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Professions at the margins

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editorial

- Professions at the margins* **259**
Nick Butler, Shiona Chillias and Sara Louise Muhr

articles

- Producing professionals: Exploring gendered and embodied responses to practicing on the margins* **273**
Katie Rose Sullivan

- New conditions for identities, cultures and governance of welfare sector professionals: The teaching profession* **294**
Karolina Parding, Lena Abrahamsson and Anna Berg-Jansson

- Social work: A history of gender and class in the profession* **309**
Rannveig Dahle

- The discursive construction of professionalism: An episteme of the 21st century* **327**
Kiely Flanigan Adams

notes

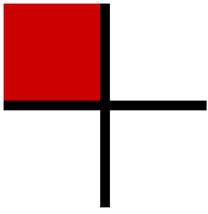
- Indier than thou: On creative professions, chefs, and the sacralization of margins* **344**
Alf Rehn

reviews

- Bites of organization* **355**
Gibson Burrell

- Colouring Benjamin* **361**
Christian De Cock

- Imagination against the machine* **372**
Antonis Vradis



Professions at the margins

Nick Butler, Shiona Chillas and Sara Louise Muhr

Introduction

The professions have become well-established at the centre of public life over the last one hundred and fifty years, both as a mode of organization and as a discursive episteme (Perkin, 1989; Adams, this issue). However, due to social, political, cultural, economic, geographical and epistemological influences, the professions also bear an intrinsic relation to the margins. These margins are *contested*: they mark the points at which jurisdictions of professional practice are fought over, lost and won. The margins are *unstable*: what counts as peripheral to a profession is constantly being modified by institutional reform, political restructuring and wider economic trends. The margins are *liminal*: they are the places where professionals encounter and negotiate with other professionals, non-professionals, clients and the state. Finally, the margins are *perilous*: they indicate the threshold of ethical conduct across which trained practitioners have, time and again, had occasion to pass. In this editorial, we will – in the tradition of *ephemera* being a marginal journal itself (see e.g. Spoelstra et al., 2007) – reflect on the relation between the professions and the margins in order to introduce the special issue.

We begin by considering some of the reasons why certain professions remain at the margins while others come to reap significant social and economic rewards. We then move on to examine marginalized groups within the professions, which raises important questions about gender, race and class in relation to modes of occupational practice. Finally, we explore issues around inter-professional competition and struggles for professional legitimacy through the theoretical lens of jokes and humour – a marginalized approach within the literature on the professions. Taken together, these avenues of inquiry will allow us to contextualize the contributions to this Special Issue under the broad theme of professions at the margins.

Marginal professions

While some occupational groups have succeeded in achieving high levels of social recognition, others have found themselves languishing at the margins and striving to legitimize their work as professionals. Examples of such marginalization include the way that medical doctors have attained a prestigious professional status, whereas radiologists, nurses and midwives have struggled to acquire the same kind of social and economic rewards from their work (Freidson, 2007; Scott, 2008). Similarly, airline pilots have managed to secure for themselves an esteemed professional image – which continues today even though most of the actual flying is fully automated – whereas cabin personnel and air traffic controllers have found it difficult to gain respect for their work, although they are also responsible for a great deal of the safety in the air (Ashcraft, 2005; 2007; Hopkins, 1998). We tend to agree with commentators who suggest that the study of professions at the margins may offer considerable insight into issues around occupational development, regulation and closure. As McKenna notes (2007: 208), ‘the specific reasons behind the institutional failures of these potential professions are far more instructive than the subsequent explanations of institutional success’. This is because the progress of thriving professions, such as medicine or piloting, can be misleading because the process of professionalization for these occupational groups seems inevitable and unproblematic. Examining professions at the margins, by contrast, serves to illuminate the kinds of institutional power struggles, social inequalities, and race- and gender-based exclusions that lie at the heart of the system of professions.

Broadly speaking, we see three major reasons for the marginalization of certain professions in relation to others. First, some occupations have established large and influential associations to represent practitioners and secure professionalization through certification and state recognition, while other occupations have been unable to collectively organize along similar lines. Second, gender dynamics within the professions have resulted in typically male-dominated occupations (e.g. law, accountancy) accruing power and status at the same time as those occupations with a greater number of women in their ranks (e.g. social work, nursing) fail to gain the same kind of symbolic and economic rewards. Finally, a number of occupations find themselves at the margins due to the social stigma that is attached to practitioners due to the nature of their work or the image of their professional practice. Let us take each one of these in turn in order to map professional marginalization in its various forms.

Certifying professionals

Some occupations have been more successful than others in collectively organizing to exert influence over a field of work. In this respect, it is clear that certain occupations have benefitted greatly from possessing a body of knowledge that can be systematized to a high level of abstraction. After all, it is on this basis that entry into the profession can be regulated by educational establishments and professional practice controlled by representative bodies (Millerson, 1964). Lawyers, accountants and medical doctors all have

very clear fields of expertise that practitioners need to master in order to be perceived as professionals by other practitioners and potential clients. In fact, none of these occupational groups are allowed to practise their work unless they have demonstrated a certain amount of professional knowledge and acquired formal certification, which involves going through a lengthy period of training and passing a series of exams.

While occupations such as law, accountancy and medicine have easily identifiable bodies of expert knowledge, widely accepted standards of qualification and well-trodden routes into professional practice, other types of contemporary ‘knowledge work’ – such as management consultancy, personal coaching or project management – are not characterized by quite the same degree of epistemological formalization or state-backed regulation. Without possessing a unified cognitive base, such occupations find themselves unable to establish accepted modes of formal training or implement universally recognized certification, even if they have managed to reap enormous economic rewards in recent times (Alvesson and Johansson, 2002; Brotman et al., 1998; Cicmil, et al., 2009). Likewise, although many knowledge workers will be university educated, it is not illegal – nor indeed uncommon – to engage in professional practice without a degree or an equivalent qualification. Often despite the best efforts of practitioners, fledgling professions like management consultancy, personal coaching or project management have had limited success in developing the kind of ‘professional projects’ launched so effectively by engineering and accountancy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which typically involves seeking to restrict access to professional practice and monopolizing the rewards that accrue as a result of occupational closure (Larson, 1977).

The case of the Institute of Consulting in the UK is instructive in this regard. Founded in 1962 as the Institute of Management Consultancy (IMC), the association for practitioners was founded with the explicit aim of gaining professional status for management consultants based on the model provided by more established professions such as law and accountancy. This involved developing a formal body of knowledge, a programme of training, qualifying examinations and a code of conduct with the intention of acquiring a Royal Charter; ultimately, it was hoped that this would allow the IMC to exert regulatory influence over the field of management consultancy and provide the first step towards gaining legal protection for the term ‘management consultant’ (Tisdall, 1982; Kipping and Saint-Martin, 2005). However, by the time the association became integrated within the Chartered Management Institute in 2005, the knowledge base of management consultancy remained broad and fragmentary; a common code of ethics was still voluntary for practitioners; certification was not universally recognized by clients; and written examinations had been abandoned soon after they were first introduced. This tells us that management consultancy, despite attempts by the IMC to control access to occupational practice, still lacks some of the key traits that characterize more established professions (Kipping et al., 2006; Kipping, 2011).

What is interesting about the case of management consultancy is that the inability to professionalize has not acted as an obstacle to its phenomenal growth over the last few

decades. Indeed, private corporations and public-sector institutions are increasingly coming to be shaped and transformed by an elite ‘consultocracy’ of global professional service firms (Hodge and Bowman, 2006; Saint-Martin, 2000). Although some newer occupational groups such as personnel specialists have managed to gain chartered status in recent years (Watson, 2001), there is a sense in which professionalization itself is becoming marginalized as a process by which occupations gain status and privilege in an era of deregulation and flexible accumulation (Leicht and Lyman, 2006). This reveals something about the shift in power from qualifying associations to large multidisciplinary professional service firms in regulating professional expertise and skilled labour, resulting in the rise of a ‘commercialized’ professionalism that relies less on barriers to entry and monopolies of practice and more on a market-based entrepreneurial approach to professional practice (Hanlon, 1996; Muzio et al., 2011). In the state sector, too, the logic of managerialism is coming to shape the professional identities of practitioners outside traditional forms of collegial organization (Parding et al., this issue), and as we see in Rehn (this issue) certification can even lead to professional critique. Full professionalization, with its emphasis on external regulation and occupational closure, may therefore no longer be the surest means of securing social and economic advancement for occupational groups like consultants, coaches or project managers under contemporary conditions of capitalism.

Gender and the professions

When it comes to the gendered aspects of the professions – including both the discourse of professionalism and the process of professionalization itself (see Dahle, this issue; Sullivan, this issue) – critical research has focused on how women, as well as other minority groups, have been excluded from power bases in occupational practice (Sinclair, 1991; Witz, 1992; Wright, 1997). The main analytical interest in this body of research is to examine how certain professions have developed as ‘women’s work’, which effectively serves to render an occupational practice ‘semi-professional’ or ‘non-professional’ and therefore less highly regarded in social terms (Hearn, 1982). While Sullivan (this issue) and Dahle (this issue) are concerned respectively with massage therapists and social workers, other examples of such feminized professions include care assistants, midwifery, nursing and preschool teaching – all occupations, notably, that are centred on care-work that were once performed primarily in a domestic environment. Due to the historical split between the male breadwinner and the female care-giver (Medved, 2009), work that involves personal care has typically been associated with household duties whereas the professional label has been reserved for occupations that historically take place outside of the home. This gender divide has been widened by the exclusion of women from certain types of higher education, which provided the entry routes into male-dominated professions in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Women were instead encouraged to undertake vocational training in care-related areas, such as social work (see Dahle, this issue).

Recent diversity initiatives in organizations as well as campaigns by educational establishments have attempted to reduce such division. However, due to the deeply rooted split between what is assumed as ‘women’s work’ and ‘men’s work’, progress has been

slow (Eaton, 2003). The discursively constructed gender stereotype still guides the overall expectation that women are caring, nurturing, understanding and listening, and thus naturally skilled in care-work, while men are viewed as rational, decisive, strategic and action-oriented, thus inherently suited for professional work. While there have been efforts to increase diversity in male-dominated professions through affirmative action initiatives, critics have noted that such interventions do not always translate into meaningful change and may in fact serve to reinforce the marginal status of minority groups (Kugelberg, 2006).

Stigmatized professions

Some occupational groups have become marginalized due to the negative social meanings that have become attached to their work. Hughes (1962) coined the term ‘dirty work’ to conceptualize the way in which certain types of professional practice are stigmatized due to their physical, social or moral character. An example of a physically stigmatized occupational group is butchers, whose physically dirty work – i.e. the handling of raw meat, blood and intestines – is often viewed with some disdain (Meara, 1974). The same can also be said of sewage workers and refuse collectors, who both engage in work that is seen as physically grubby and therefore low in status. Other occupational groups are rendered marginal due to the undesirable social, rather than physical, character of their work. Perhaps the most well-known case involves correctional officers, who deal primarily with convicted criminals in prisons (e.g. Dick, 2005; Lemmergaard and Muhr, 2012; Tracy, 2004). Correctional officers, whose work takes place literally behind closed doors and out of sight, can in this light be contrasted with certain types of police officers who perform community-oriented functions that are often visible to the public at large. The stigma attached to correctional officers is further strengthened by the way they are portrayed in popular culture as rough and sadistic, compared to the (by and large) serious and upstanding image of police officers. Finally, some occupational groups are stigmatized as a result of the moral judgements that are made about their work. For example, massage therapy can be described as ‘dirty work’ in a moral sense because of the sexual connotations that some erroneously associate with this profession (Sullivan, this issue). We might note that other medical professionals, such as doctors and nurses, are not stigmatized to the same extent even though their work puts them in close proximity to patients’ bodies. A similar example can be found in Hong and Duff’s (1977) brilliant analysis of ‘taxi-dancers’ (i.e. women who are paid to dance with men in dance halls) and the way they fight the sexual stigma that has coalesced around their work.

As a result of such stigma – whether physical, social or moral – dirty workers often find it difficult to justify themselves to others as ‘professionals’ since their work is perceived as unseemly or lacking in dignity (Ashforth et al., 2007). Nonetheless, as many forms of dirty work are important for the maintenance of social institutions and large-scale organizations (consider, for example, the chaos caused by refuse collectors’ strike in Naples in 2007 and 2008), such occupations are not eradicated within the system of professions but rather kept at the margins (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999). Social stigma also exerts a cost on

practitioners in terms of the tension between their sense of self as highly-trained professionals and the frequently negative associations attached to their work (Tracy, 2004; Sullivan, this issue). Working in 'dirty occupations' is thus most often accompanied with a constant struggle to defend occupational identity in the attempt to secure a meaningful sense of self (Chiappetta-Swanson, 2005; Lemmergaard and Muhr, 2012). Due to this constant identity struggle, many dirty work occupations suffer from high employee turnover, high burn-out rates or early retirement (Bakker and Heuven, 2006; Schaufeli and Taris, 2005).

Marginalized groups within the professions

Professions are also faced with issues of marginalization from within. Traditionally dominated by middle-class white men, many professions have long been accused of excluding those who come from a different class, gender or race that do not conform to the stereotypical masculine, heteronormative culture (Fournier and Smith, 2006). Professional groups such as pilots (Ashcraft, 2005), police officers (Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010), medical doctors (Allen, 2005), and management consultants (Meriläinen et al., 2004) have all received critical attention in this regard.

According to Ashcraft et al. (2012), there are two major explanations for such marginalization from within the professions. The first (and predominant) view proposes that some professions have historically been constituted through a process whereby certain groups have been excluded from attaining professional status (Ahuja, 2002; Dick and Nadin, 2006). This has occurred, for example, by refusing to allow women or people of colour from entering university and gaining degrees that would allow them to access certain professions. Although admission policies have of course changed over time, the historical legacy of such institutional exclusion – as we noted above – still exerts a strong influence over the make-up of the professions and acts to prevent certain minority groups from becoming practitioners (Dreher, 2003). When women do achieve the qualifications required, alternative forms of exclusion arise. In the legal profession, for example, women are often excluded from partner positions (Bolton and Muzio, 2007). Similarly, Hochschild (2003) speaks persuasively of the sacrifices women have to make in academic careers; the unequal distribution of labour at home means female academics are less likely to have children and, when they do, they tend to have fewer than their male colleagues. This approach applies equally to the question of ethnicity and race, whereby migrant workers for example are particularly susceptible to marginalization. Here we witness African and middle-eastern employees being excluded from certain professions or bypassed for promotion within certain occupations, no doubt in part due to the continuing effects of colonial discourse (Muhr and Salem, forthcoming; Van Laer and Janssens, 2011).

Where the view above attempts to explain gendered and raced occupations in terms of historical exclusion, an alternative view emphasizes the tacit inclusion on which many professions have been founded (Ashcraft et al., 2012). Instead of focusing on how certain

groups are excluded from a profession, this perspective suggests that such exclusion is based on the fact that the profession itself is defined by the selective inclusion of certain types of bodies (i.e. white, male, heterosexual). Such bodies come to define an occupation as 'professional' in contrast to other occupations that are deemed as non- or semi-professional (Hearn, 1982). The perception of professionalism is therefore linked to a form of normative embodiment rather than to the actual work undertaken by practitioners (Kenny and Bell, 2011). On this view, we can understand the limitations of affirmative action initiatives: even though minority groups within a profession may increase in number, they would still be marginalized due to the centrality of the white, male, masculine body that defines the standard of professionalism.

Professions and humour

The study of humour has featured as a rather marginal concern in the sociology of professions, but there is a case to be made that it offers an insight into important aspects of professional life. Indeed, while none of the contributions to this special issue deal in a systematic way with issues around humour in relation to the professions, we think it could serve as a potentially useful conceptual framework to analyze various occupational groups such as massage therapists (Sullivan, this issue), teachers (Parding et al., this issue) and social workers (Dahle, this issue). Industrial sociology and organization studies have long been concerned with joking relationships in different types of workplaces – from hospitals (Coser, 1959) and department stores (Bradney, 1957) to call centres (Taylor and Bain, 2003) and advertising agencies (Kenny and Euchlar, 2012) – but it is less common to find analyses of humour in relation to a specific profession. This is a significant omission since the way occupational groups tell jokes to each other and engage in jocular bantering in the workplace is not extraneous to issues around professional identity, social status or the demands of particular types of work; in fact, it is arguably central to them. For example, social workers, psychiatric nurses and medical professionals are known to employ 'gallows humour' in organizational contexts that are highly unpredictable and demanding (Sullivan, 2000; Sayre, 2001). Such humour serves as a coping mechanism in stressful jobs and a way of letting off steam under difficult conditions. This suggests that while joking relationships are on the periphery of debates around professionalism, they can play a crucial role for certain occupational groups in their everyday working lives.

Humour certainly plays a role in the daily activities of practitioners, but it can also tell us something about the kind of divisions and disputes that exist between different occupational groups. If, as Freud (2002) suggested, jokes are rarely ever innocent or innocuous but frequently contain certain tendencies, such as permitting the expression of aggression and hostility that is otherwise deemed socially unacceptable, then we might productively see occupational jokes as part of the attempt by one set of expert practitioners to undermine other (invariably competing) professional groups. To this extent, inter-professional competition is not only enacted through struggles for control over a body of

knowledge (Abbott, 1988); it is also manifested in comic stories, witticisms and gags. Consider the following:

Four doctors went duck hunting together. Together in the duck blind, they decided that instead of all shooting away at the same time, they would take turns as each duck came by. The first to have a shot would be the general practitioner, next would be the internist, then the surgeon, and finally the pathologist.

When the first bird flew over, the general practitioner lifted his shotgun, but never fired, saying, 'I'm not sure that was a duck'.

The second bird was the internist's. He aimed and followed the bird in his sights, saying, 'It looks like a duck, it flies like a duck, it sounds like a duck...', but then the bird was out of range and the internist didn't take a shot.

As soon as the third bird appeared, flying up out of the water only a few feet from the blind, the surgeon blasted away, emptying his pump gun and blowing the bird to smithereens. Turning to the pathologist, the surgeon said, 'Go see whether that was a duck'. (Cited in Cohen, 1999: 13)

There are several points to note here. First, this joke functions in a similar way as the typical 'Englishman, Scotsman and Irishman' jokes: each individual is tasked to perform the same action with a slight modification in each case, with increasingly amusing consequences. While the general practitioner is mocked for his or her perceived inability to diagnose the illness, the internist is portrayed as being overly concerned with diagnosis at the expense of intervention and cure. However, it is the surgeon who serves as the true butt of the joke, even more so than the humiliated pathologist; the joke denigrates surgeons, albeit in a comically exaggerated way, by suggesting they 'cut first and then diagnose' (Cohen, 1999: 14). Essentially, the joke plays on the idea that surgeons exert control over a technical field of expertise that is rooted in trial-and-error, rather than possessing an abstract body of knowledge that is founded in systematic theory. Since the latter acts as the basis on which practitioners are usually able to lay claim to legitimacy and status, the gag challenges the very standing of surgeons (in comparison to other types of doctors) as 'professionals' in a strict sense. Far from being marginal to the kinds of conflicts and tensions that run within and between professional groups, humour provides a novel perspective from which to view these frictions and hostilities. Just as Wittgenstein envisaged an entire book of philosophy written in the form of jokes (Malcolm, 2001), so we might imagine the sociology of professions analyzed solely from the perspective of occupational humour.

Perhaps one of the most intriguing comic depictions of professionalism occurs in Chris Morris' 2000 television series *Jam* (based on his earlier radio series *Blue Jam*) (see Randall, 2010). To call this programme a 'comedy' would be to overlook the unnerving effects it has on the viewer, produced by its mix of bleak humour, surreal interludes, nightmarish characters and woozy ambient soundtrack. The programme plays on our collective fears of medical professionals abusing their positions of authority and renegeing on the bond of trust we establish with them. *Jam*, among other things, is a case study of professionalism gone awry: the GP who cures every ailment in his patients, including

malaria and hepatitis, by ‘kissing it better’; the hospital physician who diagnoses a ‘symptomless coma’ in apparently healthy individuals and medicates them with benzodiazepine until they eventually pass away; and the acupuncturist who uses nine-inch nails to treat her patients and who claims that ‘the treatment is very successful – I’ve never had a patient come back’. Here, humour takes its starting-point from the fact that such characters – oddball clinicians and crackpot therapists, all played with impeccable detachment and reserve – are located at the heart of institutional life and occupy positions of status and privilege, even as their medical interventions lay on the very fringes of professional practice; our uneasy laughter thus arises from the comic incongruity between our expectations of professional conduct (i.e. trust, ethics and expert knowledge) and the reality we are presented with (i.e. inappropriate behaviour, professional misconduct and dangerous incompetence). The joke is funny, in other words, insofar as we are aware of the social standing of medical practitioners and the level of autonomy and independence they normally enjoy in their working lives.

Sometimes humour has the potential to damage the reputation of a profession and may reinforce negative stereotypes associated with certain occupations (e.g. jokes about lawyers or management consultants) and minority groups within the professions (e.g. sexist, racist and homophobic jokes). To this extent, humour plays a role in reproducing the stigmas that can undermine the status of a given profession. In Sullivan’s analysis of massage therapy (this issue), the popular depiction of practitioners as sex workers – especially in sitcoms such as *Seinfeld*, *Friends* and *Sex in the City* – casts a long shadow over the profession and its aspiration to be viewed as a respectable occupation on a par with medicine. As Sullivan writes: ‘While these programs offer humorous accounts, they also keep the stereotypes surrounding sexuality alive’ (this issue: 277). It is no surprise that massage therapists take active steps to counteract the set of assumptions, often comical in tone, that are made about them in the mass media. This might involve giving themselves different professional titles (such as ‘myotherapist’), wearing medical scrubs, or adorning their offices with typically ‘clinical’ symbols such as anatomy wall-charts and life-size skeletons (this issue: 283). To this extent, comic portrayals of certain professions can change the way practitioners view themselves, carry out their work and engage with clients. We would therefore be mistaken to think of humour as a trivial concern in the sociology of professions; indeed, it seems to play a rather notable role in the ongoing negotiation of professional identity and occupational conduct, and for this reason has the potential to serve as a useful grid of intelligibility for studying contemporary trends in professionalization.

Introducing the papers

In the first paper in this special issue, Katie Rose Sullivan reflects on the material and discursive resources employed by a specific marginal profession – massage therapy – to develop an occupational identity that is free from sexual connotations common in popular representations of such work. This relatively new profession finds itself stigmatized by being implicitly compared to the ‘oldest profession’ (namely, prostitution) and so part of

the task for practitioners is to develop, through modes of bodywork and styles of self-presentation, an altogether different set of professional associations. Drawing on extensive participant observation of and in-depth interviews with practitioners in the US, Sullivan finds that male and female massage therapists have different techniques for dealing with this issue, which points to an important gender divide in the quest for professional legitimacy.

Karolina Parding, Lena Abrahamssons and Anna Berg-Jansson continue to explore the theme of professional identity in the following paper in the special issue, which looks at changes in the teaching profession in line with New Public Management (NPM) initiatives in Sweden. The authors discuss the way that different logics – i.e. professional and organizational – influence the working lives of practitioners and impact on their sense of self. They find that professional autonomy, discretion and collegiality are becoming eroded by the increasing managerialism within the school system in the wider context of social, political and economic transformation. However, the authors are careful to note that '[s]ome of these changes can be seen as resulting in marginalization of the teaching profession, while others in renewing of the profession' (this issue: 303). The task for the authors, then, is to draw out the various effects of these complex and competing logics on the culture of the teaching profession and the identity of its practitioners.

The next paper in the special issue, by Rannveig Dahle, takes a historical look at the professional development of social work in Norway. The author finds that in the context of the post-Second World War welfare state, social work struggled for professional legitimacy due to the fact that it had its roots in the unpaid charity work by women in the private sphere and was comprised chiefly of female practitioners. This speaks of the inherent gender bias in the system of professions, which the 'malestream' literature has largely neglected. Dahle goes on to argue that professionalization itself has an in-built mechanism of gender-exclusion that serves to diminish the social status of female-dominated occupations. As she notes, the notion of 'profession' is 'a concept of elite masculinity aimed at describing the work of men within a realm of possibilities to which women have no access' (this issue: 321).

In the final full paper in the special issue, Kiely Adams argues that 'professionalism' functions as a Foucauldian episteme. At the heart of her argument is the idea that professionalism is best understood as a field of knowledge and set of practices that shape our conceptualization of and engagement with the world. This approach, Adams suggests, allows us to take into account the way that professionalism – as a discursive formation – has spread into domains beyond the traditional workplace, such as popular culture and the family. This theoretical *tour de force* concludes by suggesting that the professionalism episteme cannot fail to constitute various modes of subjectivity through an interplay between organizational power and expert knowledge, which implies that 'non-professional' identities (e.g. the queer, the feminine, the local) will be marginalized in the process (this issue: 337).

In his research note, Alf Rehn addresses the problematics of professionalism by discussing how professions make sense of success and status. Rehn uses the case of top-level chefs to argue that the internal hierarchies of a professional field are much more complex than is often assumed. He shows that the best-known and most successful chefs are commonly seen as something less than role models, and that more marginal positions become celebrated as the apex of culinary professionalism. Here the margins of the field, rather than the core, become idealized and praised – at least by ‘indie’ chefs.

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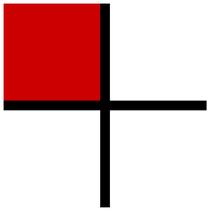
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Producing professionals: Exploring gendered and embodied responses to practicing on the margins *

Katie Rose Sullivan

abstract

A legitimate professional identity is not uniformly available to all occupations and workers. Several markers such as level of education and training, certifications, race, class, gender, sexuality, and embodied attributes can keep work and workers 'on the margins'. This study explores how massage therapists seek to manage perceptions that massage is sexual, therefore not professional, labor. Both discourses and embodied practices in massage training and reflections from working massage therapists are used to explore the question: *how do workers on the margins discursively and materially navigate a professional identity?* Findings reveal that male and female therapists have different strategies for managing a marginalized identity. Female therapists are often given the message that they must desexualize by monitoring their bodies, dress, and interactions, thereby constituting a defensive strategy to managing a professional identity. Male therapists are more likely to take a proactive approach to identity management by crafting a desexualized clinical identity by linking massage with the profession of medicine. Yet occupational and individual strategies to shed a marginalized identity both enable and constrain work and workers. *How* one seeks to gain professional legitimacy impacts on how workers make sense of their place in the professions, the bodies performing the work, and the work they ultimately perform. In other words, *practitioner's bodies and labor practices become a site of struggle for professionalization.*

Introduction

This article explores how massage therapists discursively and materially navigate a professional identity as part of their quest 'away from the margins'. Scholars critical of professional closure note that professions appear to be crafted around objective criteria such as education, training, certifications, and skills. Yet a closer examination reveals that one's professional identity can be considered suspect for many reasons. For instance,

* I wish to thank the reviewers and special issue editors for their generous and helpful feedback on earlier versions of this piece.

gender, race, class, sexuality, and embodied attributes such as appearance are implicated in which occupations and bodies can claim a professional status.

During my observations at two massage schools and interviews with working therapists, it became clear that many participants viewed a legitimate professional identity as an uphill battle. Of primary concern is that although most massage is not sex work, the labor and laborers of massage are often sexualized due to several factors such as a predominately female labor force, and a historical (and, at times, current) link with prostitution (Calvert, 2002).

To manage a sexualized and stigmatized professional identity, many therapists seek to make connections with the medical profession. A desexualized clinical professionalism, which links massage as a therapeutic healing process with the medical field, yields its own dilemmas as the labor of massage more closely mimics intimate encounters than diagnostic ones in regard to touch, private rooms, dim lighting, candles, soft music, and undressed clients (Calvert, 2002). As such, professional tensions arise around *both* the labor of massage *and* the gendered and sexualized bodies doing the labor. Despite this, several institutional voices in massage hail the profession of medicine and the image of a doctor as iconic examples of professional success. Yet, like most professions, medicine has historically remained elite by policing the labor and laborers granted entrance (Abbot, 1998; Friedson, 1970; Pringle, 1998; Witz, 1990), essentially closing itself to all but the most 'appropriate' practices and members. Massage is considered 'alternative' or complementary to medicine, sometimes allowed to practice on the fringes of the field, but as of yet not invited to join (Fournier, 2002).

In this project, massage therapists' desire to be looked upon as a bona fide member of the medical profession is tightly embedded in desires to manage a marginalized professional identity, in hopes that the former can effectively erase the latter. This is not to suggest that therapists' attempts to enter the medical field are a form of false consciousness or to deny that some therapists have achieved success in their partnerships with hospitals, clinics, and physicians. Rather, the goal is to explore how occupational and individual strategies to shed a marginalized identity both enable and constrain work and workers. *How* one seeks to gain professional legitimacy impacts on how workers make sense of their place in the professions, the bodies performing the work, and the work they ultimately perform. In other words, *practitioner's bodies and labor practices become a site of struggle for professionalization*. This article explores both discourses and practices in massage training and reflections from working massage therapists to explore the question: *how do workers on the margins discursively and materially navigate a professional identity?*

Literature review

Therapists' struggles remind us that for most occupations and workers professional status is far from given, meaning that not *everybody* can easily achieve professional status. The

degree to which a profession and its members can discursively (and materially) maintain and expand their jurisdiction over realms of practice is an outcome of professionalization strategies (Chreim, Williams and Hinings, 2007; Larson, 1977). Formal strategies include activities such as establishing a high level of education and training, entrance examinations, and licensing requirements (Bottero, 1992; Perrow, 1986; Witz, 1990). Other, less transparent strategies might include a long-standing exclusion of bodies based on gender, race, sexuality, ability levels, and age.

