défense de l'autonomie professionnelle dans laquelle s'est lancé Freidson. Au lieu d'en venir, comme Freidson, à recommander le renforcement de « l'éthique institutionnelle » et la réaffirmation des « valeurs transcendantes » du professionnalisme, l'auteur plaide en faveur de la reconnaissance des progrès dont peuvent être porteurs les « challengers » des professions, de la nécessité de faire ressortir les bénéfices que peut apporter l'autonomie professionnelle pour les usagers des services professionnels, et d'une réforme des institutions qui élaborent les compétences professionnelles et modèlent l'engagement de soi dans le métier.

Mots clés : profession ♦ autonomie ♦ consommateurs ♦ contrôle managerial ♦ institutions professionnelles

SAVING THE "SOUL OF PROFESSIONALISM": FREIDSON'S INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS AND THE DEFENSE OF PROFESSIONAL AUTONOMY

Steven Brint

Introduction

The third stage of Eliot Freidson's thinking about the professions is marked by views that are very nearly the inverse of his conclusions in *Profession of Medicine* (1970).[1] In an essay published in 1992, "Professionalism as Model and Ideology", Freidson shows how far he has moved from his criticisms of two decades before. No longer dominant, professions are in fact becoming subordinate to two stronger forces of labor control: (1) market (or consumer) control, which reduces the monopoly and privileges of professionals by introducing increased competition and pressures for lower prices; (2) bureaucratic-managerial control, which reduces professional discretionary judgment and autonomy

[1] In his transitional works of the 1980s, including *Professional Powers* (1986), Freidson continued to develop analyses of professional dominance, but he also began to show signs that his thinking was shifting in the direction of the theorists of professional decline. In *Professional Powers*, Freidson argued against theories of professional "proletarianization" (Derber 1980) and "de-professionalization" (Haug 1979) on the grounds that professionals continued to exercise power over their labor process and their clients due to their knowledge monopolies and gatekeeping powers. Yet, he also recognized that their sphere of power within organizations rarely extended to control of budgetary resources or decisions over the basic direction and policies of the organization. He also recognized that professions were coming more and more under the control of the state and efforts to increase competition inevitably lead to lower levels of formal equality among professionals and lower levels of collegial control over the conditions of practice.

by developing standardized treatment protocols and evaluative frames[2]. This is the first of Freidson's essays to offer professionalism as an alternative logic of work control to Adam Smith's "free market" and Max Weber's "rational-legal bureaucracy".

The focal concept of Freidson's analysis also changes. Where he previously focused on the social structure of professions, he now focuses on "professionalism." This is a subtle difference, but one with important implications. Professions are social structures: market shelters built on credentialing and licensing that limit the supply of workers to occupations requiring specialized knowledge and skill. Professionalism, by contrast, is a culture based on a set of values and commitments, which serves as an orientation to thought and action. It is associated with and supported by the market shelter provided by credentialing, but not directly derivable from it[3].

In this essay, we also see the beginning of a full-scale defense of professionalism. Some elements of the defense are familiar from Freidson's previous work: professionalism reduces alienation, because it is based on commitments to occupation and work as central life concerns. It can also lead to better work, because people who are committed to their work typically want to do it well. Professionalism can, in addition, create a community of workers who have similar interests and commitments to work in the occupation. In so far as these workers feel that their work is important to society, they feel a connection not only to one another but to

[2] Freidson noted the possibility in theory of a third form of labor control: an egalitarian ideal in which all workers collectively determine the work to be done, who is to do it, and how it is to be done. But he noted the paradox that criticism of professionals by radicals tended to advance the implicit alternative of the free market, rather than collective control of the labor process (Freidson 1992: 172).

[3] In a 1977 essay, Freidson had already moved away from the early position that all pertinent features of professional consciousness could be derived from professional social structure. "(T)aken as a dependent variable, commitment to occupation, fellow workers, and work may be seen to vary with occupational organization, but it is likely to vary slightly with and perhaps even independently of education and imputed skill. Dedication to service and to craftsmanship, on the other hand, have no simple and direct relationship to criteria of professionalization; as ideologies they seem to be available for use of any agent seeking to control work and motivate and direct the worker" (p. 126).

the larger society. Professionalism is, in these ways, an antidote to alienation from work, which is the inevitable outcome of capitalism in Marx and of bureaucratic regulation in Weber.

One new element is also added to the defense. Professionalism creates a milieu in which its ideas, theories, and practices can be criticized and improved. This is true, both because professions are closely linked to the scholarly and scientific occupations through their lengthy educational apprenticeships, and because practitioners themselves sometimes make new discoveries and question accepted practices that seem to be ineffective. The link to inquiry and research is an important source of innovation and improvement in practice. "These innovative cognitive activities characteristic of professionalism provide a source of growth and enrichment in knowledge, values, and technique that could not be produced by workers who are wholly dependent on satisfying the demands that others formulate, and who are concerned primarily with serving their own material interests" (ibid. 178).

In the essay, Freidson advocated an "aggressive ideology" directed at "extending and strengthening professionalism in the real world so as to get closer to the ideal model and its benefits" (ibid. 179). This ideology will directly challenge the claims of superiority advanced by advocates of market and bureaucratic control by arguing "that a monopoly held by an occupation whose members are committed to maintaining the integrity of a craft that is of value to others is a more desirable and less destructive solution to an important social problem than is the free play of unbridled material interest or the reduction of all work to formally specified procedure proposed by its critics" (ibid.). This principled defense will be aggressive in joining the attack on the pathologies that stem from the material self-interest of the marketplace and from the reduction of work to the formal procedures of bureaucracy. However, it will be equally aggressive in attacking the pathologies of professions themselves, particularly practices that "protect the incompetent, the venal, and the negligent among its members" (ibid. 180).

Thus, over the course of two decades, Freidson traveled 180 degrees, leaving the party of critics of professionalism and joining the party of its defenders. Indeed, he became perhaps the most vigorous voice in support of professionalism, certainly the most vigorous voice among sociologists. Where in his earliest writings, cupidity was inherent in occupational

monopoly, it was now inherent in market de-regulation of these shelters. Where self-serving neglect of consumers was inherent in professional privileges, it was now inherent in "one-size-fits-all" bureaucratic regulation. Where professional powers were extensive and expanding, they were now limited and under assault. Where consciousness was a product of social structure and a source of misleading ideologies disconnected to actual practices, it was now a quasi-independent force and the best hope for maintaining the strength of professions as an alternative to market or state regulation.

