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DEVELOPING AN IDEAL-TYPICAL APPROACH TO SOCIAL WORK AS A PROFESSION

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ABSTRACT

Developing an ideal-typical approach of social work as a profession
According to the global definition (IFSW, 2014), social work is a profession. Since the second half of the twentieth century, however, the meaning of professionalism has become blurred and its practices have been criticized fiercely. In order to understand, appreciate and strengthen social work as a profession, a sociological equivalent of positive psychology might be needed. Such a positive sociology (Stebbins, 2009) of professionalism would focus unequivocally on its meaningful and valuable potential. In this respect, Freidson's (2001) ideal-typical approach of professionalism is quite promising. Its outcome does not fully meet Weber's (1904, 1913, 1922) criteria for an ideal-typical construction, though. This article argues that it is impossible to develop a solid scientific ideal type of professionalism based on a power perspective, as tried by Freidson (2001). A value perspective opens up a more promising approach for strengthening social work as a profession.

Key words

Social work, profession, positive sociology, ideal-typical approach, power, value, expertise

SAMENVATTING

Het ontwikkelen van een ideaaltypische benadering van sociaal werk als een professie
Elk tijdsgewicht vraagt op zijn eigen wijze om alertheid ten aanzien van kansen en bedreigingen voor het sociaal werk. De huidige fase van transitie en transformatie, van participatiesamenleving en aanbestedingsprocedures vormt daarop geen uitzondering. Ze biedt met name de uitgelezen mogelijkheid om het sociale (weer) in het middelpunt van het sociaal werk te plaatsen. Belangrijke actuele bedreigingen zijn bij nader toezien vooral nieuwe verschijningsvormen van bekende mechanismen. Dat de huidige decentralisaties (Wet maatschappelijke ondersteuning, Jeugdwet, Participatiewet) toch vooral op centraal niveau door de landelijke overheid zijn geïnitieerd en door de lokale overheid worden geregisseerd, wijst op de welbekende dreiging van managerialisme en bureaucratisering. Dat vooral de vraag van de burger centraal dient te staan, staat daar niet alleen enigszins haaks op maar herinnert vooral aan de valkuil van consumentisme en marktwerking. Om deze bedreigingen het hoofd te bieden, is dan ook niet uitsluitend een flexibele omgang met actuele ontwikkelingen van belang maar vooral een solide professionele identiteit.

Sociaal werk presenteert zichzelf als een professie, zoals onder meer blijkt uit de internationale definitie (IFSW, 2014) en uit de naam van de Nederlandse beroepsvereniging (BPSW). In het hedendaagse taalgebruik is echter niet meer zo duidelijk wat dit betekent. Professionals zijn immers lang niet altijd lid van een professie, en zelfs criminaliteit blijkt volgens de media te kunnen professionaliseren. Ook de waarde lijkt te zijn gedevalueerd in de afgelopen eeuw, namelijk van helden (denk bijvoorbeeld aan de pioniers van het maatschappelijk werk, zoals Hélène Mercier en Marie Muller-Lulofs) via daders (zoals in de boeken van kritische auteurs als Hans Achterhuis en Ivan Illich) tot slachtoffers (zoals de lotgevallen van bedrijfsmaatschappelijk werker Fred Spijkers pijnlijk duidelijk maken). Wat nodig lijkt te zijn, is een equivalent van de positieve psychologie: een positieve sociologie die inzoomt op de actuele en potentiële waarde van professionaliteit voor burgers en samenleving evenals voor professies en professionals. Het laatste werk van Freidson (2001) – een belangrijke inspiratiebron voor Tonkens (2003) – biedt daarvoor een uitgelezen aanknopingspunt.