For instance, professions have historically been called out as patriarchal and gendered in ways that privilege men and masculinity (Arndt and Bigelow, 2005; Cheney and Ashcraft, 2007; Crompton, 1987; Davies, 1996; Hearn, 1982; Larson, 1977). The seemingly pervasive link between professions and a particular vision of rationality and masculinity insinuates the body as a site of possibility, peculiarities, and problems. Here, there is little separation between the gendered assumptions of work and the workers who perform it. For example, gender and organization scholars note that professions – and who is considered a professional – rest in large part on the gendered perceptions of both the occupation (for example, airline pilots) and the embodied subjectivities of who is doing the work (white, male, middle class, able-bodied) (Ashcraft and Mumby, 2004). In other words, we come to know a profession, in part, through our knee-jerk associations regarding the bodies that perform the work (Ashcraft et al., 2012).

Alternatively, we also come to know professions by insinuating what they are not. For example, work that is considered ‘dirty’, including sexualized labor, is often considered antithetical to a professional identity (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Tracy and Scott, 2006). Although these associations are culturally and historically contingent and open to diversity and change, a result of gendered professional exclusion is that our modern definitions of what constitutes a professional are pervasively narrow and gendered, and linked to the bodies doing the work.

At times, workers have little control over how their work is coded. For instance, feminized labor is often sexualized, particularly if women are asked to perform customer service roles, which require a ‘flirty’ or feminine performance, or if the work involves nurturing or caring for other bodies (Erickson, 2004; Pringle, 1989; Trethewey et al., 2006).

A key dilemma facing women seeking professional standing is that sexuality is often gendered in ways that make the female body and sexuality publicly suspect whereas the male body and sexuality are normalized (Acker, 1990; Brewis, 2005; Bruni and Gherardi, 2002; Butler, 1999). Women and feminized male bodies entering the public world of work might struggle to prove disembodiment, desexualization, and a disavowal of the burden of things ‘private’ if sexuality is ‘marked’ on their bodies. Or, at the very least, it seems they have a more difficult case to make. Despite the fact that some occupations, groups, and bodies struggle to achieve professional status, there remains tremendous energy around this pursuit.

As Fournier (1999) notes, ‘professionalism’ is appealing to organizations, occupations, and employees. The term conjures several things such as social prestige, high salaries, and worker autonomy (Roberts, 2005). Therefore, many social actors, regardless of their occupation, are motivated to achieve professional status (Cheney and Ashcraft, 2007; Evetts, 2003; Larson, 1977). In this line of argument, Larson (1977) argues that professionalization is a political process that is ‘inextricably bound to the person ... it follows, therefore, that *the professionals themselves have to be produced* if their products or commodities are to be given a distinctive form’ (14; emphasis in original). Practitioner’s bodies and labor practices, in turn, become a site of struggle for professionalization.

Failing to achieve a professional status has material consequences and it is far from simple. Since occupational identities are not natural occurrences, professional identities are often the result of ongoing strategic planning and deliberate constructions. As such, professional identities are complex performative accomplishments (Bruni and Gherardi, 2002; Butler, 1999; Deetz, 1998).

Not surprisingly, several sources are concerned with ‘how’ individuals project a professional image. Often, popular self-help literature suggests that professional image can be achieved through dress, speech, and bodily comportment. These ‘self’ projects are often uncritically suggested and executed, ignoring the structural and gendered constraints that keep some individuals from achieving professional status (Lair, Sullivan and Cheney, 2005).

Both men and women monitor and control their bodies and emotions at work. However, women’s navigations are wrapped up in a heteronormative double-bind when women are told to control their bodies and excessive sexuality but to maintain a proper level of femininity so as not to become ‘mannish’ and to remain visually appealing for male consumption (Trethewey, 1999; 2000a). For many women, much of the work of navigating professional identities includes the careful construction of the appropriate feminine body through the disciplinary controls of diet, exercise, proper movements, clothing, and adornments (Bartky, 1988; Bordo, 1989; Holmer-Nadesan and Trethewey, 2000; Trethewey, 1999). Trethewey (2000b: 123) explains:

Poststructuralist feminist accounts of the body ... make it clear that women experience their bodies as on display, as available to the gaze of both male and female disciplinarians. It is not surprising, then, that women routinely engage in self-surveillance and work hard at getting their own bodies to behave by conforming to the contradictory (and seemingly impossible) dictates of both professionalism and femininity.

Feminist constructions of the Foucauldian idea that bodies learn to discipline themselves when they internalize the ubiquitous gaze shed light on how women begin to see their bodies as their individual problem to ‘fix’. For example, Young (2005), in her analysis of how women are taught to ‘throw like a girl’, explains that for many women, space seems to surround them in their imagination in ways that make them hesitant to move outside of a confined space of comportment. She claims that women become socialized in ways that

make them reluctant to reach, stretch, and extend their bodies. This pattern of restrictive movement then becomes women's general style of comportment. Young further explains: 'The more a girl assumes her status as feminine, the more she takes herself to be fragile and immobile and the more she actively enacts her own body inhibition' (*ibid.*: 44). Young's work highlights that how we are socialized and taught to know our bodies will have a great impact on how we move about our social situations.

Turning to the case of massage, the idea that professional identity is, in part, the sum of one's ability to 'pull off' a particular act is an important backdrop to understanding why men and women monitor and control how work is accomplished. Of note, it is not only women who work to monitor and control their bodies. In the care-based work of massage, men face tricky navigations involving both professionalism and masculinity.

The case of massage

Massage therapy makes an interesting case for the study of professions on the margins and how working bodies become the site of struggle. For instance, in the United States where this study was conducted, the occupation has been engaged in common professionalization activities such as developing a code of ethics, as well as education, licensing and credentialing requirements (Crompton, 1987; Larson, 1977; Witz, 1990). To make symbolic and material links to medicine, various massage therapy associations have developed practices such as lobbying, research, relationship building with medical professionals, and education and training mandates as well as campaigns including white papers, websites, and advertising designed to win acceptance by the medical community and secure in the minds of various publics a connection between massage and medicine. Yet several roadblocks keep massage on the margins of medicine.

First, massage is often associated with sexual labor. Both institutional voices and individual practitioners acknowledge that one of the primary problems facing massage as it attempts to achieve professional legitimacy is its historical and current link with sex work and sexuality (Oerton, 2004). Historically, there are links between massage and prostitution. Massage parlors posed as legitimate massage businesses when, in actuality, they were brothels. Beyond the historical links, there are still practical and discursive reasons why massage is viewed as sexual. Some therapists still perform sexual services. Discursively adding to this problem, the link between massage and sex is often furthered by mass media portrayals of massage and massage therapists. For example, several popular U.S. television shows such as *Weeds*, *The Sarah Silverman Show*, *Seinfeld*, *Friends*, and *Sex in the City* produced episodes depicting therapists as sex workers. While these programs offer humorous accounts, they also keep the stereotypes surrounding sexuality alive (Calvert, 2002).

Massage's struggles to overcome associations with sexual labor appear to go beyond history and popular culture. The *gendered bodies* doing massage and its *labor* might also

play into its tenuous professional standing. Current data from the American Massage Therapy Association explains that the industry is predominantly comprised of young females (87%) (American Massage Therapy Association, 2011). Although there are not clearly defined boundaries surrounding what exactly constitutes an occupation as 'feminine', some of the cues may be a historical preponderance or later influx of female laborers who perform the work often for a lower pay, customer service as a crucial element of the work, and, as Davies (1996) notes, work that acts as a backdrop or support for the work that 'real' professionals perform (Adib and Guerrier, 2003; Clair, 1996; Hochschild, 1983).

In addition, the *labor of massage* is often hailed as intimate in that it mimics private comforts such as touch, dim lighting, and various levels of undress, whereas the labor of medicine is more likely to construct clearly defined public clinical spaces. Like bureaucratic discourses, professional discourses are gendered in ways that privilege work that upholds masculinity, rationality, and the public sphere and marginalizes things considered private (Acker, 1990; Davies, 1996; Gherardi, 1995; Hearn, 1982). Therefore, elements of the work of massage itself might play into client and other professions' perceptions that massage is not professional.

Adding to the dilemmas of massages' labor, leading touch scholar Tiffany Fields (2000) explains that males in modern societies are often touch-deprived. She argues that the only time many boys and men experience touch is through sex and violence. Therefore, when men experience the soothing touch of massage their only frame of reference to understand the experience is a sexual one. In this construction, the public link between touch and sex affects the massage experience as therapists' touch acts as a trigger, solidifying touch as a signifier for sexual intimacy.

Certainly massage therapists are not the only professionals who use touch as part of their labor. Medical professionals often use touch and work on unclothed bodies. Yet Marvin (1994) notes that the historical professionalization project of medicine rests on physicians discursively and materially separating themselves from the 'messiness' of bodies. Although doctors worked on and with bodies, they also removed themselves from the body by leaving the 'dirty' work to support staff such as nurses (Davies, 1995). As such, the 'important' work of medicine became theoretical and based in literature, and a hierarchy was created in which those who read about bodies and anatomy became professional superiors to those who worked with their hands. More recent empirical explorations reveal that while physicians certainly touch their patients, their touch is often construed as 'clinical' while touch by nurses is more likely to be construed as 'caring' (Jecker and Self, 1991), indicating that a professional identity is linked to bodies, occupation, and tasks.

Finally, massage struggles to be seen as legitimate because the specific professional identity they overwhelmingly seek is based on their inclusion with western medicine. Certainly, difficulties exist in part because the vocational training required to do massage is far less than most medical professionals. The specific training required varies. In the U.S.,

where this study was conducted, therapists receive an average of 660 hours of training. Across the U.S. and Europe this is far less than the near decade that doctors put into their education and training (American Massage Therapy Association, 2011). The power behind occupational closure and stereotypes surrounding the work and workers of massage cannot be ignored as key aspects of the tensions therapists face in their desire to professionalize.

Methods

The case of massage offers one site where professionalization strategies, gender, bodies, and stigmatized labor intersect. This ethnographic research involved both participant observation and interviews. Participants in this study were massage therapy instructors and working massage therapists in a large city in the Western United States.

Participant observation

Participant observation was key to this project (Baxter and Babbie, 2004; Marshall and Rossman, 1999). I conducted observations at two certified massage schools to explore how massage instructors discussed sexuality and professionalism and how therapists navigated embodied tensions in the face of professionalization.

Before I began observing classes I met with the directors of both schools to negotiate the classes I would observe as well as my role as a researcher. The director of the first school advised me to take five classes that would offer a mix of bodywork and professionalization topics.¹ Together, we decided that my role would be that of an observer. By the second week of classes my role shifted to that of a participant observer. Often, there were an uneven number of students in class and I was asked to fill in as a body on the table or as a massage student. I noticed that being a participant observer made my ethnographic work 'embodied'. I was learning more about the labor of massage and the culture of bodywork. As a body on the table I was also keenly aware of how professionalization tactics, sexuality, and bodies were negotiated on and between students. My new role as a participant meant that I was fully immersed in classes.

Of importance, the director of the school asked that I keep my identity as a researcher secret from the massage students but I was allowed to be open with instructors. He believed students might feel uncomfortable if they thought they were being researched. I sought and received permission from my university's Institutional Review Board, responsible for ensuring the protection of human subjects, to withhold my role. Despite the institution's

1 I participated in 5 classes at my first observation site: Swedish massage (60 hours), Spa Techniques (20 hours), Professional Practice Building (20 hours), Therapeutic Principles (20 hours), and Spinal Touch (20 hours). In total, I observed 140 hours over a six month period. I participated in two classes at my second research site: Massage I (40 hours) and Massage II Zen (32 hours). I participated in a total of 72 hours over a three-month period.

support, and upon reflection, I regret not sharing my research purpose with students. This is not because I think that obscuring my role did harm, only that I do not believe that being open about my research purpose would have either. I negotiated openness with the director of my second research site where I participated in two introductory bodywork classes, which also covered professionalism and ethics. Overall, I was a full participant in 7 classes over a span of 18 months.

My role as a full participant at both sites was beneficial and challenging. I was able to imbed myself in the culture of massage to a much greater extent than I would have by simply observing. I was also able to watch bodies in action by examining the actual practice of bodies doing labor, including bodily presence, movements, gestures, and adornments (Ashcraft, 2006; Barley and Kunda, 2001; Beckett, 2004; Fournier, 2002). My hope was that a focus on the body might help us reach new understandings of workplace practices and gendered relationships.

In-depth interviews

I conducted 16 in-depth interviews with working massage therapists whom I recruited by using a snowball sample (Baxter and Babbie, 2004). I interviewed 11 women and 5 men. Therapists' job tenure ranged from 2 to 17 years; most participants had been practicing between 4 and 5 years. Most interviews lasted approximately one hour. The longest interview was 120 minutes and the shortest interview was 45 minutes. All interviews were conducted at public places such as coffee shops or the massage therapists' off-site or home office.

Interviews were a combination of semi-structured and unstructured research questions. Questions centered on participant's constructions of sexuality, desexualization, and professionalization. Although I did develop an interview script, the guide was fluid and participants were asked to also discuss topics they found to be important (Reinharz, 1992).

I transcribed the interviews and then gave each therapist a copy of the transcript with the invitation to respond as they saw fit (i.e. corrections, additions, clarifications). Doing these types of member checks fits the feminist goal of doing participative research, which gives participants the choice to engage in the research process (Reinharz, 1992). No participants offered changes.

Data analysis

My work yielded just under 400 single-spaced typed field notes and interview transcripts. I treated data collection and analysis as dialectic interplay (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2005). I performed focused reading and re-reading of new data as I collected it. The ultimate goal of analysis is to develop categories of meaning that emerge from both patterns and contradictions in the data. I used broad categories that stemmed from my interview topics to code the data initially (for example, one broad category was 'professionalization' and it contained therapists' stories of what they believe to constitute a

professional or my observations of such). To avoid developing static themes and to add depth and complexity to each category I also searched for differences that emerged within categories. After a series of several close readings and comparisons I had themes that structured the write-up of the final analysis. In this study the themes stem from both therapists' constructions and my observations of working bodies and gendered subjectivities.

The analysis is organized by first showing how therapists use discursive strategies to construct professional identities. Next, the focus moves to the body to offer a short glimpse of how one female student seeks to make her body 'fit' with how she has been taught to perform professional massage. Therefore, the analysis seeks to highlight how professional identities are both discursively and materially constructed. Studying massage training allowed me to witness how massage instructors socialized new therapists into the profession, including the messages they foregrounded and how therapists' bodies were invoked. Materially, observations also afforded a glance at how therapists 'took up' various discourses as they practiced massage on another student's body.

All of the therapists in this study were mindful and reflective about the strategic nature of crafting a professional identity, yet male and female therapists also suggested that this crafting is slightly different for men than for women. Male and female students were socialized 'differently' and the female body was often framed as sexually suspect. Male therapists also understood their professional identity as suspect due to the stereotype that men are not natural caretakers (Lupton, 2000), yet they were also more apt to craft a medical or clinical work identity to manage both sexual and professional stigma.

Producing professionals: Vigilant protectors and medical men

Female therapists as vigilant protectors

One of the classes I observed in massage school was dedicated to building professional ethics and practice. The course covered basic rules, regulations, and norms of establishing a professional practice, including client intake forms, tax documents, and marketing tips. Perhaps unlike other professionalization classes, here, sexual tensions were on the surface and the need to separate massage from sex work – often by invoking physicians – took on the utmost importance. The need was made clear in one class when the topic of discussion was about writing a code of ethics. The following instructor/student interaction took place:

Instructor: [*To a female student in the class*] Okay, you are the president of the Massage Therapy Association. What would you expect from us as massage therapists?

Female student: Respect others, have the same moral beliefs, treat others the way you want to be treated.

Instructor: [*To the class*] Who is the code of ethics for?

[No response from the class]

Instructor: How does society see massage?

The class: [In unison] Sexual.

Instructor: Is that common?

The class: [In unison] Yes

Instructor: Do you see why it is so important for us? Doctors don't have to monitor this as much. It's driven by public perception. If they see us as sex workers, what can we do? We have to show them. We have to stand up for the profession. We have to be overboard about things. And whatever you do, don't call your establishment 'Kinky's 24-Hour Massage and Escort Service', or 'Skanky's', or 'Miss Kitty's'.

This interaction reveals a common adverse reaction to sexualization in massage. It also alludes to the fact that massage therapists perform bureaucratic professional practices *in part* as exhibits of professionalism meant to uphold a proper image. Since western ideas of professionalism do not include spaces for sexuality, therapists have to construct a professional identity that takes on a defensive air. Thus new therapists are trained that they ought to be 'vigilant professionals', protecting massage from a sexual image. Since this interaction also feminizes improper sexuality by referring to 'Miss Kitty's' and 'Skanky's' – a derogatory term that is typically associated with women who are considered promiscuous – female therapists may receive the message that a vigilant subject position pertains to them most of all. Although therapists' professional discourses and practices appear 'normal', when read closely, they reveal hidden tensions, fears, and anxieties about how therapists' bodies might sully the professional cause.

This was not the only case in which female therapists' bodies were singled out as a professional liability. In another professionalization class a male massage instructor was talking about advertising techniques and said: 'If you want to wear make-up or get all dolled up, what will the client think of you? Do you want the client to think you're cute? Try to look generic professional; try to give them a reason to trust you'. This quotation not only makes it clear that therapists who do not control their appearance might be viewed as 'asking for it' should their clients find them attractive, it also makes women's bodies problematic and recalls the belief that if women do not act 'generic professional' (read: masculine), then they likely will not be trusted. Only addressing female students, he makes them 'different' from the male students and may reaffirm the naturalness of male bodies in the public sphere.

The fact that it was a male instructor addressing his comments to female students can be read as a particular type of patriarchal socializing. However, female therapists also discuss other female therapists as having a complicit role in their own vulnerability. In this way, female therapists also seem to keep gendered constructions in play. One woman explains that when therapists encounter sexual solicitation, 'usually they end up learning the lesson the hard way and it's like "oh, maybe I shouldn't have worn that low tank top" or

whatever'. This woman's comment suggests that what a woman wears to work can 'cause' someone to solicit her sexually. When women send this message, it may work to 'discipline' women's bodies even more (Trethewey, 1999).

Interviews with therapists reveal that there are several ways to be vigilant. Women in this study tended to view this as a call to monitor their own and others' bodies. Men, on the other hand, overwhelmingly saw the solution as one that could be solved by addressing one's image. This distinction is subtle, yet important as the first suggests that the body is something to be controlled and fixed because it is perceived as sexually suspicious and the second focuses energy on rhetorical strategies that will allow the body to rise above suspicions.

Male therapists as sexually safe men of medicine

Both male and female therapists were scrutinized as potentially sexually suspect and both used their bodies and workspaces to construct a particular medical identity. For instance, some therapists wear medical scrubs as their work uniform, many decorated their offices with anatomy wall charts or life-size skeletons. Therapists also craft this professional connection by using medical jargon and anatomical terms (Deverell and Sharma, 2000; Fournier, 2002). Yet interviews with therapists reveal that a medical construction for massage is gendered and male therapists often use this in part to borrow medicine's legitimacy and desexualized perceptions.

Making the link with the medical profession offers a way for therapists to borrow its legitimacy. Both male and female therapists explain that men have a difficult time getting clients because men are often viewed as predators. Male therapists are suspect, in part, because society is not used to male bodies doing occupational tasks such as caring, nurturing, and working with bodies (Wolkowitz, 2002). Therefore, male therapists' desire to be viewed as members of western medicine could be viewed as their way of productively managing embodied occupational tensions, albeit a desire that does not offer much resistance to the gendered ideologies that constitute professions in the first place.

In a couple of instances, male therapists even craft new titles to signify this link. One male therapist explains:

I, okay, I refer to myself as a myotherapist, and 'myo' is just Latin for muscles. Muscle therapist. And I have some additional training and things beyond what the normal therapist would have when they get out of school and I do focus on clinical massage. But the reason I introduce myself as a myotherapist is because people don't have the same preconceived package of what that is. But if I say I'm a massage therapist, the majority of them, from my experience, instantly bring up their little package of luggage that is what they saw on a spa commercial or maybe experienced in a spa.

His quotation offers an important look into why many male therapists feel it is important to merge with the medical field; people do not have the same baggage and assumptions that doctors are sex workers. In a study on how nurses talk about massage, van der Riet (1995)

explains that male nurses use a similar reframing tactic when they perform massage on their patients but call the work ‘pressure care’.

Another male therapist discusses his wish for massage to be viewed as a ‘real’ profession:

You know, there isn’t a doctor of massage, or a doctor of muscles. And I’ve actually done some research on that because I’ve thought, well, that’s silly, why not? There are lots of doctors for lots of other specific things, but not for massage therapy, or anything like that. My hope is that massage is going to be recognized as a real profession and the only way that is going to happen is with stricter requirements with training.

This therapist recognizes that for massage to be viewed as legitimate they need to increase both their training and level of education. Much like the therapists above, he also thinks that adding the title ‘doctor’ will add credibility to the profession.

This may be why, when male therapists do link their work to the medical field, they overwhelmingly compare themselves to doctors and not to other medical workers such as nurses or certified nursing assistants. This is a curious construction because the work of nurses and other more care-taking medical providers within medicine seems to align more closely with the work of massage and the education and training of massage therapists. The adamant construction of massage with medical doctors can then be read as a way to craft a particular type of professional image.

One of the reasons therapists may seek inclusion in the medical field, and connect with doctors in particular, is to borrow legitimacy and to separate massage from sex work. Therapists recognize that doctors touch patients without the same sexual stigmas as therapists. Seeking medical inclusion appears particularly important for male therapists in this study because it offers them a space of legitimacy that they do not find doing spa work or relaxation massage.

A male therapist explains why his decision to do clinical massage helps him manage sexual issues:

I refer to physicians a lot because they are kind of the epitome of professional. But I’ve noticed that a lot of women will go to a male gynecologist or a male OB and they’re okay. On the other hand, um, men and women are sometimes uncomfortable with going to a male massage therapist. I’ve found that people, well, when a person is getting a physical from their doctor that does not come across as sexual. If anything, it’s uncomfortable, but it doesn’t come across as sexual.

Another male therapist who works in a chiropractor’s office acknowledges this in his practice as well:

Sexual problems can just kind of go away when you work in a clinical setting because there is a perception that it is related to medical work. And women are more likely to accept a male in a medical capacity, gynecologist for instance, then they would by someone who is just going to give them a fluff and buff, so to speak. So that was a part of my decision making personally for going into the more strictly clinical side of things.

Both of these therapists recognize that they are viewed as sexually suspect when they attempt labor that cannot easily be read as clinical. This could be why, regardless of the fact that their gender offers them greater inclusion as ‘universal’ professionals, male therapists still struggle to be viewed as legitimate (Acker, 1990).

Massage therapists make sense of their stigmatized standing by discursively constructing high standards about what it means to be a professional therapist – often mirroring medical or clinical professionalism. Interview data from this project showed that massage therapists create high standards for themselves and others in the field often crafting subject positions that made them ‘vigilant protectors’ of sexuality. Yet this subject position provokes key tensions for therapists surrounding the embodied, sexualized, and privatized nature of their labor. Questions emerge about how therapists take in professional socialization as well as how they act accordingly. These tensions play out materially as the higher standards therapists embody may actually work to make their bodily comportment more stringent than many bureaucratic professionals, and it offers little reconciliation for how therapists should manage a disembodied public performance while performing embodied labor.

To explore how these discursive tensions might play out through and on workers’ bodies the analysis now shifts to briefly foreground the struggles, tensions, and contradictions that rest on one female therapist as she works to ingest her instructor’s messages about what makes a professional therapist. The analysis shows that although ‘the professions’ might work to monitor, control, and keep certain bodies closed from the ranks, they are not the only ones concerned with closure. Members of stigmatized occupations striving for professional status appear to have a vested interest in socializing and regulating their ranks as well.

Digressions from an ‘ideal’ body

Massage therapists’ desires to professionalize impact how therapists are trained to discipline and control their bodies and aspects of the labor itself. This struck me as I watched therapists first learn how to perform massage in the ‘ideal’ manner.

One of the first things students learn is the importance of doing bodywork in the proper stance. This stance protects the therapist’s body from injury, strains, and general burn-out. Because of the importance of the stance, the first time I witnessed students working on bodies, I also witnessed the instructor placing his hands on students’ shoulders, hips, waists, and thighs to bend and move us in the proper manner. The instructor’s body was tall, long limbed, and lean with sinewy muscles.

He used his body to model the ideal: ‘First, you have to remember to bend at the knees! Go as low and as deep as you can’. As he put his body in this position, so did the students in the room. The proper pose required a deep-set stance predicated on strong thighs and a tight core to protect the lower back. The instructor told us that the power behind our strokes should never come from our hands or wrists, as this is ‘career suicide’. Instead, the labor of

massage requires a balance of gravity and leverage. With the proper stance, a therapist can work deeply into a client's muscles by pushing down or dragging across the skin. If the stance is off, the same deep tissue work requires therapists to raise their arms, putting a majority of the pressure on their hands and wrist. Importantly, the stance appeared to be predicated on an 'ideal' body, one that was actually similar to the long, sinewy frame of the male instructor. His body revealed that although the labor involves the closeness of bodies through touch, an important part of the work, and of being a 'good' therapist, also includes the therapist's ability to maintain distance between his or her body and the body of the client, modeling a clinical distancing.

I did not recognize the ideal, disciplined nature of the stance until I watched one female student struggling to make it work as she practiced on a classmate. To be clear, I watched several bodies struggle in their attempts to model how the instructors did bodywork. Certain types of massages are physically demanding labor. However, this particular female student's experience highlights how the overweight female body of a massage student is constructed as 'excessive' against an ideal type, which in its fit, lean, compartmentalized requirements often mirrors a masculine, contained, and clinical form (Bartky, 1988; Weitz, 1998). In massage, the material limit of the distance between bodies, however, is the length of the therapist's arm. Therefore, generally speaking, female therapists will be closer to their clients' bodies than their taller male colleagues with longer limbs. Adding to the material limits of space between a therapist and client is any 'excess' of either party's body beyond the ideal form, which would fill the space in between.

The female student's body was tall and curvy, with large breasts and a full, round abdomen. I first noticed her struggles when she asked her student-partner to get off the table so she could reposition it to be about a foot higher than the instructor had set it, telling her partner that she could not bend her legs like that. However, this new, higher position also meant that her arms had to come up, ultimately placing the brunt of the labor on her hands, shoulders, wrists, and back.

Once she was positioned, I watched her prepare to work on her client by putting her hands together in a prayer position and placing them in front of her chest, eyes closed, while she took three slow, deep breaths. Then she approached the table. The roundness of her body did not allow for space between her and the table, while still ensuring that her hands could reach the body. When I watched her body touch the table, I realized for the first time that other therapists' bodies did not touch. Instead, they had various levels of space and distance.

In that particular class, I was not participating in bodywork, but instead walking around the room to observe. I was not intentionally focusing on this woman, yet I was drawn to her work. As she moved, her breasts often brushed against or rested on her client's body, particularly when she had to lean low across the table. Her stomach pushed into the client's arm and sometimes rested on top of the table. At one point I heard the instructor say to her, 'Do you see how close you are? You want to create a little more space. Keep your

connection with the client, but you don't want to be lying on people'. His voice was kind and instructional, but ultimately mocking, as if this woman chose to take the space. And as if being emotionally and physically connected, yet also distant, was a self-evident practice.

While watching this interaction, I wanted the instructor to recognize that the woman's body took space, that it had a right to take space. What could she *do* to create more distance? Grow longer arms? Carve a hollow space where her stomach was? Certainly flesh is malleable, but as Trethewey (1999) says, we do not have the ability to discursively 'fix' our material bodies to fit within accepted frames. Instead of taking up less space, the woman nodded in apparent understanding and moved her feet back and further away from the table, which pushed her upper body even further into the table and the client.

The instructor seemed to be sending the message that 'excessive' bodies must work to achieve proper comportment, even if this meant losing the proper technique. For bodies that do not fit the ideal, the work may then necessitate a type of mental and physical corset, reigning in unruly parts, sucking in excess, and monitoring which parts touch what. I would argue that mental and physical 'reigning in' was not accomplished in practice, but the message that it can or should work likely produces a type of embodied paranoia, which both reinscribes the ideal as a masculine, clinical body and admonishes the excessive female body.

Foucault's (1979) theory of disciplined bodies appears to be in play here as therapists internalize the ideology of the ideal therapist. In this theory, discourse shapes both the normative body of ideas and the corporeal bodies of employees (Trethewey, 2000a). Unlike theories of power in which bodies are subject to overt or covert control, Foucauldian theories draw upon the architectural structure of the Panopticon, a structure which subjects bodies to constant surveillance, to explain how bodies begin to discipline themselves because they are always potentially subjected to a disciplining gaze.

Bartky (1988) explains that women often internalize a male gaze to construct the ideal body of femininity. In this sense, women live their bodies 'as seen by another, by an anonymous patriarchal other' (*ibid.*: 72). Trethewey (2000a: 114-115) contends that 'women engage in self-surveillance and disciplinary practices under the onus of a sense of deficiency and abnormality'. It may explain why the female therapists in this study believe it is important to craft an appropriate and desexualized body through strict bodily comportment and why an ideal labor standard in massage is upheld, regardless of the shape of the body doing the work.

Linking with the medical field allows massage to borrow the desexualized clinical professionalism of medicine. However, it also reveals more tensions because although the field of medicine has largely endorsed massage as a part of an overall wellness plan, it has yet to drop the 'alternative' status that massage currently holds or to embrace massage therapists as medical providers.

Ultimately, therapists might have a point when they claim that doctors do not face the same sexual stigmas by either clients or the general public. Here, the point is that it is not touch per se but the feminized and intimate work of massage that is linked with sex. Therefore, massage's desire to link to the medical field can be viewed, in part, as a desire to borrow medicine's legitimacy. If successful, in theory, this link could address several problems facing massage by elevating massage out of the status of feminized/sexualized labor, by facilitating the perception of desexualization via a clinical atmosphere, and by legitimizing therapists' touch in the public's mind. However, this linkage would also dramatically change the labor and occupation of massage, likely rendering it unrecognizable, and massage would still face gendered labor problems, even if they were in a different form.

