of undertaker, 'borrowed' from the British, became a specialised occupation in North America (ibid: 120). At around the same time the British undertakers were looking to improve further their social standing through professionalisation.

²⁵ According to Jean Hera (1992: 254) dissection of the corpse was a fate suffered by only the worst criminals. Therefore grave robbers provided most of the thousands of bodies dissected annually in Britain during the 1700s and early 1800s until an 1832 Act outlawing grave robbery. Previously it had been a crime only if the shroud and coffin were also taken. This same Act, however, made it legal for the bodies of those who had died in poor houses to be used for dissection. In New Zealand the Anatomy Act, 1875, mindful of the horror for so many fleeing the British Poor Laws instead provided for the use of the bodies of those who had died in mental institutions (Hera, 1992: 258). This changed in 1908 when the Medical Act Part II allowed also for the keepers of any 'establishment for destitute persons' to provide bodies of those dying in their charge. Enforcing this Act is no longer necessary as medical schools have more bodies voluntarily donated than they need (Hera, 1992: 259).

Funeral Directing in New Zealand: A Gendered Professional Project

In colonial, settler Aotearoa New Zealand, the Pakeha funeral tended to remain a much simpler affair than those in Britain or the United States. Because most communities were small and widely dispersed, and roads often merely tracks (Ninness, 1988: 102), many of the British customs were never adopted, except for rare state occasions such as the funeral of William Massey, New Zealand Prime Minister from 1912-1925. Here, undertakers were less likely to include paid mourners, vehicles for mourners, or extensive black drapery and feather hire among the services offered (and what was offered was severely curtailed by import restrictions during the two World Wars). When necessary, as well as the hearse, they provided extra vehicles for transporting the huge numbers of floral tributes that tended to be considered a social obligation. During the last quarter of the twentieth century, funerals in Aotearoa New Zealand became increasingly short, simple and lacking in ritual – and even the profusions of flowers disappeared (Ninness, 1989: 86).

Changing social attitudes to death have meant that public opinion and demand have influenced the funeral industry in Aotearoa New Zealand. In the process of improving their occupation and social position, funeral directors have also constantly and consciously shaped the rituals of disposal of the dead and management of bereaved families. In other research I have detailed how a reading of *NZFD* from 1939 to 1999 shows that the motivation underlying most of the funeral directors' actions since the first quarter of the twentieth century was the desire to gain state recognition of their occupation as a profession, both to develop their businesses and to raise their social status (Watson, 1999). Like other occupational groups, including dentists, veterinarians and pharmacists, funeral directors in Aotearoa New Zealand from early in the twentieth century deliberately set about improving their social position by developing a 'professional project'.

The term 'professional project' was coined by Magali Larson (1977), to show that the development of occupations into professions did not happen by accident. Each profession was the result of a group's plan to gain an occupational monopoly. Larson argues that use of the term project should not be taken to imply that every member of a group was aware of, or deliberately pursuing, a particular goal. Nevertheless, the funeral directors were in a different position from most professions, which had been

established by the end of the nineteenth century (Larson, 1977: 5). The funeral directors' much later professional project was explicitly and repeatedly stated in *NZFD* throughout the twentieth century. From 1939, when they established their association magazine, *FDANZ* constantly referred to their industry as a profession, and repeatedly mentioned their desire for legal recognition as a profession.²⁶ An example is from an editorial plea in 1940:

Let us not rest satisfied until we have raised the standard of funeral directing; until it is recognised by the laws of the land as one of the regular and legitimate professions (J. McIntyre, cited in *NZFD*, 1940: 2).

It is apparent that an active group of leaders among funeral directors knew the requisite list of professional attributes, and collectively and systematically set out to achieve them.

In 1999, I examined the ways the funeral directors' actions accorded with Larson's model of a professional project (discussed on pp. 24-5). Here, on the other hand, I am interested in the gendered nature of their project, why the funeral directors felt that creating a gendered hierarchy and division of labour was essential to furthering their professional project and why, although their actions can be seen to fit the modernist masculinist model, the women in their families might be seen to have participated willingly. First I discuss how the funeral directors' endeavours to achieve social respectability were a major part of their professional project and why their wives appear to have willingly kept their efforts concealed. I then look briefly at the stigma attached to their work of dealing with the dead and how they have attempted to overcome that in their bid for respectability, and recognition as a profession. This is followed by an examination of how the funeral directors have removed the socialisation of emotions surrounding mourning from women's control in the private home to the public sphere of the funeral home as a means of furthering their professional project. And lastly in this section is a discussion of how the funeral directors' attempts to gain respectability and social status through the strategy of gaining both a technical and a moral authority, necessary attributes for professional status, have instead led them closer to fitting the description of a semi-profession.

²⁶ For some of the many examples, see Watson (1999: 45n1).

Social Respectability and the Professional Project

In working to achieve the professional attributes of the functionalist model, the funeral directors developed first embalming, during the second third of the twentieth century, and then grief counselling, from the late 1960s, as areas of expertise over which to gain a market monopoly. More importantly, for gaining and controlling a market monopoly for their services, professions need the power that can only be conferred by high social status, through state recognition and regulation of their occupation. It was, therefore, vital to socialise members to conform to professional standards of behaviour in both their work and their non-work lives. In this way, they aimed to achieve the necessary public perception of members' respectability (Macdonald, 1995: 189). To do this, funeral director leaders sought to socialise their members through such activities as frequent reminders in the *NZFD* of appropriate standards of dress and behaviour befitting a professional, through training courses, FDANZ registration, annual conventions, and through setting codes of ethics and practice standards. They also encouraged members' participation in community and voluntary service organisations by describing such participation in member profiles in *NZFD*. Brooking (1980) mentions that early dentists in Aotearoa New Zealand were equally concerned with overcoming their 'relatively humble backgrounds' (ibid: 189), seeking to gain an elusive respectability through such means as 'participation in as many voluntary organisations as possible' (ibid: 188). In this section I very briefly examine an aspect of the funeral directors' search for respectability before addressing the impact of this on the position of women in the industry.

The funeral directors' first move towards convincing the public of their respectability was to establish their occupation as a legitimate business, distancing themselves from the ill repute of their working class predecessors, the nineteenth century undertakers who had been the local carter, builder or cabinet maker, moonlighting by transporting corpses (Fulton and Metress, 1995: 466). To aid the distancing process the funeral directors, following other occupations,²⁷ opted for a name change, from undertaker to funeral director. As well as influencing the public and potential clients to believe in the 'greater competence, sophistication and respectability' (Caplow, 1964, cited in Pavalko, 1971: 34) of the occupation, a new name serves to act as a constant reminder to the

²⁷ E.g. Burns (1979: 22-3) records the slow shift from farriery to the veterinary profession and the subsequent rise in status of the practitioners.

members of the occupational group of their ambitions and the actions necessary to attain them, thus also contributing to socialisation of the occupational members. Griffin and Tobin (1997) point out that in the case of funeral directors, considering ongoing recurrences of public attacks on the industry, the name change was a well-justified move. They argue:

The term undertaker is ambiguous because the word manages to conceal just what is undertaken. Having gathered a large load of associations, most of them grim and unpleasant, it is not surprising that, when the opportunity arose, the more explicit and less Dickensian term 'funeral director' was substituted. ... The newer name has become well accepted, but when the industry is under attack 'undertaker' tends to reappear as a convenient epithet (ibid: 177).

The works of Evelyn Waugh (1948) and Jessica Mitford (1963, 1998) are examples of such attacks on the industry. Both authors, writing to show the members of the industry as charlatans, use the term undertaker in a denigrating and pejorative manner throughout. In Aotearoa New Zealand, apart from some mid-twentieth century attacks by hospitals refusing to allow 'undertakers' access through their front doors during daylight hours following the advent of the eight hour working day, and by some clergy believing their position to be usurped by 'undertakers' (see Watson, 1999), funeral directors have not been the subject of such acrimonious attacks. The attempts by members of the FDANZ both to distance themselves from their former image and to socialise their members to the higher standards are apparent in their repeated reminders to the public and their own members to use the term 'funeral director' rather than 'undertaker', and in their demands for members' conformity to 'professional' standards (Watson, 1999). Their persistence has been at least partially successful as many, even clergy, eventually came to view them as professionals (Fulton, 1961: 320).

The most direct impact on women's position in the funeral industry came from an unacknowledged facet of the funeral men's professional project – its gendered nature. As discussed in Chapter Two, professions were places for men. For funeral directors to be taken seriously in the professional world, their firms, too, needed to be places for men. Therefore, part of their drive for social respectability to prove their suitability for professional status was the need to erase the presence of women. In Aotearoa New Zealand, funeral firms were established as middle class family concerns presided over by a male head of household, similar to the professional model of the general practitioner (GP) in medicine and the parish clergyman, as described by Janet Finch (1983). Professions, as artefacts of the modern industrial era separated the male public

sphere of productive work from the female private sphere of non-productive activity. Ironically, though, the work of GPs and clergymen was often based at home and premised on much unpaid, invisible work by the professional's wife (Finch, 1983). Barbara Lawrence (1987: 134) also writes of the contributions of GPs' wives:

With the surgery being so often attached to the GP's home, his professional and home life were inextricably intermingled.... [His] wife was community mother and confidante as well as mother to her children and organiser to a certain extent of the practice.

The work of the GP's or clergyman's wife, however directly it related to her husband's profession, was simply not acknowledged as work. Instead, it was referred to as 'support' or 'helping'. In her study of family businesses, Mulholland (2003) found the same attitude. She argues that, especially during the development of a business,

women's inputs are both necessary and indispensable, for they are a source of cheap capital and free labour, both of which are presented in a manner that conspires in the construction of 'his' business. ... [Thus] women's contributions constitute an unquantified invisible asset behind many successful businesses, but this is characterised in the traditional context as 'helpmeet' and 'support' (ibid: 46).

In the funeral firm, when women participated in work, in order to preserve the social respectability required for both the economic rewards of a successful business and the social status derived from membership of a professional elite, the fiction was maintained that the women's contribution was in the form of supportive help, not work.

Norris (1997) argues that maintaining male dominance has been seen as an important factor in an occupational group's acceptance as a profession. She writes:

The literature on women and professions suggests that gender is important in determining the extent to which occupations can establish and maintain professional privileges. It is generally argued that the inclusion of women within an occupation decreases this ability. Thus, women are excluded by professionalising occupations, and their increased entry into an occupation is thought to be associated with a down-grading of that occupation (Norris, 1997: 35).²⁸

While the calls for professions to remain men's domains may have relied on allegations of women's entry being detrimental to a profession's status, as Bottero (1992: 344) points out, it has been shown that decline in occupational status has been caused by more complex conditions than the entry of women. Yet, Norris (1997: 35) finds an

²⁸ Professor Carol Black, president of the Royal College of Physicians, voiced the same fears on August 2, 2004 when she claimed that increasing numbers of women in higher positions in the medical profession were endangering its power and influence. Black's argument was that by such acts as serving on government committees and regulatory bodies men tend to use networking in the political arena to maintain medical prestige and influence in a way that women do not (Laurance, 2004).

apparent link between pharmacists' attempts to maintain professional privileges and women's exclusion from retail pharmacy. Similarly, the primacy of the funeral directors' professionalising project, together with the historical nature of the patriarchal structures and control in funeral firms, appear to have encouraged male funeral directors to exclude women from working in funeral firms as funeral directors and embalmers. The same factors have permitted the entry of women into the more subordinate and acceptable 'traditional' women's clerical roles.

FDANZ members were frequently reminded that funeral firms were men's business through regular features about funeral firms in the *NZFD*. These features were used to promote and reward members' improving activities such as building new premises, or enlargement or renovation of old ones – an example of socialisation of members, encouraging them to emulate such worthy actions. The men's names, hobbies, achievements and community activities were written about in great detail, accompanied by photographs of the men, their buildings and their hearses. The family women, on the other hand, were seldom photographed or mentioned by name. Instead their rare appearance was as a brief footnote in which their 'help and support' were 'gratefully acknowledged'. A typical article concluded:

This brief history would not be complete without reference to the invaluable support of the wives of both family and employed members of the Company – their assistance and sacrifices will be well understood and appreciated by all in the profession (*NZFD*, 1977: 14).

Here the funeral directors reflect Mulholland's point (2003: 110) that 'the men's patronising accolades to their wives for giving "emotional support" merely conceal the value of wifely labour.'

As the firms grew, women from outside the family were often employed for clerical work. If they were mentioned in the articles, it was not likely to be by name but rather by the duties they performed, secretary or receptionist, for example. In a typical feature, under the heading 'History of Substantial Christchurch Funeral Firm,' all eleven male members of the firm were named and appeared in the accompanying photograph, along with one woman, also named in the caption, but without mention of her role. In the body of the text there was mention of 'an irreplaceable *Telephoniste*, *Typiste*, Receptionist and Secretary combined' (*NZFD*, 1977: 13, my emphasis) unidentified, but presumably a woman because of the 'e' added to the titles. Describing the woman in

this way might be seen as an attempt to ‘elevate’ the value of her contribution. I suggest it might equally be viewed as a condescending attempt at humour used to cover patriarchal power. An organist, unnamed, was described as ‘the daughter of a previous long term member of staff and a granddaughter of the late John Rhind’ (NZFD, 1977: 13).

Connell (1987: x) correctly writes, ‘The oppression of women ... is a matter of human agency, not of nature.’ History, however partial, shows that funeral directors and their families were following a widely accepted modernist understanding of ‘how things were’ in relation to the positions of men and women vis-à-vis the worlds of the public sphere and the private sphere. In Aotearoa New Zealand, as in other Western democracies during the middle of the twentieth century, we had the concept of the *family wage*, which ‘assumed a family with the male as bread-winner’ (Gerhard, 2004: 126). While the intention of the family wage was designed to alleviate class inequities, as Gerhard points out, it had the effect of institutionalising the gendered division of the public and private spheres. Therefore, while women worked in the public sphere at the time, in many respectable middle class families it was considered a point of honour that a man was seen to be able to support his family (Callister, 2000). I suggest that this is a reason²⁹ why women as well as men have participated in the deception that wives did not work in funeral firms, just as they have in other family businesses (see Mulholland, 2003). With a married woman’s social status deriving from that of her husband, conforming to the norms of respectability of the time was likely to have been as important to the women as to the men.

Neutralising the Stigma of After-Death Work

An important factor for funeral directors and their families to overcome in their search for social respectability was the need to escape the social stigma attached to their work. Erving Goffman (1963: 9) writes of stigma as ‘the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance’. The situation, Goffman writes, may occur when,

an individual who might have been received easily in ordinary social intercourse possesses a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn those of us whom he [sic] meets away from him, breaking the claim that his other attributes have on us (ibid: 15).

²⁹ There are other reasons, as will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

As Howarth (1996: 83) points out, there are two reasons why after-death workers' contact with the dead creates such a situation. The first is that funeral directors represent death. This leads to a public rejection of the funeral directors' role because of society's general fears surrounding death and the 'reluctance to confront issues of mortality' (ibid). The second reason is that for all their attempts to be accepted as a profession, funeral firms are businesses. No more nor less than other businesses, funeral firms are motivated by profit. The same is also true of any members of the recognised professions working in private firms, regardless of their assertions of altruism. It is permissible for professionals to make a profit from one client's ill health or another's legal problems. It would appear that there is a belief that it is proper for professionals to profit from others' misfortunes, except for the misfortune of death. In keeping with this belief there is a tendency to doubt the sincerity of funeral directors' sympathy and to view their motives with suspicion because 'making a living from disposing of the dead is often perceived as immoral or perverted' (ibid). Funeral directors believed that attaining professional status was a vital strategy towards overcoming the negative, even sinister, stereotype of after-death workers created by such stigmatisation.

The success of professional projects depended on their achievement of both a scientific (descriptive) knowledge base, which gives technical authority, plus a normative (prescriptive) knowledge base, which gives moral authority (Macdonald, 1995: 168-9). In attempting to achieve their professional project, funeral directors in Aotearoa New Zealand, avidly following the development of improved techniques and materials, particularly from the US, added embalming to their services offered (Watson, 1999). Because of the determined efforts of the early FDANZ leaders, today unless requested otherwise, almost all corpses in Aotearoa New Zealand are now routinely fully embalmed by using a combination of cavity injection and arterial embalming³⁰ (Sperber, 2003: 54). Aldridge even goes so far as to remark:

No other country, including the United States where the techniques were developed, has adopted embalming with the blanket enthusiasm of New Zealand. Some estimates say 99.9 percent of New Zealand dead are now embalmed (2002: 1).

The funeral directors hoped that gaining technical authority through an occupational monopoly of embalming expertise would bring them closer to the scientific world of

³⁰ See Watson (1999) and Iserson (1994) for a description of the two methods.

medicine and thus closer to their goal of professional status. This was discussed frequently in *NZFD*, especially in editorials and in messages reprinted from British and US funeral directors and trade suppliers. For example, an editorial in 1950 exhorted, 'We hope to see a more general adoption of the *science* of embalming in 1951' (*NZFD*, 1950: 136, my emphasis). In 1953, *NZFD* published a message from George Lear, a British embalming tutor. Lear recommended embalming because, he declared,

embalming is pursuing the *scientific* side of funeral directing.... [We are] at this moment on the threshold of a great transition of funeral service becoming a dignified *profession*.... Funeral directors will have to act as a *deputy coroner*, trained to observe post-mortem appearances with a view to assisting *medico-legal* inquiry (Lear, in *NZFD*, 1953: 69-71, my emphases).

There still remained the perception that work involving the dead is dirty and contaminating. As Hughes writes,

The physician's work touches the world of the morally and ritually, but more especially of the physically unclean. Where his [sic] work leaves off, that of the undertaker begins. ... To bring back health (which is cleanliness) is the great miracle (1958: 71,73).

To move away from the polluting stigma of being associated with the decomposing corpse, funeral directors have promoted embalming as 'sanitising' the corpse. By collecting bodies as soon as possible after death and immediately replacing bodily fluids with preservative chemicals, the funeral directors have claimed to be protecting the public from the danger of contracting illnesses such as hepatitis and AIDS from contact with the corpse.³¹ In this way they are halting decomposition and de-polluting the corpse while minimising their own time spent with the polluted body. Once the body is embalmed, re-dressed and posed in its casket, looking as peacefully asleep as possible, the funeral directors can present the purified body to the bereaved, thus removing themselves from connection to the pre-sanitised, decomposing corpse.

Until the 1980s the sanitised body was presented in a closed casket because it was not customary practice for Pakeha families in Aotearoa New Zealand to 'view', or spend time with the embalmed corpse in an open casket. In other words, the results of the funeral directors' work were seldom displayed. Therefore, the perception that work involving the dead is dirty and the public wish not to be reminded of death meant that it

³¹ I was told by a funeral director that, while still referring to embalming as sanitisation, funeral directors are today less likely to claim the process protects against disease because there is no certainty that it does.

was still difficult for funeral directors to advertise their newly acquired expertise. Furthermore, in terms of their professional project, the funeral directors were still lacking the required moral authority.

Therefore when, in the late 1960s, the funeral directors read of the growing popularity of the field of grief counselling they quickly realised that here was an answer to their problems. Funeral director Peter Strong, for example, presented a ‘lecture’ at the 1969 annual FDANZ conference (published in the following *NZFD*). He cited psychiatrist Erich Lindemann’s ‘Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief’ (1944) in which Lindemann discussed his theory of phases of grief and the tasks that must be accomplished to achieve a healthy ‘resolution’ of grief. Strong pronounced,

It is my contention that the Funeral Director should (and will more and more in the future), be called on to supervise the total resolution of this grief. I have observed ... that ministers take too little concern about the state of the bereaved. ... Therefore ... we must take charge. It is our responsibility to supervise the complete therapy – in conjunction with a minister if required – from the first contact till resolution is complete (Strong, in *NZFD*, 1969: 99).

FDANZ members were soon persuaded that by being able to offer an expertise in the psychological field of grief therapy, funeral directors could enhance their professional project by adding a moral authority as grief counsellors to their technical authority as embalmers. In 1976, *NZFD* reprinted an article from *The Australian Funeral Director* about a series of training seminars on grief therapy in Australia (*NZFD*, 1976: 14) and by 1977 grief psychology had been included in the Central Institute of Technology (CIT) training course (McIntyre, in *NZFD*, 1977: 26-7).

Offering grief therapy also provided further justification for their embalming services: they could promote the therapeutic value for mourners of viewing a well-embalmed corpse which had had the pain or trauma of the moment of death disguised. In this way they could advertise, at least to their clients, the work they had done. Moreover, as Cahill (1995: 125) argues, through offering grief counselling funeral directors were at last able to provide a skill which they could more widely publicise without the stigma of being accused of ‘implying a certain callousness and contamination’ as they would if they advertised their skill at embalming, or of ‘profiteering’ if they downplayed their embalming efforts and instead followed the often resented US practice of basing their price structures on the model of casket chosen – i.e. the dearer the casket the more services are supplied and the higher the overall cost (see Mitford, 1963; Pine and

Phillips, 1970). Goffman (1959, cited in Cahill, 1995: 125-6), for example, damns the US funeral directors' price structuring system as charging 'a great deal for their highly visible product – a *coffin* that has been transformed into a *casket*.' In doing so he is prefiguring Mitford's (1963) derision over industry attempts to change the name and the image of what the funeral directors believed was a different product from its rough, basic forerunner.

Advertising grief care then, enabled funeral directors to reposition embalming as beneficial to the mental health of the living, while avoiding the need to overcharge for caskets to cover the costs of embalming. Moreover, advertising grief counselling had the further benefit of bringing a focus to bear on the funeral directors' work with the living rather than the dead. They could not bring the dead back to life, but they could help bring the living bereaved back to health. Thus it became possible to make a shift from the stigma of the image of funeral directors as black suited, sombre men who worked on corpses in secret – and were quite possibly necrophiliacs (Iserson, 1994) – to a rather more socially respectable image of the sympathetic, kindly counsellor of the living bereaved.

Controlling Emotionality and the Socialisation of Emotions

Adding grief counselling as a sphere of expertise has meant more for funeral directors than merely adding a new skill or commodity to market and monopolise. They have been faced with the possibility of a major paradigm shift in terms of the socialisation of emotionality, where a social expectation of permission to express emotions of sorrow and joy at funerals has intruded on the funeral directors' control of others' emotions (while themselves expressing emotions of control), as discussed in Chapter Two. Hearn writes:

The management of life and death ... [is] a major material basis for the expression of emotions. The nature of emotionality ranges from positive feelings which may actually reinforce the enjoyment of work to negative debilitating grief. Thus in this sense the development of professions is also intimately bound up with the social organisation and control of emotionality. ... Capitalist development entails the shifting of control of different types of emotions or different bases of emotionality from merely domestic labour into socialised labour (Hearn, 1982: 190).

Since the development of undertaking as a commercialised specialism in Aotearoa New Zealand, funeral directors have taken charge of the corpse from almost immediately after death until the time of disposal. Taking possession of the corpse has enabled

funeral directors, themselves employing emotions of control, to control the forms of emotionality expressed by the bereaved whenever they have contact with the deceased.

Throughout the first two thirds of the twentieth century funeral directors clamped down on the expression of emotions of grief and loss by the bereaved during the after-death process for fear of being unable to control against possible mass hysteria, especially in the larger setting of the funeral service. The funeral directors' beliefs were expressed in *NZFD* (1944: 5-7) in an article entitled 'Delving into the Deeper Aspects' reprinted from the US trade association magazine *The National Funeral Director (NFD)*. Writing of how the 'most severe grief is caused by the loss by death of someone very close' the anonymous writer continues:

Nothing can compensate for this loss and no normal person can pass over such a loss lightly, for sentiment is too deeply rooted in the very nature of mankind. Every act of man [sic] is controlled by his sentimental nature. ... The very foundation of the funeral industry, as well as of all industry depends on one vital factor involved. That factor is the *control of these human emotions*, which are the basis of all human activities. ... The removal of the deceased from the home to the mortuary chapel gave the members of that household the opportunity to more easily *bring their emotions under control*. ... In helping the bereaved to *control their emotions* in their time of grief over their loss the funeral director must also keep alive the desire to *maintain accustomed standards*, if the funeral industry is to maintain its present standing (ibid: 6, my emphasis).

In responding to a growing social belief in the *expression* of emotion as necessary for good psychological health by widening their services to include grief counselling, then, the industry men have faced a major adjustment.

Between the 1940s and the late 1960s grief in Aotearoa New Zealand was considered to be a private matter. A similar belief was held in Australia, (see Griffin and Tobin, 1997: 30) and in Britain and the US (see Walter, 1991: 297-8). This attitude, which developed with the removal of the dying and death to institutions such as hospitals, reflected the wider belief that grief, like death, was a private problem that should be kept hidden or sequestered (Mellor, 1993: 20; Mellor and Shilling, 1993). Writers including Ariès (1981: 580), Gorer (1965: 111) and Walter (1994: 18) maintain that, at this time, it was considered to be better for everyone if grief and misery were not talked about and were put aside as quickly as possible.

A funeral in Aotearoa New Zealand at this time was definitely not the place to express anything more than a formal, dignified air of restrained sorrow. Equally, laughter would have been considered most irreverent and inappropriate behaviour at a funeral. A

funeral was a solemn, usually religious ceremony, conducted by a member of clergy with the name of the dead person inserted where 'n' marked the spot in the funeral liturgy (Griffin and Tobin, 1997: 127). It was to be listened to by the gathered mourners. When there was music it would be special funereal hymns and interludes, not favourite pop or sentimental music to evoke smiles or tears. This was not the place for emotionally uttered memories from family or friends, it was certainly not the place for children, and neither were women welcome if there was any fear that they might give way to embarrassing emotion or tears. Widows were likely to be encouraged to take tranquillisers (Raphael, 1984: 213-4).

These attitudes were reflected in *NZFD* at the time. References to grief were rare, all alleging to be about the importance of helping mourners *control* their emotions (for the mourners' own sake). One such mention in the *NZFD* was in a reprinted article by Ronald Jones, a US funeral director. Jones (1951, in *NZFD*: 25) asserted that the funeral service would 'no longer [be] a hazard to the mental health of the bereaved' when the bereaved were protected from the grief of others. The reason, Jones avers, is that:

Through observation, as funeral directors, we have learned that maudlin sentimentality is not only disgusting, but it will often upset that fine balance of some heroic soul who is concealing a broken heart from public view (ibid: 25).

But as discussed above, the funeral directors' actions show their underlying motives to be about the two basic issues related to the funeral directors' professional project. The first issue was concerned with ensuring a monopoly for their services and the second was the desire to raise their status (see Macdonald, 1995: 188). The social understanding of grief as an emotion to be kept private and hidden had led to funerals becoming very small and often brief events. Some bereaved families began asking for a private funeral or even no funeral service at all, creating deep concern in the funeral industry for the future of their businesses. In keeping with these concerns, in 1944 funeral directors were advised:

Private services no doubt tend to lessen the desire for better merchandise. ... Difficulties must be met as they arise. ... But the funeral director must arrange to meet them satisfactorily in order to survive. ... Service in line with the changing demands of the public is the answer to the problems of tomorrow. But whatever the service, it must profit the public as well as the funeral director to be acceptable. Such service must tend towards keeping alive that sentiment which has always ruled our people in providing respectable, fitting burial of the same high standards which has brought esteem and

recognition to the funeral profession. The key to the proper service is in the study and knowledge of human emotion (*NFD*, cited in *NZFD*, 1944: 6-7).

The funeral directors, therefore, needed to achieve control of the corpse from the time of death until its disposal to ensure a commodity over which to exercise their expertise. They also needed control of the mourners and their behaviour through socialising emotionality at the funeral to help raise the status of their establishments to professional standards.

Their most important method of simultaneously achieving both of these aims was to encourage their member funeral directors to build chapels at their funeral firms. Originally called 'chapels of rest' in Britain, from the 1930s these had been built to store corpses away from family homes between death and burial to enable families to avoid their houses from smelling of death (Adams, 1993: 164). In Aotearoa New Zealand, though, as well as the funeral directors removing bodies from the site of death to their premises for storage, they built their chapels as places to hold funeral services, away from family homes, where until after World War II many had been held (Watson, 1999: 26). The proliferation of funeral home chapels from the 1950s coincided with several major social shifts. These included the urbanisation and the secularisation of New Zealand society, and a growing emphasis, after the conclusion of World War II, on the division of social life into the rational public sphere of men and the emotional private sphere of women and children (Walter, 1994: 20).

The writers in *NZFD* contended with somewhat contradictory logic that building chapels at their *funeral homes* would enable funeral directors to provide 'privacy' for mourners by removing the funeral service from *private homes*. One funeral director exemplifies their logic:

We have, therefore, at considerable expense, arranged to give a family privacy that is not obtainable during the time of a funeral in their own homes (Jones, 1951: 25).

Certainly mourners no longer needed to open their houses for funeral services. The irony is that until the last decade of the twentieth century, those who had attended the service in the chapel frequently returned to the private home for refreshments – prepared by family and/or neighbourhood women who did not attend the funeral service, but stayed at home to ensure the kettle was boiling and everything in readiness for the guests' arrival. By claiming the provision of privacy, funeral directors explained their increased control of the body as a benefit for families. At the same time it enabled

funeral directors to turn the funeral service, previously a family/community affair, into a public event, which they managed in their chapel.

Once removed to the funeral directors' premises, the funeral service was no longer a private sphere, family-managed community renewal, celebrating such emotions as sorrow, laughter, anger and peace, as well as life and death. Instead, led by that model of dignified solemnity and decorum, the professional funeral director, the funeral had to conform to public sphere expectations, and the only emotions permitted were the emotions of control. Or, as one funeral director suggested, the move to the funeral home would encourage the bereaved '*to pull themselves together* to a much greater extent than was possible with the body left in the home' (NFD, cited in NZFD, 1944: 6, my emphasis).

Funeral directors' promotion of embalming was used to gain a market commodity over which they had a monopoly of expertise. It was used to widen their sphere of control and bring it closer to the higher status of the scientific world of medicine. At the same time, the development of embalming was related to the desire of the funeral directors to be able to control their clients' emotions. But, once again the funeral directors put this in such a way as to suggest their aim was to benefit the bereaved. During the period before the late 1960s they wrote of the importance of taking mourners' minds off their grief. And the best way to do this, they stressed, was through such activities as embalming the body to make it look peaceful and at rest. One article was 'Why Bother to Embalm' by Hall, a British embalmer. In the article, persuading the New Zealand industry that embalming was their 'moral duty' to the public, Hall argued for funeral directors to 'visualise their public's need and the importance of mental health' because:

The prime concern of the funeral director being the direction of the mind *away from* grief, the presentation of the remains in a state of natural repose was found to be the simplest way of achieving it. Peace of mind is impossible without embalming ...[which] removes all symbols of suffering (Hall, 1953, in NZFD: 91).

Hall's argument, promoted by FDANZ, was that if the evidence of pain suffered in dying was disguised, even if the bereaved had been present while the pain was suffered, they would forget their grief over this pain as well as their loss when they saw the embalmed corpse. They would thus be more easily able to control their emotions at the funeral service.

From the 1960s there was a change in social attitudes around death and grief. In the modern era, with the medicalisation of death it was removed from the private home to the public arena of the hospital 'where private experience is suppressed by institutional routines' (Walter, 1994: 39). Similarly, after death, paid work routines did not allow for extended expression of bereavement. Then, from the 1960s grief, too, became medicalised. During the 1960s there began a spate of research surrounding the social processes and organisation of dying and their psychological effects on the dying (Littlewood, 1993: 71).

Influenced by Lindemann (1944), writers on dying and grief processes included Glaser and Strauss (1965, 1968), Sudnow (1967), and Kübler-Ross (1969). The diverse stage theories of grief that developed, while later widely criticised for causing problems among the bereaved,³² became the catalyst for a psychological approach to grief. The focus was on grief as a series of emotions that must be worked through to achieve a healthy outcome. At the same time, Cicely Saunders, concerned about the effects of institutionalisation on the dying established the modern hospice movement in Britain (Walter, 1994: 29) and the death awareness movement was developed in the US (Littlewood, 1993: 71). Ironically, the effect of the medicalisation of grief, which focused on the *expression* of grief as necessary and healthy, tended to become another means of *controlling* the expression of grief. The expression of grief must be monitored for signs of excessive, repressed or otherwise pathological grief. Once again the expression of emotion was to be controlled by experts.

As discussed in the section above, the funeral directors were very quick to see how their professional project could benefit from adding grief counselling as a moral authority to their technical authority of embalming. Funeral director training altered from a focus on business management to a psychological understanding of human development and grief therapy. From there, a major shift by the funeral directors in socialising emotions came with a gradual opening of the funeral home to the bereaved at times other than the funeral service. Since the late 1970s funeral directors have increasingly followed the US practice of adding a 'viewing room' to their premises. Their purpose is to invite bereaved families to come to the funeral home once embalming is completed. Sometimes this is just to 'view' or spend time with the dead person. But increasingly

³² For a discussion and critique of a range of stage theories of grief see Littlewood, 1993: 71-3.

families are invited, and choose, to dress the body, and perhaps also comb the hair to make sure it is in the usual style and apply make-up, as they feel appropriate. In Australia where a similar practice has taken place, viewing numbers have increased from just ten percent in the 1970s to more than fifty percent in the early 1990s (Pringle and Alley, 1995: 115).

In Aotearoa New Zealand the funeral directors have made two further shifts to retain control of emotionality. Gradually since the 1990s some funeral directors have agreed to return the embalmed dead body to lie in its casket at home with the bereaved until the funeral. Other funeral directors have built facilities that may include a lounge, comfortable chairs, tea making facilities and even showers, enabling the bereaved to stay with the body at the funeral home, coming and going at will. These changes have been greatly influenced by both Maori and Pacific Islands customs of remaining with the dead until burial, plus the hospice movement's domiciliary care which keeps the dying in their homes among their families, thereby helping to demystify death and remove fear of the dead (Watson, 1999: 31).

These two practices, moreover, present opportunities for funeral directors to retain control of emotionality in different ways. With the first, funeral directors deliver the body to the private home, leaving the bereaved to express their emotions privately, and come to terms with their grief during the day or two between embalming and when the funeral director arrives to transport the body back to the funeral home or church for the service. The funeral director will usually briefly visit the home each day to ensure the body is not leaking or in danger of exploding from a build up of gases in the abdomen (Iserson, 1994: 210-13). Such visits offer them the opportunity to socialise the bereaved to set aside any embarrassing excesses of grief, to behave calmly in their presence, and thus, hopefully, also at the funeral. By establishing space for the mourners to stay at the funeral home, on the other hand, the funeral directors may be in a better position to maintain closer control of both the body and the grief expressed around it. While once again allowing families time to come to terms with their grief, they are keeping the body and the mourners in the public sphere. Those who wish to do so may, in this way, maintain control over the mourners, ensuring their expressions of grief are kept within restrained limits.

In their early enthusiasm for adding grief care to their role, funeral directors took on the work themselves. More recently there has been a tendency to extend the range of work done by women clerical staff to include more of this relational work with clients. Moreover, funeral directors are now more likely to employ untrained women to do much of their after-care visiting. In smaller firms this may be just one woman, while in larger firms a team may be used. Because the women are often those who have themselves survived bereavement, they are presumed to be 'naturally' caring and sympathetic and so more able to put the bereaved at ease. But, because they are unlikely to be trained, they are considered to apply neither specialised knowledge nor skills. And, because what they do is to provide nurturing, they are not considered to even really be working (England, 1992: 182). Therefore, these women are likely to be employed on a casual or, at best, part time basis, and on a lower rate of pay than funeral directors. As Cancian (2000) argues, this can be justified:

Since good wages are justified as a reward for applying specialised knowledge and skills, and caring is seen as a natural ability of women that does not require specialised knowledge or training, it appears fair to pay low wages to care workers (2000: 140).

The women often visit the bereaved a few weeks after the funeral. Out-of-town family have usually departed and the bereaved, past the initial stunned shock, may be feeling alone and facing the full realisation of their loss. The woman visitor tends to be welcomed as someone who is willing to listen to remembrances of the dead person and who may be able to suggest available support services when needed. The funeral directors benefit because the woman visitor is seen as their representative, sent by the funeral directors because they care. However, the funeral directors have not themselves had to deal with the emotion involved and their more highly paid time has been spent on other, more productive, activities. Here the funeral directors evince similar attitudes to those in hospital management who, in the interests of rationalisation, define 'physical care and monitoring and charting of medical information as much more valuable' (Cancian, 2000: 141), than emotional caring such as listening to or talking to patients.

By definition, the newly developing occupation of celebrancy fits into the category of 'semi-profession'. It consists of a large majority of women who, on the surface, may appear to be autonomous because they are self-employed. As most celebrants must rely on funeral directors for their work, this means that most celebrants are in reality

'handmaidens' (Hearn, 1982: 197) of the funeral directors, by whom they are effectively managed and paid.³³ Most celebrants operate within jurisdictional boundaries strictly enforced by the funeral directors, including having to conduct the funeral service and generally behave according to their requirements – if they fail to comply, they do not get work because the funeral directors do not recommend them to their clients. Therefore, in keeping with Hearn's claims, it can be seen that as in other areas of social life, even though control of the socialisation of emotions has been shifted from the private to the public sphere, the socialisation of emotions is still considered to belong to the women's sphere in the funeral firm. Through women celebrants, clerical staff and post-funeral grief workers whose work all involves caring for the bereaved, male funeral directors control the socialisation of emotionality. Moreover, they devalue the work and level of skill involved in the women's emotion labour while failing to acknowledge their own use of emotions of control.

Professions, Semi-Professions and the Funeral Director

As mentioned in Chapter Two (p. 23), according to the functionalist trait or attributional theories of professions, two core characteristics of a profession are a moral authority gained from prolonged specialised training in a body of abstract or esoteric knowledge and a technical authority gained from a scientific orientation (Hearn, 1982: 185). As also discussed in Chapter Two, what the trait theories do not explicitly add is that established professions are also essentially male-dominated. Yet when semi-professions are discussed, what clearly differentiates them from professions is a distinction based on sex. That is, groups regarded as semi-professions are those that are largely staffed by women (Preston, 1995: 379). They include nursing, teaching, social work and counselling. Theorists have maintained, for instance, that what distinguishes semi-professions is that they do not have full autonomy (i.e. they are subject to control by managers) and that semi-professions replace theoretical study with the acquisition of technical skill (see Carr-Saunders, 1933, cited in Hearn, 1982: 185). The validity of these assertions is debatable. Just one example is that doctors working in large hospitals are still considered to be professionals rather than semi-professionals, even though they

³³ There are a very few exceptions who act as celebrants only when contracted to do so by families. Those who do this do not have to rely on funeral directors for work and have far more control over how the funeral service is run. They can be seen as more 'fully' professional and thus less in the position of having to socialise clients' emotions on the funeral directors' terms. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

are subject to the authority of managers. Moreover, without a theoretical underpinning to their technical skills nurses and social workers could not do their work any more successfully than a surgeon could operate without theoretical knowledge.

Nevertheless, the idea of semi-professions being groups who replace theoretical knowledge with a technical skill hints at a problem for the funeral directors in their professional project. In their quest to become a profession funeral directors first took on the *scientific* expertise of embalming. They hoped that this might be seen as an extension of doctors' work, thus making a link between their work and the scientific world of the medical profession, similar to that of a dentist or veterinarian. The funeral directors' training, apart from the technical knowledge of embalming for those who completed the embalming course, consisted of how to run a business. It was still very brief compared with that of a medical doctor, dentist or veterinarian and focused on a technical skill rather than abstract knowledge. Even though they fulfilled the (unstated but implicit) professional requirement of being a male-dominated occupation, their owning of a technical skill rather than abstract learning positioned them nearer to the women's world of the semi-profession.

From the late 1970s, with the arrival of grief therapy funeral directors added studies of human behaviour and knowledge of the stages theory of grief to their training course, thus remedying their lack of *theoretical knowledge*. But the training comprises only brief block courses, extramural assignments and on-the-job practical experience over a two-year period. This still hardly compares with a medical doctor's minimum of five years' full-time study. Furthermore, counselling, like social work, is performed largely by women and considered to be a semi-profession rather than a profession. What the funeral directors have done by adding embalming and grief counselling to their role remains marginal in terms of satisfying the two core professional characteristics of a science orientation plus prolonged specialised training in a body of abstract knowledge. Rather, what these two particular attempts to gain legitimacy for their occupation as a profession have actually achieved is to create it more as a semi-profession than a profession according to the criteria in the functionalist trait models, whose guidelines the FDANZ were clearly following. And therein lies the undermining of the funeral directors' justification for maintaining their occupation as a male domain – counselling is women's work and semi-professions are women's occupations.

Professionalism at Work: Organisation of the Funeral Firm

The aim of the following section is to examine the organisation of the funeral firm as a gendered site of work. There are three important gendered issues that contribute to the maintenance of a gendered hierarchy in the funeral firm. The first is the gendered organisation of the firm. Here I study how the organisation of the funeral firm, from its beginnings as a family business to the more recent move by many to a management model, has influenced the gendered division of labour. The second issue is the gendered culture of the funeral firm and the impact of a stereotypical understanding of masculinity and femininity in maintaining gendered inequities. The third issue is that of gendered power and how it has been used to marginalise women and women's work in the funeral firm.

Family Business to Management Model: Gendered Structures in the Funeral Firm

While gender is a constitutive element of any social structure, and of any organisational structure, these structures become moulded by the relationships that stem from the division of work and the hierarchical nature of the organisation (Aaltio, 2002: 205).

As Aaltio, above, points out, the structures of gender relations in organisations, such as the funeral firm, are constituted by human practice and social relations. The practices and relations, however, stem from outside as well as within the funeral firm. The development of funeral firms as family businesses saw them established on patriarchal lines, with gender relations that were a continuation of those in the household. The result is that one of the most apparent social structures inside funeral firms in Aotearoa New Zealand today is the predominating gendered division of labour: funeral directors and embalmers are far more likely to be men and the support staff or office workers to be women; full-time staff members are more likely to be men and part-time staff to be women. Sheila Jacobs (1999: 44) points to a similar pattern among workers in Britain with increasing use of women as part-time labour leading to their long-term decrease in occupational status. In the traditional New Zealand family firm, as in Australia, the male head of household and breadwinner has usually been the funeral director/embalmer, 'helped' when necessary, by members of his family, especially his wife, in 'a strictly background role' (Pringle and Alley, 1995: 111). Because helping tends to be considered what women do naturally in their household roles, their contribution has often not even been accorded the status of work, by either men or women.

Unlike funeral firms in Britain (see Howarth, 1996; Bradbury, 1999), family firms in Aotearoa New Zealand have largely tended to maintain a simple division of labour which is typically: male funeral directors, male embalmers, female office workers, and possibly a female cleaner. There are other, mostly female, casual workers who tend to be marginal to the main structures and culture of the funeral firm, although in some firms they may have a larger role and be more fully integrated. These include caterers, musicians and post-funeral visitors of the bereaved, the last a more recent role. In Britain, funeral directors may also employ (predominantly male) assistants who act as bearers for removal of corpses from the place of death such as the hospital, house or accident site to the funeral firm's mortuary; from the funeral home to the hearse; and from the hearse to the cemetery or crematorium chapel. Their job may also include assisting in the mortuary by washing and dressing the corpse (Howarth, 1996: 61). In Aotearoa New Zealand, funeral directors are more likely to do removal work themselves. As it may be their first point of contact with the bereaved family it is considered an important aspect of their work. Funeral directors in small firms in Aotearoa New Zealand have often also done the embalming. As washing and dressing the corpse is part of the embalmer's work, any mortuary assistant is likely to be a trainee embalmer.

There are two major interconnecting historical factors contributing to such a gendered division. The first is the funeral firms' beginnings in the late nineteenth century when they were established as family firms, run by a male funeral director who, as the 'head of the household', was helped by the members of his family. Mulholland (2003) emphasises the role of gender relations specific to family firms. She writes of gender relations in family firms during the three periods of wealth *creation*, wealth *accumulation* and wealth *preservation*. The first period is used for the *establishment* and the second and third for the *maintenance* of gender relations in the firms.

