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Professionalism as an Occupational Value: theoretical challenges in the sociology of professions

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For a long time, the sociological analysis of professional work has differentiated professionalism as a special means of organizing work and controlling workers and in contrast to the hierarchical, bureaucratic and managerial controls of industrial and commercial organizations. But professional work is changing and being changed as increasingly professionals (such as doctors, nurses, teachers, social workers) now work in employing organizations; lawyers and accountants in large professional service firms (PSFs) and sometimes in international and commercial organizations; pharmacists in national (retailing) companies; and engineers, journalists, performing artists, the armed forces and police find occupational control of their work and discretionary decision-making increasingly difficult to maintain and sustain.

There also have been a number of policy and societal developments and changes, and increased complexities in the contexts and environments for professions. This makes it necessary to look again at the theories and concepts used to explain and interpret this category of occupational work. Some long-established differences are becoming blurred. For example, there is no longer a clear differentiation between the public and the private sectors of professional employment. Private funding is now operational in public sector work places and PPP (public/private partnerships) in the UK (e.g. in schools, universities and hospitals) enables the promotion of new capital as well as other policy developments.
Another complication and variation is the increased emphasis on and calls for professionalism in the voluntary sector, charities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Wherever trust, transparency and accountability need to be demonstrated, then increased regulation, audit and assessment seem to follow (e.g. social work and aid agencies, national and international). In addition, there is wider accessibility to internet knowledge which renders the importance of professional and expert, tacit and experiential knowledge and expertise more open to challenge (Olofsson 2009, Verpraet 2009).

The role of the nation-state has always been critical in theorizing about professions and, in particular, differentiating between Anglo-American and European systems of professions (Burrage and Torstendahl 1990a,b). The role of the nation-state had been seen to be paramount because states had granted legitimacy, for example, by licensing professional activity, setting standards of practice and regulation, acting as guarantor of professional education (not least by giving public funds for academic education and scientific research), and by paying for services provided by professional experts and practitioners. But the internationalization of markets required the reconceptualization of traditional professional jurisdictions. In addition, the increased mobility of professional practitioners between nation-states necessitated recognition and acceptability of other states licensing, education and training requirements. Again, the convergence of professional systems and of regulatory states has required the reconceptualization as well as new theoretical and interpretational developments in the disciplinary field of professional occupational groups.
The paper begins with a section on the concept of professionalism, its history and current developments. The second section considers the main theoretical challenges to and for research and analysis within the sociology of professions and for this category of knowledge-based work in the labour market.

1. **Professionalism as an Occupational Value: history and current developments**

In sociological research on professional groups, three concepts have been used extensively in the development of explanations: profession, professionalization, professionalism. The concept of profession represents a distinct and generic category of occupational work. Definitions of ‘profession’ have been frequently attempted but sociologists have been unsuccessful in clarifying the differences between professions and other occupations and identifying what makes professions distinctive. Definitions of professions as institutional remain unresolved though particular generic occupational groups continue to form the case studies in which to examine and test sociological theories and explanations.

The concept of professionalization is regarded as the process to achieve the status of profession and has been interpreted as the process to pursue, develop and maintain the closure of the occupational group in order to maintain practitioners own occupational self-interests in terms of their salary, status and power as well as the monopoly protection of the occupational jurisdiction (Larson 1977, Abbott 1988). This interpretation was
prominent in the field in the 1970s and 1980s and was associated with a critique of professions as ideological constructs (Johnson 1972).

This interpretation has declined in popularity recently (e.g. see themes of papers presented at recent international conferences) although sociologists interested in gender issues and differences continue to critique the idea of profession as a gendered (historical) construct (Davies 1995, Witz 1992). Sometimes they also see a positive outcome, as a process that has benefited particularly female-dominated occupational groups (e.g. midwifery) in competition with medical dominance (Bourgeault et al 2004). In addition, the concept of professionalization continues to be important in the analysis of newly emerging occupations (e.g. IT consultancy, human resources management, psychology and social care work) perhaps seeking status and recognition for the importance of the work often by standardization of the education, training and qualification for practice (Brint 2001, Ruiz Ben 2009).