It is as if the same person had been asked to imagine two very different worlds: one a threatening world of autonomous educated workers ascendant in an age of technocratic domination; the other a threatened world of once-autonomous educated workers declining in an age of market and state-bureaucratic domination. Two continuities remain, however: Freidson's exceptional analytical powers and his commitment to moral action. His fusillades against professional dominance of the 1970s may have turned into a campaign to strengthen professionalism in the 1990s, but the underlying moral energy - the desire to turn wrong into right - is the same.

There can be little doubt that Freidson's change of heart was based on his observation of changes in the environment faced by professionals and, particularly, the dramatic changes in the environment faced by the most powerful of professions, medicine. Indeed, the autonomy of even the stronger professions began to break down in the later 1960s, just at the time Freidson was completing *Profession of Medicine*. At that time, the Supreme Court began to strike down the legality of several economic privileges enjoyed by the major professions – the legality of standard fees, bans against competitive bidding, and bans of advertising. By introducing competitive incentives, the courts hoped that the cost of professional service would be lowered while the quality of service improved. The major professions, particularly medicine, also became subject to a massive increase in external bureaucratic regulation beginning at this time. This regulation included review of professional decisions by external agents and also mandated formal regulation by colleagues, including the proliferation of disciplinary boards. The resulting change in the environment can be characterized as deregulation of anti-competitive practices and increased external regulation of practice standards.

The changes in medicine were the result of escalating costs of medical services, endemic both to the fee-for-service system and advances in treatment technologies. Between the 1960s and 1990s, under the pressure of cost-containment incentives of third-party providers, most physicians became employees of large health maintenance organizations or private corporations providing medical and hospital services. New bureaucratic rules, developed by HMOs and health insurance providers, such as Diagnosis Related Groups (or DRGs) for reimbursing hospitals, led to declining discretion of physicians in patient treatment. Cost containment policies also led to an increased number of patient interactions each day and the off-loading of routine case work to lower-cost physician assistants and nurses. "Like all workers...professionals have no tangible power of their own. They possess only their knowledge and skill, the essence of their labor. Therefore, the professions are highly vulnerable to political and economic pressures. Medicine, the most prestigious and wealthy of them all, provides an instructive example of ultimate weakness in the face of the power of the state and capital. It is being forced to change in ways that (would have been) inconceivable twenty years ago" (ibid. 180)[4].

Freidson's last book, *Professionalism: The Third Logic*, is a culmination of his thinking in this third phase. It formally develops the "ideal type" of professionalism as a form for controlling work, and he contrasts this ideal type with Smith's "free market" of economic exchange and Weber's "rational-legal bureaucracy". The book is ambitious; in so far as Freidson's model of the "logic" of professionalism is accepted, social analysts of the future will speak of Freidson in the same breath as Smith and Weber. The ideal-type consists of five major elements: (1) a body of knowledge and skill officially recognized as based on abstract concepts and theory and requiring exercise of considerable discretion; (2) an occupationally controlled division of labor involving functional specializations and occupational assistants; (3) an occupationally controlled labor market requiring training credentials for entry and career mobility; (4) occupationally controlled training programs segregated from

[4] Freidson found the critical literature to be of little help, because it continued, he believed, to be stuck in a different age, one in which professions were growing more, rather than less powerful. Instead, he turned for intellectual support to liberal defenders of the autonomy of intellectuals and professionals, writers such as Robert W. Gordon (1988) and Walter Metzger (1987).

the labor market, which produce the credentials and are organized by academics who also contribute to the production of new knowledge relevant to the profession; and (5) an ideology serving a transcendent value and asserting greater devotion to doing good work than to economic reward (Freidson 2001: 180).

For the most part, these elements are unexceptional and well discussed in his previous work, as well as in the work of others writing on the professions from the social closure perspective (see, e.g., Larson 1977; Murphy 1988; and Tilly and Tilly 1994). The inclusion of intellectual qualities (abstract concepts and theory) as part of the ideal type of professional knowledge and skill is notable, and is presumably introduced to allow for a distinction between professions and the skilled crafts. But more notable still is the inclusion of ideological elements as part of the ideal type.

In *Profession of Medicine*, Freidson had scoffed at the notion that "transcendent values" actually directed the work of the profession as a whole or of most individual practitioners: "(A)re not the ends of the established professions so beneficent that they may be given the autonomy to be able to lead us to them? Of course, this is true in the abstract, but what concretely is health, justice, truth, or virtue? Who is to determine it? Is it a matter for determination by a special class of moralists, disguised as experts? Or is it a matter of such importance as to be every man's choice for his own life? I myself do not believe that professions, no matter how beneficent their intent, have either the moral right or the special qualification to make such choices for the individual or the society" (Freidson 1970: 351). But now: "Transcendent values add moral substance to the technical content of disciplines. Professionals claim the moral as well as the technical right to control the uses of their discipline" (Freidson 2001: 220). And: "(T)he most important problem for the future of professionalism is neither economic nor structural but cultural and ideological. The most important problem is its soul." (ibid. 213)

The Soul of Professionalism

And, so, we come to the critical questions: Do professions have a "soul"? And, if so, of what essence does this "soul" exist? In ordinary usage, the word "soul" encompasses both the idea of animating spirit and sometimes

also the idea of moral anchorage[5]. To have a soul is to have depth. A soul is something that can be drawn to higher things; it is something that can therefore be saved from the superficialities, expediencies, and corruptions of ordinary life. It is associated with a higher dignity of life. Although each one of these associations is implied connotatively in Freidson's usage, Freidson also has a very specific denotative conception of the "soul of professionalism". For Freidson, the "soul of professionalism" is, quite simply, occupational autonomy: the freedom to follow an occupationally-controlled agenda for the development of a specialized body of knowledge and skill and to assume responsibility for its use. For Freidson, autonomy depends not only on technical skills that are accessible to practitioners through formal training, but also on a distinctive moral position that judges the use of knowledge and skill in light of values that transcend time and place.