According to Mulholland (ibid: 28), during the start-up period women, particularly wives, may bring welcomed money or expertise to the family business and their labour is often a crucial resource. Then, as the business becomes established the women are eased out, often being sent home to run the household. As Mulholland writes, 'aside from the structural disadvantages that women face in the phase of business start-up, the wifely role distinguishes them from their male counterparts' (ibid). When the women

try to return, their roles have been filled by males, either family members or from outside. The gender relations are thus maintained, as the women find themselves marginalised to a non-management role, such as basic clerical duties.

The problem then faced by the women in trying to re-enter a management role is exacerbated by the development of male structures during their absence. Peggy Newton (1987) discusses similar difficulties encountered by women trying to enter the male dominated world of engineering. Newton (citing Rothwell, 1982) writes:

The ... systems have been designed and administered by and for men – taking men's careers and attitudes as the norm and never questioning that this is in the interests of the organisation (Newton, 1987: 184).

Newton's suggestion illustrates the events that may occur after women have been displaced from their position in a family firm. However, Newton was examining women's movement into a male dominated field rather than sites of family firm relations in which women were attempting to re-enter as equals after being displaced by male relatives. Therefore, Newton remains less convinced than Mulholland that the development of male structures is a deliberate policy. Her approach understands men's organisational power to be simply the result of men having been in the work or organisation first.

The second factor contributing to the funeral firm's gendered division of labour is the funeral directors' goal last century of raising their status through the professionalisation of their industry. The belief that professions are men's spheres meant it was important to their ambition to maintain an image of funeral work as men's work, with women fulfilling the same supportive role as GP and clergy wives. The early professionalising period of funeral directing fits neatly with Mulholland's (2003) second period of wealth accumulation. Funeral directors have also used discourses of professionalism to justify the maintenance of inequitable gendered structures and gender relations within the funeral firm. Patriarchal power practices in both the family and the professionalising project of male funeral directors have thus worked together to create structures of men's dominance within the funeral firm. These long-standing structures of dominance have often assumed the status of taken for granted realities by both men and women, and are only very slowly being eroded.

The continuing patriarchal dominance in the funeral firm impacts on women in two major ways. The first is in a hierarchical valuing of jobs that places more importance on the men's occupations of funeral director and embalmer than on the women's traditional clerical roles. The women's roles have been regarded, sometimes even highly regarded and appreciated, as help or support, but not as 'work'. The effect is both to devalue the women's contribution and to make much of their work invisible. The resultant inequity for the women clerical workers leads to further problems with the introduction of women into men's funeral directing and embalming roles in the firm, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six. The second effect of the continuing patriarchal dominance is apparent in the way the funeral firm has been so slow to admit women to the men's roles of funeral director and embalmer, and the funeral directors' continuing preference for male funeral celebrants.

With the growth and ageing of Aotearoa New Zealand's population and subsequent growth of the funeral industry, some funeral directors in small firms find that they have too much work to do but, for whatever reason, do not choose to employ an extra full-time funeral director. One solution is to employ a part-time embalmer, thus freeing up their own time for more funeral directing activities. This solution has contributed to an increase in the numbers of women embalmers. The reason, reflecting the 'job queues, labour queues' theory of Reskin and Roos (1990) to be discussed in Chapter Six, is that although embalming is still largely considered to be a man's job, those in the part-time labour market tend to be women (Briar, 1992: 54).

The women participants who have joined the funeral firm in this way are often women wanting to rejoin the paid workforce after taking time out to care for young children. While some of the women may be trained embalmers, in other cases the funeral director gives on-the-job training. Sometimes, as will be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, the women take on the work, unpaid, as the only means of accessing national embalming training. Others, seeking paid work, take on the job without prior ambitions to join the funeral industry. Where the work is not enough to provide a living wage, the women supplement it with other part-time jobs, with an unemployment benefit, or by contracting their services to several funeral directors. The women find that trying to balance embalming with other part-time work is difficult and the choice of other part-

time work is limited. The reason is that when the funeral director needs them they need to be prepared to drop whatever else they have planned.

In the mid-1990s, the arrival of the large US conglomerate Stewart Enterprises coincided with a growing trend towards changes in ownership and management patterns in funeral firms. This was caused by several factors, including rapid urbanisation, and succession problems in family firms whose financial success had often opened wider educational and occupational opportunities for their children (Parsons, 1999: 132). In the main centres where there was increased population density, larger firms bought out smaller firms or opened branch offices. This allowed for economies of scale with such services as embalming facilities being centralised in some firms. It also meant that rather than being run by an owner-funeral director, as they were during most of twentieth century Aotearoa New Zealand, many firms are now run by managers. Such moves away from the family firm model have opened the way for employment opportunities in the industry for workers outside the funeral firm family, and may have contributed to the recent growth of women working in the industry.

These changes in the structures and management of the businesses have given opportunities for the separation and specialisation of the New Zealand funeral directors' traditional dual tasks of funeral directing and embalming.³⁴ Centralisation of embalming facilities means that there is more likelihood that funeral directors will not also perform embalming. This is apparent in the numbers of women funeral directors who choose not to also embalm. Some firms with a centralised embalming facility employ a specialist embalmer, but roster their funeral directors on embalming duties to work under the supervision of the specialist. In this way, just one embalming specialist is needed and the firms' funeral directors are all trained as embalmers while they are on the job, so do not need time away from work for training. On the other hand, separation of the occupations means that there are opportunities for others who may choose to specialise in embalming.

Nevertheless, it is apparent that many funeral firms still tend to hold to the patriarchal values of the old family firm model by maintaining gendered structural inequalities

³⁴ New Zealand funeral directors are more likely to perform the dual tasks of funeral directing and embalming than those in Australia or Britain where a greater use of refrigeration has meant embalming is less likely to be undertaken as a matter of course – see Bradford, 1996; Griffin & Tobin, 1997.

through differential authority, status, pay and career opportunities. These are most visible in the hierarchical, gendered division of labour. At the top of the hierarchy are the funeral directors, the majority of whom are still male. The funeral director's job takes priority while the other jobs, including office administration and reception, accounts, preparing the casket and cleaning are performed merely to support the work of the funeral director. Women's lack of structural power, so evident in the funeral firm, is both a reflection and a result of a wider invisibility of women *as* women and men *as* men that leads to stereotypical images and expectations of masculinity and femininity (Hearn, 1994: 49; Witz and Marshall, 2004b: 20-1). Next, I examine how these, in turn, contribute to the creation of the funeral firm as a gendered culture.

A Masculine Business: The Funeral Firm as a Gendered Culture

One of the ways that gendered structures are maintained in an organisation such as the funeral firm is through the development and maintenance of a gendered culture. Halford and Leonard (2001: 99-100) point out that organisational power is predicated on a gendered culture within organisations. They argue:

Power may be mobilised through culture, making it work to support the design of the organisation and to maintain the structural relations in it. Organisational culture thus acts to gender organisational life. As individuals move into these gendered cultures, they undertake considerable mental work in order to assimilate the organisation's gendered structure of work, opportunity and gender appropriate behaviours and attitudes. Organisation is thus bound up with the ways in which relations between individuals are interpreted and performed, and the ways in which individual identities are enacted.

Funeral firms in Aotearoa New Zealand were established in the modern era. And, as Witz and Marshall (2004b: 20) observe, modernity was an explicitly *masculine* project, which both created the social as masculine, excluding women and femininity, and 'overloaded woman with corporeality, while evacuating man of his' (ibid: 21). The funeral firm, then, has tended to be centred on a patriarchal culture, which emphasises and requires the enactment of distinctive stereotypical masculine and feminine models of behaviour. On this understanding, men, who are considered to be capable of masculine rational, objective thought and behaviour, should fulfil the public roles while women, as feminine, irrational and subjective, should perform the background extensions of their household work; men should be in control and women controlled.

The problem, as Witz and Marshall (ibid) point out, is that the masculinity underlying organisational structures and cultures is undefined and unstated – it is an 'absent

presence'. This leads to the contradiction where the men are expected to conform to a professional code of conduct by dressing and behaving as 'gentlemen' when they are in the presence of clients and the public, while in their backroom work, as will be discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, they may make sexualised comments about the corpse during embalming, and sexist jokes in the staffroom in the presence of the women staff. Ramsay and Parker (1992: 258) suggest that if organisations are seen as cultures, they 'begin to appear as webs of meaning that are constructed through the everyday practices of actors.' In this way such aspects of culture as what we wear, and the language and symbolism used 'become the unrecognised material out of which the organisation is built' (ibid). Although the specific details of what constitutes organisational masculinity may remain unstated, as a generalised concept it is part of the unrecognised material of the funeral firm's organisation and as such the cultural norm against which the women are expected to fit into a modernist model of femininity that is set as not-the-norm, different and lacking.

Such a gendered organisational culture has made it difficult for women to be accepted, by either men or other women, into any but traditional women's support roles. As Jenkins et al. (2002: 97) argue in their study of women in postal work in Britain, with a male gendered culture firmly in place, men are 'able to draw upon collective resources as a symbol of power to undermine women. There is no doubt that this workplace culture has the effect of marginalising women.' In the funeral firm the male culture has been reinforced and women marginalised through insistence that the public prefer a male funeral director, and that women would find the work too dirty, or too heavy, or the hours would intrude on their family responsibilities.

Possibly for fear of infringing the unstated, but ever present, masculine norms, some women who have successfully moved into male roles have found themselves acting as 'honorary men' while taking care not to step outside a particular model of expected feminine norms. Sarah Rutherford (2001) points out that women fulfilling senior management roles encounter the same problem of never being able to achieve the accepted organisational masculine norms. She argues:

When women display the same traits as men they are stigmatised as being 'masculine' ... so it is not masculinity per se that is valorised in organisations, it is masculinity in men (Rutherford, 2001: 330).

As is discussed in Chapter Seven, some earlier women funeral directors made no concessions to femininity other than to wear a straight-cut suit skirt rather than trousers. Here the women accomplished a neat balancing act. They were performing men's work, while trying not to feminise, and so devalue, the work. By wearing plain, formal skirts rather than trousers, the women avoided transgressing gender dress codes of the time, while downplaying their gender. Today, on the other hand, some of the newer celebrants emphasise their gender. They are particularly careful to dress in a 'feminine' style, wearing soft fabrics, pastel colours, understated jewellery and cosmetics. In doing so, the women are indicating their stance that celebrancy is a woman's occupation and that they offer women's attributes of nurturing and compassion.

Connell (1987: 109) reminds us that not all men or all masculinities are equal. In funeral firms there are men who are constrained in the same way as women by the expectation of the prevailing model of masculine culture. Moreover, although men in funeral firms tend to be funeral directors and therefore ranked above women's support roles, some are employees rather than owners or managers, so do not share power equally. Nevertheless, it is women and women's occupations that have been excluded and/or marginalised in the funeral firm. This is what I examine next, to understand the connections between gendered power, hierarchies and cultures within organisations and how the relationship between them has contributed to the marginalisation of women in the funeral firm.

Marginalised Women: Gendered Power in the Funeral Firm

Power is mobilised within organisations to situate women in distinctive and largely marginalised positions (Halford and Leonard, 2001: 99).

Women's situation in distinctive and marginalised positions in organisations has been well documented by writers including Kanter (1977), Cockburn (1983), Pringle (1988, 1998), and Witz (1992). These writers have considered the relative positions of women and men in a range of large organisations. They have also considered the power mobilised, largely by men to maintain male dominance, and countervailing power or resistance of women. These issues, discussed in Chapter Two and the following chapters, are equally relevant to the power relationships in the smaller funeral firms. What distinguishes the funeral firms is the more direct and personal form of control inherent in the patriarchal nature of power in family firms.

In her study of family firms Mulholland (2003) found that male partners in family firms have trouble accepting their wives as equals or as professionals. Mulholland writes, 'Wives must remain wives, either as "trophies" or as "supports", playing an essential but non-threatening or invisible role' (ibid: 68). She writes further that the men's attitude leads to a pattern of

systematic marginalisation of wives and female kin from the organisation of the family enterprise ... that can be accounted for, first, in the power that men have as husbands, and second, in the logic of men's interests in their capacities as husbands, men and entrepreneurs (ibid: 3-4).

The problem must, then, extend to non-family women: if wives who may have considerable financial investment in the firm are marginalised from decision-making or excluded from the business, especially if it is on the grounds that the work is not suitable for a woman, it becomes difficult to justify their exclusion if non-family women are employed, unless it is in marginalised, invisible women's support work.

Funeral director, Peter, demonstrated this contradictory position while showing the continuing links of the funeral firm's origins as a family firm with patriarchal power structures. He was discussing the difficulties he was experiencing in finding the right secretary/receptionist to replace Eleanor, who had recently left for fulltime work elsewhere. Eleanor was the first outside woman Peter had employed in his firm and had worked on a part-time basis for five years. In describing the qualities he sought in his 'ideal secretary/receptionist', Peter referred to Eleanor in glowing terms, mentioning how efficient and qualified she was in every respect for the job.

She always had the perfect telephone manner, skill with a typewriter, was unflappable, had a good sense of humour, and a quiet warmth and kindness, a person who could just sit with someone and put her arm around them if they needed it. She was just exceptional, irreplaceable really (Peter).

For all his professed high regard of Eleanor, Peter had refused her requests for full-time employment. He had also never allowed her to 'do the books'. For that he had brought in a cognate family member on a casual basis. When asked why he had considered that necessary if Eleanor was so well qualified, Peter replied,

She was *only office staff* and a family's business is a family's business. Imagine the power an *outsider* would have knowing the intimate details of family finances. You know how *women always talk* (Peter, my emphasis).

Peter's reply revealed his view of women's place in the work sphere, his fear of losing power and an inability to set aside a stereotypical view of women as incapable of

discretion. This dismissive attitude towards women ensures their continuing marginalised role in the workplace and provides an insight into why some funeral firms may have been slow to employ non-family women even in the traditional women's office roles.

As funeral firms have grown, though, more are now likely to employ men and women from outside the firm's family. But, in some firms the family model of patriarchal power structures and gendered division of labour has tended to be maintained and reproduced. Men are likely to be employed to work alongside the owners as funeral directors and embalmers, and women to fulfil the clerical and support work previously provided by the owners' family members. For some men this leads to feelings of ambivalence. While they may accept the need to employ a woman for office duties, some men appear to have found it difficult to accept an outside woman's presence, even in a traditional woman's role. Nevertheless, the same men's entrenched belief in a gendered division of labour, that labels some activities men's work and of greater value than other activities, which are women's work, means that they do not want to perform the less valued activities themselves.

What emerged during this research was that some women have experienced antagonism, particularly from older male funeral directors and embalmers. Rhoda, a secretary newly employed from outside the firm's family, described the stance of one older male funeral director to the presence of women in the firm. She alleged that the funeral director disapproved of women entering the paid workforce in any role. He reluctantly accepted Rhoda's contribution because it meant that he did not have to do the secretarial duties, which he considered women's work, but he was strongly opposed to the idea of women working in the male role of embalmer. She explained:

One of the funeral directors here doesn't think that women should work at all. Period. They should be at home minding the children. He definitely doesn't think our mortician should be embalming. It's man's work. She's female and is married and is taking a man's job. He tolerates me because I'm doing women's work and if I didn't do it he'd have to. Like, sometimes when there's a rush on I have to work Saturdays and he really hates that I have half a day off the next week and he has to answer the phones and sort out the paper work (Rhoda).

Such resentment against women for 'taking' a man's job is not confined to family firms. Women anaesthetists working in hospitals in Australia and Britain encountered the same attitude (Pringle, 1998: 138), demonstrating a wider social practice of the

marginalisation and exclusion of women in the workplace. Nevertheless, the relationship of patriarchal power to the organisation of funeral firms as family firms has tended to emphasise the gendered hierarchy and power relations in funeral firms. Part of the funeral directors' professional project was to uphold the behaviour they associated with being professionals, which included keeping their 'profession' a male bastion and being able to 'support' a wife and family. Therefore, through the use of patriarchal power, women have largely been kept out of the funeral firm except in the manner of the wives of other professionals such as doctors and clergy, in a supporting role when the funeral director was busy, answering the phone and doing subordinate 'little' tasks, often regarded as helping rather than as work. In this way the men did not so much exclude women family members from work as mediate between women and capital, and thus between women and power. As Mark-Lawson and Witz state:

The family system of labour constitutes one mode of patriarchal control, but one which does not depend on the exclusion of women from the capitalist workplace. On the contrary, it is a mode of patriarchal control which operates by way of the inclusion of women and children within sites of capitalist production. The inclusion of adult women is premised upon the control of their labour by male relatives (1988: 170).

It is only when women start to compete with men for jobs that the form of patriarchal control exercised becomes the use of exclusionary strategies (Mark-Lawson and Witz, 1988: 171). In Chapters Six and Seven, I argue that women are resisting these exclusionary strategies, showing that although women are constrained by gendered structures of inequality, power is fluid and shifting.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have examined the masculinisation of after-death work. The focus has centred on the actions of men, working first to create a commercial occupational specialism and then to professionalise it. Intertwined with the men's professional project have been actions, spurred by both their *desire* and their *need* to raise the social status of their own and their families' lives. That is, funeral directors desired recognition as a profession in order to raise their social status, but at the same time, to become recognised as a profession, they needed to raise their social status.

In attempting to adhere to a functionalist model of professions, funeral directors have established their work as a male domain. Their desire and need for social respectability

have led them to maintain conservative values and mores, which have further contributed to the continuing marginalisation of women in the industry. At the same time, the nature of the funeral firm as a family business has also played an important role in women's unequal and inequitable position. Patriarchal relations have been transferred from within the family, to dominate gender relations within the funeral firm, creating gendered hierarchical structures and culture. Stereotypical models of masculine and feminine behaviours are demanded. While constraining men, these gender models more largely advantage men, who are expected, and may expect, to take on the dominant roles, while women are relegated to background support work.

In response to recent social changes, male funeral directors have given the appearance of making a paradigm shift, from permitting only emotions of control throughout the after-death processes, to accommodating the expressions of emotionality surrounding grief. However, by using untrained, invisible women for the work of socialisation of appropriate emotions, male funeral directors remain aloof from the expression of emotions of grief, while themselves retaining control of socialisation of emotions, as well as emotions of control. Male funeral directors have, therefore, been able to benefit from women's devalued emotion labour, to provide changes to accommodate client demand, while avoiding the necessity of being personally involved in any paradigm shift of their own.

Next, Chapter Five considers how women's exclusion and marginalisation in the funeral industry has been an ongoing and active social process. I argue that women's invisibility in after-death work has been a 'strategic absence'. First, male commercialisation of after-death work involved the men taking over and excluding women from work that had previously been done by women. Second, women's participation has been actively written out of historical accounts of after-death work. Third, women's contemporary roles have been created as backstage work, marginalised, devalued and 'disappeared.' While some women, particularly family members, have apparently acquiesced in their invisible supportive roles, others have been working to move into the funeral industry on equal terms with men. Finally I examine women's return to the public sphere and the effects of this on the shape of the contemporary funeral industry and on women's place in it.

Chapter Five

Women's Strategic Absence from After-Death Work

Introduction

So far, here as elsewhere, the story of after-death work has largely been presented as a tale of men. Beneath and weaving through the men's story has been an almost invisible accompanying motif of the background, backstage, supporting role of women, working as family members, clerical staff and as emotion workers. I suggest that women have been present in family funeral firms in more significant roles than is usually acknowledged, and that they have often willingly participated in the myth that women do not work in the funeral firm. Jane Haggis (1990) writes of the exclusion of women in studies of colonial social protest. She argues: 'While the subject matter seemed to indicate the centrality of women's presence, they were not 'there' in the historical accounts and analyses, certainly not as *actors*' (1990: 68, my emphasis). That the majority of early funeral firms in Aotearoa New Zealand have been family firms indicates the centrality of women's presence there. But, like Haggis' colonial women, they are not present in historical accounts as actors.

In Chapters Five, Six and Seven, I bring women back into the story as actors by foregrounding their stories of their experiences as women within the funeral industry. In the next section, my aim is to set the scene for this by showing the women's historical role in after-death processes and rituals, how their role was taken over by men's commercialisation of death, how their contributions have been written out of history, and why they may have acquiesced with the men in creating their strategic absence. To do this, I begin with a brief overview of women's officially recognised historical role in the ritual processes of after-death work prior to the medicalisation of death and the establishment of undertaking as a male commercial enterprise. This is followed by an examination of the systematic and systemic 'strategic absence' (Witz and Marshall, 2004b: 21) of women from both the processes and the social history of after-death work.

With the medicalisation and commercialisation of death, women were gradually, but deliberately edged out of the process, as first the medical men and then the funeral men sought to develop their specialty and increase their sphere of control. Moreover, it will be seen that through marginalising, hiding and devaluing women's historical role in after death work social scientists such as Habenstein (1962) and Litten (1991, 1997), themselves part of a male professional project, have contributed to women's apparent absence. Following this I move to an examination of theories of women's exclusion from work, with a particular focus on Fletcher's (1999) theory of why much of the work that women tend to do, 'relational' work, is not seen as work and how this has affected women's position in the funeral industry. From there I move to discuss reasons for women's more recent entry into the public sphere of paid work, here drawing on the work of Reskin and Roos (1990). Part Two will conclude with a discussion of the position of women in the funeral industry today.

Women's Historical Role in After-Death Work

Unlike the well-documented male commercialisation of after-death work and subsequent professional project of funeral directors, women's early participation in after-death work and rituals tends to be shrouded in mystery. As a woman's activity and part of the private sphere, it did not warrant being analysed as work. It was only when it entered the public, male, commercial sphere that after-death work became productive and therefore considered to be of value. The result is that there is little theoretical analysis of women's role, their place and impact on communities prior to commercialisation or their role as members of a family business after commercialisation. I begin with a brief description of the work women are known to have performed and the processes by which men who engaged in professional projects took over women's occupational domains.

Women's involvement in the rituals of after-death care prior to commercialisation, firstly by modern male medicine and then by funeral directors, has been examined by Clare Gittings (1984), Elizabeth Roberts (1989), Sheila Adams (1993), and Jean Hera (1995). They describe how after a death in most neighbourhoods in Britain and Europe until the middle of the twentieth century a woman known as a 'layer-out' would be called to the house of the deceased to clean the corpse and prepare it for burial. The

corpse was usually prepared, with many variations according to location, by washing, probably in salt water, straightening the limbs, packing the orifices with fabric such as gauze or cotton wool to stop leakage, closing the eyes – perhaps by placing pennies over them, folding the hands on the chest, and either dressing it in nightclothes or wrapping it in a shroud. Prior to the development and commercialisation of modern medicine, the women who performed these rituals were likely to be neighbourhood women called on for a range of healing knowledge and skills. Although the women would be paid in some form for the work, it was not a commercialised enterprise.

Women also participated in more public aspects of after-death activities and rituals. In Britain many fulfilled the role of ‘searcher’, a role that was officially recognised for two hundred years (Hera, 1995: 166). Between 1660³⁵ and 1815, when it was the law in Britain that all shrouds were made of wool, it was women who were used in their role of layer-out to verify not just that this law was being followed but also to ‘certify the event and cause of death, ... to collect the data on mortality, and to institute any sanitary measures required’ (Hera, 1995: 166). In this official public health role as searchers the women were responsible for registering deaths from contagious diseases as well as for trying to stop further infection.³⁶ Women were also involved in other after-death activities such as pall-bearing, singing laments, keening over the dead and even fulfilling the role of hired public mourners (*ibid*). Gittings (1984: 117-8) colours the picture by describing women dressed in white carrying the ends of the pall (a long cloth covering the coffin) during the funeral procession, particularly when the deceased was a young woman or child, and sometimes for a young man of ‘marriageable age’ (*ibid*: 69).

With women so clearly established in public after-death rites what I examine next is how they were first edged out of their position by the medicalisation and commercialisation of death and then their participation written out of histories of after-death work.

³⁵ Litten (1991:73-4) states that the first Act for Burying in Woollen came into force in 1660, but because it was too often ignored, it was made more powerful in 1678 with a £5 fine being imposed for non-compliance.

³⁶ In Aotearoa New Zealand, since the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1924 funeral directors have been responsible for supplying information for the registration of death (Watson, 1999: 21).

Women's Strategic Absence from the Professional Project

Women figured most frequently as a *strategic absence* in classical sociology – that is, we can glean as much or more about conceptualisations of women *in the classical project* by their dis-locations or absences from specific contexts as we can from the bits where they are present (Witz and Marshall, 2004b: 21, my emphasis).

In this quote, Witz and Marshall discuss the way women theorists have been written out of the classical sociological canon and how the silences and spaces speak as much about women and attitudes to women as any words *in the classical project*. The notion of an academic professional project running parallel to other professional projects helps make sense of the absence of women from the narrative of the commercialisation of after-death work and the professional project of funeral directors. The reason is that while the absence of women in the classical sociological project indicates particular conceptualisations of women, it also reveals the gendered nature and aims of the academic classical project. In doing so, it exposes the gendered underpinnings of the wider historical and social context influencing the funeral directors' professional project.

The use of the word *strategic* to qualify the absence of women is of particular significance. Witz and Marshall use the idea of a strategic absence to convey a deliberate covering over or hiding by male academics of women's contribution and presence. In Chapter Two, I discussed *closure strategies* used by professionalising groups such as funeral directors to signal the deliberate nature of the groups' actions in excluding outsiders. The concept of closure strategies is also linked to inclusionary strategies of those trying to get in. Using the same logic, in what follows I take the concept of women's strategic absence to examine the ways men have both excluded women and written out women's contributions, but I also use it to include women's complicity in disguising the nature of the work involved in their presence.

Closure strategies and the strategic absence of women are each aspects of the professionalisation of occupational groups. Unless there is an examination of such steps taken in the development of professions, the term professionalisation disguises the deliberate nature of actions taken by the occupational groups involved. Similarly, an examination is needed of the terms medicalisation and commercialisation, which likewise tend to disguise the deliberate actions underlying the development of these

social processes. Next I look at how women were systematically displaced from their role in after-death work by men's efforts to gain a monopoly over a service.

Death Medicalised and Commercialised: Excluding Women

Until around the seventeenth century dying was viewed as a religious event, presided over by the clergy. With the development of modern medicine this gradually changed. At first doctors were called on to predict the time of death so people could organise their affairs and the clergy could be present at the crucial moment to perform the appropriate religious rites. By the end of the eighteenth century doctors had wrested control of the dying process from the clergy (Walter, 1994: 10-12). Death had become medicalised. Rather than funeral directors being those who first displaced the women from their laying-out work, it was the newly professionalised male doctors. With the commercialisation of modern medicine, women were gradually excluded from the work because they were excluded from medical training at the universities and so unable to achieve the required scientific study, credentialing and registration (Pringle, 1998: 25).

Collectively, and with the help of the clergy (rather ironically, considering their own role at death had been usurped by doctors) and the state, the doctors campaigned to discredit as 'ignorant, incompetent, dirty, evil and immoral' (Hera, 1995: 163) women who participated in any healing activities, including the work of laying out the dead. The women were gradually supplanted in after-death work. Barbara Reskin and Patricia Roos (1990) explain how the process took place in the US:

Using herbal remedies and lore handed down over generations, female lay healers and midwives often served as their communities' only medical practitioners. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the emerging male medical establishment drove their often more experienced female competitors out of business. Professional and scientific transformations ensured that male physicians, schooled in 'regular' (that is, allegedly scientific) medical schools and supported by the American Medical Association, secured a monopoly on the practice of medicine in the United States (1990: 16).

And yet, for all the collective might of the professional men, the change did not occur suddenly or rapidly. Roberts (1989) and Adams (1993) learned from their interviews in different parts of Britain that many of the community women healers still continued in the work until the mid-twentieth century. Furthermore, the early to mid-twentieth century layer-out may not have been formally trained in after-death work, but rather

than the 'Sarah Gamp' figure so maliciously portrayed, she was more likely to be an experienced and registered midwife (Roberts, 1989: 194).³⁷

Although attributing the eventual demise of women's community after-death care to the medicalisation of health and death, Adams (1993) explains that, contrary to medical men's claims, in Britain the women's community system of care, while not commercialised, had been successful because it was neither disorganised nor lacking in rationality. Instead, she argues there was a *community* rationality of care, which was gradually superseded by a *scientific* rationality of care in the form of professionally trained district nurses under the management of male doctors (1993: 156). As the district nurses were sent in to 'monitor and control' (ibid: 164) the working class mothers' child care they increasingly took over the nursing of the sick, convincing the working class women of the superiority of the new professional system and the inadequacy of their own system. The intrusion of the public health experts into working class homes led to an increased awareness of hygiene and with it a sense of shame over the smells and sight of death that came with keeping a corpse in the house between death and the funeral. This created a willingness among the working classes for funeral men to take control of corpses from the moment of death (ibid).

The dominance of the commercialised modern western medical model over the women's domestic model was the result of a deliberate male project. Doctors intentionally worked to exclude women from the lucrative monetary rewards of the new commercial venture of medicine. To do so, and to create markets for their own services, they deliberately set about establishing the superiority of their commercial products and services over the non-commercial ones offered by the women (Witz, 1992: 82). The collective power of the medical men destroyed the credibility of the women and thus their ability to continue with their healing work, including after-death work. The result for the layers-out was that as their role disappeared they worked with dwindling respect until around the time of World War II when the medicalisation of death had moved most of the dying from their homes to hospitals (Adams, 1993: 165). There, the laying

³⁷ Sarah Gamp was a midwife in Charles Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit*. She was characterised as decrepit, gin swilling, dirty and disreputable and, according to Dickens' biographer Peter Ackroyd (1990: 398), based on the 'midwife and night nurse of the female secretary and companion' of an acquaintance. Although a fictional character, Sarah (Mrs) Gamp has since been cited by writers, including Litten (1991, see the following section), to denigrate community midwives, layers-out and nurses and as a case for leaving medicine to 'trained' (male) doctors.

out was done by nurses prior to the removal of the corpse by the funeral director – until the last decade of the twentieth century when rationalisation of hospital care insisted that nurses were there to care for the living, not the dead (Biswas, 1993: 137). Thus, control of the entire process of after-death care was handed to the funeral director.

With the neighbourhood women's reputations widely discredited by the combined power of the men of medicine, the clergy and the state, the way had been opened for funeral directors to develop their occupation. They moved in, gradually taking over after-death processes formerly controlled by clergy, some work done by doctors plus the work of women who had laid out the dead (Hera, 1995: 164). The increased demand for the undertakers' services opened the way for their professionalisation. After-death work, then, long promoted by male funeral directors to be 'naturally' men's work, was once considered to be 'naturally' what women did. The difference is that because what women did was a non-commercialised activity performed in the private sphere of the home, it had not been considered work.

Men's actions towards discrediting women in the process of the medicalisation of death that was part of the commercialisation and professionalisation of medicine and the development of undertaking as an occupational specialism can be seen to have contributed to the displacing of women's official roles in after-death work. Women have, nevertheless, continued to perform after-death work in the family businesses that have been the basis of the male-controlled commercialised system. Therefore these actions of long ago are not the sole cause of the devaluing and invisibility of women's after-death work. In Chapter Four, I discussed the importance to the men's professional project of erasing women's presence from the industry. In Chapter Two, I looked at the role social scientists have played in shaping professions' position and power. I now examine how even recent scholars have also contributed to the strategic absence of women in the funeral firm by the perpetuation of the myth that after-death work is men's work.

Marginalising Women's After-Death Work in Historical Records

In her study of women's role in death rites, Jean Hera (1995) argues that male funeral directors deliberately set out to cover over the history of women's early involvement, developing their own myths and ideologies, and mystifying what they do in order to

professionalise death, for their own profit and power. But, while funeral directors have indeed contributed to hiding women's involvement in after-death work, sociologists and historians too have ignored women's involvement within the funeral industry.

Some of the blame for the disappearance of women, therefore, must be attributed to writers such as sociologist Robert Habenstein (1962) and historian Julian Litten (1991, 1997). Habenstein (1962), with obscure reasoning and no support for his stance, tries to justify the male takeover of women's roles in after-death work. He admits that 'female undertakers were no novelty in England and her possessions' (ibid: 228). But, he then goes on to contend that while the men's early roles of providing coffins and hearses could be easily extended to taking on the role of funeral director, it was not the case with women's role. He writes:

The *stretch in logic* required to extend one's tasks from laying out the body to such functions as ... funeralizing, professionalizing, and sacredizing the body ... seems far greater for the nurse than for the sexton, cabinetmaker, and liveryman (ibid: 229, my emphasis).

Making essentialist assumptions, Habenstein proceeds to devalue women's after-death role, likening the nurses' role to an extension of their private sphere role as mothers. Moreover, he patronisingly commends the sense of early undertakers using women to take on the body preparation and emotional aspects of after-death work, suggesting it would save the funeral men the stress involved. Again, Habenstein writes:

The role of the nurse has traditionally been one of mother surrogate. The affective component in carrying out this role is high. ... It would appear that less strain would have attached to delegating the more personal or sacred aspects of care for the dead to the nurse than to any of the other categories of occupations 'on the make', so to speak, for command of the undertaking functions. It may be noted ... that some adaptive measures were taken by the early morticians insofar as they attempted to include a woman 'in attendance' with the operation of their funeral establishments (Habenstein, 1962: 229).

While indicating that women did, indeed, work in the early days of the commercialised after-death trade, Habenstein shows that it was, suitably in his opinion, under the control of men. But Habenstein does not say what happened to this early female 'attendance'. Instead he thenceforth completely ignores any possible presence of women in the industry.

Writing thirty years later of the funeral trade in the period up to the seventeenth century, Litten (1991) ignores his own evidence of women as actors. He includes a reproduction of an old engraving of 'Plague Scenes c. 1655' (ibid: 145). In one of the scenes, two

women clearly labelled 'searchers' lead the bell-ringing sexton who precedes the coffin. Litten makes no mention of these women or their role. Moreover, he belittles the role that he believes women played in relation to that of men's. He writes first:

By the early seventeenth century it was more usual, both in town and country, for [the laying out and washing of a corpse] to be provided by the coffin-maker. He would tend to have a number of *lowly women* on his books living in the locality whom he could call upon at short notice to attend – the Mrs Gamps of this world (Litten, 1991: 72, my emphasis).

At this time, then, some women layers-out, rather than being employed informally but directly by the public, were employed by the male undertakers, in what would seem to be a forerunner of today's mortuary work of body preparation. According to Litten, rather than having a skill or social status to complement that of the coffin-maker, the women are merely 'lowly', to be called on. The research participants of Roberts (1989) and Adams (1993) would agree that the women, like the coffin-maker, would have been working class, and poorly paid, but this does not necessarily make them any more lowly than the coffin-maker. Adams, for example, found in a working-class British community, where few could afford either nursing training or medical care, that women with experience but no formal medical qualifications worked in an organised system of care. They nursed the sick, helped with childbirth, childcare, housework and meals for the sick, as well as laying-out the dead (ibid: 156, 158).

In a later book, Litten (1997), writing of the eighteenth century death customs in Britain, continues to denigrate the after-death work done by women, making only two references to their participation. In one he makes passing mention of the possibility of women working in the industry when he describes a 'competent joiner making and dressing coffins... whose wife, *one presumes*, made shrouds' (1997: 51, my emphasis). He, in fact, makes three presumptions for which he gives no justification. The first is that the joiner was competent; the second is that he had a 'wife'; and the third is that the woman's only contribution was to make shrouds, or that she even made shrouds at all. I suggest that he might equally have presumed that the woman was competently laying-out bodies (he does not say who else was doing that), dressing the coffins (which, like making shrouds, involved needlework, apparently presumed by Litten to be women's work), and performing other tasks.

In his only other reference to women's after-death participation, Litten writes:

First the death was notified to the parish minister who in turn was responsible for ascertaining the cause of death from those who laid-out the body. Ministers filed a 'certificate' with the parish clerk whose duty it was to publish a record of deaths and their estimated cause.... As the majority of the certificates were completed by 'good women' with no medical experience whatsoever, the reliability of the cause of death is highly questionable (Litten, 1997: 48).

Litten does not elaborate on what he means by 'medical experience', so it is difficult to know with certainty if he is comparing the knowledge of the 'good women' of the eighteenth century unfavourably with that of the medical men of the day or with what passes for medical knowledge today. If it is the latter, his criticism of the reliability of the knowledge of the women, qua women, in the context is spurious. If, as seems more likely, it is the former, his uncritical acceptance in the late twentieth century of the superiority of the reliability of eighteenth century 'medical experience' over that of the 'good women' is puzzling. It seems that Litten has unquestioningly accepted and is perpetuating the modernist professional discourse, as do the functionalist theorists of the early to mid twentieth century. He is thus, in the late twentieth century, contributing to the continuance of the strategic absence of women established in classical sociology.

Devaluing Women's Work

Organisational logic is a masculine logic that fears, denies and contains the world of bodily needs and emotions and interdependencies and seeks to contain it in a private sphere. It is also a logic that subdivides and ranks tasks, ignoring those activities that do not lend themselves to partitioning in this way (Davies, 1995:51).

In the funeral firm, the continuation of patriarchal domination and a gendered division and hierarchy of occupations mean that the women's clerical work tends to be ranked less highly than the male occupations of funeral directing and embalming. This ranking means that the women's work is considered to be of less value. The undervaluing of the women's work is a much bigger issue than merely ranking funeral directing and embalming above such clerical work as typing, filling in forms, filing, sending out accounts and keeping the books. These clerical aspects of their work that can be labelled and used to show a specific output are not the only work-related activities done by the women. But they have tended to be the only activities recognised and acknowledged by both the men and the women as work.

The women participants working in clerical roles draw satisfaction from their work and see their place within the funeral firm as pivotal, though of minor importance compared with the work of the funeral director, again accepting the dominant view. When asked

about the work they do, they all hesitated over how to describe it, then went on to list administration and secretarial activities. Although they referred to themselves variously as office administrators, office managers, accounts managers, secretaries or receptionists, Gail's account and her hesitation express the attitude of all the clerical workers interviewed:

Well, I'm a secretary. I do newspaper notices, registrations of death. What else do I do? Um – when you sit down and think about it, it's a bit hard to put together. I write cheques, do up accounts sometimes, type up the service sheets, memorial books, cassette covers, ring doctors to see where death certificates are, ring the sexton, ring the florist, the caterer, the organist, – that's about it really (Gail).

My observations of Gail and other office workers in funeral firms have shown that there is another aspect of their work comprising a large part of the women's daily activities. This work is not part of any job description and is so 'invisible' it is not valued as a productive output and yet without it, funeral firms could not operate as part of the 'caring professions'. It is the women's interrelational work with the other members of their firm, the wider funeral industry and the bereaved. They are intimately involved in the smooth running of the daily lives of their more highly ranked colleagues, protecting them and intercepting for them, making connections, making excuses and compromises, covering and averting potentially damaging slips, offering apologies, thanks, praise and support. Particularly significant is their considerable contact with the bereaved, both by phone and in person. But when asked what their job entails, not one of the women office workers mentioned that she is often the first point of contact for bereaved clients, or that she welcomes them into the firm's premises when they call with clothing for the deceased, come to dress, 'view' or sit with the deceased after embalming. I have seen the women supporting families, affirming their decisions, admiring photographs, helping them make travel arrangements for out of town relations, making them cups of coffee, giving them tissues and a hug, encouraging them to apply makeup or arrange the hair of the deceased – as the office worker said above, 'all the little bits that need to be done.' Yet, it was only after being prompted that they added these interpersonal or relational activities, usually with surprise that anyone would think them important enough to discuss.

One reason for the undervaluing of the women's interrelational work is that it is not considered to be work but, rather, is connected to the nature of being a woman. 'The idea that it is work is obscured. The work is not seen as what women do, but as part of

what they are' (Fishman, 1978: 405). Hochschild (1983) calls the work that women do to affirm and care for others 'emotion work'. Employers manage and capitalise on this aspect of women's skills, often gained through experience as mothers and managing a household, but do not recognise or reward it as labour. Even when employers do recognise the contribution of women's emotion work, as the funeral director describing Eleanor's 'qualities', they still do not acknowledge that the work is expected, or seen as an essential element of the job. Instead they assume it to be part of a particular woman's character and that she chooses to perform emotion work (Rosser and Davies, 1987: 82).

A recent change in some funeral firms has been the inclusion of women in advertising photographs. Pleased, women participants mentioned this as a sign of appreciation of their value and contribution to the firm. One funeral director downplayed this suggestion. The reason for a woman's inclusion in his firm's advertising, he said, was that there is an increasing customer expectation that there will be a woman available. As the woman's occupation is unnamed in the advertisement, including the 'office manager' in photographs might be seen as misrepresentation, a pretence that the photograph is of a woman funeral director when there is none in the firm. On the other hand, perhaps it shows that the funeral director is aware that the woman in the front office is as important a member of the firm as the funeral directors, doing the work that is rarely considered to be work – her daily relational interaction with and for her employer, colleagues, the wider funeral industry and especially the bereaved.

What is not at first so apparent, is the women's contribution to the continuation of the devaluing of women's clerical work. An example of how 'the marginalised internalise, accept and give voice to dominant thinking' (Fletcher, 1999: 17) is seen in the way it is not only the men who tend to rank the women's clerical work below their own. When asked what their job entails the women were mostly self-deprecating, saying things like, 'Just the odds and ends that no one else does,' and 'Yeah – just – yeah – it's sort of hard to put into words really – just all the little bits that need to be done.' On the other hand, funeral directors are likely to make a definite and positive statement of their occupation, such as, 'I care for the body and the family from the time of death...' or an embalmer, 'what we're doing is we're preserving the body so that the process of viewing is very pleasurable' (Tamblin, 2003).

Kritzer (2002) writes about comparing his observation of a lawyer's workday with the lawyer's own description of his day. What Kritzer's observation shows, is that the lawyer's activities, based on several cases, were highly fragmented, and broken by numerous phone calls. Yet, when the lawyer recounted his day, he tended to focus on the progress of each case as a whole. Similarly, in the funeral firm, the funeral directors and embalmers have the progress of individual corpses and their related funerals to present as a narrative whole. Women in the clerical jobs in the funeral firm are less likely to have such a focal point. Their work is less tied to the progress of each individual corpse. Instead, they are usually working on the minutiae for several families simultaneously, both pre- and post-funeral details, and their day is more highly fragmented into a multitude of small, unrelated activities. Because it is difficult for them to link their activities into a coherent narrative in the same way as the funeral directors and embalmers, it is also difficult for them to say with such assurance just what their work is. This increases the probability that the women will contribute to the perpetuation of the view that their job is worth less than that of the men's.

Theorising Women's Absence from After-Death Work

Because the subject of death has long been fraught with taboos and fears, there is a danger that the work and workers involved in the funeral firm are theorised as a special case. It is as if, because death is present, gendered relations within the funeral firm are somehow outside those in the wider historical and social context. Rather than looking at the relationship of the work to death to discover reasons for the devaluing of women's after-death work, what is needed is to examine the work in relation to other work where women with the same qualifications and experience as men consistently 'achieve' less highly. First, I look at an example of a theory which does focus on the relationship of funeral firm work to death as a reason why women's work in the funeral firm has been kept in the background. I then move to a discussion of the nature of work that tends to be seen as women's work, relational work, and how women, regardless of their wishes and qualifications, are channelled into this form of work and disadvantaged because it is regarded as of less value than the forms of work men do.