A third concept is professionalism which has had a long history in the disciplinary subfield. Professionalism was usually interpreted as an occupational or normative value, as something worth preserving and promoting in work and by and for workers. Then later developments interpreted professionalism as a discourse and to an extent this has combined the occupational value and the ideological interpretations. Certainly there are real advantages in the analysis of professionalism as the key analytical concept in explanations and interpretations about professional knowledge-based work, occupations and practitioners.
In current work and employment contexts (such as professional work in organizations) it is the increased use of the **discourse of professionalism** in a wide range of occupational work places which is important and in need of further analysis and understanding. The discourse of professionalism is used as a marketing slogan (e.g. ‘have the job done by professionals’) and in advertising to attract new recruits (e.g. ‘join the professionals’ – the army) as well as customers (Fournier 1999). It is used in occupational recruitment campaigns, in company mission statements and organizational aims and objectives to motivate employees. The discourse of professionalism has entered the managerial literature and been embodied in training manuals. Even occupational regulation and control (both internal and external forms) are now explained and justified as means to improve professionalism in work. The concept of professionalism has an appeal to and for practitioners, employees and managers in the development and maintenance of work identities, career decisions and senses of self.

If the focus of analysis is shifted away from the concepts of profession (as a distinct and generic category of occupational work) and professionalization (as the process to pursue, develop and maintain the closure of the occupational group) and towards the concept of professionalism, then different kinds of explanatory theory become apparent. Then the discourse of professionalism can be analyzed as a powerful instrument of occupational change and social control at macro, meso and micro levels and in a wide range of occupations in very different work, organizational and employment relations, contexts and conditions.
In early British sociological analysis, the key concept was ‘professionalism’ and the emphasis was on the importance of professionalism for the stability and civility of social systems (e.g. Tawney 1921; Carr-Saunders and Wilson 1933; Marshall 1950). Tawney perceived professionalism as a force capable of subjecting rampant individualism to the needs of the community. Carr-Saunders and Wilson saw professionalism as a force for stability and freedom against the threat of encroaching industrial and governmental bureaucracies. Marshall emphasized altruism or the ‘service’ orientation of professionalism and how professionalism might form a bulwark against threats to stable democratic processes. In these interpretations professionalism was regarded as an important and highly desirable occupational value and professional relations were characterized as collegial, co-operative and mutually supportive. Similarly, relations of trust characterized practitioner-client and practitioner-management interactions since competencies were assumed to be guaranteed by education, training and sometimes by licensing.

The early American sociological theorists of professions also developed similar interpretations and again the key concept was the occupational value of professionalism based on trust, competence, a strong occupational identity and co-operation. The best known, though perhaps most frequently mis-quoted, attempt to clarify the special characteristics of professionalism, its central values and its contribution to social order and stability, was that of Parsons (1939). Parsons recognized and was one of the first theorists to show how the capitalist economy, the rational-legal social order (of Weber),
and the modern professions were all interrelated and mutually balancing in the maintenance and stability of a fragile normative social order. He demonstrated how the authority of the professions and of bureaucratic hierarchical organizations both rested on the same principles (for example of functional specificity, restriction of the power domain, application of universalistic, impersonal standards). The professions, however, by means of their collegial organization and shared identity demonstrated an alternative approach (compared with the managerial hierarchy of bureaucratic organizations) towards the shared normative end.

The work of Parsons in general has subsequently been subject to heavy criticism mainly because of its links with functionalism (Dingwall and Lewis 1983). The differences between professionalism and rational–legal, bureaucratic ways of organizing work have been returned to, however, in Freidson’s (2001) final analysis. Freidson examines the logics of three different ways of organizing work in contemporary societies (the market, organization and profession) and illustrates the respective advantages and disadvantages of each for clients and practitioners. In this analysis he demonstrates the continuing importance of maintaining professionalism (with some changes) as the main organizing principle for service sector work. Freidson does not use the term ‘occupational value’ and instead focuses on the importance of knowledge and expertise; but he maintains that occupational control of the work (by the practitioners themselves) is of real importance for the maintenance of professionalism. It is important because the complexities of the work are such that only practitioners can understand the organizational needs of the work, its processes, procedures, testing and outcomes. It is by means of extensive (and
expensive) systems of work place training and socialization that the new recruits develop the expertise to put theoretical knowledge into practice and to control the work systems and procedures.