Freidson maakt een onderscheid tussen drie modellen voor de organisatie van arbeid: de vrije markt, de hiërarchische bureaucratie en de georganiseerde professionaliteit. Teneinde

de geschetste begripsmatige onduidelijkheden betreffende professionaliteit te vermijden, maakt Freidson gebruik van de door Weber (1904, 1913, 1922) ontwikkelde ideaaltypische methode. Bij de toepassing daarvan kunnen echter kanttekeningen worden geplaatst. Weber benadrukt namelijk dat de constructie van een ideaaltype begint met de betekenisvolle waardering van een cultureel verschijnsel. In Freidsons constructie vindt echter een impliciete verschuiving plaats van de betekenisvolle waardering van professionaliteit, namelijk van een machtsperspectief (controle van het werk) via een expertiseperspectief (mentale discretionaire specialisatie) naar een waardenperspectief (goed werk doen). Hierdoor ontstaat een onevenwichtigheid in de analyse: het nuchtere en kritische begin staat haaks op het geëngageerde en lyrische einde.

In dit artikel wordt betoogd dat een machtsperspectief weliswaar van belang is voor een kritische analyse van professionele praktijken, maar dat het ontwikkelen van een ideaaltype op basis van dit perspectief enkel leidt tot een dogmatisch paradigma dat ongeschikt is als basis voor wetenschappelijk onderzoek. Het machtsparadigma impliceert immers dat onderzoekers niet alleen professionaliteit maar ook hun eigen onderzoeksactiviteiten volledig tot dat perspectief dienen te herleiden, iets wat niet onmogelijk is maar wel hun geloofwaardigheid zal ondergraven. Verder leidt het machtsparadigma tot de contradictie dat professionalisering letterlijk gelijkgesteld wordt aan machtstoename, een veronderstelling die ingaat tegen de intenties van ons spreken. Bovendien kan het machtsparadigma niet worden weerlegd door te verwijzen naar concrete verschijnselen in de werkelijkheid, en dat impliceert dat het niet wetenschappelijk is volgens Poppers falsificatieprincipe. Ten slotte leidt het machtsparadigma tot reductionisme, waardoor de belangrijkste vraag niet kan worden gesteld, namelijk in hoeverre de macht van professies en professionals gelegitimeerd is. Het beantwoorden van deze vraag vereist namelijk een verschuiving naar het expertiseperspectief (de complexiteit van de werkzaamheden) en het waardenperspectief (de beoogde uitkomst van de werkzaamheden).

Een machtsparadigma leidt tot wat zou kunnen worden aangeduid als een buitenperspectief op professionaliteit, want hierbinnen is geen ruimte voor aandacht voor wat in een professie gebeurt in termen van goed werk doen (waardenperspectief) en werk goed doen (expertiseperspectief). Abbott (1988) heeft overigens laten zien dat de macht van professies de facto zeer beperkt is, bijvoorbeeld door aanpalende professies met veelal vergelijkbare macht, maar met name door mondige burgers die zo nodig hun heil elders zoeken evenals door de overheid die desgewenst ingrijpt in de arbeidsmarkt. In een volgend artikel zal worden gepoogd een ideaaltypisch model van professionaliteit te ontwikkelen dat gebaseerd is op het waardenperspectief, dat het

expertiseperspectief en het machtsperspectief daarbinnen een plek geeft, en dat behulpzaam kan zijn om de professionele identiteit van sociaal werk verder te versterken.

Trefwoorden

Sociaal werk, professie, positieve sociologie, ideaaltypische benadering, macht, waarde, expertise

INTRODUCTION

To safeguard social work against the sometimes-disruptive forces of bureaucratization and managerialism on the one hand and marketization and consumerism on the other, a firm professional identity is indispensable. More than a century ago, Abraham Flexner posed the question in his eponymous article: *Is Social Work a Profession?* His conclusion is promising: 'In the long run, the first, main, and indispensable criterion of a profession will be the possession of a professional spirit, and that test social work may, if it will, fully satisfy' (2001, p. 165). At present, this question could appear to be obsolete, for the global definition of the IFSW (2014) states self-assuredly that social work is a profession:

> *Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversity are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, the humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance well-being.*

Yet Flexner's question is nevertheless problematic, not so much because of the development of social work since then but mainly because of changes in the meaning and valuation of professionalism, as a folk concept as well as a scientific one (Becker, 1962).