Why is autonomy – control by the occupational community – the deepest part of professionalism, the part that provides the hope of a higher dignity? I believe Freidson's answer is quite like that of C. Wright Mills (1951), who famously decried the dependent condition of white-collar workers in the age of the corporation. Without autonomy, middle-class workers are little more than technicians with larger bank accounts. They do the bidding of others and are controlled by priorities chosen by others. Like Mills, Freidson finds a link between control and responsibility. Technicians are not ultimately responsible for their work, unless they explicitly break the rules of their employers. These appear to be bedrock beliefs in both Mills and the later Freidson, and of course they can be

[5] In choosing the phrase "soul of professionalism," Freidson seems to stand close to the non-sociological tradition of character ethics. Here the fundamental idea is of an animating spirit capable of "right action." If the soul is lost, the person lacks the capacity to follow a path of dignity and purpose, and falls instead into a path of superficiality, reflex conformity, and disorientation. Given the connotations of the word "soul" and some of his comments on "moral custodianship," Freidson seems to ask us to consider that the same thing can be true of practitioners of an occupation and even of an occupational community. In this respect, Freidson's position could hardly be more different from the main currents in sociology in which action is based either on cognitive understandings (typically of a recipe nature) (Berger and Luckmann 1968; DiMaggio and Powell 1991) or dispositions and structured improvisations growing out of the routinely reproduced experiences of a way of life (Bourdieu 1979).

criticized as "petty bourgeois" ideology. I believe the connection between autonomy and responsibility should be treated more as hypotheses than as a self-evident truth (particularly in an age of litigation and insurance against liability). Nevertheless, I agree with Freidson that a sense of responsibility *can* grow out of autonomy, provided that it is nourished by commitment to the higher ends of the occupational community.

The connection between freedom to choose and responsibility for choice is one that goes back to *Profession of Medicine*. But here Freidson claimed that choice and responsibility should be the province of every citizen in a democracy. "The prime value is the right of men to the dignity of self-determination of ends or goals and to civic equality" (Freidson 1970: 365). Because of the danger of a tyranny of experts, he argued, "Professions' role in a free society should be limited to contributing the technical information men need to make their own decisions on the basis of their own values" (ibid. 380).

What changed in the interim? In Freidson's analysis, the autonomy of the professions has been weakened by three types of ideological attacks: on the economic privileges associated with their market shelters, on the exclusionary character of their credentialing, and on the seemingly "out-of-touch" preoccupations of disciplinary "elitism." These attacks, he believed, reduced the credibility of professions, and thereby encouraged alternative approaches for the control of labor. "I will suggest that the major consequence of (these ideological attacks) is to create an atmosphere of distrust that has weakened the credibility of professional claims to an independent…voice" (ibid. 197). The emphasis, however, is on the practical force of market competition and bureaucratic regulation as challengers to professional autonomy. Market competition limits the economic protection provided by shelters and bureaucratic regulation restricts the degree of discretion professionals can exercise at work.

Freidson also grew markedly more pessimistic about the capacity of ordinary citizens to make well-informed and responsible choices, thereby claiming their democratic right to self-determination. In the first place, he noted, nearly half of citizens in the United States are either functionally illiterate or "marginally literate". This greatly reduces the prospects for informed deliberation. These prospects are further reduced, he argued, by the influence of "commercialized popular culture," which encourages

emotional responses and sensual pleasures over cognitive rationality. Freidson considers professional autonomy, the "soul of professionalism," an essential counter-weight to the influence of rationalizing managers and poorly informed consumers.

Market shelters can be defended, he argues, only through persuasive arguments that the shelter does more than inflate the earnings of professionals. It must be seen as encouraging a higher quality of work and more integrity in the conduct of work than would be possible without it. And the services provided must be seen by consumers as warranting protection because of their capacity to bring benefits and to reduce the potential for harm. Freidson's defense of the "soul of professionalism" implies ideological struggle. Defenders of professionalism must be prepared to criticize efforts to increase competition between and within professions if they erode professionals' commitment to quality. They must be prepared to criticize efforts to standardize professional work if they reduce necessary discretion in the conduct of complex work requiring judgment.

While professions fight off the incursions of market and bureaucracy, Freidson argues they should also reinforce ethical norms that help them to protect their autonomy. Freidson distinguishes between two forms of normative reinforcement: *practice ethics* and *institutional ethics*. Practice ethics, the familiar form, regulate individuals in their everyday work relationships. Freidson argues that they are important for controlling conflicts of interest that encourage practitioners to enrich themselves at the expense of clients. Institutional ethics, by contrast, are intended to regulate the contexts within which work is conducted. "The issues with which they are concerned include the way practice itself is financed, administered, and controlled in concrete places where professionals work, and the social policies which establish and enforce the broader legal and economic environment" (ibid. 216). Institutional ethics are concerned to guarantee that practice is organized in a way that benefits others and serves the transcendent value of a discipline. They are animated by moral concern for the ultimate purpose of disciplines.

Freidson's comments on institutional ethics are sketchy, but they are clear enough to see that he regards three principles as fundamental. First, professions should seek to make certain that their services are available to as many people as need them. This is a marriage of modern

egalitarianism to the professional model. In the past, professions were content to work in a market context in which services were allocated by ability to pay. However, the extension of public sector entitlements, combined with private philanthropy, has legitimately expanded the scope of public expectations concerning legal, medical, educational, and social services.

Second, professionals should control the terms of work far enough at least to insure that clients receive competent, high quality service. This means up-to-date technology and a reasonable pace of work. Freidson makes it clear that medical professionals should oppose inadequate lab facilities and 10-minute consultations norms, and that teaching professionals should oppose cramped, incommodious lecture halls and overly heavy course loads.