This interpretation represents what might be termed the optimistic (or positive) view of what professionalism and the process of professionalization of work entails. It is based on the principle that the work is of importance either to the public or to the interests of the state or an elite (Freidson 2001:214). According to Freidson, ‘the ideal typical position of professionalism is founded on the official belief that the knowledge and skill of a particular specialization requires a foundation in abstract concepts and formal learning’ (2001:34-35). Education, training and experience are fundamental requirements but once achieved (and sometimes licensed) then the exercise of discretion (discretionary decision-making rather than autonomy, see Evetts 2002) based on competences is central and deserving of special status. Practitioners have special knowledge and skill and because of complexity it is often necessary to trust professionals’ intentions. One consequence is that externally imposed rules (from states or organizations) governing the work are minimized and the exercise of discretionary decision-making and good judgment, often in highly complex situations and circumstances, and based on recognized competences is maximized.

It can also be argued that professionalism represents a distinctive form of decentralized occupational control and regulation which constitutes an important component of civil society. Professions create and maintain distinct professional values or moral obligations
(e.g. codes of ethics) which restrain excessive competition by encouraging cooperation as well as practitioner pride and satisfaction in work performance – a form of individualized self-regulation. Indeed it could be argued that professional commitment (professionalism) has frequently covered for the various failures of statutory and organizational forms of work regulation. Where statutory and organizational forms have been seen to impoverish the quality of work and increase the bureaucracy, professionalism can be defended as a uniquely desirable method of regulating, monitoring and providing complex services to the public (Freidson 2001).

There is a second more pessimistic (or negative) interpretation of professionalism, however, which grew out of the more critical literature on professions which was prominent in Anglo-American analyses in the 1970s and 1980s. During this period professionalism came to be dismissed as a successful ideology (Johnson 1972) and professionalization as a process of market closure and monopoly control of work (Larson 1977) and occupational dominance (Larkin 1983). Professionalization was intended to promote professional practitioners’ own occupational self interests in terms of their salary, status and power as well as the monopoly protection of an occupational jurisdiction (Abbott 1988). This was seen to be a process largely initiated and controlled by the practitioners themselves and mainly in their own interests although it could also be argued to be in the public interest (Saks 1995).

A third development involved the analysis of professionalism as a discourse of occupational change and control – this time in work organizations where the discourse is
increasingly applied and utilized by managers. This third interpretation is a combination of the previous two and includes both occupational value and ideological elements. Fournier (1999) considers the appeal to ‘professionalism’ as a disciplinary mechanism in new occupational contexts. She suggests how the use of the discourse of professionalism, in a large privatized service company of managerial labour, works to inculcate ‘appropriate’ work identities, conducts and practices. She considers this as ‘a disciplinary logic which inscribes “autonomous” professional practice within a network of accountability and governs professional conduct at a distance’ (1999:280).