Nowadays, common references to professionalism are somewhat confusing: a professional isn't necessarily a member of a profession, and professionalization can even refer to criminals and their organizations. Even the social sciences appear to agree only about the professional identity of the three classical 'learned' professions (divinity, medicine, and law), but not about the multitude of 'occupational' professions (Freidson, 2001) that have emerged since the nineteenth century. Sometimes the scientific demarcation of professionalism appears to depend on the

focus of the research. Larson (1977), who narrows her research down to market control and social mobility, excludes the clergy, the military and politicians, for they 'do not transact their services for income on a market' (pp. xvii, 271). On the other hand, Abbott (1988), who widens his research to competition between professions, regards 'automobile repair as an intellectual discipline' (p. 8) and even claims that 'mediumship fits the basic definition of a profession very well' (p. 29).

According to Karpman (1968, 2007), only three roles are required for a drama: a persecutor, a victim and a rescuer. He also emphasizes that dramatic characters often switch roles, like the Pied Piper, who starts as a rescuer, then becomes a victim and ends as a persecutor. Karpman's account of the drama triangle can be used to roughly sketch the transitions in the public estimation of professionalism. In the early twentieth century the 'social trustee model of professionalism' (Dzur, 2008) was predominant, and professionals were esteemed as rescuers – take Albert Schweitzer. Early scholars like Flexner seem to be convinced of the value of professionalism for the advancement of society and the well-being of humanity (cf. Carr-Saunders, 1928; Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933; Durkheim, 1893, 1897, 1950). In the second half of the twentieth century, however, professionals started to be viewed as persecutors, almost like the notorious Josef Mengele. In the footsteps of the 'masters of suspicion' (Ricoeur, 1969) – to wit Nietzsche, Marx and Freud – scholars developed the 'radical critique model of professionalism' (Dzur, 2008). Parsons (1951) focused on social control, the early Freidson (1970) on the production of deviant behaviour, Illich, Zola, McKnight, Caplan and Shaiken (1977) on the loss of autonomy, and Foucault (1975) on discipline, i.e. on economic productivity and political impotence. More recently, attention for the 'assault on professionalism' (Freidson, 2001) casts the professional as a victim, for instance of bureaucratic, managerial and economic forces (e.g. Lipsky, 1980; Smith & Lipsky, 1993).

In order to free professionalism from undesirable meanings and valuations, a sociological equivalent of positive psychology (Lopez & Snyder, 2009; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) might be needed. Such a positive sociology focuses on the study of what people do to make their lives (in the domains of work, leisure and non-work obligation) worth living, that is substantially rewarding, satisfying and fulfilling (Stebbins, 2009). This paper tries to focus on the actual and potential meaning and value of professionalism for service users and society at large as well as for professions and professionals. A good starting point for such a paradigmatic shift might be found in the last book by the late Freidson (2001) – one of the most influential publications on the subject, in sports jargon a real contender for a medal of all times and a gold medal of the century

(cf. e.g. Google Scholar). In the Netherlands this book sparked a thorough re-evaluation of the notion of professionalism (see e.g. Duyvendak, Knijn & Kremer, 2006; Tonkens, 2003). To be clear, such a positive approach deviates from the predominantly critical and problem-centred approaches of professionalism, in sociology as well as in social work. What might be required is a critical approach to critical approaches, especially those based on a power perspective; this of course does not imply that abuse of professionalism should be neglected.

It is quite tempting to characterize the latter Freidson as the Moses of contemporary research on professionalism, as metaphorically speaking it appears he chose the right direction but did not reach the promised land. With his choice for the ideal-typical method he selected a promising approach, and his synthesizing analysis is a treasure trove of valuable insights into professionalism. Yet the result of his endeavour is somewhat unsatisfactory and disappointing, as he himself seems to acknowledge, for he speaks of 'my sense of inadequacy' and characterizes his own work as 'highly imperfect', a 'doughy mass' and 'indigestible' (p. vii). Comparing his book to an unexplored goldmine is rather irresistible: the most important impression that lingers after studying it is that it should be possible to develop a more solid ideal type of professionalism on the basis of the same method and the same material. Indeed, an analysis of his work provides the basis for an alternative outcome, namely the outline of a model of professionalism that highlights its actual and potential value for furthering a humane society. Such an ideal type could turn out to be quite helpful in strengthening the professional identity and status of social work.