Conclusion

The appeal of being viewed as a professional keeps several occupational groups striving for admission, often with tepid results. Scholarship depicting the gendered, raced, and class-based under workings of the professions notes that a professional position is not uniformly available for all bodies or all labor practices.

Sexualized labor and bodies struggle to gain professional legitimacy. In this study therapists craft a new subject position where they view it as their responsibility to conform to a higher standard than other professionals. In this way, therapists send the message that they are vigilant against sexuality in their profession. Although this construction may aide in their quest to shed stigma and gain legitimacy, it also creates key tensions for therapists, including a disjuncture between the embodied labor of massage and a desexualized professional identity construction.

A second roadblock facing therapists revolves around the specific professional identity they seek as they attempt to link massage to western medicine. 'Medical professional' is also a subject position that is not neatly available to therapists, and when massage is placed within this discursive frame therapists are more likely to be viewed as 'support' staff, rather than the 'professionals' they would like to be. Achieving this subject position is particularly important for male therapists because they seek this construction to avoid the feminized and sexualized stigmas of massage. Therefore, crafting a medical identity may be a productive way for male therapists to reclaim masculinity, while raising their status as professionals and securing more clients. Again, however, a medical subject position in massage also creates key tensions, as therapists cannot easily enter the professional medical realm, and their attempts to do so often reinforce the idea that male bodies are out of place when they perform nurturing labor, thus often making male bodies sexually suspect. In a parallel construction, this argument also tacitly constructs female bodies as 'less natural' than their male counterparts in a medical or clinical setting.

The analysis in this project underscores that a masculine and clinical embodied ideal organizes the labor processes of massage. In answer to the question, *how do workers on the*

margins discursively and materially navigate a professional identity?, we learn that members of stigmatized occupations work to monitor and control bodies and labor.

When professions on the margins attempt to mirror a particular professionalism – such as this example in which massage seeks to align itself with bureaucratic professionalism or medicine – they expect both male and female therapists to discipline and control their bodies in service of this pursuit. Rather than differentiating and highlighting the unique contributions of their own field of practice, these narrow expectations often limit the labor of massage and reproduce some of the gendered practices for which the professions are already critiqued. For instance, touch, a key benefit of massage, is monitored and controlled as therapists are taught to mind their bodies and image as much as their technique. The unique contributions of the practice and the practitioners might be lost in the service of professionalization.

With an eye toward local, occupationally-rooted solutions, one option is for massage therapists to embrace what makes them ‘alternative’ and ‘complimentary’ to medicine instead of working to mirror clinical professionalism. The occupation of massage is a potential place for both scholars and practitioners to begin to reconceptualize professionalism. Certainly, this is no small feat. It is not my intent to suggest that massage therapists should internalize the responsibility of re-crafting professionalism. That said, the occupation of massage is in a position to help scholars, clients, and other professions broaden our conceptions of what it means to be a professional by foregrounding how so-called private labor practices are not antithetical to professional performances. Peeling back the profession’s reigns on how practitioners must act allows us to see that the roles and norms governing professional behavior are socially constructed and can be otherwise. It reveals that massage’s dilemmas in seeking a professional identity are rooted in how it is perceived within an already established system, and not with inherent problems regarding the labor of massage.

Therapists can seek ways to discursively construct touch in order to highlight how therapeutic and caring touch is a part of professionalism (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Hancock and Tyler, 2000). A subtle, yet potent shift can occur if therapists move from a defensive stance (such as diligent anti-sexual stances) toward a more educational stance that communicates the positive health benefits that stem from massage. This education can take the form of public press releases, or advertising and branding efforts as well as interpersonal dialogue between therapists, clients, and medical professionals. These attempts might not work to fully ‘shed’ a sexualized or stigmatized image. But they may work to add another option for how massage can frame itself as a legitimate part of a healthcare profession.

In line with this, if therapists were to re-educate clients and the public about the legitimacy of bodies and touch it could work to solve one of the practical dilemmas facing massage. Instead of attempting to link themselves with a professional identity, which is often antithetical to the labor of massage, they could advocate a professional identity specifically

for those who perform embodied labor. Therapists could use their particular ‘alternative’ status to their advantage in the labor market by embracing their holistic understanding of health, the extended time they spend with clients, the fact that massage is a relatively inexpensive healthcare alternative, and finally, that massage is one of few treatments that offers healthy, human touch.

If massage draws on the strengths they already possess – holism, the pleasure and safety of touch, the acceptance of human sexuality, and the message that individuals need to acknowledge and pay closer attention to their bodies – they could do great things to slowly shift public views of professionalism, touch, gender, labor, and bodies. Just as male therapists develop savvy campaigns to align with physicians, all therapists can develop campaigns to educate the public about professional touch. This work, while not likely a quick fix, has the potential to be more inclusive, rather than exclusive.

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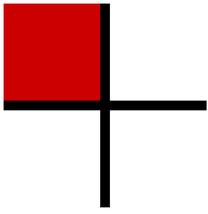
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New conditions for identities, cultures and governance of welfare sector professionals: The teaching profession

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abstract

This paper deals with changes in governance of professional work in relation to the concept of professional identity. Professional work is often depicted as an essential part of today's society. At the same time, the conditions for professional work are changing – especially in the public sector. These changes can be seen in terms of an on-going interaction between the logic of the profession and the logic of the organisation where the concept of identity can be used to examine the dynamics of the changes and their consequences. In this paper, the teaching profession is used to illustrate changing conditions for professional work in the public sector. We identify processes of diversification of professional identity and culture, some of which can be described as processes of marginalization. This approach can provide a theoretical point of departure for studying professional work – in the context of changed governance – by focusing on the concept of identity as an analytical point of reference. This approach explains organizational dynamics in terms of what changes are desired and what changes are unintentional.

Introduction

This paper examines conditions for professional work in times of contradictory trends in the context of professional work, changes that inevitably influence working conditions. Changes in governance¹ are of special interest as many recent reform movements specifically, albeit not always explicitly, aim at changing the identity of professionals (Skålén, 2004). We argue that changes in governance of public sector professionals can lead to new ideas about professional identity, diversification in professional identity

¹ The concept of governance is often used in the field of political sciences and refers to systematic approaches to how organizations govern, or steer, the organization; including the members of the organization. It deals with rules set up in the specific organizational context at quest. In this paper we discuss governance as it applies in professional work settings. A dilemma in governance of professionals' work is that as the tasks are complex in character, it is difficult, not to say impossible to govern by simple rules. Rather the professionals need to be given discretionary power as to be able to make context appropriate decisions; in order to carry out their work

patterns, some of which can be described as processes of marginalization. Processes of diversification can be understood in various ways; for example, we examine changes in governance from an identity and culture perspective. We draw attention to the concept of professional identity as a way of understanding changes in governance and the dynamics between the logic of the profession and the logic of the organisation. By diversification we mean that the concept of professional identity can be seen in terms of multiple identities as well as movements between and within these identities, dividing previous more homogenous identities into more heterogeneous identification patterns².

In previous studies, we have found that changes in the way welfare sector professions, such as teaching, are governed can lead to resistance among targeted professionals if the changes result in a clash between the logic(s) of the profession and the logic(s) of the organisation. That is, often professionals subscribe to a logic based on profession-specific values rather than organisation-specific values. For instance, professions and organisations may have different ideas about how to plan, execute, and follow-up work (e.g. Fältholm and Jansson, 2008; Jansson and Parding, 2011; Parding and Abrahamsson, 2010; Parding, 2007). In addition, we have found that the concept of identity³ illuminates the dynamics at play when professions, professionals, and organisations interact to prioritise interpretations (an expression of power), a struggle that has become particularly clear as public sector services are being privatised (Lundström and Parding, 2011; Muzio et al., 2008). Although the foundation of this paper is theoretical, we use the teaching profession, in the context of Sweden, as a way to explain our line of argument.

By examining changes in governance for the teaching profession using the concept of identity, we highlight the dynamics at play for professional work organisations in the public sector. We argue that the concept of identity can be used as an example of an intersection where a profession's and an organisation's respective logics meet, coevolve, and sometimes clash. The concept of identity can yield insight into the logics underpinning organisational change, as identity highlights the continuous negotiation between the stakeholders – the profession and the organisation (Alvesson et al., 2008; Jenkins, 2008). In fact, although researchers have explored professions as key mechanisms and primary targets for institutional change on a general level, few researchers have used the concept of identity as a point of entry (Alvesson and Wilmott, 2002). The identity perspective has been relatively neglected in relation to the logic of professions and organisations when it comes to examining the conditions of professional work (Goodrick and Reay, 2010), such as teachers' work (Tsui, 2007). In addition, much research done on changes in working conditions for professionals, such as for teachers, takes a rather normative stand by depicting the changes as challenging and even counter-productive (e.g. Apple, 2004; Ball, 2003; Day, 2002; Evetts, 2006a; Lindblad, 2009; Sachs, 2001). We elaborate on this

2 It should be noted that we do not use the concept in terms of diversity-based on ethnic background or other similar constructs.

3 When using the concept of identity, we refer to professionals' identities as it relates to work, work organisation and workplace culture.

critique by acknowledging that different forces are at play simultaneously, which produce change as well as continuity (e.g. Ackroyd et al., 2007; Evetts, 2009; Muzio et al., 2008; Noordegraf, 2011). Recently, van Gestel and Hillebrand (2011) have supported this argument in a longitudinal study of change in public employment services. Their study demonstrated that fluctuations often occur; that is, who has the priority of interpretation, or the 'winning logic', changes over time. In addition, effects can imply problematic *and* beneficial features (Adler et al., 2008; Farrell and Morris; 2003; Waring and Currie, 2009). In other words, we see professions and organisations as both being influenced and influencing and both subject to gains as well as losses (e.g. Adler et al., 2008; Malhotra and Morris, 2009; Muzio and Ackroyd, 2008). Summarising this line of argument, Farrell and Morris (2003: 150) see the impact of these competing logics as 'differentiated, mediated and not entirely negative. The impact, however, is real and major'.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we present a background to the context in which we see professional work, and more specifically teachers' work, being placed: the context of New Public Management (NPM). Then, we present the concepts of professional and organisational identities and cultures as tools for understanding changes in professional work. Next, we discuss identity and culture as platforms for resistance and change. Finally, we highlight ways that identity can explain change of governance in the context of professional work.

Teachers' work in the context of NPM-influenced changes

Professional work is indeed often depicted as an essential part of today's society (e.g. Adler et al., 2008). For example, professional workers have been described as 'key players in the production of knowledge and technology, the economic engines of post-industrial societies' (Bourgeault et al., 2009: 475). At the same time, professional work in the public sector has recently been subject to extensive reforms and institutional changes (e.g. Adler et al., 2008), not the least of which have occurred in the health care and education sectors (Evetts, 2006b; Lindblad, 2009; Power, 1997). These institutional changes can be seen as part of the New Public Management (NPM) model, a philosophy that applies private-sector management models to the public sector. Because the definitions and practical implementation of NPM varies (Hood, 1995; Ferlie et al., 1996; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004), it can best be described as an umbrella term for many reforms aimed to make the public sector more cost-efficient and more effective (Sachs, 2003). On a more concrete level, concepts such as lean, balanced scorecard, system thinking, process organisation, and learning organisation are examples of NPM-related ideas that have been implemented in the public sector to achieve better quality, effectiveness, and efficiency. Muzio et al. (2008: 24-25) describe the recent changes as lying at ideological and symbolic levels with new 'vocabularies of efficiency, choice, competition, together with the redefinition of traditional categories of client groups [...] as consumers'. Even if the main aim often has been to save money, it is clear that one part of NPM-related organisational changes deals with how organisations view their aims and roles in society. Even in those cases where the NPM-

related ideas are not actually implemented in their entirety, which is usually the case, NPM influences professional discourse and therefore influences how the employees view their organisation, their profession, their work, their own identity, and their professional identity.

The teaching profession is an example of a traditional welfare sector profession that has been subject to considerable change. In today's society, the education sector is seen as central to forming social institutions that shape and change society and its citizens in desirable ways (Ginsburg et al., 1995; Hargreaves and Goodson, 2003; Lindblad, 2004). From this perspective, teachers have a central position in that they transform political decisions into practice vis-à-vis the citizens (Vinzant and Crothers, 1998). In addition, the teaching profession has historically been defined by 'the logic of the profession' (Evetts, 2006a). According to Evetts, the logic of the profession is based on collegial authority, knowledge, discretionary power, and trust from the management level, all characteristics that reflect the professional ethics promulgated by professional associations. Moreover, the teaching profession can be linked to 'a sense of being responsible for education in society', and thus teachers are knowledgeable, well read, and keepers of societal values as well as literature and art. These features have given teachers high self-esteem and the profession has historically enjoyed a high status in society. It can be argued that the teaching profession has also been characterised by altruism, where becoming a teacher has been seen as a calling rather than just a profession. In addition, in Sweden and other welfare state countries teachers are almost exclusively public employees as equal (and free) education has been regarded a right for all citizens. These historical and cultural circumstances have formed how teachers view their work and hence their professional identity. While the circumstances depicted above take the context of Sweden as a point of departure, the discussion may be applicable in similar contexts.

In school organisations, the influence of NPM can be seen in terms of pupil orientation. One practical example of pupil orientation is the introduction of interdisciplinary work teams, teams that are formed of teachers with different subject specialities (Havnes, 2009; Parding, 2007; Parding and Abrahamsson, 2010). These teams are responsible for one group of students in one specific study programme for the entire three years of upper secondary school. In Parding's study, the teachers were expected to create joint projects that required the use of several subjects for their students. This change also meant teachers were to share offices with their interdisciplinary team colleagues rather than their subject colleagues. This organisation of upper secondary teachers' work clashes with traditional ways of organising their work, which is based on subject specialisation (e.g. Siskin, 1994). Havnes (2009) and Parding (2007; 2010) both show that local school organisations have introduced these teams with the ultimate goals of transforming the traditional individual structure of teaching and improving student learning. At the same time, this change is complex and problematic: some teachers resist as it goes against their logic of how work should be organised, planned, and executed and challenges their strong subject identification. The school, as an employing organisation, can be seen as attempting to transform the way teachers see themselves, their professional identity, by requiring teachers to organise their work in interdisciplinary teams rather than as members of a specialised

field of study. Other studies point at more adaptive responses towards changes. These changes reflect how identification processes are continuous and depend on surrounding conditions. Fredriksson (2009; 2010), for instance, claims that four different attitudes and behaviours among teachers can be identified in the wake of recent marketization reforms in Sweden: bureaucratic-, professional-, participation-, and market-oriented teachers. These ideal types are based on different views in terms of overriding ideals about professions, basis for decision-making, view of pupils (and parents), and the basis for legitimacy. For instance, the bureaucratic ideal is based on the belief that rules, regulations, and standards should lead work, whereas professional logic is based on the belief that teachers' professional knowledge and shared ethics should govern. The participation logic is based on the idea that a professional's focus should always be on the 'client', e.g. the students. Finally, the market-oriented logic is based on a loyalty towards the employing organisation, profit, and attempts to satisfy the paying customers, who should be in focus at all times. The examples above reflect resistance and continuity as well as adaptation and change.

Four changed circumstances in the teaching profession

As earlier described, recent and current reforms have often been depicted as linear, decision implementation outcomes. We argue that the changes are not as straightforward as they may appear in many descriptions of professions and NPM. We argue that recent and current changes in the governance of the public sector, as well as changes in society as a whole, influence the way people form their professional identity. To illustrate this point, we draw on four changed circumstances, while acknowledging that these are mere examples and similar circumstances may be found.

First, we argue that a movement in status and priority of interpretation from profession to organisation identity can be identified. As mentioned earlier, we see a trend of continued strengthening of organisations and managerial structures and values in school organisations. This implies that decision-making and hence power is moved from the professional level to the managerial level. Our analysis is that the traditional emphasis on professional values – such as discretionary power, collegiality, and trust from management – are shifting towards organisational values that rest on a rational legal foundation where rules are central, procedures are standardised when possible, evaluations are important, and decisions are made on hierarchical authority. This means that the identity based on professional values is being challenged and a movement from profession to organisation identity can be identified. This scenario is supported by a study of upper secondary teachers who were subject to extensive changes where two identification patterns were noted: one more traditional and one more in line with the organisation's current idea of how to manage teachers' work (Parding, 2007). This can be seen as a diversification in identity patterns. However, it has yet to be examined whether this movement in a more general sense makes teachers' professional identities stronger (i.e. the teachers' collective traditional identification becomes stronger as a response) or changes the identification patterns (i.e. diversification within the profession as individual teachers take on an organisation-oriented

identity as a way of positioning themselves positively in the organisation, perhaps causing a marginalisation of the profession-oriented identity).

Second, we see processes within the profession whereby the traditional professional identity eventually competes with new sub-identities. We argue that these processes reflect the trend to privatise the public sector. In Sweden, the school choice reform in a short time has led to a drastic change in the distribution between independent and public schools, especially at the upper secondary levels. Education is becoming a commodity that can be sold to customers (i.e. parents and students). This implies that there are a number of actors with different ideas about working conditions for teachers in the employing organisations. This can strengthen the tendency that teaching is becoming more like any other job and by that perhaps making the old type of professional identity marginalized, at least in some contexts. It most probably will create different professional identities, conditions, roles, and ethics depending on where a teacher works. In the long run, this may lead to a split or divide of the formerly homogenous teaching professional culture and the profession's collective powers. In other words, the traditional professional identity of teachers may become diversified as sub-identities emerge under different school organisations in different school enterprises (Fredriksson, 2009; 2010).

A third new circumstance can be identified: a diversification process of ideologies. Partly clashing ideological trends can be identified. In Sweden, as in many other Anglo-Saxon and western countries, right-wing political movements are attempting to influence how schools operate. These movements include a return to order, punishment and retribution, league tables, classification, individualism, elitism, focus on core subjects, and the separation of theoretical and vocational upper secondary programs. In other words, we can see a movement away from the 'fuzzy school' with group work, interdisciplinary teaching, holistic learning, and the trust in the student's own drive for knowledge. In some aspects, this reinforces old ideals in the profession (core subject focused) and works against new ideals (interdisciplinary, problem-based learning). On the other hand, many educators still endorse holistic views on education and learning with interdisciplinary teaching, problem-based learning and appealing to students' own drive for learning. These ideological trends flourish simultaneously. The former trend encourages an organisation-oriented identity among teachers, whereas the latter encourages the traditional professional identity. Also this can be interpreted as a diversifying process within the profession.

Fourth, we identify processes of status movements between the teaching profession and other occupational groups. While the teaching profession today is suffering from relatively low salary development, relatively low status (Svensson and Ulfdotter Eriksson, 2009), lower meritocratic assets (Börjesson, 2009), changed social recruitment of new teachers (lower socioeconomic classes), and deteriorated working conditions (Lundgren, 2009), other occupational groups that have not historically been identified as professions are improving in all these areas. In other words, the teaching profession can be seen as changing positions in relation to other up-and-coming occupations and professions, e.g. nurses, entrepreneurs, middle-managers, technical experts and other officials. This can be

seen as status movement processes between the teaching profession and the wider working life and other occupational groups, where the teaching profession, at least partly, seems to move downwards.

What directions the processes described above take in the future depend on the actions of different actors and who has the priority of interpretation. Clearly, this change needs further empirical examination.

Professional and organisational identities and cultures

How does the concept of identity apply to professional work and changes in governance and management? NPM reforms indeed attempt to change employee identity (Skålen, 2004). As Fenwick (2006) argues, today individuals are required – indeed seduced – to engage in self-alteration through self-assessment, shape shifting, and self-marketing to adapt to an organisation’s changing needs. Rose (1992) refers to this as ‘the enterprising self’; even if this can be seen as something on the surface, it certainly can also be part of forming new professional identities. Building a professional identity is assumed to be changing, on-going, and pervasive, more like a process than a product (Jenkins, 2008). It can be described as the perception of belonging (Baruch and Cohen, 2007) and as negotiated meanings of experiences arising from membership in social communities both in professional education and working-life (Wenger, 1998; Billett and Somerville, 2004). Individuals’ professional identities overlap with institutional, normative, and discourse practices as well as with how individuals present themselves to the social world and with which social practices they wish to be associated.

However, changing identities is a complex endeavour as professional identity is often ‘highly resistant to change’ (Goodrick and Reay, 2010: 59). Evetts (2006c), for example, argues that professionals construct a profession-specific identity during their professional training and as members of professional associations. The professional identity frames how professionals see the problems and solutions associated with their profession, perspectives that suggest how work is to be done, including how professionals should interact with clients. When superiors or the organisation as a whole introduce and try to implement changes in an organisation, professionals often object as the changes challenge their concept of what it means to be a professional, their professional identity. Such a conflict can be seen as a clash of identities as members of a profession traditionally identify with their specific profession more than with their employer, the work organisation (Baruch and Cohen, 2007).

Professionals generally tend to have a weaker identification with their organisation than with their profession because individuals in general choose professions rather than specific work organisations; moreover, workers change organisations more often than professions (Baruch and Cohen, 2007; Heggen, 2008). How individual professionals identify themselves can also depend on whether their work organisation approaches the ideals and

values they identify with. Eteläpelto and Saarinen (2006) distinguish between three voices or discourses – personal, professional, and institutional – that give rise to different kinds of professional identities.

As Billett (2006) points out, individuals are neither fully autonomous nor totally constrained and shaped by situational factors, social practices, and cultural mores. When new and old members are socialized into an organisation and a profession, they are not only passive receivers but also active agents who influence and sometimes challenge the organisation as well as the profession. Therefore, the concept of identity closely relates to the concept of culture. The concept of culture is usually used to discuss the symbols, stories, standards, truths, and so on that are mutually *created* in the organisation and the profession in relation to the world, how this creation occurs, and how it affects both individuals and the culture. As cultures are context-dependent, inconsistent, multifaceted, and above all socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Martin, 2002), it is not possible to say that an organisation or a profession has *one* homogeneous and stable culture. Rather, organisations are imbued with pluralism, conflict, and processes that are constantly being updated (Gerhardi and Nicolini, 2000). In other words, the individual and the social world are co-constitutive (Billett and Somerville, 2004; Jenkins, 2008).

This perspective, however, makes it difficult to draw a sharp line between profession and organisation. The same individuals are involved in the creation of both the organisational structures and cultures and the structures of professional cultures. Wenger (1998) emphasizes learning in communities of practice as a way of discussing the creation of the varying but still normative laws, interpretive frameworks, stories, and symbols that govern what happens in an organisation and, we argue, in a profession (professional culture). Communities of practice can be within the organisation, but they can also extend beyond organisational boundaries, across time and geography. Simultaneously, communities of practice may also extend across professional boundaries and be intertwined with expectations deriving from broader social categories such as social class and gender (Somerville and Abrahamsson, 2003). Teachers' professional identity formation can thus be seen as an on-going process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences in professional learning contexts (Beijaard et al., 2004; Eteläpelto and Saarinen, 2006).

Identities and cultures as platforms for resistance and change

Typically, professional identities and cultures and organisational cultures are conservative and involve social control – for better or for worse. They create productivity, stability, professional identity, organisational boundaries, learning environments, and motivation, but also limit autonomy, flexibility, innovation, and opportunities for change for both individuals and organisations (cf. Alvesson, 2002; Abrahamsson, 2006).

Cultural heritage can serve to restore the old order – such as diffuse backlash and disobedience that result from resistance and entrenched professional culture – and make it

difficult to achieve the desired outcome (Abrahamsson and Somerville, 2007; Andersson and Abrahamsson, 2007; Gerhardi and Nicolini, 2000); however, it is not clear who has power over the cultures. They are created and owned by groups and are not directly accessible for control by the organisation's management. It may be that the organisational culture in the form of ambiguities, paradoxes, informal conflict, power and condition differences, subgroups, and evasive and contradictory objectives are more significant for what happens (or what does not happen) in the organisation than the official and the overall culture (Alvesson, 2002; Gerhardi and Nicolini, 2000; Lysgaard, 1961, Martin, 2002). We argue that these dynamics and different currents have implications for processes of diversification within professions, such as the teaching profession. Indeed, Tsui places such an argument in the following context:

In a community of practice, engagement in the negotiation of meanings involves the production and adoption of meanings: The two must go together. Members whose meanings are consistently rejected and whose experiences are considered irrelevant, and hence not accepted as a form of competence, will develop an identity of marginality. (Tsui, 2007: 661)

In other words, for a certain identity to develop, a supportive environment is essential. This means that institutional changes and organisational changes can influence professional identity. In addition, if work organisations gain a greater role, a basis for identities is created with different content, content that equates those values that permeate the specific organisation. Research supports both the idea of peaceful co-existence of different identities and ideas (e.g. Reay and Hinings, 2009) as well as clashing identities and ideas (e.g. Evetts, 2006a; 2006b).

At the same time, changes in technology, production, and organisation create new conditions and place new requirements on behaviour, attitudes, and skills and even new forms of professional cultures and professional identities that follow the new developments. For example, professional strategies, union politics, and professional education as well as pedagogical theories and professional ideals play important roles for the forming of teachers' professional culture. Equally important, however, is the practical work in the local school. That is, the local school's management and organisation as well as its administrative rules and the political and institutional climates in the municipality, region, and nation significantly influence a teacher's professional identity.

One way of examining and understanding change is to separate the values of the profession and the organisation and the organisational principles of the profession and the organisation. This type of perspective makes it possible to discuss more complex connections between profession and organisation. Using this type of analysis, Espersson (2010) shows how the Swedish Enforcement Administration attempted to introduce team organisation to strengthen professional values (equality and impartiality) even though some aspects of the professional and bureaucratic organisational principles were simultaneously reinforced (hierarchy, control, and management by rule).

Conclusions: Diversified identities

In this article, we have examined changes in governance of professional work as the changes relate to the concepts of identity and culture. We have identified processes of diversification within the teaching profession relating to new and old forms of work organisation and competence demands, to more and new types of employers, to new and old pedagogical ideologies, as well as to other occupational groups. Clearly, a complex picture of changes (social, cultural, economic, geographical, institutional, political, pedagogical, and theoretical to name but a few) emerges when examining professional identities. Some of these changes can be seen as resulting in marginalisation of the teaching profession, while others in renewing of the profession. Professions and professionals have a strong identification with collective values set up by their respective power structures, and these professions resist change by delaying identity changes, retaining old values (for better or worse), and preserving whatever they can (i.e. by fighting marginalisation, lower status, lower pay, etc.). At the same time, professional groups or even individual professionals or sub-groupings may transform so the changes correspond to their ideals and logics (cf. Muzio and Ackroyd, 2008). The intersection between what can be called traditional professional identity and new professional identities (derived from NPM-influenced governance changes) together with other changes shapes new identities, or rather changes the landscape of identities. Skålen (2004: 251), for example, argues that ‘NPM creates heterogeneous, conflicting and fluid organisational identities rather than the uniform and stable business identity it is supposed to’. Similarly, Pritchard and Symond (2011) believe that new roles for professionals lead to new identities, a view that emphasises the importance of seeing local (organisation level) as well as broader (institutional and societal) contexts when examining how professional identity is formed. Future studies should examine multiple coexisting or competing identities to understand the dynamics involved in shaping these identities and what these changes mean for professionals, professions, organisations, as well as clients. Indeed, we see these complexities as crucial to understanding the dynamics of change:

Much of the theorizing in this field, which has tended to homogenize collective identities by emphasizing what is common or shared, failed to capture the interplay between different communities within organisations, and produced bland, undifferentiated empirical research. (Brown, 2006: 731)

There are many views on what it means to be a professional and what constitutes a profession. How a profession is defined depends on who has the power to interpret and define a particular profession, so it is extremely important to discuss the governance of professionals in terms of identities. By examining the role of identity, one can come to understand the dynamics of various forces involved in shaping what views or logics or discourses are winning and which ones are losing. Research suggests that changes in work organisations (not only in the teaching profession) have led to a shift in what professional work involves and means. For example, professionals have been described as going from being social trustees to experts (Brint, 1994), from professional to managerial (Liecht and Fennel, 2001), and from professional commercial to commercial professional (Suddaby et al., 2007; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005). Sahlin (2009) describes this process as a

bifurcation – professions becoming divided into regular practitioners and experts where being an expert increases one's status and being a regular practitioner decreases one's status.

As a result of our findings, we believe organisations should understand that professionals often have a strong identification with profession-specific values, and for a change to be implemented successfully there needs to be a dialogue between profession and organisation, both at the level of values as well as the level of organisational principles. In this way, the discussion can move beyond the victimization discussion, an approach that is often ineffective for the organisation, the professional, and the customer. Several other researchers (Noordegraf, 2011; Timmermans, 2008; Waring and Currie, 2009) also argue that professionals may gain from incorporating new ideas and values even when they are introduced by management. Old and new values within professions and within organisations themselves continually compete to form professional identity. In the case of the teaching profession, this struggle for supremacy in identity formation can be seen on at least three levels: in professional associations and communities; in regional and national school systems and municipalities or companies that employ teachers; and in the teaching activities and the students. All three of these competing levels influence the way teachers form their identities even though they involve different and sometimes contradicting logics, values, expectations, and demands. Future studies should carry out empirical research that examines how professional identity is formed in the context of changing conditions for professional work to further understand the micro processes that form professional identities as they intersect and coexist.

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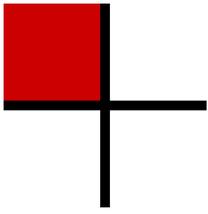
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Social work: A history of gender and class in the profession

Rannveig Dahle

abstract

Most successful professions emerged as male middle-class projects based on scientific knowledge and are organized to promote the self-interests of those involved and to protect their turf. The professional theories have also been developed from a male perspective. Social work, on the other hand, is a female professional project, where women constitute a vast majority of the professionals. This article explores the process of social work professionalisation in Norway from a feminist perspective and by taking the historical position of women into consideration. According to the official account, social work in Norway is a product of the post-WWII welfare state. A close look reveals the gendered nature of this 'new' profession, and further, reveals a professional developmental story prior to World War II, which was formed by women's ideas; visions and values and that were structurally built into the occupation. This article explores the historical social context of women's professional work and its interactions with social environments. The paper's theoretical contribution exposes how masculine theories on professions have proved unable to account for both female *and* male professional projects because they devalue women's efforts and ignore the different societal expectations of men and women. The development of the post-war welfare state did move Norwegian social work from the margins to a much more central position, but gender is still an important dimension through which to deconstruct professional development.