It is also the case that the use of the discourse of professionalism varies between different occupational groups. It is possible to use McClelland’s categorization (1990:170) to differentiate between professionalization ‘from within’ (that is, successful manipulation of the market by the group, such as medicine and law) and ‘from above’ (that is, domination of forces external to the group, such as engineering and social work). In this interpretation, where the appeal to professionalism is made and used by the occupational group itself, ‘from within’, then the returns to the group (in terms of salary, status and authority) can be substantial. In these cases, historically the group has been able to use the discourse in constructing its occupational identity, promoting its image with clients and customers, and bargaining with states to secure and maintain its (sometimes self) regulatory responsibilities. In these instances the occupation is using the discourse partly in its own occupational and practitioner interests but sometimes also as a way of promoting and protecting the public interest (e.g. medicine).
In the case of most contemporary public service occupations and professionals now practicing in organizations, however, professionalism is being constructed and imposed ‘from above’ and for the most part this means by the employers and managers of the public service organizations in which these ‘professionals’ work. Here the discourse (of dedicated service and autonomous decision making) is part of the appeal (or the ideology) of professionalism. This idea of service and autonomy are what make professionalism attractive to aspiring occupational groups. When the discourse is constructed ‘from above’ then often it is imposed and it is a false or selective discourse because autonomy and occupational control of the work are not included. Rather, the discourse is used to promote and facilitate occupational change (rationalization) and as a disciplinary mechanism of autonomous subjects exercising appropriate conduct.

This discourse of professionalism is grasped and welcomed by the occupational group since it is perceived to be a way of improving the occupations’ status and rewards collectively and individually (e.g. aspiring caring occupations). It is a powerful ideology and the idea of becoming and being a ‘professional worker’ has appealed to many new and existing occupational groups particularly during the second half of the twentieth century (e.g. social work and social care occupations throughout Europe and North America).

However, the realities of professionalism ‘from above’ are very different. The effects are not the occupational control of the work by the worker-practitioners but rather control by the organizational managers and supervisors (e.g. health and social care work).
Organizational objectives (which are sometimes political) define practitioner-client relations, set achievement targets and performance indicators. In these ways organizational objectives regulate and replace occupational control of the practitioner-client work interactions thereby limiting the exercise of discretionary decision-making and preventing the service ethic that has been so important in professional work. Organizational professionalism is clearly of relevance to the forms of public management currently being developed in the UK, and more widely, in educational institutions (schools and universities) and in NHS hospitals and primary care practices.

The appeal to professionalism can and has been interpreted as a powerful motivating force of control ‘at a distance’ (Miller and Rose 1990, Burchell et al 1991). It is also effective at the micro level where essentially it is a form of inner-directed control or self-control where close managerial supervision is not required – professional workers don’t need supervisors. Organizational professionalism will be achieved through increased occupational training and the certification of the workers-employees, a process Collins labels credentialism (1979, 1981). In these cases the appeal to professionalism is a powerful mechanism for promoting occupational change and social control.

But the appeal to the discourse by managers in work organizations is a myth or an ideology of professionalism (Evetts 2003). The myth includes aspects such as exclusive ownership of an area of expertise, increased status and salary, autonomy and discretion in work practices and the occupational control of the work. The reality of professionalism is actually very different. The appeal to professionalism by managers most often includes
the substitution of organizational for professional values; bureaucratic, hierarchical and managerial controls rather than collegial relations; managerial and organizational objectives rather than client trust and autonomy based on competencies and expertise; budgetary restrictions and financial rationalizations; the standardization of work practices rather than discretion; and performance targets, accountability and sometimes increased political controls.

The use of the discourse of professionalism as operationalized by managers in work organizations is also a discourse of self-control which enables self-motivation and sometimes even self-exploitation. Born (1995) illustrates this process in the work context of French professional music practice and is present more generally in the work culture of artists, actors and musicians in general. Once self-defined as a professional artist, imposing time or other limits on one’s efforts are rendered illegitimate. Similarly with professionals in general. The expectations by self and others of the professional have no limits. For the professional, of all kinds, the needs and demands of audiences, patients, clients, students and children become paramount. Professionals are expected and expect themselves to be committed, even to be morally involved in the work. Hence managers in organizations can use the discourse of professionalism to self-motivate, inner-direct and sometimes to exploit professionals in the organization.