Pollution: Women and Death

Examining women's more recent participation in the funeral industry in Australia Pringle and Alley (1995) draw on Mary Douglas' (1966) anthropological views about pollution to explain women's relegation to hidden, background work. Pringle and Alley theorise women's absence from 'men's' visible roles in the industry by drawing on the arguments of Douglas, who connects the idea of the corpse as polluting to the idea of women as also polluting and therefore dangerous. They write:

The corpse is seen as polluting because it falls between distinct classificatory boundaries, neither alive nor properly dead, neither human nor animal. Its transitional state threatens our perception of clear individual and social entities. This has a particular resonance for gender because women too are perceived as a source of pollution; the act of giving birth demonstrates the vulnerability of the body and the permeability of boundaries between self and other. The countless taboos governing menstrual blood and on menstruating women handling food are based on a very strong fear of pollution. The female body is regarded as a powerful and dangerous object to be controlled and regulated... This is achieved by excluding women from contact with animal or human flesh, which are also pollutants (1995: 109-110).

Women, then, according to Pringle and Alley, by being polluting are likely to endanger the 'depollution' process carried out by male funeral directors, embalmers and celebrants (through such practices as embalming and funeral service rituals) necessary for a dead body to reach its final resting stage. They use the same reasoning to explain why women have been excluded as mourners from funeral services – that is, women's tears are feared as polluting (1995: 110). Further, they suggest that the reason women have performed hidden, background work is that they are aware of fears of their polluting effect and do not want to upset clients (ibid).

On the other hand, Glennys Howarth, in *Last Rites: The Work of the Modern Funeral Director* (1996), argues that, although motives of control and professionalisation may have prompted early funeral men to exclude women from the industry, it is the polluting nature of after-death work that makes the continuing gendered division of labour in the funeral firm 'peculiar'. Howarth writes,

Given the 'dirty' nature of the work and *the ubiquity of allocating polluting tasks to women*, it is curious that they are not expected to have closer contact with the corpse as they are in many other cultures (ibid: 56, my emphasis).

Further, as Howarth points out, in British society women were responsible for after-death work until post-World War II, either as community layer-out or under contract to an undertaker. She pinpoints the exclusion of women from the work to the development

of funeral directors' chapels of rest at which time 'came countrywide criticism from the British Undertakers' Association of the role of laying-out women and the need to exclude them from the profession' in order to transform 'the perception of bodywork from menial to scientific' (ibid). By emphasising their work as scientific, the funeral directors were thus aiming to shift the image of bodywork away from (women's) dirty, polluting, working class, backyard conditions to the pristine, hygienic image of the (male) operating theatre. If there is a connection between women and pollution, then, it would appear to be via women's historical work rather than because of any essentialised polluting nature of women. Women have been excluded from contact with the corpse more because of fears that women's presence would carry reminders of funeral directors' lowly beginnings and bring loss of prestige.

Pringle and Alley make an important point missing from most studies of the funeral directing industry. That is, far from being absent from after-death care, women have performed many roles as marriage partners in what largely tend to be family firms. Pringle and Alley find that 'the majority of funeral directors in Australia are still husband/wife teams' (ibid: 111), but remark that women's 'strictly background role' has been neither recognised nor clear. Without citing fears of pollution or otherwise theorising why, Graeme Griffin and Des Tobin also acknowledge that women's contribution in Australia has been significant, but they too assert that it has been backstage. They write: 'In the past the wife's role, even if extensive, was largely out of the view of the public' (1997: 197).

Women's Relational Acts: Disappearing Work

While agreeing with Pringle and Alley, and Griffin and Tobin that women have made a significant contribution to the work in the funeral firm, I disagree that the women's role has always been in the background. On the contrary, much of their work has involved such frontstage activities as answering phones and welcoming clients in reception. Rather than their work being unnoticed because it has always been in the background, it has been unnoticed because first, as discussed above, the men's professional project required women's absence, and second, because what the women have done has not been acknowledged as work. In her research into women working in a large firm of design engineers, Joyce Fletcher (1999) found that women, even when they are as fully qualified as men in the same field, are more likely to be working in areas where they

provide emotional support. Even when they are employed at exactly the same work, as were the engineers in Fletcher's research, the women have ended up doing the supportive roles of advising, teaching, mediation, and adapting or modifying a system to make it easier to use. By doing so the women tend to miss promotions because, although the work is helping others to be 'productive', it is not itself counted as 'productive'. Writing of these supportive activities as 'relational acts', Fletcher argues further that it is largely women who perform this type of work. Marie Campbell (2000: 187) discusses examples found in nurses' work, including, for instance, when they mediate between doctors and patients, or between doctors and administrators. As Campbell points out, although these acts may be part of a nurse's work, they are not valued as productive or even as work because they tend to be assumed to have little skill, just something that women do naturally. Because they are not valued as work, they are seldom noticed. For this reason, Fletcher calls these relational acts 'disappearing acts'.

Using Fletcher's theory gives insight into how women's strategic absence as actors in historical accounts of the funeral firm was achieved. As marriage partners in a family firm women have answered the phones, talked to the bereaved, offered them advice and support, accompanied the bereaved when they view the body (which they may, quietly, have embalmed and dressed as well as doing the hair and makeup, after trimming the casket and doing the clerical work). But, even though their contact with the bereaved is frontstage or public sphere work, because they are working with clients, it is also relational work and is therefore not recognised as work on the same level as the 'real' frontstage work of the funeral director, or even the celebrant. The work is thus 'disappeared', leaving the public, the funeral directors and the women themselves to believe that women have not *worked* in the funeral industry. They have just *helped*.

As well as the tasks mentioned above, after-death care provided by the funeral firm involves many other activities. These include arranging such things as newspaper advertisements, flowers, music, the gravesite or cremation, the post-service refreshments, the celebrant. Linked to this array of tasks is a custom that has contributed to writing women out of history. Work done by any member of the firm towards the arranging of a funeral tends to be attributed to the funeral director managing the funeral, rather than to the individual employee or family member who did the work.

Griffin and Tobin (1997: 178), exposing Tobin's connection to a large Australian firm, exemplify my point when they claim:

The funeral director may well perform 20-25 different tasks and, for an average funeral, a dozen or more people may expend some 35 hours between them on these tasks (my emphasis).

What Griffin and Tobin have done is to conflate the funeral director with the funeral firm, and, therefore, with the other workers in the firm. By this tendency to conflation, women's work is made invisible in the industry. In a small business, the male funeral director may do any number of these tasks himself. But, as part of their project to gain social respectability, funeral directors have carefully promoted their role as that of the professional man who dresses in a formal suit, collects the corpse, drives the hearse, 'arranges' the funeral service (a vague term which obscures the range of activities involved) and takes the leading organisational role at the funeral service. All other jobs mentioned are considered as secondary to these roles³⁸ and the efforts expended in performing them are downplayed to keep the focus on the professional aspects. Therefore, however many hours women may have worked in the funeral industry doing the other jobs, it has developed into an industry controlled by men, who in their own and the public's perception do all the 'work'.

Nevertheless, over the last ten years, particularly, there have been signs of change. There has been a gradual increase both in the visibility of women working in the funeral firm and in the numbers of women working in the higher status and higher profile 'men's' jobs of funeral director and celebrant. In the following two sections I look first at explanations for why change has been taking place and then at the position of women in the funeral firm today.

Women's (Strategic) Reappearance in After-Death Work

After many years where women and their work were all but invisible in the funeral industry, the last decade has seen a marked increase in their visible presence. Glennys

³⁸ Except embalming, which holds a contradictory place. While the funeral director has used the result of the work, the embalmed body, as proof of professional medico-scientific skills, the physical act of embalming has tended to be mystified and hidden. As discussed above, the reason can be explained by continuing social attitudes to death and decay as dirty. The body is embalmed to sanitise it and slow the decaying process, but those doing the sanitising still carry the stigma of contamination through handling the corpse in its 'unclean' state.

longer (Statistics New Zealand, 2005: 15) and work till an older age (Dominion Post, 2003: 3), more women never marrying (Statistics New Zealand, 2001: 65), an increase in divorce (New Zealand Statistics, 2005: 27), and the rise of one-parent families, with the parent much more likely to be a mother than a father (Keenan, 2003: 12). Concurrently, a growing number of women now have high public profiles through success in both the political and private sectors (see Human Rights Commission, 2004). In the political arena we currently have, for example, a woman Prime Minister, Speaker of the House, Governor General and Chief Justice as well as a number of women mayors. In the private commercial sector women head several of the largest corporations. Unfortunately, although these are important successes by individual women, they are not the result of improved status for all women. The numbers of women in higher echelons of governance and selected professions remain remarkably low (Human Rights Commission, 2004; Statistics New Zealand, 2005). And neither do the successes of the few high profile women tend to benefit women generally. Instead, they tend to give a false idea of women's achievements and so disguise the enormity of the continuing gender inequalities. McNay (2004: 180) explains:

Gender inequalities are no longer perpetuated so much through arbitrary and direct sanctions confining women to the domestic sphere but rather through indirect forms of economic exploitation and state inertia. These indirect and impersonal forms of structural discrimination render gender inequality less visible because formal equality between men and women, at the level of civil and social freedoms, appears to be upheld.

Nevertheless, I suggest that the growing visibility and success of women in the public sphere are the direct result of increased participation by women throughout all levels of public life. Moreover, because of the increasingly active presence of women in the public sphere, the numbers of women funeral directors and celebrants will continue to rise.

Women in the public political and commercial spheres are now making choices and decisions that are based on their own experiences and needs. Until the latter part of the twentieth century, while women were more often confined to the private sphere, major decisions such as where they lived, the house they occupied, or the car the family owned were more likely to have been made by and to suit the occupational needs of the male head of household. Even when a woman lived alone and was in full-time paid employment, if she wanted to buy a house or car, the institutionalisation of the gendered public and private spheres meant that she needed a *male* relative to act as guarantor.

Similarly, the arrangements for funerals, as public sphere activities, were most likely to be made through a male relative. Women's growing acceptance and confidence in public sphere activities should see women increasingly setting the terms of the services they require rather than expecting to have to accept what is offered.

Although Reskin and Roos (1990) miss the interconnections between women's increased participation in the wider public sphere and their increased participation in some occupations, their theory of 'job queues, gender queues' raises issues important to this discussion. Reskin and Roos use the term 'feminisation' of an occupation to indicate a shift in which '*the majority sex and the occupation's sex label have shifted ... from male to female*' (1990: 11, my emphasis). Wright and Jacobs (1995: 336), moderate the definition by referring to the feminising of an occupation as *increasing numbers* of women entering an occupation. In the discussion that follows, I draw on the ideas of Reskin and Roos to examine how the women's growing participation in the public sphere may have contributed to increasing numbers of women entering the funeral industry, to changes in the roles they fulfil, and to their greater visibility. But, in doing so, it is Wright and Jacobs' moderated definition of the concept of feminisation that I use. The reason is that women's presence in the public sphere and in funeral firms has recently become both greater and more apparent, but there is no suggestion that they are (currently) in the process of outnumbering men as funeral directors.

As a way of theorising the feminisation of several traditionally male occupations since the 1970s, Reskin and Roos (1990: 29) argue that the labour market operates on a 'dual-queueing process'. Employers rank workers, in terms of their desirability, into 'labour queues'. Similarly, workers rank occupations, according to their desirability, into 'job queues'. According to Reskin and Roos, it is possible to understand the social processes that have led to the feminisation of some formerly male occupations, such as pharmacy, real estate sales and public relations, by examining how and why labour queues and job queues are ordered, and how the orders within the queues change. Using this approach Reskin and Roos found that, the feminisation of occupations did not signal women's equality. It meant, instead, that employers were accepting women either because there was a shortage of male workers (e.g. through rapid occupational growth or because deskilling of the work made it less attractive to men), or because of the presence of more qualified women in the labour queue, or because there was a

demand for women (e.g. because of anti-discrimination laws or more women clients). At the same time, they found that male workers have their own reasons (e.g. lowered status or conditions) for walking away from traditionally male occupations and women (e.g. higher pay and status than traditional women's work) for choosing to enter them. Echoing these findings, Pringle and Alley (1995: 112) mention women's entry to more overt roles in the funeral industry occurring partly because of a shortage of men for the positions.

The strength of the dual-queueing approach is that it accounts for 'demand and supply factors' as well as individual choices (Roos and Jones, 1995: 299). Both labour queues and job queues, and workers' and employers' preferences, are part of a gendered occupational structure in which men and women are differentiated. As this gendered structure is historically and socially constructed, the occupational gender boundaries are open to change and this can be the result of interactions between individuals in the workplace responding to wider social change. Roos and Jones explain:

Because studies of occupational feminisation target those work areas where social norms regarding gender are in transition, they can show us how boundaries between men's and women's jobs emerge and change at specific historical moments... Rather than being rigid, reified categories that leave individuals powerless, gender boundaries emerge from the interactions of individuals in the workplace. In turn, they constrain or enable the actions of individuals, and hence can limit or enhance individual opportunity. Structures, then, are always being renegotiated by individuals with different amounts of power to affect outcomes (ibid: 299-300).

Reskin and Roos (1990) argue that the underlying reason for increased women's entry into an occupation is a shortage of male labour, often because of the rapid growth of that occupation. Even more important than an industry growth, they state, is a shortage of male labour because of 'a change in the work process or rewards that rendered jobs *less attractive to men* than competing opportunities' (ibid: 303, my emphasis). Further, Reskin and Roos discuss employers' tactics, such as constructing jobs or designing part-time jobs to entice women, particularly when faced by a shortage of men or in an attempt to cut wages (ibid: 58), or of women being slotted into niche areas within occupations to accommodate women clients and consumers (ibid: 49-50). Because of their emphasis on employer preference (labour queues) as the underlying reason for the sex composition of occupations, what Reskin and Roos do not consider adequately is the contribution of recent changes in work processes making an occupation *more desirable to women* rather than merely less desirable to men. In the same book, though,

Phipps (1990: 125) mentions that women have recently entered pharmacy because the shift to a focus on service has made the work more appealing to women.

Following Scott (1988: 40), Reskin and Roos contend that gendered job segregation developed through employer preferences rather than employee choices, but that employer preferences have been constrained by such occurrences as shortage of male employees. Such activities as the funeral directors' gendered professional project, which has used exclusionary strategies to keep men in top positions and women in less prestigious roles, support the authors' thesis. I suggest that historically, gendered job segregation is the result of an even more complex picture than that painted by Reskin and Roos. For example, Mark-Lawson and Witz (1988) describe how political intervention, rather than employer choice, removed nineteenth century women from family groups working in British coalmines, resulting in mine work becoming exclusively men's work. Similarly Nadeau and Barlow (2003) state that in France women have been excluded from industrial night shift work by a political rather than employer decision. In the Aotearoa New Zealand family funeral firm, original job segregation, although ultimately of greater benefit to men, was at the time a strategic family manoeuvre to assist the men's professional project and therefore raise the family's social status.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to study the impact of labour queues on the gendered organisation of the Aotearoa New Zealand funeral industry. From 1991 to 2001, there was an overall increase of funeral directors and embalmers of thirty percent. But although women represent more than half of that increase and the women informants mentioned several ways they had entered the industry, it is not immediately obvious that the reason for their rise in the labour queue rests on a shortage of men. Indeed, according to 'Labour Market Information on Funeral Director' (2005), 'There is not an immediate or long term shortage of skilled New Zealand workers in this occupation.' Since 2002 there have been just thirty-two positions advertised, with only two vacancies in April 2005 (ibid).

Several women have begun in the office and 'grown' the job and others have entered by joining a firm owned by a woman – in each case an employer preference choice, which benefited a woman rather than a man. Others have entered by working unpaid for a male funeral director so they could attend the training courses. Therefore, an increased

number of women with credentials may account for some of the rise in numbers, as suggested by Reskin and Roos (ibid: 253). But there appear to be two more important reasons for the rise of women in the funeral directing labour queue. The first is that there is a specific demand for women, brought about by an increase in the numbers of female clients, a further reason suggested by Reskin and Roos (1990). The second is the shift in focus in the job of funeral director from management and disposal of the body to an increased emphasis on grief work, along with changes in work techniques. Cleaner work, with less heavy lifting, more focus on the presentation of the deceased, requiring make-up and hairdressing skills, and greater concern for care of the bereaved, all contribute to making the job seem more appropriate for women.

Turning now to the job queues, funeral director (employer) informants have said that they have more men and women requesting work than positions advertised or available. This means that workers, both men and women, see the occupations of funeral director and embalmer as desirable. The increase in women seeking to work in these traditionally male areas could mean, as Reskin and Roos (1990) suggest, that women see the occupations as offering higher wages and status than more traditional 'women's work'. But as well as the shift to a focus on bereavement care possibly making 'a change in the work process or rewards that rendered jobs less attractive to men' (ibid: 303), this change in focus has made the work more attractive to women. Funeral directing has become an extension of the nurturing socialisation of emotionality work traditionally performed by women, whether in the private sphere of the family home, in service industries or in the semi-professions. The change has occurred as a result of the shift from funeral directors as business managers who undertake to arrange funerals and dispose of dead bodies, to funeral directors as facilitators of funeral arrangements in consultation with the bereaved family in order to help the bereaved towards a healthy grieving process.

'Ladies in a Men's World': Women in the Funeral Firm Today

Figure 2 shows the relationship between the numbers of men and women employed fulltime in Aotearoa New Zealand as 'undertakers [sic] and embalmers' according to census data from 1976 to 2001. It can be seen that, whereas in 1976 women comprised only 6 percent of the total number of funeral directors and embalmers, by 2001 they represented 24.5 percent. The numbers of women increased from 18 of the total 294 in

1976 to 132 of 537 in 2001. During the same period, numbers of male funeral directors and embalmers have increased from 276 in 1976 to 405 in 2001. Although women are now still less than a quarter of the total numbers of those in fulltime employment as funeral directors and/or embalmers in Aotearoa New Zealand, from 1991-2001 they account for more than half of the increase.

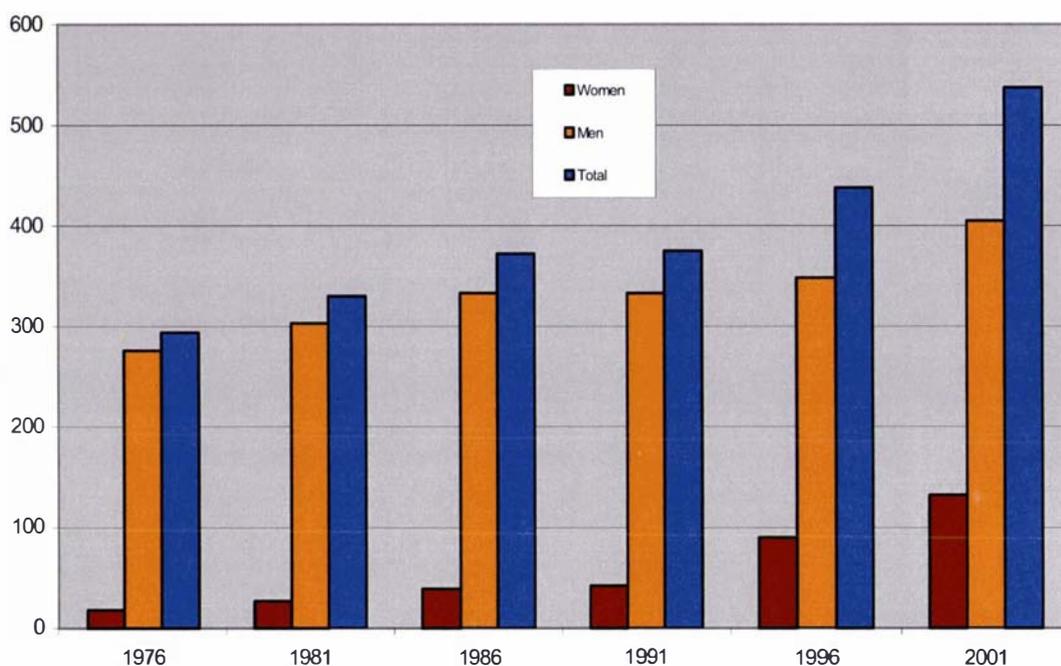


Figure 2: Women and men funeral directors and embalmers in Aotearoa New Zealand, 1976-2001³⁹

Breaking this down even further, between 1981 and 1991 the total numbers of funeral directors and embalmers, men and women combined, increased by 13.6 percent, from 330 to 375. Women's participation during this decade increased by 55.6 percent from 27 to 42. However, in relation to the total numbers of funeral directors and embalmers, women's participation had risen only 3 percent (up from 8 percent to 11 percent).⁴⁰ On the other hand, between 1991 and 2001 there was a surge in growth in the industry, with the combined numbers of men and women increasing by more than 30 percent from 375

³⁹ Source: Statistics New Zealand (2004).

⁴⁰ This compares with a 5 percent increase in Australia during the same period (Pringle & Alley, 1995: 118).

to 537. Of the 162 new workers in this latter decade, 55.5 percent were women, more than doubling the total percentage of women funeral directors and embalmers from the 1991 level of 11 percent to almost 25 percent – a rise of almost 14 percent over ten years.

For all these statistical figures, though, it is just as difficult today as it was at the beginning of last century to know with any certainty the numbers of women working in the funeral industry in Aotearoa New Zealand. Statistics New Zealand provides data since 1976, but the data comprises only the combined total of undertakers and embalmers. Although figures for part-time funeral directors and embalmers are available from 1991, showing an increase from 7 percent to 12 percent of total workers, there is no gender differentiation (see 'Labour Market Information', 2005). As women are more likely to be employed on a part-time or casual basis in the funeral industry this is an important gap in available data. It also does not show the numbers of women, such as marriage partners, who work unpaid in these jobs. Moreover, women's contribution in other occupations in the industry including administration, reception, grief care and mortuary assistance does not appear in any statistical analysis so is invisible.

Just as the data does not show how many women work part-time as funeral directors or embalmers, it does not show how many of those who complete training as funeral directors or embalmers are unable to gain employment. The FDANZ also does not include qualified funeral directors on their list of 'registered funeral directors' unless they are employed full- or part-time by an FDANZ member firm. Those who choose to work on a contract basis do not 'qualify' to be listed, and neither do those who belong to other associations such as Funeral Services Council (FSC) and New Zealand Independent Funeral Homes (NZIFH), unless they are also FDANZ members. Moreover, the number of women entering embalming training has for several years equalled the number of men, but it is difficult to know what happens to all those trained women, whether they cannot gain work, work only part-time, or leave after a short time. Finally, Statistics New Zealand has no data at all for funeral celebrants.

Pringle and Alley (1995) suggest three important reasons for increasing numbers of Australian women working in the men's jobs of funeral director, embalmer and celebrant. These are also reflected in the views and experiences of the Aotearoa New

Zealand participants in this study. The first reason Pringle and Alley suggest is that because of new technologies such as 'streamlining of transfer services' (ibid: 113)⁴¹ work once considered too heavy and dirty for women to manage is now much lighter and cleaner and so more appropriate for women's participation. The second reason is that embalming, which funeral directors, as part of their professional project, deliberately linked with medicine, anatomy and surgery, has now also, 'aided by popular films like "Death Becomes Her" ... come to be associated with cosmetics and femininity' (ibid: 114). The third reason is the shift from 'on the job' training to a national curriculum diploma (ibid: 115).⁴² These changes within the industry coincide with changing societal attitudes, which also raise women's chances of gaining inroads into the more highly valued jobs of funeral director, celebrant and embalmer. The first change, which has been discussed in the section on socialisation of emotions above, is in social attitudes to death and grief that now allow for the expression of emotions, making women's presence in the industry more acceptable and desirable. The second change comes from 'women's greater visibility in public domains since the 1970s' (Pringle and Alley, 1995: 108).

Gradually, then, changes have been occurring, with more women outside the family being employed in clerical and reception roles, and with this a certain acknowledgement that this is 'work' even though it is still women's work. More women are being employed and trained as funeral directors and embalmers, and women's photographs now appear along with the men's in advertising material – a point also noticed by Griffin and Tobin (1997) in Australia. In *Yellow Pages: Auckland 2001*, for example, the funeral director advertisements included photographs of twelve men and just three women. But, in 2005, while there are still photographs of twelve men, there are fourteen women.

Conclusion

It can be seen, then, that women have been systematically excluded from after-death work. First, they were eased out, as the work was commercialised by men. Second,

⁴¹ That is, moving the corpse.

⁴² In New Zealand there is also now a national NZQA certificate course. This may work in women's favour in the long-term. However, as is discussed in Chapter 6, male funeral directors currently control entry to the course.

women's presence and work has been written out of historical records. Third, as part of the men's professional project, a modernist and, therefore, masculinist project, women's contributions have been marginalised, devalued and made invisible. In family firms, this includes the contributions of funeral directors' wives. Fourth, in order to maintain a gendered hierarchy, both family and non-family women have been excluded from work as funeral directors, embalmers and celebrants, the occupations accorded the highest status and value.

Since the 1990s, women have increasingly moved into after-death work. The increase may be attributed to wider societal changes, rather than to any collective decision by male funeral directors over the industry benefits of equal employment opportunities for women, or belief that women may be equally suited to the job as men. Women's growing move into the public sphere of paid work and to higher status work, women's tendency to a longer life span than men and the numbers of women living independently, all contribute to a greater and more sophisticated, in terms of public sphere experience, female client base for the funeral industry. Rather than relying on a male relative or professional to make their decisions over such events as funerals, women now expect to make such decisions themselves. This, in turn, has led to an increased demand for women funeral directors, embalmers and celebrants.

Even today, although there are more women working in 'men's' roles, the attitudes and culture of the funeral industry tend to remain centred on a stereotypical male model. This was illustrated in 2003, when a city crematorium in Aotearoa New Zealand held an open day. In response to a visitor's comment on the dull, spartan décor and stale odour, the sexton laughingly replied, 'There are no frills around here. It's men only.' It can also be seen in the continuing hierarchy of job importance and gendered division of labour. Within the industry, the job with the highest status and priority is still that of funeral director. The other work is all treated as necessary, but background work, merely there to support this public role. Women overwhelmingly perform the invisible, support roles of receptionist, administration or clerical worker and grief care worker. The large majority of funeral directors are still men. Their focus is on projecting an image of helpful, sympathetic professional competence, business-like, efficient, expert, knowledgeable, in control of the situation and of others' and their own emotions.

In Chapter Six, the focus is on the women's stories of closure strategies used by men to exclude women from men's work in the funeral firm, to marginalise those who fulfil the support work, and to maintain the gendered hierarchy and culture. I draw on Witz' (1992) model of gendered closure strategies and poststructuralist theories to examine both practice-based and discursive-based closure strategies practised by the funeral industry men to exclude women. This is followed by a discussion of demarcationary strategies that funeral directors have applied to maintain gendered hierarchies within the funeral firm, creating differentially valued distinctions between their own work and women's clerical work. I also study the women's allegations of the funeral directors' use of demarcationary strategies to define and limit the occupational boundaries of celebrants.

Chapter Six

‘It Was Very Closed Door’: Men’s Closure Strategies in After-Death Work

Introduction

The Aotearoa New Zealand funeral industry has never achieved its aim of state recognition as a profession. Through the efforts of succeeding members of their national executive, funeral directors have been encouraged to think of themselves as professionals and to act as members of a professional body. Modelling their actions on those of the medical profession (Pavalko, 1971), funeral directors’ professional closure was similarly ‘historically constructed as a mode of patriarchal closure, and was sustained by gendered strategies of exclusion’ (Witz, 1992: 74). Just as medical men masculinised and professionalised healing activities by wresting them from women’s control in the private sphere and relocating them in the male market arena (Hearn, 1982: 188), so funeral directors masculinised and commercialised after-death care by shifting it from women’s domestic control to the market place. They then developed strategies to exclude women to ensure male monopoly of power, which was considered to be a necessary attribute for their professional project. Nevertheless, because of the origins of funeral firms as small family businesses, their mode of patriarchal closure has differed from that used in medicine.

Patriarchal closure in medicine has been embedded within a complex system of institutionalised, organisational structures and hierarchical occupational specialisms (Witz, 1992). In the family funeral firm, on the other hand, although there has been a hierarchical gendered division of labour there has been no such complexity of structures or specialisms. The mode of patriarchal closure has, instead, tended to be based on a private sphere model that includes a male head of household and a subordinate female ‘helpmeet’. Rather than being tied to an internal logic of organisational structures, funeral firm patriarchal closure has been contingent on more external factors. Arguably, the most important contributing factor has been the strong element of conservatism exhibited by funeral directors, who, as a group, have struggled to rise above a social

perception that their work is dirty and somehow shameful and mercenary. Conservatism is manifest in attitudes relating to the idea of men's and women's strictly gendered, dominant and subordinate, 'complementary' roles, with expectations of stereotypical norms of masculinity and femininity, which may be partly explained by a widespread underlying Christian culture apparent within the funeral industry.

While early women struggled as individuals to enter fields such as medicine and midwifery, they later used collective strategies (see Witz, 1992). The women funeral directors and embalmers, on the other hand, have never acted collectively as a gendered 'group' or class separate from the men in the firm. Women trying to enter from outside the family funeral firm have done so as individuals. Because Witz' conceptual model of closure strategies relates to actions between groups, her theories of subordinate inclusionary and dual closure strategies do not, therefore, altogether apply to the women within funeral firms. Nevertheless, showing that women are as influenced by current feminist ideas as the men have been by professional and psychological trends, the women's stories indicate that they have individually tended to exercise remarkably similar inclusionary strategies in their attempts to overcome the men's exclusionary and demarcationary strategies.

Larson (1977: 6) points out that not every member of a group may be conscious of the development of a professional project. It is often only on looking back that the connections and patterns of actions can be traced. But while there is no apparent evidence of women within the funeral firm forming a group to become accepted on equal terms with men, this is not so with the group currently working to develop celebrancy as a specialist occupation. The women in this group are in a different position from women in the funeral firm. Although part of the wider funeral industry, most celebrants remain outside the funeral firm after their training, employed by the funeral firm on a casual basis only. Unlike the women working within the funeral firm, many of the celebrants are consciously working together as a group, trying to form a professional association to set standards and conditions of work. Added to this, the celebrants as a group are also engaging in inter-occupational control strategies with clergy, JPs and funeral directors, even though individual celebrants may deny or be unaware of any desire to do so.

In this chapter, using the experiences recounted by the research participants and Witz' fourfold model of gendered closure strategies discussed in Chapter Two, I start to build up a picture of how the current gender imbalance and hierarchical division of labour in the funeral firm has been initiated and maintained. To do this, I examine how the men's and women's accounts reveal gendered exclusionary and demarcationary strategies, both structural and discursive, used by male funeral directors against women.

Men's Exclusionary Strategies

In her research into women working in third world countries, Gomez (1994: 144) found that women continued to be excluded from occupations, previously considered men's work because they required physical strength, even when that was no longer the case. Gomez continues,

Skills and characteristics learned in their lives as girls and women, assumed to be 'natural' attributes of the female sex were being used to confine them to some jobs and exclude them from others (ibid).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, funeral directing now has advantages of new equipment and technology, meaning the work no longer relies on physical strength alone, and yet women are still being channelled into what has been considered 'women's work'. Applying Witz' (1992) model of gendered closure strategies shows that funeral directors have used a variety of exclusionary strategies to keep women from entering the funeral firm as funeral directors. Within the funeral firm itself, the male funeral directors have tended to use demarcationary strategies to maintain a gendered division of labour that excludes women from the higher status jobs of funeral director and embalmer, segregating them into the lower paid and less highly valued administration and reception work. In this first section, I examine two exclusionary strategies often successfully deployed by men to exclude women from working as funeral directors and embalmers: simply saying 'no'; and maintaining industry control of credentialing. This is followed by a look at how employing a 'token' woman, but excluding her from the firm's male culture, is used as a strategy to marginalise women funeral directors to maintain the dominant male culture.

'No'

According to the stories of the women research participants there has been a widespread tendency for male funeral directors to resist the idea of women working as funeral directors and embalmers. The women cited a variety of exclusionary strategies used against them. Most frequently mentioned was that the women's requests for employment were met with a straightforward, unqualified, 'no'. Irene's attempts to become a funeral director more than thirty years ago began after years of shift work in a job where she regularly dealt with people in emergency situations. Her comment about the knock-backs she received is representative of many of the women:

When I decided I was old enough, had had enough life experience and the time was right to be a funeral director I wrote to all the funeral firms in the city. I wrote to everybody and they either didn't reply or they said no, there were no openings for a woman (Irene).

Less than ten years ago, Lesley and Susan found that funeral directors throughout the country still held the same attitude towards employing women as funeral directors. Indicating that, like Irene, she sees life experience as a necessary attribute for the job, Lesley was one of several women who mentioned that their attempts to become funeral directors had followed a long-term plan. She described her experiences of encountering funeral directors' exclusionary strategies:

I had wanted to be a funeral director since I was young but trained and worked as a nurse till I knew I had the life skills and people skills to do the job well before I started enquiring around the funeral firms. It was hard going because they don't take on many people anyway and being a female was very tricky. I got knocked back by quite a few funeral directors who weren't interested in even talking to me just because I was a female (Lesley).

For Susan, not even the specific work-related experience of helping arrange several family funerals was sufficient to break the gender barrier. She explained:

After I had been involved in a series of funerals for family and friends I decided to become a funeral director to try to help families through that time. I talked to a local bereavement group about it and they didn't rate my chances very highly but said one funeral director was a lot more open than the others. And he *was* more open than the others. He encouraged grief groups and nurses through his premises when no one else would. But when I rang him he wouldn't even see me. He said no, it's just not work for a woman, full stop (Susan).

Such frank refusal to contemplate employing a woman shows that even in the 1990s when the Human Rights Act prohibited discrimination on gender grounds, men considered that refusing a woman employment because of her gender was legitimate and acceptable.

As there were few regulations surrounding equal employment rights for women thirty to forty years ago (Padavic and Reskin, 2002) Irene's decision to breach such a male stronghold was unusual. However, in the last decade there has been an awareness of equal rights issues, a national promotion of the slogan 'Girls can do anything', and a shift of focus in funeral directing from management of disposal of the corpse to caring for the bereaved. Together these changes have made the work more desirable to women. They have also made it more difficult to understand how the funeral men have managed to continue successfully just saying no. One of the men's major strengths has been the continuing industry control of training, qualifications and registration. Next, I look at how the FDANZ control of credentialing and registration has been used as a gendered closure strategy, enabling men to act as gatekeepers to the industry.

FDANZ Control of Credentialing and Registration

In recent years, women have been able to overcome many gender barriers to enter professions such as dentistry (Brooking, 1980: 196), medicine, law and pharmacy (Norris, 1997: 25). State registration of members of such professions and state control of education has forced the professions to comply with state regulations on gender equality (Norris, 1997). Professions have been more autonomous than non-professions in many areas such as self-policing of their members' standards, ethics and behaviour, for example. At the same time, state registration of members has ultimately placed them under state laws regarding equal access to education, credentialing and registration. Women have not been forced to apply to members of their chosen profession to be entitled to study, gain qualifications and be accorded registration. They have been able to do so by gaining credentials through a national tertiary provider where the entry criterion is academic merit.

The failure of the Aotearoa New Zealand funeral directors' professional project means that there has been no state registration of funeral directors. While it has meant that they have no control over either who sets up in business as a funeral director or standards of after-death service provided, it has, ironically, allowed them to maintain control over access to education and 'registration'. When funeral directors speak of registration they are most likely to be referring to membership of the largest of the three national industry associations, the Funeral Directors Association of New Zealand

(FDANZ), who claim about 85 percent membership of funeral firms (Redgrave, 2002: 198).

A second exclusionary strategy used by male funeral directors against many of the women research participants, then, has been to block their access to credentialing and thus to 'registration'. By creating a system of registration linked to membership of their association, FDANZ, have developed their own gendered exclusionary tactic. On their web page they write, 'FDANZ also maintains *the* Register of Funeral Directors'⁴³ (my emphasis). According to the web page, to become a Member of the FDANZ today a funeral director must own a funeral firm that meets a list of criteria set out by the FDANZ. The funeral director of the firm seeking membership must also have 'attained qualification in funeral directing ... [and] hold Practising Certificates which are renewable every three years, on provision of evidence of ongoing training'.

There are two New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) certificate courses, one for funeral directing and the other for embalming. They consist of fifteen months each with block courses, assignments and practical work to be undertaken at a funeral firm. For the right to appear on the 'FDANZ Register of Qualified Funeral Directors and Embalmers', a funeral director or embalmer must have completed the appropriate training course at the state tertiary provider WelTech,⁴⁴ in Wellington, Aotearoa New Zealand. They must also be working for an FDANZ member firm, either full- or part-time. Attaining the NZQA qualification is by itself not sufficient, holding the qualification and being employed on a contract or casual basis for an FDANZ firm is also not sufficient, and nor does holding the qualification and working full-time for a non-member company qualify.

Because the funeral directing and embalming courses are currently run at a state tertiary provider, legally women and men should be equally entitled to enrol in the courses. The British medical corporations and universities, nevertheless, managed for many years to subvert the 1858 Medical Act to exclude women from access to training in medicine (see Witz, 1992: 88). While the male funeral directors' control of access to education and credentialing is not inherently gendered they have been able to use it similarly to

⁴³ (<http://www.fdanz.org.nz/about.html>, retrieved 18 April, 2005). There are 138 FDANZ member firms listed, including branches.

⁴⁴ The training course was held at the CIT until its closure.

continue successfully to exclude women from attending the state tertiary provider to gain credentials in funeral directing and embalming. The male-dominated industry gate keeping of training and 'registration' have therefore made this a difficult avenue for women to enter the funeral firm. These conditions enable the exclusion of women in the same way the earlier apprenticeship system did in pharmacy (see Norris, 1997: 31).

As in teacher training, social work and nursing courses, practical experience is a necessary component of learning funeral directing and embalming. In all except funeral directing and embalming courses, the training provider sets up the place of experience and students practise and experience working in a variety of situations, learning from others in their field with a range of skills and techniques. The FDANZ, on the other hand, has established as a prerequisite for entering the public training course a minimum of one year's experience working in a funeral firm plus access to ongoing work throughout the duration of the course – that is, the students must first gain employment as a funeral director and then, except for exceptional circumstances such as moving to a new district, students gain all their training experience 'on the job' at one funeral firm.

As an exclusionary strategy, the FDANZ control of funeral director and embalming training and registration has a dual effect. The first is that current funeral directors control access to the state education provider: if you cannot gain employment as a funeral director or embalmer you cannot participate in the state training course. Some men wishing to become funeral directors are also affected by this policy as they fail to gain the required employment. However, the greater impact is on women as a group because, as Reskin and Roos (1990) point out, male employers prefer to employ men rather than women. The second effect of the FDANZ control of training and registration is that even those with passes in the state training course must gain employment with an FDANZ member funeral director to be included on the FDANZ Register of Qualified Funeral Directors and Embalmers. The wider ramifications for the funeral industry are that students are trained within a narrow field of experiences and not given the opportunity to experience and so learn to make informed judgements about what is good and bad practice. Moreover, by shutting down the students' range of experiences, the industry is failing to appreciate and maximise the contribution of students as disseminators of new ideas and techniques among their members.

There are two further associations of funeral directors in Aotearoa New Zealand. New Zealand Independent Funeral Homes, which is allied to the US based Selected Independent Funeral Homes, is a very small group and according to their web site (www.nzifh.org.nz, retrieved April 16, 2005) 'Membership is subject to strict entry criteria, by invitation only, and only one member per area is allowed'. The Funeral Services Council (FSC) was set up by funeral directors who have either not been able to gain FDANZ membership for reasons such as not having their own mortuary, or because they prefer not to be members of FDANZ. Women have found it easier to be accepted as FSC members. As funeral director Alison said,

We have a code of ethics and have to run our companies according to set standards just the same as FDANZ, but it's not the old boys' network like them. Women are just as welcome as men at all levels (Alison).

While FSC members have found advantages in belonging to their association, there are also disadvantages. With fewer than fifteen percent of funeral directors as members, compared with FDANZ's eighty-five percent, it has fewer resources, less prestige and power, their members are not listed among the FDANZ's 'register' of funeral directors, and FSC does not control the training programmes. However, FSC members do have access to the training programmes.

Deirdre discussed how the FDANZ prerequisites of a year's work experience and 'on the job' practical experience have excluded her from working in the industry. She maintained that she had unsuccessfully applied to every firm in her district in her search for a funeral director who would allow her to work to gain access to the training. Her comments sum up the experiences and mood of several women:

I'd wanted to be a funeral director for years. I'm a qualified nurse and counsellor and have done psychology papers at university. But it made no difference. If you want to be a funeral director, no matter what other courses you may have done that prove you would be suitable you still have to have a [funeral director] sponsor or you cannot do the training course. That means you can be kept out without any chance of proving whether you can do it. And as long as the system is allowed to be like that if men say it is not women's work, that's the way it will remain (Deirdre).

The issue raised by Deirdre is that funeral directors have overridden the usual entry criteria for a state tertiary education provider, such as proof of ability to perform to the required educational standard. They are in a position of making non-rational, arbitrary decisions over who may or may not attend the training and therefore of who may become funeral directors.

Linda, on the other hand, explained how the FDANZ control of registration affected her employment chances in the industry. She described her work as ‘pretty much a full week’ as a contract funeral director and embalmer for several firms, including FDANZ members, in her district. It was only after she had completed her NZQA qualification that she learned that achieving registration was dependent on working in a full- or part-time capacity for an FDANZ member. On receiving passes in both her qualifications Linda found that although she regularly worked longer hours than others working part-time for an FDANZ firm, she was still ineligible to be included on the FDANZ list of registered funeral directors. The reason was that she was self-employed rather than on the permanent staff of any one firm. Linda explained the impact of the FDANZ’s exclusionary strategy on her situation:

I’ve worked as a contractor for years but I’m raising three children on my own and really want the security of a permanent position. In the end I decided that if I had the piece of paper saying I’m qualified I’d have a better chance and be a better funeral director. The whole process was hugely expensive and stressful. I nearly gave up at one stage, but I made it. I learnt a lot and made some good friends. Only it hasn’t made the slightest bit of difference to my work. I still can’t get permanent work, not even part-time and not being able to get on the register was just about the last straw. All that struggle and cost to find that work-wise I’m absolutely no better off (Linda).

A further problem for women caused by industry rather than state control of membership and registration is that the FDANZ executive is accountable to no one else for its decisions. Alison, a funeral director, declared that not even owning her own firm and gaining the requisite qualifications were sufficient to overcome the FDANZ exclusionary tactics. After repeated requests over several years she was unable to gain membership of the FDANZ, the ‘inner circle’.

I’ve done all my training, got all the facilities they demand, including a fully equipped mortuary. My business is really successful, growing all the time. But, although I’ve tried for years the FDANZ is such an old boys’ network they won’t let me become a member. And they won’t even tell me why (Alison).

As FDANZ is an independent organisation, they maintain the power of inclusion and exclusion without needing to abide by a publicly available list of entry criteria to justify their decision.

The 'Token' Woman Funeral Director and Embalmer: Male Culture as Exclusion

Women funeral directors and embalmers are still a small minority within the industry. Nevertheless, recent societal shifts including increasing numbers of women participating in the labour market, the industry shift in focus to caring for the living bereaved, plus client demand have contributed to a growth in their numbers. For the woman funeral director or embalmer her employment may represent the successful outcome to long-term inclusionary strategies. Once inside the funeral firm, some women funeral directors have faced further gendered closure strategies from the male funeral directors.⁴⁵ This is particularly apparent in some larger firms where a sole woman funeral director or embalmer has been employed amongst a group of men. Greed (2000) found women in the male dominated construction industry experienced a similar reaction, while Tanner et al. (1999: 277) write of males manufacturing a 'chilly climate' for early women entering pharmacy. Rosabeth May Kanter (1977) refers to women in such situations as 'tokens'. Kanter points out that the lone women tend to be 'treated as representatives of their category, as symbols rather than individuals' (ibid: 208). Pringle extends Kanter's idea by arguing: 'Men are perceived as a universal category, hence unsterotypable, whereas women are treated as a minority group about which stereotypes can be made' (1988: 57). Again, the absent presence of a particular norm of masculinity strategically situates the women as 'different' and out of place. Because they are thus symbols and out of place the women may in some firms become the focus of discussion, with comparisons made of their performance as women in relation to the masculine norm.

