

# Professionalism: Value and ideology

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**abstract** Professionalism is a key concept in the sociologies of work, occupations, professions and organizations. But professionalism is changing and being changed. The article considers the different ways in which professionalism has been and is currently being interpreted. Beginning with a section on defining the field and clarifying concepts, the second section examines the concept of professionalism, its history and current developments. The third section considers the consequences of changes in work contexts and employment conditions for aspects of professionalism both as an occupational value and as an ideology in the global world.

**keywords** discourse ♦ ideology ♦ occupational value ♦ professionalism

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## Professionalism: Value and ideology

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 workplaces 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, 1990b). The role of the nation-state had been seen to be paramount because states had granted legitimacy, for example, by licensing

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Julia Evetts, 2012, 'Professionalism: Value and ideology', *Sociopedia.isa*, DOI: 10.1177/205684601231

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.

This article begins with a section on defining the field and clarifying concepts. This is followed by a second section on the concept of professionalism, its history and current developments. The third section considers the consequences of change for aspects of professionalism as an occupational value in the global world.

### Defining the field and clarifying concepts

The concept of profession is much disputed (Sciulli, 2005 and Evetts' response, 2006). For a period in the 1950s and 1960s, researchers shifted the focus of analysis onto the concept of profession as a particular kind of occupation, or an institution with special characteristics. The difficulties of defining the special characteristics and clarifying the differences between professions and (expert) occupations troubled analysts and researchers during this period (such as Etzioni, 1969; Greenwood, 1957; Wilensky, 1964). It is generally the case, however, that definitional precision (about what is a profession) is now regarded more as a time-wasting diversion in that it did nothing to assist understanding of the power of particular occupational groups (such as law and medicine, historically) or of the contemporary appeal of the discourse of professionalism in all occupations (Champy, 2009). To most researchers in the field it no longer seems important to draw a hard and fast line between professions and occupations but, instead, to regard both as similar social forms which share many common characteristics (Olofsson, 2009).

Hughes (1958) was probably the first sociologist to argue that the differences between professions and occupations were differences of degree rather than kind. For Hughes not only do professions and occupations presume to tell the rest of society what is good and right for it, but also they determine the

ways of thinking about problems which fall in their domain (Dingwall and Lewis, 1983: 5). Professionalism in occupations and professions implies the importance of trust in economic relations in modern societies with an advanced division of labour. In other words, lay people *must* place their trust in professional workers (electricians and plumbers as well as lawyers and doctors) and some professionals must acquire confidential knowledge. Professionalism requires professionals to be worthy of that trust, to put clients first, to maintain confidentiality and not use their knowledge for fraudulent purposes. In return for professionalism in client relations, some professionals are rewarded with authority, privileged rewards and high status. Some subsequent analysis has interpreted high rewards to be the result of occupational powers rather than professionalism but this was one result of the rather peculiar focus on medicine and law as the archetypal professions in Anglo-American analysis, rather than a more realistic assessment of the large differences in power resources of most occupational groups (Freidson, 1983; Hanlon, 1999; Johnson, 1992).

The comparative work of Hughes, and his linking of professions and occupations, also constitutes the starting point for many micro-level ethnographic studies of professional socialization in workplaces (e.g. hospitals and schools) and the development (in new) and maintenance (in existing) workers of shared professional values and identities. This shared professional identity (which has been a major research focus for French researchers) is associated with a sense of common experiences, understandings and expertise, shared ways of perceiving problems and their possible solutions. This common identity is produced and reproduced through occupational and professional socialization by means of shared educational backgrounds, professional training and vocational experiences, and by membership of professional associations (local, regional, national and international) and institutes where practitioners develop and maintain shared work cultures and common values.

One result is similarities in work practices and procedures, common ways of perceiving problems and their possible solutions and shared ways of perceiving and interacting with customers and clients. In these ways the normative value system of professionalism in work, and how to behave, respond and advise, is reproduced at the micro level in individual practitioners and in their workplaces (Abbott, 1988; Hughes, 1958). Some of the differences in occupational socialization between occupations have been identified but the general process of shared occupational identity development via work cultures,

training and experience was regarded as similar across occupations and between societies. Research into occupational identities has been prominent in French analyses (e.g. Dubar, 2000) because the rather peculiar emphasis on occupational privileges and powers, in Anglo-American research, has had less influence on the definition of the field in France.