FREIDSON'S IDEAL-TYPICAL MODEL OF PROFESSIONALISM

Freidson (2001) states that all approaches to professionalism have so far been inductive, which explains why they have yielded rich empirical material but fall short conceptually. His aim is to present a model of the logic of professionalism 'that can enjoy the same privileged intellectual status' (p. 4) as the logics of the market (Adam Smith) and of bureaucracy (Max Weber): all three ideal-typical models for organizing work focused on delivering good quality at reasonable costs. The scope of Freidson's analysis will emerge by focusing on its starting point and its results.

Freidson starts his book with a definition of professionalism (p. 12):

> I use the word 'professionalism' to refer to the institutional circumstances in which the mem-
> bers of occupations rather than consumers or managers control work. [...] Professionalism
> may be said to exist when an organized occupation gains the power to determine who is qua-

lified to perform a defined set of tasks, to prevent all others from performing that work, and to control the criteria by which to evaluate performance. […] The organized occupation creates the circumstances under which its members are free of control by those who employ them.

In the free market work is primarily controlled by consumers, in the hierarchical bureaucracy it is controlled by managers, and in organized professionalism by the members of the occupation, that is, the workers. Freidson characterizes professions as organized occupations with power over exclusion, qualification and evaluation, and professionals as workers who control their work (p. 32, italics left out): 'This monopolistic control is the essential characteristic of ideal-typical professionalism from which all else flows'. This characterization of professionalism as 'control of work' appears to start with the early Freidson (1970, pp. 71–72), is adopted by Larson (1977, p. xii) and Abbott (1988, p. xii), and is maintained by the later Freidson (2001, pp. 1, 5, 12) as well as other scholars (e.g. Watson, 2012, p. 223).

The results of Freidson's approach are five ideal-typical characteristics of professionalism, which he summarizes at the beginning of the second part of his book (p. 127):

I discussed in the five chapters of part I what I consider to be the interdependent elements of the ideal type, professionalism. They are:

[1] *specialized work in the officially recognized economy that is believed to be grounded in a body of theoretically based, discretionary knowledge and skill and that is accordingly given special status in the labor force;*

[2] *exclusive jurisdiction in a particular division of labor created and controlled by occupational negotiation;*

[3] *a sheltered position in both external and internal labor markets that is based on qualifying credentials created by the occupation;*

[4] *a formal training program lying outside the labor market that produces the qualifying credentials, which is controlled by the occupation and associated with higher education; and*

[5] *an ideology that asserts greater commitment to doing good work than to economic gain and to the quality rather than the economic efficiency of work.*

The ideology claims both specialized knowledge that is authoritative in a functional or cognitive sense and commitment to a transcendent value that guides and adjudicates the way that knowledge is employed.

WEBER'S METHOD FOR DEVELOPING AN IDEAL-TYPICAL MODEL

In order to analyse Freidson's approach to professionalism it is necessary to take a closer look at Weber's (1904, 1913, 1922) account of the ideal-typical method, which is embedded in his ideas about knowledge in general and cultural studies (*Kulturwissenschaft*) in particular. Weber presupposes that reality is perceived by humans in an immediate way, as a chaotic and irrational, meaningless and senseless plurality of transient events. The finite human mind can know infinite reality only in a selective (not encompassing) and discursive (not intuitive) way. Weber describes both culture and science as a particular relatedness to empirical reality. Culture is in essence a meaningful valuation (*Sinn und Bedeutung; Wertideen*) of meaningless and senseless reality, whereas science is a rational structuring (*denkende Ordnung*) of irrational and chaotic reality. According to Weber, in cultural studies the cultural content as meaningful valuation precedes the scientific approach as rational structuring. This science is therefore subjective in its choice of subject and method, but at the same time empirical in its basis and focused on objective results. This view of cultural studies implies that the objectivity of its results is not related to the immediately perceived reality but to the cultural phenomena as meaningful valuation of empirical reality. Whereas natural studies (*Naturwissenschaft*) are focused on deductively explaining (*Erklären*) the perceptible reality on the basis of general notions and regularities, for Weber cultural studies are engaged in the interpretative and qualitative understanding (*Verstehen*) of a particular and unique historical event as a whole, in its meaning, coherence and development. In cultural studies, general knowledge is only a means since particular understanding is the true objective.