When several male funeral directors work together to treat a token woman funeral director or embalmer as a stereotype and an outsider they do so to resist possible encroachment of feminine culture into their masculine norms. Although the woman may have overcome exclusionary strategies to become employed, some men have used further closure strategies such as telling sexist jokes to ensure the continuance of their male culture and power. Emma, who had spent several years working as the only woman funeral director/embalmer amongst a group of men, talked about how she was never sure whether the men's behaviour was intended to make her feel excluded or

⁴⁵ Token women funeral directors also face gendered exclusionary strategies from women clerical staff. This is discussed in the section Women's Closure Strategies below.

included and her fears that if she complained she would be proving that women were, indeed, unsuited for the job.

It was pretty hard going there for a few years. Did you ever go into the workshop area of a garage in the days when it was boys' own territory? You know, everything in a filthy mess, old pin-up calendars, the guys all swearing and spitting, whistling at any females? Well, I'm not saying it was like that of course. But the attitude towards women wasn't much better, just a bit more subtle. It was hard to know if they were treating me as one of the gang and so I should feel flattered and ignore it or if they were doing it deliberately to upset me so they could accuse me of just being a typical pathetic girl who shouldn't be trying to do a man's job. When they were embalming they'd make crude comments about the bodies of the women. 'This one's a bit dried up, hasn't had sex for a while.' That sort of thing. Never, ever about men's bodies. In the staff room it was blonde jokes and sports. I just kept quiet and let it go because I was getting the training and experience I wanted, then moved out as soon as I had the chance (Emma).

The problem for women in Emma's male-dominated situation is that they are caught in a catch-22 gender trap. To gain the necessary skills the women need acceptance in the male culture. To gain acceptance in the male culture 'they must be prepared to condone conversation derogatory to their gender' (Legge, 1987: 55). But, in ignoring men's derogatory comments, the women appear to condone them, which leaves them open to criticism for not conforming to the dominant male culture's norms of femininity. To be fully accepted the women must simultaneously fit into the mutually exclusive categories of *honorary man and stereotypical woman* (Marshall, 1984: 37). Token women participants faced personal struggle to overcome this dilemma. They achieved individual success in becoming funeral directors through 'keeping quiet' and getting on with the work, but then left as soon as possible following completion of training, looking for a position where they were not a token woman. As Legge (1987: 55) points out, 'copying male patterns of behaviour simply serves to reinforce prevailing culture and patterns of dominance'. In other words, the catch-22 dilemma remains for the next token woman employed to fulfil the firm's need for a woman's presence.

Male funeral directors, then, have excluded women by simply saying no to women seeking employment, by excluding them from credentialing and registration, and by using the prevailing male power to marginalise women funeral directors and embalmers within the funeral firm. Male funeral directors have also told women why they will not consider employing them. They have used a range of gendered discourses as exclusionary strategies to show that women and men are essentially different and therefore should have different roles. As Barbara Reskin (1991: 150) argues, 'men will respond to women's challenge in the workplace by emphasising how women differ

from men'. Hilary Homans (1987: 87) too, writing of the experiences of women working as scientists, found an assumption that women and men have different skills. The skills are allied to an innate, 'predetermined and inevitable' masculinity and femininity with male values dominating and considered the norm. And indeed, the funeral directors have focused on essentialised gender differences enshrined in conservative, normative stereotypes of masculinity and femininity and the corresponding expectations of appropriate behaviours and capabilities. These and the ways funeral directors use them to justify male dominance will be examined in the next section as I look at several of the discourses used by funeral directors to block women's entry.

Male Discourses as Strategies of Closure

Several women research participants mentioned that when they were seeking work as funeral directors men funeral directors told them that they were not interested in employing women because 'the public prefers a male funeral director'. The women's contentions were borne out by Peter, a funeral director, who was adamant that he would never employ a woman as a funeral director. He justified his position by claiming to have conducted a questionnaire survey, the results of which proved beyond doubt that the public prefers a male funeral director. He stated:

In 1991 when there was a big thing about women's rights and women being treated unjustly I handed questionnaires out to two hundred people on the streets in the central business district and at the suburban shopping centres. I got one hundred and fifty back and they turned out to be exactly half men and women and a wide range of ages from thirty upwards. It was purely random and I was really pleased with the response rate. But it was just phenomenal the numbers who did not want a woman funeral director and the biggest group were the thirty to forty-year old women. *They just saw it as a man's job.* The response with my survey was just phenomenal. I was expecting that about sixty-five percent would prefer a male funeral director, but eighty-nine percent of the one hundred and fifty who replied wanted a male. It was just overwhelming. And oddly, where you'd have expected the strongest preference for a man, in the sixty-five to eighty-year old men, they were the ones who felt most comfortable with the idea of a female funeral director (Peter).

Peter could neither show me proof of his survey and results, nor provide me with a list of the questions he had asked. He contended that he had burnt the survey responses because he 'didn't want it to get political'. He would not concede that using the

'results' as a reason to refuse to employ women as funeral directors or celebrants was itself a political act.

Regardless of the scientific reliability and validity of Peter's research, he has not been alone in his insistence that clients prefer male professionals. In their book *In a Man's World: Essays on Women in Male-dominated Professions* (1987), Anne Spencer and David Podmore found that, from among the essays, there emerged ten factors appearing to contribute to the marginalisation of women as professionals in male-dominated professions. Among these was the repeated assertion that 'women professionals are unacceptable to many clients, and so can work only in less "visible" capacities' (ibid: 2). Alison Scott (1994: 17-8), using data from a large labour market survey in Britain, also found widespread social pressure leading to an expectation that the public would expect men to fulfil particular roles. One of the reasons given was tradition: 'it has always been that way' (ibid: 18).

'Against God's Word'

Underlying and supporting the continuing patriarchal hierarchy of a broad sector of the funeral industry is a current of religious conservatism. Christian mores have been a constant message throughout the years of publication of the *NZFD*, from editorial comment, to messages from members of clergy, to reproductions of famous religious paintings on the covers of December issues. Some funeral firms have used Christian affiliation as a feature in newspaper advertising. Revealing how closely firms are linked to their religious connections, several women participants, when referring to another funeral firm said something like, 'Oh, Funeral Director and Sons? Of course they're Catholic [or Mormon, or Baptist, etc] you know.'

Funeral director Matthew refused to employ women as funeral directors on the grounds that to do so would go against Christian teachings. His argument rested on the conservative Christian view of the relative societal positions and roles of men and women. Citing the Bible to justify his position, Matthew stated, 'St Paul says it is men's role to look after their wives and women's role is to support their husbands'. Further, Matthew said, 'Funeral directors and celebrants are like ministers and it is not intended that women be ministers.' This argument would appear to originate in Paul's misogynist message, which, according to Barbara Harris (1978: 4), has long been used

by churches as justification for the subordination of women, including the refusal to ordain women as clergy: 'Women should learn in silence and all humility. I do not allow them to teach or to have authority over men; they must keep quiet' (1 Timothy, 2: 11-12). Following this logic, Matthew argued that there is no place for a woman funeral director because 'people know it is going against God's word so they would feel as uncomfortable with a woman funeral director as with a woman minister'. For a group who have had to work assiduously to overcome the social stigma of their disreputable beginnings and the public fears of death as dirty and contaminating, continuing careful adherence to religious conservatism may have become a convenient justification for gender inequality.

'The Hours are Not Suitable for a Woman'

The women participants, too, discussed gendered discourses the men presented to them as reasons why women should not become funeral directors. One discourse frequently cited is linked to the funeral firms' origins as family businesses and indicates examples of the patriarchal nature of power in operation. According to the women, funeral directors told them that the hours a funeral director works are not suitable for women. There is an assumption that women are tied to family care responsibilities in a way that men are not. Kate, who lived alone, said that she was attracted to the job partly because of the unpredictable hours. When Kate pointed out that the hours were not a problem for her because she lived alone and had no family responsibilities, the funeral directors would still not consider employing her. Kate stated:

I don't want to be bound to set hours. As an on-call nurse I loved just being rung up and called out. That's what I love doing. But the funeral directors say that's the killer for most of their workers. They find it is too much of a drain on their families. They are never at home for their wives and families – they get rung up and called out at 3 o'clock in the morning. But I love that. They say it is a problem for the men so it would be much more of a problem for women. But that's only an excuse because it doesn't make any difference when I tell them I don't have family ties to make it a problem (Kate).

In continuing to exclude Kate from work as a funeral director even though she had no family responsibilities, the men were drawing on a normative patriarchal definition of appropriate womanly actions and behaviour.

Mulholland (2003) discusses the same impact of patriarchal control in family businesses in Britain. Reflecting the position made apparent by the discourse of the male funeral directors, she writes:

Laying claim to the moral high ground and reminding wives [women] of their domestic duties is a tactic in the quest for male recognition and the establishment of a power base at the head of the family business (ibid: 60).

Mulholland found that men often used the issue of family responsibilities to ease women partners out of management positions in family firms, refusing themselves to participate in any of the child care (ibid: 58). They would use the opportunity to bring in a male relative or outside male, even when the woman had either started the business or been the major financial or creative contributor. Sometimes the woman was brought back on a part-time basis to train the male taking over her job. When the 'family responsibilities' had lessened, they found that there was no longer a clearly defined role in the management structure of the firm for the woman, thus showing the men's desire for male control. The male funeral directors' desire to keep women, both their marriage partners and 'outside' women, from the position at the top of the hierarchal occupational structure within the firm is equally tied to their desire to maintain male control.

'The Work is too Dirty for a Woman': Visible and Invisible Dirty Work

I was only allowed to see my first dead person after 4 years and I was never allowed to do removals. You see I was always protected from that because of my boss, because he was the perfect old school gentleman. He opened the doors, used to walk on the right side of the footpath, all that sort of thing, and he believed that I shouldn't have to deal with the grim reality of dead bodies. He would say, 'Why should you do that? You are a lady' (Deborah).

This quote is from Deborah, who began work in a funeral firm as office assistant and cleaner, but eventually became a funeral director partner in the firm. Her words reveal a paradox in funeral firms relating to the level of dirtiness accorded to particular occupations and, thus, who should perform them. 'Dirty work' is declared to be 'naturally' men's work. Handling the dead body is defined as dirty work, therefore not suitable to be undertaken by women of the class the funeral directors sought to achieve by professionalising their work. Howarth (1996: 53) makes an important point when she argues that men excluded women from contact with the corpse because they were trying to professionalise their occupation and distance themselves from their beginnings as coffin-makers who employed the neighboured layer-out for mortuary duties. On the other hand, women, including the men's mothers and marriage partners, have done other dirty work such as the cleaning, either paid or unpaid, as a continuation of their appropriate private sphere duties. Moreover, part of the professional project of nurses, whose work involves a daily intimacy with the dirt or 'pollution' of illness and death,

was to restrict nursing entry to 'educated gentlewomen' (Witz, 1992: 145), giving the impression that the pollution surrounding bodies is indeed women's work.

The difference in judging whether dirty work in the funeral firm is appropriately men's or women's work, it seems, lies in the visibility and the perceived level of skill in the work. It may be argued that the two dirty jobs of embalming and cleaning are both backstage work, performed unobserved. Nevertheless, with the funeral firms' recent focus on caring for the bereaved, the results of the embalmers' efforts are increasingly placed on display. While the ostensible reason is to provide solace for the bereaved, the embalmed corpse also becomes a commodity for achieving public recognition of, and gratitude for, *the firm's* skill. As work, therefore, embalming, unlike cleaning, has value through being made visible. The unpleasant, dirty and heavy nature of the work gives it an added masculine value and has ensured it a place at the top of the hierarchy of funeral firm occupations.⁴⁶ Furthermore, because embalming is viewed as skilled work it must be men's work.

In the funeral firm as elsewhere in the public sphere, then, work considered to be dirty or heavy has been *deemed* 'masculine' work, to be carried out by men who protect their ladies from needing even to be aware of its existence. As discussed in Chapter Five, an alternative explanation for men's exclusion of women from contact with the corpse relates to fears of pollution and death from women's supposed lack of control over their leaking, menstruating bodies. As Lupton (1996) writes,

Women's bodies thus threaten self-integrity; they threaten also the integrity of other bodies with which they come into contact. In the context of western societies, in which autonomy and self-control are valued as ways of constructing and maintaining subjectivity, the fluidity and resultant liminality of women's bodies create high ambivalence. The female body ... is also understood as dark, threatening, a source of contagion, pollution and engulfment (ibid: 44-5).

Women's bodies, on this understanding then, need to be controlled and kept from contact with dead bodies, which funeral directors aim to 'depollute' (Pringle and Alley, 1995: 110). In reality though, in the public sphere, especially in caring occupations such as nursing, as well as in the private sphere, women have continued to do work that is dirty and heavy. In the funeral firm the roles of funeral director and embalmer have

⁴⁶ This attitude is not confined to Western societies. Suzuki (2000, cited in Kawano, 2003: 472) writes that in Japan the reason male funeral staff have the highest ranking in the firm is 'because their handling of the corpse – often with bare hands – constitutes a source of authority and masculinity and generates customers' appreciation and monetary rewards.'

been positioned discursively and structurally both as dual pivotal roles and as involving heavy and dirty work, thus doubly making them ‘masculine’ work, not suitable for women. In order to comply with the social norms of the mid-twentieth century to gain social respectability, therefore, funeral firms could not *be seen* to employ women as funeral directors or embalmers.

Although embalming has maintained a high status among the funeral firm’s occupations, the invisibility of the *performance* of the work has made it marginally easier for some women participants to gain work as embalmers.⁴⁷ It has not necessarily made it easier for the women to gain recognition for their work. Elaine and Linda, employed as embalmers, both raised the issue of visibility. Elaine was describing the funeral directors’ response to her desire to train as a funeral director after she had worked as an embalmer for several years. In doing so, she commented on how the funeral directors’ vehemence that the work was too heavy for a woman appeared to be relevant only when the work was visible to clients.

What the male funeral directors use against me all the time is the lifting. They all say there’ll never be a job as a funeral director for me because the lifting is too heavy for one woman on her own and they can’t afford to send two funeral directors out on removals. But, they’re happy for me to do their embalming, and I don’t see them around when there’s lifting to be done in the mortuary. Does that mean the lifting is only too heavy for a woman if the customers can see them doing it? (Elaine).

Linda, on the other hand, made three claims that pointed to the importance for the men funeral directors in maintaining a public understanding that embalming is skilled, men’s work: she was never permitted to be alone with relatives when they came to view the embalmed body; praise from families for the work done was accepted by the funeral directors who did not acknowledge that they had not done the work; and there were times when the funeral directors were especially anxious that ‘particularly important families’ were not informed that it was she and not the funeral directors who had performed the embalming. Linda explained:

The problem is that some of the men do not want to admit that a woman *is* doing the work or that a woman *can* do the work. Embalming is men’s work. What does it say about them if a woman can do it? (Linda).

⁴⁷ Because funeral directors and embalmers are listed as a joint category in census figures it is not possible to assess the relative numbers of women in each occupation.

The failure to acknowledge Linda's contribution means that the status of embalming as 'men's work' is undiminished. Furthermore, her *efforts* remained invisible while the visible *results* of her dirty work were used to gain value for the men and the firm.

'The Work is too Heavy for a Woman': Equipment and Techniques

In order to justify women's exclusion from the job of funeral director and embalmer, male funeral directors have practised two further, closely related discursive closure strategies that are linked to the concept of patriarchal control of family firms. They have held first that the work is too heavy for women and second that employing a woman would, therefore, necessitate sending two workers on removals, which they cannot afford to do. Cynthia Cockburn in *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change* (1983: 174) writes of how male composers used a similar essentialist discourse of women's physical weakness in their attempts to exclude them from entering their domain. Sally Cline, who interviewed 150 women for her book *Lifting the Taboo: Women, Death and Dying* (1997), also notes the same strategy effectively used by male funeral directors in British and North American firms (*ibid*: 126).

In Aotearoa New Zealand, Alex, who became a celebrant after repeated failures to be accepted as a funeral director, laughed when she recalled being told that the work is too heavy for a woman. A teacher, hockey player and former surf lifesaver, Alex remarked that she was taller and fitter than many of the men funeral directors she approached. She also wore her hair very short, tended to wear trousers and walked in long, determined strides. In other words, Alex did not conform to the norms of femininity required by some male funeral directors. She said:

I was stunned to be told over and over that the work is too heavy for a woman. Look at me. You can see that's just an excuse, just a patter they use because they can't think of anything else. It's more than that though. I had such an instant negative response from some. I think it bothered them that I'm tall, fit and outgoing. When you look at them, many funeral directors are actually quite short, small even. If they can do the job I surely can but they wouldn't give me a chance. I wonder if being a funeral director is a power thing for them. Perhaps they are really insecure (Alex).

In describing her experiences Alex raised the issue of the men's desire for power. What she did not do was make a specific link to the gendered nature of the power the men sought.

Saul, an older, slightly built male funeral director, verified Alex's contention that men use lifting as an excuse to exclude women. Commenting on recent improvements in equipment, Saul made two points. The first was that he found that recent technical improvements in equipment had made his work much easier. The second point was the necessity of learning techniques for extricating bodies from awkward situations, such as a bath, when working alone. And yet, while admitting to benefiting from 'tricks of the trade', Saul adamantly reiterated the exclusionary discourse that there is no place in the industry for women funeral directors because the work is too heavy for women.

In her research into women in paid work, Patricia Lunneborg (1990) found that the reason women did not participate in many occupations stemmed from social understandings of appropriate gender roles and gendered abilities. She writes:

Technical ability is socialised; after all, why else did women in the 1960s, for example, represent only one percent of the US engineers while they made up a third of the Russian engineers? Why were only two percent of our dentists women while more than eighty percent of the Russian dentists were women? Technical skills and technical interests are cultural, conditioned, and controllable (Lunneborg, 1990: xii).

Cockburn (1983), though, more explicitly points to underlying issues of gendered power at work. She found that, like Saul, 'small and old men' compositors had developed techniques, equipment and systems to manage the heavy work. Furthermore, as members of a trade union the compositors had 'used their political muscle ... to fight against excessively heavy tasks and so save their physical muscle, only when and to the degree it suits them' (Cockburn, 1983: 175). The reason, Cockburn argues, is that it suited the men to 'leave within the political definition of their craft certain tasks too heavy for the average woman' (ibid). In other words, the men are creating gendered discourses and retaining specific practices with the express purpose of excluding women.

'Lady Funeral Directors'

The attitude of the 'old school gentleman' described by Deborah above makes sense in light of the funeral directors' professional project as a means of upward social mobility. It also exposes a further gendered discourse that is often more implicit than spoken. Pringle (1998: 8) states that early women doctors were tolerated on a limited basis providing they 'behaved as *lady doctors*'. Pringle continues:

Given the level of hostility to women moving into 'masculine' territory, it is not surprising that they emphasised their ladylike qualities, apparently denying any direct challenge to men. But the price was high. Michael Belgrave (1990), writing about New Zealand, has noted that ... [i]t became acceptable for women to study medicine as long as they practised within the stereotype of 'lady doctor', which implied that they continued to fulfil roles consistent with late nineteenth century norms of behaviour acceptable for middle-class women (ibid: 29).

In the funeral firm, in similar fashion, the discourse revolves around the practice of referring to female funeral directors as 'lady funeral directors', a term which has been used, especially in the *NZFD*, in a rather patronising tone. There are two immediate problems with using this term. The first is that it separates *lady funeral directors* from *funeral directors*, as if they are different occupations, demonstrating the *absent presence* of masculinity as the norm (Witz and Marshall, 2004b: 21). The result is to create the women's role as lacking or marked. Allied to this, is a problem found among lawyers: feminine qualities are considered inappropriate for professionals, but women who emulate masculine qualities are viewed with suspicion (Spencer and Podmore, 1987: 114). The second problem, as Belgrave (1990: 204) points out, stems from the perception of ladies as women of the middle classes, who conform to a particular norm of femininity and do not participate in work or paid employment.

The firm White Lady Funeral Services in Auckland exemplifies this image. Although they have a separate advertisement in *Yellow Pages: Auckland* and a name clearly designed to attract clients preferring to deal with a female funeral director, at the time of this research they were part of a larger funeral firm, sharing both premises and telephone number. 'Fiona', a client of White Lady in 2005, informed me that when she dialled the phone number and asked for White Lady Funeral Services, she was connected to a woman funeral director. Fiona was told that men do removals and embalming unless a client specifically requests that a female do the work, in which case they will 'arrange for a female to come in'. Because ladies do not work, calling women funeral directors 'ladies' situates their work as helping, or a hobby to keep them amused. The result is to marginalise women from the sphere of real paid work and from the serious business of the men's professional project.

The gendered division of labour within the funeral firm reflects the dominant class and culture's social values and expectations of the historical period during which the funeral industry was developing its professional project. Mills and Mills (2000) refer to the expectations created by the dominant values and beliefs external to an organisation as

'extraorganisational rules'. These rules, they argue, become embedded within an organisation as organisational rules, both formal and informal, contributing to expectations of such things as how work and roles are gendered, 'justifying failures to hire, promote, and pay equitable wages to women' (Mills and Mills, *ibid*: 63). In other words, because of their reflection of wider social beliefs, the rules have served to establish male hegemonic power, as can be seen in the acceptance by many women of gendered inequalities. However, because organisational rules are contingent on wider social understandings, they are unlikely to remain fixed.

Changes over time in social understandings and expectations, along with technological changes, do lead to shifts in organisational rules that can alter the balance of power in associations between genders and particular occupations (Mills and Mills, *ibid*). In a group such as the funeral firm, where social respectability is considered to be of vital importance to their survival, change will always tend to take place slowly and cautiously. As mentioned on p. 144, a glance at the *Yellow Pages: Auckland* shows that changes are taking place. While in 2001 the funeral director section included photographs of twelve male and three female funeral directors, the same section in 2002 showed ten males and six females and in 2005 twelve male and fourteen female funeral directors appeared.

A further example of change is found in the *Yellow Pages: Auckland* advertisements for the 'parent' firm of White Lady Funeral Services. In 2002 the firm advertised their list of services (Telecom New Zealand, 2002: 941). White Lady Funeral Services are not mentioned in this advertisement, but the accompanying photograph includes three men and two women, one of whom also appears in the separate White Lady advertisement (*ibid*: 943). In the detailed notes about the 'Personal Service' the firm provides, 'Professional Funeral Director' and 'Your Funeral Director' are mentioned, with no reference to gender. But, as an example of the 'absent presence' (Witz and Marshall, 2004b: 21) of men as the unstated norm, at the bottom of the advertisement is a list in bold, large font:

- Quotations
- Catering
- Chapels
- Viewing Rooms

- *Lady Directors*
- Receptions (Telecom New Zealand, 2002: 941, my emphasis)

In their 2005 *Yellow Pages: Auckland* advertisement, though, the same firm made no mention of 'Lady Directors'. Instead they advertised 'Male and Female Directors available' (Telecom New Zealand, 2005: 970, my emphasis).

According to the women interviewed, the male funeral directors have used a variety of discourses focusing on essentialised gender differences and normative stereotypes of gender roles and behaviour to maintain a male dominance in the jobs of funeral director and embalmer. In addition, the men have employed a variety of demarcationary strategies in their efforts to maintain the gendered hierarchy within the funeral firm and to obstruct the growing incursion of the newly developing group of celebrants, the great majority of whom are women. Considering the funeral directors' jurisdictional disputes with (the mostly male) clergy through much of the twentieth century (see Watson, 1999), there is some irony in the funeral directors' more recent collaboration with clergy to exclude women celebrants. In the following section I look first at the demarcationary strategies used by the men to maintain the hierarchical structures within the funeral firm that divide their work from women's clerical work and place greater value on their own work. This is followed by an examination of the demarcationary strategies used by the funeral directors to maintain power over the women celebrants while limiting their occupational boundaries.

Men's Demarcationary Strategies

Demarcationary strategies, according to Witz' (1992) fourfold model, are closure strategies used by a dominant group over a subordinate group. The aim of these strategies is to achieve 'inter-occupational control over the affairs of related or adjacent occupations in a division of labour' (ibid: 44). Data from research participants shows that funeral directors have used demarcationary strategies to marginalise and devalue the work of women clerical workers and to limit and define the boundaries of the work performed by celebrants.

‘Office Ladies’

When Kay tried to gain employment as a funeral director less than ten years ago, she was told, very clearly, that the only work for women in the funeral firm was in a support role for a male funeral director.

I'd been interested in becoming a funeral director for some time so after I'd worked as a nurse and done some psychology and counselling study I explored it further and found how difficult it was for a woman. Very difficult, and very male orientated. The doors were opening but only if I wanted to answer the phone and wash the windows and clean the cars and make the coffee (Kay).

The same issues of gendered demarcationary role segregation confront women who have gained entry into a funeral firm with no intention of ‘usurping’ the male roles of funeral director or embalmer. The women clerical workers face demarcationary closure in the form of a gendered, hierarchical division of labour which segregates women in less valued, lower paid work consisting of occupations traditionally considered to be women’s work – office administration, reception and cleaning. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapters Two and Three, because family members performed much of the clerical work in the early family businesses, the parameters of the work are often ill defined (Rosser and Davies, 1987). It is also often considered as unskilled, supportive help, something that women do naturally as an extension of their private sphere activities. Reflecting this background and the masculine norms underlying the patriarchal power dominating the firm, just as female funeral directors are referred to as *lady* funeral directors, many clerical workers are referred to as *office ladies* instead of women. Again, this term tends to imply that what the women do is not really work. It also firmly situates the women in their ‘not men’ roles by signifying expectations of a particular norm of feminine mode of behaviour, demeanour and dress.

In the Aotearoa New Zealand funeral firm, the gendered roles have mostly been a reflection of the values and expectations found in the second third of the twentieth century, among the dominant middle-class Pakeha society, holding conservative Christian, patriarchal beliefs. The men were professionals who dominated the public sphere, while the women’s role was taking care of the private sphere. Any public role taken by the women was that of ornamental ladies. This is apparent in photos and descriptions in the *NZFD* of annual conventions. The *men* attended business meetings, which the women were for many years not permitted to attend. In 1992, it was first mentioned that ‘yes, there are lady registered funeral directors who attended the

business sessions, not the “ladies” programme’ (NZFD, 1992: 3). Excursions were organised for the *ladies* to such places as a chocolate factory, followed by sessions at the beauty parlour to prepare for evening social events. In this, they exemplify Kanter’s (1977: 111) argument that the wives of corporate men, while considered outsiders, are expected to assume prescriptive norms of dress and behaviour to promote the firm and advance their husbands’ careers. Such patriarchal understandings of gendered roles permeate gender relationships when non-family women are employed in the funeral firm. They were encountered by many of the women research participants, and used to keep the women segregated in the less valued roles considered suitable for ladies.

Several firms turned Valerie away when she tried to become a funeral director ten years ago. She eventually entered a funeral firm as ‘office lady’, hoping to prove her worth, ‘grow’ her job and eventually become a funeral director. She has never become a funeral director. Valerie’s job, like those of other women participants in traditional office jobs in the funeral firm, did grow, and vastly. The reason was that they were in growing metropolitan centres where the numbers of funerals handled by their firms have more than doubled. Valerie described how her job grew, though not exactly as she had anticipated:

We didn’t do orders of service when I started. Then, when we started doing them, there were only a few and we typed them and then photocopied them. Now everybody wants a coloured one and we can do up to five hundred to six hundred copies sometimes. We didn’t do memorial books, which are the books that people sign when they come to the funeral. We started doing those about three years ago and now there are heaps of those. We didn’t do cassette tapes, and then when we did, I started doing nice little tape covers with a coloured picture of the person on the front. We now do videos and I’ll do a video cover as well with the details and the person’s photo. It all takes extra time and even though it’s all computerised, it’s still a huge amount of work.

It is interesting to note that by ‘we’, Valerie meant the firm. It is interesting because, although Valerie declared that the extra activities made her work more varied and interesting, she also admitted to working under constant stress because no extra office workers had been employed to cover the extra workload. The result was that, apart from one attempt when she was apparently quickly dissuaded from any serious application, she had ‘had no time to be thinking of becoming a funeral director’ (Valerie) and her working week had grown to six days a week, rather than four or five.

Valerie felt proud that her extra responsibilities had apparently been recognised with a recent occupational title change from ‘secretary/receptionist’ to ‘office administrator’.

Such a name change, though, appears to follow a more general trend. Although some clerical workers are still called *ladies*, their official titles are now less likely to be 'office ladies' or 'receptionist'. Instead, like Valerie, they have more sophisticated sounding titles like 'office manager', 'administrator' or 'accounts manager'. The name change disguises a lack of change in the women's status or the hierarchical valuing of the work performed.

On the contrary, as Jane Rosser and Celia Davies (1987: 70) found in the United Kingdom, in some cases the name change leaves women worse off. More may be expected of them, while their position in the hierarchy remains unaltered. Administrators and managers are expected to have a sense of commitment involving working late or taking work home. But where administrators may assume the right to flexi-time, the rules are different for workers like Valerie. They may be granted permission in specific instances by the owner/manager to 'take a day in lieu', but they are unlikely to have an administrator's level of autonomy because their work is not recognised as 'real' management or administration. Through their position at the bottom of a hierarchical structure, they lack power over decision-making rights, career and advanced training opportunities, and income-earning ability (Burton, 1992:189-90).

Anne, whose job had grown and whose occupational title in a large firm had also recently been 'upgraded' to office administrator, talked about the stress caused by her employer rating her work so lowly that when she went on leave no one was employed to do her job. She said:

When the directors go on leave, someone else is rostered on or they bring in a locum to do their work. When I'm away, it's left to the duty director to take on my work. But they just do bits here and there and nothing's ever finished or put where it should be. When I come back, everything is in such a shambles I have to spend weeks sorting it out and still do my usual work. The guys don't have to return to an extra load. Why should I? It didn't used to be so bad, but we've grown so big and I'm doing so much more these days. I've been so stressed because I dread the mess so much I put off taking leave (Anne).

Anne commented that her employer had recently solved her problem by promising that in future Beryl, her counterpart in a branch office, would take on her work while she was away. By adding Anne's work to Beryl's (and, probably, when Beryl went on leave, adding her work to Anne's), rather than employing someone to work the same hours Anne would normally have worked, the funeral director perpetuated the devaluation of both Anne's and Beryl's work. He underrated the time, effort and skill

involved in their work and demonstrated the hypocrisy beneath the altering of their occupational title.

Rhoda, in a very similar situation to Valerie above, had decided that it was just as well that she had not succeeded in her ambition of being employed as a funeral director because, unlike the men in her firm, she would not have been capable of coping with such a stressful job. Rhoda blamed herself for her 'failure' and excused the men for not promoting her. She explained:

I think that it's really stressful for the funeral directors having to be going out at nights and finding your way around to different things, time frames. Their day has to be so precise, where they've got to be at a particular time and I'm a person who can't stand being late and I'd never be here because I'd be leaving an hour before I needed to just to get to the places and of course that would never work in the day's schedules. I'm quite paranoid about being late to things and I would find that pressure quite stressful. I think that they do a great job, but now I know I wouldn't have been able to do it (Rhoda).

Clara Greed (1990) found that women working among male surveyors held the same belief in their lack of ability to perform the work to the same standard as men. She argues that this tends to happen if for the women 'success or failure is a sign of personal effort and worth and not of wider economic and social forces' (ibid: 152). Furthermore, as Greed notes, it is particularly likely to happen when women are 'isolated from other women and alternative feminist ways of thinking' (ibid: 153). The experiences of Valerie, Anne and Rhoda, all lone clerical women, highlight Greed's conclusions. They also underscore Davies' (1996: 672) argument that it is not in men's interests to alter the present hierarchical system, because the public sphere of paid work could not operate successfully without the hidden inclusion of the support work that women perform.

But, the overloading of work, lack of genuine promotion possibilities and leave problems of the women, are the result of more complex issues than merely a devaluing of their work. They are caused by several factors, each of which is linked to the way many of the women's clerical jobs in the funeral firms have 'evolved' – funeral directors, helped by their families, tended to do the clerical work themselves until they found there was simply too much to manage. They have then employed a woman, usually part time at first, to answer the phone and do some of the paper work so they could attend to more customers. When the women have begun the work, then, there has often been no job description so the women have made up their own to 'make the job work' (Rosser and Davies, 1987: 73). The work has also grown through funeral

directors' requests that the women have felt unwilling to refuse. Moreover, because of their responsibility for a wide range of activities and knowledge of the day-to-day workings of the firm, the women often become indispensable (ibid). While this may be a source of gratification for the women, like Valerie, Anne and Rhoda, they tend to become trapped by it.

Women Celebrants

While the inter-occupational demarcationary strategies funeral directors have used against office workers operate within the funeral firm, funeral directors have also practised demarcationary strategies against celebrants, the large majority of whom are independent female professionals based outside the funeral firm. Funeral directors use this form of closure strategy to control and limit the celebrants' sphere of influence in after-death work and to maintain power over the celebrants. The issue of funeral directors' power over celebrants relates to three interconnecting areas of concern discussed by the celebrants. The first is that funeral directors are limiting celebrants' autonomy, the second is that funeral directors attempt to limit celebrants' relationship with their clients, the bereaved families, and the third is that funeral directors dictate the fee celebrants receive for their work. Delwyn, a celebrant, summed up all three issues:

It's a traditional conflict, which has been experienced, not just in New Zealand but also in every country, between celebrants and funeral directors. The funeral directors have complete control of the industry. They tend to be the first in when someone dies and if the family wants a civil [i.e. non-religious] service they are able totally to influence who is chosen as the celebrant. Some funeral directors suggest a range of celebrants to the family while others don't offer any choice. They just give the name of the celebrant they like or think is most appropriate. We are really taken on by the funeral directors as sub-contractors. Because of that they are able to totally control our pay. Rather than leaving us to arrange our fee with the family as they [funeral directors] do themselves they set our fee and pay us out of their total. And the biggie they hold over us all the time is that if we don't smile and toe the line they don't call us (Delwyn).

The issue of autonomy was one raised by most of the celebrants. They viewed their role as complementary, but equal, to that of the funeral director. The celebrants alleged that funeral directors tend to treat them as casual employees, instead of as autonomous professionals. Their argument was that funeral directors dictate the terms of celebrants' employment and interactions with the bereaved clients in a way that suggests the celebrants are subordinate to the funeral directors rather than equal to them. The anaesthetists in Pringle's (1998: 138) study rejected the idea that their work was

subservient to surgeons' or that they might be handmaidens to surgeons, although that was how surgeons tended to view them. The celebrants, too, were adamant that, as independent professionals, their responsibility was to their clients, the bereaved families, not to the funeral director, and that the funeral director's role did not include the content of the funeral service.

Erica, a celebrant, maintained that a funeral director was trying to control her work as an independent professional and at the same time compromising her professional relationship with her clients, the bereaved family.

The funeral director bailed me up after one service, complaining that the service was too short. The family had especially asked me to keep it brief because they were worried about their elderly mother coping for more than about fifteen minutes. The funeral director said that I was to make sure that, in future, the services were never less than twenty minutes, otherwise there might be complaints afterwards that the service was too hurried (Erica).

The difference apparent between the two professionals is an example of the different values and expectations of the old and new models of professions, which will be discussed more fully in the following chapter. Here it serves to exemplify the comparison between the funeral director, who is concerned with public opinion of his firm's provision of service and value for money, and the celebrant, who views her only valid commitment as being to the wishes of her clients, the bereaved family. Frank, a funeral director, explained the reason for the funeral directors' tight control over the celebrants' interactions with families and with the overall planning of the funeral service, when he said,

They're working at my chapel. They are the face of my firm. At the end of the day, no one remembers the celebrant. When something goes wrong, it's the funeral directors they remember. It's the funeral directors who get the blame and lose the custom. It's my job to see nothing goes wrong. We don't get a second chance if someone stuffs up (Frank).

The celebrants are caught in an ambiguous situation. They believe that they should be providing what their clients request, but the funeral directors, concerned about the reputation of their firms, closely circumscribe the form and parameters of the celebrants' work. Erica continued her story:

It is a difficult situation because who am I actually working for? Is it the family or the funeral director? The funeral directors say I am working for them. This one promptly told me to forget it, when I said, 'But the family wanted....' He said, 'What do you mean what the family wanted? They do as they're told. You can't have families dictating to

you what they're going to have.' Well, as far as I'm concerned, of course the family should be able to say what they want. It's their funeral for their loved one. They're paying handsomely to use the funeral director's services and premises, and they're paying me for my services too, although the funeral directors like to make out that they're the ones paying me. But at the end of the day, if I want to keep getting work there I just have to do as he says (Erica).

The reason for the funeral directors' power over the celebrants (and the bereaved) is the funeral directors' control of the corpse (Bradbury, 1996: 93). This means that, although celebrants view themselves as independent, self-employed professionals, most must rely on funeral directors for employment. Since the funeral directors have gained control of the dead body, they are most often the first person contacted by the bereaved family after a death. Once they have the body, the funeral directors offer a 'one-stop-shop' for the bereaved family, taking responsibility for the whole after-death process through preparation of the body and the funeral service until the body has been buried or cremated. Their actions in taking such control have been described as 'disabling' (Illich, 1977) families, who often rely on the funeral directors' choices and decisions for all aspects of the after-death process.

It is the family's reliance on funeral directors that enables them to exercise inter-occupational closure against the celebrants. Where a family does not have a church affiliation, the celebrant suggested or recommended to the family is most often entirely decided by the funeral directors. If funeral directors believe that a celebrant is usurping their role or in any way not acceding to their wishes, that celebrant is simply not called upon. Therefore, even once funeral directors recommend a celebrant to families, they hold professional power to constrain the celebrants' actions, attitudes and behaviours. Celebrant, Ellen, stated that she had been forced to comply with funeral directors' demands for fear of not gaining work:

Okay, sometimes it compromises everything I've been taught about what families are entitled to. But I figure that if I make waves or dig my toes in I'm out, kaput, no work, and there is no chance of making anything better. But, if I do as I'm told and they get to see I'm not going to cause trouble and they can trust me, I can gradually open things up (Ellen).

Celebrant, Delwyn, on the other hand, mentioned a strategy among funeral directors of creating uncertainty. In her experience, funeral directors would give employment for a while and then withhold it for a period to maintain compliance among celebrants and other contract workers such as embalmers. Doing so had the same effect as the implicit threats, experienced by Ellen. Delwyn explained:

How they work makes sure that nobody will ever disagree with them because they keep people quite hooked in by creating some uncertainty for their workers. I've seen it with celebrants and it happens also with other people like their embalmers. They will suddenly stop using somebody for a while which creates a whole lot of paranoia for that person and then they'll bring them back again so you're on the back foot and you're going to toe the line. So that's how they seem to operate. They just sort of have somebody for a while, build up that expectation, then drop them back. It makes you very insecure so therefore you're going to be a lot more compliant (Delwyn).

The funeral directors, then, are able to achieve control through an implicit threat that if celebrants do not conform to funeral directors' wishes and instructions they will not be recommended in future, and thus not gain employment.

A further strategy, which has been instrumental in maintaining the funeral directors' power over the celebrants, has been the method of payment. The payment for the traditional funeral 'officiant' in Aotearoa New Zealand has been a small honorarium to either the member of clergy or the JP to cover expenses. The funeral directors have paid the officiant in cash or with a cash cheque at the time of the funeral service and then included the amount in the funeral account. John, a member of clergy, reflecting last century's jurisdictional boundary disputes (Abbott, 1988) between clergy and funeral directors, expressed anger over what he believed was one funeral firm's attempt to exert power over him. He said,

They make a flourish of handing me the cheque in front of the mourners gathering for the funeral service, as if they are employing me as casual labour. They do not employ me. I do this for the families (John).

Pringle (1998) discusses a similar experience in medicine, where surgeons employed General Practitioners (GPs) as anaesthetists prior to the development of anaesthetics as a specialism. The surgeons paid the GPs privately, 'deliberately refusing them the right to send the patient an account' (ibid: 132). In expressing his anger at the funeral directors' attitudes, John echoed the feelings of many of the celebrants. But, clergy member, John both received a salary and conducted funeral services as one of many activities in his otherwise autonomous occupation. For the new celebrants, conducting services is the focus of the occupational specialism, which is their means of earning a living.

By retaining control of payment of celebrants, the funeral directors retain control of the amount they are paid. This means that most celebrants are bound to accept a fee for their work that funeral directors decide is appropriate, rather than the amount the

celebrants believe to be fair remuneration. Several celebrants, including Kim, asserted that, because the celebrant's fee is included in the funeral director's account, the funeral director wants to keep it as low as possible, to keep down the total cost to the family. Kim argued that, when funeral directors set a low fee for celebrants, they knowingly choose to ignore the hidden costs and devalue the expertise in the celebrants' work that make them entitled to more than a token gratuity. Kim described her experience of funeral directors' attitudes to her claim of entitlement to the same remuneration as funeral directors for her work:

When I first came to [this district] I went round the funeral directors and said this is who I am and what I can do. The first thing they said was, 'How much do you think you're going to charge?' I explained the situation, that I'm a professional and this is how I earn my living, and then I asked, 'How much do you charge per hour of work for your funerals?' They all looked at me, but not one answered. They just told me what they pay per service. They can tell you how many hours it takes them per funeral but they don't want to know how many hours it takes me and they don't think my time is worth as much as theirs (Kim).

Funeral directors have compensated for the problem of hidden costs by charging more for the highly visible products such as the casket (Goffman, 1959: 32). Celebrants do not have such a 'product'. Kim explained:

I'm setting up my office and it has all added to the cost of training. The Certificate cost a few thousand dollars including the celebrancy courses, transport, accommodation and books. Then we can end up paying for the privilege of taking a funeral because the funeral directors won't take our time and travel expenses into account when they set our fee. When they hire a tradesman, they are aware of it because travel expenses are included on the bill. Our time and expenses are not itemised like the funeral directors'. We're added along with the organist as if we just turn up on the day and it all just happens.⁴⁸ I've told the funeral directors this, but they just say that's all the market will pay. It's such a farce when you think that what we do is central to the success of the funeral and of the funeral directors' reputation and what a small part of the overall cost of the funeral a more realistic fee would be (Kim).

Paying the celebrants and adding the fee to their own account means the funeral directors act as intermediary between celebrants and clients. They remove the celebrants' autonomy and diminish their status to the clients, who see them positioned on the account as a casual employee. Thus, funeral directors, through the use of demarcationary strategies, effectively define and limit celebrants' occupational boundaries.

⁴⁸ It seems that Kim is unaware of the equally hidden travel and time costs for organists. Tracking down an unusual choice of music for the congregation to sing or listen to as a meditation, often being given nothing more than a melody line which needs to be turned in one to two days into three or four-part harmony rehearsed to performance standard, can take many hours.

Conclusion

By applying Witz' (1992) model of gendered closure strategies, then, it can be seen that funeral directors, the large majority of whom are men, have employed an array of closure strategies against women to exclude them from an equal place in after-death work. Other occupations previously dominated by men, such as medicine and pharmacy, have been opened to women through equal rights laws over access to state education. Even though bound by the same equal rights laws, the funeral industry men's most powerful exclusionary tool has been the industry's continuing ability to control access to credentialing. The organisers of the state run training programme for funeral directors and embalmers may have no intention of excluding women. However, there is a prerequisite that those wishing to enter the programme must first be employed as funeral directors or embalmers. Therefore, current funeral directors, who are predominantly men, have the power to grant or deny access to training.

A variety of other practice-based closure strategies, exclusionary and demarcationary, have been exercised against women by men funeral directors. Exclusionary strategies included the refusal to make use of new, lightweight equipment, or to pass on skills and techniques that enable women to perform the work. They also included maintaining stereotypical masculine cultures in a funeral firm, where a lone woman worked as a funeral director or embalmer among a group of men funeral directors. In this way, men have marginalised the woman from participation in the social life of the firm.