Many researchers focus on a particular case study professional/occupational group and handle the definitional problem in different ways. Some avoid giving a definition of profession and instead offer a list of relevant occupational groups (e.g. Hanlon, 1998 claims to be following Abbott, 1988). Others have used the disagreements and continuing uncertainties about precisely what *is* a profession, to dismiss the separateness of the intellectual field, although not necessarily to dispute the relevance of current analytical debates. Crompton (1990), for example, considered how paradoxes and contradictions within the sociological debates about professions actually reflected wider and more general tensions in the sociologies of work, occupations and employment.

For most researchers, professions are regarded as essentially the knowledge-based category of service occupations which usually follow a period of tertiary education and vocational training and experience. A different way of categorizing professions is to see them as the structural, occupational and institutional arrangements for work associated with the uncertainties of modern lives in risk societies. Professionals are extensively engaged in dealing with risk, with risk assessment and, through the use of expert knowledge, enabling customers and clients to deal with uncertainty. To paraphrase and adapt a list by Olgiati et al. (1998), professions are involved in birth, survival, physical and emotional health, dispute resolution and law-based social order, finance and credit information, educational attainment and socialization, physical constructs and the built environment, military engagement, peace-keeping and security, entertainment, the arts and leisure, religion and our negotiations with the next world.

In general, however, it no longer seems important to draw a hard definitional line between professions and other (expert) occupations (see Svensson and Evetts, 2003). The operational definition of profession can be highly pragmatic. The intellectual field includes the study of occupations which are predominantly service sector and knowledge-based and achieved sometimes following years of higher/further education and specified years of vocational training and experience. Sometimes professional groups are also elites with strong political links and connections, and some professional practitioners are licensed as a mechanism of market closure and the occupational control of the work. They are

primarily middle-class occupations sometimes characterized as the service class (Goldthorpe, 1982).

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 (Abbott, 1988; Larson, 1977). 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. This critique sees profession as a gendered (historical) construct (Davies, 1995; Witz, 1992). Sometimes, however, professionalization can be seen as 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 sub-field. 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 workplaces 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 sense 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 analysed 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.

### Professionalism: Historical development of interpretations

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. Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933; Marshall, 1950; Tawney, 1921). 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, cooperative 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 cooperation. The best known, though perhaps most frequently misquoted, 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 (the principles 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 examined the logics of three different ways of organizing work in contemporary societies (the market, organization and profession) and illustrated the respective advantages and disadvantages of each for clients and practitioners. In this analysis he demonstrated the continuing importance of maintaining professionalism (with some changes) as the main organizing principle for service sector work. Freidson did not use the term 'occupational value' and instead focused on the importance of knowledge and expertise; but he maintained 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 workplace training and socialization that the new recruits develop the expertise to put theoretical knowledge into practice and to use and 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 entail. 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 judgement, usually 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 internal 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) considered the appeal to 'professionalism' as a disciplinary mechanism in new occupational contexts. She suggested how the use of the discourse of professionalism, in a large privatized service company of managerial labour, worked to inculcate 'appropriate' work identities, conducts and practices. She considered 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: 107) to differentiate between professionalization 'from within' (that is, successful manipulation of the market by the group, such as in medicine and law) and 'from above' (that is, domination of forces external to the group, such as in 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. in medicine).

In the case of most contemporary public service occupations and professionals now practising 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 occupational groups 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 20th 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' (Burchell et al., 1991; Miller and Rose, 1990). 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 labelled credentialism (1979, 1981). In these cases the appeal to professionalism is a pow-

erful mechanism for promoting occupational change and social control.

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) illustrated this process in the work context of French professional music practice and it is present more generally in the work culture of artists, actors and musicians. Once self-defined as a *professional* artist, then imposing time or other limits on one's efforts is 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 even to exploit professionals in the organization.