Four steps can be discerned in Weber's references to the construction of an ideal type: first the choice of a phenomenon, then successively the selection, intensification and structuring of its characteristics. In this sequence, Weber's interpretation of cultural studies as meaningful valuation underlying rational structuring can be recognized. The starting point for the construction of an ideal type is the subjective choice for a particular cultural phenomenon, which according to Weber's epistemology is always mediated by a meaningful valuation. The second step is the selection of particular aspects of the phenomenon based on the meaningful valuation it is associated with. This implies that it is possible to develop more than one ideal type of the same phenomenon, based on different meaningful valuations. The third step is to expose the selected aspects to one-sided rational intensification or maximization (*gedankliche Steigerung*), in order to express the meaningful valuation optimally and unequivocally, even better than could be achieved in reality. Rational structuring is the last step. The selected and intensified aspects of the

phenomenon are combined into a coherent whole, based on rational principles. The result is a particular ideal type of a particular cultural phenomenon.

The ideal-typical approach results in the construction of a concept: abstract, univocal and consistent. Weber emphasizes that such a construction does not describe a reality, neither in an empirical nor in a transcendent way. Such a construction is inevitably of a temporal and transient nature, as it refers to a culture-bound phenomenon and is based on a culture-bound valuation. Ideal types are not ends but means and as such necessary, given the limitations of human cognition as well as the nature of cultural studies. In Weber's description four interrelated functions can be discerned; together they elucidate how an ideal type can be helpful for empirical cultural studies. First is the search function: the ideal type is a heuristic device that helps gain awareness of certain phenomena. Second, the rendering function: an ideal type can help systematically describe phenomena. Third is the gauge function, which means that phenomena can be compared to the ideal type as a criterion or a benchmark (*Grenzbegriff*). Lastly, there is the attribution function. Weber states that cultural studies are focused on understanding and therefore not interested in complex causal explanations of phenomena as a whole but only in the attribution (*Zurechnung*) of causes to the most meaningful aspects of the phenomena. Ideal types support this attribution. In short, ideal types are artificial constructions for cultural studies in order to detect, describe, evaluate and understand cultural phenomena. Weber emphasizes that an ideal type is not an ideal. Within the boundaries of his view of cultural studies this is true, but a concept resulting from a value-based interpretation of a phenomenon and a value-based selection and intensification of its characteristics could in practice very well turn out to be a valuable ideal.

Weber (1913) distinguishes two different types of ideal-typical construction. On the one hand he considers it possible to construct an ideal type even without really understanding the phenomenon at hand. In such a case the mere description of the phenomenon is considered to be the ideal type. However, it is hard to see how such an ideal type can be of any help to really understand cultural phenomena, as it will be nothing more than a duplication of the phenomenon itself. Using such an ideal type as a benchmark for another, similar phenomenon boils down to merely comparing two phenomena, neither or which are obviously quite understood. This could very well be the reason why Weber, on the other hand, emphasizes that a rational understanding of a phenomenon is the most solid ground for developing an ideal type. Weber furthermore believes that ideal types based on a goal-oriented rationality provide the best basis for developing an understanding of reality, even in its irrational aspects.