Through the men's practice of demarcationary strategies, women clerical workers have been marginalised in funeral firms, with their work valued less highly than that of funeral directors and embalmers. While at times admitting to feeling stressed or resentful over their conditions of work and the men's apparent disregard for the value of the work they do, the clerical women tended to accept their position at the bottom of the hierarchy. Many were gratified by the recent trend to altering their job titles from receptionist to office manager. They saw it as an indication of greater appreciation of their worth, seldom appearing to notice that the raised title was likely to bring increased responsibility and longer hours, without a guaranteed raising of their status or rewards.

Celebrants, too, experienced funeral industry men's demarcationary strategies as the men tried to limit and control the celebrants' sphere of work and influence over the client families. This was done through such practices as setting the celebrants' fee; withholding work, or using an implicit threat of withholding work as a means of coercing compliance; stipulating a standard length or location for funeral services or who will cater for the post-funeral refreshments. Many women celebrants have found themselves unable to make a viable living from the specialism of celebrancy. There are two major contributing factors. The first is funeral directors' control over access to clients, and, therefore, the women's employment opportunities. The second is the undervaluing, by funeral directors, of the financial worth of the labour involved in celebrancy work.

In the following chapter, I continue to draw on the understandings provided by the gendered occupational control literature to look at how the accounts of women in the funeral industry uncover their own countervailing inclusionary and closure strategies, both intra- and inter-occupational, and both practice- and discursive-based, as they try to develop and consolidate their position within the funeral industry.

Chapter Seven

'Sheer Persistence': Women's Closure Strategies in After-Death Work

Introduction

[L]istening to women's voices, past and present, to tell of their experiences, is essential to an understanding of women's search for respect and equality. Through these voices, we learn not only of indignities suffered, but of progress made... (Morgan, 1988, cited in Mills, 2002a: 124).

In the previous chapter, the focus was on closure strategies used by male funeral directors to exclude women and thus maintain male dominance in the industry. As Morgan, cited above, suggests, we learnt of 'indignities suffered' by women. The aim in this chapter is to bring the focus more sharply onto women as actors in the funeral industry, to learn of the progress they have made. I examine the women's accounts of strategies they have successfully used to enter the funeral industry. The women funeral directors' stories were the strongest and dominate this chapter. One reason is that embalming is frequently part of a funeral director's job and another is that the women participants who were employed specifically as embalmers tended to work on a part-time, casual or contract basis. Nevertheless, stories of embalmers, celebrants and clerical workers are present. This chapter also demonstrates the need for a multi-dimensional approach to understanding power, as argued in Chapter Two. A discussion of strategies used by women in the funeral industry to exclude or marginalise other women shows how power is not always exerted in a straightforward, top down movement.

First, then, women participants describe a variety of inclusionary strategies they have successfully used to enter the funeral industry. This is followed by a brief return to several of the men's exclusionary strategies, discussed in Chapter Six, as the women discursively resist those strategies. Finally, I examine three situations in which women practise closure strategies against other women.

Women's Inclusionary Strategies

In response to men's closure strategies, women's 'upwards, countervailing exercise of power' (Witz, 1992: 48) has been pursued through a variety of successful inclusionary strategies to gain entrance to work in the funeral industry. In what follows, I examine strategies exercised by the research participants. A strong thread linking the women's diverse inclusionary strategies and underpinning all their other actions, was the claim of having succeeded through determination or 'sheer persistence'. David Collinson (1994) writes of 'resistance through persistence' to the injustices of workplace authority. Collinson focuses on the ways subordinates can enlist organisational rules in overcoming workplace inequities. Here the women's resistance through persistence has not always had the advantage of insider employee access to organisational rules. Instead, their resistance to men's closure strategies has been through persistence in seeking alternative inclusionary strategies.

'Growing the Job': Buying the Firm

One inclusionary strategy used by some women to gain work as funeral directors and embalmers has been to accept work as cleaners or office assistants. Valerie and Anne, discussed in Chapter Six, were not successful in their attempts to use this path, but others have more successfully overcome the male funeral directors' closure strategies. Deborah, reiterating the paradoxical attitude over what constitutes appropriate women's work in a funeral firm, referred to herself by the oxymoron 'the cleaning lady' as she described her route to inclusion. A small, quietly spoken woman, she also showed that she had not backed down in the face of her boss's disapproval when her chance to extend her role arose:

When I came into the industry I started as the cleaning lady and worked my way up and that's how it was. Women were cleaners and in the office. That was acceptable, but the men were the funeral directors. But then after I was working in the office a friend asked me to do the funeral for her aunt. The funeral director was not at all happy about it but I ended up doing it anyway. Word got around and it just gradually grew from there. Then when he was ready to retire I bought the business (Deborah).

Irene, showing the persistence that is a feature of many of the women's stories, described her determination to become a funeral director and how her chance to extend her role beyond office duties came with an expansion of the funeral firm. When the owner bought a branch office in another suburb Irene gradually took on more of the funeral director's work as he found himself overextended.

I wrote to everybody without any success. I just wanted to know how I could get into funeral directing, even if I could do the office work. I felt that I could start there. It took me more than a year then one of the funeral directors found the old letter and rang me saying, 'Look we've got an opening three days a week in the office, would you like to do that?' So that's where I started. And then I sort of built up from there and ended up by buying him out (Irene).

Deborah and Irene both established themselves as funeral directors by quietly and strategically becoming indispensable to their employers. Some women, including Valerie and Anne, have found that becoming indispensable in the office binds them more tightly to their office duties (Rosser and Davies, 1987: 73). Deborah and Irene were successful in gradually developing and expanding their original office and cleaning work to include more and more of their ageing male employer's work before eventually buying him out.

There were two apparent reasons why Deborah and Irene were more successful than Valerie and Anne. The firms where Valerie and Anne worked were large family firms, employing a range of both family and non-family members. Although both firms expanded to buy or set up branches in other parts of the city, their early expansion was first to develop a large operation on one site and then to appoint a manager for the branch offices as they were established. The firms where the women were able to expand their role did not employ members of the funeral director's family, leaving no family successor to manage the branch or to continue when the owner retired. In Irene's firm, when the funeral director bought a second small firm he tried to run both firms himself, with just Irene's assistance in the office. He quickly found himself overstretched and accepted her growing role. In Deborah's employer's small firm, the funeral director, dependent on her knowledge and skills in the office, found himself forced to allow her to develop her role in order to cater to a market demand for new forms of funeral service he was unable or uncomfortable with offering himself.

Other women described taking a rather more daring trajectory than the determined persistence of Deborah and Irene to overcome male exclusionary strategies. Determination still featured strongly in their accounts.

'Yes, I Can Do It': Establishing a Funeral Firm

A more unusual but dramatic inclusionary strategy taken by several women in Aotearoa New Zealand has been to start up their own funeral firms. Women in Britain have also

successfully followed the same process to become funeral directors (Cline, 1997: 126-7). Kim explained why she decided to take such a step:

Some years ago I had the opportunity of helping a friend in a funeral home and went from helping to working part time, to full time, to going through the Central Institute of Technology and gaining the funeral directing qualifications. Then after working for that company for a number of years I was suddenly and unexpectedly made redundant. That was devastating. I went away and thought, 'Where do I go from here?' I knew there was public demand for a woman funeral director but it took a time of licking my wounds before the idea of starting up on my own came to me. But after some time away I took the plunge, saying 'Yes, I can do it' and built up this business (Kim).

Before taking the radical step of setting up her own business Kim had the advantages of training, credentials, experience and the knowledge that there was a public demand for the services of a woman funeral director. Joanna, on the other hand, with none of Kim's advantages, simply had the desire to be a funeral director and the belief that there would be a demand for a woman's services. Unable to breach the exclusionary ramparts, she was trained by a family member with funeral industry experience as she opened her own firm. She recounted her experiences, showing, like many of the women, that becoming a funeral director was the result of a long-term goal and careful plans:

Being a funeral director is something I've wanted to do for many years. Because it was so difficult to get into I went nursing, but wanting to do it was still in the back of my mind. The problem was how to get into it. I had been around all the funeral directors in the area, asking if they would take me on, and always got the same answer, 'Not at the moment, nothing just now.' Nobody said anything even remotely positive, like, 'We'll call you', or anything. They were very closed door. I thought well, that's not going to be an avenue I can go down. Then a cousin in the industry offered to train me. We did that for just over a year then I opened the place up and worked under his supervision for about six months. It was the only way to do it really (Joanna).

Deborah and Irene, after initial opposition, gradually eased into their roles under the protection of their male employers. Both women described incidents of gendered exclusionary tactics used against them by male clergy and other workers in the wider funeral industry. Neither reported further exclusion by male funeral directors once they become funeral directors. In setting up their own firms, Kim and Joanna have posed the same threat as any new firm seeking a share in a limited market. As women moving into a field dominated by men they have found the inevitable exclusionary tactics tend to focus on their gender. A particular example reported by a woman funeral director, and confirmed by others in her district, is that the local funeral industry men refer to her firm by a demeaning sexist pun on the firm's name. Nevertheless, by using the inclusionary strategy of establishing their own firms the women have successfully overcome the men's exclusionary strategies.

‘Working for Nothing’: Attaining Credentials

After repeatedly failing to gain employment as funeral directors, the most common decision taken by women participants was that credentialing was their most likely long-term means of achieving success. As a year’s experience working for a funeral director was a prerequisite for the training course, some decided to ‘persuade’ a funeral director to allow them to work for nothing for the duration of the training period. Typical of several of the women participants, Natalie, who lived in a large metropolitan centre, explained how she eventually succeeded:

I had decided it was what I wanted to do. But it took months to get there. I’m a fairly persistent kind of individual though and I just kept knocking on doors until I persuaded a company to take me on working for nothing. It was for a fixed term. I was told there was no chance of a job at the end of it. But I was prepared to take my chances (Natalie).

Linda’s experience was almost identical, but she elaborated on wider ramifications for women with childcare responsibilities caused by the exclusionary tactics that she encountered:

The whole set up with the funeral director training programme is that you’re expected to be employed by a funeral home and they pay your fees and send you off. But I couldn’t get a funeral home to employ me. Finally after I’d knocked on all the doors, one firm offered to let me work there unpaid in return for the experience required to do the training programme, though strictly on the understanding that there was no possibility of a job when I’d finished. I thought, well, although I won’t actually be *employed* in a funeral home I’ll be doing the work, but I want to show them that I’m committed to the funeral industry and to the training so I accepted and paid for it all myself. And it wasn’t easy because on top of course costs, travel and accommodation costs and the loss of earnings all that time there were the kids to be cared for back at home while I was away at the block courses. It was so much easier for the men on the course. They got paid, had their expenses covered, a wife at home to mind the kids and pretty much a guaranteed job at the end (Linda).

Kanter (1977) avers that one reason corporations prefer male employees is that they are presumed to bring the resources of two workers to the firm: the male employee and his wife. And clearly, as Terri Apter writes, ‘Working women don’t have wives’ (1993). Instead, because of her family responsibilities a woman is ‘seen as perhaps bringing less than one full worker’ (Kanter, 1977: 107). Because of the tendency towards such an attitude, Linda was caught in the same gender ‘double bind’ (Legge, 1987: 55) as token women funeral directors. If she complained of her difficulties in achieving credentialing, she justified the men’s reason for preferring to employ a male by demonstrating that her family responsibilities made it too difficult for her to do the work. By saying nothing, she was supporting the prevailing gender inequities, which

left the status quo unchallenged. There is the likelihood, therefore, that the next woman in Linda's situation faces the same inequities because the male hierarchy and dominance remain unchanged. As Neysmith (2000: 14) points out, 'Power, as enacted and relational, ... is not an entity that can simply be overthrown.' Nevertheless, it is for the very reason that power 'emerges through relationships with others' (Apter, 1993: 183), that perseverance in attending training, despite the gender difficulties and apparent inability to shift the power balance, enables Linda and subsequent women to keep open the possibility of effecting change.

Three of the women participants had been sponsored through training while working as paid employees of a funeral firm, one of those while employed in a firm owned by a woman. A larger group of women had received full on-the-job training from their employers. These tended to be women, including Irene and Deborah, who had 'worked their way up' from clerical positions in the firm, or those like Emma who had gained positions in large firms. Although they had been in paid employment throughout, they had no formal credentials and no FDANZ registration. Some of this second group, including Raewyn who owned her own firm, thought they might in future take time to attend the certificate courses at Weltech. Others, including Joanna who owned her own firm, Megan who managed a firm and Emma, had decided that credentialing was not necessary for their future employment. Joanna voiced the opinion of several women when she said,

No, I've had good training. The only reason I would do the [WelTech course] training would be to become a member of FDANZ. But they're such an old boys' club aren't they? I don't need that. My business is fine without putting up with all that. That said, [my assistant] is going to do the embalming course next year because she'd like to have the certificate (Joanna).

Joanna's assistant is one of several women who show that credentialing is now seen by women as a path to achieving their goals and also that women are less willing to spend years working in less valued jobs in the hope of eventually 'working their way up.' Those who have entered the industry by paying for their study while working in a firm on an unpaid basis, tend to be the women trying more recently to enter the industry.

In addition to mentioning that her unpaid, on the job 'training' was largely unsupervised, Annette described another recurring theme of the women's closure experiences: the funeral directors' insistence that there would be no paid work at the end of her training.

It was very hard for a woman to get started. I wrote to every firm here. Even when I said I wanted to do it voluntarily while I did my class work they all said 'no' except one, and he said, 'Yes, you can come, but on condition you don't expect a job when you've finished because it's a very small firm and I don't need anyone else.' I agreed, of course, and worked for him for nothing for the three and a half years it all took.⁴⁹ After showing me what to do a few times he left me to it and I did the rest on my own, just calling him in for any problems (Annette).

After repeated attempts Natalie, Linda and Annette have all since successfully used their credentials to gain employment as funeral directors. Nevertheless, it was not at the firms where they had worked for up to three and a half years for no pay. Even though two of the firms did discover they needed an extra funeral director when the women had finished their training, they both employed a male.

'Honorary Men': Fitting into a Man's World

Because there was such a strong cultural perception of the role of funeral director as masculine, the first few women who succeeded in breaking through the exclusionary barriers in Aotearoa New Zealand struggled to know how to perform the role as women. Gail Young (1981: 153) argues, similarly, that in Britain in the 1960s the cultural view of doctors as men tended to situate women doctors as 'honorary men'. This made it difficult for women doctors to reconcile their subjectivity as women with their role as doctor. Taking on the role of honorary man is a strategy used by women in their attempts to gain acceptance in the male world of the funeral industry. Denise, herself a funeral director since the late 1980s, recounts the route of Sarah to the role of funeral director in another firm in the early 1970s. Sarah's strategy for inclusion among her male colleagues in the industry was to emulate the male funeral director persona of the day and take on the role of 'honorary man'. Denise explains:

When Albert married Sarah, he taught her the business, but she wasn't ever allowed to be a front person. She was very much in the background. Then Albert died and Sarah took over the business. She became a very good *lady funeral director*, and it was back in the days when women just did not do things like that. Of course funeral directing was quite different from now. They wore tails and pin stripes, were pasty-faced and grim. Sarah took on that role, dressed the same, even the bowler hat, except she wore a straight skirt instead of trousers, because *ladies didn't wear trousers*. She *took on the role of the male* basically. She used to do all the removals. Apart from the skirt she didn't seem to change anything or make any adjustments to the job or how she went about it to make it fit herself as a woman. It was different in those days. That's just how it was (Denise, my emphasis).

⁴⁹ In New Zealand that is one year's employment prior to study followed by fifteen months each for the Certificate in Funeral Directing and the Certificate in Embalming.

Sarah's actions resembled those of women funeral directors in Britain who claimed to 'dress with respect; cautious conservatism... either a black jacket and trousers, or grey striped, with a white blouse, a tie of some description, and court shoes' (Cline, 1997: 128). One of Cline's participants also mentioned that she thought it inappropriate for a woman funeral director to wear make-up (ibid: 125). It is difficult to know whether this is because men do not wear make-up or whether the woman associated the wearing of make-up with women who are not 'ladies'. The difference between Sarah and the British women is that, while taking on the role of honorary man, Sarah felt that she had to conform to the norms of dress expected of a *lady* by wearing a skirt rather than trousers. In this, she reflected the concern for social respectability of early Aotearoa New Zealand women doctors (see Belgrave, 1990: 204) and mid-twentieth century male funeral directors. The women funeral directors in this research did not feel so tied to the older norms of femininity and were equally likely to wear trousers *or* skirts.

As owners or managers of funeral firms in the twenty-first century, women funeral directors still find themselves honorary men in a man's world. Several women professed to run their funeral firms in a more egalitarian style than men but have retained a hierarchal structure. Nevertheless, in their view the hierarchy tends to differ from the patriarchal hierarchy found in men's firms. Rather than taking on the authoritarian patriarchal role, the women represented themselves as taking the overall lead but delegating responsibility. Funeral director Alison, who owned her own firm, declared:

Of course at the end of the day the responsibility for the firm is mine, therefore I need to take the lead. But in saying that, if my business is going to achieve what I set out to do I need the wholehearted support of my staff and I don't believe that's possible through dictating to them or giving them all the scummy jobs or not trusting them. There's lots of talk. We talk everything through to find out what works and what doesn't. It works really well. I learn as much from some of the younger ones as they do from me (Alison).

As part of their strategy, several owners of firms made a point of not employing clerical staff but instead incorporated secretarial and receptionist work into the funeral director role. Joanna explained her reasons:

I think it's really important for families to work closely with us to get the funeral that best suits their needs. If one person answers the phone and takes the family's details, then another person arrives to do the removal, and another comes to discuss the arrangements, and yet another is at the funeral on the day it is too hard to manage continuity unless each funeral follows a rigid plan. We want to offer choices so each family deals with just one person from the time of that first call. We get to know them and they get to know us and

then they're more likely to be able to trust us enough to tell us what they really want (Joanna).

On the other hand, Raewyn, with a much smaller firm, preferred to employ a woman clerical worker to maintain continuity in the office while she and the other funeral director were out visiting families or arranging services. Like Alison, her emphasis was on equality and the importance of all three getting together often to talk through issues, make improvements and plan for the future.

Without Mary [the office administrator] we could not operate. She is the first point of contact with the bereaved and she is the one who is here when they want to call in to sit with the deceased or just to talk to someone. She knows what works with service sheets, who the reliable florists are, the different newspaper deadlines, the sextons, you name it. I've worked with male funeral directors and I know some will say the same. But scratch beneath the surface just a little way and you find that they talk about the women's importance but they are really second-class citizens and their views carry no weight. That does not wash with me. Mary is part of every meeting and every decision (Raewyn).

Here the women reflect Mulholland's (2003: 145, 142) argument that the approach of women developing businesses is often closely modelled on male strategies, but that they tend to keep a modified form of hierarchal structure in which power is delegated rather than paternal. In this way, the women are contributing to breaking down prevailing hierarchical structures that value one occupation over another.

Women's Discourses as Strategies of Resistance

In Chapter Six I presented women's stories of male discourses used as strategies of closure against them. In the following section I examine ways the women have re-presented three of the discourses as discourses of resistance.

'The Hours are Not Suitable for a Woman': 'Nurses Have Always Worked Shifts'

One of the discourses used by male funeral directors to deny women entry as funeral directors has been that the hours are not suitable for a woman. Part of a funeral director's job has been the length and unpredictability of the hours of work and the need for someone in the firm to be on call at all times. The women admitted that the hours could indeed intrude on family occasions and could make the work itself stressful. Their argument was that the hours were not more of a problem for them just because they were women. Irene and her husband had worked together as funeral directors for

many years. Irene likened the problems of long hours to those faced by anyone else running a family business. She also pointed out that between them she and her husband had coped with the length and unpredictability of the working hours even before the arrival of cell phones which have made their work much easier:

It was 24 hours, 7 days a week and we'd done the phones non-stop right through and you don't really get a break. It's a lot easier today because you can flick on the cell phones. But when it's your own business, whatever the business, you tend to work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week anyway (Irene).

Megan, also a marriage and working partner in a small funeral firm, admitted the hours and unpredictability could be a problem. She described it in terms of just one organisational issue among many to be managed in any small family business. Megan said,

We do get called out at all hours and it makes it difficult at times – one time we were trimming the Christmas tree and I just had to go. Or it might be a school function or anything. There's just no guarantee we can both be there. We have to make allowances for that so when we can we do all go on a holiday together. One of us takes the children but we rarely all get away together. In a big company you'd have first and second call, whereas we have to do it all ourselves. But we have the advantage of being able to work in with each other more easily. Then if one of us really needs to be somewhere else the other can cover. That's not always so easily arranged in a big city firm, especially at the last minute (Megan).

Emma, a funeral director working in a large company, did not have children to make care arrangements for. She, therefore, did not agree that the job should be any less suitable for herself than it was for a man. Emma saw the hours and shift work as inconvenient, but just part of the job, and believed that she was sufficiently recompensed to make it worthwhile.

When you're on call at the weekend you can't plan to do anything. You are waiting for the phone. It does impinge on your life but then we do get rewarded for that. From my perspective it's quite adequate. My partner works shifts at his job too. But he has to be at work all the time on his shifts while at least I can be at home during quiet shifts – or anywhere else as long as my phone is on. It's just part of the job for both of us and it's good because sometimes if he's not on he rides along with me on night removals (Emma).

When asked how she managed to care for her young family while on call, Myra, a sole parent, compared the shift work in funeral directing and embalming to that in occupations traditionally accepted as women's work. Myra replied:

It's really not a problem. I don't know how some people can use the need for working shifts as an excuse not to employ women as funeral directors or embalmers. Lots of other jobs like flight attending and nursing have always had shifts and no one says they are not suitable jobs for women because of it. How do women cope in those jobs? The same as I

do no doubt, by planning for it. I just have to prepare for on-call times assuming I will be away from home and arrange for the children's babysitter (Myra).

Some women, nevertheless, argued that funeral directors could and should allow for part time work to cater for mothers if long shifts and unpredictability of hours were genuine reasons for not employing women. According to Pringle (1998: 39, 125), part time work has recently been successfully introduced in medicine to solve a problem of shortage of associate specialists. Two research participants, both sole parents when they began working in the industry, finding that funeral directors would not consider the option of part-time work or job sharing, solved the problem by working as self-employed embalming contractor and funeral director locum. Lesley, whose partner did not work in the funeral industry, was a self-employed contract embalmer. She chose the work as a life-style option as she enjoyed the freedom and variety of never knowing exactly where she would work from one day to the next. She, too, treated the unpredictable hours as just a part of any contract work. Lesley explained:

We have to plan spontaneity. We can't suddenly decide at 5 o'clock on Friday night that we're going to go away for the weekend because I have to have someone to cover my work. We can't suddenly decide that we're going to go to the movies and not let someone know because otherwise one of the funeral directors would be on the phone looking for me, so we've learnt to plan to be spontaneous. I've had to cancel out of doctors' appointments, dental appointments, and family functions. The only thing that I move heaven and earth to be around for are things that are important to my children because dead people can wait. Sometimes their relatives don't like to, but dead people can [wait] (Lesley).

Thus the women refute the men's contentions that funeral directing and embalming are not suitable occupations for women because the long, unpredictable hours cannot be fitted into their family responsibilities. They argue that women have successfully overcome such problems in other occupations, that finding arrangements to cope with the hours is their own responsibility and that for some women the unpredictability of the hours is a drawcard rather than a drawback of the occupations.

'The Work is Too Heavy for a Woman': 'Men Have Only One Back Too'

A second male exclusionary discourse refuted by the women was that the work of funeral director and embalmer is too heavy for a woman. The women suggest that lifting dead bodies is an important safety issue that needs addressing just as much for men as for women. Linda, a former domiciliary care nurse, was a trained funeral director and embalmer. She argued,

We should be doing whatever we can to save our backs. Not just because I'm a woman and can't do the heavy lifting. The men have only got one back too (Linda).

Linda discussed the importance of technique and passing tips on to new workers. She pointed out that as health care workers in both the public and the private sphere women have always had to find ways to perform heavy work. Linda explained:

The men just use the lifting as an excuse to keep women out. They won't admit that *all* lifting is about learning the right techniques, for men as well as for women. Nearly all nurses are women and they are lifting all the time. Besides, they should just see the women all over the country, and some are quite frail and elderly, managing immobile relatives on their own for years (Linda).

Pringle (1998: 35) found that in medicine, as in the funeral industry, where most of the training occurs in an apprenticeship system, many women doctors feel that they are disadvantaged because senior doctors, while willingly assisting male junior doctors, will not pass on techniques to women. Saul, the slight, older funeral director discussed in Chapter Six was an example of the same attitude in mentioning techniques he used for managing the heavy work while still refusing to admit women to the work. Similarly, funeral director and embalmer, Raewyn, alleged that some men, while helping each other with techniques and benefiting from the new equipment available, find it convenient with women to perpetuate the myth that the work is heavier than it really is. She argued that if male funeral directors would utilise inexpensive new equipment, lifting would be no excuse for not employing women.

It's all just technique and equipment. Too many men either won't buy the new equipment or when they do, won't admit that the work is really not such a big deal. There are stretchers that you can flick a switch and they come from ground level, and you just lift them and they flip up. There are ways of removing and moving dead people that are still dignified but don't need brute strength. It is not hard. They show each other, but they won't show a woman. But we work it out (Raewyn).

Myra had recently completed her training as a funeral director and embalmer. Although employed as a contract embalmer she had been unable to find employment as a funeral director. She commented that she had been refused work by several funeral directors who refused to be convinced that she could manage removals on her own. Myra argued for the use of simple lifting technology already available in public hospitals.

While I was at the training course we did a removal out of intensive care and they had a wonderful sliding board gadget. With that the body slides off the bed and onto the trolley, exactly like off a conveyor belt. It easily fits on a trolley. We could just take one wherever we go. The men should have one for their own health too. They should be

doing everything in their power to save their backs rather than using it as an excuse for not letting me get out there to do the work (Myra).

Also concerned about her long-term health and safety, and determined to manage alone, funeral director and embalmer Alison had devised ways to manage the heavy work. In her mortuary, for example, she had incorporated a gadget she designed herself for lifting bodies.

When you bring the stretcher in you can simply slide the body across to the mortuary table, but to lift it from the mortuary table into the casket you use a body lifter I designed. To bring an electric one in from America costs about \$3000-\$4000 but mine is a hand hydraulic pump on the same principle used to lift motors out of cars. It was really inexpensive, costs nothing to operate and suffices perfectly for what we need. If I can put one in anyone can, so saying the work is too heavy for women is just a feeble excuse for not employing them (Alison).

The comments of Linda, Raewyn, Myra and Alison are all interesting examples of women's discourses of resistance to the men's discursive strategies. They show that lifting is not the insoluble problem for women the male discourse would suggest. The use of new technology, devising of inexpensive very old technology and sharing of techniques are all ways the women suggest funeral directors could more easily open up the industry to women, thereby empowering them. In the absence of men's willingness to do so, the participants show that women are taking steps to empower themselves.

'It's Too Expensive to Send Two on Removals': 'It Looks Nicer to Send Two'

In Chapter Six, I mentioned that men funeral directors, who refused to employ women because the work is too heavy, tended to make a related claim. That is, because the work is too heavy for a woman, they would need to send two funeral directors on removals and that, to do so, would be too expensive. Considering the need to be prepared twenty-four hours a day for a call out to a removal, the men are justified in citing extra expense when that means two staff must be on call rather than one. Nevertheless, most of the women funeral directors argued that it is more professional to send two funeral directors, both for the safety of the funeral directors and for the sake of doing a better job for their customers. Irene's response was typical:

We always have two people on call. It's so much more professional. Even when the guys are on I never send them out to a house removal by themselves. The simple fact is that you never know what you are going into. I would never ask a family member to help me put the person onto the stretcher. Sometimes if the family ask if they can help, well by all means, but I would never just expect it. Some people can't cope with the idea (Irene).

Alison was also insistent that two funeral directors attending removals was an important part of the image of her firm and the service she provided.

When you go to somebody's home you should always take two just because it looks nicer. You can handle them better, with more care. It's not about costs for me or about my back. It's about family feeling like they're getting care. If you just rock up on your own and there are 10 steps and you've got to make the family lug half a stretcher down the stairs and they didn't want to do that, then you're not being fair (Alison).

On the other hand, Megan worked in a small firm where it was not possible to send two funeral directors on removals. She argued that she had never had a problem with lifting or with asking for and receiving help. As well as using the available technology she had always found attending police and fire services personnel to be willing to help at accidents. According to Megan, members of the police and fire services also willingly assisted when she phoned them the few times she had been at a private home where access was too difficult or the family unable to help. During a wet lunchtime gathering of his workers, funeral director Peter, too, told of calling on the fire service to help remove a corpse through the window of an inaccessible third floor room. For Peter, the retelling of the event had become part of his funeral firm's 'heroic stories or sustaining myths' (Charlesworth et al., 1989: 3), used by him to develop and reinforce the culture of the funeral firm. It was not used to show that he had needed to ask for help, but, rather, to show that he had been involved in a heroic adventure. For Megan, her retelling was to demonstrate that by using the resources available and not being too embarrassed to ask for assistance, even a very small woman funeral director is able to perform the work with as much dignity as a man.

Women's Closure Strategies

Arising from the women's stories of their experiences in the funeral firm is evidence that women as well as men, have participated in gendered closure strategies, both practice- and discursive-based. In Witz' (1992) model of gendered closure strategies, women are the subordinate group and tend to use dual closure strategies. Dual strategies occur when subordinate women, such as registered nurses, try to move into a more dominant position. They use inclusionary strategies to overcome men's control, while blocking even more subordinate women, such as unregistered nurses, from moving 'up' to the level of the registered nurses.

Two of the examples of closure used by women in the funeral firm are a little different from the examples cited by Witz. In the first example, women clerical workers, who are the subordinate group, practise closure against token women funeral directors who are marginalised members, because of their gender, of the dominant occupational group. Most clerical workers are not themselves trying to move into the role of funeral director and accept their place in the prevailing gendered hierarchy. But, in some instances, their acceptance is upset by the arrival of a younger woman into the more highly valued role of funeral director. In the second example, women funeral directors who are in a more dominant position, tend to practise demarcationary closure strategies against women celebrants, but not against male celebrants or clergy. The third example fits more fully into Witz' model of a gendered usurpationary strategy. Here the women celebrants, trying to carve an occupational niche for themselves, exert a countervailing exercise of power by drawing on discursive closure strategies against the largely male clergy and JPs. In the first two examples, then, the strategies work specifically to exclude other women, while the third, because the majority of clergy and JPs are male, is more to exclude men. In the following section, I examine these three strategies. I also briefly discuss closure strategies applied by women JPs against the recent incursion of women forming the new occupational specialism of celebrancy.

'Never Takes a Joke': 'Office Ladies' and Token Women Funeral Directors

Male funeral directors have used gendered demarcationary strategies to position women in funeral firms in clerical jobs at the bottom of a gendered hierarchy of occupations. While the women may express dissatisfaction at the lack of appreciation by funeral director employers of the value and stress levels of their work, they tend to accept that, in the hierarchy of occupations, funeral director ranks higher than clerical worker. In other words, the women working in what are considered by many men and women in the funeral firm to be 'traditional women's work' have tended to accept the gendered demarcationary strategies of the male funeral directors. When a younger woman is brought in as a token woman funeral director, her success in achieving her goal may upset long established gender relations within the funeral firm. I have earlier discussed the male funeral directors' use of exclusionary strategies to marginalise token women funeral directors. Here, I examine how the women are doubly excluded when clerical women, disturbed by the women funeral directors' apparently ambiguous status, also

use closure strategies against them, effectively socially excluding them from the culture of the funeral firm.

Nancy and Kay work in large firms as 'office administrator' and 'accounts manager'. In each of their firms there is one younger woman working as a funeral director with a group of male funeral directors. Rather than viewing the new woman as an ally in an otherwise all-male environment, they have found her presence unsettling. This may be partly because of the male funeral directors' marginalising tactics towards the token woman, partly because the woman funeral director may feel insecure in her position, and partly because the clerical women suddenly feel unsure of their own position. It is as if they find their own location in the traditional, subordinate women's roles supportable while there are men in the dominant roles, but insupportable when a woman moves into the dominant role, especially when it is a younger woman. Their response is to create a new set of gendered closure strategies against the woman funeral director. Gomez (1994: 145) argues that, in the face of men's closure some women, rather than taking a stand, tend to withdraw from such spaces as recreation rooms, spaces nominally shared by men and women. Gomez links such withdrawal partly to women's avoidance of sexual harassment. The experiences of some participants point to wider closure issues as well.

The frankness with which Nancy and Kay raised the issue of their discomfort with the women funeral directors was unexpected. Unlike Valerie and Anne, they had been guarded in their discussion of gender relations with their employers, asserting their belief that the funeral director's job was paramount and their role was as support. When I suggested that Nancy must be pleased to have the company of another woman, though, she suddenly became more open.

Personally I enjoy working with the guys as funeral directors *much* more than the women. The guys seem to mix better together, they co-operate better together, they're not so demanding. We've had two women since I've been here, one after the other. There is a definite role for women and I'm sure they are fine as far as families go, but it's just the interaction between staff I've found has been much harder (Nancy).

Pressed for reasons why she had found interaction harder with the women, Nancy's complaint was that the women funeral directors were 'so much more demanding, always wanting this and that done' (Nancy). But when asked what sorts of things the women demanded that the men did not, Nancy had to stop for a moment before answering:

It's hard to pinpoint really. I suppose it's not so much what she wants but how she asks. The guys just drop it on my desk, saying 'Thanks Hon [ey],' trusting me to sort it out, but she always comes and asks and explains as if I can't work it out for myself and the other one [earlier woman funeral director] was just the same (Nancy).

Here Nancy echoes Pringle's argument that 'Women do not like other women exercising authority over them.... They experience women's authority as "unnatural", whereas men's authority is taken for granted' (Pringle, 1988: 58). For these reasons, Pringle adds, 'Women have to go on proving themselves' and in doing so are often perceived as being 'harder' and 'more rigid', while men are seen as 'more laid back' (ibid: 57). In discussing the same issue among doctors, Young (1981) correctly suggests the reason for the discomfort stems from wider social relationships:

One's acceptability as a young woman doctor is also related to the power balance that exists in the world outside the consulting room. I have found that relationships with patients can be difficult if the power balance is the complete opposite of what it might be in the street outside (ibid: 154).

The older women clerical workers are comfortable with their place in the gender hierarchy at work as it reflects a familiar societal gender hierarchy. A young woman moving into the men's position in the hierarchy upsets the usual balance.

Kay also preferred working with the male funeral directors at her firm. She openly positioned herself discursively as a 'mother' to her 'naughty boys', while seemingly unable to feel the same towards the young woman funeral director. She was unreflexive about why this might be so and refused to be drawn about what form the jokes and 'naughtiness' took or why the female funeral director would not join the fun.

Apart from the partners the other funeral directors are all much younger these days. They're like my boys. I've two boys of my own and I really like working with them. But I find the young woman much more difficult. The boys kid around and tell jokes all the time. They're so funny, often a bit naughty really, but it's all meant in good fun. But *she never takes it as a joke and never joins in*. The atmosphere is much better when she is not there to dampen the fun (Kay, my emphasis).

Kay's attitude reflects Pringle's discussion of the ways women secretaries position themselves discursively in the traditional 'mother' role (see Pringle, 1988). Kay comfortably takes on the mother role with the male funeral directors because she is accustomed to her place in the prevailing gendered hierarchy both at work and in the wider social world. Because the situation is unfamiliar, she is unable to view herself fulfilling such a role with the younger woman whose occupation is positioned and valued more highly than her own.

The result, then, is that the older, longer-serving office workers, while shutting them out of the funeral firm's social culture, may accuse the women funeral directors of being standoffish and resent being given work by them or told by them what to do. On the other hand, the female funeral directors feel that the office workers do not support them as they do the male funeral directors. Abby, the token woman funeral director at one of the firms, explained the dilemma of being unaccepted by both the male funeral directors and the office administrator.

I've never complained. It's not really something you can pin down and I don't want to sound paranoid. But really some days you wonder why you ever thought you'd do this. You sit in the staff room pretending to read so you don't have to respond to the guys' crude jokes, then when you need something done in the office, which she just automatically does for the guys, you're made to feel as if it's an imposition – but if you do it yourself to save the sigh then you're encroaching on her territory (Abby).

In apparently siding with the male funeral directors against the token woman funeral director in their firms, Nancy and Kay, as 'old hands', are helping the male but not the female funeral directors feel welcome. In creating their own gendered closure they are contributing to the isolation of the women in the non-traditional roles. They thus not only contribute to the perpetuation of closure against women as funeral directors but also lose the chance of closing the hierarchical gap between their own and the funeral directors' roles. Greed (1990: 152) notes a similar effect among surveyors where men are welcomed and women made to feel 'unwanted and ill-at-ease'.

However, Greed does not suggest the attitudes of women in traditional roles as a possible contributing factor. Instead of a gendered social division with two women supporting each other amidst a larger group of men, in each case the woman in the traditional role tends to support the men in their traditional hierarchy. The token woman funeral director is thus at risk of being socially marginalised from the firm's culture by both the male funeral directors and the clerical staff. Cockburn (1991, cited in Jenkins et al., 2002: 97) calls the token woman's position a 'no-win situation'. Jenkins et al. (ibid) write:

Being too feminine meant not being able to take a joke and not integrating with their work mates, yet behaving too much like a man was unacceptable because it transgressed gendered norms.

With token women in such a no-win situation in relation to other women as well as to men, patriarchal power relations are reaffirmed and continuance of the status quo ensured.

‘Very New-Age’: Women Funeral Directors Excluding Celebrants

In Chapter Six, I discussed male funeral directors’ use of gendered demarcationary strategies against the new women celebrants. What became apparent in interviews with women funeral directors and celebrants, is that some women funeral directors have also used demarcationary strategies against women celebrants, siding against them with the (predominantly) male clergy and JPs. Witz (1992: 47) writes:

Gendered strategies of demarcationary closure describe processes of inter-occupational control concerned with the creation and control of boundaries between gendered occupations in a division of labour. They turn not upon the exclusion, but upon the encirclement of women within a related but distinct sphere of competence in an occupational division of labour and, in addition, their possible (indeed probable) subordination to male-dominated occupations.

To find women funeral directors participating in the same demarcationary strategies as the male funeral directors raises questions about the relationship of occupational power to gender. A closer inspection of the women funeral directors in this research who were involved in the demarcationary strategies, shows them, in each case, to be a woman funeral director married to a male funeral director. Not all women funeral directors married to a male funeral director participated in such demarcationary strategies and the small size of the research sample leads to doubts in the reliability of generalisations. Nevertheless, it appears that where a woman is working closely with her male partner in a male-dominated industry, she is more likely to be drawn into the hegemonic male perspective than women funeral directors working in all-women firms or not working with their marriage partners.

Dana, a funeral director partner in a firm with her husband, explicitly set the boundaries for what the celebrant may and may not do at her funeral chapel, thus treating her like an employee and excluding her from full professional status and equality:

I’ve found too many celebrants have no experience and there’s a bit of a reality check needed with some of them. We tried one lady who was very nice and had all the right words but because she was trying to do different things with no experience the parts didn’t flow. She had candles all round the casket, which is all very nice but the wax drips on my carpet. I had to point it out to her and a couple of others. I do have a problem with some of them. They tend to be very New Age and insist on imposing their ideas on the family. I tell them, *‘It’s your job to listen not to tell them what to do.* They’ll tell you what they need.’ They’re well intentioned *but we pick the celebrant.* I will pick them very carefully after I’ve been a while with the family. I think about who will perhaps understand them and I kind of use my intuition (Dana, my emphasis).

Dana made it clear that she was in control. While accusing the celebrants of not listening to the family's wishes, she declared that the choice of celebrant was not the family's decision but her own. She expected the celebrants to abide by her rules. If they did not she would ensure that they were not employed. Dana is asserting her right as a funeral director to hold power over the celebrants through imposing limits and conditions on the parameters of their work.

Dana complained about the candles dripping on her carpet, a problem easily solved through negotiation with the celebrants or the strategic placing of mats. Dana's derogative discursive construction of secular celebrants as 'very New Age' points to the dripping candles as a symbol of a wider issue. This is a reminder of the tendency among funeral firms to adhere to a religious conservatism that is still uncomfortable with deviance from a mainstream Christian form of funeral service – unless the service is for, say, a Chinese or Indian family who in recent years have been permitted to follow their own religious ceremonies. While in some church communities lighting candles is an important and highly symbolic ritual, other churches view the ritual as anti-Christian. If rituals do not fit a particular conservative religious form, a funeral firm seen to be hosting, and, therefore, approving them, may fear to lose the social respectability they have fought so hard to achieve.

Lois, another funeral director working with her marriage partner, was equally adamant that control of the funeral belonged to the funeral director. She was very clear that occupational boundaries were hers and not the celebrant's to draw:

These new celebrants confuse their role as celebrant with our role as funeral director so there are some that aren't good celebrants because they try to take over the whole funeral. I bring in a celebrant to take the service and I'm paying that celebrant on behalf of the family. I'm the funeral director. I run the show – what's happening, the family, the venue, when I come forward with the flowers. There's a very fine line between celebrant and funeral director and when it gets crossed too many times it can become an issue. But for me it doesn't become an issue because I'm pretty quick at saying, 'Hey look, we need to redefine our roles here because by getting them crossed you can confuse the family as to who's in charge of what and when. I'm in charge of the heating and the seating and all that. That's my role. You're in charge of what's said and how many eulogies are said and in what order. That's your role and we have to try to marry the two' (Lois).

Lois followed these comments by observing that, for two reasons, she preferred to 'employ' a local clergy member. The first reason was that, because of the importance to them as a firm of being accepted as members of their community, they chose to support the local minister. The second reason was, Lois said,

He's a professional. He's been doing it for years. He knows what he's doing and we know what to expect. It just flows so much better and is always the same length. Some of the celebrants let it drag on far too long. And there's poor old Dad or Mum barely able to cope. It's all just too much (Lois).

Dana and Lois support the status quo. During their professionalising project male funeral directors fought and won the battle over professional boundary disputes with the clergy. Once this had happened, clergy could safely be accorded professional status, as long as they remembered to stay within the boundaries drawn by the funeral directors. The funeral directors wrested control of the after-death processes of the corpse and the bereaved family, leaving the clergy only the narrow focus of the ritual aspects of the funeral and interment services. Funeral services became a minor, and with secularisation and expansion of the funeral directors' chapels, often inconvenient, aspect of the clergy role – the dead and their families requiring their services were not so likely to be parishioners.

Most funeral services, even in the 1990s, were based on a religious format, and when a non-religious service was requested, funeral directors in many centres tended to call on a retired member of clergy who would perform a 'non-denominational' service rather than a non-religious service. The clergy's only competition came from a few JPs. As the JPs were doing the work as a voluntary community service and tended to follow a modified standard religious funeral liturgy, they provided neither surprises nor usurpatory threat to the funeral directors. Like the clergy, JPs were paid a small honorarium to cover expenses. The money, either cash or a cash cheque, was handed to the officiant by the funeral director at the time of the funeral (see Watson, 1999), reinforcing the dominant position of the funeral directors.

The newly professionalising celebrants, on the other hand, have provided surprises for the funeral directors. They do not merely follow the religious liturgy and above all, they are not doing the work as a small part of another job. On the contrary, they are trying to create an occupational specialty, just as the funeral directors did last century. Lois, the funeral director, accepts clergy but not celebrants as professionals. In the view of the celebrants it is they who are the professionals when it comes to helping clients arrange and lead a funeral service. For clergy, funeral services are a small part of a much larger role. For JPs, conducting funeral services is a community service for which they are pleased to receive a small honorarium to cover expenses. For the

celebrants, conducting funerals is a major part of what they do and they are seeking to establish autonomy to develop their own occupational parameters.