Third, the professions should renew their commitments to "transcendent values." As in the 19th and early 20th century legitimations of "social trustee professionalism" (Brint 1994: chap. 1), doctors should keep their commitment to health foremost in mind; lawyers their commitment to justice; engineers their commitment to safety; and clergy their commitments to virtue and salvation[6]. These value commitments provide professionals with the moral authority from which to resist and even to refuse obeying the dictates of the consumer market or state and organizational officialdom. "By virtue of commitment to a transcendent value, professionals reserve the right to judge the demands of employers or patrons or the laws of the state, and to criticize or refuse to obey them. That refusal is based not on personal grounds of individual conscience or desire but on the professional grounds that the basic value or purpose of the discipline is being perverted" (ibid. 221). He notes that the inability or unwillingness of doctors in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union to exercise that independence justifies considering them "de-professionalized."

[6] Cf. Tawney: "[Professionals] may, as in the case of the successful doctor, grow rich; but the meaning of their profession, both for themselves and the public, is not that they make money, but that they make health, or safety, or knowledge, or good government, or good law…[Professions uphold} as the criterion of success the end for which the profession, whatever it may be, is carried on, and [subordinate] the inclination, appetites, and ambition of individuals to the rules of an organization which has as its object to promote the performance of function" (Tawney 1948: 94-95).

In this last book, the moral component of professionalism, far from a mere legitimation for privilege, is an essential component of the "third logic." Indeed, it is more important, even, than technical skill, because preservation of the conditions for technical skill often depend on effective ideological legitimation: "The fundamental issue is how to nurture and control occupations with complex, esoteric knowledge and skill, some of which provide us with critical personal services, others with functional knowledge without which much of our standard of living could not exist, and others with enlightenment without which we would be culturally impoverished…. The functional value of a body of specialized knowledge and skill is less central to the professional ideology than its attachment to a transcendent value that gives it meaning and justifies its independence" (ibid. 220-1).

It is understandable that Freidson emphasized "transcendent values" as a source of professional defense. Groups pursuing or attempting to hold onto power very often mobilize around values. Values provide a rhetoric that binds members and inspires action (Collins 1988: chap. 4). Alas, Freidson provides very little practical guidance for those who wish to strengthen the moral component of professionalism, apart from the implication that "transcendent values" should be at the center of public conversations among professionals and between professionals and their clients and employers.

In the remainder of this essay, I will argue that Freidson was largely correct in his diagnosis of the assault on professionalism, but that his prescription to meet the challenge was flawed. Specifically, I will argue that the ideological defense Freidson proposed is unlikely to work. To strengthen professionalism, it will be necessary to understand more clearly the political, as well as the economic and managerial, challenges it faces. Instead of relying solely on a revival of the discourse of "transcendent values," it will be necessary to meet those challenges through demonstrating the good results of professional organization and through strengthening institutional practices that build the skills, capacities for judgment, and commitments of practitioners.

Political Economy and Professional Ideology

Can ideology be central to the defense of professionalism? Let me look critically for a moment on the historical and contemporary grounds for

thinking that professionals express a coherent ideology based on the four ideological commitments emphasized by Freidson: concern for the quality of work performance, service to clients, service to society, and "transcendent values."

Until the mid to late 19th century, professionalism could be defined as technical expertise, service to clients based on a trust relation, and gentlemanly status conferred by birth and higher education (Elliott 1972; Larson 1977). The professions' focus on "transcendent values," or what I have elsewhere called "social trustee professionalism", (Brint 1994: chap. 1) was a product of an expansionary period in which new occupational groups were being absorbed into universities and granted exclusive rights to practice by the state. During this period, which can be dated roughly between 1890 and 1960, the dominant carriers of professional ideology were men in the fee-for-service professions serving middle and upper middle class clienteles and leaders of professionally dominated "middle-class" organizations such as the established churches, the universities, and the philanthropic foundations.

By contrast, the fit between "transcendent values" and corporate employment was awkward from the beginning. Mining, mechanical, and electrical engineering professionals, for example, always employed their expertise in the service of private corporations. Engineering design qualities (such as durability, safety, and convenience) were a potential source of "transcendent values" for engineers. But these values never appeared in a pristine state; they were always conditioned by corporate priorities: the desire to minimize labor costs, to market effectively to consumer preferences, and to succeed in price competition. Not surprisingly, engineers have accepted the market test of performance ; if products meet regulatory requirements and find a market of consumers who want to buy it at the price offered, it is, by definition, providing a service to clients.

Many professions have been highly stratified, and this circumstance has increased dramatically in recent years due to the cost of providing services and efforts to provide services to all who need them. Those for-profit professionals who serve upper-status clients have been far more likely to argue in favor of "transcendent values" than those serving lower-status clients. Thus, in journalism, the search for truth and independence from official sources is stronger at newspapers like *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* than it is in the mass media, in spite of the similar educational backgrounds of journalists in both sectors. Similarly, architects producing customized buildings on lucrative commissions for high-status clients focus on aesthetic values, while those employed by developers to build for a less exclusive clientele focus on efficiency in generic forms. Indeed, some professions do not purport to be rooted in "transcendent values" at all, except as a transparent piety useful in public relations. The practice of law is a technical, rule-bound activity involving representation and advocacy. Justice, the transcendent value, is a matter left to judges, juries, legislatures, and legal theorists.

The idea that professionals should be of service not just to clients, but to those most in need has an entirely different source: it is a product of public service professions connected to the state, not of the fee-for-service professionals and leaders of middle-class non-profit organizations. In the U.S. social welfare sector, the beginnings of the idea go back to the early proponents of "common schools" in the 1830s, where it built on the assumptions of democratic-republicanism that all citizens should have a basic literacy (Edwards and Richey 1963). During the course of the "New Deal" in the United States: it extended to most public sector professionals: school teachers, social workers, and parks personnel in public service. This more liberal idea of service to society is consistent with the view that some human services are so vitally important that they should be provided to every person regardless of ability to pay. This view was adopted episodically by salaried professionals as a weapon in their contests with management over legitimate spheres of professional authority, but the implication that professional services should be available through the state to anyone needing them had scant general appeal to professionals who worked in for-profit firms or in consulting relationships with firms. Other than public sector workers themselves, only socialist and liberal intellectuals showed much affinity for this view, as in Veblen's (1963 [1921]) attempt to reorient engineering in a progressive direction and Tawney's (1948) writings on the dissenting character of professionalism in the "acquisitive society."