SOME REMARKS ON FREIDSON'S IDEAL-TYPICAL CONSTRUCTION

Weber's account of the ideal-typical method raises some questions about Freidson's approach and model of professionalism. First of all, the construction of an ideal type should be based on a meaningful valuation, whereas in the course of Freidson's book on professionalism there seems to be a shift in tone as well as content. In the Introduction, Freidson states that he wants to 'avoid the pretentious, sometimes sanctimonious overtones' and the 'fog of mystique' associated with professions and that he instead aims at 'secularizing the issues' (p. 13). However, in the last chapter he speaks overtly about the 'soul' and the 'spirit' of professionalism (e.g. pp. 197, 213, 217, 220). In his meaningful valuation of professionalism, Freidson seems to shift somewhat implicitly from a power perspective ('control of work'; pp. 1, 5, 12) as the foundation of his analysis to an expertise perspective ('mental discretionary specialization'; p. 34), to conclude with a value perspective ('doing good work'; p. 127; cf. p. 2). This shift is not addressed in Freidson's own analysis, which implies that his ideal-typical construction lacks solid ground in an unambiguous meaningful valuation.

Since an ideal type should be based on a selection of relevant characteristics founded in the chosen meaningful valuation of the phenomenon at hand, it is no surprise that Freidson's selection, however encompassing his analysis may be, is incomplete. Freidson for instance rejects a code of ethics and a professional association as ideal-typical characteristics of professionalism because not all existing professions possess these characteristics (p. 4). This reason is at odds with the demand that an ideal type should be based on a meaningful selection and able to function as a benchmark. Furthermore, several relevant characteristics of professionalism are not explicitly mentioned in Freidson's construction for unclear reasons – most notably the 'complexity of the task' (p. 153), 'responsibility' (p. 3), a 'secular calling' (p. 108) and 'expert' (p. 21).

Freidson's stance towards professionalism oscillates between an engaged and a relativistic perspective (cf. the description of the first and last chapters in the Introduction of his book, pp. 13–14). These shifts in tone suggest that Freidson failed to make up his mind concerning what to think of professionalism. There are relativistic elements even in his summary of the ideal type of professionalism quoted above: he refers to 'ideology' and uses phrases like 'is believed to be', 'asserts' and 'claims' (p. 127). It should be noted that relativism runs against the grain of intensification as one of the principles for developing an ideal type. It is therefore noteworthy that intensification is the only aspect of Weber's ideal-typical approach to which Freidson does not refer in his book at all.

While an ideal type should be rationally structured, Freidson's concept of professionalism seems to reflect primarily the steps of a scholarly quest, more than the logic of the phenomenon itself. While he states, as quoted above, that control of work is 'the essential characteristic […] from which all else flows' (p. 32, italics left out), his own reasoning shows the opposite. Control of work is deemed necessary because the task requires 'discretionary judgment and action' (p. 23), based to a high degree on the 'formal knowledge' (p. 34) of an 'expert' (p. 21), for the task cannot be 'standardized' (p. 17), most notably because of the 'variation to be found in individual cases' (p. 12), the 'complexity of the task' (p. 153), and 'devotion' to 'transcendent and self-evidently desirable values' like 'Justice, Salvation, Beauty, Truth, Health, and Prosperity' (p. 122). Although Freidson's analysis starts by stating the importance of control of work, this characteristic turns out to be more an outcome than the starting point of the ideal-typical logic.

PROFESSIONAL POWER

In Freidson's view, professionals' control of their work consists in their discretionary performance; the power of professions rests internally on the control of the qualifications for and the evaluation of these performances, and externally on the exclusion of all unqualified workers from such sheltered positions in the labour market. And yet the nature of professionalism can only be properly understood by answering the substantive question of whether this professional power is arbitrary or legitimate. This begs investigating whether or not the power perspective ('control of work') serves and supports the value perspective ('doing good work') on the basis of the expertise perspective ('mental discretionary specialization'). If so, then professional power is most likely bestowed by society for good reasons, and only to the extent that and for so long as it serves 'the common good' and 'a transcendent value'. In that case it would seem more appropriate to speak about delegated, contained and, above all, functional professional power.