In contemporary societies we seem to be witnessing the development of two different (and in many ways contrasting) forms of professionalism in knowledge-based, service sector work: organizational and occupational professionalism (see Table 1). As an ideal-type *organizational professionalism* is a discourse of control used increasingly by managers in work organizations. It incorporates rational-legal forms of authority and hierarchical structures of responsibility and decision-making. It involves the increased standardization of work procedures and practices and managerialist controls. It relies on externalized forms of regulation and accountability measures such as target-setting and performance review. In contrast, and again as an ideal-type, *occupational professionalism* is a discourse constructed within professional occupational groups and incorporates collegial authority. It involves relations of practitioner trust from both employers and clients. It is based on autonomy and discretionary judgement and assessment by practitioners in complex cases. It depends on common and lengthy systems of education, vocational training and socialization, and the development of strong occupational identities and work cultures. Controls are operationalized by practitioners themselves who are guided by codes of professional ethics which are monitored by professional institutes and associations. In earlier work the links and connections between these two different forms of professionalism and the classical interpretations of Weber and Durkheim have been explored (Evetts, 2004, 2005). These links will not be explained here but can be illustrated by reference to Weber's analysis of the increased prominence of the

**Table 1.** Two different forms of professionalism in knowledge-based work

<i>Organizational professionalism</i>	<i>Occupational professionalism</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discourse of control used increasingly by managers in work organizations</li> <li>rational-legal forms of authority</li> <li>standardized procedures</li> <li>hierarchical structures of authority and decision-making</li> <li>managerialism</li> <li>accountability and externalized forms of regulation, target-setting and performance review</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>discourse constructed within professional groups</li> <li>collegial authority</li> <li>discretion and occupational control of the work</li> <li>practitioner trust by both clients and employers</li> <li>controls operationalized by practitioners</li> <li>professional ethics monitored by institutions and associations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>linked to Weberian models of organization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>located in Durkheim's model of occupations as moral communities</li> </ul>

efficiency of the rational-legal and Durkheim's interpretation of organic solidarity and occupations as moral communities and sources of identity.

### Professionalism as an occupational value: Changes and consequences

In conclusion, and returning to the question of the appeal of professionalism, it is necessary to try to understand how professionalism as normative value system and ideology is now being increasingly used as a discourse in modern organizations and other institutions and places of work as a mechanism to facilitate and promote occupational change. Why and in what ways have a set of work practices and relations, that historically characterized medicine and law in Anglo-American societies, resonated first with engineers, accountants and teachers, and now with pharmacists, social workers, care assistants, computer experts and law enforcement agencies in different social systems around the world?

The *ideology* of professionalism that is so appealing to occupational groups and their practitioners includes aspects such as exclusive ownership of an area of expertise and knowledge, and the power to define the nature of problems in that area as well as the control of access to potential solutions. It also includes an image of collegial work relations of mutual assistance and support rather than hierarchical, competitive or managerialist control. Additional aspects of the ideology of professionalism and its appeal are autonomy in decision-making and discretion in work practices, decision-making in the public interest unfettered only marginally by financial constraints, and in some cases (for example the medical profession historically) even self-regulation or the occupational control of work (Freidson, 1994).

The meaning of professionalism in most service

and knowledge-based occupational contexts is very different, however, and even medicine and law in Anglo-American social systems are no longer exempt. Fiscal crises have been features of most states and such crises have been partly 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, 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) 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'.

Another interesting aspect of this question of the appeal of professionalism is how the balance between the normative and ideological control elements of professionalism is played out differently in the various service and knowledge-based occupational groups with very different employment situations. In considering this aspect, it can be argued that the Anglo-American over-emphasis on medicine and law as the archetypal professional groups has been largely unhelpful. One consequence has been that Anglo-American social scientists have developed a distorted view of the power of a limited number of occupational groups to influence states, demand and retain regulatory powers from those states, and control (through monopoly practices) the markets for their knowledge and services. For other occupational groups (such as engineers, teachers and health workers), however, the ideology has worked, and has been working in other ways.

In general, then, a focus on (previously) powerful occupational groups has deflected attention away

from analysis of occupations which generally have been less successful in using 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.