Introduction

In 2010, social work officially marked its 60th anniversary as a profession in Norway. In 1950 the state-run Norwegian School of Governmental and Social Work was established to meet the needs of a 'new born' welfare state emerging immediately after the Second World War (Kluge, 1960; Terum, 1982). A corps of executive officers was required to handle a series of social-political reforms regarding social support and economic services. During the anniversary celebrations, many emphasized that this state demand had given rise to a whole new kind of professional and contributed to continual growth in social work regarding knowledge production.

The social work profession in Norway is the topic of this article, with a focus on two main concerns. First, to describe the formation of social work as a field of professional work for

women in Norway and through this, subsequently to engage in a critical analysis of the 'male-stream' way social work has been theorized in the literature on professions. The point of departure is that social work is primarily women's work; in Norway, as in most countries in the western world, women constitute a vast majority of its practitioners. This consistently large proportion across national boundaries has commonly been explained through the values embedded in the work, with its orientation towards caring for the vulnerable and those with social 'handicaps'. I challenge the official understanding of the origin of Norwegian social work as a profession, claiming that there already existed a school of professional social work prior to the state school, although its existence has been made invisible and neglected in the official story. From a feminist perspective I explore the constitution of a professional field and the construction of the first school of social work, focusing on what these pioneering women tried to achieve, their working strategies, thought styles and motivations. Also I argue that our understanding of professions and professional growth is still overwhelmingly male biased. The theories in the field need to be elaborated, with closer attention given to gender relations, power structures and women's ways of knowing. Among other things, gendering professional theories will produce new and richer understandings of the professions and allow us to comment on how the premises for becoming successful within the system of professions differ according to gender. In my view, social work provides an example of a profession where there is still a knowledge gap to fill and where there are silenced stories that need to be told. The article draws on earlier writings on social work (by scholars and by social workers themselves), a series of white papers, annual reports, official statistics, biographies and Festschrifts¹.

The article begins with a brief outline of professional theories and a feminist critique of these before touching on how the process of professionalization in social work has been accounted for internationally by different scholars, taking conventional and feminist interpretations into account. Then I turn to the Norwegian context, setting the scene by drawing attention to the social, cultural and normative conditions of women towards the end of the 19th century – when women's 'natural' place and role was in the home. Unlike male professionals, women were confronted with obstacles and dilemmas related to their familial obligations and assumed place in society. Given their different positioning, they were guided by a different professional logic and articulated their strategic aims in accordance with the normative expectations towards women. Simultaneously, the process of professionalizing social work was transforming women's former unpaid charity work in the private domain into paid work in the public sphere.

A theoretical framework

Professions in the form we know them today are inextricably linked to modernity (Fauske, 2008; Larson, 1977; Slagstad, 2008). Although the term 'profession' is frequently used in

1 Festschrifts, written to celebrate the 20th and 40th anniversary of the establishments of the state school of social work

research and everyday speech and seems to have broadened, it is still a contested concept and there is strong dissent on how to define it (Molander and Terum, 2008). Some characteristics, however, seem to recur in the literature: professions are knowledge-based, the management of such knowledge is ruled by codes of ethics, and autonomy is regarded as a core criterion, which implies that professional practices are not subject to an employer's control. In a recent article, Brante (2011) argues vigorously against a broadening of the definition and advocates a universal definition based on an approach that views professions as occupations that conduct interventions derived from the scientific knowledge of mechanisms, structures and contexts. Professions, he argues, are socially and politically significant parts of contextually conditioned truth regimes. According to Brante, a strict definition has an impact on research and the lack of a shared definition renders communication between scholars more difficult. Brante's position sustains a view of practical knowledge (which social work is based on) as non-professional.

Although all agree that professional work is knowledge-based, the knowledge question itself is a much debated issue. What should count as 'true' professional knowledge? From the 1980s onwards, the multitude of different knowledge forms in professions seems to have been more accepted and the assumption that abstract and scientific knowledge forms are always superior to practical and experience-based knowledge has been challenged (Heggen and Engebretsen, 2009).

Fundamental disagreements between scholars in the research field encourage further investigations from different perspectives. As many feminists have pointed out, autonomy and abstract thinking connote masculinity in our society, whereas practical work connotes femininity (Dahle, 1991; Davies, 1995; Annandale, 1998; Waerness, 2003). Hence, the professional work that many women do, such as nursing, social work, and teaching, is regularly associated with being practical, not theoretical. The implications of such tacit conceptions are that their work is not classified as scientific and their occupations are not part of a truth system that constitutes 'true' professions. The knowledge forms are ranked and women's work is regarded as inferior.

The idea that professions emerge in dynamic interaction with their environment and that professional politics are shaped through negotiation and power struggles have gained approval (Larson, 1977; Abbott, 1988; Fauske, 2008). To prosper, actors must prove a societal need for their expert knowledge and, furthermore, strategic allies are required to support their professional claims. Those who succeed in promoting their self-interests obtain benefits and privileges on behalf of their group. They achieve sovereignty and jurisdiction over their knowledge, i.e., autonomy. This mode of thought suggests that power is always involved. In his influential work, Abbott (1988) views the professions as a system of expert knowledge that, above all, is characterized by jurisdictional power struggles about turf, privileges and influence. He vividly describes a male world characterized by aggressive masculinities, worlds in which women's occupations are easily relegated to the margins. Within this system, abstract theoretical knowledge confers an important advantage in the power struggles, while practical knowledge is devalued and

subordinated. In his analysis, Abbott does not see an implicit gender order in the system of professions. He denies any gendered power differences and holds that, to the extent women engage in the professional game, they are likely to use the same power strategies as men.² He seems to be unaware of how women have been barred from the same weapons and tools that men use and that women historically have been located far from the power sources in working life (Dahl, 2008; Holter, 1977; Witz, 1992). Feminization, he argues, seems to be the most familiar form of degraded recruitment. One of his examples is the move of medical care from home to hospital that destroyed the former independence of the private duty nurse and placed her in a subordinated division of labour. The move from the private to the public automatically ranked the nurses as subordinate assistants to the medical profession in line with the abstract-practical knowledge divide.

In an early phase of theory building, often regarded as the era of the functionalist paradigm, Etzioni (1969) and his associates investigated professional development in three occupations – social work, nursing and teaching – and labelled them *semi*-professions. Stacey (1981) once characterized that term as mystifying and stigmatizing: it mystified social realities and stigmatized women as second-class citizens by labelling them as ‘semi-professional’. The term still circulates³, despite the lack of awareness about its original meaning. On Etzioni’s understanding gender was integral to his definition of a ‘semi-profession’, which had two features. Firstly, it was an occupation located within a bureaucratic organization and one in which women predominated. ‘The sheer preponderance of women places a brake on the extent to which these occupations can professionalise’, Witz claimed (1994: 60). Secondly, these occupations were characterized primarily by their shortcomings: they lacked occupational motivation, ambition and any drive towards intellectual mastery, and those in the occupations were incapable of exercising authority over men. Taking an implicit normative and masculine perspective, Etzioni concluded that achieving full professional status for these professions was unlikely and suggested that semi-professionals accepted rather than challenged this reality.

From a feminist and critical perspective, Witz (1992) and Davies (1995; 1999) underline the need to include a gender perspective in the general theories of professions. Historically, women have been barred from men’s privileged world, and the work they do is not recognized as professional, and thus devalued. In her studies of nursing, Davies claims that to understand current trends we need to delve deeper into cultural notions of masculinity and femininity, while Witz’s research focuses more on how processes of exclusion have actively shut women out of men’s professions.

Notably, the professions have historically been dominated by upper-class elite men. Hence, the study of professions deals with social classes; sometimes explicitly, but more often implicitly. Still, with a few exceptions, class issues, like gender issues, have mostly been ignored and understudied in mainstream research (Witz, 1992; Dahle, 1991; 2008; 2009).

2 Abbott (1988: 351-2) treats the gender issue only in a footnote.

3 The term is for instance frequently – and uncritically – used in Molander and Terum, 2008.

In Norwegian social work, class relations played an important role in the formative period of the occupation. A feminist theoretical perspective that takes gender and class into account provides the direction for this article's exploration of social work. With this view in mind we start by locating social work in a broader, international context.

Social work

It is commonly held that the historical roots of social work lie in charity work that was directed towards social needs and poverty throughout the centuries. Much of this work was previously women's unpaid work. The theoretical foundations of social work rest on exploring human behaviour, social systems and principles of social justice (Levin, 2004). The strong ties between professional social work, values of compassion and human support have made it difficult to delineate the boundaries of social work. According to conventional theories on professions, transparent boundaries limit the possibilities for professionalizing in a differentiated system of functions (Stichweh, 2008). On the other hand, Levin (2004) holds that exactly this ambiguity provides a challenge or a starting point for critical reflection of and further development in professional social work.

Bacchi (1999) reminds us that we always need to tease out and comment on the presuppositions and assumptions embedded in competing interpretations of an issue. She argues that any description of a problem is simultaneously an interpretation that involves judgment and choices. Regarding American social work, it is interesting to note how scholars have represented and interpreted its developmental process differently. While Abbott (1988) provides his 'genderless' analysis, sociologists Dresselt (1992) and Deegan (1990) interpret the process of professionalization of social work from a gendered perspective. Through their feminist gaze they observe how gender is structurally embedded in professional work from the very outset. All three agree that social work was constituted as a field of education in the second half of the 19th century in the US and in most European countries, but they depict these processes in different ways.

Dresselt (1992) portrays the professional process in very different terms from Abbott. The American Civil War (1861-1865), she argues, created an increased need for social support and a rational, scientific and administrative organization to deal with it. Until then, the charity model was the only option for helping those in need, and because women, who did most of such work, were more or less denied entrance to the paid labour market, it went unpaid. A desire to liberate social work from the 'chaotic charitable sentiments sometimes floating in the minds of women' (Dresselt, 1992: 212) was embedded in the new undertaking. The above critique was explicitly directed at the benevolent upper-class women who organized the volunteer work. According to the ideology emerging at that time, empathy and emotion were no longer assumed to be part of social work; its duties were to be performed in a 'business like', professional manner. There was an attempt to make it more masculine. From that shift, states Dresselt, a whole new industry evolved. Even more importantly, a gendered hierarchy emerged in which men, due to their 'natural

leadership', organized the work, the knowledge production and the teaching, while women, further subordinated, continued their work in the different social practices. Although Dresselt does not deal with the economic question, an obvious assumption is that men were properly compensated for their leadership positions, while women's practical client work was poorly paid. Dresselt notes, however, that in the 19th century, charity work was more highly valued than it is now, because it was felt that labours of love could not be performed for money. Regardless of that sentiment, or perhaps because of it, through several mechanisms, a gendered wage gap was structurally built into the profession.

Exploring American social work from her position as a historical sociologist, Deegan (1990) connects the emergence of the profession more directly to the University of Chicago in the 1920s. At that time, theories of social interaction were a major focus and the university's influential and progressive scientific milieu attracted several intellectual women. Later, many of them left the institution, saying they preferred to now apply their theoretical knowledge in concrete situations. Most of their male colleagues remained at the university, pursuing a life of the mind and scientific careers. The question of whether these women left academia voluntarily, or were excluded from scientific membership by the men through more or less subtle discriminatory strategies, warrants further exploration.

In 1889, American sociologist Adams co-founded Chicago's Hull House, part of the Settlement Movement. Social worker Richmond worked for the US Charity Organization Society for nearly twenty years from the 1880s, and instituted a method of casework that is still widely used. Notwithstanding the gender split, Deegan argues that American social work was the global pioneer and its ideas spread to most of Europe, including Norway. In England, disparate stories of social work's professional development circulate. The year 1895 is recurrently marked as a starting point, when a female social worker was hired by the Royal Free Hospital in London for a one-year trial period and thereafter the hospital would be able to determine whether social work added to patient treatment. It apparently did; she was contracted to continue her work. In 1921, Sweden was the first country in Scandinavia to establish privately financed social work education. The programme later became a separate institute, located at Stockholm University (Pettersson, 2001) and became state financed in 1945. Positioning social work within the Swedish university system gave it a unique educational standing among the Nordic countries.

This brief comparative glance demonstrates that the development of social work as an educational and professional field has taken different routes in different countries and is accounted for in different ways. There has been no consistent pattern to define social problems across countries, nor is there an unequivocal definition of social work itself. Establishing social work as a profession in a country was dependent on the local context and on the cultural perspectives and presuppositions embedded in the subject.

Social work development in Norway

As already noted, the social work profession in Norway is publicly assumed to have a relatively brief history of 60 years. However, there are silenced aspects of the story that I now will give voice to. In 1920, the National League of Norwegian Women (NLNW) began on their own initiative to teach courses in social work in Oslo. At that time, the term 'social work' was broad and transparent. For the historian Seip (1990), it describes much more than a set of professional practices; she considers it to cover a wide range of women's unpaid work in society at that time, especially in the late 1890s when Norway was undergoing industrialization. The new society prospered, but created new kinds of social problems, and concurrently, Seip claims, a whole new political awareness regarding society's responsibility to deal with them.

In this new culture, wage work the way we know it today was established, and a new political democracy and organizational life emerged. It is important to note that most women had scarce access to paid work and were located outside political life; voluntary organizations were the only way for women to engage in activities outside the home. One such group was the philanthropic Post-Natal Women's Association, organized to assist women in need of help after birth; other organizations promoted missionary work or alcohol abstention. Many women's organizations gradually began collaborating with public authorities to solve social problems, although it took a long time for their contributions to be acknowledged.

In her analysis of social work, Seip is deeply concerned with class-divided society and treats tensions between middle-class and working-class women as a social issue. The latter sometimes voiced their disgust for what they felt to be an encroachment on their way of life. One working-class woman wrote:

Charity work – what a disgusting term. We don't want their pity or mercy, what we claim is justice for all. Let the upper class alone with their pities as other people are addicted to other things. (Seip, 1990: 137; my translation)

Notably, women from all classes participated in social work, although from profoundly different premises. The social work of upper- and middle-class women was carried out as top-down charity politics, and for working-class women such work was, without question or analysis, naturalized as female (Seip, 1990: 138). The quotation above indicates strong tension and conflicting views between the classes. Some middle-class women saw a need early on to develop a social work education programme, but there was no explicit goal to develop as a profession. Working-class women, on the other hand, had no aim to make an occupation out of their social work; their contributions were anchored in mutual solidarity.

Although most of the literature on professions does not clarify or deal with the class aspect, the scarce literature on the history of Norwegian social work implicitly shows how gender and class were closely interrelated and formed a foundation for its development through an

education programme and as a professional field (Kiær, 1951; Efskind, 1983; Kluge, 1960; Ulsteen, 10; Løvskår, 1983).

The National League of Norwegian Women's School of Social Work

During the 1890s, new social and educational policies paved the way for women to enter some social positions in the public sphere. In 1884, the University of Oslo (the only university in Norway at that time) opened its doors to women. By 1896, women could hold a seat on civic guardian committees and in 1889 the school system allowed mixed-gender classes. Soon after 1900, a formal decision was made to allow at least one female representative on every civic committee that dealt with all sorts of questions regarding support for the poor (Agerholt, 1973). Women also began to hold state-financed public and paid positions such as industrial inspectors, housing inspectors and children's home inspectors. These positions demanded formal education of some sort and social work became a sought-after competence and supposedly innate 'female' capacities were deemed insufficient.

Through these factors, Norway's political and social development in the second half of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century provided a context for professional social work to grow. A small-scale education programme found form in 1920, when the National League of Norwegian Women began teaching social courses as a private initiative. The NLNW was founded in 1904 by prominent upper- and middle-class women, some from the educated elite and some with relatively influential positions in society. They had in common a profound engagement with women's questions, with a major ambition to inspire women to engage in humanistic social work to improve the conditions of all women. Many of the league's founders were internationally oriented and had spent time abroad (Løvskår, 1983), hence they were familiar with international developments regarding social work.

The model for a Norwegian school of social work came from Sweden. Conditions for acceptance in the programme were a strong commitment to work for the benefit of the socially disadvantaged and a desire to make a living from practicing social work. The school's founders regarded the capacity to care for others as an inherent, female characteristic but they felt this had to be combined with some theoretical knowledge. According to their ideology, an educated social worker should be able to take on a wide range of professional tasks in the public and private spheres, such as in factories, prisons and police services, where a social worker would perform home visits and sit on committees, such as for public health (Kiær, 1951; Efskind, 1983; Levin, 2004).

The Swedish programme did not completely match the NLNW's visions and values (Ulsteen, 1960; Efskind, 1983); that model was directed mainly at upper- and middle-class women and based on academic ability. The Norwegian ideology was to primarily target

lower-middle- and working-class women, who needed more general education before practicing. The founders regarded it their obligation to educate working-class women so they could increase their employment prospects, and their educational programme was deliberately oriented towards women and values assumed to be female. However, despite the NLNW's moral commitment and intensive recruitment efforts, enrolment from working-class women remained extremely low; most applicants came from the middle class (Løvskår, 1983; Rasmussen, 1985).

The NLNW's mode of thinking regarding their educational programme departs substantially from the logic in most masculine-defined professional projects in that a major concern of the leaders was to educate women with lower class background than themselves. There are few, if any, indications that the NLNW considered strategies for promoting their self-interests or protecting their own turf to ensure their own exclusiveness in a professional market. Rather, their goal seemed to be helping people in need of support and to educate qualified helpers. This also implied that any striving for autonomy, which is regarded as a core value in most theories on professions, and that helps to protect boundaries and the independence of the professional group, is strikingly absent in the literature on social workers. They needed a strong professional organization to protect and promote the interests of the clients. However, they did not consider the class inequalities and the educated working-class women were never regarded equal to the women leaders of the NLNW. The class hierarchy rather remained untouched, it was only silently visible and taken for granted.

Their school started quite modestly with a series of short courses. They were initially organized as half-year units that soon expanded to full-year classes. The curriculum covered a wide variety of subjects such as language, history, psychology, personal hygiene, family planning and budgeting economy. Because of the short amount of teaching time the education was necessarily fragmented and superficial. In the 1930s most schools of social work in Europe used a two-year curriculum, which met the minimum standards set by the International Association of Schools of Social Work (Rasmussen, 1985). It remains unclear why the Norwegian education programme fell short of the international standards, but possibly it was due to national conditions such as lack of support from strategic allies, i.e. the intellectual academic elite and the state. In addition, the general fiscal crisis in the 1930s was devastating for women's rights and gender equality issues. Another assumption could be that a higher educational standard worked against the NLNW's ideology of encouraging primarily working-class women to engage in education.

Anthropologist Solheim argues that the modern gender regime rests on two mutually dependent pillars (Solheim, 2007: 19). The first pillar is the split between family and working life; the second is the split between private life and public life. Using Solheim's theoretical perspective to analyze upper-middle-class women in the 1930s, one sees that, married or not, they participated actively in public life while maintaining a firm foundation in family and the private sphere. A social work education programme was a 'natural' expansion of their commitment to help others, not a split from it, and their work was never

meant to be at the expense of their familial obligations. The construction of the social work profession, the professional organization and the content of the education were adapted to the normative conceptions of womanhood of that time. The founders of the NLNW's school of social work were likely aware of – and probably acknowledged – that a majority of educated social workers would leave professional work when they married or had children, according to the norms. Generally, those women who tried to combine family and professional life were met with contradictory expectations and often negative sanctions (Agerholt, 1973; Dahle, 1991).

There were other tensions and dilemmas. Despite the gendered restrictions discussed above, the NLNW had high aspirations for its school. One of their visions was to make women's values of caring a model for the whole society. Contrary to such an ambitious goal, however, they were modest about their endeavours and almost reluctant to consider the implications of the transformation of women's unpaid work in others' homes to paid work in the labour market. Their concern was to increase women's professional influence but without challenging their traditional domestic roles. The school's initiators took the gendered world as a given, and accepted – even emphasized – that female obligations necessitated different opportunity structures regarding involvement in professional work. Investigating social work as a gendered professional construction brings ignored theoretical dilemmas to the forefront; ones that account for people's actual lives, their obligations and the work they did (and do).

A new education takes form

After World War II a new welfare state was emerging in Norway (and Scandinavia) that demanded a corps of qualified personnel to handle its governmental tasks, such as distribution of welfare services, counseling, and to administer the welfare offices (Terum, 1982). Very soon a state-regulated education was planned to meet with these new challenges, and the Norwegian School of Governmental and Social Work (NSGSW) was established in 1950. This state financed school soon became the major competitor of the NLNW's school – and eventually the cause of its demise.

According to Terum (1982), the establishment of a state school marks the distinct starting point for social work as a professional field in Norway. He points to the exceptional nature of this process through the close links to the state needs in the arising welfare state. As noted earlier, most theories of professions amply demonstrate that a more common pathway to professional growth has been that a group of private actors with strong self-interests aim at monopolizing a specific field of knowledge-based work practices in a competitive market.⁴ In the formation of professional social work in the Norwegian context, such private self-interests hardly played a prominent role, Terum claims. With his

4 Abbotts (1988) analysis is a particularly distinct example of this research position, although he published his analysis much later than Terum (1982).

strong focus on the role of the state in developing social work as a professional field, he points to an important, although underestimated dimension in the common knowledge of professional growth that deserves to be further explored. However, what Terum neglects – or silences – is the thirty years of women's endeavours to establish a field of professional social work and that they even established an education long before the state school. There are no signs that the private entrepreneurship of upper class women was to protect their self-interests, rather it was based on a moral and political commitment to offer social support to people in need, besides providing an opportunity for working class women to get an education. One might however conceive that these upper class women preferred to educate working class women to do the practical work rather than doing it themselves, but this has to be explored. The important aspect here is that Terum, in his analysis of the professionalization process of Norwegian social work, hardly mentions the NLNW's school of social work. One assumption for not taking the existing into account, could be that he was not aware of its existence, another (and more plausible) is that he regarded the school to be unimportant for the constitution of social work as a professional field and hence there was no need to account for its origin or significance.

The committee to give a report of a state education consisted of both male and female members. In the final report, submitted in 1947, the committee suggested an educational model with three different branches: social work, government and social pedagogy, with the suggested name of the school the Norwegian School of Social and Governmental Work. On a symbolic level the ordering of the three elements conveyed different meanings and the committee favoured the social aspects by putting it first. When debated in Parliament later on, however, the suggested name became a highly contentious issue (Kluge, 1960). The parliamentarians, all of them men with one single exception, strongly underlined the needs for administrative competencies, while they questioned the needs for client-focused social work. The existing NLNW's school of social work – and the 30 years of work women had put into developing this school – seemed to be unknown to most parliamentarians (Kluge, 1960). The major concern was instead to implement the emerging social and radical policy, based on new welfare rights. The outcome of the heated debate in Parliament thus became to rank the administrative and governmental aspects above the social needs of individual's. Viewed from Terum's perspective, the state school therefore rightly marks an official starting point of the social work education programme in Norway (despite the unofficial work and education that had taken place for many years prior to the establishment of the state school), a process in which professional interests played an uttermost modest role. As noted earlier, this seems to be similar to the US development and may be also be the case in other European countries (Deegan, 1990; Pettersson, 2001).

A gendering of the state education

The new school gave rise to gendered divisions of work on many levels. The educational programmes comprised two paths of study: one of administration and one of social work. Each branch was divided into two parts: Level I (1 ½ years) and Level II (1 year). Entrance

required having completed elementary school and two years of secondary school, lower than the requirements for university study. Both branches were open to women and men, but the enrolment was gendered from the beginning (student statistics, 1960; Kluge, 1960). Among the 27 students in the first administrative class there was only one female. Ten years later, three out of 28 students were female. The social work branch held 19 men and 12 women in the first year. Only three years later, women constituted the majority, with 17 women and 12 men. The proportion of women in the social work branch continued to increase and stabilized at 80 per cent after its first twenty years of existence; public administration was the preference of males, social work the preference of females.

In a different gender split, the majority of men left the school after Level I, while nearly all women finished the two levels (Kluge, 1960). Why this gendered pattern? The most obvious answer lies in the labour market conditions of the emerging welfare state. Due to a shortage of competent administrative personnel in local governments, males were regularly recruited for jobs well before finishing Level I. Conversely, employment in social work was scarce. There were a few positions in medical institutions and some child welfare and rehabilitation positions. Because of this women may have taken the position that the best way to increase their job chances was to complete the education (Kluge, 1960).

On an institutional level, competition between the NLNW and NSGSW to recruit students had been heavy from the beginning. Because of the NLNW's school's historical and ideological roots, its programme accepted only women, and was shorter, due to women's assumed 'natural' family obligations. There were also substantial curriculum differences between the two schools. The NLNW's school focused on a broad range of humanistic subjects and paid less attention to the welfare economy and legal rights. Profiling the NLNW's school as different from the state school proved to be insufficient for attracting more students; the NSGSW rapidly achieved higher status and the number of female students increased.

The NLNW's school was forced to continually re-evaluate its functions and roles, but was reluctant to give up its educational endeavours. The course content was revised, some years later male students were accepted and the length of the programme was expanded to three years, in fact half a year longer than the NSSW's. However, none of these strategies proved successful. In 1961, a state policy made almost all private post-secondary schools state run, and the NLNW's school finally closed. An era of social work in Norway had come to an end.

The NSGSW had also changed its format over the years. Between 1950 and 1966, it had focused more on the public administration aspect; gradually, however, this perspective shifted towards client services because of empirical demands in the field (Terum, 1982). Further, new expectations regarding social work were articulated and promoted in Parliament, with the aim to better support clients in need of social and economic help.

The shift in ideology subsequently raised a debate about entrance requirements for state schools. Some argued to reduce the formal education requirement in favour of focusing on

having the ‘right’ qualities, skills and values to perform empathetic social work. The consequences were that the educational ideas of the NLNW’s school gradually found a place in state schools. Why did a discussion of changing the requirements arise? One assumption is that in the 1960s it was still regarded appropriate for women to attend shorter educational programmes because of their familial obligations. As social work primarily attracted women, the education adapted to this gendered norm rather than challenged it. Through such arrangements, gender and education were implicitly co-constituted.

Where did the men go? Statistics from the 1960s and 1970s confirm that more men than women attended university and became lawyers, sociologists and political scientists, who were later recruited to leading positions in local governments (Kluge, 1960). The state-run social work education remained positioned outside the universities until 1978, when the school joined a new university college system. Even today, the gender composition in social work education remains female dominated, with approximately 80-85 per cent women (SSB 2011)⁵.

Discussion

The purpose of this article has been to explore the roles of women in constituting social work as a professional field in Norway, from a gendered perspective and in the light of general theories of professions. The analysis has been guided by the question of how the historical, social and cultural conditions formed the social workers’ professional aspirations. There has been both driving but also prohibiting forces in this endeavour. ‘The professions dominate our world’ was the opening sentence in Abbott’s (1988: 1) influential book, which – taking a gendered analysis of professions into account – is equal to saying that men dominate our world. This gendered subtext is however not mentioned in most ‘malestream’ theories of professions. Feminist scholars have challenged this biased view. The term profession is itself a concept of elite masculinity aimed at describing the work of men within a realm of possibilities to which women have had limited access. If they speak at all, women have been speaking from the margins of a male world. I shall comment on how the findings in this study both relate to and challenge the universality of the conventional theories of professions.

In liberal societies citizenship is contingent upon an individual’s ability to participate in the public realm and measured by paid labour in the work force. Professions are to be regarded as social constructions within this matrix of citizenship. Following Pateman (1988), women have continued to challenge their alleged natural subordination within private life since universal citizenship first appeared as a political ideal three centuries ago. Women in Norway were barred from the ivory tower of the elites – the university – until the late 19th century and hence had no access to the professions. Middle- and upper-class women belonged to the social elite, but only achieved social and cultural status through their

5 SSB: The National Statistic Bureau

husbands. The home was their primary site and unpaid charity work an extension of 'natural' female tasks outside the home without much reward. As we have seen, the pioneering women in social work belonged to the social and cultural elite who demonstrated a strong moral commitment to offer unpaid help to other women and men and their families in need of social support, which they had witnessed through their organizational work in the civil society. There is no indication that professional self-interests or collective upward mobility, as described in conventional theories of professions, was a motive or a primary goal. More likely such an effort might rather have threatened their social status as 'virtuous women'. The historical context however was a time of upheaval and modernization. The university had been forced to allow entrance for women in 1884, there was an initial discourse with regard to women's right to vote and more women entered the labour market in paid but subordinate positions. The pioneering women's familiarity with professional international social work constituted a common ground for the work in the public.

In the literature on the professions, the knowledge question is a major issue. Abbott (1988) characterized professions as a system of expert knowledge and he emphasized that abstract, scientific knowledge is an asset in the power struggles between professions. As noted earlier, a whole new discourse in regard to what counts, and not least what should count, as knowledge has arisen more recently that contests the masculine view of expertise. Social work is clearly located within this new discourse. The pioneers were deeply concerned with the knowledge question, but on other terms than those that are prominent in the literature on professions. A major ambition was to develop useful practical knowledge, which is ranked low within the professional elite system. Abstract, theoretical/scientific knowledge is regarded an admission ticket to the elite and part of the definition of professional knowledge (Brante, 2012). None of the theories of professions have so far acknowledged that the contributions of women have been based on different grounds than those of men. Rather they are characterized by their shortages to explain why they are inferior to the knowledge produced by traditionally male professions. Practical knowledge itself connotes femininity that renders lower status (Holter, 1997, Waerness, 2001, Bacchi, 2009), and as Heggen and Engebretsen (2009) more specifically pointed to, we still need to challenge the relationship and constant balances between scientific and experience-based knowledge forms in professional work. Moreover, women's longstanding responsibilities to balance obligations both in the private and public sphere raise problems that conventional theories have not been concerned to account for. A broader gender shared participation in the home and the workplace may even challenge traditional theorizing on professions.