Jobs that allow for autonomy, a sense of meaning, and sufficient mental challenge are keys to work commitments. These types of jobs are connected to labor market shelters in both the skilled crafts and the professions. However, they are also connected to the achievement of protected and privileged positions within organizations on the basis of

valued loyalties, habits, and skills. For this reason, professionals are by no means the only workers to experience work as intrinsically rewarding. Many entrepreneurs, managers, and skilled craftspeople, and some non-credentialed administrative staff people also show high levels of work and organizational commitment (Archibald et al. 1981; Blauner 1964; Mattoz 1988; *Work in America* 1973). Surprisingly, the evidence is not yet in, but if Freidson is right about the importance of market shelters, people in these occupations could also rank as high as professionals on such outcomes as concern for the quality of work and the integrity of practice, and even propensity to talk shop with colleagues[7].

Once work commitments and quality concerns are properly located in these broader strata of the work force, it is difficult to show that professionals share much in the way of a common ideology. In earlier work, I theorized that a few outlooks would be characteristic of the culture of professionalism and not shared as well by managers. These included: an emphasis on autonomy at work, support for academic meritocracy as a mode of access to jobs, and a tendency to look for ways to strike a balance between conservative, market-oriented ideals and liberal, community-oriented ideals (Brint 1994: 82-85). These views can be considered a straightforward extension of the position of professionals as relatively autonomous mental workers, whose positions depend on educational achievements and who are attached both to performance-minded organizations and occupational communities.

Thus far, however, the evidence is much stronger for education effects than for occupation effects. Higher education is strongly associated with attitudes and values ranging from higher levels of volunteering and political participation to more time spent on reading and the arts. Controlling for relevant covariates, the attitudes and values of highly educated professionals vary little from those of equally highly educated

[7] In broad outline, the research evidence supports the Durkheimian position. Durkheim (1960 [1893]) argued that occupational communities are natural sites of identity, and advocated "occupational syndicalism" as an alternative to capitalist domination of the labor process. (See also Grusky 2005). Of course, competition for scarce rewards is a countervailing influence, and has led to frequent incidents of cheating, corner cutting, lying about competitors, and other unethical practices within the professions and other sheltered occupations.

people who work outside the professions - in entrepreneurial, managerial or sales jobs (Brint and Proctor 2006; Davis 1982; Kingston et al. 2003)[8].

Finally, the survey evidence indicates that some attitudes and values attributed to the professional stratum as a whole are in fact characteristic only of particular segments of the stratum. Technical and business service professions give rise to outlooks that are much more sympathetic to business priorities than do social and cultural professions (such as city planners, journalists, and professors) or human services professions (such as teachers, nurses, and social workers). Similarly, professional work in private, for-profit organizations gives rise to outlooks supportive of business priorities, while work in government and non-profits does so much less often. Professionals in advantaged market situations are more conservative economically and more supportive of business values than those in less privileged market situations. To the extent that norms of social justice based on equity are found in the professional stratum, they are found in the public and non-profit sectors and among lower-income professionals who, lacking in economic power, are more inclined to seek the symbolic benefits of identification with the disadvantaged (see Brint 1994: chap. 5). Figure 1 provides an overview of the relationships I have outlined above.

Strengthening Professionalism

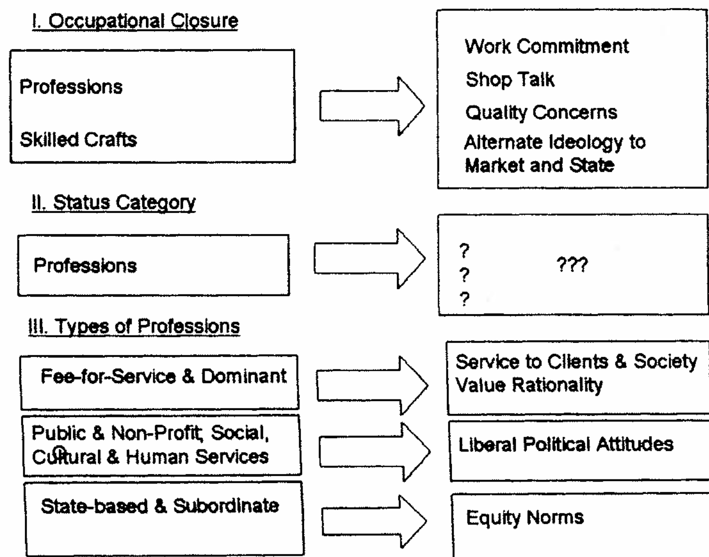
These comments are intended to show that the various ideologies of professionalism – whether commitment to quality, service to clients, service to society, or equity norms -- have diverse historical roots and are far from universally embraced by all professions. This is one reason why I find values unlikely sources of professional renewal, but it is not the only reason. The other reasons have to do with contradictions and limitations in Freidson's own view of the connection between values and practice.

First, it is clear that two ideals Freidson joins in his conception of institutional ethics - inclusive "service to society" and high standards of "quality of service" - are in fact very often in tension. Unless resources expand proportionately, the more people covered by a professional

[8] Higher education is no longer as strongly associated with professional occupations as it once was. In the United States, half of managers have college degrees, as do one-third of salespeople and technicians (Brint and Proctor 2006).

service, the less time each professional will have to provide service to each person. If a constant number of social workers or physicians are asked to double their case load to provide service to more people, each person will receive half the amount of service. Some occupations, such as social work and psychotherapy, require little in the way of supporting technologies, but others require large investments in technology or facilities, a further constraint. Expansion of service to all who can benefit requires a social compact to increase tax revenues.

Figure 1: Characteristics of Professions and Cultural Variables



Taxpayers have not been willing to support such a compact; consequently, public sector professionals, from public defenders to college teachers to social workers, have found their case loads increasing, as their institutions attempt to meet client demand in a context of limited state support. In the public sector, an alternative to unsupportable case loads has been to mix payment sources, so that the state or employers pay

part of the cost of services and consumers themselves the other part. This compromise has been developed for provision of medical, educational, and parks services, but it certainly does not allow for the equal provision of services to "all who can benefit from them".