2. Theoretical Challenges
In these turbulent times, some of the long-established theories, concepts, distinctions and differentiations in the sociology of professional groups begin to seem outmoded and
certainly are in need of modification and amended. For example, in 1990 Collins (p.98) was able to distinguish ‘Anglo-Saxon’ and ‘Continental’ modes of professionalism. In Continental modes the state was the main actor while in the Anglo-American model self-employed practitioners had freedom to control work conditions. Processes of convergence now render the Collins distinction somewhat obsolete, except in historical accounts (and Evetts, ed, 2003; Evetts, ed, 2008a). In a similar way Burrage and Torstendahl (1990) identified four key ‘actors’ in the development of professions – practitioners, users, states and universities – but it is now increasingly important, in both Anglo-American and European societies to add a fifth which is the role of the employing organization.

The challenges to sociological theories about professionalism are all interrelated and interlinked. For the purpose of explanation, however, these challenges are subdivided into the following categories:

(i) the changing role of states;
(ii) the increasing dominance of organizations;
(iii) the challenges of public policy changes at state, international and local levels;
(iv) the development of new occupational specialisms and yet prominence in sociological theories of the medical, health (and legal) professions.

(i) The Changing Role of States

The role of the nation-state has always been critical in theorizing about professions and, in particular, differentiating between Anglo-American and European systems of professions (Burrage and Torstendahl 1990a, b). The role of the nation-state had been
seen to be paramount because states had granted legitimacy, for example, by licensing professional activity, setting standards of practice and regulation, acting as guarantor of professional education (not least by giving public funds for academic education and scientific research), and by paying for services provided by professional experts and practitioners. But the internationalization of markets required the reconceptualization of traditional professional jurisdictions. In addition, the increased mobility of professional practitioners between nation-states necessitated recognition and acceptability of other states licensing, education and training requirements. Again, the convergence of professional systems and of regulatory states has required the reconceptualization as well as new theoretical and interpretational developments in the disciplinary field of professional occupational groups.

The education and training of practitioners, their credentialing and sometimes their licensing and continuing professional development is of increased importance in international markets and the increased mobility of practitioners. In nation-states the education, training and apprenticeships for practitioners has been organized, controlled and monitored by professional associations usually in association with universities. Most of these apprenticeships are, of necessity, vocationally specific. A recent European interest in work-place competencies, however, has attempted a more general focus. The links between work-place competencies and professionalism as an occupational value are potentially important and, as yet, continue to be unexplored. Similarly policy initiatives in respect of competences and where these are best developed and promoted (i.e. in education, higher education or in work) are currently of interest to policy-makers,
employers and governments. Also, the Bologna Accord and subsequent developments (e.g. in Lisbon) are also encouraging the standardization and regularization of higher education credentials and levels in order both to encourage mobility within the European Union as well as to promote higher education itself as a marketable commodity in international markets.

In other words, the role of the nation-state is changing and in this respect there is convergence between European and Anglo-American systems of professions and professionalism. Political scientists have discussed the rise of the regulatory state in Europe. McGowan and Wallace (1996, p. 562) list the characteristics of regulation as: rule-based behaviour; the use of institutions for scrutiny and enforcement; and the promotion of specific public objectives. They describe the regulatory state as one which attaches relatively more importance to processes of regulation than to other means of policy making (such as government as welfare provider, as strategic planner or as owner). The regulatory state, they argue, is a rule-making state, with an attachment to the rule of law and, normally, a predilection for judicial or quasi-judicial solutions.

(ii) The Increasing Dominance of Organizations

The theoretical challenges from organizations continue to be an important focus for researchers on professions and professionalism who have argued that it is becoming increasingly important to reconnect the theories of organizations with the theories of professions.
So how is it best to theorize these organizational contexts for professionalism. One possibility is to see professions as severely challenged and threatened by organizations, professions as passive victims who are relatively powerless against demands for regulation, increased bureaucracy, transparency and accountability. In effect this might involve a return to notions of proletarianization or de-professionalization (Reed 2007). This rather pessimistic interpretation has been prominent in my own recent writing (2008b, 2009) when I have characterized recent changes as a threat to the third logic of professionalism and as challenges to professionalism as an occupational value; and that expert judgment and professional discretion is something worth protecting and preserving. It is also being demonstrated, however, that organizations and management offer opportunities for professions and practitioners.