The way the pioneers intended to develop a knowledge-based social work practice brings the class question to the forefront in a way that has not been accounted for in the literature on the professions. Earlier on Larson (1977), Abbott (1988) and most recently Brante (2012) argue that professions represent elites in society and implicitly these elites are restricted to comprise only men. Before them Etzioni (1969) had applied the term 'semi-professions' to account for typical women's work. Gender was embedded in this concept, but not class. Stacey (1981) has characterized the concept of 'semi-profession' to be both

stigmatizing and mystifying. The concept, however, has survived and is still frequently used in the Norwegian discourse on professions. Holter (1960) explored the class question in social work with regard to practitioners' professional aspirations from a somewhat different angle. In line with the functionalist paradigm of the 1960s, her research focused on whether or not social work had the potential to achieve status as a full-fledged profession.⁶ In giving attention to an aspiring profession in which women constituted a majority, her investigation was exceptional for the time and she focused on a group that her male colleagues took little interest in. Holter noted particularly the 'charity aspect', which she judged as a characteristic that prevented professional progress. Still, she concluded that social work definitely had the potential for becoming a profession, but only if social workers rejected their old-fashioned ideas of charity work of middle class women:

The social worker takes over the functions of family, medical doctor and nurses. Not least, the social worker substitutes *the upper-class charity woman* – and it is exactly this role that the social worker has made great efforts to avoid being identified with. If this upper-class charity woman is the forerunner of the social worker, the naked truth is that the social work occupation does not live in peace with its forefathers in the way that other occupations do. (Holter, 1960: 47; my emphasis)

In stating this, Holter neglects the historical context and the contributions of elite and upper-class women to public organizational life around the turn of the century that was pivotal for constituting a platform for their position in the late 1950s. She even used the social background and the efforts of the pioneers to criticize their project and paid attention to how masculinity was an in-built and indispensable part of most successful male professions. She regarded charity work as the opposite of professional work. 'They do not live in peace with their forefathers', Holter wrote, but without taking their *foremothers* into account. She also neglected their efforts to involve working-class women in the new practices and hence failed to explore the societal and contextual dynamics involved. Holter did not theorize the class relations, since her concern was not to explore how professional social workers handled the class issue in theory or in practice.

Conventional theories underline the fact that to prosper, actors are dependent on a dynamic interaction with their environment (Larson, 1977; Abbott, 1988; Fauske, 2008). This analysis demonstrates that the pioneering constructors of social work lacked support from strong allies. But as Holter (1977) herself stated much later in life, women are located far from the power sources in society. In my own previous work, I have found this to be the case also for Norwegian physiotherapists, who were left on the margin and remained invisible up to the late 1940ies (Dahle, 1991).⁷ Various research findings indicate that we need to study much more systematically women's ways of working strategically to attain

6 The functionalist paradigm was based on a taxonomy approach.

7 Rehabilitation of soldiers after WW II and the polio epidemic demonstrated a need and brought the profession 'out of the shadow' (Dahle 1991).

professional acceptance and move themselves from the margins to more central positions. Such studies will enable a closer look at the continuities and changes that so far have been understudied.

The most unexpected finding and the most difficult to explain in this study is the awkward relationship between the 'first' and the 'second' school of education of social work. How have the efforts of these competent women remained invisible for so long? I have not been able to fully account for the mechanisms in the process of silencing, although I see this as a sign of the complexity in the case that calls for further attention.

The ways in which women's efforts have been overlooked and silenced is related to questions of gender and power. The barring of women from the university was only one instance of a gendered power relation, based on deeply rooted conceptions of women's lack of intellectual capacities. Women in general were confined to the private realm. Given the historical context and women's conditions in the late 19th century in a modernised Norway, upper class women gradually entered new positions in the public realm, from which they articulated professional aims on their own terms, although their motivations and knowledge claims differed from those of men. As we have seen, this is highly relevant in regard to the early development of professional social work. Viewed from one perspective the early social workers may be considered to be in victim positions, but from a different angle we should rather acknowledge the way they virtually acted as independent subjects transgressing their 'natural' confinements.

Acker (1992) reminds us that because people's mode of thought in a particular society (in this case Western) is formed within the same overarching power structures, these very same power structures and their influence on society often become concealed to ourselves as they because of their overarching status are taken for granted or seen as normal – even for the most critical feminists. Uncovering gender issues and making them visible necessitates a reinterpretation of conventional theorizing. Such research will result in a deeper understanding of both women and men's lives and how specific gender regimes are reflected in the theories on what has come to be labelled as a profession.

The old concepts of the professions are contested and rightly so. Still, Brante's (2012) recent vigorous defence of the old-fashioned 'scientific truth systems', serves as a reminder that the golden days of the masculine theories and visions are not yet gone. The field demands new, updated and fresh perspectives. This study illustrates that the gender question in the theories of professions matters and also that gendering processes and transformations deserve a much closer examination than they have been subjected to so far. We need studies that take both men and women's lives into account. New and gendered approaches may move the women's classical professional work from the margins to a more central position that may expand our knowledge horizon in unexpected ways.

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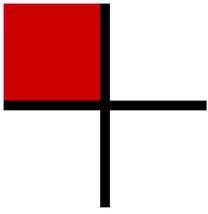
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The discursive construction of professionalism: An episteme of the 21st century*

Kiely Flanigan Adams

abstract

Constructions of professionalism in the 21st century extend beyond traditional, structural analyses of historic divisions of labor. In exploring the changing nature of occupations and the limitations of previous analyses of professions, a more robust conceptualization of discourse is needed to account for a plurality and contingency of meaning articulations and subject positions. In this article, I argue that professionalism functions as a Foucauldian episteme because its diverse articulations cut across institutions and define the rules for that which is considered legitimate knowledge in the 21st century. Building on Cheney and Ashcraft's (2007: 146) framework of professionalism as a 'complex interplay of symbolism and materiality in the domains of interaction and artifacts surrounding "the professional"', this study contributes an understanding of how the professionalism episteme organizes a changing set of discursive articulations and the constitution of new subjectivities. In marginalizing constructions of the 'Other', the professionalism episteme prevents all employees from achieving dignity and meaningfulness at work.

Introduction

[...] all the means by which humanity was meant to have been made moral so far were fundamentally immoral. (Nietzsche, 1998: 36)

I recently heard about a disturbing workplace incident experienced by a student Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA). She had spent the first four months of her clinical residency being verbally harassed, publicly and privately, by a male doctor. These interactions escalated into the doctor physically assaulting her during the wrap-up of a non-life threatening procedure – twice. Once, he walked around the patient gurney and came up behind the student, took her by the shoulders and forcibly maneuvered her towards the door. The second time, he reached across the patient to push her hand, while verbally

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harassing her. The student, in a calm voice, asked the doctor not to touch her. He became agitated and started screaming at her to leave the room. The student asked the doctor not to speak to her in that way. This only agitated him more. After asking her supervising CRNA, a passive witness to these and other transgressions on the part of this doctor, for permission to leave the situation, the student filed a formal written complaint. Despite the fact that the doctor had been counselled previously on inappropriate interactions with another female student CRNA, the doctor only received another proverbial slap on the wrist. The student, however, was counselled about being 'more professional'. Her supervisors lectured her – saying, as a student CRNA, there were certain things she needed to learn to tolerate and that the most important thing to remember was that the professional thing to have done was to stay in the room no matter what was going on.

The situation is more complicated than I am suggesting in this brief vignette. But the point I am trying to make through this narrative is that professionalism, for all the ways in which it is invoked with positivity, also hides processes of marginalization. In this particular case, the construction of professionalism reifies power/knowledge differentials, which privilege the man, the doctor, the instructor – a certain authority – and masks the subordination of the woman, the nurse, the student – the 'Other'. In the name of professionalism, as it is constructed in this particular workplace, the student has limited recourse to address the indignity and powerlessness experienced in that situation. This is what concerns me about professionalism. Professionalism disciplines in ways that make the work environment presumably more pleasant, such as by minimizing conflict, limiting emotional expression, enforcing dress codes, ordering work relationships, encouraging proficiency and knowledge, and instilling autonomy and responsibility. Yet professionalism simultaneously serves to obscure and silence a variety of gender, occupation/profession, skill, race and class inequalities, raising concerns about for whom and to what ends professionalism serves.

Given its pervasiveness and taken-for-granted nature, professionalism warrants renewed attention and theorization. This essay argues for an understanding of professionalism in terms of Foucault's notion of the episteme. Such a move recasts professionalism as a field of knowledge constituted through a set of discursive practices and formations, and which cuts across institutions to shape and reify a particular way of knowing the world. Theorizing professionalism as episteme enables deconstruction of embedded assumptions about professionalism, thereby revealing politically implicated linkages with problematic effects within and beyond the workplace. In order to reveal these connections, an analysis of professionalism must introduce an element of pluralism. It is no longer sufficient to look at professionalism as a unified construct with an implied objective status, as some traditional sociological analyses have employed (e.g. Abbott, 1988; Brint, 1994; Freidson, 2001; Wilensky, 1964) because articulations of professionalism have colonized non-occupational domains. Departing from existing work that sees professionalism as tied to specific applications, such as occupational closure or organizational discipline, this paper develops an account of professionalism that better recognizes its proliferation into the realm of the everyday.

Instead of looking at professionalism as a set of practices, a type of expertise or a disciplinary mechanism, professionalism as episteme enables us to analyze professionalism as a broad, dispersed discursive formation – an epistemological configuration. As Larson (1990: 32) suggested, ‘a theory of professions should be centrally concerned with the conditions under which knowledge is produced and applied in ways that make a difference for the life of others’. As the professionalism episteme structures the conditions of possibility of knowledge, it functions as a logic with specific material effects. These effects include the ways in which work-related identities and relationships are formed, shaped and maintained. Identities are central to how employees find meaning and dignity at work and home. Therefore, my intention with this conceptualization of the professionalism episteme is to provoke critical organizational critique that challenges taken-for-granted articulations of professionalism by showcasing the proliferation of professionalism into non-occupational domains, as well as the privileging of particular professional subjectivities.

This article begins by exploring the relationship between work, occupations and professions. Then, in addressing the limitations of traditional sociological analyses of the professions, I argue for a more comprehensive discursive approach to studying professionalism. In order to point to the complexity of issues and concepts tied to the varied invocations of professionalism, I use Foucault’s conceptualization of episteme to highlight two discursive transformations distinctive to the 21st century: (1) the professionalism episteme incites and coordinates new, varied discursive articulations outside the purview of occupations and (2) the professionalism episteme locates and privileges particular subjectivities. After presenting professionalism as episteme, I suggest this theorization warrants additional attention, specifically in relation to its marginalization of alternative ways of experiencing work and life.

Professions, occupations and work

A critical unit of organizational structure in both for-profit and non-profit organizations, occupations play an important role in defining life at work. More specifically, ‘occupations are cultural constructions based on structural realities of jobs having wide societal relevance’ (Kalleberg and Berg, 1987: 36). Most jobs center around a set of defined tasks and activities. As such, occupations are a way to aggregate like-minded job activities into categories spanning different organizations and industries.

Professions usually are understood as occupations with special status as experts and/or moral authorities (e.g. doctors, lawyers), often as a result of extensive education, training and licensing. The related concept of professionalism, both as a professionalization project and as a behavioral expectation, is a mimetic response – an attempt by individuals, occupations and organizations to replicate the social, moral and political power of established professions. A key goal for occupations attempting to professionalize business operations is social closure. Many occupations take steps, including garnering state support, to delineate and control unique occupational jurisdictions (Abbott, 1988). Macdonald

(1995: 29), for example, describes the process of social closure in the following manner: ‘the occupation and its organization attempts to close access to the occupation, to its knowledge, to its education, training and credentials and to its markets in services and jobs; only “eligibles” will be admitted’. Through these efforts to professionalize and achieve social closure, professions and occupations become analytical categories for researching and discussing social and structural divisions of labor.

There is an extensive body of sociological research on the occupational division of labor. In some cases, research has taken structural approaches. These studies relate professions to traits (Brint, 1994; Lammers and Garcia, 2009; Wilensky, 1964), societal functions (Begun, 1986), American culture (Bledstein, 1976) and power (Freidson, 2007). In other cases, research takes various process orientations. These studies look at the professionalization of occupations through particular steps (Larson, 1977; MacDonald, 1995; Wilensky, 1964), as well as through spheres of jurisdictional competition (Abbott, 1988). Yet these perspectives of occupational status and change are not wholly satisfying because they narrowly relegate professionalism within discrete occupational categories. Contemporary forms of work point to a complexity that cannot be captured in structure- and process-centered accounts.

Since the early 1970s, the nature of work and employment relations has become increasingly characterized as contingent, flexible, mobile, and heavily tied to global information and communication technologies. Prevalent neoliberal discourses privilege market-driven approaches, reduced governmental protections, and individualistic cultural values. Importantly, these changes shift risks from organizations to employees (Kalleberg, 2011). There is an increasing precarity experienced in both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ jobs in contemporary organizations, characterized by fewer worker protections such as unions and no implicit employment contracts (*ibid.*). Individuals whose employment is at the mercy of another individual, including professionals, executives, bosses and managers, are subject to increased insecurity and powerlessness in the postmodern employment relationship. Conditions of precarity are important for understanding professionalism as episteme because, as Fournier (1999: 281) points out, ‘the appeal to professionalism is one of the strategies that is deployed to control the increasing margin of indeterminacy or flexibility in work’. Overall, these combined changes in the nature of employment relations have implications for methodological approaches to work and occupations.

The changing nature of work in postmodernity corrodes standard understandings of occupational divisions. In a knowledge economy, specialized knowledge becomes the domain of everyone, which may suggest a new permeability in occupational categories. One perspective suggests, ‘occupations remain task-based mechanisms for dividing labor; however, there may be several ways to allocate task sets among jobs and workers and, accordingly, many occupational forms of work control’ (Damarin, 2006: 458). The flexibility and mobility of the postmodern period eventually may render occupational divisions of labor more fluid, dynamic and potentially irrelevant. Indeed, ‘occupational structures serve a defining function that tends to be backward-looking, reflecting what existed in the past, rather than forward-looking, reflecting trends in the changing

organization of work' (Committee on Techniques for the Enhancement of Human Performance, 1999: 166). These changes in the structure of work present an opportunity to look at jobs and occupations in more dynamic ways, beyond unified categorizations. Discursive analyses are well suited to answer this call.

Discursive analysis

Several researchers identified productive linkages between discourse and occupational professionalization by drawing attention to the use of professionalism as a disciplinary mechanism for socializing employees within strategically crafted occupational identities. Four examples illustrate this perspective. First, Fournier's (1999) work proposes that professionalism acts as a way to control employee conduct and is an important element of new occupational groups' identity formation. Such localized discursive constructions of professionalism highlight specific interactions and negotiations shaping professional identities. Similarly, Anderson-Gough et al. (1998: 1) examine the socialization of trainee accountants and find that 'part of being a professional person involves a "regulation of the self" in terms of the articulation of a professional discourse, the following of formal and informal norms of conduct'. In a third example, Larson (1993: 6), who also employs a Foucauldian discursive analysis in her work on architectural change, finds that 'elite standing depends on the perceived discursive capacity of particular producers in specialized areas of the production of culture'. Lastly, several researchers (Grey, 1997; Kipping, 2011; McKenna, 2006) found the use of jargon a key part of the professionalization process for management consultants, particularly in claims of expertise to clients.

While these discursive accounts make an important intervention into traditional research centered on structure and process, they tend to construct professionalism as a tool that can be wielded for organizational/occupational means. Discourse can be conceptualized in more robust ways and integrated within broader systems of meanings and messages. Organizational research points to a need for 'deeper analysis of how such broader symbolic meaning systems systematically structure localized practices and identities, as well as how such ground-level translations and performances contribute to the editing and reformulation of broader cultural ideas and discourse in more interactive and recursive ways' (Lounsbury, 2007: 302). Given current cultural articulations, it is important to consider how professionalism as a broader assemblage of seemingly unrelated concepts structures the way we understand the world. Departing from a view of professionalism as a particular discourse or a specific discursive resource, as some studies suggest, this article positions the episteme as a more robust conceptualization for critiquing the pervasiveness of professionalism structuring work and life in taken-for-granted, everyday ways.

Organizational communication research offers one such avenue for reconfiguring the discourse of professionalism. In a critical examination of discursive articulations and

ambiguities surrounding professionalism from a communication perspective, Cheney and Ashcraft (2007: 157) call for:

a return to the more robust notion of discourse advanced by Foucault, which allows for the consideration of bodies, adornments, and architecture (among other things) within the range of associations and manifestations of discourse as an arena of knowledge, interaction, and control. At this broad level, discourse refers to assemblages, contexts, and movements of symbols and artifacts that come to cohere around a certain defining idea, principle, or relationship.

Adopting this theorization of discourse emphasizes the plurality and contingency of meaning construction. This viewpoint opens the possibility of exploring the question, ‘how is it that professionalism has come to exist as a particular configuration of practices, knowledge and discourse?’ This type of Foucauldian discursive analysis is different from previous sociological discursive work on the professions. Instead of seeing discourse as a tool that can be strategically wielded, this approach recognizes discourse’s ability to constitute the world as we know it. More specifically, a Foucauldian episteme is a helpful theoretical construct in thinking about the varied and broad nature of professionalism because it is a gathering space of seemingly unrelated articulations. With the permeation of professionalism into non-occupational domains, it becomes clear that the notion of professionalism requires a broader discursive formulation for understanding its material effects inside and outside of occupational categories. The epistemological work of the Foucauldian episteme is further elaborated in the following section.

Foucault’s episteme

As deployed in two of Foucault’s works, *The archaeology of knowledge* (1972) and *The order of things* (1973), an episteme is a unique gathering of various, dispersed discursive formations under a large, shape-shifting umbrella. These discursive formations mutate, change, shift and are displaced but retain a shared correlation to the organizing epistemic framework, thus constituting the knowledge, objects and practices of a particular historical period. In Foucault’s (1972: 191-192) words, an episteme is:

a constantly moving set of articulations, shifts, and coincidences that are established, only to give rise to others [...] The episteme makes it possible to grasp the set of constraints and limitations which, at a given moment, are imposed on discourse [...] in the enigma of scientific discourse, what the analysis of the episteme questions is not its right to be a science, but the fact that it exists.

Through the mobilization of discourses and practices, the episteme constitutes particular boundaries, which often go unchallenged. Accordingly, an episteme defines what is sayable, what is knowable, what is included, and what is excluded from possibility within a particular epoch.

Foucault (*ibid.*) examined the concept of episteme in *The archaeology of knowledge*, a methodological approach to understanding the formation of disciplinary discourses shaping society. ‘In this *archaeological history*, what one is trying to uncover are discursive practices in so far as they give rise to a corpus of knowledge, in so far as they assume the status and role of science’ (*ibid.*: 190, emphasis in original). Foucault (1973) also engages with the notion of episteme in *The order of things*. Here, discourse analysis plays a key role in Foucault’s archaeological methodology. ‘The fundamental codes of a particular cultural epoch that govern its language, schemas, values, techniques, and hierarchies of practices are often hidden from the view of those who are engrossed in their everyday activities’ (O’Leary and Chia, 2007: 394-395). These codes become visible when linkages are identified across discursive practices, which highlight the existence and boundaries of knowledge within a particular time period. Foucault takes on three epochs, Renaissance, Classical and Modern, in order to reveal epistemic codes. The Renaissance period is governed by an episteme of resemblance, the Classical period by an episteme of classification and the Modern period by an episteme of interpretation (Foucault, 1973; O’Leary and Chia, 2007). Through *The order of things*, we are given examples of how an episteme focuses our attention on certain ways of knowing the world – thus, marginalizing ‘Other’ knowledges. Multiple, competing and overlapping epistemes are present at any one historical point in time. Thus, professionalism is one of many epistemes operating in the 21st century.

The professionalism episteme

Approaching professionalism discursively relies upon particular historical and cultural contingencies. Because of these contingencies, it is not important to define professionalism *per se*. Foucault cautions against seeking covert meanings and, instead, focuses on exteriority. Through the archaeological concept of exteriority, ‘Foucault encouraged the critic to think about the possible mode of thought that would lead to and/or fix the boundary conditions for a particular statement or set of statements’ (Blair, 1987: 370). How do discursive relationships come to exist? How does a particular set of relationships come to define, regulate and perpetuate certain practices and knowledges? For, it is ‘at the limit of discourse’ that discursive relations

determine the group of relations that discourse must establish in order to speak of this or that object, in order to deal with them, name them, analyse them, classify them, explain them, etc. These relations characterize not the language (*langue*) used by discourse, nor the circumstances in which it is deployed, but discourse itself as a practice. (Foucault, 1972: 46)

Professionalism is an episteme because its diverse articulations cut across institutions and define the rules for that which is considered legitimate knowledge. The term is no longer the domain of professions, of professionals. Its pervasiveness saturates the workplace and now pervades culture, mass media, economy, politics and family. As a field limiting conditions of possibility, the professionalism episteme gives rise to particular subject positions. In essence, professionalism circulates within and between shifting relationships

with various articulations of language, context, knowledge, practice and subjectivity. These discursive articulations come together as ‘a simultaneous play of specific remanences’ (Foucault, 1991: 55).

In the following sections, I highlight two discursive transformations distinctive to professionalism in the 21st century. To complement and build upon dominant sociological work on the professions, I draw primarily from a selection of organizational communication, management studies, sociology and anthropology scholarship relating to professionalism. I intentionally selected an eclectic set of examples in order to begin building themes and identifying trends indicative of the varied and pervasive ground the professionalism episteme covers. This is consistent with the spirit of Foucault’s (1972) conceptualization of the episteme in that it reflects the non-linear, seemingly unrelated patchwork of articulations the episteme stitches together.

Changing set of discursive articulations

As an episteme, professionalism organizes a diverse set of changing articulations. Professionalism has displaced the traditional, functional boundaries of early sociological work on professions. That is to say, professionalism is no longer strictly tied to work and occupations. The rules for what is considered professional are shifting, as demonstrated by the plurality of the following articulations coming together in the name of professionalism. Examples of the prevalence of professionalism outside the bounds of occupations include professionalism’s connections to ideology, popular culture, entrepreneurialism and family.

Larson (1977: xviii, emphasis in original) analyzes the development of professionals and notes that ‘the persistence as a category of social practice suggests that the model constituted by the first movements of professionalization has become *an ideology* – not only an image which consciously inspires collective or individual efforts, but a mystification which unconsciously obscures real social structures and relations’. However, Foucault would be quick to point out the problematic use of an unconscious ideology (see Mumby, 1992). As one of the ‘universal skeleton-keys’ (Foucault, 1980: 118), ideology is often appropriated and invoked in slapdash, negative ways. More specifically, Foucault (*ibid.*) takes the perspective that ideology

always stands in virtual opposition to something else which is supposed to count as truth [...] it refers to an order of a subject [...] ideology stands in a secondary position relative to something which functions as its infrastructure, as its material, economic determinant, etc.

The use of episteme differs from the use of ideology in that it is positive (not repressive), robust (goes beyond traditional analyses) and productive (challenges taken-for-grantedness) and avoids assigning valence (avoids truth claims) (*ibid.*). In comparison, lurking behind ideology is often ‘the nostalgia for a quasi-transparent form of knowledge, free from all error and illusion’ (*ibid.*: 117-118). Despite the knottiness of Larson’s use of ideology, her work points to the reification of professionalism as a set of practices and knowledge – and also gives the opportunity to explore the differences between an episteme and ideology.

Contemporary popular culture shapes assumptions about professionalism. Television shows like Donald Trump's, *The Apprentice* (see Kinnick and Parton, 2005), and Mark Burnett's *Survivor* (see Thackaberry, 2003) counsel audiences about professional competencies in the corporate world (Cheney and Ashcraft, 2007). Popular press autobiographies of social entrepreneurs provide anticipatory socialization of nonprofit professionalism (Dempsey and Sanders, 2010). Professionalism now also makes an appearance in the gaming world. For example, Nintendo DS, Wii, and other video gaming platforms offer software such as 'The Personal Trainer' or 'My Coach' series, which promise to teach players how to cook or exercise like a professional. Television advertisements for GMC cars and trucks emphasize their 'professional grade', bringing the discourse of professionalism into product engineering and marketing. In each of these ways, popular culture strengthens the articulation of professionalism in terms of neoliberal consumerism.

A third set of discursive articulations of professionalism center on entrepreneurialism. Professionalism in the information age relies heavily upon notions of entrepreneurialism (Hanlon, 1998) and an enterprising spirit (Du Gay, 1996; Rose, 1990). One such study suggests competing logics related to professionalism contribute to the emergence of organizational spin-offs (Lounsbury, 2007). In another study, Scott (2008: 232) observes, 'the emergence of a collection of business-oriented professionals connects to another structural vocabulary: an emphasis on privatization, the ascendance of for-profit enterprises, and the increasing reliance on market controls and managerial mechanisms'. Market-driven economic articulations are heavily implicated politically. For example, Ngai (2005) examines capitalist forces, state socialist power and the local patriarchal culture to make an argument about the gendered resistance and agency of a Chinese peasantry social revolution. In the introduction, Ngai (*ibid.*: 11, emphasis added) makes an explicit reference to a discourse of professionalism shaping the contemporary Chinese economy:

Restructuring class structures and relationships is a contemporary project for capital and the newly emerged elites in Chinese society. And yet the subsumption of class analysis in order to hide class positions and social privileges is their political strategy. The language of class is subsumed so as to clear the way for a neoliberal economic discourse that emphasizes individualism, *professionalism*, equal opportunities, and the open market.

Ngai's example adds an interesting nuance to the discussion of professionalism because it moves discourses of professionalism outside of organizational and popular culture contexts and into discursive assemblages related to class, patriarchy and gender. The articulation of professionalism in the Ngai example suggests broader discursive themes and contexts the episteme engenders. The notion of professionalism existing as a condition of possibility in Ngai's work is indicative of how the professionalism episteme brings together a set of seemingly unrelated relations – discursive articulations of professionalism not seen before in sociological analyses.

As a final example of changing articulations the professionalism episteme informs, we can look at family. Although professionalism contributes to the idea of an ideal worker, this notion rarely includes reproductive labor, including child bearing and rearing. Yet,

professionalism, as a set of epistemic competencies and knowledges, extends into realms traditionally situated outside the purview of sociological definitions of white-collar professional work. There are normative expectations for parents to educate themselves through reliance upon the expertise of childbirth doulas (for the growing professionalization of doulas, see Lantz, Low, Varkey and Watson, 2005) and child development experts, and yet, parents are expected to embody a certain professional comportment as role models for their children. And for those parents choosing to stay at home to rear their children for an extended period of time, there are resumé-writing resources to assist in translating reproductive labor into more professional discourse. ‘Stay at home mom’ becomes ‘household manager’ (for an analysis of bringing household activities into labor market discourses, see Duffy, 2007). Additionally, a host of professionalized services have emerged to help make home life more professional. Yard services, organization experts, feng-shui consultants, birthday party planners and certified nannies are all at a family’s disposal to assist in the production and management of a professional, efficient family. In these articulations of professionalism, public/private and work/life dichotomies are blurred. As a result, discourses of professionalism previously relegated to the workplace now play a primary role in family and home life.

As these examples illustrate, the professionalism episteme shifts the boundaries of our understandings of professionalism beyond occupational divisions of labor and professionalization projects. Professionalism is now implicated in ideology, popular culture, entrepreneurialism, and family – to name only the representative examples discussed thus far. Through these diverse discursive articulations of professionalism, particular subjectivities are formed.

The constitution of new subjectivities

While this argument of professionalism as episteme adds an interesting nuance to existing research on the professions by establishing its discursive plurality and contingency, it also points to a potential brutality because in defining the conditions of possibility for what is knowable and sayable, the episteme also defines human subjectivity. In its organization and influence of what counts as legitimate knowledge, the professionalism episteme marginalizes the ‘Other’. Otherness appears in many forms, but here I focus on how the professionalism episteme situates workers within particular subjectivities; it provides certain self-orientations. Future work on the professionalism episteme might look at how the professionalism episteme marginalizes the unemployed as a non-subject in contemporary society. To clarify, the problem is not with the existence of multiple, competing subjectivities, as subjectivities are ‘ambiguous, fragmented, discontinuous, [and] non-rational’ (Collinson, 2003: 534). The problem I see is that we often do not recognize these subjectivities as implicated within broader networks of knowledge/power and politics related to professionalism. As a result, professionalism can marginalize collectives of people – sometimes quietly, sometimes overtly, sometimes unknowingly – in ways that enforce and reinforce neoliberal discourses of obedient, entrepreneurial workers. Through various knowledge/power configurations of the professionalism episteme, the professional

subjectivity is made manifest. Based on the illustrative themes and trends I have identified thus far within the professionalism episteme, I point to five varied, yet related, subjectivities the professionalism episteme makes possible: the commodified professional, the embodied professional, the performative professional, the for-profit professional, and the archived professional.

An example of a subjectivity circulating within the professionalism episteme is the commodified self. In this subjectivity, an individual sees her/himself as a brand to be created, molded and sold. It is intimately linked to organizational and occupational expectations and governance. While the crafting of a commodified professional identity can be pleasurable (see Freeman, 2000; Nadeem, 2011), it can become problematic when that identity is co-opted for organizational means. The problem with this kind of subjectivity is that personal success is associated with self-packaging and branding, rather than a particular skill set or specialized knowledge (Lair, Sullivan, and Cheney, 2005). In developing a personal brand of 'professional', individuals model themselves based on normative expectations of how professionals dress, style hair, arrange space, select office décor, and so forth. Importantly, some individuals can be branded easily, while others will have more difficulty (*ibid.*). Neoliberal discourses of consumerism and professionalism influence that which is marketable. As such, gender, race, class, sexuality and age affect an individual's capacity for personal branding based on taken-for-granted, socially constructed depictions of the professional as a white, middle-aged, heterosexual man.