Second, prohibitions on practices violating "transcendent values" of professions are possible only in the most obvious and easily enforced cases of violation. The participation of physicians in executions is a clear cut violation of the Hippocratic Oath and, because of the rarity of executions, the participation of physicians is easily monitored. But can the American Institute of Architects prevent practitioners from designing buildings that violate its transcendent value to beautify the built environment when the concept of beauty is contested and buildings reviled in previous generations, such as the mirrored hotels in Miami Beach, become objects worthy of historical preservation in succeeding generations? Can the teaching profession ban teachers who fail to challenge their students to achieve higher levels of understanding? The membership rolls of the teaching profession would be significantly reduced if they could. Both the uncertainty of the content of "transcendent values" and the potential for perpetrating injustice through actions in their name limit the capacity of organized professions to develop meaningful prohibitions. In some cases, union rules also play a role in preventing such prohibitions.

Third, few professions can agree on the criteria by which to judge the "transcendent values" they purport to represent. Consequently, values work better as a rallying cry against the restrictions of market and state than as bases for internal conversations. Is the "educated person" well defined by her performance on standardized tests, or by her interest in delving deeply into an area of study? Is "health" maintained by the treatment of disease, practices that encourage the avoidance of disease, or improvements in unhealthy environments? Is "justice" a commitment to the vigorous representation of clients who have the ability to pay for legal services, or does it require the vigorous representation of all who require it? Are such values as "beauty," "truth," or "virtue" definable at all?

Public schools are an important site today to see how effective values can be as a rallying point against assaults on professionalism, and how divisive they can be as bases for institutional ethics. In the United States, accountability legislation has shifted control of classroom teaching from

teachers themselves to the creators of state content standards and accountability tests and to textbook publishers who design scripted lesson plans to meet content standards. Teachers have responded by insisting that accountability testing is a poor substitute for more authentic assessments of children's learning. They challenge the tests for focusing too exclusively on narrow fact recollection in a multiple choice format, and ignoring critical thinking skills. They have also insisted that the skills and experiences of teachers are essential for promoting an enjoyable environment in school, for addressing individual student needs, and for developing exercises that interest and challenge student learners. Teachers' rebellion against NCLB is based on an assertion of the importance of professionalism. The technical skills of teachers are at the heart of this assertion, but the value of a broader conception of the educated person is implicit (Brint and Teele 2006).

During more settled periods, teachers find it difficult, if not impossible, to agree on what the value of education might mean. Some teachers feel that education should produce well-rounded people; others that it should produce employable and reliable workers. Some teachers are interested in socio-emotional development; others in cognitive development only. Some look for signs of engagement in learning; others judge performance only. Some hope to develop critical thinking skills; others are content with fact retrieval. Teachers in low income areas would be satisfied if their children showed up for school, did not disrupt class, and turned in most of their homework (Anyon 1990).

The Assault on Professionalism: A Reconsideration

Although I cannot agree entirely with Freidson's proposals about how best to save "the soul of professionalism," I believe that he was correct to raise an alarm about the future of professionalism. Professionalism is under assault[9], and it is necessary therefore to consider in greater detail

[9] Nor is Freidson alone in his assessment. Another keen observer, Andrew Abbott, has written in a similar vein about the academic profession: "Outside the elite level, the social structural foundations of disciplines are steadily eroding, both in terms of the employment relations and more importantly in terms of the curriculum. There is a steady pressure from the private sector for a more vocational emphasis, and there will soon be pressure to let the private sector take over the 'measurable-outcome,' profitable parts of education just as it has already done in medicine and social service. It seems inevitable that we will see a much smaller portion of (the) mass educational system under the direct control of

just what sort of problems professionals face and how these problems could be addressed, if not primarily through the reassertion of "transcendent values."

Freidson emphasizes the weakening of professionalism as an influence over the control of work in relation to two ascendant logics: the market logic of abiding by the preferences of consumers and the managerial logic of standardizing treatments for efficiency and effectiveness. By focusing exclusively on these two "alternative logics," Freidson misses an equally important threat: the politicization of knowledge. Powerful forces outside the professions (whether representing political party interests or highly mobilized interest groups) have shown that they are capable of limiting the authority of knowledge in the adjudication of policy controversies. The most important recent case is the role played by the fossil fuel industries in slowing responses to global warming in spite of consensus in the scientific community about the nature and magnitude of the problem. Powerful forces outside the professions have also shown that they are capable of dictating to professionals what they should be looking for in their work. This is a direct incursion into the heart of professionalism – the technical authority professionals claim based on their expertise. Notorious cases exist in this area as well, such as the shaping of intelligence analysis to support politicians' beliefs about the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Politicization is an everyday challenge in many professional settings. Teachers, for example, have been told by politicians (and their allies in educational bureaucracies) to focus on standardized test results, rather than multiple indicators of cognitive and socio-emotional development. On the other side of the political spectrum, some social movement activists would like to make "social engagement" as important in college classrooms as intellectual engagement.

The politicization of knowledge makes an ethics and values-based program of revival more difficult to establish and promote. Even among intellectuals, the critiques of Kuhn (1970), Foucault (1979), and the postmodernists have shaken confidence that truth claims (or any value

disciplinary academics than is now…Disciplines won't vanish from the mass university, but they could become relatively much less important in it" (Abbott 2002: 226).

claims) are universalistic and absolute. We have become acutely aware of the vested interests attached to truth claims and their historical variability. We have also become acutely aware of the extent to which institutional contexts shape the character of what becomes accepted as timeless truth. For these reasons, Freidson's response to the challenges faced by professionalism does not extend far enough into the heart of the problem. In an age in which ideologies of all types have become more important, an ideological defense of professionalism can be more divisive than unifying.

So, let us instead reconsider what it is in the "soul of professionalism" that we can hope to save – and should try to save. As a practical force in the world, professionalism is a matter of expertise, trained judgment, and commitment to the occupational direction of work. These are the fundamental features of professionalism, and they are the features that are most in need of support. I will therefore propose an alternative course, emphasizing the value of demonstrating the beneficial results of professional (as opposed to market or bureaucratic-managerial) authority and institutional reforms to strengthen the technical skills of professionals and their commitments to the occupational community. "Transcendent values" have a role in this alternative course, but primarily as a response to external threats, not as medium in which to build internal commitments.