It is, however, this willingness by states to concede professional powers and regulatory responsibilities, and for occupational groups to construct and demand professionalism 'from within', that is now almost universally in question. The consequence of this is still diversity in the balance of normative values and ideological control aspects of professionalism between different occupational groups – although this diversity might be reducing. The legal profession now (in contrast to medicine) is perhaps the best example of an occupational group in a relatively privileged normative position and still able to construct professionalism 'from within'. There are however numerous occupational groups within the profession of law, and groups can be categorized as social service, or as entrepreneurial (Hanlon, 1999). In general, groups which are publicly funded compared with commercial practices are occupations where the ideological control elements are stronger than the normative.

The medical professions are similarly highly stratified and differentially powerful in the sense of being able to construct and demand professionalism 'from within'. It is also interesting to observe that the professional groups who are becoming powerful in international markets (for example some accountancy and legal professions) might be different from the occupational groups who have been powerful at state levels in the sense of constructing and demanding professionalism 'from within'.

In order to be able to analyse and discuss these occupational shifts and changes at state and international levels, however, 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 deems 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. All of these different interpretations are now needed in order to understand the appeal of professionalism in new and old occupations, and how the concept is being used to promote and facilitate occupational change.

The different balances between normative values and ideological control aspects in occupational groups, and the differences between professionalism constructed and operationalized 'from within' or 'from above', can help to explain the wider and more general appeal and attraction of professionalism. These different balances between occupational groups can also be applied in other societies and parts of the world where issues to do with the closure of markets or the 'capture' and manipulation of states never occurred. Thus Freidson's (2001) analysis of professionalism as the third logic – namely control and order of the work and workers by the occupation rather than by the logics of the market or the organization – warrants further elaboration. Control continues to be by normative and ideological means but the balances vary between different occupational groups and are critically dependent on where professionalism is constructed and operationalized.

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.

## Annotated further reading

Freidson E (2001) *Professionalism: The Third Logic*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

This book examines and compares the logics of the organization, the market and the profession as different contexts for the control of work and worker/employees/practitioners. It demonstrates the importance of maintaining professionalism in the production of service sector, knowledge-based work.

Muzio D and Kirkpatrick I (eds) (2011) *Reconnecting*

professional occupations and professional organizations. *Current Sociology* 59(4; monograph 2, July).

This collection is important because it examines the ways in which professionalism and managerialism are coexisting and mutual affecting and influencing each other.

Svensson LG and Evetts J (eds) (2010) *Sociology of Professions: Continental and Anglo-Saxon Traditions*. Göteborg: Bokförlager Daidalos, AB. This book explains the different traditions of research and analysis in sociology of professions in Anglo-American and Continental Europe. It also examines the convergences between these two traditions.

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**résumé** Le professionnalisme est un concept clé dans les sociologies de travail, des métiers, des professions et des organisations. Toutefois, le professionnalisme est en train de se modifier et d'être modifié. Cet article examine les sens différents d'interprétation du professionnalisme antérieur et actuel. En début de cet article on définit le domaine de l'investigation et on clarifie des concepts. La seconde partie de l'article examine le concept de professionnalisme, l'histoire de ce phénomène et les développements actuels. La troisième partie considère les conséquences de ces changements par rapport à des contextes de travail et des conditions d'emploi, pour les aspects de professionnalisme tant comme une valeur professionnelle que comme une idéologie dans la société planétaire.

**mots-clés** discours ♦ idéologie ♦ professionnalisme ♦ valeur professionnelle

**resumen** El profesionalismo es una noción clave en las sociologías de trabajo, de ocupaciones, de profesiones y de organizaciones. Sin embargo, el profesionalismo está cambiando y está siendo modificado. Este artículo considera las diferentes maneras en que el profesionalismo ha sido y actualmente está siendo interpretado. Este artículo empieza con una sección en que se define el campo de la investigación y se clarifican los conceptos. La segunda sección examina el concepto de profesionalismo, la historia de este fenómeno y las evoluciones actuales. La tercera sección considera las consecuencias de los cambios en los contextos de trabajo y las condiciones de empleo para los aspectos del profesionalismo tanto como un valor profesional como una ideología en la sociedad planetaria.

**palabras clave** discurso ♦ ideología ♦ profesionalismo ♦ valor profesional