A second subjectivity professionalism engenders is the embodied self. This subjectivity centers on a particular disciplined body. Here, professionalism discourses code bodies in specific ways (see Wolkowitz, 2006). For example, Rumens and Kerfoot (2009) studied constructions of professionalism from the perspective of professional gay men. That which defines the professional appearance is not limited to clothing – 'the body outline itself may be (re)sculpted in response to the take up of potential subject positions and identities coded in professionalism' (*ibid.*: 780). As an example, 'Douglas (paramedic) talked about how his "toned" and "angular" body shape projected a "straight acting" version of masculinity' (*ibid.*). In a different study related to female professional bodies, Holmer-Nadesan and Trethewey (2000: 240) found that 'good eye contact, a firm handshake, an upright (not uptight) posture, and paralinguistic markers are all external indicators of internalized control and an aestheticized, masculinized professionalism'. The authors also found that body fitness and avoidance of emotional outbursts were measures of professionalism. The body, in these studies, is the site of a professional subjectivity, which marginalizes the queer and the feminine.

Another example of new subjectivities emerging in the wake of the professionalism episteme is the performative self. This subjectivity fosters mimetic performances of professionalism. Nadeem's (2011) research in Indian call centers reveals the problematic social and political effects of the outsourcing movement. Professional identities constructed within the emerging IT industry have led to cultural self-alienation and emotional labor (e.g. forced accent neutralization, identity shifting, location masking). In teaching mimetic

performances of Western professionalism, corporate trainers encourage call center workers to make up Western names and to avoid using local inflections. As such, local Indian culture, speech patterns and cultural practices are marginalized as ‘Other’. Workers in Nadeem’s study have little choice in their work subjectivity – they must perform the Western professional.

A fourth subjectivity example is the for-profit professional. For Meisenbach (2008), the professionalism episteme manifests a sector-bias, in which for-profit orientations are dominant. Meisenbach (*ibid.*: 281) argues of her research that ‘the results show fundraisers encountering impressions that it is not okay for them to seek the same sort of personal advancement that is expected in dominant (for-profit) conceptualizations of professionalism’. Professionalism privileges for-profit orientations and subjectivities. Yet when these discourses of professionalism are juxtaposed with notions of philanthropic organizational objectives, tensions arise. In this case, non-profit professionals experience normative expectations to marginalize self-interest and promotion in the name of professionalism. This is at odds with conventional associations of self-promotion, as seen in the commodified professional. This draws attention to the dichotomy of for-profit and non-profit discourses of professionalism that exist in practice and are often overlooked in organizational research.

A final subjectivity I would like to introduce is the archived professional. An archive is not limited to texts, but also includes the breath and depth of discursive fields of articulation, including material manifestations like the human body and associated subjectivity positions (Foucault, 1972). I argue that the memory of ‘being professional’ lives on as an archived subjectivity long after leaving a particular job. The professional, as a general mode of subjectivity, marks the body and social memory in material ways. What is at stake when the professional retires, switches careers or gets fired? The resilient nature of the archived professional is demonstrated in Dempsey and Sanders’ (2010) analysis of social entrepreneur autobiographies. The circulation and perpetuation of discourses of what it means to be professional in the nonprofit sector contributed to particular archived depictions of the nonprofit professional. As the authors note, founders John Wood from *Room to Read* and Greg Mortensen from the Central Asia Institute both experienced difficulty embarking upon their social entrepreneurship projects, in part because of a well-established professional identity in previous organizational contexts. Wood and Mortensen’s initiation of their social projects ‘only occurs after significant reflection about the risks such a move might have on their sense of self-identity, as well as the consideration of how others might judge them’ (*ibid.*: 446). The professional identity is one that is socialized, normalized and resistant to change. Stoler (2009: 39) calls this kind of developed archival knowledge ‘epistemic habits – steeped in history and historical practices, ways of knowing that are available and “easy to think”, called-upon, temporarily settled dispositions that can be challenged and that change’. There is a need to assess the effects – personally, professionally, socially, politically – of an archived professional subjectivity that remains intact after the individual is no longer a member of the organizational context in which the professional identity was constituted.

Taken together, these examples of subjectivities engendered by the professionalism episteme point to the vast terrain in which professionalism operates. The professionalism episteme cultivates these subjectivities in a way that blurs and extends beyond occupational categorization. The commodified, embodied, performative, for-profit and archived professionals are particular self-orientations, which exist through the marginalization of various 'Others'. This is a perspective and insight that cannot be captured by structural and process-oriented approaches to professionalism. The discursive effects of the professionalism episteme normalize and discipline in such a manner as to stamp out dissent, conflict, diversity of thought and diversity of people. Certain subjectivities are privileged and others are marginalized. This limits opportunities for truly democratic organization, interaction, collaboration and living in our world today. Additional research is needed to explore the field of the professionalism episteme in which these, and other, subjectivities are created, circulated and maintained.

Concluding discussion

The discursive transformation of professionalism beyond traditional analytical categorizations of occupational professionalization projects is evident through new and varied articulations and subjectivities. Professionalism fundamentally has shifted how we think about work and life in today's society. The examples identified throughout this article, while contextually diverse, are correlated. There is a scattered arrangement of discursive 'mutations' (Foucault, 1991: 57) – all directed by the higher-order guiding principle of professionalism. Thus, the professionalism episteme has enabled us to identify and disarticulate some of the taken-for-granted linkages. Beyond occupational domains, professionalism extends into the realms of ideology, popular culture, entrepreneurialism, and family. Through these varied articulations, particular subjectivities are rendered natural and unproblematic, yet research suggests professional subjectivities privilege enterprising performances of white heterosexual masculinity. Although professionalism is often invoked in positive ways, a major contribution of this article is to present an alternative way of thinking about professionalism that demonstrates the colonization of professionalism into non-occupational domains and the insidious structuring of commodified subjectivities.

To reiterate, the professionalism episteme organizes the contingent and seemingly unrelated discursive articulations of professionalism into a field of knowledge that shapes what is knowable and sayable during the 21st century. As such, organizational studies are enabled to take a more critical look at the political effects of invocations of professionalism because it is no longer fixed as a static category of workplace attributes, behaviors, skills or values. Professionalism is a product of broader discursive articulations, which privilege certain voices, bodies, experiences, work and ways of knowing over others. This marginalization often serves particular organizational and occupational interests. The implications of this argument affect methodological approaches for future work on professionalism.

The professionalism episteme underscores the generative role of communication in building upon sociological frameworks of professions – giving attention to representational meaning construction, both material and symbolic. From the examples identified in this article, discourse bridges both macro- and micro-level manifestations of professionalism. A discursive approach to professionalism delivers a more robust analytic for organizational critique of the pervasiveness of professionalism structuring work and life. This opens up opportunities for a wide array of interdisciplinary studies for both theory and praxis orientations. As the professionalism episteme permeates occupational boundaries and traditional constructions of expert labor, how might organization, communication and sociology scholars partner to explore the shifting discursive articulations of professionalism using cultural, occupational, organizational and individual levels of analysis? Future studies of professionalism must examine all of these levels for more robust understandings of the effects of professionalism more broadly. The professionalism episteme offers a conceptual foundation for such analyses.

Importantly, the professionalism episteme is an ongoing project. There is no linear progression to a next stage of research. I have identified the shift from professionalism tied to organizational/occupational usages into a broader epistemological configuration – signaling the spread of professionalism into the everyday and non-occupational domains. However, the professionalism episteme presents an interesting way of thinking about organizational studies. By setting the boundaries for how we live and understand our world, the professionalism episteme generates many questions that hold promise for future research. What are alternative ways of organizing currently marginalized by the professionalism episteme? Is it possible to rearticulate professionalism with what might be considered radical ideals: love, compassion, dignity, respect, diversity and conflict? As epistemes are historically and contextually grounded, what will displace professionalism as a guiding principle for work and life in the next era? How can we re-imagine a world in which good, stable jobs, available and accessible by all, are infused with dignity and meaningfulness?

To close, this article establishes a foundational analytic for exploring these and other questions related to professionalism. Continual critique and questioning of the taken-for-granted usages of professionalism offer hope for opening up opportunities for more dignity and meaningfulness for people, particularly within the context of work. In thinking back to the opening vignette of the CRNA, how do the variety of power/knowledge differentials that cohere around notions of professionalism mask the subordination of ‘Others’, while simultaneously undermining chances for respectful employment relations for all people? By further exploring the episteme of professionalism and its effects and implications, scholars will disrupt the piety surrounding professionalism as it stands today. This will cultivate new possibilities of a world in which work does not come first – people come first.

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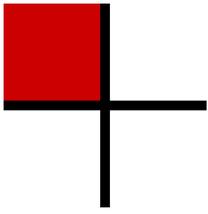
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Indier than thou: On creative professions, chefs, and the sacralization of margins

Alf Rehn

Soundly situated in obscurityland,
famous in inverse proportion to how cool I am,
and should I ever garner triple-digit fans
you can tell me then there's someone I ain't indier than.

– MC Frontalot, 'Indier Than Thou'

Introduction

The notion of professions and professionalism often assumes a hierarchy of achievement, even a meritocracy (Abbott, 1998; Derber et al., 1990), where the true professionals will rise and the mediocre will at best occupy a vague middle position. For instance, the best oncologist is assumed to be one that all in the business know of, and also one that is most likely to be known by the outside world. Even though we rarely state things so bluntly, the best professionals – the most professional ones of all – are meant to occupy the tip of the pyramid and be the exemplars against which all others are measured. Such a perspective of professionalism, one of pure and generally accepted meritocracy, has as its core the notion that professions can be objectively assessed, regardless of whether this assessment is internal (i.e. done by fellow professionals) or external (i.e. done by laymen, customers or the interested public).

This, however, assumes that the criteria through which professionalism is measured would be homogenous across the internal/external divide in a profession, that these can be understood in at least a quasi-objective fashion, and that positions of centrality, optima and marginality can be meaningfully negotiated between these fields. In any number of professions such an assumption will hold true, to the point of being trivial. For instance, a lawyer that loses cases rather than winning them will be seen by both peers and clients as less of a professional than one who tends to win them. Professionalism in medicine would

dictate that an oncologist who saves many patients is a better doctor than one who does not, and so on. Even though there are cases that go against this – a lawyer may well specialize in hard-to-win cases and few laymen know exactly what makes a pathologist ‘good’ – there often exists an assumption that we can state with some degree of certainty how good a person is at his/her chosen profession, i.e. just how much of a professional they are.

In fact, one could argue that the normal way in which professions are discussed builds on such implicit assumptions. Phenomena such as professional association tests and certifications work from the notion that there is a clear body of knowledge that defines a profession, and thus that the better one is at mastering this body, the more obviously one is a professional. However, this perspective ignores both the possibility of resistance against such norms (Ashcraft, 2005; Achinstein and Ogawa, 2006) and the potential for multiple interpretations of the same. Somewhat differently put, an extended understanding of professionalism would demand not only understanding how professionalism is established internally and legitimized externally, but also how varied perspectives on professionalism and the apex of the same can be negotiated in the internal discourse of a profession.

It is this latter issue that this research note addresses. Rather than professing (*sic*) an interest in the manner in which professionalism is negotiated *in general*, the note instead looks to the much more special case of how success in a profession can be seen as a flaw and a breach of professionalism, and how a marginal position can become sacralized in relation to such a perceived breach. Even more specifically, this note addresses how occupying a marginal position becomes an important sign of ‘real’ professionalism in the field of high-level gastronomy, particularly in the image- and identity-work of chefs, based on an ongoing research project in which I’m studying chefs working in world-class restaurants. I will in this note argue that this case shows the need for understanding marginal categories in professions in a more multi-faceted way, and further that the notion of ‘being indie’ can be utilized to do so.

Being Indie

The term ‘indie’ comes from the world of music, and denotes that a band is ‘independent’. Originally coined for bands that chose either to forego a record contract or to sign up with an independent label rather than with one of the big record companies for fear of becoming creatively neutered, the term has been co-opted in a number of different contexts. If indie music was music that was freed from the format and template thinking of the major labels, and thus at least theoretically more creative and free, similar sensibilities obviously exist in most creative industries. Today one can talk of indie gaming, indie fashion and indie film, and these only represent the more established forms of being independent. In wrestling, there are several independent circuits, brewing and soft-drink aficionados talk of indie beer and indie soda and there is a burgeoning indie porn scene.

The logic of indie is founded on there being something to be independent from. Looking to the development of the notion in the field of music, we can see that the key element was the exceptional market control wielded by the major music labels in the 1950s onwards. With a near monopoly on both retail and media space, labels such as EMI or Warner Music Group have a history of using their corporate coffers to effectively shut out non-affiliated artists and exerting tremendous power over artists who wanted to break commercially. Artists and labels who did not want to conform to this became labeled as ‘independent’, i.e. independent from the demands (and the resources) of the ‘majors’. This established indie as a counter-position to the usual way of doing business, an alternative to corporate interests, and more often than not a moral position in relation to an assumedly reductionistic mainstream. A consequence of this was often the establishment of professional norms that deviated from those adopted by the majors.

As a result, the identity of being indie became a moral one, a way to show that one could be, say, a professional musician without adhering to the norms of the mainstream, even if this often meant accepting a significantly greater business risk (or significantly less chance of large-scale success). Something similar can be seen in other cultural industries. Indie games rarely get the kind of marketing campaigns that major games do, and as a result show significantly smaller profit potential. Indie wrestling is rarely broadcast on TV, and thus seldom enables performers to make lucrative sponsorship agreements or build a movie career. Indie porn, which often uses performers who do not live up to the stereotypical image of porn-stars, sells far less than the products of, for example, Vivid but is often viewed as a worthier form of pornography, particularly as it highlights the reductionism in the field. In all cases, performers and companies in these fields tend to argue that they have chosen to remain small(er), and that they do not even wish for the kind of success that their field’s major actors have achieved.

What this creates, thus, is a kind of bifurcation in the notion of what it means to be an artist, a porn-star, a wrestler, and so on. You can be a major performer, or you can occupy the margin known as indie. The former will build their legitimacy on easily ascertainable measures of success and professionalism, such as sales of records and T-shirts, attendance at shows, and number of media hits. This also enables them to be hierarchically rated, for example by being crowned as the World’s Best-Selling Rap Artist or Best-Known Porn Star. Indie performers will not be able to compete in these kinds of rankings, or show comparable measurements (although some have claimed that social media is evening out the playing field) and thus often turn their relative obscurity and lack of success into badges of honor.

Looking at this from the perspective of professions and professionalism we could talk of a dual structure in how a creative industry views itself. From one vantage point, the one adopted by people affiliated with the major corporations, professionalism is striving for ever-greater sales and attendances. From the other, the vantage point of indie, professionalism is more of a moral category, and can be defined in much more fluid and flexible ways. Here, opting to create, say, a concept album that one knows will never get

any greater radio time may well be proof of one's professionalism and adherence to professional norms. Or, as nerdcore rapper MC Frontalot breaks it down:

I'm so indie that my shirt don't fit.
You wonder out loud, 'Frontalot, yo, why you come so ill-equipped?'
B-b-b-because...uh, being all prepared to get on the mic is selling out
and I ain't even about to relinquish indie clout.

While this represents a well-known fact in the performing arts, I will here argue that this extends to professions assumedly more controlled than rap, wrestling or porn, and that the increasing tendency to ascribe performative and experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) aspects to more and more professions will make indie an increasingly important category for understanding post-industrial professions. As an example of this, I will now turn to the profession of chefs, particularly those involved in high-level gastronomy.

Chefs: Profession and professionalism in the kitchen

From the perspective of studying professions, becoming a chef is something of a cipher. Where doctors, lawyers and accountants need to show formal qualifications and often belong to a professional association, and a number of the 'marginal' professions highlighted in this special issue do not follow such formal paths of certification, chefs represent both/and. One can become a chef by partaking in formal education, for instance at the Culinary Institute of America (see Ruhlman, 1997) or Le Cordon Bleu, and later joining one of the many professional associations, such as the American Culinary Federation or one of the other societies that comprise the World Association of Chefs Societies. The latter also has certification programs, such as the planned WACS Recognition of Culinary Professional Program, through which 'professional chefs can be recognized by WACS for having obtained a certain level of mastery in the field of professional food service and culinary education by documenting their experience and education' (<http://www.wacs2000.org/>).

As should be obvious, this is very much in line with how we normally see professions and advancement in the same. Some chefs take this very seriously, and collect certifications and awards from professional associations as badges of honor. On the other hand, this is only one of the ways in which someone can create a career as a professional chef. A great deal of chefs – including some of the most highly regarded ones – have instead of formal schooling partaken in a less structured but more traditional form of education. This, which might be referred to as an apprenticeship, often starts by an aspiring young wo/man walking into a restaurant – which may or may not be owned by a family member – and simply starting at the bottom of the kitchen hierarchy. Starting out as a kitchen boy/girl, with tasks such as peeling potatoes and washing dishes, the aspiring cook will over time progress to take on more demanding roles, involving working the different stations of the kitchen (such as salads and other cold items, fish, and meat). In some kitchens, one may rise to the level of mastering and thus permanently occupying one such station, and

eventually rising to the level of *sous-chef*, i.e. the position just under the chef of a kitchen – his/her second-in-command. Even though there are cases where one can progress in this manner directly to chef (Ferran Adrià, who many consider the greatest chef of all time, started as a cook at *El Bulli* [later *elBulli*] at 22 years of age and took control of the kitchen 18 months later, but as he is considered something of a demi-god in culinary circles, this is not to be considered normal), the usual way is to do a series of ‘stages’ at other restaurants. For those who wish to become star chefs, this is seen as almost a prerequisite. To work as a *stagiaire* often means to do an unpaid internship at a famous restaurant, and the competition for such spots at the most prestigious ones is fierce. Many do several stages, attempting to learn from each restaurant/chef in turn.

While this system does not bestow any formal accreditation upon the individuals who follow such a path, it is highly regarded in the culinary system – certainly more so than the more formal one. The reasons for this are many. Even though it is by no means easy to gain acceptance into one of the elite schools, it is still far easier than getting to be a *stagiaire* for one of the most famous chefs. Formal education is also seen as easier in itself, seeing as it doesn’t necessarily involve the hectic everyday activities of the professional restaurant. Further, where a formal education legitimizes you as a culinary professional by way of one institution, the system of stages acts a more complex legitimizing function – by having partaken in it, one is made into a legitimate professional both by having passed through a number of well-regarded kitchens, and by having partaken in a system that has been in place for a very long time. Thus, traditional legitimacy is supplanted by something we could call co-branding legitimacy. Having for instance done stages at *Arzak*, *Alain Ducasse at The Dorchester* and *Noma* signals to the larger culinary field that you have a complex set of experience and that you’re prepared to do hard work to get ahead, both things that are valued greatly by other chefs. While no-one, and certainly no chef that I’ve interviewed, would state that all forms of formal education are worthless, the overall view is that the older, less formal system is preferable and even mandatory for those wishing to make their mark on the field.

If you want to become a cook, certainly do not fall for one of these fucking three-year Culinary Institute of America scams. Tens of thousands of dollars later and you sill still have to start of as a third appetizer cook. A six-month program might be good to learn some basics, but culinary school can teach all types of bad mannerisms. (David McMillan, interviewed in *Lucky Peach*, issue 3, Spring 2012)

What this suggests is that there are at least two forms of professionalism that chefs consider. One is the formal one, with certification and similar accolades, and is more or less transparent to outsiders. The other – the informal one – is much more opaque, and the manner in which professional development is understood is based much more on a negotiated order within the field. This can also take a number of forms, and the subtle differences in how something is valued can be complicated for someone outside the field to parse. For instance, the most highly regarded top restaurant of the last decade is undoubtedly *elBulli*. As the stage upon which the already mythologized chef-of-chefs Ferran Adrià created some of the most influential and outlandish dishes of recent culinary

history (his ‘deconstructed’ gin and tonic is justly famous), it has also served as a training kitchen for many of the contemporary top chefs. In personal communication – as I took part in a round-table discussion arranged in Stockholm, summer 2011 – Adrià stated that basically every restaurant that is promoted as being among the best in the world had an *elBulli*-alumnus. While this is somewhat hyperbolic, a very large number of particularly European top chefs have done stages for Adrià, and this affiliation is often highlighted on CVs (Abend, 2011). The competition for such spots has also been exceptional. For an outsider, it would seem that this, then, represents a quasi-formal accreditation, and a universally accepted one. The reality is however more complex. While no-one would discount the value of working at *elBulli*, many chefs bristle at the notion that this in itself would be enough. Instead, an often stated suggestion is to *first* do a stage at a much more traditional restaurant, such as for instance one of Joël Robuchon’s restaurants, in order to get classic technique drilled in, and only later do a stage in a more avant-garde kitchen.

Through this, the notion of professionalism among chefs is neither tied to the idea that there would be one, formal path to greatness, nor to the idea that one can simply set out and make things up as one goes along. Instead, the negotiation of what is considered professional behavior, and what is seen as laudable, is part of a highly complex set of negotiations, many of which can seem idiosyncratic or even incomprehensible to outsiders. Thus, the sensibility of the culinary ‘scene’ is one, which plays to a certain indie logic, but without being stable. Rather than presenting a clear-cut picture of what counts and what doesn’t count as laudable in the profession of a chef, the field showcases a number of discourses through which the idea of ‘the good chef’ is processed. It is towards these I will now turn.

The in crowd: Victories and vilification

One of the most complex issues in the interpretation(s) of professionalism among chefs is connected to the role afforded to success. As the culinary economy is a very challenging, hit-driven one, and as the development and management of a top restaurant is exceptionally risky, success is not necessarily measured in the same manner internally in the field as it is externally. To understand the underlying complexity, it is important to note that top restaurants very rarely make a profit, and often run at a considerable loss (see e.g. Chelminski, 2005). In order to, for example, gain three stars in the *Michelin Guide*, a restaurant not only has to be able to serve outstanding food, it needs to keep up exceptional service and quality standards that most corporations would find excessive if not impossible. Even when things are running smoothly, a three star restaurant or one that aspires to be one, will have almost no profit margins, simply because the costs for food and personnel are very high and can only be adjusted upwards. Chefs thus often see their main restaurants as loss leaders, flagships that are sponsored by the more lucrative business of catering, consulting and the like.

In the world of top chefs, then, top restaurants aren't necessarily seen as vehicles for personal enrichment. While there certainly are top restaurants that run at a profit – however small this may be – the understanding in the field is that just trying to make as much money as possible of a restaurant, even a very good restaurant, is not necessarily professional. Many top restaurants can thus be found in somewhat unlikely places, particularly if one were to consider things from strictly a business perspective. *Arzak*, a three-star restaurant in San Sebastián, is still located at the site where Juan Mari Arzak's grandparents opened a tavern, which is now next to a rather busy street but still removed from the more fashionable quarters of the city. When I interviewed Juan Mari and his daughter Elena (who run the kitchen jointly), both stated that it would be impossible to consider moving the restaurant merely for convenience or commercial reasons. Both also bristled at the idea of opening more restaurants. Similarly, when David Chang, the young Korean-American chef who is often considered to be one of the most important new voices in the culinary field, opened up his most ambitious restaurant, *Momofuku Ko*, he ensured that it had only twelve seats and took reservations only six days in advance, online only, first-come-first-served. From a commercial standpoint this might be seen as sheer insanity, but within the field it has been viewed as an almost spiritual move. By echoing the ideal of the hole-in-the-wall restaurant, democratic yet somewhat difficult to approach, David Chang signaled to the field that he was not prepared to dumb down or go for the easy buck.

This, then, can be compared to the internal reception and appreciation of chefs who may be more famous among laymen. A case in point would be Jamie Oliver, who is beloved by the TV-viewing public and either hated or treated with indifference among serious chefs. While few consider him important enough to comment upon, Marco Pierre White (the epoch-defining chef who's cookbook *White Heat* (White, 1990) was a defining moment in making chefs rock-star cool) has referred to him as 'a fat chef with a drum kit', while Gordon Ramsay has stated that he doesn't consider Oliver as a chef, but as a mere cook. According to the tabloids, White has also said: 'When he gets his first Michelin star I'll take him seriously'. Jamie Oliver is obviously much more commercially successful than either of his aforementioned critics, even though Gordon Ramsay has amassed a considerable fortune as well. This has made him a figure of ridicule in the culinary community, where he is seen as a sell-out and as someone who panders to the lowest common denominator. Interestingly, something similar is said about Gordon Ramsay, whose penchant for appearing in TV shows and trying to establish a plethora of top restaurants is seen as the mark of the less-than-serious chef. The difference in how the field views the two is, however, marked. While no-one can question that Ramsay is a skilled chef with a serious background – his work with *Aubergine*, *Restaurant Gordon Ramsay* and *Petrus* is very well regarded – the same cannot be said for Jamie Oliver. His cooking has always been geared towards a mass audience, and he has never shown an interest in working as a *stagiaire* at what top chefs would consider a serious restaurant. His success, then, is internally interpreted as a sign that he is not prepared to enter into the profession in a manner that would show seriousness towards the craft, but rather that he is happy with cooking mediocre food for less-than-discerning audiences.

A somewhat similar case can be found in the appreciation of people such as Emeril Lagasse. Lagasse, who in the US is better known as just ‘Emeril’ or ‘That guy that went “Bam!” on food shows’, has a background in fine dining, but became famous through the Food Network. As one of the first modern celebrity chefs, he is known for his jocular media personality, as well as for a mode of cooking that celebrates Cajun and Creole influences. While it is a simplification to say that Emeril creates home-cookin’ with an aura of *haute cuisine*, he has still become something of a joke and a punchline in the culinary fraternity. Although exceptionally successful (even if this success has waned as of late), with a conglomerate of food-related businesses – part of which was sold to Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia for a reported \$50 million in 2008 – he is rarely mentioned as anything except a bad example in the internal discussions in the field. Much of this is for the same reasons as the field shuns Jamie Oliver. While it is true that Emeril has shown far more serious kitchen prowess than the at best mediocre Oliver, the fact that he has aimed for commercial success rather than culinary excellence has marked him as representing something other than professionalism – at least in the manner top chefs understand the same.

It is here that the category of indie may be helpful. As the business of high-end food is fraught with commercial risks, the only way to ensure economic success is to appeal to a broader, blander taste. This is, implicitly, understood both as trying to follow a more formalized path and as being prepared to compromise one’s culinary vision. In this way, following formal structures, be they the path of formal education or corporate interests, becomes a source of potential corruption. The Culinary Institute of America may teach technique, and the Food Network may make you rich, but at a cost. Affiliating with either kind is to invite a logic that is seen as alien or corrupting, as it can be assessed externally. More simply put, success often means putting the audience ahead of the craft and being interested in succeeding – which often means caring about other things than those deemed important internally in the field.

For a person aspiring to become a top chef, and to be seen as such by other chefs, being dependent on things such as the TV viewing audience or formalized techniques means being controlled by an outside force. In order to show that one is to be taken seriously, a chef must be able to demonstrate that s/he is prepared to go through the initiation of being a *stagiaire* (or do this initiation in another form – as long as you get your burns and scars (see Bourdain, 2000)) and show that one can also be indie.

The indies: Aspirations and authenticity

The village of Axpe Marzana, in the Basque countryside, has (according to the Basque edition of Wikipedia, the only source I’ve been able to find) 238 inhabitants. It also has a restaurant with a Michelin star, *Asador Etxebarri*, which according to Newsweek’s (Aug 13, 2012) survey of 53 leading chefs is one of the 101 best places to eat in the world. Here, chef Victor Arguinzoniz serves his special grilled *cuisine* – everything, including caviar

and ice-cream, is prepared over an open fire – in the upstairs dining room while local farmers drink in the sparse street-level bar. Foodies come from far and wide, as do many chefs. It exists in a highly marginal location – it can be tricky to find even with the help of GPS – and follows no known foodie trends. Arguinoniz simply grills the food he wants to grill, aided by a few trusted collaborators, among them his father, who despite being over 70 years old grows the vegetables served at the restaurant. The *sous-chef* at the time I visited and interviewed at *Etxebarri* was Lennox Hastie, who had worked at several two- and one-star restaurants before going to cook in the middle of nowhere (at the time he started, the restaurant held no stars). As I query him why he'd made the change, he professed that working in more formal and controlled (read: French-style) kitchens wasn't enough of a challenge, and further that it kept him 'out of contact with the raw materials' and that working at this more marginal restaurant allowed him to 'stay in touch with the cooking'.

Etxebarri is revered among chefs, as it represents the polar opposite of the typical corporate high-end restaurant – often attached to a hotel, close to areas with a suitable density of high-net-worth individuals, and with a kitchen where closely managed processes and a regimented hierarchy reigns. In other words, *Etxebarri* represents an indie alternative to a process in the culinary business that chefs find challenging. While many chefs work in establishments that are in one way or another affiliated with corporate interest or are positioned to benefit from the same, this does not mean that they do not dream of other things. As a result, many of the restaurants that are most often mentioned as truly outstanding by top chefs are places that live up to this kind of more independent existence.

Looking to the restaurants most often mentioned by the chefs (and also the foodies) I've interviewed, most if not all of these are places with a definite indie sensibility. The most often mentioned is *elBulli*, which was (it is no longer a restaurant but, according to Adrià, a 'think-tank') placed in a very hard-to-get-to location, ran at a loss throughout, turned away almost everyone trying to get a table as bookings ballooned, and never compromised with its culinary integrity. Other often mentioned restaurants are *Mugaritz* (situated some way outside San Sebastián), *The Fat Duck* (located in a village in the English countryside), *Momofuku Ko* (which is well-situated but compensates by being impossible to get into), *Noma* and a number of places that are referred to in highly circumspect ways – one of my informants insists that the best restaurant in the world is a on-and-off place run by a friend of a friend, which may or may not ever open again (and which assumedly only serves in-the-know chefs).