One of these opportunities is the incorporation of Human Resource Management (HRM) from the organization into professional employment practices, processes, procedures and conduct of the work. Job contracts, job descriptions, formal interview and selection procedures, employment rights and benefits, appeals procedures, sickness benefit and cover, maternity, caring and other absences, are all examples which have benefited the majority of professionals working in organizations and have for the most part replaced less formalized social networking and informal recommendation procedures. All these organizational practices and procedures have benefited professional practitioners in their working careers and family lives.
Other opportunities would seem to be explained by the increased recognition that organizational management and managerialism are not only complex but are also multi-layered and multi-dimensional. Management is being used to control, and sometimes limit, the work of practitioners in organizations but, in addition, management is being used by practitioners and by professional associations themselves as a strategy both in the career development of particular practitioners and in order to improve the status and respect of a professional occupation and its standing.

As a micro-level strategy, there is some evidence, particularly from health professionals such as nursing and midwifery (Carvahlo 2008; Bourgeault et al. 2004) but also now from medical doctors (Kuhlmann 2008) and teachers (Gewirtz et al. 2009), of individual practitioners acquiring qualifications in management (e.g. the MBA) with the clear intention of developing careers. In the case of health professionals such as nurses and midwives this can also be interpreted as a strategy in the competition with medical dominance but increasingly hospital management at middle and senior levels is perceived as a career opening for those with appropriate management credentials, experience and motivation.

As a mezo level strategy, it is also interesting to note the work of Langer (2008) in respect of social work in Germany. Masters level programmes for social workers in Germany are incorporating management training as a way of increasing the status, standing, reputation and respect for social work as a professional occupation in the field of social services work. Following the Bologna process and standardization of higher
education levels in Europe, in Germany there is a large development of Masters programmes which qualify (in this case) social workers to apply for leadership positions in non-profit organizations and social services departments. These developments can be interpreted, therefore, as both a micro and mezo level strategy in respect of social work.

In addition, as Muzio and Kirkpatrick (2011) have argued, organizations can constitute sites for (and objects of) professional control and domination. Other processes also explained by Muzio and Kirkpatrick (2011) refer to jurisdictional disputes and negotiations – originally described by Abbott (1988) but this time played out within organizations rather than in the wider arena of labour markets and education systems. Within organizations, occupations seek to process and control tasks and task divisions to suit their own occupational interests. The medical profession – particularly doctors employed by the state – continue to use their cultural authority and legitimacy to maintain dominance (Larkin 1983; Freidson 2001; Coburn 2006). Armstrong (1985) describes competition between professionals in management (accountancy, engineering and personnel) in colonizing key positions, roles and decision-making with large organizations. In these ways organizations constitute arenas for inter-professional competitions as well as professional conquests. Or, as Muzio and Kirkpatrick explain, organizations can provide a means through which traditional objectives of collective mobility, status advancement, financial reward and service quality can be better served.
(iii) Challenges from Public Policy Changes: nation-state and European

It seems that public policy initiatives, at both nation-state and European levels, are changing the contexts and conditions for professions and professionalism and in addition posing challenges to sociological theories particularly in respect of professional powers. For the most part public policy changes are nation-state specific although some general changes can be identified. In addition, a new task for sociologists of professions seems to be the testing of new public policy initiatives as well as, in some cases, the drafting of and commenting on policy changes.

The more general or widespread policy changes include attempts to slow down the constantly increasing costs of welfare states. Fiscal crises have been features of most states and such crises have been explained by governments as resulting from the rising costs of welfare states and particularly social service professionalism. Remedial measures to attempt to contain the fiscal crises have been taken (sometimes motivated as in the UK by a New Right ideology), and these have included cut backs in funding and institutional ‘rationalizations’ as well as the promotion of managerialist/organizational cultures in the professional public service sector including medicine. As Hanlon (1999:121) has explained: ‘in short the state is engaged in trying to redefine professionalism so that it becomes more commercially aware, budget focused, managerial, entrepreneurial and so forth’

A second more general change which is linked is the rise of the regulatory state which has been referred to already in the section on the Changing Role of States. The
regulatory state is posing a challenge to nation-state theorizing about professions and professionalism and necessitating the inclusion in theorizing of European policy measures as well as international and global. The mobility of practitioners and their migration sometimes from economies who cannot afford to lose them is posing challenges to theories of expert knowledge, to the licensing arrangements for practitioners and for the promotion of competence and professionalism in work.