To properly consider the difficulty of the task of strengthening professionalism, we must face squarely the uncomfortable fact that submitting to the control of an occupational community is difficult and unsatisfying for many people at times; it is a restriction of freedom as much as a precondition for freedom. It requires the willingness to accept the authority of professional leaders and, when necessary, to argue with and discipline colleagues who stray too far from the accepted standards of the discipline. This takes courage, and it requires a primary identification with occupational elites, rather than managers or clients.

Recognizing the Progressive Moments of Challengers

Paradoxically, a workable program to strengthen professionalism must begin with recognition by professionals of the progressive elements of market, bureaucratic, and political pressures for reform. In so far as market pressures are concerned with consumer satisfaction, they can be a guide to improvements in professional practice. Such improvements

increase consumer satisfaction without imperiling technical authority. Thus, the effectiveness of teachers undoubtedly improved with the advent of the consumer-led insistence on teaching evaluations. Teachers learned that they have to be structured, clear, enthusiastic, humorous and personal at times, and accessible to be effective in the lecture hall (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005: 114-119). Commodification, another outcome of market pressures, has had an exceptionally progressive impact on certain professional capacities. Reference texts and statistical packages are examples of commodifications of knowledge that have led to the broader diffusion of useful knowledge in the hands of practitioners and clients alike. Consumerism is a threat only when necessary discretion and the higher purpose of a profession's work are sacrificed to consumer satisfaction. Clearly, the customer is not always right when it comes to professional services. Patients do not know what will make them healthy; clients do not know what legal arguments will bring them safety; and students do not know what teaching will give them the knowledge, skills and capacities of mind they need. This is the great difference between professional (and other expert) services offered on the market compared to goods and services whose value the customer is competent to judge.

Bureaucratic regulations also have their progressive moments. Because professions often reward incompetence, professional discretion must be continuously questioned. Some of the procedures of professionalism can be standardized to reduce costs and unhelpful variations in practice. If yearly check-ups for people under 60 show no relation to disease prevention, physicians have no grounds to continue to perform them and regulations about how frequently they should be conducted are warranted. As we learn more, we are able to translate more "rules-of-thumb" into standard operating procedures. Nor should professions be insulated from political pressures. Political pressures can also break up the insularity of professional practices. The medical community, after all, was not in the forefront of demanding new treatments for AIDS; rather the activist community demanded treatments and the medical community responded (Epstein 1996). The dependence of professionals on the market power of individual or corporate clients has created many such blind spots.

Professionals must therefore try to recognize when market-led consumer preferences, bureaucracy-led standardization, and politically-based advocacy improve practices or reduce costs without subverting quality standards or valid areas of discretion. In other words, they must learn to

recognize the progressive moments of their challengers, while protecting the useful and necessary prerogatives of professionalism. This, of course, is not an easy balancing act and, because the public (or elements of the public) associates consumerism, standardization, and political mobilization with progress, professionals often appear to be fighting rearguard battles for unnecessary privileges.

Demonstrating Results to Skeptical Publics

Under the circumstances, the best defense of professionalism will not be the assertion of "transcendent values," but rather the demonstration of results. Both technical expertise and value rationality should have demonstration value to the relevant publics who evaluate and consume professional services. This means that research to show the value of professional quality and professional discretion is essential. Architects should be able to show developers that design elements lead consumers to associate their buildings with pleasurable or uplifting experiences. Teachers should be able to show that educating the "whole child," including social and emotional facets of the child, leads to more interest in school, better performance on assignments, and lower rates of drop out than education focusing on high-stakes testing. If high-stakes tests in a few core subjects lead to better outcomes, teachers will have difficulty convincing the relevant publics (taxpayers, educational administrators and politicians) that the "whole child" approaches of progressive educators serve children's interests more effectively - and rightly so. Of course, struggle over the definition of the relevant value - in this case a "well-educated person" - is involved in any such demonstration, as is struggle over appropriate measures of the underlying value. When challenged, the moral component of professionalism - the definition of the goal state and the criteria for measuring it - must be engaged through ideological struggle backed by research, but the value of professionalism for reaching the goal state, as compared to the relevant alternatives, can be proven only through demonstrated results.

Self-criticism and self-correction based on results will be essential to the long-term survival of professionalism. The age of trusting the experts is now passing, because expertise is costly and has not always proven trustworthy. The status value of professional service remains formidable for those who can pay for it, but many cannot pay for it. Demonstrated results are the only effective response to the challenges of market and state rationalization. Consider higher education as a professional service

industry: Today, it has many competitors and potential competitors. Status continues to matter, but for how long? If undergraduate education fails to educate, either because professors are ineffective in the classroom or because students are not engaged with their studies, undergraduate education will not likely continue in its current costly-to-deliver form. At least it will not continue for the majority of students. To maintain professionalism, educators will have to learn how to make professors more effective and students more engaged. If they cannot, one of two outcomes will eventually occur: either students will opt for low-cost, web-based alternatives; or private firms will enter the undergraduate market more aggressively with standardized, but face-to-face curricula. The DeVry Institute has already demonstrated that adult learners can be trained effectively at a fraction of the cost of most undergraduate colleges (Kirp 2003: chap. 13).

In some cases, the professional community is the only community capable of evaluating work. This is true, for example, in the more purely scholarly professions. But in most cases, disinterested parties outside the profession can evaluate its work and alternatives to professionalism can also be evaluated. Some of these evaluations may not support professionalism. Where they do not support professionalism, a good case can be made that the work previously done by the profession should be left to businessmen, bureaucrats, and technicians.

Institutional Reforms to Build Skills and Commitments

In addition to demonstrating results, professions can try to make sure that their institutions are functioning as well as they possibly can. For these purposes, I doubt that strengthening institutional ethics or "transcendent values" will be most important. Instead, professional associations will need to consider how concrete organizational mechanisms can build the skills and capacities for judgment of practitioners. I will suggest four ways that institutional reforms can matter: (1) by buffering the technical core of professional activity from unwarranted commercial and managerial influences, (2) by rethinking training programs where they are not effective in building skills and capacities, (3) by putting more energy into outreach to the professional periphery, and (4) by adapting "transcendent values" to new knowledge and new conditions of service.