The marginal space, the one that requires work to get to – literally or otherwise – is thus held up as a symbol of that which codified professionalism is not. The margins, rather than the core, become the icons to be emulated and celebrated, as the core is too easily corrupted by external influences. In a manner of speaking, the margins become sacred, both in that the people working in them are prepared to forgo more material gains in favor of striving for higher ideals and in that they knowingly do not follow the logics and the rules of more secular-corporate businesses.

By emphasizing the importance of places that do not necessarily live up to the usual criteria of professional success, chefs emphasize a professional identity that exists *outside of* the process of formal professionalization, much like indie music sprung out of a need to break with a highly successful and professional mode of creating and selling music. In this manner, the understanding of professionalism in creative industries requires understanding a counter-point to the professionalism that can be understood by others, and the reaffirmation of a ‘deep professionalism’, one that can only be fully comprehended by those internal to and embedded in the field.

On the sacralization of professional margins

What, then, might we learn from a developed understanding of how chefs view professionalism and negotiate notions of achievement in their field? In part that professionalism in creative industries can be negotiated in a number of ways, and that the manner in which this is interpreted will shift depending on whether one adopts an insider’s perspective or not. Further, that the notion of core and periphery, mainstream and margin, may need to be studied more extensively. In order to fully understand the processes through which a professional field is constituted, it is not enough to assume that the margins are occupied by people who have not managed to live up to the norms of the field. In the case of top chefs, I would instead argue that the opposite is the case – and I suspect that the same goes for a number of other creative industries.

For people engaged in creative work, the interesting thing is not simply to be good at doing something. Instead, the driving impetus is to excel, and to excel means to break with existing norms. A young chef can only go so far by doing only what s/he’s been taught. Yes, s/he may well make a good career out of it, and probably make more money in this way, but if s/he wants to get the respect and the accolades of his/her peers, a certain indie sensibility is needed. Doing food that is universally accepted and understood is to pander to less knowledgeable eaters, to stay fixed in the secular realm. To truly shine, the chef must explore the margins, the unknown.

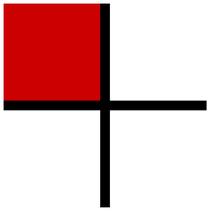
The notion of margin, as the astute reader surely has realized, has a double meaning in all this. To exist at the margins of a profession can mean that you’re not fully a part of it, or are at risk of ‘falling out’. This is particularly the case in professions that have very clearly delimited areas of expertise. But the notion of margin can also point to the realm of the not-yet-explored. In creative endeavors, this is of course the most important – and thus most professional – area of all. To stay merely in the already known, the codifiable, the standardizable, the certifiable, that is to stay in the non-creative. In a creative field such as cuisine, to stay there is to be something less than a professional – a cook rather than a chef. A Jamie Oliver, if you will. In order to shine as a professional, the creative worker needs to explore margins, even inhabit them. This is the movement that chefs sacralize and celebrate, the indie movement from the marginality of a profession to a professionalism of the margin.

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Bites of organization

Gibson Burrell

review of:

Alison Pullen and Carl Rhodes (eds.) (2009) *Bits of organization*. Copenhagen Business School Press: Copenhagen. (PB, pp. 206, £46.00, ISBN 9788763002240)

Let us begin as we mean to go on – perversely – and start with the words on the back cover of this edited book. It proclaims that organization studies is made up of diverse methods and theories which ‘collide and compete, gathered together only in the broken net of a name. This book assembles some of the bits that break off in the process of this collision’. The authors are a group of ‘the most exciting, innovative and original thinkers and writers working in the field of organization studies today. They are writers who push the boundaries of innovative and unconventional work that is on the fringe of publishability...’.

Bits of Organization (hereafter *BOO*) is a book that Pullen and Rhodes, its editors, variously describe as lying on the fringe, outside the mainstream, pushing the boundaries, overflowing the boundaries, teetering on the edge, borderline to the mainstream, at the margins, the peripheries, the extremities. The reader interested in metaphorical language will see the two-dimensional nature of the picture with which we are presented. The map-like presentation is of a space, both flat and broad, in which collisions occur and the resultant broken pieces gravitate to the periphery where they enjoy a speed and motion unknown to those resting in the stasis of the mainstream. This is a space of flows. But it is movement at the surface; there is no depth *in* the metaphor or *to* the metaphor. There is a crucial third dimension, then, which is more or less absent in *BOO*. If we talk of ‘fields’ and how cultivated they are, then what will be missed is a feel for the land’s substrata, its archaeological history and the possibility of achieving ontological depth. The metaphor of the ‘field’ comes at a cost and ‘bits’ get missed out from spatial analogies (10). It may be geology that is required more than geography.

BOO contains papers by authors who will be familiar to readers of *ephemera* and whose work is likely to have been read by them. But this collection acknowledges that despite the

credentials possessed by the authorship, these papers may well have been rejected by peer refereed journals. The reasons for publishing them here in *BOO* are declared to be in order to push the boundaries of what is acceptable to mainstream journals. By focusing on the surface of the fact of editorial rejection, however, few questions are asked by Pullen and Rhodes about the ‘depth’ of analysis contained within the papers. And here is the rub. There are other reasons for one’s work being rejected apart from its transgressive nature. Perhaps, even in terms of a mission aimed at pushing the boundaries and extending the field, it may be that one’s work in some widely shared inter-collegial sense is just not good enough. Speaking personally, I have too many letters, secured in a locked drawer, that have rejected my hand-crafted pieces, not because they were transgressive, but because they were just not gestated enough to be forced out into the light of day. Indeed, these editorial letters, loudly fulminated against at the time, have saved me from considerable embarrassment. Reading these papers in *BOO* invokes a judgement of categorisation – of inclusion and of exclusion. Are they of a ground-breaking inventiveness not yet recognised by the custodians of organization studies, or are they just poorish pieces of writing that, as yet, lack the journalistic polish necessary for entry into journals? Or is the collection a mixture of both? And, indeed, are some of them close to being an embarrassment?

BOO does have the feel in places of ‘leavings’, of the ‘trimmings’ to a meal (in the original sense of the term), and the appearance of what drops as dead meat on the lime-coated cart when you shout out as editors to the populace, forcibly barricaded behind red crossed doors, ‘Bring out your dead, bring out your dead’. Some articles *are* deceased. A number are dead parrots; they have slipped their mortal coil. Yet *BOO* also contains some fine transgressive material. On the ‘sources’ front, we are offered a prestigious line of thinkers including Nietzsche, Artaud, Burroughs, Freddie Flintoff, Kafka and Andy Friedman. Paralleling this, we are offered parts of the human body to ‘affront’ us. Here the tongue and mouth stand alongside the phallus, the arsehole, the vagina and the whole zombied body. This is *organ*-isation as it was meant to be. As for places, we are offered the hospital waiting room by two separate writers and the city as a jungle by others. There is a fine concentration of effort within these ‘marginal’ organization studies to wilfully ignore the staples of information technology, organization structure and corporate culture, for example. The focus upon anti-Establishment body parts means the book is unlikely to play well in INSEAD, LBS and the Judge but the less Said on this the better. To these readers, it would look like *BOO* does offer a horrifying glimpse of a different, maybe even infantilised, aspect of the discipline.

But what about the need for depth as well as breadth? Marginal material in and of itself does not necessarily shed light on the abyss of our organized world. To illuminate our human predicament, these challenging subjects also need to be set on fire in the heat of searing insight and a roasting analysis. Do the chapters then offer this combustive illumination of the depths of dis/organization through being hot? Which chapters offer *abysmal* writing in the full and positive sense of the term? Is there on offer some ‘drilling bits’ of organisation?

Chapter 1 is the ‘opening’ chapter in which there is an attempt to encourage transgression and the breakout from the traditional. There is an attempt to ‘subvert the proclamation of a centre’ (16). Pullen and Rhodes do not see that all those differences between organisation theorists need to be ‘handled’ but call instead for them ‘to be fuelled’ (15). The piece is replete with metaphorical exploration of this kind in which antinomies are used to the full. Here is promise.

The first two chapters share several things in common and presumably are placed together because of this. They are redolent of people who have reached a certain position in the life cycle and who are becoming unhappily familiar with the largest organisation in Western Europe. Chapter 2 is by Heather Hopfl who at the outset sets her piece in a NHS hospital, probably in Stockton. Here it becomes clear that ‘experience and pronouncement intersect and there is always a privileged interpretation. Such is the nature of organisation’ (30). But this order is the organ-isation of the rigid phallus which uses fear and fiction to have its wicked way. Particularly in the hands of hospital consultants where our lives, our fates and our notes are doctored. The following chapter is very short and is by Robert Grafton Small. Grafton Small, also in the hands of the medical profession in the Endocrine Unit of another UK hospital, ends with an examination of a doctor who holds the ring by having an indisputable worldview. Apparently, the ‘bit of organisation’ that glues the NHS together is the self-proclaimed demi-god status of the consultants. Although mine, a couple of years ago, only sought the status of a saint.

Damian O’Doherty and Hugh Willmott, meanwhile, seek to offer the unassuming Andrew Freidman the status not of saint but of sinner. The article is a ‘remnant – a paper that was submitted to *Sociology* as a detailed response to an earlier piece published in *Sociology* written by Andrew Friedman (2004): “Strawmanning and Labour Process Analysis”’ (39). Their paper was rejected and the authors appear to have been considerably miffed by this. Rather than put the rejection letter in the secure, locked drawer marked ‘legitimate disappointments’, they sought to engage in ‘self-exposure’ at the risk of the readership attributing ‘self-indulgence, resentment or vindictiveness, etc.’ to their response. This is a large risk! Another risk comes when the authors point their fingers at the Editor-in-Chief of *Sociology* and note that ‘established authors with strong reputations in the field are treated with considerable leniency and favouritism’ (52). Some self-reflexivity is surely to be expected here. This criticism of the favoured treatment of established authors comes from the lips of someone who was known to be a member of the evaluation subject group panel for RAE 2008 several years prior to the reporting of results, and in these years was feted by rafts of business school heads and their directors of research because of this role. As a general rule, the powerful are often lauded and so become unused to rejection and disappointment. The rest of us have to get over it quietly. O’Doherty and Willmott start their paper by arguing for ‘close attentiveness’ to the text in what is written and what is read. But close attention to *their* text reveals a bit of organisation that looks (as the authors prefigure) remarkably like ‘sour grapes’ (51). For what it is worth, I would have said the same things as Referee 1 of their original piece appears to have dared voice.

Chapter 5 is also about a sociological department but this time at the Ford factories of Detroit. It is by Stewart Clegg and is self-proclaimed to have been written ‘in relation to the conference theme, “doing good”’ (59). So clearly this is a remnant of a symposium of the past. It is about Taylor in the steel mills, Sinclair writing about the Chicago slaughterhouses and sordid investigators of private lives deep within Detroit communities. This is reconstituted meat from interesting bits within lectures given on early US sociology.

The following chapter is paired in a sense with its predecessor. For it is also about Taylor; and it is by Alexandra Pitsis. She offers a ‘shifting line between the poetics of Artaud and some concepts from Taylor’s Scientific Management and surreal moments in life’ (68). The focus is upon the body for, as well known, the body was problematic to both authors. Pitsis suggests that ‘the theatre of cruelty’ was relevant to both and seeks to make other connections. A ‘ficto-script’ is presented in which is imagined an interplay between Artaud’s poetic vision and phraseology derived from Taylor. More good lecture fodder ends the piece when we are reminded that Artaud composed the imaginative line ‘a dead rat’s arse suspended from the ceiling of the sky’ only to have his friends defend his body for three days from the rats that wanted to eat *his* corpse. This is analysis of two strange but important individuals.

Martin Corbett looks to the other end of things and the arse is declined in favour of the mouth, tongue and nose. Well known as a ‘fun guy’, Corbett looks to a tale of the tasty truffle as being about ‘excess, ritual, identity, power, death, deferment and resurrection’ (83). The paper is ordered as an Italian menu but its sources are divine Greek sauces. Getting food into the centre of organisational analysis is not easy but Corbett manages it with taste and aplomb. He achieves in putting the excremental, the cannibal, the indigestible, the abject and the desirable in ‘the visceral register of subjectivity and intersubjectivity’ and on the menu in organisation studies (96).

Chapter 10 is by Christopher Land and is about the ass-thetics of William S. Burroughs, ‘the drug addled writer of fiction’ (142), notably *Naked Lunch*. He was such a symbol of subversion that Nike wished to use his radical chic in a footwear advert, yet he was also an influence on Gilles Deleuze. In Burroughs, the arsehole becomes ‘an ontological principle for the production of radically democratic forms of organisation’. Unlike the transcendent phallus, the arsehole is about falsification, forgery and fantasy. And Land makes a convincing case for its centrality in organisation studies, as the radical organ of choice. I can see journal editors turning up their noses at this article on the basis of its subject matter, not its intrinsic quality. Using the cut-up method of incising text, Burroughs sought to escape from linearity in text and thus the smooth functioning of control, yet Land develops his argument coherently and in a scholarly way without recourse to cutting up.

Chapter 11 is also about cutting up – in the *vagina dentata*. Located in demonology and feared among others by teenage boys who knew any Latin – or any Freud – the origins of the feminist analysis notion are described by Sheena Vachhani. The notions of monstrosity and fluidity are explored in the chapter and a number of very interesting sources on this

topic are discussed. The ‘devil’s gateway’ is not unexplorable. As Cixous says, it is merely presented by men as too dark to explore. It confers non-human status on women. What is needed, says Vachhani, is a monstrous feminist-inspired organisation theory – and I wholeheartedly agree.

Speaking of whole hearts, Alf Rehn moves to the monstrous being of the zombie. Of course, the living dead (known as the *professoriate* in some places) are also the radical Other. It has been estimated, we are told, that armies of the living dead would save the US economy \$17 billion per annum but there are drawbacks in such employment. The necropocalypse is one of these problems, for it is the time when more zombies inhabit the planet than the living. But, says Rehn, ‘a zombie is often preferable to a living worker’ (195).

These then are the bones of the book adorned by small pieces of flesh of my choosing.

Overall, the text does hang more tightly than at first glance and there was a pairing of chapters that may or may not have been deliberate, but it works. It gives it some structural stiffness which is necessary in any edited collection. It suggests a fusion of spinal bits along a line of argument. But stiff, fused spines are not very malleable for the user and the reader will need to exercise themselves through some hard work to get the play of movement that good reading requires.

On the issue of the depth of argument that the collection as a whole, or its component individual chapters, produce, I have to say I was somewhat disappointed. It was not abysmal enough for my taste. Nietzsche, Kafka and Artaud and Burroughs are deep thinkers but there was not enough of the tapping of the depths of suffering that the harrow can produce. What was missing was downward, excoriating movement. There was no recognition in my eyes half-way through of enlightenment (102), no recognition in my consciousness as if I were actually listening to the harrow’s inscription. My argument is not that it has all been said before but only that it could be said more persuasively and more poignantly. I get the point, but I wanted it to go deeper. More harrowing please.

The naughtiness of the topics shocks me not, but many a journal editor would be flummoxed by making a decision as to whom to send these pieces for refereeing. No one would read these articles and see them as natural meat and drink for the typical metropolitan European MBA, never mind a student in the Bible Belt of the USA. It would be foolish to claim they are confections for the delectation of conventional teachers either. But there are journals, including this one, which do accept unusual pieces of provocation and it should have been possible for many papers to have been acceptable in the business and management orientated literature. There are exceptions, of course, and Land’s paper on the arse (which I delight in) is an example of one that might confront petit-bourgeois notions of good taste. Bad smells too are unwelcome but Corbett’s paper would have graced any journal. The phallus and the vagina are more acceptable topics, perhaps, especially when put together in polite heterosexual company. Zombies are positively welcomed at many a high table. True, aged concerns like hospital visits for those over 60

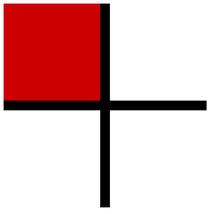
are less welcome in the thrusting world of magic bullets and magic wands; and industrial history is a declining interest among students who have never visited nor even glimpsed a factory in their part of Surrey, Sydney or even Sunderland. But let's be honest with ourselves. The principle of inversion – of turning the normal on its head and looking at it afresh from the 'wrong' way round – is a decent principle. But it does not mean that any shit will do.

So is it my argument that these papers are of low quality and should not have been published? No. My argument is that some of them should not have seen the light of day and have remained in the locked filing cabinet. *BOO* has bits of it that are good and bits of it that are not good. You, the reader, will have your own views. Do not be put off by the quality of the feel of the book itself. It is printed by 'Sahara Printing, Egypten', which should be totally irrelevant given many European books are printed in all parts of the world and publisher control over appearance is never compromised. But this feels and looks a bit different from a 21st century publication and that sometimes matters. It is part of well known series, so the editors of *BOO* may have been unable to intervene in such issues, being distanced from the publishers by both role and hierarchy. In any event, the aesthetics of the text are not without relevance to its reception, and its text-ure may have some effect upon the typical reader.

In conclusion, Sheena Vachhani says on page 200 that she sharpens her teeth daily. Good. It is extremely important that we bite the hand that feeds us – but we must bite deep. Down to the bone. It is worth reading *BOO* to make up your own mind, but I would have preferred *Bits of Organization* to have been more recognisably *Bites of Organization*, for deep wounding incisors are necessary to transgress any meaningful boundary. Bigger teeth, more poison, deeper harrowing – please. And not aimed at the 'vibrant fringe' of the discipline, but at its very heart.

the authors

Gibson Burrell has recently had a birthday that the Beatles sang about and is therefore far too old to engage in biographical nostalgia. He is just pleased he can still put his own socks on.
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Colouring Benjamin

Christian De Cock

review of:

Samuel Weber (2008) *Benjamin's -abilities*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA. (PB, pp.363, £14.95, ISBN 9780674046061)

Michael Taussig (2009) *What color is the sacred?* University of Chicago Press: Chicago. (PB, pp. 292, £16.50, ISBN 9780226790060)

The past is desperate energy, live, an electric field. It chooses a single moment, a chance so domestic we don't know we've missed it, a moment that crashes into us from behind and changes all that follows. (Michaels, 2009: 253)

A decade ago I co-authored a Taussig/Weber 'double-bill' review essay for *ephemera* (De Cock and Volkman, 2002) and I remember struggling somewhat to make connections between the two books. This time around I experienced no such problem. Weber's book is very much *about* Walter Benjamin, whilst Taussig reads his material *with* Benjamin. In using and reflecting on Benjamin's work, both authors give an extra layer of depth and colour to that work. Hence the title of this review: *Colouring Benjamin*. Being *with* and *about* Benjamin, the books inevitably return to the issues of language and writing and how these condition the way we see the world and our efforts in helping others to see, value and understand that world. These concerns are introduced nicely on the dust cover of Weber's book, which starts with an epigraph by Benjamin: 'There is no world of thought that is not a world of language'¹.

1 Taussig (2006: 20) pokes gentle fun at our current-day uses and abuses of his aphorisms in an essay on Walter Benjamin's grave: '...yet another quotation from Benjamin's writings. His texts seem to be full of pithy statements apt for gravestones and monuments, and there is no shortage of writers who, desirous of some spectral profundity, paste in a slice or two. Poor Benjamin. To have his pearls thus cast. This one read: "There is no document of civilization that is not a document of barbarism"'.

Benjamin's -abilities

Such ambivalent -abilities – splinters of a word – endow Walter Benjamin's writings with much of the enigmatic fascination that has made them increasingly difficult to ignore but even more difficult to respond to. (121)

Weber remarks (357) that the chapters making up his book span forty years, but the bulk seems to have been written especially for this publication. He uses the suffix '-ability' (*-barkeit* in German) as an organizing concept for the first part of the book (and for its rather intriguing title). To list just some of the -abilities making up separate chapters: criticizability, impartability; translatability; citability. Nouns formed with this suffix, Weber suggests, refer to a potentiality or virtuality; to a capacity rather than an existing reality. The obsession with endowing the present with its virtuality, with its abilities to become other than it is and than it has been, is perhaps the dominant motif in Benjamin's writings. Benjamin dreamt of bringing a certain history to a standstill, to a *Zustand*, and thus to keep open the possibility of what is *yet to come* (which, as Weber points out, in German as in French, is the name assigned the English word 'future': *Zu-kunft, a-venir*). Paradoxically, the place of this future is nowhere if not *now*. It involves the exposure of 'the goings-on of being-present' (105). Weber sees Benjamin's thinking and writing as marked by a double – 'cracked' – tone. They are full of melancholy, sadness and mourning, but he also finds them full of engagement, militancy and hope, 'because the very same fracture that is felt as loss also opens up the (linguistic) possibility of this loss itself being lost, imparting and thus altering itself and thereby keeping the way open for the coming of something radically different' (119). It is this crack that constitutes the chance of history to be something more than the mere registration and reproduction of what has been – its *potentiality* in other words. Phenomena can be saved precisely through the disclosure of the crack or breach in them.

The notion of '-ability' is also closely related to that of style (viz. chapter 8: 'Ability and Style'). Benjamin's texts never quite come together as a work, but at most as a 'constellation' (a concept I will explore in more detail below) in which empty spaces are at least as important as the 'stars' the constellation serves to situate (Ferris, 2008). Benjamin is fascinated with the knots and nodes, links and interstices that make up 'the net in which we stand',² whilst being acutely aware that the net, or the general context, does not allow itself to be demonstrated. For Weber, the essential issues at stake with Benjamin are thus always to be found in the margins and interstices of his writing: 'The general pattern is to take one step forward and the next step back, but slightly to the side, slightly skewed' (134 – in the following four pages Weber works through the example of the concept of 'Origin' to illustrate the point). This has implications for how we should read Benjamin (and read more generally!) of course:

2 'We cannot draw closed the net in which we stand' Benjamin famously wrote in a letter from 1921, explaining why he would not write an essay entitled 'Capitalism as Religion' (250).

To read then is not to go with the flow, as one speaks – or believes that one speaks – but rather groping, stumbling, interrupting oneself, like an older person whose sight has weakened bends over a text, following its movement with her fingers, always stopping anew, but only in order to continue. Such reading goes against the grain of meaning, so that the text does not disappear into it but remains as a figure: a written image (*Schriftbild*). (299)

As a corollary, criticism does not involve the evaluation of individual works but rather their fulfilment, their *Vollendung*. Following Benjamin, the German word must be read in a double sense, entailing on the one hand the completion of the work and on the other its consumption. The value of a work can be measured to the degree to which it allows the process of criticism to take place: ‘Through this history of citation and recitation, reinscription and transformation, the earlier versions take on a significance that they otherwise might not have had’ (97). Benjamin thus clearly functions as a predecessor for much of the work on reception theory (cf. Volkmann and De Cock, 2010). Weber tries to be a good critic and much of his writing in this book can be read as an instantiation of that about which he is writing. It would make little sense then simply to follow the flow of the book in this review. Rather, in a way that stays true to both Benjamin and Weber we can explore Weber’s writing ‘as tracing lines of force that lead in certain directions’ (231) – lines that criss-cross this book. Three such interlacing ‘lines of force’ concern the future (in terms of a ‘remaining open to’ as outlined above); Benjamin’s epistemology (in particular as found in convolute N of the *Arcades project*, which goes by the title *On the theory of knowledge, Theory of progress*); and the dialectic (in particular the ‘dialectical image’). I will address the latter two in turn.

A key epistemological concern for Benjamin was to rethink the relationship between ‘a certitude of knowledge that is lasting’ (the concept) and ‘the dignity of an experience that passes’ (the empirical) (168). Benjamin’s mode of investigation is indebted here to Schmitt’s (2006) *Political Theology*, which was written in the early years of the Weimar Republic. Both Benjamin and Schmitt insist on the significance of the extreme case: for them the formation of a concept is dependent on a contact or an encounter with a singularity that exceeds or eludes the concept. In other words, concepts take their point of departure in the extreme. The more precisely the empirical is investigated as an extreme the more profoundly it will be penetrated. By driving complex phenomena to their extremes, concepts do not reveal what makes them like other phenomena, but rather what distinguishes them and makes them ‘*einmalig-extrem*’. Things must not be grasped as a mere instantiation of some universal essence. Instead, the investigator must deploy a range of specific concepts that, in Cubist style, refract the object in many directions or penetrate it from a range of diffuse angles (Eagleton, 1990). Benjamin thus seeks to gather examples of the ‘smallest and most precisely cut components’ in order to discover what he calls ‘the crystal of the total event’ (Benjamin, 1999: 461; AP N2, 6³). The component elements of the object are dismantled through the power of minutely particular concepts, reconfiguring these in a pattern which then becomes an idea. This idea is not a universal essence, but the way the object is conceptually configured in its disparate and extreme elements, thus

3 This notation indicates that the quote can be found in the *Arcades project*, Convolute N, note 2.6.

preserving its irreducible heterogeneity (Eagleton, 1990). Weber cites from Benjamin's 'Epistemo-Critical Preface' to his study of the *Origin of the German tragic drama* to represent his ideal critical method:

Ideas are to objects as constellations are to the stars. This means in the first place that they are neither their concepts nor their laws. They do not contribute to the knowledge of phenomena... [in them] phenomena are partitioned and at the same time redeemed. (313)

In this analogy Benjamin draws attention to the fact that a constellation does not determine the content of stars, it only determines the relation of stars to one another in a way that gives them a form. The stars are not changed – they remain what they were before the constellation is recognized – and the stars play no role in determining the form of the constellation (Ferris, 2008).

The Kantian notion of a 'disjunctive synthesis', which allows for a certain non-synthesis of two concepts (e.g. thesis and antithesis) in another, is an important complementary point of departure for Benjamin's critical method as it allows for the conception of a relationship between concepts 'capable of relating the "temporal singularity" of experience to the "timeless certitude" of the concept' (165). Weber elucidates using another analogy:

What Benjamin seems to be arguing for, therefore, involves a relationship of awakening to the dream in which separation itself becomes the constitutive factor: awakening relates to the dream precisely in being separated from it. It is this relating through separation or as separation that characterizes what he calls the 'constellation'. This could indicate how a certain 'non-synthesis' could nevertheless relate concepts to one another while preserving their differences and without subordinating them to a totalizing continuity or unity. (168)

Out of such a non-synthetic constellation results what Weber calls 'knowability' or *Erkennbarkeit*, rather than knowledge. Knowability cannot be reduced to the positive knowledge it both makes possible and relativizes, and it is always situated in a place that can never be fully actualized. Its manifestation is inseparable from its vanishing. It is important to emphasize that the 'awakening' alluded to in the quote above has to be distinguished both from consciousness and from unconsciousness and thus has to be investigated on its own terms; as a distinctive experience and not simply as a transition from the dream to being-awake. To quote from the Arcades Project again:

Is awakening perhaps the synthesis of dream consciousness (as thesis) and waking consciousness (as antithesis)? Then the moment of awakening would be identical with the 'now of recognizability' in which things put on their true -surrealist- face. Thus, in Proust, the importance of staking an entire life on life's supremely dialectical point of rupture: awakening. Proust begins with the evocation of the space of someone waking up. (AP N3a, 3)

Benjamin (and Weber in his wake – viz. chapter 11: 'Awakening') thus goes back to Proust and even further to Marx. Convolute N of the Arcades Project, from which I have already quoted a few times and to which I shall return, starts with a quotation from a letter by Marx from 1843: 'The reform of consciousness consists solely in... the awakening of the world

from its dream about itself' (456). In a way one could say that Benjamin's Arcades Project is devoted to rendering revolutionary possibilities conceivable through its attempt to foster a dialectical consciousness. The moment of awakening emphasized by Benjamin is the moment at which history emerges from the dream of a continuity between past and present;⁴ from the dream that it is simply a record of progress. The past that Benjamin is interested in has only a spectral presence in the present. His gaze is firmly fixed on the debris of history, on the insignificant (Lucero-Montano, 2004). Benjamin wants to actualize this past in such a way that it is capable of releasing a revolutionary potential in the present; bringing it into a 'critical state'. It is the problem of such actualization that informs a crucial concept which he developed in convolute N; that of the dialectical image. This critical state arises from an image formed by the past and the present. In this dialectical image, the past and the present suddenly enter into a relation that Benjamin calls a constellation. As Ferris (2008: 120) points out, 'such constellations do not occur at just any moment. Nor are they the product of a more advanced ability to interpret the past. Rather, they are the product of a present that is ready to receive a meaning that the past could not realize'. It is worth going back to the original here in order to capture all of the nuances in Benjamin's writing:

It is not what is past that casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, the image is where what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical... Only dialectical images are genuinely historical – that is, not archaic – images. The image that is read – which is to say, the image in the now of its recognisability – bears to the highest degree the imprint of the perilous critical moment on which all reading is founded. (AP N3, 1)

Past and present are brought together dialectically, but this constellation does not allow itself to be enveloped in an ongoing history or narrative. It forms an instantaneous flash where the past is illuminated precisely at the moment of its disappearance into the present (Lucero-Montano, 2004). It ignites in the 'now of recognisability'. Its significance is not to present the past as it really was. Instead, the belief is expressed here that the past contains a contingency that only the present is able to recognize; the contingency in the past is preserved for the time in which its significance becomes readable in this 'now of recognisability', allowing it to appear momentarily as a force in the present. What is crucial is that Benjamin defines the image as both the medium and the result of a process by which phenomena become readable, and thereby transform time into history. Weber expands: 'Benjamin here cites the image as the instance through which the Now becomes knowable (*erkennbar*) because readable (*lesbar*). And this process is described as a process of

4 It is a theme we will revisit in Taussig's *What color is the sacred?* He quotes from Convolute N to give an insight into Benjamin's philosophy of history: 'In order for a part of the past to be touched by the present actuality there must be no continuity between them' (198). In an earlier book (Taussig, 2006: 6) had described Benjamin's philosophy of history as 'something in which every detail of a life counted, nothing was to be forgotten, the present had an ironclad obligation to the past, and running as a slender thread through all of this was the ever-so-faint possibility of redemption'.

transformation that goes on within the image rather than in its relation to what is outside' (314).

