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The Social Work Profession and the
Ideology of Professionalization

by

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The idea of Christian brotherly love... in a society founded on serfdom remains an unrealizable and, in this sense, ideological idea, even when the intended meaning is, in good faith, a motive for the conduct of the individual. To live consistently in the light of brotherly love, in a society which is not organized on the same principle is impossible. The individual in his personal conduct is always compelled--in so far as he does not resort to breaking up the existing social structure--to fall short of his own nobler motives.

Karl Mannheim (1936: 195)

Introduction

The phenomenon of professionalization has been an exceptionally powerful force in Western industrialized countries for more than a century. "The professions are as characteristic of the modern world as the crafts were of the ancient," said Stephen R. Graubard in the preface to The Professions in America (1963). Talcott Parsons (1968) declared that "The development and increasing strategic importance of the professions probably constitute the most important change that has occurred in the occupational system of modern countries." Dry statistics alone bear out these views. In the United States "professionals" increased in the population from 859 per 100,000 in 1870 to 3,310 in 1950 (Goode, 1957). In absolute numbers professional and technical workers increased from 350,000 in 1870 to 12.5 million in 1974. In 1900 professional and technical workers represented only 4.3% of the workforce; by 1970 they were 14.4% (Galper, 1975: 56).

**Professional and Technical Workers in the
United States: 1870-1974 (April)**

1870	1910	1940	1950	1970	1974
340,000	1,655,270	3,497,100	4,490,000	11,140,000	12,446,000

These figures are indicative of profound changes in our political economy, characterized by some observers in the 1970's as "post-industrial" (Bell, 1973; Heilbroner, 1973; Gartner and Riessman, 1974). Its central feature is that economic growth has shifted from the goods-producing sectors to the information and service-producing sectors. The dramatic growth of social work in the last two decades (recent cut-backs notwithstanding) has been part of this larger shift in the political economy, as the expansion of the welfare state has been a substantial ingredient of service sector expansion.

The figures on the growth of professional and technical workers mask a considerable amount of conflict about professionalization and its implications for social democracy. Professions are an integral part of our system of social stratification. In terms of status and rewards, they lie near the top of the occupational hierarchy, much higher than technical occupations. The citadels of professionalism are carefully protected by ideological, political, and economic barriers. In 1970 some 2,200 occupations required highly skilled workers. In a study decrying this "professionalization of everyone," Wilensky (1964), a sociologist, could only find 18 occupations at best, including social work, that might make a reasonable claim to professional status.

Social workers have coveted professional status. Their desire and the course of their struggle for its realization have been shaped by broader political economic conditions. At the same time social workers as professionals have also struggled to create a more egalitarian and a qualitatively richer society. (Other professionals have also done so.) These conflicting interests have created a unique tension within social work, a kind of marginal consciousness about its position in society. Because of it, social workers occasionally have been able to reflect on their role

in preserving practices and institutions that perpetuate inequities. This kind of self-conscious deliberation requires an attention to political economic analysis. Naturally it has been strongest during periods of cataclysmic social upheaval, when the entire society has been forced to focus on political economic conditions. But it has also appeared at other times as a kind of persistent counterpoint to social work's main themes. When it happens, social workers expand their capacity to shape the character of their work.

The ideology surrounding professions has obscured social work's past and present relationships to political economic events. Both the schools and the professional associations whose purpose is to advance professionalization usually fail to examine social work critically from this perspective. One consequence is that social workers always seem to be contending with a series of recurrent professional issues--whether schools should train generic or specialist practitioners; whether caseworkers should be involved in social reform and reformers in casework; whether or not private practice is a "sell-out", etc.--whose relevance and implications cannot be thoroughly assessed because their political economic character is washed out. Another consequence is that the options that social workers might have for working towards social construction are not fully explored.

Sociological Perspectives on Professionalization

Because "an industrializing society is a professionalizing society" (Goode, 1960), prevailing ideas about professions and the quest for professionalization have more than academic significance for an aspiring occupation. They serve as an ideological screen through which other societal events are sifted out, either to be acted on or neglected. To comprehend the effects on social work of its struggle for professional status, we need to make explicit the screens through which professionalization has customarily been viewed, as well as our own position.