‘A Professional Service’ or ‘Taking Advantage’? Women Celebrants and JPs

A small number of women research participants had completed the Certificate in Celebrancy Studies in the hope of surmounting the exclusionary strategies blocking their path to becoming a funeral director. At the time of the interviews, none of the women had made such a transition. Some, once they made the decision to do the celebrancy training, or after completion of the training, decided that becoming a funeral celebrant opened more opportunities for helping the bereaved than funeral directing or embalming.

The celebrants expressed disappointment over several conditions of their work. First was a belief that there was often an unwelcoming attitude from many funeral directors who, as intermediaries between celebrants and clients, held the power to exclude them from working. A second disappointment was funeral directors’ attempts to control and compromise their relationships with their clients. Third, in most centres apart from Auckland the celebrants argued that their work was inadequately recompensed, and fourth, there was seldom sufficient celebrancy work to make it the viable, full-time occupation they had hoped for. For all that, many celebrants had decided that the role of celebrant allowed them greater independence from the constraints of the funeral firm to support the bereaved. Nevertheless, while conducting their own inter-occupational dual closure strategies in their attempts to establish themselves as a specialist occupational group with a place in the funeral industry, celebrants have also been faced with discursive exclusionary strategies from JPs, whose role they were usurping.

Several of the JPs viewed the professionalising celebrants as encroaching on an area of their expertise. Rather than discussing the threat to their own role, their response was to focus on the issue of payment, discursively portraying the celebrants as ‘greedy’ and ‘taking advantage’ of the bereaved. A legal requirement of those fulfilling the role of JP is that they may not charge for their time, but may accept recompense for expenses incurred. Helen, the wife of a retired businessman, had been a JP for more than twenty years. She explained her motives for offering her services:

Acting as a celebrant at weddings and funerals is something I do to give back. We have such an amazing life here in New Zealand and one reason is that people still look out for

each other. With neighbours moving in and out so often and so many women working all day it's getting harder to do but helping people organise their weddings and funerals is one way of keeping it going (Helen).

Reminiscent of the attitudes of writers such as Waugh (1948), Harmer (1963) and Mitford (1963, 1998), who found it unreasonable of undertakers in a capitalist society to make a profit from disposing of the dead, Helen suggested that it is wrong of celebrants to turn officiating at funerals into a paid occupation:

It saddens me that some people are now trying to turn it into a way of making money. Fifty dollars is more than adequate to cover my expenses but I've heard some of these newcomers are demanding more than two hundred dollars. I can see that women who live alone need to make a living but it just seems such a shame that they're choosing to turn what is a privilege, and it is a privilege to be asked to take part in these family times, into a money-making venture (Helen).

Helen's response reflected the feelings of discomfort about younger token women funeral directors expressed by clerical women in funeral firms. She was another woman in a more traditional role perpetuating the dominant patriarchal discourse by participating in gendered exclusionary tactics. Helen, like the layers-out of earlier centuries, was resisting those she viewed as commercialising and thus threatening her community service role, for which she earned 'just a nice little bit of pin money' (Helen). The difference is that now, rather than men, it is largely women who are commercialising an activity.

Beth, on the other hand, was a JP who lived alone. Wanting to learn some new ideas to include in her funeral services, she had recently completed the celebrancy course. Thinking of the increased preparation time needed for each funeral Beth had more ambivalent feelings about whether a token 'honorarium' was sufficient payment for her time. She explained that while she still regarded conducting funerals as her way of offering community support, her training had made her realise that her support was both work and poorly paid:

If you do it properly it is time-consuming sort of work by the time you travel to spend time with the family, get all their stories together, write about the deceased's life, collect up suitable readings, help them choose and locate the music, prepare those who are participating, and put it all together – and that's before you even get to the service itself. The remuneration at \$125 is low and I suppose some of my colleagues in Auckland will charge for and ask for a lot more but again I think that it's – I suppose it's partly a service that you do but it's a vexed question and it's something that we discuss at celebrancy meetings because it's a whole rather difficult area (Beth).

The group of professional celebrants have trained as celebrants with the intention of trying to establish a career and a living from celebrancy work. Rather than accepting a mere reimbursement for expenses, they argued for a fair payment for their time and services provided. Karen explained:

As a celebrant I'd like to charge thirty dollars an hour but there is a lot of resistance to that because people just don't think in terms of paying us so that we can live on it. There are still people who say, 'Hey, I thought you only had to give a donation.' But we are offering a professional service, and where else do you get that for thirty dollars, let alone less than that? They accept it for a wedding now but preparation time for a funeral can take even longer. It's just over a much shorter time space. If I just read the service out of a book as the old JPs do I would be happy to do it for a hundred and twenty-five dollars but there is a vast difference between a personalised, personally constructed and designed service and one out of a book. You can't compare them. We're putting in ten to fifteen hours' work on each funeral. Ten dollars an hour or less is not enough in this day and age for the professional skill that we provide. (Karen).

By referring to her professional skill, Karen used one of the celebrants' most frequent usurpationary strategies. She and others discursively positioned themselves as professional funeral celebrants and 'old time JPs' as untrained amateurs. The celebrants argued that their own specialised training gives them a professional expertise in the role of funeral celebrant that clergy and JPs, often without specific training in this field, lack. Celebrant, Jane, reflected both the general view of the celebrants and the earlier twentieth century attitudes of the professionalising funeral directors when she likened her work to that of a doctor:

I believe that the new celebrants are coming in with a greater creativity and a new fresh approach to services and it takes time, effort and skill, like any other service provided by a doctor or other professional – it's a service we provide to the core needs of people. We have a skill that perhaps only a few people have and we should be recompensed for that skill. The old time JPs, who do it as a community service, are only doing two or three a year and just do not have the training or the skill to give people the support they need at such an important time (Jane).

Conclusion

Often after long-term planning and considerable persistence, women have gradually entered after-death work by taking advantage of shifting social attitudes to death and grief, and the changing focus of funeral directing. In response to the men's exclusionary tactics, they have deployed a variety of inclusionary and closure strategies of their own. While the growing numbers of celebrants continue to encounter funeral directors' demarcationary strategies, women have been increasingly successful in

overcoming the men's exclusionary strategies to become funeral directors and embalmers. Their methods have included the use of both practice-based and discursive-based inclusionary tactics. As practice-based strategies, the women have adopted such measures as 'growing' their entry jobs of clerical worker or cleaner, opening their own firms, or working unpaid to achieve credentialing. Discursive-based inclusionary strategies tend to be used to build on ground gained through practice-based tactics. In direct response to discourses exercised as closure strategies by men in after-death work, the women have utilised discourses that resist and/or invert those exclusionary discourses.

Women in after-death work have also resorted to closure strategies against other women as well as against men. Office women have worked with the men to marginalise token women funeral directors and embalmers from the gendered culture of the funeral firm. The problem is caused by the maintenance of stereotypical forms of masculinity and femininity that means the arrival of a woman in a 'man's' role upsets the accepted gender power differential. Some women funeral directors exercise closure strategies against women celebrants, appearing to align themselves with clergy and JPs who tend to be men against the newly forming specialism of celebrancy. In part, this closure against celebrants is in response to the celebrants' attempts to establish a field of expertise. The women funeral directors, in attempting to define and limit the celebrants' boundaries, are ensuring the maintenance of their own field of expertise, a field established by men funeral directors through their earlier boundary disputes with clergy.

In Chapter Eight, I examine the way women funeral directors, embalmers and celebrants, as part of their professionalising projects, have drawn on the wider discourses of new professionalism and how they resist, invert or reflect the discourses of the old model of professionalism. In doing so, I explore the ways in which, what the women perceive they have to offer funeral work, reflects the discourses of new professionalism, and as such opens the way for increased feminisation of after-death work.

Chapter Eight

‘A Point of Difference’: New Professionalism and the Feminisation of After-Death Work

Introduction

‘One way to explore the development of [a group’s] claims for professional status is to examine the way in which these claims have been discursively constructed’ (Ryan et al., 2003: 149). In the preceding chapters, I have shown how funeral directors throughout most of twentieth century Aotearoa New Zealand have been discursively constructed as professional men, firmly in control of the corpse, the clients and the proceedings. Inherent in this particular discursive construction of professional control, has been the idea of funeral directors in control of emotions, both their own and those of their clients. As Chua and Clegg (1990: 136) argue, the discursive constructions of a group are subject to shifts and discontinuities, in the same way as other aspects of the group’s professional project. The funeral industry’s shift to including care of the bereaved, grief care, among their areas of expertise, has led to a shift in the discursive construction of funeral directors. In this chapter, I explore the ways women are capitalising on the recent shift by developing their own new discursive construction of what it means to be a funeral director, embalmer or celebrant through the use of discourses that resist and/or invert the men’s discourses. A particular example is found in the women’s adoption of the discourses of new professionalism, in which men’s discourses of the old model of professions are frequently inverted.

It’s just a point of difference. We look after funerals much better because men tend to come in and say, ‘We’ll look after everything for you. We’ll do everything for you. You don’t have to worry any more.’ As women we come in and say, ‘What would you like us to do? We’ll walk alongside you, with you through this funeral arrangement or process,’ giving the power back to the person who needs it so they’re in control. At the same time, though, we’re right there with an arm around them saying, ‘We’re here if you need us to advise. We’ll give you suggestions.’ At the end of the day, that person is far healthier than having all that taken away. But if families say, ‘No, we can’t do any of it,’ we will do it, but we give them the choice because as women we don’t need the power trip over that person. That’s the difference and that’s why people like a woman. At the same time we have a very varied outlook on things. Men usually have themselves and a career to look after. Women have themselves, a career, the children, the in-laws, the out-laws, the house, you name it. Because they’re used to all those different experiences coming in,

when they're talking to somebody they understand where they're coming from in a much better way (Alison).

This quote from Alison, a funeral director, conveys the critique of the old professional model and promotion of discourses of new professionalism, as described by Williams (1993) and expressed by the women participants. The discursive claim of the new approach is that professionals should no longer exercise prescriptive professional power, through a superior/subordinate hierarchy. Instead, their aim should be for a partnership between professional and client, in which professionals share their expert knowledge and build on the client's knowledge and experience. In this model, the aim is for professionals to take a supportive role with their clients, seeking to enable them, rather than taking a controlling role that expects compliance (Williams, 1993: 11-12).

In describing her 'point of difference', Alison was explaining how she used her gender as a marketing tool, to differentiate her funeral firm from the archetypal masculine firm, in order to attract clients. She followed this by describing practices of men funeral directors in terms of the old professional model, while drawing on the new professional discourse to discuss her own practices. In doing so, Alison's contention was that women are better funeral directors than men. She supported her claim with examples of how she and the other women funeral directors in her firm related differently from men funeral directors to their bereaved clients. Finally, Alison theorised the reasons for the difference between men's and women's ways of working, as stemming from the differences in their life experiences.

Because of their understanding that professions are men's domains, one of the professionalising strategies practised by men funeral directors has been the exclusion or marginalisation of women. Paradoxically, another of their professionalising strategies has been a contributing factor to their failure to enter the top professional ranks as equals with doctors and lawyers. That is, their turn in the final quarter of the twentieth century from a business management approach to a focus on the psychology of grief. By making this shift, they have entered the women's arena of caring work, and thus the women's world of semi-professions. Through adhering to the old professional discourses and trying to maintain professional standards of expertise, dignity, rationality, detachment and control, men funeral directors have attempted to masculinise, or at least maintain their dominance of, this 'women's work'.

The growth of the funeral industry, with small family firms needing to employ non-family workers, increased numbers of women entering paid work, and the changing, more caring focus of the occupation, have all increasingly attracted women to the work. Furthermore, the growing numbers of women participating in the public sphere means that there are also more women clients. The effect of the combination of more women working in the funeral industry, and more women as clients or employers of the funeral industry, has been a quiet, but inexorable, two-pronged attack on the old professional approach of men funeral directors.

In this chapter, I discuss the relationship of the women participants' views and actions to the idea of a new, or democratic, approach to professionalism. I focus on the three major areas where the funeral industry women's accounts align them more closely with the discourses of the new professional model. The first focus is on the way that women discursively separate themselves from the hierarchical role, established in the old professional model of expert professional, in relation to their clients and to other funeral industry occupations. The second focus is the women's adoption of discourses on the primacy of the caring nature of their work and relationships, with the bereaved and with corpses. The third focus is on the ways women draw on discourses of emotionality and their emphasis on the importance of enabling expression, rather than control of emotionality.

Dismantling the Hierarchies: Towards a Shared Expertise

There have been two forms of hierarchy apparent in the old professional model operating in the funeral firm. One is the hierarchy that values men's occupations over women's clerical occupations. The most important role is that of funeral director, but the occupation of embalmer becomes part of that role when fulfilled by the funeral directors. It is considered rather less important when performed by women working on a part-time, or casual, basis. This gendered occupational hierarchy is discussed in the section 'Honorary Men' in previous chapters. The second hierarchy is the one that places the funeral director in a position of power over the client and expects compliance from the client. Here, I examine the women's utilisation of discourses surrounding this second form of hierarchy.

'Give Your Worries about Death to the Funeral Director'

One of the ways professionals in the old model have maintained a hierarchical relationship with their clients has been through a 'deskilling' or 'disabling' of the clients (Illich, 1977). Professionalising groups commercialised, medicalised and professionalised activities previously performed by the general public. The result is that the lay population, losing much of their competence in a wide range of activities, have become increasingly dependent on expert professionals to tell them how to act. Management of death and grief are two particular instances. Doctors have managed the dying process and funeral directors the after-death process. Funeral directors have developed their occupational specialism and monopoly in the market place by convincing the public to rely on them for every aspect of after-death work (see Hera, 1995). Vanderlyn Pine (1995) writes a symbolic interactionist analysis of how funeral directors 'carry out the public aspects of their work' (ibid: 168). As a funeral director for ten years prior to becoming an academic, Pine is writing sympathetically of the funeral directors' work. Ironically, in doing so, his description throughout of the 'knowledgeable and concerned' (ibid: 171) manner of funeral directors exemplifies the stereotype of the old model of the expert professional. The same attitude is evident in an article 'The Art and Science of Modern Embalming' in *NZFD* (1953). The author writes:

People come to the funeral director to be advised and directed in what is advisable.... Curious clients are to be told that embalming is like a blood transfusion. If she [sic] knows what that is she will be satisfied, if she does not know you will not get her to admit it, so either way ... [i]t is neither necessary nor advisable to discuss it any further (*NZFD*, 1953: 137).

Funeral director, Simon, while aware of possible problems caused by the old professional approach, was convinced the public had been equally instrumental with the funeral directors in causing the current professional/client relationship. When asked how he saw his relationship to his clients, Simon likened his role and position to that of a doctor's. In his opinion, it has benefited both funeral directors and members of the public to keep funeral directors, like doctors, in the position of 'demigod'. The problem, he suggests, is that it has become such an entrenched position that it is now difficult to make changes. Simon explained:

Old-style undertakers were like doctors. People liken doctors to demigods, but there are two reasons for that. One is because they put themselves there and the other is because

people put them there. Funeral directors are the same. People put the old undertakers into a scary mould, but they also put themselves there. *Funeral directors liked to keep people in awe and unsure because it gave them the upper hand.* If there is a question mark in anyone's mind, they won't query the bill. The old undertakers and some funeral directors today put themselves into that mould, but the general public have also helped to put them there. And now it's hard to break those moulds (Simon, my emphasis).

In her research into funeral firms in Britain, Mary Bradbury (1999) found a similar attitude among male funeral directors. The difference, in Bradbury's experience, is that while the doctor is seen as God, the funeral director is more likely to be viewed as the 'knight in shining armour' (ibid: 187). The reason, as Bradbury continues, is that after a death 'in such a time of confusion and chaos, it is reassuring to believe in someone' (ibid). Simon explained the analogy further. In his view, a doctor has knowledge and expertise from years of study and experience. On the other hand, those who are unwell have not had a doctor's training or experience, so have no knowledge of what might be the cause of the problem. What the ill want to do, according to Simon, is to leave everything to the doctor. Similarly, he believed, the bereaved have no knowledge of what to do or how to cope with a death and need an expert funeral director to take control. In Simon's words:

When you go to the doctor, then, you don't go to get cured. You go to the doctor to relinquish to him [sic] the responsibility for your health. It's the same with death. You don't want to have all those worries about death so you give them to the funeral director (Simon).

The male funeral director's approach to his clients reflects two aspects of the old model of the relationship between professionals and their clients (see Parsons, 1951: 437). The first is that those accepting the mourner (i.e. sick) role are expected to hand power to Simon, the expert professional. The second is that Simon, the (professional) funeral director, socially constructs his clients as objects of his professional services, rather than as subjects with their own knowledge and experiences (see Hugman, 1991: 134). Simon, like any entrepreneur or professional working in private practice, has a business to run and his continued success depends on attracting new clients. In the hierarchical model of professionalism, even with the highest altruism, Simon will tend to use his role as expert to guide the client in the correct way to proceed to best present the funeral director at the public performance of the funeral service.

Offering Choices

Part of the old professional model, as espoused by Simon, is the idea that, as the expert, the professional should make decisions for clients. One such decision made by funeral director Peter, cited in Chapter Six, was that as *most* clients prefer a male funeral director, he would employ *only* male funeral directors. There is evidence from the women's experiences in the funeral industry to show that some members of the public do, indeed, prefer a male funeral director (see also Cline, 1997: 126). The research participants, in both this study and in Cline's British and North American research, admitted that there were clients who ultimately refused to allow a woman to make their funeral arrangements. Contrary to Peter's assertions, however, the women in this study found that those clients were most likely to be a particular group of older men. Furthermore, the women believed that funeral directors should not manage client preference by judging what the majority of clients would want and providing that. Instead, funeral directors should offer options for both clients and professional colleagues. Lynette, a funeral director, discussed the issue in relation to clients:

It's some older men, especially lodge members, who can't ever accept a female arranging a funeral. It's just as well *we have both males and females working here* because they are very upfront and blunt about it. They're usually only the males in that certain old school. You can tell the age and group it's going to be. They just won't deal with a woman. *I never take it personally*. It's just the old tradition of those men how funerals were always a male domain (Lynette, my emphasis).

Funeral director Irene showed that the gendered project of the old model of professions was evident among some men clergy as well as funeral directors. Her most painful and public experience of gendered preference came, not from any client, but from an elderly Catholic priest who refused to travel to the cemetery with a woman driver. She recounted the event:

He came up to me and said, 'How am I going to the cemetery?' And I said, 'With me,' wondering what he meant, because the clergy always sit in the front with the funeral director. And he said, 'I'm not driving with you. You're a woman.' He was so rude. My mouth fell open. But I just said, 'Perhaps you could ask a family to take you then' (Irene).

Later, finding himself stranded at the cemetery after the family had departed without him, the priest still refused to travel with Irene. At Irene's suggestion, he went to the sexton's office and asked him to phone for a taxi. Irene, like Lynette, found that in her early years as a funeral director, a few clients expressed initial disbelief that the woman

who arrived to discuss their funeral arrangements was a 'real' funeral director. Nevertheless, Irene noted that while most quickly adjusted, 'There are still a few elderly gentlemen of the old school who *accept my offer* of working with a male director instead' (my emphasis). Irene then laughed and added, 'But I never expected to have to make the same offer to a priest.'

Kim, who runs an all-women funeral firm, has found a client preference among some of the elderly, both men and women, for a man to perform the ritual aspects of the funeral service. In discussing the issue of client preference, Kim's emphasis was also on providing choices:

I look at it this way. I promote this as an all-woman firm so people know what to expect when they call us. If they want a male funeral director they will call somewhere else. At the same time, I know that while some people, especially the older men and women, prefer a woman to be handling their loved one's body they may still feel more comfortable with a male clergy figure. In fact, most of our services are in churches, where they are usually run by a man, but we have a range of celebrants on our books so *people can choose whether they prefer a man or a woman* to conduct the service (Kim, my emphasis).

Pringle (1998: 9) writes of a shift in thinking in medicine: 'Health ministers and deans of medicine also speak not only of equal opportunities for women but of the community's *right* to have access to women doctors' (original emphasis). By taking the same approach to professional power, funeral directors such as Lynette, Irene and Kim seek to empower their clients. They provide options that enable clients to choose whether they prefer a man or woman funeral director or celebrant, rather than funeral directors making the choice for them. It is the discourse of women empowering their clients that underlies the women's claims to developing a non-hierarchical relationship with their clients.

Sharing Power

Valuing formal, expert knowledge over informal knowledge and experiences means that professionals are likely to exert power and control over their clients, because the professional discourse claiming expert knowledge 'gives an image of omniscience' (Williams, 1993: 13). Many of the women funeral directors and celebrants, using the language of the new professional discourse, countered the old professional discourse. Declaring that they were able to share power with bereaved families while maintaining professional standards, they were explicit in expressing the benefits for their client

families. Furthermore, many believed that it was something that they, as women, were able to achieve more successfully than men funeral directors and celebrants.

May, a celebrant, portrayed herself in a position of equality with the bereaved. By enabling families to participate in achieving what they want, she professed to better assist them through the grief process:

I don't make families feel inadequate or make out that I'm anybody special. I'm there to help them put together everything they want for the funeral service they want. The trouble with the men I've seen is that they don't know how to run a service without being the boss and taking control. But women can do that and the families end up in a far better place in their grieving (May).

May then elaborated the new discourse, by describing further the difference in her approach to officiating at the funeral service compared with how she believes men work. She suggested that she helped the bereaved by involving the congregation in the ceremony in a conversational manner, encouraging them to respond, rather than by lecturing at them:

Men deal with the service by standing up the front with a strong, distant manner like an old style headmaster at a school assembly or a priest giving a sermon. They talk *at* people while I talk *to* people more through the ceremony. I'm much more personal and *with* the family. I try to help them cope by bringing everyone in. For some it's by getting them to take part. For others it's just including them by talking to them (May).

Instead of emphasising the value of their own expertise, the women participants are more likely to represent themselves as focusing on the importance of their clients, as knowing subjects, with valid knowledge and experiences. Deborah, for example, began by working in the office for a man funeral director. Having once acted as funeral director for a friend, though, she was increasingly requested by clients to be their funeral director. Highlighting her difference to men, like Simon, who believe in the old model of professional excellence, Deborah did not attribute her rise in popularity to her professional status and ability to take over and remove all the worries from the bereaved customers. Rather, she held that her knowledge allowed her to enable and encourage clients to participate in both the planning and the funeral service:

I did what people wanted and it got around. I did what was not done. For instance, instead of lining a casket with the usual funeral drapery, we might put beautiful, big, hand made quilts in from the family. Families would do the service and they'd have their own speakers. That was not done. And the dog would come into the crematorium chapel. Heaven forbid in those days. I remember the crematorium worker saying, 'Oh, no, not

you again Deborah!’ But the families responded so well when they realised that what they wanted mattered, was okay. They just came to life (Deborah).

Deborah made several claims that incorporate discourses of the new professional approach. The first was that she did not present a ‘one-way transmission of knowledge from professional to client’ (Williams, 1993: 11). The second claim was that she was not bound by her knowledge of what a funeral should be. The third claim was that she validated the experiences and knowledge of her clients, responding to them by sharing her own expertise to work in partnership with them. In this way, Deborah, using her knowledge of ‘the system’, sought to enable her clients to achieve the funeral that they wanted rather than one she thought they should want.

Valuing Both Formal and Informal Knowledge

Funeral director, Joanna, argued that changes to two societal expectations contribute to the current demand for funeral directors to listen to their clients’ needs and experiences. In the past, society in Aotearoa New Zealand has tended to accord deference and compliance towards higher status authority figures, such as professionals. Funeral directors could, therefore, expect bereaved families to defer to their expertise. Previously, there was also importance placed on conformity, including what constituted a ‘proper’ funeral service and appropriate funeral behaviour. In most areas of today’s society, there is no longer quite the same emphasis on compliance and more room is allowed for flexibility. The problem, according to Joanna, and the reason why, as newcomers, women funeral directors have more to offer, is that men funeral directors have tried to maintain the old professional status quo, where their knowledge was discursively constructed as superior to that of their clients. Joanna explained:

Society’s expectations of funerals are changing. People now expect to have more say in how their funeral goes and to be able to do things that aren’t considered the norm. Ten years ago the funeral director said, ‘This is what we do, we take Dad away, we embalm him, we bring him back and the funeral will be on this day and this is the best time to have it and this is how you have it, then we’ll take him to the cemetery’ etc. As a grieving family you said, ‘Okay.’ But now it’s, ‘We want the funeral on this day, at this time and we’ll do this part ourselves. We want this celebrant, and we want things done like this. We want the casket opened until this point. We don’t need you except to drive the hearse.’ Sometimes they don’t even need that. Male funeral directors aren’t used to being told what to do. Nor do they like it very much. Women are more open to changes than these men who have been in the industry for so long. Whether it’s because they’re male, or whether it’s because they’ve just been in the industry for so long and are used to having things done their own way I’m not sure (Joanna).

Davies (1995) rightly points out that formal knowledge should not be dismissed as having no worth, but that neither should it be prioritised as it has been in the old professional discourse. Instead, formal knowledge needs to be used 'alongside other knowledges' (Davies, 1995: 149), such as the equally valid knowledge gained through experience and understanding of people and situations. Mavis Kirkham (1998), citing Ehrenreich and English, also argues that expertise itself should not be denigrated, but that it is important to distinguish between *expertise*, as knowledge gained in order to share with clients, and *professionalism*, with its explicit aims of status and exclusivity. She writes:

'We must never confuse professionalism with expertise. Expertise is something to work for and to share; professionalism is - by definition - elitist and exclusive, sexist, racist and classist' (Ehrenreich and English, 1973)... We need to generate the strength to make knowledge and control available to [our clients] despite the pressures on us to retain knowledge and power (Kirkham, 1998: 152).

The women funeral directors contend that they use skills gained through their experiences of performing 'women's' (caring) work both to understand the needs of their clients and to enable their clients to value and use their own knowledge and experiences. Women's skills gained through experience, tacit skills, are often employed in relational work, as discussed in Chapter Two. This work tends to form a large part of women's work and is considered to be what women just do, naturally (Fletcher, 1999). Therefore, it is devalued, often by women as well as men, considered to require little skill and thus to be merely helping, rather than real work.

Interdependent Client/Professional Relationships

Deborah, the funeral director, exemplified the women's approach when she told the story of arranging a memorial service for a celebrity. Rather than accepting the credit for what turned into a major media event, Deborah would only admit to 'helping' bring it together. She said:

The friends of [a media star] wanted me to arrange a memorial service. How do I do that? I'm a funeral director. They came to me because they didn't know what to do. They were stars in their own right, but they'd never done anything like it before either, so we all helped each other. We guided each other through everything, got it all mapped out. We only had a day to do it and it was really a production, a stage show, but, like every funeral, you have to get it right the first time; you don't get a second shot at it (Deborah).

Forming interdependent relationships between professional and client is one of the main areas of focus of the model of new professionalism for caring professions (Davies, 1995: 150). Deborah's collaborative actions bring her into the new professional model where the professional-client relationship is one of interdependent partnership rather than the old style of superior-subordinate relationship (Williams, 1993: 12). In her account, she shared her expert knowledge to enable her clients to develop theirs.

Interdependent relationships were also a matter of importance for Amy, a celebrant. She discussed interprofessional relationships between herself and funeral directors, as well as the relationships between professional and client. Her argument was that she preferred to work with women funeral directors because they have an ability to act in a 'personal' manner, without losing their professionalism. This might be a result of Amy's personal feelings of greater comfort in dealing with a woman rather than a man. But, according to Amy, she also saw the same 'personal touch' from the women funeral directors working positively with the bereaved.

It's more personal working with women. I enjoy working with them. It doesn't mean they're unprofessional, but women seem to be able to be professional as well as to have that personal touch. I'm not saying that men can't do it but that women seem to do it more easily somehow. It makes it so much nicer, friendlier, for us and for families too (Amy).

Women celebrants and funeral directors have continued to maintain the need for their clients to make choices and take as much responsibility as possible for developing the process of their funerals. Sometimes, as Auckland funeral director Chris Foote observes, this has caused them to be 'dismissed sniffily in certain quarters' (cited in Sperber, 2003: 59), but there is a belief among them that 'the more women and young people that come into the industry, the more those fuddy-duddy old men die off, it'll change things' (ibid).

Developing Non-Competitive Collegial Relationships

Amy's discussion fits into a further discourse used by many of the women. That is, women professionals are less likely to be competitive towards each other than men. Traditionally, male funeral directors socialise with other funeral directors annually at national conventions or training sessions but seldom socialise with other funeral directors in their own locality. The celebrants, many of whom are newly trained, are forming themselves into local professional associations, who socialise together

regularly, are more supportive of each other and more likely to share resources. One of the reasons is that Mary Hancock, the developer and controller of the celebrancy course in Auckland, stresses to her classes that sharing, rather than competing, will strengthen their position. Celebrant, Alex, expressed the philosophy described by several of the new celebrants:

We have been taught that if you find a verse, a poem, a reading you think you could use at a funeral, bring it along to the [support group] meeting and share it. What you give to 20 women you'll get back from 20 so you'll end up with not one but 20 readings you can use. That was instilled in us throughout the course. It was share, share, share. Don't think of your colleagues as competition. Share with them. The more we support each other the stronger we become, so that we can go to the funeral directors and say, 'Look what we have to offer. We are worth every cent' (Alex).

Breaking down the competitive nature, or jurisdictional boundary contests (Abbott, 1988: 89), of interpersonal relationships between professions and professionals inherent in the old professional model is discussed by those theorising caring professions and new professionalism (e.g. Hugman, 1991; Davies, 1995). While these writers focus on the gendered hierarchy within a large bureaucracy, such as a hospital, the issue is equally relevant in the much smaller setting of the funeral firm, and among workers such as celebrants who are in a peripheral relationship to any organisation. Many of the women funeral directors and celebrants, including Amy and Alex, raised the topic.

In their accounts, the women tended to talk of cutting through competitive and hierarchical barriers to work more personally and informally with others, interprofessionally and within their own professions, as well as with clients. This does not mean that there is no inter- or intra-professional competition between women in the funeral industry. Rivalry does exist: funeral director, Megan, disparagingly dismissed women celebrants as 'New Agey' and lacking in practical skills; and office worker, Nancy, criticised her woman funeral director as 'stand-offish'. There is also a problem among some celebrants. A few celebrants who complained of funeral directors underpaying them had avoided joining their local association because they feared funeral directors might see the association as a political move and blacklist members. On the other hand, celebrant, Karen, although struggling to gain sufficient work, joined the association with the aim of improving and promoting their occupation. She commented rather sharply about the lack of support from some women:

The tame women have got through. They are the ones who are seen as acceptable, the feminine, very demure sorts. They keep on side with the funeral directors and get the

work by not joining our association. *And* they're the ones who'll reap the rewards when we achieve a fair remuneration (Karen).

But, these are rare examples, suggesting that, on the whole, the women have found satisfactory ways of negotiating a 'shared autonomy' (Hugman, 1991: 217) with clients 'to act together in formulating the ends and means of service provision' (ibid) and with each other as women in the funeral industry.

'Accounting' for Success

Women funeral directors, embalmers and celebrants do not seem to have been as successful in negotiating shared power with male funeral directors. Problems were still apparent in the ambivalence with which the women discussed their success, as women, in relation to male funeral directors working in the old professional model. For example, Deborah, above, by insisting that her role was merely a helping one rather than a controlling one may be seen as offering a justificatory 'account' (Goffman, 1971: 109), as a way of playing down her highly successful actions in order to avoid giving offence to the established male order. Thus, through recounting her offering of the new professional ideal of democracy to her clients as 'helping', Deborah, the professional funeral director, carefully repositioned herself in her proper place among women, a supporter rather than a worker, one who was not really challenging the male funeral directors' superior-subordinate relationships with their clients. Celebrant Sharon, too, while clearly proud of her success and believing that she, as a woman, was offering something to the bereaved that the men in her region were not, alternately declared and denied her success and her claim to equality.

But when there is something very tragic that has to be addressed like a murder or suicide, I definitely think it needs to be addressed in the funeral. Quite often, especially in a religious funeral, the clergymen skirt around and do anything but address the core issue and I am convinced that sort of funeral leaves people totally unsatisfied and unfulfilled. It has to be addressed really, really sensitively and carefully, but it *has to be addressed* and that's what women aren't afraid to do. I wish, I *wish*, men would do a better job, because I think they are capable enough. It's not that I'm claiming women have anything special to offer that men don't. It's what each individual person has to offer that needs to be looked at. I've done more than 100 funerals in less than three years, but I don't want to be a newcomer trying to muscle in. I'm very happy to be the junior partner. We have to acknowledge that they [men] have had years and years of experience and work with that (Sharon, her emphasis).

Such ambivalence over claiming to be more successful than men and denying any intention of supplanting men, while at the same time discussing just how their approach is superior to the old male professional model, was evident in many of the women's

interviews. The women were at once both placatory and defiant, unwilling to 'rock the boat' (celebrant, Alex), but angry at the men's control over their ability to work, assured of their own relative value, but wanting to work in with the men, while wondering how to overcome the gendered inequities they faced on a daily basis.

One of the most striking features of the women's accounts was the way they were so often centred on how they, as women, approached their work differently from men in the industry. Indeed, showing a pattern of resistance, they frequently inverted the old male gendered discourses. Where the old discourses vilified women's emotional attachments and their 'distractions' of family care responsibilities, women in the funeral industry expressed these as advantages. They argued that men, too, should bring the same approach to the work, although they tended to believe that, because of men's different life experiences, they are incapable of working as women do.

In the following section, I move to an examination of the women's accounts surrounding their care of the dead body and their mediation between the body and the family and how they very often believed that their approach differs from that of male funeral directors and embalmers *because of* their experiences as women and mothers.

'The Whole Womanly Touch': Embodied Care Work

Embalmers, who in Aotearoa New Zealand are frequently also funeral directors, perform the embalming procedure in the back rooms of their premises or, in larger cities, in a centralised embalming facility. During embalming, the mortuaries, as embalming rooms are called, are now closed for health and safety reasons to all but appropriately gowned and protected embalming practitioners (Cahill, 1999). As the dead are inanimate bodies, with no autonomy or self-expression, they can neither supervise what happens nor complain of how they are treated. Therefore, shuttered from prying eyes and the possibility of censure, how embalmers behave towards the corpse largely depends on their own beliefs and attitudes.

The stated aims of funeral director and embalmer research participants were twofold: to disguise and delay the smells and processes of decay; and to disguise signs that the

deceased suffered pain or illness.⁵⁰ Their accounts, in keeping with the new emphasis on grief care, were focused on the living bereaved. They were about the need to give the bereaved a peaceful final image of their dead loved one, to facilitate a healthy grieving process. The women's stories about embalming centred on two areas in which they stressed their difference from the men. Like many of the women's accounts already discussed, both of these claims of difference reflect the discourses surrounding the new professional model. The first difference was in relation to how they cared for the corpse and the second was in how they mediated between the corpse and the family.

'Dignity and Respect': Caring for the Corpse

The most often repeated phrase, used by both men and women funeral directors and embalmers interviewed, was that they treated the dead body at all times 'with dignity and respect.' At the same time, several of the men said that the way they remained emotionally detached enough to be able to work with corpses on a day to day basis, was by telling themselves, 'that's not the person anyway ... it's just the remains ... it's just an empty shell' (Watson and Tolich, 1998: 331; see also Howarth, 1996: 73-5). Few of the women research participants adopted the same discourse. The more usual response from the women was to express a belief that, even though the conscious persons of the corpses are no longer 'there', they have the right to be treated as if they *are* there and aware of what is happening. According to the women, that is the way to treat the dead with respect.

Several women expressed a concern about the way, in their view, some men accord neither dignity nor respect to the physical body during embalming. One aspect of the men's behaviour that upset several women was that corpses were often left lying on the gurney or the mortuary table uncovered. Linda, for example, stated,

Men just don't understand. You have to leave them [the corpses] with their dignity. And what dignity is there in being left lying around uncovered?

Linda then averred that she always took care to cover corpses whenever possible. She believed that it was her upbringing and training as a woman that made her more conscious than a man of the corpse's right to be treated with respect.

⁵⁰ Bradbury (1999: 129) adds a third reason for embalming: to enable funeral directors to charge more. Of course, this was not a reason given by the research participants, men or women, but as discussed in Chapter 2, their reasons for embalming, while including making money, are rather more complex.

I'm training with a male embalmer, and I'm finding it really, really difficult because our work ethics are so different. The way he treats the dead and the way he talks about them is just so different to the way I think. When I say, 'Hey, that's not on,' all I get is 'Ha ha. They can't hear me.' I find that upsetting. How hard is it to just cover them up, give them a little bit of dignity when they're on the mortuary table? That's where women are so different from men. We're brought up to think about things like that (Linda).

Claire also used a gendered discourse of respect, arguing that, as a woman, she had more respect than male embalmers for the dead body. In her opinion, women are more able to imagine the corpse as an individual person and therefore more likely to take a more careful and minimalist approach to making incisions in corpses.

They might be dead, but they're still people. They were someone's mother, father, sister, brother, or lover you know. They're people. It could be my Mum lying there, and as women, we have respect for that. We are always careful not to drop their head on the table, or treat them like they're a slab of meat and start butchering them and making cuts where you don't need to be making incisions. Some of the guys are so disgusting (Claire).

In her account, Irene also talked of treating the corpses as if they were her own mother or father, even when no one else was there. She stated that she was taught this principle as a (girl) child but suggested that, not having had such early training, the men at her firm did not always behave with such care:

I tell the men, 'Treat the person as if it is your own mother or father. How you would like them to be treated? How would you like your mother looking? How would you like her to be lifted?' Those are the sorts of things women somehow learn as children. They don't need to be told that it doesn't matter if no one is seeing you. You've got to live with yourself (Irene).

As Bradbury (1999: 185) points out, embalming is not always a pleasant job. Decomposing bodies smell and leak. Much of the work is straightforward and routine and when embalmers are working long days, shut away on their own, it can become monotonous work. Megan talked about men coping less well than women with monotonous and repetitive actions. Tolich and Briar (1999: 131) write of a gender division of labour in supermarkets, where women were confined to what could become monotonous checkout work, freeing the men to do other, more varied work. The reason given was that, in monotonous conditions, women were better at emotional management than men. According to Megan, in order to pass the time, the male embalmers where she worked had races to embalm corpses. They kept a tally of how quickly they had embalmed, for example, a drowned, a burnt or a decomposing corpse. She asserted that, having been an embalmer for a number of years, she could partly understand a need to add some motivation when they were working on their own in the

small hours of the morning, but that, as well as detesting their lack of respect for the corpses, she worried that one day a family member would inadvertently catch them in the act. Megan concluded:

Sometimes it is hard to go in there and do the job. It's not always easy and sure not always pleasant. In the middle of the night or at the weekend when the family is waiting to go to the beach, [embalming] can seem to take forever, but it's part of the job and if they don't like it they should quit. Listen to the radio or just switch your mind on to something else. But don't play games with the body. They deserve better than that (Megan).

Elaine criticised one male embalmer for making sexual comments about female corpses. She partially excused him by suggesting that too many years on the job may have led to complacency and desensitisation. But she then pointed to the anomaly of the continuing existence of a sexual 'double standard' that allowed differences between men's and women's standards of behaviour, an issue discussed by Mary Crawford (2003).

When I first came, the embalmer was a male. I was just appalled at the way he would make sexual remarks about the bodies – the women that is, never the men. I think with some embalmers there is a level of complacency that can happen and I guess that people can become desensitised after years and years of doing it. But, it's also the old double standard, isn't it, where men think it's their right to make smutty remarks about women, but they would never tolerate women doing the same [about men] (Elaine).

This instance of the use of a sexual double standard poses the question of the reasons for such behaviour by the male embalmer. He may have been 'joking' to cover embarrassment at the presence of the woman embalmer. On the other hand, he may have been exerting a form of sexual harassment, intended to maintain the existing patriarchal power structures in the funeral firm. Or, reflecting Sheppard's (1992: 157) point, the embalmer may have been attempting to punish Elaine for 'transgressing gender and organisational norms' by taking on men's work. None of the women accused the men of intent to punish or sexual harassment. Instead, they blamed the men's actions on nothing more sinister than that, because they were not women, they just did not know how a corpse should properly be treated.

Women as Mothers and Nurses

In discussing their mediation between the corpse and the family, the women used a gendered discourse of women as mothers and nurses. As Coltrane and Galt (2000: 16) point out, 'Caring is normatively linked to gender, insofar as women have felt socially

obligated to provide it, and men and felt entitled to receive it.’ Also implicit in the women’s accounts, but never stated, was the homophobic discourse that has been highly prevalent in New Zealand society. The focus was on the idea of women as mothers, who, unlike men, are free from any taint of sexual misconduct with dead bodies. They applied this discourse to explain why both men and women were likely to prefer a woman rather than a man embalmer.

Alison, for example, likened embalming to nursing, simultaneously representing women as nurses and as less sexually threatening than men. She argued that there is a demand for women to become embalmers, and that contrary to the arguments of funeral directors who might say that older people, especially, prefer male funeral workers, she found that older men often prefer to know that it is a woman embalming their dead wife. Alison said,

Older men just don’t like the thought of a strange male looking at and touching the body of their wife. But they’re used to the idea of women doing the nursing thing and that’s what embalming is like, really (Alison).

Following a similar theme, Joanna contended that older women, too, were unhappy at the thought of a man handling their corpse. Joanna had noticed that Maori women were especially concerned over the possibility and wondered if this was the reason Maori were much slower to accept embalming than Pakeha.

They spend their whole life, especially these older women, and they’ve only known one man. And then they die and they’ve got these men looking after them. This is particularly so with Maori women who have spent their lives keeping their bodies covered. They hate to think of themselves at the end of their lives exposed to other men. And the families are the same. When they know there is a female embalmer, they are so relieved and so much more accepting of embalming (Joanna).

Kate expanded Joanna’s argument when she described the way Maori families came to the funeral home to wash and dress the corpse. If the corpse was a man, the men in the family did the preparation, while the women waited in another room. If the corpse was a woman, it was the women who cared for the body while the men gathered outside. In Kate’s experience, while both men and women Pakeha prefer to know the embalmer is a woman, Maori prefer the embalmer to be the same sex as the corpse. She explained:

We have both a male and a female embalmer, but most of our embalming is now done by the female. Once it was expected that men did the embalming but now that women are doing it, if they think about it at all, which most don’t, Pakeha people, male and female, seem to like to know it’s a woman. For Maori though, it’s important to have a man for their men and a woman for their women. We now have two rooms available so that once the embalming is completed the women can wait in one, make a coffee, watch TV, have a

chat, while the men wash and dress their male [deceased], or the men can wait while the women do the females (Kate).

A further claim using the discourse of women as mothers and nurses was that parents of children who die feel more comfortable knowing that a woman is doing the embalming. The reason, the women participants remarked, is the belief that a woman will be more nurturing towards their dead child. Joanna explained:

I've had such a positive response from young parents when they find there is a female here. I guess if you were a mother and you lost a child, you would be more inclined to want them to go to a female than to a male. Just for that, I guess, that nurturing feeling (Joanna).

Funeral director Tania Faithfull endorsed this understanding. She declared that 'most people, including male funeral directors and the police, are more comfortable when a woman deals with dead babies and children' (cited in Redgrave, 2002: 194).

'A Woman's Presentation Skills': Women's Tacit Skills

When it came to the presentation of the corpse to the families after embalming, the women represented themselves through accounts of their superior experience and skill at applying cosmetics, styling hair and knowledge of fabrics and colours. Here they were representing skills often ignored as skills, tacit skills, as of greater value than the men's more recently learned, and less often applied, skills. As Annette said, 'I think it's about how a woman gets up in the morning does her hair, puts her face on and therefore has a skill the men don't have.'