Given the importance of the dialectical image in Benjamin's later writings it may appear somewhat surprising that this concept should possess so few actual examples. But then again, as Ferris (2008) warns, in actualizing the dialectical image and sustaining it beyond the moment when it flashes before us we could rob it of its force. At the very least, any attempt at providing an example of what a dialectical image could be has to rise to the occasion and provide the linguistic and stylistic subtlety so typical of Benjamin. Perhaps one such decent attempt is Taussig's (2006: 102) description. The setting here is a ferry from the city disgorging its well-heeled passengers onto the wharf at Long Nose Point at Balmain, Sydney:

In this regard I wonder if these strange silhouettes of 'hollowed out' businesspeople stepping off the ferry, no less than the quiet people fishing on the wharf, more nature than culture, have absorbed into themselves the dead past of these waterfront suburbs, their dead boat-building industriousness and once-busy social life? In which case, that moment when the boat hits the wharf to unload its passengers, that moment in the dusk after work, that is the dialectical image. You feel the shudder radiating along the creaking wooden wharf. It goes way down the piles into the ocean floor. Softly.

And yet, we have to fight the temptation to fill the gaps and supply the links that Benjamin apparently failed to provide by attempting to reconcile the contradictions in which he left the dialectical image suspended. Such efforts would simply reduce Benjamin's thinking to the familiar and the plausible (Auerbach, 2007). It is to Weber's immense credit that he does justice to Benjamin's concepts and style in a writing that achieves an eloquence all of its own. The quotation below captures well the purpose and spirit of Weber's writing well and, as such, serves as a fitting end to this section:

Benjamin strips his reader of all assurance with tranquil assurance, drawing him into a dizzying whirl with a hard-headed enthusiasm that pulls out all the stops and then suddenly stops short, interrupting abruptly to demand an accounting. The promise of never granted luck shimmers through his writings, casting its glow over his name, in order then to slip from the outstretched hands of the reader. All that remains is its trace as mournful script. As empty as only allegory can be, the reader – especially one who, according to a tried and tested model, has sought to distil concepts or just to take the text at its word – leaves the stage: the contradictions and inconsistencies that result pose a formidable challenge that even the dialectic can hardly resolve in a fruitful manner. And yet the reader who has been touched by these texts knows, in the words of Beckett's Hamm, that the ball is in his court: *A moi de jouer.* (297)

What color is the sacred?

Business as usual led step by wretched step to terror as usual. (223)

Style is to the writer what color is to the painter, Proust's insistent point being that this art, working through layers of color and light, achieves its revelatory power through indirection and never by means of conscious confrontation, because the real treasure is inaccessible to the intellect. (45; emphasis in original)

If style is an important issue for Weber, for Taussig it becomes the key distinguishing characteristic. The back cover of the book carries the rather amusing endorsement by *Publishers Weekly*: ‘If Hunter S. Thompson had been trained by Boas in anthropology, Engels in Economics and Arendt in philosophy, he might write something like Taussig’. Old friends resurface in this book. Burroughs, Proust and Benjamin are the most prominent authors. Benjamin has a chapter entirely devoted to him (chapter 12: ‘The Red Butterfly’); Proust even gets a whole section of the book (part 3: ‘Color in Proust’, 175-213). The Benjamin chapter concerns his stay on the island of Ibiza in the summers of 1932 and 1933 and his encounter with the French painter Jean Selz who ‘wants us to remember his friend from Ibiza. He wants us to remember his prose as *that truly unique medium*, he says, in which poetry and the science of history merge as truth of the world’ (76; emphasis in original). The chapter also contains some nice pictures of Benjamin on the beach with Selz and in a lobster boat off Ibiza. Taussig’s own island stay – Christmas 2004, spent in a lighthouse on a deserted island of the west coast of Spain – offers us another dialectical image:

Nature does not so much disappear as exist in layers of such histories, with each layer written across the one before so that the earlier layers continue to be visible in a smudged-out and sometimes surprising ways...Through the dense undergrowth, the spiraling, burrow-like paths of wild pigs went deeper into nowhere, the beginnings of time itself, while overhead the white lighthouse kept time at a standstill.⁵ Surrounded by sea, history surfaced as prehistory. Dialectical images such as these recast history as nature, the ideal as real. They come out of nowhere, it seems, as if by chance, making the present more present, the past more vivid, welling up within us as something alive. ‘There I have been’, you might almost say. Yet redemption can never be final because the gap between the old and the new can never be closed. Writing worth reading is built this way, writing being a continuous confrontation with the past that evoked it. (144)

For Taussig the dialectical image can affect the deepest layers of our being where habit reigns so that bodily dispositions become transferred to another register altogether: ‘from homogenous empty time to ‘time filled by the presence of the now’ blasted out of the continuum of history’ (199). Via convolute N, Taussig takes us back to Proust’s notion of *awakening* as the recognition of something forgotten: ‘Thus, in Proust, the importance of staking an entire life on life’s supremely dialectical point of rupture: awakening (AP, N3a, 3) [...] The realization of dream elements in the course of waking up is the canon of dialectics. It is paradigmatic for the thinker and binding for the historian (AP, N4, 4)’.⁶ In fact, he sees Benjamin’s writing as having ‘Proust’s fingerprints all over’ (198). When Benjamin says in convolute N that ‘the past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again’, Taussig sees this as an instance of the ‘*memoire involontaire* grafted onto a Marxist vision of world history and revolution’

5 Note the Benjaminian vocabulary in Taussig’s description: ‘To thinking belongs the movement as well as the arrest of thoughts. Where thinking comes to a standstill in a constellation saturated with tensions – there the dialectical image appears. It is the caesura in the movement of thought... It is to be found, in a word, where the tension between dialectical opposites is greatest... it justifies its violent expulsion from the continuum of historical process’ (AP, N10a, 3).

6 Taussig’s quote on pg. 199 actually contains two small errors. I have reproduced here the original quotes from Convolute N.

(*ibid.*). It parallels Proust's definition of reality as a montage of memories; a *now* overlaid by a *back then*. Taussig quotes directly from Proust's *In search of lost time* here: 'what we call reality is a certain connection between the immediate sensations and memories which envelop us simultaneously' (*ibid.*).

And yet, our everyday language makes it difficult for us to talk about reality that way; to actually see that reality. That is why in Proust writing style and critical method become indistinguishable. His method lies in *actualization*; writing as the production of reading. This actuality is one 'where consciousness shifts from the imagined to the perception of the cruel radiance of what is' (103). Actualization in Proust is an effect achieved by him having his particular style. The awareness at stake here involves the reader becoming aware of what he or she was already aware of without knowing it. What is evoked in words seems to exist not only on the page, but it seems to draw the reader in as well. The work as a whole is diffused with a visceral quality, 'an all-encompassing bodily disturbance' (207), creating a different sense of awareness. The most worked out example of creating such a different sense of awareness can be found in part two of the book, 'Color in the Colony' (77-174), which offers a 'restudy of early anthropology' (16). Good ethnographies, Taussig believes, can make the reader imagine and imbibe other ways of being and feel the difference from one's own way of being. We are taught to be aware differently in much the same way as when we first to learn to walk or swim; it requires a surfacing of the bodily unconscious. Taussig structures this section of the book around the juxtaposition of Malinowski's personal diary and his published ethnographies. In reading Malinowski's diary 'we are pitched into another sense of what makes the real real' (91). In the ethnographies, the body of the writer gets restored to 'what we might call Standard Western Subjectivity' (*ibid.*). The chapters making up this part are the most tightly written and offer a wonderful early history of the ethnographic method and thoughtful general reflections on doing fieldwork. Taussig also bemoans the self-imposed limitations and the lost possibilities in ethnographic work:

Like diary writing, novel reading was taboo in the sense that it was part of that Other existence, tugging for expression, wanting to breathe and be openly recognized as a legitimate part of ethnography and ethnographic writing. It would be equally disingenuous to assume that first comes ethnographic field-work and after that comes the writing of the ethnography. To the contrary, fieldwork always presupposes the writing of it and is immersed in writing, no less than Malinowski's diary immerses his being in the shifting colors of the sea and sky. What died, what was continuously dying, as I see it, was the possibility if not the actual temptation to create hybrid, avant-garde forms, both fictive and nonfictive, personal and impersonal, instead of stuffing the off-screen stuff into the incommensurable confines of the diary or into forbidden novel reading. (93)

This quotation brings us to the rather peculiar title of this book. As Taussig puts it, to ask 'what color is the sacred?' is to ask about connections 'and whether we have lost the language that could do that connecting for us...' (6):

Could Michel Leiris have had something like this in mind with his bizarre question that I paraphrase as What is the color of the sacred?... Here is what he said: 'If one of the most 'sacred' aims that man can set for himself is to acquire as exact an understanding of himself as possible, it seems desirable that each one, scrutinizing his memories with the greatest possible honesty, examine whether he can

discover there some sign permitting him to discern the *color* for him of the very notion of the sacred'.⁷
(191)

The book then is about sneaking past 'the watchful eye of the system that in categorizing holds you apart from reality' (65). It means having to come up 'with a way of thinking – which means a way of using words to tell a story – that will do an end-run around language so there can be some first contact with reality' (*ibid.*). For Taussig, 'to be good at not-knowing is the true knowing. Skilled revelation of skilled concealment is a wheel that spins without rest. The point is the effort *and* the failure' (207). He is fascinated by the 'unthought quality of thought, the automatic capacity a person has to relate shapes and sounds of words to what words mean' (186) and aims to locate a mode or style that expands and contracts that automaticity. Colour provides a key – Taussig refers to colour as the epitome of *polymorphous magical substance*⁸ (viz. chapter 9 with this title; also pages 47, 140, 181, 200) – in that it does not fit into the division of reality into subjects and objects. It has 'fallen through the cracks of Western self-making and the everyday sense as to the makeup of the world. Nobody could decide if color belonged to the subject or the object, or whether it was visual or corporeal' (174). It is therefore important to 'indulge the trickster quality of color'. It helps us 'to pass, as Engels puts it, "beyond the sphere of thought" (AP, N10a, 2)'. The aim of introducing a Benjaminian or Proustian sense of colour is not to give it a specific content (i.e. colour is really *this* or really like *that*). What matters to Taussig is speculation about the way we traditionally talk about colour and the relationship of such discourse to world history. The true aim then is to think about colour in such way 'that propels you into the image, [so] we might never think the same about thinking itself' (8).

As a careful reader of Proust and Benjamin, Taussig conceives of his book as 'an effort in human actuality' (103). Actualization in Taussig, no less than for Proust, is achieved through a particular style, at one point described as 'the Poetry of the join by means of which lies the possibility not of mastery but the mastery of nonmastery' (242). Many chapter titles have a strange poetic resonance: 'Where stones walk like men'; 'Color walks'; 'In the time of Lapis Lazuli'; 'Sailing through color'; 'Redeeming indigo'; 'Sex appeal of the inorganic'; 'An hour is not merely an hour'; 'Colored by weather'. Sometimes the effect of Taussig's poetic writing style is exhilarating; at other times it can be quite deadening as the text gets far too saturated (at least for this reader!). For example:

Is it not time for blue to exert its magic and sexuality, its fearsome impacts on snakes and potency, so as to undo that which would cast it as 'color', sans history, sans density, sans song? If it could

7 The quote is taken from a lecture to the College of Sociology, Paris, January 1938 and also functions as epigraph to the book.

8 For Taussig this is similar to the mana of Lévi-Strauss's which Marcel Mauss thought was the basis of all magic. He likens it to human stem cells, which have the potential to become any of the specialized cells of the body. But polymorphous magical substance concerns 'not the human body, but the body of the world' (41): 'It is like no substance we have ever seen or can imagine, more like a substance which is no substance, suspending laws of time and space where substance gives way to movement, manifesting itself in a myriad of changing forms' (*ibid.*).

penetrate an egg and make men cough blue, this beauty that is indigo, how much more likely is it to penetrate history as a silent symbol ensconced in a color chart? When will we cough blue? ... Equally strange is that our eyewitness all along here is called Colesworthy. Even as he was gazing down into indigo swirling in the vat in Bengal, the German chemists in Germany and London were fabricating color from coal. Coal's worthy indeed! (154)

‘There is a tortured relationship here’ reads the first sentence of the next paragraph. Indeed, but perhaps not in quite the sense Taussig intended. But it would be rather churlish to condemn Taussig for these excesses. As I quoted him above, ‘the point is the effort *and* the failure’.

In order to do justice to Taussig (...and to Weber...and to Benjamin) I cannot simply seek to ‘distil concepts or just to take the text at its word’. Because style is so important to all these authors I have quoted them generously; thus trying to give the reader a feel for the texture, depth, strangeness and sensuousness of their writing and thinking, and hopefully providing some hints as to how these combine in an attempt to interrupt our thinking. My own writing in this review perhaps has mirrored unintentionally the very different styles of Weber and Taussig – tranquil assurance and exuberant restlessness respectively – in the relevant sections. Such is the ability of style! In wrapping up this review I can offer no take-away concepts or easy applications for either of the books, but I hope to have revealed some of the lines of force running through them in a way that does justice to both books. No pulling it all together this time either then. Just a few more borrowed words which I believe capture the spirit of both books (and even this review):

I am coming to the end. All along it has been my heartfelt wish to allow color to change the way we see and hence the way we are made aware of the world at large as a body like the human body.... *Look! Look at color! Become aware!* is what I'm saying – Benjamin... crazy about it; Burroughs, it drips off the page; Proust, the same... Malinowski's kula, the same – yet we so rarely see color unless it hurts and offends us. Color passes us by in the same way in which we do not notice our own breathing until it stops, by which time it's a little late. This is puzzling. It suggests that we in the West have an unconscious engagement with the color world, to which our bodies even more than our eyes are connected, and it is this force and connection, really, rather than color itself, which has gotten me going as our planet heads into the manmade onslaught of global warming and the bodily unconscious forces another type of awareness on the species. (243; emphasis in original)

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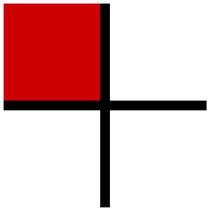
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Imagination against the machine

Antonis Vradis

review of:

Stevphen Shukaitis (2009) *Imaginal machines: Autonomy and self-organization in the revolutions of everyday life*. Autonomedia: Brooklyn, New York. (PB, pp. 258, £12.99, ISBN: 9781570272080)

‘What I miss the most’, I hear my friend saying from across our table, ‘is the ability we once had to imagine. I feel this has been taken away from us, you know?’ It is an unusually cold Athenian morning in the early winter of 2011, two-and-a-half years from the moment when the IMF, the EU and the ECB came to the rescue of the rapidly faltering Greek economy. Ever since, the landscape surrounding us has kept changing beyond recognition. Excruciating austerity measures, a seething political scene and anger mingled with despair on the everyday level now constitute a reality mostly alien to what any of us would have been used to only a few years ago. This fluidity, one could be forgiven for expecting, should have allowed people’s imagination to run wild. And yet more and more people seem to find themselves in my friend’s position, with the militant optimism during and after the December 2008 revolt seemingly giving way to the cold realisation of an unprecedented series of consecutive dead-ends. Why is this happening?

As I ponder, not long after, I am again sitting by the same table, the book-to-review now resting on it. This is a review that comes inexcusably late, now nearing two years after the original publication date – yet on the other hand, as I want to argue here, this distance now offers a great opportunity to review its contents not as a stand-alone but within the current context instead.

With 2009 as its year of publication, Shukaitis’ *Imaginal machines* was presumably penned either in, or immediately prior to, the wake of the financial crisis that continues to sweep through the global West at the present time. This review (delivered in late 2011) therefore testifies to the book’s formidable quality as a harbinger, as a call-out for us to start seeking out alternatives to the present crisis, a call made even before this crisis had fully descended upon us. But the review also seeks to discuss this book’s quality as a work of legacy, an ever-timely reminder of the struggles that were played (even if largely lost) at times of

overt dominance of spectacle and capital alike. If the book has succeeded in this role, and my view is that it has, it can then also act as a reminder of the dangers and pitfalls facing present and future struggles against spectacle and capital – both of which are at the present time manically reformulating themselves.

Let me start from the obvious and what may strike many as somewhat odd – the book's title. To juxtapose 'machine' and 'imagination' may seem peculiar at first, one concept so close and the other so distant from the world of industrial production. And yet of course it should not be so, as the combination signals a call for us to begin producing alternatives ourselves. Shukaitis excellently discusses the evolution of the use of the two terms together, from Peter Lamborn Wilson (1996), then to Deleuze and Guattari (1977), all the way back to Castoriadis (1975). And this is just a prelude. In the relatively limited space of the book's 255 pages Shukaitis manages to delve into debates on everyday life; on the eternal problem of insurrections and revolutions left incomplete, or even recuperated by the forces of capital (how apt in the case of the Egyptian Revolution, or the Greek Uprising); on the perceived existence, in revolutionary circles, of an autonomous, pure quality of society that only requires the veil removed from the false totality of the present to make itself present in return ('to understand revolution as revelation', [53]); on the role of outer space and extraterrestrial voyage in shaping radical imagination; on affective composition, self-management, the politics of minor composition (creating social movement from within intense, everyday relations); on the question of organisation within the social antagonist movement ('the labor of imagination' [119]); on affective relations and their relationship in creating communities of resistance; all before devoting a chapter to precarity struggles and, finally, a chapter confronting recuperation of radical politics – both as a threat, but even more as a reminder for us to continually recompose our political theory and our praxis.

Clearly a review of all the ideas discussed in the book would be perforce incomplete, confined by this text's allowed length. What I want to do instead is to take a handful of these ideas and use them as a starting point for a discussion not only about the book's potential legacies but also the legacies of the antagonist movement as a whole – and even more so, its potential amidst the current crisis of capital.

'While liberatory impulses might point to a utopian (no)where that is separate from the present,' says Shukaitis, 'it is necessary to point *from* somewhere, from a particular situated imagining' (10). And so he does, delving into his own experiences, among so many others, with Ever Relived Records (ERR, a punk/DIY label under workers' control) in chapter 6. Shukaitis points out that examples such as ERR could be described as a type of 'propaganda of the deed' (125), just as Flynn et al (1997) would do. Such small (in the scale of things) experiments in subversion encountered across the social antagonist movement have indeed offered some invaluable service in keeping the spirit of alternative everyday realities alive through some of the darkest days (or should it be nights?) of capitalist certainties: workers' co-operatives operating in the midst of the capitalist euphoria, breaking away from the everyone-for-themselves mantra. There have of course been some suffocating limitations to these experiments, with the collectivisation of labour

often leading to the subsequent socialization of workers themselves ‘into the role of collective capitalists’ (130). As a result, participants in social antagonist movements have often in the past moved away from seeking alternative ways of envisioning the everyday within their own structures. Many would have reached Shukaitis’ own, seemingly gloomy, conclusion: ‘Perhaps self-management is a fish that is only well suited to swim in the struggles of Fordist waters’ (134).

What space does such a conclusion leave for the social antagonist movement in which to imagine? Shukaitis has a number of propositions, including literally pointing toward space (outer, extra-territorial space) as a ‘pole of imaginal recomposition’ (92). At the precise moment when sovereignty encroaches into even the most intimate of everyday experiences, the cornerstones of people’s existence, centrifugal tendencies of this kind may indeed seem appealing. Yet still, as he too recognizes, it is not at all necessary to look at such exteriorities; there is no need to reach all the way out to the moon (meant quite literally here) in order to free our perspective and to start imagining afresh. If anything, this change of perspective is much easier, feasible and perhaps rewarding even, when we take an opposite, introverted look; when we gaze, that is, inward. Peeking straight into the particles of social activity that comprise the mosaic of everyday life: the gestures, the signs, the smallest of actions beaming solidarity, autonomy and mutual aid – each on its own perhaps too small to decisively contribute toward change on any larger scale, yet in their sum reflecting a myriad of revolutions that are already taking place in the here and now.

In opening this review I declared Shukaitis’ book a harbinger. I did so because essentially, the book describes experiences and struggles of workers disgruntled with capital; meanwhile, in an ironic twist of history, capital got (even more) disgruntled with (even more of) its workers. At this exact point in time, then, the book comprises a handy reference guide to an abundance of key struggles and strands of thought belonging to the social antagonist movement so far; a guide that can prove invaluable for those only now finding themselves exposed to the cold reality of the complete war staged by capital and spectacle against the backbone of the social whole.

The key here is the word ‘now’: the timeliness of this project. Throughout reading *Imaginal machines* I kept returning to another seminal book on the everyday, Henri Lefebvre’s *Critique of everyday life*. The obvious reason would have been the parallels one could draw between the two books’ contents. And yet there is another stunning parallel, which is the swirling ‘in-between’ times in which they were both written. Lefebvre finished penning his *Critique* in the winter of 1945, shortly after the French Liberation and the end of WWII and immediately prior to the beginning of the Cold War. It is impossible to separate content from social context: had Lefebvre allowed, say, another year before completing his book, we may have never encountered the optimism running through it.

Equally, it is impossible to distinguish the content of *Imaginal machines* from its social context. The struggles for autonomy and self-organisation in late capitalism that it lucidly describes could only be a product of their times: Fordist and post-Fordist sub-products, to

be precise. But if Lefebvre's optimism was crushed under the subsequent historical developments, the content of *Imaginal machines* is seemingly vindicated, with the generalisation of social and the economic conditions that had led a handful of deeply politicised, disgruntled workers to seek out alternatives. In retrospect it may not be an exaggeration that these workers had a conceptualisation not merely of their *position* as workers, but also of their *velocity* and *acceleration*. This claim surely requires some explanation!

In physics, there exist two essential quantities that can help you understand how your position is changing in relation to the world, given of course that you have knowledge of your position (i.e. that you know where you stand). First, there is your velocity (the rate and the direction of your motion: how fast your position is changing, and in what direction) and second, there is your acceleration, that is, the rate of change of your velocity. Back in the social sciences: to be able to understand our position and that of society is one thing. But to be able to understand our – so to speak – social velocity and acceleration is an invaluable skill. And there is no field more appropriate to seek out this understanding, I would argue, than in the field of everyday life.

When thinking of everyday life, we will also – perhaps expectantly – bring to mind scenes and actions familiar and close: whether work or leisure, time spent in private or public, the 'everyday life' has this inextricable closeness of an all-too-familiar experience. We are, after all, talking of our own lives. And yet we should not, not quite exactly anyway, because this intimacy, this closeness can lead to a loss of perspective. An inability, in other words, to comprehend that everyday life is bound by its historical circumstances and as such is continuously shifting, while the rate of change in which it is shifting keeps changing as well: as Henri Lefebvre himself put it, 'everyday life is not unchangeable' (2008: 229). It is not a coincidence that the current crisis of capital and the spectacle is a crisis striking at the heart of the everyday, altering the ways in which people live. And it is not a coincidence, in return, that resistance to this enforced change has come from within primary loci of everyday socialising (think here of the role of the mosques in the Arab uprisings, or the closure of youth clubs prior to the English summer riots).

Future ruptures will inevitably be situated in the everyday and therefore *Imaginal machines* hits the nail in recording the legacy of ruptures past. But can we dare to speak of 'revolutions' of everyday life in the future, as the book's subtitle suggests about the past? And wouldn't any future revolutions face the risk of recuperation, just as their predecessors repeatedly did? Perhaps even more worryingly, in very recent times a formidable expansion in sovereignty's capacity for recuperation seems to have taken place. Before, recuperation had been an act that would come retrospectively – that is, only following (and largely thanks to) the passing of a considerable amount of time distancing it from the event. Think, for example, of the recuperation of situationist thought years after the Situationist International had ceased to exist as a group; the May 1968 slogans that were digested and assimilated in the decades that followed by the same power they had aimed at, and so on. Today, a major change in this recuperation process has occurred: it no longer takes place *ex*

post facto but simultaneously or even *ex ante* – prior to the occurrence of any act that turns against sovereignty. I am thinking here of David Cameron’s Big Society agenda in the UK encouraging the spread of co-operatives; essentially attempting an integration into state sovereignty of entities that could otherwise grow to threaten it. I am also thinking of certain elements of the global Occupy movement (and this does not signal a dismissal of its extremely hopeful emergence). To an extent, its apparently inherent pacifism has come, it seems, as a prerequisite of its sweeping mainstream media success. Here, a movement comes already digested for the media machine to consume and devour. I am also thinking of the idea of the ‘human mic’, whereby participants at certain Occupy sites (most notably, it seems, in New York City) adopted the following practice to overcome the ban of audio transmission equipment imposed on them by the authorities: speakers at their events would mouth sentences intermittently, slowly and loudly; the crowd encircling them would repeat the sentences after them for the benefit of those further away to listen and to repeat in return. Meanwhile, the entire process would in most cases be simultaneously broadcast online by many of those present. Here we have it then, the preemptive formulation of action and words alike in ways that will allow maximum impact and spread across the media landscape. At the same time, of course, this preemptive formulation could then already contain their pacification and their recuperation: some pacification and recuperation that was therefore prenatal, already coded into the form of this movement at the time of its birth.

I suspect it was something along these lines my friend had in mind when she complained about the stealing away of our capacity to imagine. If reaction to spectacle is as omnipresent as spectacle itself, this annihilates the space in which to create a movement – since a *movement* that is omnipresent from its birth cannot, by definition, *move*; therefore, it cannot exist. Having already hit the wall, the antagonist movement of the Fordist and post-Fordist era as unfolded in the pages of *Imaginal Machines* has a great deal to offer to what is slowly emerging as its successor; with all the necessary disclaimers of course, due to the entirely different social terrains in which the two act.

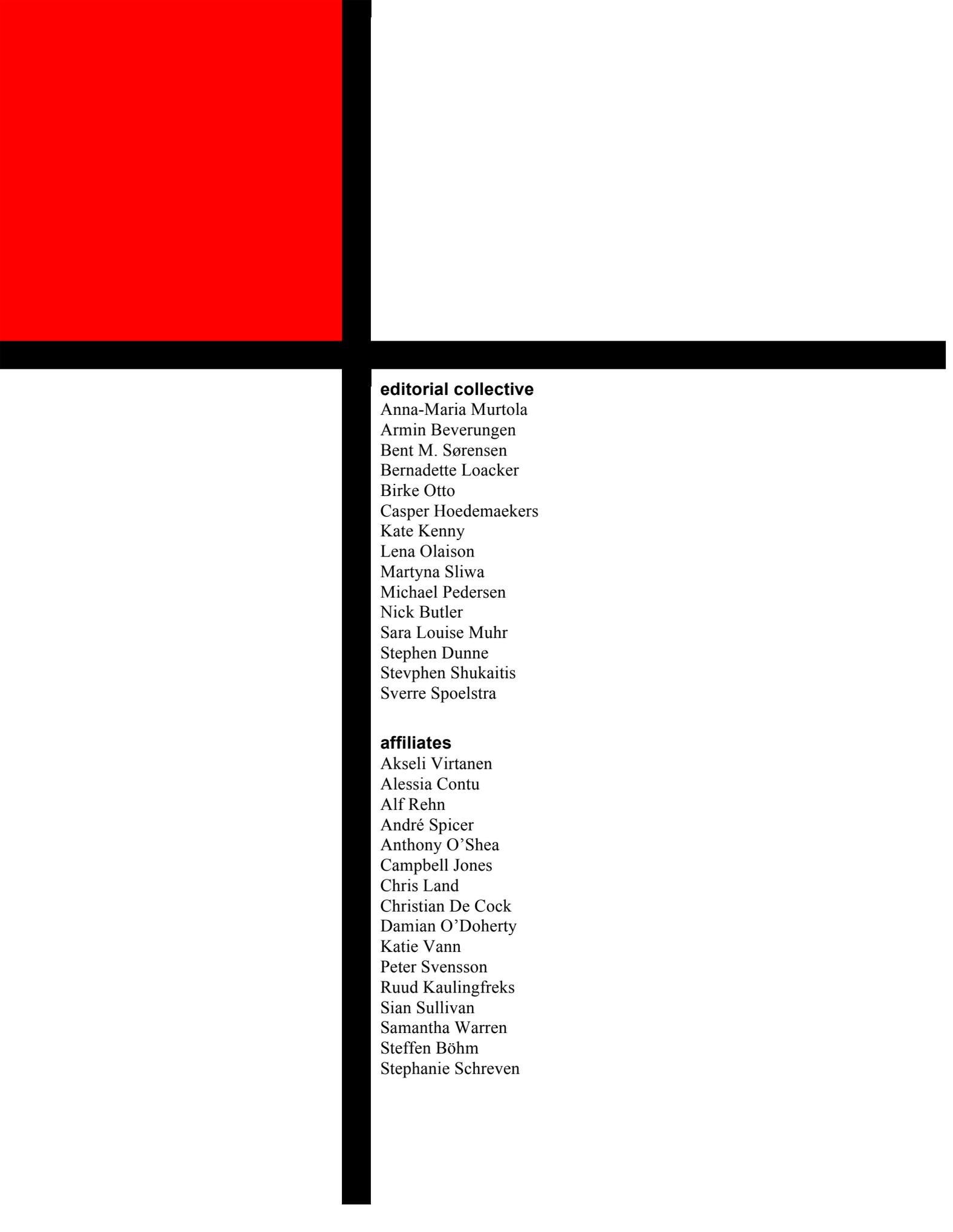
Currently, the onslaught of capital upon society seems to be accompanied by the encroachment of spectacle upon everyday life and upon social movements – essentially depriving from them the space necessary in which to develop. A culture of the instant and the omnipresent, wherein acts of resistance are instantly formulated to fit the needs of the spectacle, or even come preformulated in order to do so. In the social world, as in the physical, movement is about process. The rule naturally applies to social movements too. ‘What will we be waiting for when we no longer need to wait in order to arrive?’ asks Paul Virilio (2005: 118). Having endured all the waiting to finally arrive at this moment of crisis for capital and spectacle, the social antagonist movement as documented in *Imaginal Machines* presently has an exceptional opportunity to arm emergent movements with the required experience and patience as well as a capability to imagine what it means to succeed.

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