(1) Protecting professionalism requires buffering technical expertise from potentially corrupting market, bureaucratic, and political pressures. Very

often this is done by building walls between "professional" spheres and "market" or "administrative" spheres of organizations. This is the reason why editorial offices are buffered from advertising offices in the better (i.e. more "professional") newspapers. It is also the reason why educational policy is walled off from admissions and development offices in universities. It is why the large accounting firms were forced, under legislative pressure, to separate their management consulting operations and their certified public accounting operations. But economic, bureaucratic, and political pressures are continuous. It will continue to be important to support colleagues who speak out about the incursions of unwarranted economic, bureaucratic, or political influences into areas of technical expertise requiring trained judgment. The rights to the technically competent must be defended both organizationally and interpersonally.

(2) The credentialing system is at the heart of professionalism. Consequently, training programs that are failing to build technical skills, relevant capacities for judgment, and value commitments adapted to contemporary practice will need to be reformed. Today, the most innovative engineering programs, such as those at Harvey Mudd College in California and the Olin Institute in Massachusetts, are organized around collaborative design teams whose members work together to solve concrete engineering problems, sometimes in internship relationships with private firms. These programs produce engineers who have high levels of esprit de corps and are capable of working in the collaborative environments they will encounter as adults. Most professional programs provide opportunities for interaction with clients in practice settings (think of internships in medicine and business). Most also have "signature pedagogies" requiring public performances of competence (think of moot court and architectural exhibitions). Most also require public accountability in classroom interactions (think of medical rounds and Socratic questioning in law schools). These pedagogical designs build commitment through active learning with tangible results and public accountability.

By contrast, teaching and learning in the liberal arts has hardly adapted for more than a century. Passive learning activities, such as lectures, are the staples of instruction, and active learning opportunities are rare. Few moments of public accountability exist, and little in the way of concrete public demonstrations of competence. (Papers and tests are

demonstrations of competence, but they are not public.) Students have little exposure to practice environments outside of the classroom, and the importance of the work may be more often assumed than conveyed. Although the liberal arts have been at the core of the university, this centrality is now changing, and they likely have quite a bit to learn from the professions as they attempt to reform teaching and learning (Shulman 1997). Some arts and sciences fields have the potential to involve students from the beginning in research activities. They can do so, while building theory and methods instruction into the design of research-centered courses. In an era in which increasing numbers of students are disengaged from their studies, all disciplines will need to provide incentives and opportunities for students to care.

(3) Freidson correctly observes that elitism is a problem for the professions. "Ideologies invoked to attack the fundamental institutions of professionalism deprecate claims of exclusive cognitive authority on the part of those creating and practicing a discipline. Implicitly they deny that specialized bodies of knowledge and skill are any more reliable or valid than everyday knowledge. The epithet 'elitist' expresses that denial and colors it with the charges of inequality, exploitation, domination, and injustice" (Freidson 2001: 207). Strong technical training and internal "policing" to encourage loyalty to professional standards of conduct can go only so far to counter of "elitism".

The reward structure and interaction structure of professions fosters elitism, because professional rewards tend to be reserved for elites and interactions are also highly stratified. Therefore, in addition to celebrating intellectual contributions to the disciplines, professions might consider establishing awards to celebrate the accomplishments of practitioners who live up to the highest ideals of service in the profession and demonstrate its contributions to society. Similarly, intellectual elites in the disciplines should consider ways to share the "charisma" of knowledge with colleagues in non-elite settings. For many years, the major federal granting agencies have earmarked funds to support research in low-submission states and in institutions enrolling high proportions of under-represented minorities. The professional associations should consider similar programs of outreach, including sending outstanding teachers and researchers out to non-elite institutions to provide seminars. Phi Beta Kappa sponsors such a lecture series for its national awardees. The professional associations should consider following suit by sending prize

winning authors to practice settings around the country as part of educational outreach programs. National and regional associations might also consider appointing task forces to discuss ways to increase the involvement of disengaged practitioners in the life of the discipline.

(4) Finally, professions must change with the times. Professionals will need to continue to have serious discussions about whether the ultimate ends of their work are being met and how these ultimate ends can be met more effectively. In this respect, discussions of "transcendent values" continue to be an important touchstone of professional life, just as discussions of profitability will always be essential to commercial life. But we must recognize, at the same time, that our understandings of the "transcendent values" of many professions have changed since the age of "social trustee professionalism". New challenges and new understandings eventually put pressure on old values. Today, medicine is as much about health maintenance as it is about disease prevention. Environmental engineering is as much about human and environmental sustainability as it is about environmental protection. Teaching is as much about creating opportunities and increasing engagement as it is about communicating facts. Sometimes, as Freidson observes, resistance and refusal on the basis of "transcendent values" is necessary, but in the long sweep of professional ideology we can see clearly that so too is the adaptation of values to new understandings and new conditions of service.

Conclusion

In this essay, I have disagreed with some of Freidson's analysis of the problems facing professionalism and also with some of his recommendations for saving the "soul of professionalism". But I do agree with him that the "soul of professionalism" - the autonomy of professional organization and professional work - is under assault and needs support. We can honor the memory of Eliot Freidson by acting on the final words of his last book: "There is…still some popular foundation for the professional's claim of license to balance the public good against the needs and demands of the immediate clients and employers…Professionals claim the…right to control the uses of their discipline, so they must resist economic and political restrictions that arbitrarily limit its benefits to others". Rather than turning attention to the creation of "institutional ethics" or mobilization around "transcendent values", I have argued that the professions will resist economic and political restrictions most successfully where they demonstrate the good

results of professional (rather than market or political) organization and where the organizational mechanisms of their associations build technical skills, capacities for refined judgment, and commitment to the professional community throughout the entire body of practitioners. Mobilization around transcendent values will continue to be important as a defense against market and state, but these mobilizations cannot be effective in the absences of demonstrated results and institutional mechanisms for maintaining and extending expert skills and commitments to the occupational community.

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