Kay and Natalie made a similar point when they described women's years' of practice at doing hair and make up:

It comes down to a woman's presentation skills. The guys all knew how to embalm. But the presentation, the whole hair thing, the whole make up, the whole womanly touch, they did not have. When John was on duty, he always asked my help with make up colours and what side sheets [casket liners] would go with the clothes (Kay).

I'm a funeral director, not an embalmer. But the embalmer is a man and I used to see the look of disappointment on the families' faces when they came to view. There is nothing wrong with his embalming. He's a very good embalmer. But he just doesn't understand the importance of getting the final touches right. Now I assist in the back room, because I enjoy doing a person's hair, make-up, and clothing and making sure they're all right. Things like that don't matter to a man. They try, but they don't know how to do it properly and think you're making a fuss about nothing anyway, so are happy to hand the job over (Natalie).

Irene used the example of how she suggested to two young women that they might dress their mother's body and apply her cosmetics to show how she encouraged as much participation as possible by the deceased. She also emphasised her belief that doing so is beneficial to the future mental well being of her client families.

I try to get families involved as much as possible because it's good for them later on. One lady who knew she was dying came and talked to me about it. We went through what she wanted so when she died and her daughters came in I asked them, 'Would you like to come and dress Mum and put her make up on?' They thought that was great. They said, 'We didn't think we were allowed to.' I said, 'You're allowed to do whatever you like and feel you can do. You don't have to but the option is there.' They came in and had a lovely time. Then they said, 'That was neat. We did the last thing for Mum. We had her looking just spot on' (Irene).

The women also spoke of men clients' appreciation of women's better understanding of such things as appropriate clothing. Lynette's description was typical of several women's representations of their dealings with bereaved men:

Some men, especially some of the farmers I've dealt with are just lost. We'll get a situation of a father and three sons and there are no daughters-in-law around and you really notice it. You've got to get in there and try to soften it all. Some will say, 'What do you think I should dress her in? What clothing do you want? Come into the bedroom. What do you think?' And I'll say, 'Well, it's really your choice, but that looks nice. It looks as if she had that for special occasions.' And they'll say, 'That's good. Thank goodness you were here. We wouldn't have known what to do.' They really appreciate your help. They'll say, 'It's been really good to have a woman to help us out' (Lynette).

Kim, on the other hand, needed to instruct the men at her firm to make the changes that she believed to be important. In doing so, she was mediating between the men at her firm and the bereaved, on behalf of the deceased.

When I first started working with the male directors I impressed on them that when they do an arrangement with a family please ask for a full set of underwear with the clothing because they're the little things that some of the guys used to forget. They would come back from the family with a frock and I'm going, 'Okay, where's the knickers, where's the bra, where's the pantyhose?' 'Oh, I never thought of that.' 'Okay it's important.' Well, it is important to me. And it is important to the family. And it's the same with the make up. Ask them if they want make up on. Always ask the family with a lady. It's just automatic. It's one of the questions I always ask so we've had to try to train the men to do exactly the same (Kim).

Pringle (1998: 106) argues that increasing numbers of women entering a specialist occupation can alter the way the specialty is viewed, creating a demand for their particular form of service and thus challenging men to change the way they work. In the following section, I discuss how men in the funeral industry have tended to learn how changes in care for the bereaved should be made, but then, without in any way altering their own performance (Witz, 1998: 61), remain in control, while delegating the

new performance of the work to women. In other words, the men go to courses to learn how to allow the bereaved to express emotions of grief. By then passing the work to women, the men often do not need to make a shift from being the detached, expert professional who expresses only emotions of control, to being the professional nurturer.

‘Men Won’t Talk about how You Feel’: From Emotions of Control to Expression of Emotions

As a woman I can just drop in and check up on people. Once I popped in to see an old [newly widowed] fellow, knowing his daughters had left the day before. I asked, ‘How are you?’ ‘I’m fine.’ ‘Have you eaten today?’ ‘Oh, no. I’ll make some toast in a minute.’ I made him a cup of tea, then left him to it, but something just didn’t feel right so I popped back about 2 hours later. He was still in the chair; everything was still exactly the same. I said, ‘You haven’t eaten anything. Now you talk to me about this.’ I was in a role where I was almost mothering him, whereas his daughters couldn’t have done that, because it’s not their role. A man couldn’t have done it because *men will sit and talk about fishing and rugby but they won’t talk about how you feel*. As it turned out *he was scared of eating* because he’d never been shopping before, so if he ate what his daughters had left he’d have to go shopping. My role was to hook him into [a community group] that could teach him how to go into a supermarket and shop. I took him the first time and he stood there in front of the tea bags and he said, ‘My God’ and I’m looking and thinking, ‘I didn’t know there were so many kinds’ so I asked, ‘what colour packet would you like? Let’s try that.’ It took him 6-7 months to learn to shop and then he rang me and said, ‘Hey I did it on my own today.’ But he was not going to tell his daughters that. That had been Mum’s job. It felt pretty special being able to help without him losing face with his family (Megan, my emphasis).

In describing her interaction with a bereaved client, Megan focused on how she enabled her client to express his fears of coping on his own. The reason she gave for her success was that, as a woman, she asked her client what was upsetting him, whereas in men’s relationships with clients, they focus on small talk rather than emotional issues. According to Megan, it is because of their experiences as nurturers and mothers that women funeral directors are uniquely in a position to help the bereaved. On the other hand, because men are unable to talk to each other about their feelings they tend to miss opportunities to solve underlying problems. Old professional discourses adopted by funeral directors in Aotearoa New Zealand are concerned with maintaining professional status, dignity and control. As discussed in Chapter Four, men funeral directors claimed that achieving professionalism necessitates the regulation and repression of emotions, both their own and those of their customers, through, as Rutherford (2001: 327) expresses it, ‘a command and control approach.’ But the late twentieth century funeral industry shift to a focus on grief and caring for bereaved families, has brought funeral

directors into more open contact with emotions. This causes a problem for those men who have been socialised to believe that expressing emotions is dangerous and not part of the professional masculine culture of the work place.

It is a fallacy that men do not express emotion in the work sphere (Fineman, 2000: 7-8). The emotions that men may legitimately express are the emotions of control, emotions such as fear, pride, enthusiasm and drive. And these are simply not recognised as, or admitted to being, emotions, but are instead 'disguised by rationality' (Mulholland, 2003: 91). Furthermore, as Mulholland argues, 'emotionality is ... critical to entrepreneurial men and they reserve it as a resource to be consumed in business activity' (ibid). Hugh, a funeral director, illustrated these arguments when he expressed his anxieties over facing emotion at a funeral. He was afraid that bereaved men would be angered if the funeral director saw their grief. The best way to avoid possible trouble, he decided, was to pretend that he had not noticed his clients' grief. Hugh's explanation:

Eyes are the most devastatingly strong area of communication, far more than anything else. At funerals it can be very difficult because if men are crying you mustn't make eye contact. They will actually get angry with you if they think you are looking at them if they are crying (Hugh).

Funeral director, Philip, talked about how the success of his role as a funeral director depended on constant vigilance in his social life. He stated that wherever he went he needed to be conscious of the image he was presenting and that he could not afford to miss greeting anyone he knew in case he offended them, thus losing future business. When discussing the grief of bereaved families, Philip stated that he did not think about their grief, that rather, he was more concerned about upsetting them by making a mistake. He said:

It's not the funerals and the grief and the dying that upset me. They never upset me. What upsets me is making mistakes. I live in fear of making mistakes and upsetting a family (Philip).

It is unclear with both Hugh and Philip, whether their concern was over adding to their clients' distress, or whether it was over the possibility of their clients' ensuing anger causing the loss of future custom. The ambiguity of the men's intentions raises two issues. The first is the disjunction between funeral directing as a commercial business and funeral directors' professional project with its claims to altruism. As Rossides

(1998) suggests, funeral directors exemplify the reasons for the impossibility of trying to theorise professions as distinct from any other organisations. He writes:

Funeral directors ... illustrate the difficulties of making sense of the professions. Funeral directors have tried and failed to professionalise: the mix of commerce and formalised funerals (and of course, the type of service performed) have been drawbacks (ibid: 177).

The second issue raised by the funeral directors' ambiguity is their concern to avoid others' emotional issues while focusing on the importance of maintaining their own emotions of control. The clergy in Hockey's (1993) study of 'acceptable' grief at funerals portrayed similar beliefs. They believed that they should look as if they were empathetic while always remaining in control; or, as Hockey (ibid: 141) writes, 'Control must be exercised with artistry.'

According to the women participants, other male funeral directors have had the same difficulty as Hugh and Philip in responding to the feminisation of the funeral industry and the growing demands for the emotionalisation of funerals. As Davies (1995: 187) argues:

Masculinity fears and feminises dependency. It handles vulnerability and indeed any emotional expression by handing it over to women, and repressing and denying the need for any discussion of such matters in the 'rational' forum of a public place or space.

Facing expectations of the bereaved to express emotions through the funeral period, funeral directors have maintained control by studying grief-counselling skills. In this way they are still the 'expert'. Witz (1998: 57) points out that 'new forms of organising demand new forms of organisational work, and this involves radically changing the performative aspects of ... work.' Not all male funeral directors then use their newly learnt skills to change the performance of their work. Instead, some capitalise on the tacit skills of untrained 'naturally caring' women, perhaps office workers or even women employed especially, as after-funeral visitors, to take care of the growing emotion work. Through using the women to do the caring work, funeral directors provide the caring support now expected, while themselves remaining removed from facing emotional expression of the bereaved. In this way, they have kept the care of emotions as a secondary issue to that of arranging the funeral and preparation of the corpse.

Contrary to this approach by male funeral directors, women are more likely to take on emotion work as part of their own job rather than delegating it to a subordinate. In doing so women funeral directors are raising emotion work to the same status as making funeral arrangements. The women participants maintained that this means the arrival of increasing numbers of women funeral directors and celebrants tends to make men funeral directors feel threatened. The women supported their claims using a combination of essentialist and social constructionist discourses of gendered difference to show that women are more able than men to care for the bereaved. In their accounts women are caring, empathetic and capable of casual physical intimacy in the interests of helping their grieving customers both because this is what women just do naturally, and because it is what women are trained from childhood to do. Ellen, a celebrant, combined the two discourses to explain why she believed women have the ability to care for the bereaved:

Women are instinctively nurturing and to be able to go to people and touch them when they're really distressed and bereaved and confused is something that we're able to do as women. We're more practised at it. We're the ones who smooth the brows. In all the years I was in the paid workforce while our children were at school my husband never once took a day off to look after the children if they were sick. I always took the day off. Some of the jobs he did he could have [taken the time off]. I don't think I'd stand for it now. But it was expected and because of it women are just so capable at dealing with emotions (Ellen).

There was a strong consensus among the women that there is a need to support the bereaved through offering them emotional and physical closeness but that there are difficulties for male funeral directors in supporting the bereaved as naturally and as well as the women do. Funeral director Megan suggested that the male funeral directors feel threatened by women funeral directors because it is easier for women to gain rapport with the bereaved without making the bereaved feel threatened. She explained:

Sometimes as a woman you can get closer. If a man is upset you can hold his hand and say, 'Just go slowly. We'll do something else and come back to that.' The guys can't do that though. They have their own ways of getting around that sort of thing but if someone wants it or if you think someone might be better with a little touchy feely stuff, as a woman you can give it without being so threatening as a guy. But at the same time this can make the guys [funeral directors] feel threatened by women funeral directors because we can do what they can't (Megan).

According to Ellen and Megan, then, the reason for male funeral directors feeling threatened by women funeral directors is that women, through both experience and societal expectations of what is acceptable behaviour, are often able to offer sympathy in ways that the men cannot. Women have been socialised to take prime responsibility

for emotion work and treat it as a central part of social dealings (James, 1989: 22-3). Moreover, by being able to raise emotion work to the same status as making funeral arrangements, the women believe that they are able to move with societal wishes and offer the bereaved and the funeral industry more than men.

Frequently underlying the women's reasons for their ability to offer physical support to the bereaved, is the homophobic discourse discussed above. Funeral director, Joanna, attributed the male funeral directors' feelings of threat to society's dual standard of, on the one hand, acceptance of women as carers with no ulterior motives when they touch others, and on the other hand, a distrust of men's motives when they touch anyone, women or men. Joanna, while not blaming individual men for the situation, believed that society's fears leave an important space for women to fill in the funeral industry. She stated:

Women are a threat to male funeral directors because if somebody comes in grieving, as a woman you can put your arms around them and comfort them. As a woman you can do that, and it won't be perceived as anything else. As a male, you can't. You haven't got the freedom to do that. A woman can also get away with touching on the shoulder whereas with a man, you'd probably look at him sideways and think, 'Hey mate, what are you doing?' It's not the man's fault. It's just the attitude in our society. But it means we need women funeral directors (Joanna).

Funeral director, Irene's explanation for her successful dealing with grieving men is another example of the utilisation of the homophobic discourse. She argued that, as a woman, she was better able to offer emotional support to bereaved men who would accept physical closeness from her that they were unable to accept from a man funeral director. Irene:

A man on his own will often respond to me better. At a funeral, I'll take his arm and physically support him. It's okay for me to do that, but not the men (Irene).

Linda, also a funeral director, alluded to the same homophobic discourse. But, her thinking was not about whether it was *socially acceptable* for men funeral directors to offer physical support for men clients. Linda's focus was men funeral directors' *emotional reserve* and their inability to express emotions with men clients. In doing so she was inverting the masculinist binary opposition in which containing emotions was valued over expressing emotions:

If a man comes in to see his mum or his wife, he's not embarrassed about crying in front of me. The difference is that if the men are on duty they are more stiff upper lip and *containing* their emotions whereas I don't have a problem with going and giving [the

bereaved man] a hug. The men won't do that and yet they should be able to. I've seen them hug ladies, but I've never seen them hug a man (Linda, my emphasis).

Linda's reference to 'containing' emotions points to a different explanation for male funeral directors' tendency to control, rather than express, emotions. That is, it has come to seem 'natural' for women to express emotions because they are likely to have been socialised to do so since childhood. In the same way, it has come to seem 'unnatural' for men to express emotions, except for emotions of control, because this is what most have been socialised to do.

Davies (1995: 149) argues that, when women who are professional care workers transport their care work from the private to the public sphere of paid work, they do not view emotions as something to be left at home. This was the discourse used by men funeral directors, throughout the twentieth century, to explain why women should *not* attend funerals, let alone organise them. Ignoring the presence of their own emotions of control, the men's professional discourse, as discussed in Chapter Four, sought to ban expression of emotions from the professional and public sphere of funerals. Thus, by the association of women with emotional expression, male funeral directors were effectively banning women, as mourners and as workers.

The funeral industry's move to providing grief care links it to the woman's arena of caring professions. It is thus opened to the new professional discourse, which gives permission for the expression rather than the control of emotions. Nevertheless, the continuing dominance of the old modernist masculine discourses still constrains women entering professional and organisational worlds. For example, some women mentioned that while allowing the bereaved the right to tears and emotion, they themselves were careful to exhibit no signs of emotion. In other words, aware that they were competing in a men's domain, they took on the role of honorary man, citing the modernist discourse that equates being professional with expressing only emotions of control.

Ellen, a celebrant who admitted to being an emotional person, stated this clearly. She declared that, while allowing her clients to weep, she remained 'totally professional' by not expressing emotion. Ellen said:

Although I'm an emotional person I don't get emotional about the work. When I'm with a family it's like switching to professional mode. It doesn't mean that I can't give someone a hug when I'm visiting the family to plan the ceremony. Often I will do that. I go and put my arms around them and let them weep and cry and go to pieces. A woman

can do that but a man can't. It can be either a man or a woman but I can put my arms around them and let them weep. I respond to people's emotions, but when I take the ceremony, it's totally professional mode (Ellen).

For Beth, also, to 'be professional' meant showing no emotion. She admitted to having 'felt' for some families, but alleged that, as a professional, she was able to hide her feelings.

I have never *broken down* or *been emotional* at any of the funeral services I have done. I might have felt more for some families than others but I have never shown that. It doesn't mean that I don't feel for them but I've always been able to be professional when it's time to take the service (Beth, my emphasis).

Beth's comment raised an important point that appears to be at the centre of the issue of expression of emotions. That is, she conflated the *expression* of emotion or *being emotional* with 'breaking down'. Another celebrant, Lesley, believed that male funeral directors avoid employing women as celebrants because they are afraid the women will 'fall to pieces' by succumbing to excessive emotions. Like several of the women, Lesley used the men's professional discourse that equates 'getting emotional' with loss of control and was at pains to distance herself from any such unprofessional behaviour. She did distinguish between empathy and emotion, claiming to be able to be empathetic without being emotional. Lesley explained:

A lot of men funeral directors prefer to use men celebrants because they're not as – I was going to say emotional but I don't mean emotional because I don't get emotional in my work. It's not to say that I don't empathise but I don't get emotional. But *men assume women are going to fall to pieces* which is why they hire men rather than women celebrants (Lesley).

On the other hand, there were some women who stated that they were comfortable with expressing emotion along with the grieving family. Annette was one, although interestingly she then felt the need to justify her tears, by showing that they had helped her client.

It's okay to sometimes cry with the family. One woman said later that she had felt bad for making me cry too, but that mothering me had helped her to cope (Annette).

Megan also justified her tears, but, like Linda above, she did so by resisting and reversing the old masculinist discourse that devalues the expression of emotion. She depicted women funeral directors sitting with bereaved women, letting them weep and talk about their feelings. In this way, she believed that she enabled her clients to 'move on' in a way that men cannot.

There's this thing that women will pick up a cup of tea and sit down with a woman and have a howl and a bit of a groan and a moan and often it's out and gone and you move on, whereas men don't. That is really rewarding. It's not just about dealing with the dead body (Megan).

Conclusion

Adopting a combination of essentialist and constructionist discourses, women in after-death work insisted that they 'do things differently' from men. Many of the discursive strategies they exercised were in resistance to men's closure strategies. Especially apparent were the many ways in which the women participants inverted the binary oppositions of the old professional discourses, to reposition the formerly negative women's attributes, as positive and beneficial, both to the funeral industry and to the bereaved clients. In doing so, the women discursively separated themselves from the hierarchical role, established in the old professional model of expert professional, in relation to their clients and to other funeral industry occupational groups. They also presented discourses on the primacy of the caring nature of their work and relationships, with the bereaved and with corpses. Finally, the women drew on discourses of emotionality to assert the importance of after-death workers acting to facilitate the expression of emotion, rather than attempting to contain or control emotionality.

There are still questions over the underlying reasons for recent changes in after-death care. Shifts in how funerals are organised and how grief is expressed coincide with increasing numbers of women entering the funeral industry on more equal terms. This suggests a link, but does not answer the question: if women are responsible for the changes, what is it about them that contributes to such changes? Paul Williams (1999) reflects on these matters in relation to the growing entry of women into medicine. He writes:

Yet there is continuing controversy about the meaning of observed gender differences in practice, whether they reflect an essentially pragmatic response to women's dual workload of family and career, or whether they are the result of underlying differences in attitudes, values and orientations.... The results show that seemingly related differences in practice are accounted for in different ways: while some are associated with differences in family situation, others are tied to attitudes, while others are a function of gender alone. The results also reveal gender similarities which do not suggest that women are becoming more like men, but that men, and the profession as a whole are changing (Williams, 1999: 108).

Recent magazine articles in Aotearoa New Zealand, such as Hannah Sperber's (2003) 'The New Undertakers' feature both men and women funeral directors taking a new professional approach to funerals and their clients. They show that the attitudes of men in the funeral industry are now changing. It is not possible to claim with certainty whether it is the advance of women in the industry that has influenced the men, or whether the change in direction in the funeral industry has made the work more appealing to women. The evidence in this thesis points heavily towards the former, but both are closely interrelated. I suggest, contrary to Williams above, that changes are not connected to any pragmatic need for women in the funeral industry to juggle career with family responsibilities. Rather, a combination of growing numbers of women after-death workers and demands from a greatly increased female client base, have brought changes that are more to do with women's attitudes, values and skills learned through different life experiences.

Chapter Nine

Conclusions: Connecting Closure and Difference

I remember once when I went to [a rural area] and there was a man who had completed suicide in his vehicle and he had been dead three or four days. The local policeman said, 'I don't think you should be here,' and I said, 'Well, let's just give it a go together' ... and we went and opened the door to let the flies out and it was just gross and I'll never forget it.... The man was really bad and the policeman said, 'Right, let's have a go,' so we did half and I looked at him and he said, 'Shall we go outside for a minute?' and I said, 'Oh yeah.' So we raced outside and were throwing up in the trees together ... and he said to me, 'God, you're a trooper,' and I said, 'Well, you're not doing so badly yourself.' And off we'd go, and it took us three goes to get the man on to the stretcher and into the car.... And then in the car, when we finally made it, I said, 'I've got something for you.' I always carry Wet Wipes and Smints and Vicks and things like that, girl things, and he said to me, 'I've never been so grateful for having a girl on the job for your Wet Wipes,' because we could wipe our hands with these wet nappy wipes and sponge off our faces and [there were the] peppermints for your mouth and Vicks up your nose so you didn't have to smell it because you can't wind the windows down and I had to drive all the way back to [the city]. And he said to me, 'Well, I've learnt a thing or two' and so now the boys here always carry Wet Wipes and things like that in the car (Megan, funeral director).

The introductory vignettes (pp. 1-3) presented images of two celebrants performing two different types of funeral services. The celebrants were deliberately gendered. In the first, Ted exhibited the array of skills in performing the type of funeral service over which I have seen many men presiding. It was a personalised, but formal service, following a slightly modified Christian funeral liturgy, with both the proceedings and expression of emotion carefully controlled by the kindly, but reserved, professional expert. While Ted invited the mourners to express their emotion, his manner and timing effectively limited and contained expression of emotion. On the other hand, in the second vignette, Lynette represented the skills and type of funeral service more frequently displayed by women celebrants. After her introduction, rather than performing a starring role, Lynette acted as a link between the various elements of the service, which were prepared and performed by the bereaved family. In doing so, Lynette was able to allow more freedom for expression of emotion.

The differences between Ted and Lynette, while focusing on celebrants at the funeral service, were intended to represent the gendered differences in a range of after-death workers, including funeral directors, embalmers, celebrants and clerical workers. The quote above from funeral director, Megan, extends the ideas suggested in the vignettes. It is an example of the women research participants' expression of their ability to perform after-death work as well as men, and their claims that their experiences as women enable them to contribute different, learned skills from men. Megan describes her ability to withstand the unpleasant, 'dirty' and heavy aspects of after-death work as well as a man. She then supports her claim of the usefulness of her introduction of 'girl things' such as 'wet nappy wipes' by explaining that they are now included as regular items among men after-death workers carrying out removals. Megan's funeral industry work is equal to that of a man and she also brings improvements to his work with her skills learned through her different experiences as a woman. What Megan's story does, then, is reflect the argument of theorists, including Scott (1988), Bacchi (1990) and Adams (2003), discussed in Chapter Two. That is, rather than arguing for either gendered equality or gendered difference, we need to claim that women are equal to men and also contribute different learned skills from those of men.

The aim of this thesis has been to examine the means through which women are surmounting gendered exclusion and marginalisation in funeral industry after-death work in Aotearoa New Zealand. In doing so, I have sought to present women's voices as a counterbalance to the overwhelming predominance of men's versions of the development and processes of funeral work. By focusing on the women's accounts of their experiences of working in the funeral industry, I have presented the women as actors, rather than as passive victims of men's exclusion. There is statistical evidence of women's minority status in funeral work. Moreover, the recurring themes in the women's stories of the perseverance necessary to enter the industry and of the continuing gender boundaries within after-death work, clearly link women's minority status to the men's long-term deployment of gendered closure strategies. And yet, in most of the women's stories, far from being victims, they represent themselves as making progress. They contend that, in overcoming men's closure strategies, they offer a different style of after-death service to bereaved clients, a style predicated on the skills learned in their life experiences as women.

Although funeral directors were never successful in gaining state recognition as a profession, their actions throughout the twentieth century reflect those of other professionalising groups pursuing social status and a market monopoly for their services. I have argued that, similarly to the projects of groups such as doctors and veterinarians, the New Zealand funeral directing men's professional project was a modernist, masculinist project. In keeping with their understanding of the necessary attributes required to become a profession, it was a project designed by funeral director leaders with the specific intention of creating and maintaining a gendered occupational hierarchy. To this end, the occupations of funeral director, embalmer and funeral officiant have been held to be men's jobs, more highly valued than the supportive roles allocated to women.

Witz' (1992) fourfold model of gendered professional closure strategies provided a theoretical framework for examining the experiences related by the women research participants. It brought to the fore the collective and gendered nature of strategies of exclusion and marginalisation, exercised by funeral directors in their attempts to maintain the gendered hierarchy. The most striking example is the way the funeral directors' failed professional project and subsequent lack of state recognition has enabled them to pursue a concrete discriminatory strategy against women. I refer to industry control of access to training, which persists even though the certificate courses are under the aegis of a state tertiary institution. While state recognised professions, such as medicine and law, use their status to claim self-regulation in many areas, because their training has been removed from industry control, access is closely monitored and bound by anti-discrimination laws. A large component of funeral directing and embalming training is the prerequisite of a year's employment in the industry, followed by continuing employment throughout the training period. In addition, the lack of state registration of funeral directors and embalmers has left the way clear for the FDANZ, the largest group of industry leaders, to create their own 'register' of funeral directors and their own rules of who qualifies to be listed. These two factors have enabled practising funeral directors, the great majority of whom are men, to decide who may, or may not, enter funeral directing and embalming training and then to decide who among the credentialed may be entered on the list of registered FDANZ funeral directors, the largest 'register' of funeral directors in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The stories of the women participants revealed exclusionary strategies by men that, in the light of anti-discriminatory laws, are clearly illegal. The exclusion of women from training epitomises the men's closure strategies. What I have discussed are some of the more common practices aimed at thwarting women's attempts to gain access to training. Other, blatantly illegal and deliberately exclusionary, strategies must remain unmentioned for fear of breaching internal confidentiality and causing repercussions for the women. And yet, the men continue their discriminatory behaviour unchallenged: there have been no reports of any woman laying a complaint before the Human Rights Commission. I have argued that, in itself, the current system of access to funeral directing is not, perhaps, consciously discriminatory against women. However, while the majority of funeral directors are men, working in the modernist model of professions that sees professions in general, and funeral directing in particular, as men's domains where women's role is as supportive helpmeet or handmaid, as long as access to education and registration remain in industry control, women will continue to be disadvantaged.

Just as Witz' theoretical model of gendered closure strategies includes women's countervailing strategies, so the women participants have recounted their strategies for surmounting the funeral directors' closure strategies to successfully become funeral directors and embalmers. However, unlike those in Witz' model, the women funeral directors and embalmers have not worked collectively. Witz' model, therefore, does not satisfactorily account for their success. Instead, a feminist poststructural analysis has drawn attention to ways in which women have countered the discourses of the masculinist professional model. This has been achieved largely through employing a combination of essentialist and constructionist discourses that resist and invert the male discourses.

Particularly remarkable was the frequency of women's adoption of a discourse of resistance through persistence. According to many women, once they had decided that their aim was to become a funeral director or embalmer, they persisted, often overcoming not just one but a variety of men's closure strategies, until they achieved their goal. The women have used a wide range of tactics. Some entered a firm in a clerical role and 'grew' the job, making themselves familiar with the work. Becoming trusted by their employers, they gradually took on more and more work, sometimes

forcing the issue if, for example, they were asked to take on a funeral directing role for a friend or relative, at others filling a gap when the employer needed assistance, such as taking on funeral directing work and more of a management role when a boss bought a branch office. Other women who entered the industry in a clerical position hoping to grow the job were less successful and many years later were still in clerical work. The difference between the two groups of women appears to be due partly to the circumstances surrounding the firms. Those who were more successful tended to work for smaller firms that were no longer functioning as family firms. There was, therefore, no family member to take on increased responsibility.

Other women persuaded a funeral director to allow them to work for nothing during their training period. They were then able to gain work as credentialed funeral directors or embalmers, though not at the firm where they had worked unpaid. Some women, unable to gain work as funeral directors, have set up their own funeral firms or bought an existing firm. There are not many women in a position to be able to do this, and it is difficult to discuss individual situations for ethical reasons. However, an interview in *Her Business* (2000) provides a clue to the difficulties faced in setting up a funeral firm. Cheryl Cowden told of the effort involved in establishing her firm on suddenly being made redundant after working for a funeral firm for ten years. She admitted that she had succeeded through 'having an extremely helpful and understanding woman bank manager and lawyer', supportive family and friends, mortgaging her house, studying 'a course on running a business at the Polytechnic', obtaining a state Work Scheme grant and putting in a '24-hour day, seven-day a week workload' (ibid: 25). Although Cheryl may not have had collective support from other women funeral directors, she has drawn moral and political support, as well as networking opportunities, from membership of another professional association, Business and Professional Women New Zealand (ibid: 26).

Most women participants adopted discourses of resistance, often coinciding with those of the new model of professions, valorising 'feminine' attributes which men funeral directors have declared unsuitable for the role of funeral director. They tended to maintain that, as women, they have been trained since childhood to empathise with others, to allow expression rather than containment of emotion, and to listen to what others have to say rather than telling them what to do. In other words, according to the

women, men tend to disempower clients and employees by establishing hierarchical control of the after-death process. Women, on the other hand, they claim, nurture and enable their clients and employees by sharing power with them.

These are ideals expressed by the women. In reality, women managers and owners face the same issues of management, control and financial viability as men; women celebrants have the same necessity as men to have a funeral service arranged on time, and to ensure the smooth flow of the service. Whether it is a man or a woman who owns a firm, decisions need to be made and final responsibility accepted. This means a hierarchy of occupations tends to remain, although where there was a woman funeral director owner or manager, in most cases there was more job sharing, the hierarchy was noticeably less apparent and less likely to be gendered.

Unlike the women funeral directors and embalmers, another group of women have reflected Witz' model of professional projects, working collectively to engage in their own professional project. From the mid-1990s, the newly professionalising specialism of celebrancy, with its predominance of women members, entered the arena. As they have pursued their goals, the celebrants, too, have faced closure strategies practised by funeral directors. There has been a tendency among funeral directors to unite with their former occupational rivals, the clergy, in attempting to maintain the public role of funeral officiant as preferably a men's, but at least a clergy, occupation. There are several reasons. One is that the funeral directors believe the funeral officiant, or celebrant, represents the 'public face' of the funeral director. In their masculinist project, any such public face should be a professional man's face. Another reason is that last century funeral directors competed successfully with clergy for the right to limit and control the conditions surrounding the funeral service. For most clergy, already receiving an income for their parish work, performing a funeral service is a minor, albeit extra, aspect of their work. Payment for funeral work, in the form of an honorarium to cover expenses, may even be returned to their parish. There may be some residual resentment over the way some funeral directors treat clergy as casual employees, but on the whole there is an acceptance of the status quo.

Many of the new celebrants, on the other hand, are in the same position as funeral directors at the beginning of last century. They are trying to establish an occupational specialism with which to earn their living. The funeral directors last century, while

attempting to take control of the ritual aspects of after-death work from the clergy, had autonomy over their own specialist area, the preparation and disposal of the human corpse. They were able to stipulate their own conditions of work, seek clients (within their own group's code of ethics), and set the fee they judged necessary for the survival of their businesses. Unlike funeral directors, few celebrants have autonomy over setting their fee. It is the funeral director, and not the celebrant, who nearly always decides the amount celebrants receive for their work. Unlike clergy, for celebrants, preparing and conducting services is their occupational specialism, it is what they do to earn a living. Therefore, just as funeral directors charge their clients for their time and expenses at the rate they believe is necessary to keep their firm viable, so celebrants need to be able to charge for the number of hours they work for each funeral and at the rate they believe their time is worth. In other words, they need to be paid a fair wage, rather than a token honorarium, for the work they perform.

Furthermore, for the celebrants, who consider themselves to be independent professionals, the reality is that, unlike the funeral directors, most are reliant on a competing occupational group (the funeral directors) for work opportunities. One of the closure strategies practised by the funeral directors is to not suggest a celebrant's name to the bereaved clients, in which case the celebrant simply does not have work. Alternatively, funeral directors suggest a celebrant's name for several funerals, until they start to feel relatively secure in regular work and then, suddenly, for no apparent reason, for a month or more they are no longer called upon. This may be the result of nothing more sinister than that the funeral director is trying someone new. The impact on the celebrants, nevertheless, is to create a sense of insecurity and self-doubt – perhaps they have done something to offend or upset the funeral director or the clients, or perhaps their work is just not good enough. The strategy works for the funeral director by creating a pool of compliant celebrants.

The celebrants are following a similar path to that followed by the funeral directors last century. They are establishing an occupational specialism; choosing a new occupational title 'celebrant'; creating an occupational association; arguing for autonomous control of their work; seeking recognition of their occupation as a profession; and seeking commensurate payment. The funeral directors' establishment and maintenance of market control of an occupational specialism involved occupational boundary disputes

with clergy. The celebrants, too, as they work towards establishing a specialism over which they have a market control, are engaging in boundary disputes, with funeral directors, clergy and JPs. However, most celebrant participants preferred not to admit to any sense of competing for position between themselves and funeral directors. While funeral directors continue freely to practise exclusionary strategies against celebrants, the celebrants' tenuous position was made clear. In the accounts of their experiences, several expressed concern at the possibility of losing future work if there was any suspicion that it was they who had revealed the men's strategies. Until funeral directors cease their closure strategies and treat celebrants as their equals, rather than as casual employees, celebrants' contributions to after-death work will continue to be marginalised.

Women within the funeral firm have also been marginalised, and their work devalued. The reason for this has been the development of funeral firms in Aotearoa New Zealand as family firms, run as an extension of the model of the early to mid-twentieth century middle class family under patriarchal control. There was a strict hierarchical, sexual division of labour: the man was considered the head of the house who entered forth into the public sphere as the earner of the 'family wage'; the woman remained in the private sphere of the home, responsible for the unpaid work of managing the household and reproduction and socialisation of the work force. Transporting this division of labour to the funeral firm was important to the men's professional project. Therefore, the men did the public, most highly valued work, while the women assisted in the background, doing 'untrained little jobs' to help out when needed. As both the funeral firms and the work they undertook grew, outside women have been employed, often part time, to take on the assisting role, usually in the form of clerical work. However, because the funeral firm model has often remained the family firm model with a patriarchal gendered hierarchy, some new clerical workers have been treated as outsiders, the work and the women undervalued.

Nevertheless, many of the clerical women have become valuable assets to the firms as they have gained knowledge of the firm and the work involved. Their hours have increased and their role titles upgraded to sound more valued and important. At the same time, the actual status of their position is revealed when a woman, especially a younger woman, is employed in the higher status occupation of funeral director. The

clerical women tend to appear to feel threatened by the new woman's arrival and work with the men funeral directors to ensure the woman funeral director's marginalisation from the culture of the funeral firm. The effect of this two-pronged marginalisation of the woman funeral director is to maintain a gendered hierarchy, with the woman funeral director positioned somewhere between the men funeral directors and the women clerical workers. As funeral firms employ more women funeral directors, and in funeral firms where the owner or manager is a woman, the family firm patriarchal model disappears and these gender hierarchies are much less apparent.

The questions remain as to whether increasing numbers of women entering the funeral industry on more equal terms will bring changes in how funerals are organised and how grief is expressed, and, if so, what it is about the women that contributes to such changes. Recent media coverage and the research participants' stories show that the attitudes of men in the funeral industry are now changing. It is not possible to claim with certainty whether it is the advance of women in the industry that has influenced the men, or whether the change in direction in the funeral industry has made the work more appealing to women. I suggest it is the former, although both are closely interrelated.

A major incentive for male funeral directors to bring women to work in their firms in a more public role has been the realisation since late last century that funeral directing is not just about dealing with the dead body. Funeral directing is also about dealing with their clients, the living bereaved, who are increasingly women. As I was thinking about this conclusion it was announced on Radio New Zealand's business news (August 18, 2005) that the giant Swedish firm Ikea is to increase its numbers of women managers from thirty percent to fifty percent because they believe that women understand better what their women customers want. In this they reflect the views of Duncan, a funeral director, who spoke to me in 2003 while I waited for a woman participant. He stated,

Women are the future of the funeral industry. More and more of our clients are women. And more and more, those women have been out to work, sometimes in high-powered jobs. They know what they want and that is not for some man to tell them what they want and what to do. An all male firm cannot expect to represent their needs and interests. So what do the women do? They go to a firm where there are women who will listen and understand where they are coming from (Duncan, funeral director).

It is becoming evident that it may always remain helpful for some bereaved men and women to participate in a formal funeral where emotions are contained and where a

paternal figure takes control of the after-death processes. Others, however, wish to retain control of the after-death processes and require more emotionally expressive options. When men funeral directors employ women to perform the emotional aspects of funeral work, it appears that they recognise the necessity of offering a more emotionally expressive service to remain competitive in the industry. However, employing untrained, low-paid women for emotional work suggests they consider that women have an important contribution to make, but either do not entirely recognise the intrinsic value of such work, or are still not comfortable with their own ability to perform the work. Whatever the reason for the men's decisions, they are employing more women in the funeral industry.

To conclude, the strength of this thesis is that it has examined, in depth, the impact of selected aspects of women's experiences working as funeral directors, embalmers, celebrants and clerical workers in the field of commercial after-death work throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. In doing so it has raised issues such as reasons underlying women's historical exclusion from this work and the continuing gender hierarchy present in the industry even as women increasingly enter occupations once denied to them. Because of a decision to make an in-depth focus on a limited number of issues rather than a more superficial coverage of a wider range of issues, it has been possible to reveal the complex and contradictory nature of gender power at work. Thus, it can be seen that while men may have used the power of their dominant position to constrain women, both men and women have been influenced by wider social understandings and expectations. It further shows that far from being passive victims, women have actively participated in their own gender projects. On the other hand, the limitations of this thesis stem from the tight in-depth focus on a few aspects of women's experiences and work in the funeral industry. Inevitably, several important issues that were revealed in the research data have not been examined.

However, the issues revealed, but not examined, open the way for future research on women in commercial after-death work and the wider field of women's work. The first issue is how the work of most celebrants and many embalmers fits, as so much of women's work today, into the category of 'non-standard' work. At the beginning of my research this had been a topic I was interested in pursuing, but during the analysis process other issues gradually became more compelling. The impact on funeral

industry women of their position in relation to non-standard work and multiple-job holding is one with implications for any study of contemporary women's employment. The second issue, as discussed in Chapter Three, is that of the participation of Maori women in commercial after-death work. The third issue, also discussed in Chapter Three, is the urgency of gathering the experiences of funeral directors' wives as previously invisible contributors to an important area of social endeavour in the history of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Nevertheless, this thesis has demonstrated that, along with the arrival of greater numbers of women after-death workers and women clients, there has been a shift in after-death work. It is becoming feminised. Clients are consulted, their choices heard, and emotion expressed or contained, according to preference. Funerals are now more often celebrations of loved ones' lives, reflecting their personalities and wishes, while offering comfort to the bereaved. After-death work has become a different undertaking from twenty years ago. Women clients and after-death workers are entering the field and their values and ways of working are influencing the industry and industry men, for so long dominated and constrained by the stereotypical masculine values of the old professional model. The women's work is equal to men's and they also bring the different skills they have learned through their experiences as women.

Appendix 1

Letter to Research Participants

School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work
Massey University
Private Bag 11-222
Palmerston North

31 July 2001

Dear _____,

As you will read in the accompanying Information Sheet, I am Bronwyn Watson, at present studying as a doctoral student in the Sociology Programme at Massey University. The focus of my PhD is to explore women's experiences and roles in the funeral industry in contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand. While in our society we have tended to think of women as the nurturers, it is only recently that women have become involved in funeral industry in any numbers, except in clerical positions.

To learn what led you to work in this field, the training you have had and your experiences of working in the funeral industry, I would like to hold an interview of about an hour with you. By collecting the stories of women from a range of Aotearoa/New Zealand centres I hope to build up a picture of women's experiences of working in the funeral industry in contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Enclosed is a copy of my information sheet outlining in a little more detail the purpose of my study and how you would participate. I will contact you within a week to talk further about this.

Yours sincerely

Bronwyn Watson

Appendix 2

Information Sheet

Women in the Funeral Industry in Contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand

What the Study is About

I am Bronwyn Watson, a doctoral student in the Sociology Programme at Massey University. My supervisors are Dr Martin Tolich and Dr Allannah Ryan, both senior lecturers in Sociology at Massey University. The focus of my PhD is to explore women's experiences and roles in the funeral industry in contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand.

To learn about how you came to be working in this field, your training and your experiences of working in the funeral industry, I would like to hold an audio taped interview with you. Because I hope to interview women associated with the funeral industry in a wide range of settings it is my belief that this study will be beneficial to women already working in the funeral industry and to those who would like to be doing this work. I believe it will also provide useful insights for male funeral directors and for the general New Zealand population. It will demonstrate the problems faced by women working or trying to work in this area, as well as showing the contributions and perspectives these women offer.

This research develops upon previous research that I have undertaken. During three months in one funeral home I explored the emotional strategies used by funeral directors and morticians to cope with their daily association with death and grief. I spent time with the funeral directors, embalmer, office staff and crematorium worker as a participant observer. From this I produced a paper, which was published in the journal *New Zealand Sociology*. More recently I completed a content analysis of *The New Zealand Funeral Director* (June 1939 - March 1999). The report examined the connection between changing social attitudes to death and the funeral directors' desire to achieve recognition as a profession.

What the Study Will Entail

This will involve an interview of about an hour. The questions will focus on how you entered this field of employment, your training and your working experiences.

Ethical Issues

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Protocol 01/37. The research will be conducted in accordance with the guidelines and requirements of the Code of Ethics. The number of women working in the funeral industry in Aotearoa/New Zealand is relatively small. However, every attempt will be made to keep what is said confidential. Conducting the research in 6-8 centres will help ensure confidentiality. No individual or company names will be used. Any other characteristics that could lead to the identification of individuals or companies will be changed. Interview tapes and field notes will be listened to or read by the researcher only and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet until their destruction twelve months after the completion of the study.

If you agree to take part in this study, you have the right to:

- refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study at any time until the summary of the results has been prepared.
- ask any questions about the study that occur to you at any time during your participation.
- provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researcher and that you will not be able to be identified in any reports prepared from the study.
- know that interviews will be taped and that you may ask to have the recorder turned off at any time.
- ask to see a summary of the findings of this research.

For further information contact either my PhD supervisors or me:

Bronwyn Watson, Dr Allanah Ryan, Dr Martin Tolich
School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work
Massey University, Private Bag 11-222, Palmerston North
Phone: 06 350 5799, Dr Ryan #2623 or Dr Tolich # 2625.

Appendix 3

Question Prompts

1. Some background: where they are from, their approximate age, what they were doing previously, what led them to this work, how they got started.
2. What training, how they heard about the training, where, when, how long, how many in the class, what it involved/covered, the costs, what sort of practical experience, ongoing training. Both funeral directing and embalming? Celebrancy.
3. What does their job entail? Removals, embalming, clerical, families, arranging services, conducting services, counselling. How many funerals conducted, officiated at, or bodies embalmed, what each tends to involve in time and activity, visits to the bereaved, before/after.
4. Hours each week, job satisfaction, frustrations - e.g. how does it fit with family commitments, can they ever get time away etc
5. Gender issues. Working as a woman in a largely male dominated field. Attitudes of other funeral directors. Any difficulties? Are they FDANZ members? Why/not? What value in belonging?
6. Attitudes of those outside the industry - social stigma? Recent/gradual changes?
7. Any noticeable changes in funerals or peoples' attitudes to funerals or funeral directors since they began? Any changes they'd like to see happen?
8. Any particular experiences they'd like to mention that perhaps epitomise their feelings about their work, good and bad.
9. Celebrants: How have they advertised their availability? What responses have they had? How were they contacted? Yellow pages? Did a funeral director recommend them? Other?
10. Working with funeral directors. Describe your experiences, their attitudes.