Freidson's ideal type of professionalism contains several clues that suggest that professional power is functional and delegated, or at least that this should be the case in an ideal type that has to function as a criterion or benchmark. In the first characteristic of the ideal type, Freidson states that 'specialized work [..] is accordingly *given* special status in the labor force' (italics added). The same applies to the third characteristic, as a 'sheltered position in both external and internal labor markets' is not based on power or control of the profession itself but is primarily a privilege bestowed on it by society. The second characteristic holds that exclusive jurisdiction is 'created and controlled by occupational negotiation'. It should be stressed that control by negotiation is something completely different than control by occupation, as the outcome of

occupational negotiation will neither solely nor most likely be determined – not even substantially – by the occupation itself, but instead by the interplay with several other societal stakeholders. The fourth characteristic asserts that the qualifying credentials are produced by a 'formal training program lying outside the labor market […] and associated with higher education', and again Freidson stresses that this programme is 'controlled by the occupation'. This could certainly be the case, but only insofar as society allows the occupation to do so. The relation of the fifth characteristic to power and control remains unclear, but if Freidson intended to suggest that the 'ideology that asserts […] commitment to doing good work […] and to the quality […] of work' is part of the power and control of professions (cf. his relativistic tone), then it could be noteworthy that the assertion of doing a good job has never saved anyone from ending up behind bars.

Abbott's (1988) analysis, which Freidson characterizes as a 'tour de force' (p. 6), is quite helpful in this respect. As mentioned before, Abbott likewise takes 'control of work' (p. xii) as the starting point for his analysis of professionalization. He states that 'Professional power can be operationally defined as the ability to retain jurisdiction when system forces imply that a profession ought to have lost it' (p. 136). At the same time, Abbott's analysis reveals that the power of professions is quite limited (pp. 134–142). In the competition between occupations' 'fighting for turf', other powerful actors are active. For instance, similar occupations often possess comparable power. Besides, service users nowadays are no longer passive consumers but a well-organized force that actively assesses professional performance. If professionals fail to provide good service, service users will eventually go elsewhere. So professions can only be as powerful as their service users will let them be. According to Abbott, even the state can be a competitor to professions when providing cheaper services by untrained officials. Abbott also stresses that professional power can be used immediately but not stored for the future. Hence in his analysis of professionalism he eventually exchanges the power model for what he calls the equilibrating model. The concept of 'countervailing power' seems to be more apt than 'control of work': constantly striving for the right balance of power between professions and society, between professionals and service users.

POWER AS AN IDEAL-TYPICAL PARADIGM

Although the answer might turn out to be somewhat speculative, we may ask whether it would be possible at all to develop a solid ideal type based on the meaningful valuation of professionalism as power and control of work. It is nonetheless an important question, as the construction of an ideal

type involves more than just choosing a perspective for research – it constitutes in fact nothing less than developing a paradigm. Freidson's initial meaningful valuation of professionalism has the quality of a classical definition, with 'work' as the 'genus proximum' and 'control' as the most important of the 'differentia specifica', even the decisive one. Although power as a perspective can very well serve as a basis for a critical investigation of professional praxis, as an ideal-typical paradigm it could turn out to be a rather dogmatic basis. There are four reasons backing up this perhaps somewhat bold statement.

The first argument derives from the philosophical law of reflexivity. A statement or a theory has to be applicable to itself, otherwise it will lead to downright contradictions. For instance, the belief that 'everything is relative' is itself an absolute statement, hence it forms a contradiction. Choosing a power paradigm therefore implies – as a descriptive requirement of consistency as well as a prescriptive requirement of integrity – that researchers should reveal their own deepest motives for conducting the research within the boundaries of this power paradigm. Indeed, this could be done with great honesty, but it won't be easy and will most likely affect researchers' credibility.

Nevertheless, the power paradigm leads to contradictions. The meaningful valuation of professionalism as 'control of work' implies that an increase of 'control of work' is by definition an increase of professionalism, and that the summit of 'control of work' is by definition the summit of professionalism. If this is true, then it would not be difficult to develop a thought experiment in which a superior and solitary hitman turns out to be almost the perfect professional. This conclusion is counterintuitive, paradoxical and contradictory, and runs against the grain of every sound understanding of professionalism. We do not consider presidents to be more professional because they control their work to a higher degree. When we talk about professionalization our speech might be somewhat inaccurate, but we never wish to suggest primarily that the power of an occupation or the control of a worker has increased.