(iv) The Development of New Occupational Specialisms and the Dominance in Theorizing of Medicine, Health and Law

The growth and development of new occupational groups, with aspirations and ambitions to consider themselves and to be regarded as professions, poses another challenge to and for sociological theorizing. Some are in completely new areas of specialization and examples in this category include occupations in security, IT and public relations. Other occupation have developed from specialisms within previously existing occupational groups and where a process of occupational fissure and specialization has resulted in diversity of occupational interests. There are very many examples in this category including specialist occupations within health, teaching, training and counselling. These new occupations and aspiring professions inevitably present a challenge to and for sociological theorizing about professionalism.

It is also important to recognize that the medical, health and to a lesser extent the legal professions have been prominent, even dominant, in sociological theorizing about professions. It is worth emphasizing, however, that the medical and legal professions
seem to be the only occupational groups able to exercise power, authority, control,\d\n\ndominance and closure. Other occupational groups, including new groups, have been and\d\ncontinue to be unable to exercise such powers in their negotiations with states or with\d\nmangers, employers and other occupational groups. For other occupational groups their\d\nstrategies are, of necessity, competition – and now competition within the organization\d\n(rather than in the market and the economy as Abbott, 1988, described).

It might also be the case then that the medical and legal professions in Britain and North\d\nAmerica are unique in these respects. It can be argued that the Anglo-American over-\d\nemphasis on medicine and law as the archetypal professional groups has been largely\d\nunhelpful in attempts to extend the theorizing to other occupational groups. This is\d\nparticularly the case with attempts to try to understand the different balances between the\d\nnormative (occupational value) and ideological control elements of professionalism. One\d\nconsequence has been that Anglo-American social scientists have developed a distorted\d\nview of the power of a limited number of occupational groups to influence states, demand\d\nand retain regulatory powers from those states, and control (through monopoly practices)\d\nthe markets for their knowledge and services. For other occupational groups (such as\d\ngineers, teachers and health workers), however, the ideology has worked, and has been\d\nworking in other ways.

In general, then, a focus on (previously) powerful occupational groups has deflected\d\nattention away from analysis of occupations which generally have been less successful in\d\nusing the ideology in their own interests (such as engineers and teachers). Indeed, it has
handicapped and prevented discussion of how and why so many new service and knowledge-based occupational groups are attracted to the normative aspects of the ideological appeal.

**Conclusion**

In order to be able to analyze and discuss these occupational shifts and changes at state and international levels it is necessary to be able to assess, evaluate and compare the balances between normative and ideological control elements of different occupational groups both historically (over time) and comparatively (between groups and in different social systems). In many of the new occupational contexts, where professionalism is being imposed ‘from above’ the normative value of the concept of professionalism is being used as an ideological instrument and a mechanism to promote and facilitate occupational change. In effect, professionalism is being used to convince, cajole and persuade employees, practitioners and other workers to perform and behave in ways which the organization or institution deem to be appropriate, effective and efficient. And ‘professional’ workers are very keen to grasp and lay claim to the normative values of professionalism.

The meaning of professionalism is not fixed, however, and sociological analysis of the concept has demonstrated changes over time both in its interpretation and function. It is precisely the highly contested nature of the meaning of professionalism which according to Fournier (1999) makes professionalism as an ideological mechanism such an imperfect form of governance. For all occupational groups this leaves space for professional
institutions (where they exist) and for professional workers to act as a countervailing force against organizational as well as political and state bureaucracies of ideological control. This entails that professionalism as both normative value system and ideology of control need to continue to be contested and challenged in new and old occupational contexts.
References