Appendix 4

Consent Form

Consent Form:

Women in the Funeral Industry in Contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand

1. Your Rights

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you agree to take part in this study, you have the right to:

- (a) refuse to answer any particular question, and to withdraw from the study at any time until the summary of the results has been prepared.
- (b) ask any questions about the study that occur to you at any time during your participation.
- (c) provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researcher and that you will not be able to be identified in any reports prepared from the study.
- (d) know that interviews will be taped and that you may ask to have the recorder turned off at any time.
- (e) ask to see a summary of the findings of this research.

2. Consent Statement

I, consent to participate in the PhD research project 'Women in the Funeral Industry in Aotearoa/New Zealand'. I accept the assurances given here and give permission for Bronwyn Watson to use the information gained during the research for any publication she may write.

Signed:

Date:

For further queries please contact:

Bronwyn Watson, Dr Allanah Ryan, Dr Martin Tolich

School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work

Massey University,

Private Bag 11-222,

Palmerston North

Phone: 06 350 5799, #2623 (Dr Ryan) or # 2625 (Dr Tolich)

Appendix 5**Transcribers' Statement of Confidentiality**

TRANSCRIBERS STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY
--

I acknowledge that I have been employed by Bronwyn Watson to transcribe audio-taped interviews which were recorded by Bronwyn Watson for her study.

I agree to keep confidential all the information contained in the audiotapes and the completed transcripts.

I agree to ensure that all materials in my possession related to this study are stored securely until such items have been handed over to Bronwyn Watson.

Signed _____

Name _____

Date _____

References

- Aaltio, Iris. 2002. 'Interviewing Female Managers: Presentations of the Gendered Selves in Contexts'. In *Gender, Identity and the Culture of Organizations*, edited by Iris Aaltio and Albert J. Mills. London: Routledge, pp. 201-218.
- Aaltio, Iris and Albert J. Mills. 2002. 'Organizational Culture and Gendered Identities in Context'. In *Gender, Identity and the Culture of Organizations*, edited by Iris Aaltio and Albert J. Mills. London: Routledge, pp. 3-18
- Abbott, Andrew. 1988. *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labour*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Acker, Joan. 1991. 'Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organisations'. In *The Social Construction of Gender*, edited by Judith Lorber and Susan A. Farrell. London: Sage, pp. 162-179.
- Acker, Joan. 1992. 'Gendering Organisational Theory'. In *Gendering Organisational Analysis*, edited by Albert J. Mills and Peta Tancred. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp. 248-260.
- Ackroyd, Peter. 1990. *Dickens*. London: Sinclair-Stevenson.
- Adams, Diana. 1996. *Care and Control: Exploring the Gendering of Emotion Management Tasks Among Uniformed Police*. Unpublished MA thesis. Palmerston North: Massey University.
- Adams, Sheila. 1993. 'A Gendered History of the Social Management of Death in Foleshill, Coventry, During the Interwar Years'. In *The Sociology of Death*, edited by David Clark. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 149-168.
- Adams, Tracey L. 2003. 'Professionalisation, Gender and Female-Dominated Professions: Dental Hygiene in Ontario'. In *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 40(3): 267-289.
- Aldridge, Val. 2001. 'Life's Little Rituals'. In *The Dominion*, March 22, p. 17.

- Aldridge, Val. 2002. 'Behind the Scenes at the Crematorium'. In *The Dominion*, April 13, Weekend Magazine, pp. 1-2.
- Alvesson, Mats and Yvonne Due Billing. 1997. *Understanding Gender and Organizations*. London: Sage.
- Apter, Terri. 1995. *Working Women Don't Have Wives: Professional Success in the 1990s*. New York: St Martin's Griffin.
- Ariès, Philippe. 1981. *The Hour of Our Death*, translated by Helen Weaver. London: Allen Lane.
- Arni, Caroline and Charlotte Müller. 2004. 'More Sociological than the Sociologists? Undisciplined and Undisciplinary Thinking About Society and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century'. In *Engendering the Social: Feminist Encounters with Sociological Theory*, edited by Barbara L. Marshall and Anne Witz. Maidenhead: Open University Press, pp. 72-97.
- Bacchi, Carol Lee. 1990. *Same Difference: Feminism and Sexual Difference*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Bain, Helen. 2001. 'Working at Death's Door'. In *The Dominion*, January 10, p. 11.
- Bain, Helen. 2002. 'Embracing a Grave Subject'. In *The Dominion Post*, September 21, p. F4.
- Barnes, Marian. 1982. *It's Your Funeral: Before, When and After You Die*. Auckland: Key.
- Barnes, Marian. 1985. *Funeral for a Friend*. Auckland: Self-published.
- Barnes, Marian. 1991. *Down to Earth: The Changing Funeral Needs of a Changing Society*. Auckland, NZ: Benton-Guy.
- Barrett, Michèle. 1987. 'The Concept of Difference'. In *Feminist Review*, 26 (July): 29-42.

- Belgrave, Michael. 1990. 'A Subtle Containment: Women in New Zealand Medicine, 1893-1941'. In *Women Doctors in New Zealand: An Historical Perspective 1921-1986*, edited by Margaret M. Maxwell. Auckland: IMS NZ, pp. 203-16.
- Billing, Yvonne Due. 1994. 'Gender and Bureaucracies – A Critique of Ferguson's "The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy"'. In *Gender, Work and Organisation*, 1 (4): 179-192.
- Biswas, Bronwyn. 1993. 'The Medicalisation of Dying: A Nurse's View'. In *The Future for Palliative Care: Issues of Policy and Practice*, edited by David Clark. Grand Rapids: William W. Eerdmans, pp. 64-74.
- Boland, Mary Jane. 1995. 'Grave Decisions'. In *The New Zealand Herald*, June 3, p. 8.
- Bone, Alistair. 2003. 'Profit from Loss'. In *New Zealand Listener*, October 25, pp. 32-34.
- Bottero, Wendy. 1992. 'The Changing Face of the Professions? Gender and Explanations of Women's Entry to Pharmacy'. In *Work, Employment & Society*, 6 (3): 329-346.
- Bradbury, Mary. 1996. 'Representations of "Good" and "Bad" Death Among Deathworkers and the Bereaved'. In *Contemporary Issues in the Sociology of Death, Dying and Disposal*, edited by Glennys Howarth and Peter Jupp. London: Macmillan, pp. 84-95.
- Bradbury, Mary. 1999. *Representations of Death: A Social Psychological Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Briar, Celia. 1992. 'Women, Economic Dependence and Social Policy'. In *Superwoman Where Are You?: Social Policy and Women's Experience*, edited by Celia Briar, Robyn Munford and Mary Nash. Palmerston North: Dunmore, pp. 41-66.
- Brooking, T. W. H. 1980. *A History of Dentistry in New Zealand*. Dunedin: NZ Dental Association.

- 'BRW'. 2005. 'Seriously Rich, and in the Gun'. In *Sunday Star Times*, May 22, p. D9.
- Burns, Edgar A. M. 1979. *Occupational Control in the Development of the Veterinary Profession*. Unpublished MA thesis. Palmerston North: Massey University.
- Burton, Claire. 1992. 'Merit and Gender: Organisations and the Mobilization of Masculine Bias'. In *Gendering Organisational Analysis*, edited by Albert J. Mills and Peta Tancred. London: Sage, pp. 185-196.
- Cahill, Spencer E. 1995. 'Some Rhetorical Directions of Funeral Direction: Historical Entanglements and Contemporary Dilemmas'. In *Work and Occupations*, 22 (2): 115-136.
- Cahill, Spencer E. 1999. 'Emotional Capital and Professional Socialisation: The Case of Mortuary Science Students (and Me)'. In *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 62 (2): 101-117.
- Callister, Paul. 2000. *Living and Working in New Zealand: Links Between Labour Market Change and Household Structure*. Wellington: Institute of Policy Studies.
- Calás, Marta B. and Linda Smircich. 1996. 'From "The Woman's" Point of View: Feminist Approaches to Organisation Studies'. In *Handbook of Organisation Studies*, edited by Stewart R. Clegg, C. Hardy and W. R. Nord. London: Sage, pp. 218-258.
- Campbell, Marie. 2000. 'Knowledge, Gendered Subjectivity, and the Restructuring of Health Care: The Case of the Disappearing Nurse'. In *Restructuring Caring Labour: Discourse, State Practice, and Everyday Life*, edited by Sheila M. Neysmith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 186-208.
- Cancian, Francesca M. 2000. 'Paid Emotional Care'. In *Care Work: Gender, Class and the Welfare State*, edited by Madonna Harrington Meyer. New York: Routledge, pp. 136-148.
- Carr-Saunders, Alexander M. and P. A. Wilson. 1964. *The Professions*. London: Cass.

- Charles, Maria. 2003. 'Deciphering Sex Segregation: Vertical and Horizontal Inequalities in Ten National Labour Markets.' In *Acta Sociologica*, 46 (4): 267-287.
- Charlesworth, Max, Lyndsay Farrall, Terry Stokes, and David Turnbull. 1989. *Life Among the Scientists: An Anthropological Study of an Australian Scientific Community*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press.
- Chua, Wai-Fong and Stewart Clegg. 1990. 'Professional Closure: The Case of British Nursing'. In *Theory and Society*, 19 (2): 135-172.
- Cline, Sally. 1997. *Lifting the Taboo: Women, Death and Dying*. New York: New York University Press.
- Cockburn, Cynthia. 1983. *Brothers: Male Dominance and Technological Change*. London: Pluto Press.
- Cockburn, Cynthia. 1991. *In the Way of Women: Men's Resistance to Sex Equality in Organisations*. London: Macmillan.
- Coffey, Amanda and Paul Atkinson. 1996. *Making Sense of Qualitative Data*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Collinson, David. 1994. 'Strategies of Resistance: Power, Knowledge and Subjectivity in the Workplace'. In *Resistance and Power in Organizations*, edited by John M. Jermier, David Knights and Walter R. Nord. London: Routledge, pp. 25-68.
- Coltrane, Scott and Justin Galt. 2000. 'The History of Men's Caring'. In *Care Work: Gender, Class and the Welfare State*, edited by Madonna Harrington Meyer. New York: Routledge, pp. 15-36.
- Connell, Robert W. 1987. *Gender and Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Connell, Robert W. 2002. *Gender*. Oxford: Polity.
- Consedine, Jim. 1997. 'Death Choices: It is Our Right to Bury Our Own'. In *New Zealand Listener*. Auckland: NZ Magazines, January 11, p. 53.

- Cram, Fiona. 2001. 'Rangahau Maori: Tona Tika, Tona Pono – The Validity and Integrity of Maori Research'. In *Research Ethics in Aotearoa New Zealand*, edited by Martin Tolich. Auckland: Pearson Education, pp. 35-52.
- Crawford, Mary. 2003. 'Sexual Double Standards: A Review and Methodological Critique of Two Decades of Research'. In *Journal of Sex Research*, February, pp. 1-24, <http://www.findarticles.com>, retrieved June 6, 2005.
- Crompton, Rosemary. 1987. 'Gender, Status and Professionalism'. In *Sociology*, 21 (3): 413-428.
- Crompton, Rosemary and Kay Sanderson. 1990. *Gendered Jobs and Social Change*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Cunningham, Elizabeth. 1976. 'A "Birds" Eye View of Convention'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 37 (4): 8-9.
- Davidson, Carl and Martin Tolich. 1999. 'Collecting the Data'. In *Social Science Research in New Zealand: Many Paths to Understanding*, edited by Carl Davidson and Martin Tolich. Auckland: Longman, pp. 114-142.
- Davies, Celia. 1995. *Gender and the Professional Predicament in Nursing*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Davies, Celia. 1996. 'The Sociology of Professions and the Profession of Gender'. In *Sociology*, 30 (4): 661-678.
- Dekker, Diana. 2002. 'The Young Undertakers'. In *The Evening Post*, June 22, pp. 25-26.
- Derrida, Jacques. 1978. *Writing and Difference*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Dominion, The*. 1996. 'US Firm Wants NZ Funeral Parlours'. In *The Dominion*, July 23, p. 1.
- Dominion Post*. 2003. 'Long Lifeline for Kiwi Babies'. In *Dominion Post*, December 19, p. A3.
- Douglas, Mary. 1966. *Purity and Danger*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

- England, Paula. 1992. *Comparable Worth: Theories and Evidence*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.
- Etzioni, Amitai. 1969a. 'Preface'. In *The Semi-Professions and Their Organisation: Teachers, Nurses, Social Workers*, edited by Amitai Etzioni. New York: Free Press, p. v-xviii.
- Etzioni, Amitai. 1969b. *A Sociological Reader on Complex Organisations*, Second Edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Evans, David and Paul Gruba. 2002. *How to Write a Better Thesis*, Second Edition. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Finch, Janet. 1983. *Married to the Job*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Fineman, Stephen. 2000. 'Emotional Arenas Revisited'. In *Emotion in Organisations*, edited by Stephen Fineman. London: Sage, pp. 1-24.
- Fishman, Pamela M. 1978. 'Interaction: The Work Women Do'. In *Social Problems*, 25: 397-406.
- Flax, Jane. 1987. 'Postmodernism and Gender Relations in Feminist Theory'. In *Signs*, 12 (4): 621-643.
- Fletcher, Joyce K. 1999. *Disappearing Acts: Gender, Power, and Relational Practice at Work*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Freidson, Eliot. 1970. *Professional Dominance: The Social Structure of Medical Care*. New York: Atherton Press.
- Fulton, Gere B. and Eileen K. Metress. 1995. *Perspectives on Death and Dying*. Boston: Jones & Bartlett.
- Fulton, Robert L. 1961. 'The Clergyman and the Funeral Director: A Study in Role Conflict'. In *Social Forces*, 39 (4): 317-323.
- Funeral Directors' Association of New Zealand*. Web page of The Funeral Directors' Association of New Zealand, <http://www.fdanz.org.nz/about.html>, retrieved 2005, April 18.

- Gerhard, Ute. 2004. "‘Illegitimate Daughters’: The Relationship Between Feminism and Sociology’. In *Engendering the Social: Feminist Encounters with Sociological Theory*, edited by Barbara L. Marshall and Anne Witz. Maidenhead: Open University Press, pp. 114-135.
- Gittings, Clare. 1984. *Death, Burial and the Individual in Early Modern England*. London and Sydney: Croom Helm.
- Gittings, Clare. 1997. ‘Expressions of Loss in Early 17th Century England’. In *The Changing Face of Death: Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal*, edited by Peter Jupp and Glennys Howarth. London: Macmillan, pp. 19-33.
- Glaser, Barney and Anselm Strauss. 1965. *Awareness of Dying*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Glaser, Barney and Anselm Strauss. 1968. *Time for Dying*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Goffman, Erving. 1971. *Relations in Public: Micro Studies of the Public Order*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gomez, M. Carme Alemany. 1994. ‘Bodies, Machines and Male Power’. In *Bringing Home Technology: Gender and Technology in a Changing Europe*, edited by Cynthia Cockburn and Ruža Fürst Dilić. Buckingham: Open University Press, pp. 129-146.
- Goode, William J. 1957. ‘Community Within a Community: The Professions’. In *American Sociological Review*, 22: 194-200.
- Goode, William J. 1969. ‘The Theoretical Limits of Professionalisation’. In *The Semi-Professions and Their Organisation: Teachers, Nurses, Social Workers*, edited by Amitai Etzioni. New York: Free Press, pp. 266-313.
- Gorer, Geoffrey. 1965. *Death, Grief and Mourning*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

- Greed, Clara. 1990. The Professional and the Personal: A Study of Women Quantity Surveyors. In *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology*, edited by Liz Stanley. London: Routledge, pp. 145-155.
- Greed, Clara. 2000. 'Women in the Construction Professions: Achieving Critical Mass'. In *Gender, Work and Organization*, 7 (3): 181-196.
- Griffin, Graeme and Des Tobin. 1997. *In the Midst of Life: The Australian Response to Death*, Second Edition. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Habenstein, Robert W. 1962. 'Sociology of Occupations: The Case of the American Funeral Director'. In *Human Behaviour and Social Processes: An Interactionist Approach*, edited by Arnold M. Rose. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 225-246.
- Habenstein, Robert W. and W. Lamers. 1981. *The History of American Funeral Directing*, Second Edition. Milwaukee: National Funeral Directors' Association.
- Haggis, Jane. 1990. 'The Feminist Research Process: Defining a Topic'. In *Feminist Praxis*, edited by Liz Stanley. London: Routledge, pp. 67-79.
- Halford, Susan, Mike Savage, and Anne Witz. 1997. *Gender, Careers and Organisations*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Halford, Susan and Pauline Leonard. 2001. *Gender, Power and Organisations*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Hall, A. C. A. 1953. 'Why Bother to Embalm?' In *New Zealand Funeral Director*, Wellington: FDANZ, 15 (1): 91-92.
- Hammersley, Martyn and Paul Atkinson. 1995. *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, Second Edition. London and New York: Routledge.
- Harding, Sandra. 1987. 'Introduction: Is There a Feminist Method?: Social Science Issues'. In *Feminism and Methodology*, edited by Sandra Harding. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp. 1-14.
- Harmer, Ruth. 1963. *The High Cost of Dying*. New York: Collier.

- Harris, Barbara. 1978. *Beyond Her Sphere: Women and the Professions in American History*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Hawke's Bay Today*. 2003. 'Open Day at Crematorium'. In *Hawke's Bay Today*, September 27.
- Her Business*. 2000. 'Success with Sincerity'. In *Her Business*, July/August, 30: 24-7.
- Hearn, Jeff. 1982. 'Notes on Patriarchy, Professionalisation and the Semi-Professions'. In *Sociology*, 16: 184-202.
- Hearn, Jeff. 1987. *The Gender of Oppression: Men, Masculinity and the Critique of Marxism*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf.
- Hearn, Jeff. 1994. 'Research in Men and Masculinities: Some Sociological Issues and Possibilities'. In *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 30 (1): 47-70.
- Hearn, Jeff. 2002. 'Alternative Conceptualisations and Theoretical Perspectives on Identities and Organisational Cultures: A Personal View of Research on Men in Organisations'. In *Gender, Identity and the Culture of Organisations*, edited by Iiris Aaltio and Albert J. Mills. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 39-56.
- Hearn, Jeff and P. Wendy Parkin. 1983. 'Gender and Organisations: A Selective Review and a Critique of a Neglected Area'. In *Organisation Studies*, 4 (3): 219-242.
- Hera, Jean. 1992. 'Reclaiming the Last Rites (Rights)'. In *Superwoman Where Are You?* edited by Celia Briar, Robyn Munford, and Mary Nash. Palmerston North: Dunmore.
- Hera, Jean. 1995. *Reclaiming the Last Rites (Rights): Women and After-Death Policy, Practices and Beliefs in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Palmerston North: Massey University.
- Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 1983. *The Managed Heart: Commercialisation of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Hockey, Jenny. 1996. 'The View from the West'. In *Contemporary Issues in the Sociology of Death, Dying and Disposal*, edited by Glennys Howarth and Peter Jupp. London: Macmillan, pp. 3-16.
- Homans, Hilary. 1987. 'Man-made Myths: The Reality of Being a Woman Scientist in the NHS'. In *In a Man's World: Essays on Women in Male-Dominated Professions*, edited by Anne Spencer and David Podmore. London: Tavistock, pp. 87-112.
- Howarth, Glennys. 1992. *The Funeral Industry in the East End of London: An Ethnographical Study*. Unpublished PhD thesis. London: University of London (LSE).
- Howarth, Glennys. 1993. 'Investigating Deathwork: A Personal Account'. In *The Sociology of Death*, edited by David Clark. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 221-237.
- Howarth, Glennys. 1996. *Last Rites: The Work of the Modern Funeral Director*. Amityville, NY: Baywood.
- Howarth, Glennys. 1997. 'Is there a British Way of Death?' In *The Unknown Country: Death in Australia, Britain and the USA*, edited by Kathy Charmaz, Glennys Howarth, and Allan Kellehear. London: Macmillan, pp. 84-97.
- Howarth, Glennys. 2000a. 'Australian Funerals'. In *Death and Dying in Australia*, edited by Allan Kellehear. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, pp. 80-91.
- Howarth, Glennys. 2000b. 'Dismantling the Boundaries Between Life and Death'. In *Mortality*, 5 (2): 127-136.
- Hughes, Everett. 1958. *Men and Their Work*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Hugman, Richard. 1991. *Power in Caring Professions*. London: Macmillan.
- Human Rights Commission and New Zealand Centre for Women and Leadership. 2004. *New Zealand Census of Women's Participation in Governance and Professional Life*. Auckland, NZ: Human Rights Commission; Palmerston North, NZ: Massey University, New Zealand Centre for Women & Leadership.

- Illich, Ivan. 1977. 'Disabling Professions'. In *Disabling Professions*, edited by Ivan Illich, I. K. Zola; J. McKnight; J. Kaplan, and H. Shaiken. London: Marion Boyars.
- Iseron, Kenneth V. 1994. *Death to Dust: What Happens to Dead Bodies?* Tucson, AZ: Galen Press.
- Jacobs, Sheila. 1999. 'Trends in Women's Career Patterns and in Gender Occupational Mobility in Britain'. In *Gender, Work and Organization*, 6 (1): 32-46.
- James, Nicky. 1989. 'Emotional Labour: Skill and Work in the Social Regulation of Feelings'. In *Sociological Review*, 37: 15-42.
- James, Steve. 2002. 'Dying to Make You Laugh'. In *Hawke's Bay Today*, July 19, p. 26.
- Jenkins, Sarah, Miguel Martinez Lucio and Mike Noon. 2002. 'Return to Gender: An Analysis of Women's Disadvantage in Postal Work'. In *Gender, Work & Organization*, 9 (1): 81-104.
- Johnson, Terence. 1972. *Professions and Power*. London: Macmillan.
- Jones, Ronald C. 1951. 'Your Responsibility to Society'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 13 (2): 24-25.
- Kanter, Rosabeth Moss. 1977. *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kanuha, Valli K. 2000. "'Being" Native versus "Going Native": Conducting Social Work Research as an Insider'. In *Social Work*, 45 (5): 439-447.
- Katila, Saija and Susan Meriläinen. 1999. 'A Serious Researcher or Just Another Nice Girl?: Doing Gender in a Male-Dominated Scientific Community'. In *Gender, Work and Organisation*, 6 (3): 163-173.
- Kawano, Satsuki. 2003. 'The Price of Death: The Funeral Industry in Contemporary Japan'. Review in *American Anthropologist*, 105 (2): 471.

- Keenan, Raylene. 2003. 'Citizen Kiwi Gets More Multicultural'. In *Hawke's Bay Today*, December 26, p. 12.
- Kirkham, Mavis. 1998. 'Professionalization: Dilemmas for Midwifery'. In *The Sociology of the Caring Professions*, edited by Pamela Abbott and Liz Meerabeau, Second Edition. London: UCL Press, pp. 82-105.
- Kirkman, Allison. 2001. 'Ethics and the politics of research: where gender and sexuality still matter'. In *Research Ethics in Aotearoa New Zealand*, edited by Martin Tolich. Auckland: Pearson Education, pp. 53-63.
- Kritzer, Herbert M. 2002. 'Stories from the Field: Collecting Data Outside Over There'. In *Practicing Ethnography in Law*, edited by June Starr and Mark Goodale. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 143-159.
- Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth. 1969. *On Death and Dying*. New York: Macmillan.
- Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth. 1975. *Death: The Final Stage of Growth*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth. 1981. *Living with Death and Dying*. New York: Macmillan.
- 'Labour Market Information on Funeral Director'. <http://www.labourmarket.co.nz>, retrieved 2005, June 16.
- Larson, Magali. 1977. *The Rise of Professionalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Laurance, Jeremy. 2004. 'The Medical Timebomb: "Too Many Women Doctors"'. In *Independent*, UK, August 2.
- Lawrence, Barbara. 1987. 'The Fifth Dimension – Gender and General Practice'. In *In a Man's World: Essays on Women in Male-dominated Professions*, edited by Anne Spencer and David Podmore. London: Tavistock, pp. 134-157.
- Lear, George. 1953. 'They Who Serve'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 14 (4): 69-78.

- Legge, Karen. 1987. 'Women in Personnel Management: Uphill Climb or Downhill Slide?' In *In a Man's World: Essays on Women in Male-dominated Professions*, edited by Anne Spencer and David Podmore. London: Tavistock, pp. 33-60.
- Lindemann, Erich. 1944. 'Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief'. In *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 101: 144-148.
- Litten, Julian. 1991. *The English Way of Death: The Common Funeral Since 1450*. London: Robert Hale.
- Litten, Julian. 1997. 'The Funeral Trade in Hanoverian England 1714-1760'. In *The Changing Face of Death: Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal*, edited by Peter Jupp and Glennys Howarth. London: Macmillan, pp. 48-61.
- Littlewood, Jane. 1993. 'The Denial of Death and Rites of Passage in Contemporary Societies'. In *The Sociology of Death: Theory, Culture, Practice*, edited by David Clark. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 69-84.
- Lunneborg, Patricia. 1990. *Women Changing Work*. New York: Bergin & Garvey.
- Lupton, Deborah. 1996. *Food, the Body and the Self*. London: Sage.
- Lupton, Deborah. 1998. *The Emotional Self*. London: Sage.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Macdonald, Finlay. 1996. 'The Pinebox Inquiry'. In *Metro*, June, pp. 62-66.
- Macdonald, Keith M. 1995. *The Sociology of the Professions*. London: Sage.
- Manning, David. 2002. 'Death in the Family'. In *The Nelson Mail*, May 11, Weekend, pp. 15-16.
- Mark-Lawson, Jane and Anne Witz. 1988. 'From "Family Labour" to "Family Wage"? The Case of Women's Labour in Nineteenth Century Coalmining'. In *Social History*, 13 (2): 151-174.

- Marshall, Judi. 1984. *Women Managers: Travellers in a Male World*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Martin, Yvonne. 2001. 'Death Watch'. In *Manawatu Evening Standard*, April 14, Saturday Magazine, p. 10.
- Matterson, Helen. 1993. 'Grief Trade Finds a Zest for Life'. In *Marketing*, 12 (8): 26-30.
- McIntyre, Ian. 1977. 'The President's Course'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*, Wellington: FDANZ, 39 (3): 26-27.
- McNay, Lois. 2004. 'Situated Intersubjectivity'. In *Engendering the Social: Feminist Encounters with Sociological Theory*, edited by Barbara L. Marshall and Anne Witz. Maidenhead: Open University Press, pp. 171-186.
- Mellor, Philip A. and Chris Shilling. 1993. 'Modernity, Self-Identity and the Sequestration of Death'. In *Sociology*, 27 (3): 411-431.
- Mills, Albert J. 1988. 'Organisation, Gender, and Culture'. In *Organisation Studies*, 9 (3): 351-369.
- Mills, Albert J. 2002a. 'History/herstory: An introduction to the problems of studying the gendering of organisational culture over time'. In *Gender, Identity and the Culture of Organizations*, edited by Iris Aaltio and Albert J. Mills. London: Routledge, pp. 115-136.
- Mills, Albert J. 2002b. 'Studying the Gendering of Organizational Culture Over Time: Concerns, Issues and Strategies'. In *Gender, Work & Organization*, 9 (3): 286-307.
- Mills, Jean C. Helms and Albert J. Mills. 2000. 'Rules, Sensemaking, Formative Contexts, and Discourse in the Gendering of Organisational Culture'. In *Handbook of Organisational Culture and Climate*, edited by Neal M. Ashkanasy, Celeste P. M. Wilderom and Mark F. Peterson. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 55-70.
- Mitford, Jessica. 1963. *The American Way of Death*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

- Mitford, Jessica. 1998. *The American Way of Death Revisited*. London: Virago.
- Mulholland, Kate. 2003. *Class, Gender and the Family Business*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nadeau, Jean-Benoît and Julie Barlow. 2003. *Sixty Million Frenchmen Can't Be Wrong: Why We Love France But Not the French*. Naperville, Illinois: Sourcebooks.
- Nettleton, Sarah. 1995. *The Sociology of Health and Illness*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- New Zealand Funeral Director*. 1940. 'Arterial Embalming'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 1 (4): 1-2.
- New Zealand Funeral Director*. 1944. 'Delving into the Deeper Aspects'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 6 (1): 5-7.
- New Zealand Funeral Director*. 1950. 'Editorial'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 12 (3): 136.
- New Zealand Funeral Director*. 1953. 'The Art and Science of Modern Embalming'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 15 (3): 134-137.
- New Zealand Funeral Director*. 1975. 'New Zealand's Very First Lady Funeral Director'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 36 (4): 1-2.
- New Zealand Funeral Director*. 1976. 'Bereavement Seminars in Australia'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 38 (1): 14.
- New Zealand Funeral Director*. 1976. 'Profile: Watney Sibuns Funeral Services'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 38 (3): 21-3.
- New Zealand Funeral Director*. 1977. 'History of Substantial Christchurch Funeral Firm: John Rhind Ltd.'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 39 (2): 11-14.
- New Zealand Funeral Director*. 1978. 'Death, the Modern Taboo'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 39 (4): 5.

- New Zealand Funeral Director*. 1979. 'Invercargill Firm'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 40 (4): 29-30.
- New Zealand Funeral Director*. 1992. 'The Rarotonga Experience'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 53 (4): 3-7.
- New Zealand Herald*. 1996. 'Active American Buys Up Funeral Directors'. In *New Zealand Herald*, May 2-3, p. 5.
- Update, Lottery Grants*. 2002. 'What Are They Doing to Our Loved One?' Wellington: New Zealand Lottery Grants Board, May/June, p. 29.
- Newton, Peggy. 1987. 'Who Becomes an Engineer? Social Psychological Antecedents of a Non-traditional Career Choice'. In *In a Man's World: Essays on Women in Male-dominated Professions*, edited by Anne Spencer and David Podmore. London: Tavistock, pp. 182-202.
- Neysmith, Sheila M. 2000. 'Networking Across Difference: Connecting Restructuring And Caring Labour'. In *Restructuring Caring Labour: Discourse, State Practice, and Everyday Life*, edited by Sheila M. Neysmith. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-28.
- Ninness, Jack. 1987. *1937-1987 A Golden Anniversary History*. Wellington: McKenzie, Thornton & Cooper.
- Ninness, Jack. 1988. 'Undertakers in New Zealand 1840-1890 – Part I: A Glossary of the First Fifty Years'. In *GRINZ Yearbook*, edited by Guy Palliser. Lower Hutt, NZ: Genealogical Research Institute of New Zealand, pp. 102-113.
- Ninness, Jack. 1989. 'Undertakers in New Zealand 1940-1940 – Part II: The First Hundred Years of Funeral Service'. in *GRINZ Yearbook*, edited by Guy Palliser. Lower Hutt, NZ: Genealogical Research Institute of New Zealand, pp. 88-122.
- Norris, Pauline. 1997. 'Gender and Occupational Change: Women in Retail Pharmacy in New Zealand'. in *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 33 (1): 21-38.

- Oakley, Ann. 1984. *The Captured Womb*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Opie, Anne. 1999. 'Unstructured Interviewing'. In *Social Science Research in New Zealand: Many Paths to Understanding*, edited by Carl Davidson, and Martin Tolich. Auckland: Longman, pp. 220-230.
- Padavic, Irene and Barbara Reskin. 2002. *Women and Men at Work*, Second Edition. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.
- Parkin, Frank. 1979. *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*. London: Tavistock.
- Parsons, Brian. 1999. 'Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: The Lifecycle of the UK Funeral Industry'. In *Mortality*, 4 (2): 127-145.
- Parsons, Talcott. 1951. *The Social System*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Parsons, Talcott. 1954. 'The Professions and Social Structure'. In *Essays in Sociological Theory*, edited by Talcott Parsons. New York: Free Press.
- Pavalko, Ronald M. 1971. *Sociology of Occupations*. Itasca, Illinois: Peacock.
- Perrott, Stella. 2002. 'Gender, Professions and Management in the Public Sector'. In *Public Money and Management*, 22 (1): 21-24.
- Phipps, Polly A. 1990. 'Industrial and Occupational Change in Pharmacy: Prescription for Feminisation'. In *Job Queues, Gender Queues: Explaining Women's Inroads into Male Occupations*, edited by Barbara Reskin and Patricia Roos. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 111-127.
- Pine, Vanderlyn R. 1995. 'Public Behaviour in the Funeral Home'. In *Death: Current Perspectives*, edited by John B. Williamson and Edwin S. Shneidman, Fourth Edition. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield, pp. 168-182.
- Pine, Vanderlyn R. and Derek L. Phillips. 1970. 'The Cost of Dying: A Sociological Analysis of Funeral Expenditures'. In *Social Problems*, 17 (3): 405-417.

- Preston, Jo Anne. 1995. 'Gender and the Formation of a Women's Profession: The Case of Public School Teaching'. In *Gender Inequality at Work*, edited by Jerry A. Jacobs. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 379-407.
- Pringle, Rosemary. 1988. *Secretaries Talk: Sexuality, Power and Work*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin
- Pringle, Rosemary. 1998. *Sex and Medicine: Gender, Power and Authority in the Medical Profession*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pringle, Rosemary and Jo Alley. 1995. 'Gender and the Funeral Industry: The Work of Citizenship'. In *ANZJS*, 31 (2): 107-121.
- Ramsay, Karen and Martin Parker. 1992. 'Gender, Bureaucracy and Organisational Culture'. In *Gender and Bureaucracy*, edited by Mike Savage and Anne Witz. Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 253-276.
- Raphael, Beverley. 1984. *The Anatomy of Bereavement: A Handbook for the Caring Professions*. London: Routledge.
- Redgrave, Tess. 2002. 'Good Grief'. In *Next*, December, pp. 192-198.
- Reskin, Barbara. 1991. 'Bringing the Men Back In: Sex Differentiation and the Devaluation of Women's Work'. In *The Social Construction of Gender*, edited by Judith Lorber and Susan A. Farrell. London: Sage, pp. 141-161.
- Reskin, Barbara F. and Patricia A. Roos. 1990. *Job Queues, Gender Queues: Explaining Women's Inroads Into Male Occupations*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Richardson, Ruth. 1989. 'Why Was Death so Big in Victorian Britain?' In *Death, Ritual and Bereavement*, edited by Ralph Houlbrooke. London: Routledge.
- Ritzer, George. 1996. *The McDonaldization of Society*, Revised Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.
- Roberts, Elizabeth. 1989. 'The Lancashire Way of Death'. In *Death, Ritual and Bereavement*, edited by Ralph Houlbrooke. London: Routledge, pp. 188-207.

- Roos, Patricia A. and Katherine W. Jones. 1995. 'Shifting Gender Boundaries: Women's Inroads into Academic Sociology'. In *Gender Inequality at Work*, edited by Jerry A. Jacobs. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 297-333.
- Rosser, Jane, and Celia Davies. 1987. "'What Would We Do Without Her?' – Invisible Women in National Health Administration". In *In a Man's World: Essays on Women in Male-Dominated Professions*, edited by Anne Spencer and David Podmore. London: Tavistock, pp. 61-86.
- Rossides, Daniel W. 1998. *Professions and Disciplines: Functional and Conflict Perspectives*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Rutherford, Sarah. 2001. 'Any Difference? An Analysis of Gender and Divisional Management Styles in a Large Airline'. In *Gender, Work and Organization*, 8(3): 326-345.
- Ryan, Allanah, Jenny Carryer and Lesley Patterson. 2003. *Healthy Concerns: Sociology for New Zealand Nursing and Midwifery Students*. Auckland: Pearson Prentice-Hall.
- Sargent, Ewan. 2002a. 'Ashes to Ashes', in *Manawatu Evening Standard*, August 17, Saturday Magazine, p. 9.
- Sargent, Ewan. 2002b. 'Offering Something New'. In *Manawatu Evening Standard*, August 24, Saturday Magazine, p. 11.
- Sarup, Madan. 1993. *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism*, Second Edition. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Schein, Edgar H. 1992. *Organisational Culture and Leadership*, Second Edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Schultz, Majken. 1994. *On Studying Organisational Cultures: Diagnosis and Understanding*. New York: de Gruyter.
- Scott, Alison MacEwen. 1994. 'Gender Segregation and the SCOLI Research'. In *Gender Segregation and Social Change: Men and Women in Changing Labour*

- Markets*, edited by Alison MacEwen Scott. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-38.
- Scott, Joan W. 1988. 'Deconstructing Equality-Versus-Difference: Or, the Uses of Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism'. In *Feminist Studies*, 14 (1): 33-50.
- Sheppard, Deborah. 1992. 'Women Managers' Perceptions of Gender and Organisational Life'. In *Gendering Organisational Analysis*, edited by Albert J. Mills and Peta Tancred. Newbury Park: Sage, pp. 151-166.
- Spencer, Anne and David Podmore. 1987. 'Introduction'. In *In a Man's World: Essays on Women in Male-dominated Professions*, edited by Anne Spencer and David Podmore. London: Tavistock, pp. 1-32.
- Spencer, Anne and David Podmore. 1987. 'Women Lawyers - Marginal Members of a Male-dominated Profession'. In *In a Man's World: Essays on Women in Male-dominated Professions*, edited by Anne Spencer and David Podmore. London: Tavistock, pp. 113-133.
- Sperber, Hannah. 2003. 'The New Undertakers'. In *North and South*, August, pp. 50-59.
- Statistics New Zealand. 1998. *1996 Census of Population and Dwellings: Families and Households*. Wellington, NZ: Statistics New Zealand.
- Statistics New Zealand. 2001. *Demographic Trends 2000*. Wellington, NZ: Statistics New Zealand.
- Statistics New Zealand. 2005. *Focusing on Women*. Wellington, NZ: Statistics New Zealand.
- Strong, Peter. 1969. 'The Psychology of Grief and Death'. In *New Zealand Funeral Director*. Wellington: FDANZ, 31 (1): 97-99.
- Sudnow, David. 1967. *Passing On: The Social Organisation of Dying*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

- Tanner, Julian; Rhonda Cockerill, Jan Barnsley, and A. Paul Williams. 1999. 'Flight Paths and Revolving Doors: A Case Study of Gender Desegregation in Pharmacy'. In *Work, Employment and Society*, 13 (2): 275-293.
- Taurima, Wayne and Michael Cash. 1999. *Tumatanui: The Experience of a Group of Maori Funeral Directors*. New Zealand: Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.
- Telecom New Zealand. 2001. *Yellow Pages: Auckland*. Auckland: Telecom Directions Ltd.
- Telecom New Zealand. 2002. *Yellow Pages: Auckland*, Auckland: Telecom Directions Ltd.
- Telecom New Zealand. 2004. *Yellow Pages: Auckland*. Auckland: Telecom Directions Ltd.
- Telecom New Zealand. 2005. *Yellow Pages: Auckland*. Auckland: Telecom Directions Ltd.
- That's Life!* 2002. 'What a Way to Go!' In *That's Life! New Zealand*, April 17, pp. 32-33.
- Tolich, Martin. 2004. 'Internal Confidentiality: When Confidentiality Assurances Fail Relational Informants'. In *Qualitative Sociology*, 27 (1): 101-106.
- Tolich, Martin and Celia Briar. 1999. 'Just Checking It Out: Exploring the Significance of Informal Gender Divisions Amongst American Supermarket Employees'. In *Gender, Work and Organization*, 6(3): 129-133.
- Toren, Nina. 1969. 'Semi-Professionalism and Social Work: A Theoretical Perspective'. In *The Semi-Professions and Their Organisation: Teachers, Nurses, Social Workers*, edited by Amitai Etzioni. New York: Free Press, pp. 141-195.
- Tully, Elizabeth and Belinda Mortlock. 1999. 'Professionals and Practices'. In *Health and Society in Aotearoa New Zealand*, edited by Peter Davis and Kevin Dew. Auckland: Oxford University Press, pp. 165-180.

- Walby, Sylvia. 1994. 'Is Citizenship Gendered?' In *Sociology*, 28 (2): 379-395.
- Walby, Sylvia. 1990. *Theorising Patriarchy*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Walter, Tony. 1990. *Funerals and How to Improve Them*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.
- Walter, Tony. 1991. 'Modern Death: Taboo or Not Taboo?' In *Sociology*, 25 (2): 293-310.
- Walter, Tony. 1994. *The Revival of Death*. London: Routledge.
- Walter, Tony. 1999. *On Bereavement: The Culture of Grief*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Watson, Bronwyn. 1999. *A Professional Undertaking: Changing Meanings of Death, Professionalisation and the New Zealand Funeral Director, 1939-1999*. Unpublished BA (Hons) thesis. Massey University, Palmerston North.
- Watson, Bronwyn and Martin Tolich. 1998. 'Acquainted with Grief: Emotion Management Among Death Workers'. In *New Zealand Sociology*, 13 (2): 321-343.
- Waugh, Evelyn. 1948. *The Loved One*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Weedon, Chris. 1997. *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*, Second Edition. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Whyte, William Foote. 1993. *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*, Fourth Edition. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Wichtel, Diana. 2002. 'Dig This'. In *New Zealand Listener*, March 23, p. 77.
- Wicks, David and Pat Bradshaw. 2002. 'Investigating Gender and Organisational Culture: Gendered Value Foundations that Reproduce Discrimination and Inhibit Organisational Change'. In *Gender, Identity and the Culture of Organisations*, edited by Iiris Aaltio and Albert J. Mills. London: Routledge, pp. 137-159.

- Wilensky, Harold L. 1964. 'The Professionalisation of Everyone?' In *American Journal of Sociology*, 70 (2): 137-158.
- Williams, A. Paul. 1999. 'Changing the Palace Guard: Analysing the Impact of Women's Entry into Medicine'. In *Gender, Work and Organization*, 6 (2): 106-121.
- Williams, Jan. 1993. 'What is a Profession? Experience Versus Expertise', in *Health, Welfare and Practice: Reflecting on Roles and Relationships*, edited by Jan Walmsley, Jill Reynolds, Pam Shakespeare, and Ray Woolfe. London: Sage, pp. 8-15.
- Wilson, R. Guerriero. 2001. 'Women's Work in Offices and the Preservation of Men's "Breadwinning" Jobs in Early Twentieth Century Glasgow'. In *Women's History Review*, 10 (3): 463-482.
- Witz, Anne. 1990. 'Patriarchy and Professions: The Gendered Politics of Occupational Closure'. In *Sociology*, 24 (4): 675-690.
- Witz, Anne. 1992. *Professions and Patriarchy*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Witz, Anne. 1998. 'Embodiment, Organisation and Gender'. Conference proceedings in *Rationalisation, Organisation, Gender*, University of Dortmund, <http://www.sfs-dortmund>, retrieved January 2005, pp. 56-63.
- Witz, Anne. 2000. 'Whose Body Matters? Feminist Sociology and the Corporeal Turn in Sociology and Feminism'. In *Body and Society*, 6 (2): 1-24.
- Witz, Anne and Barbara L. Marshall. 2004a. 'Introduction: Feminist Encounters with Sociological Theory'. In *Engendering the Social: Feminist Encounters with Sociological Theory*, edited by Barbara L. Marshall and Anne Witz. Maidenhead: Open University Press, pp. 1-16.
- Witz, Anne and Barbara L. Marshall. 2004b. 'The Masculinity of the Social: Towards a Politics of Interrogation'. In *Engendering the Social: Feminist Encounters with Sociological Theory*, edited by Barbara L. Marshall, and Anne Witz. Maidenhead: Open University Press, pp. 19-35.

- Wright, Rosemary and Jerry A. Jacobs. 1994. 'Male Flight from Computer Work: A New Look at Occupational Resegregation and Ghettoization'. In *American Sociological Review*, 59: 511-536.
- Young, Gail. 1981. 'A Woman in Medicine: Reflections from the Inside'. In *Women, Health and Reproduction*, edited by Helen Roberts. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 144-162.