The third argument is based on Popper's principle of falsification. Within the power paradigm there seems to be no room for phenomena like sharing power or empowering others, so it is basically all about the will to be powerful, about self-interest and group-interest. The problem with this paradigmatic notion of power is that it really is impossible to refute the assumption that an action is based on self-interest or group-interest. If, for instance, I refuse to donate to charity, according to this paradigm I do so merely because I want to keep all my money to myself. But if I do give money, then I do so only because it raises my self-esteem or improves my public image. So within the framework of the power paradigm it appears impossible to act contrary to self-interest or will

to power. The power paradigm cannot be falsified, so it isn't a sound basis for scientific research according to Popper's criterion. Since literally all actions – even those that are at odds with each other – can be explained on the basis of power and self-interest, this also implies that power and self-interest as such can never offer a sufficient explanation for any action at all, and that statements about power and self-interest are not based on solid empirical observations but at least partially on hypothetical attribution, if not on metaphysical speculation.

The fourth and last argument is that the power paradigm leads to reductionism. Power and self-interest are on their own insufficient explanations for actions, as we have seen, but at the same time supplementary explanations are excluded precisely because power is the overarching paradigm. The result is a closed notion of reality; in the footsteps of Nietzsche and Foucault, the good news of Christian faith which envisioned the hand of God in all events is replaced by the bad news of philosophical suspicion which discovers the mighty arm of vested interests everywhere. If professionalism really should be all about power and control, then the most important question is whether this power and control are legitimate. However, this question cannot be answered within the power paradigm – perhaps not even be articulated. Posing and answering this question requires transcending the power paradigm, for the legitimacy of professional power includes two aspects, and both are out of range of this paradigm. The first aspect of legitimate professional power is that the work is so complex that special expertise is required to perform as well as evaluate it. Only a surgeon is really capable of performing and evaluating a surgery. In order to clarify this first aspect, we have to exchange the power perspective for the expertise perspective: doing work well. The second aspect of legitimate professional power is that the complex work is focused on the right outcome. The aim of a surgeon should be to improve patients' health and quality of life. To clarify this second aspect, we have to exchange the power perspective for the value perspective: doing good work. In sum, the impact of the power paradigm is that the most important question remains unanswered. This reductionism is traceable in Freidson's analysis of professionalism, as he makes use of relativistic phrases in his summary of the ideal type (p. 127) in connection with the expertise perspective ('specialized work […] *that is believed to be* grounded in a body of […] knowledge and skill'; italics added) and the value perspective ('an ideology *that asserts* greater commitment to doing good work […] and to the quality […] of work'; italics added). The same kind of reductionism prevents Larson from granting professional status to the ministry and Abbott from withholding it from mediums. This kind of reductionism could be called the outside perspective, for it neglects what is really going on inside a profession in terms of doing good work and doing work well.

CONCLUSION

This article has critically examined Freidson's use of the ideal-typical approach to develop a model of professionalism on several counts: his meaningful valuation is ambiguous, his selection is incomplete, and his intensification as well as his structuring falls short. It also appears impossible to develop a solid ideal type of professionalism based on the power paradigm. This could very well be the central yet hidden problem of Freidson's ideal-typical approach to professionalism as control of work. This does not imply that a power perspective on professionalism cannot be useful and valuable – it only means that power is not suited as a meaningful valuation of professionalism and thus cannot serve as a foundation on which to develop a solid ideal type of the phenomenon. To develop a more solid ideal type of professionalism than Freidson managed to do, it must first of all be based on the meaningful valuation of 'the soul of professionalism' transparently and unambiguously, starting from a value perspective like the quoted global definition of social work does. Second, on the basis of this valuation the most relevant characteristics of professionalism need to be selected and intensified. Lastly, the selected and intensified characteristics need to be ordered and connected rationally, from the perspective of the chosen meaningful valuation, in order to develop a coherent and preferably goal-oriented whole. This challenge will constitute the subject of another article, aimed at contributing to strengthen the professional identity and status of social work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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