The ideology of professions appears in two important forms. The first, which will not be our focus here, concerns the degree to which the scientific-technical knowledge base within a particular profession--the sina qua non for claimants to the title--is riddled with ideology, and the circumstances wherein this ideological content is most likely to arise. Scientific principles informing practice are seldom complete enough to enable practitioners to explain, control, or predict all the practice situations they encounter. In order for professions to maintain an aura of competence, consensually validated ideologies--beliefs,

normative principles, expectations, and "practice wisdom"--fill the gaps, also leaving room for competing ideological belief systems to arise. These ideological elements are especially likely to surface (1) when a professional field experiences social pressures to produce "professional" behavior, (2) where the application of theory to practice requires or allows for a high degree of subjectivity, intuition, or particularistic values, and (3) where the content and behavior of professional practice involves many moral and ethical considerations (Holzner and Marx, 1979: 258,6).

The second form of professional ideology deals with the bits and pieces of ideology surrounding professionalization. These are the empirically unproven assumptions, values, and theories attached to the idea of professions and taken as "truths" that offer an interpretation of their relationship to man, nature, and society in its parts and as a dynamic whole. Aspiring occupational groups have fallen back on such ideological material to pursue their claims to professional status; established professions use it to maintain their privileged position.

The Structural-Functional and Processual Perspectives

The structural-functional perspective has probably been the most powerful lens through which professions have been studied. It is rife with ideology. In this view, professions are part of the natural elaboration of an organic social structure accompanying modernization. The social and technological changes set off by the industrial revolution created specialized needs that could no longer be met by traditional institutions like family businesses and small communities. In the economic sphere, new occupations arose in response to these needs. As they developed a distinctive and "responsible" expertise based on scientific-technical knowledge and an ethical code, they gained community sanction and progressed up the occupational ladder to professional rank. Wilensky and Lebeaux (1958: 286-7) offer a clear illustration of this perspective in their explanation for why "demand" for a profession of social work arose.

Specialization itself, a prerequisite for professionalism, is the result of the underlying industrialization process. Rising productivity and income not only permit but force the eventual withdrawal of population from farming and manufacturing. These people are channeled into the tertiary service "industries"--service professions and occupations of all kinds, from physicians and social workers to beauticians and television repair service men...

The growth in scale and complexity of social organizations--business corporations, labor unions, professional groups, social agencies, units of government--is likewise a factor, because it creates a demand for liaison and contact men of all kinds. We need guides, so to speak, through a new kind of civilized jungle. Social work is an example par excellence of the liaison function...

Also involved in the shift towards professionalization is the prestige of science... The empirical, critical, rational spirit of science has found its way into nearly every type of activity in America. And it has become particularly important to social work because the neighboring, established professions, especially medicine, to which social work looks for its model of professionalism, stresses scientific knowledge as the basis for professional practice.

The functional importance and positive contribution of professions to the larger society is a central assumption of the structural/functional perspective. Professions are seen as rational, "stabilizing elements in society." "They engender modes of life, habits of thought, and standards of judgement which render them centers of resistance to crude forces which threaten steady and peaceful evolution"... They function "to bring knowledge to the service of power" (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933: 497,499). They "dominate the contemporary scene in such a way as to render obsolescent the primacy of the old issues of authoritarianism and capitalistic exploitation" (Parsons, 1968: 546). On an international level, professions even help to maintain world order through the communication among intellectual leaders of different countries (Lynn, 1965: xiii).

In the sociology of professions, structural-functionalists have devoted a good deal of energy to investigating the attributes that distinguish professions from other occupations. A core list of attributes culled from this work would be as follows (Holzner and Marx, 1979; Ritzer, 1972: 1) an abstract, theoretical knowledge base; 2) an esoteric, specialized, technical skill; 3) a long period of training and socialization; 4) strong professional subculture and ideology; 5) lifelong commitment to a structured career; 6) autonomy of action; 7) a formal occupational association; 8) control over training and legal licensing; 9) a code of ethics and/or a client-centered orientation--the service ideal.

With the exceptions of the archetypes of law and medicine, however, sociologists disagree as to which occupations actually meet the criteria. The solution to this troublesome problem has been to place occupations on a continuum of professionalization with the ideal-types of law and medicine demarcating the outer professional pole and other unskilled occupations, such as janitorial, the opposite non-professional pole. Then the more of the "differentia specifica" (Barber, 1965) held by an occupational group, usually with heavier weighting for scientific knowledge combined with a formalized service ideal, the higher the rating on the scale of professionalization (Greenwood, 1957). This approach has lent support to labeling some occupations as "emergent," or "marginal" (Wilensky, 1964), or "semi-professional" (Etzioni, 1969), based on possession of these attributes in only moderate degree.

The structural-functional perspective, as the name implies, derives from that particular theoretical perspective in sociology. The processual approach has focused mainly on the question of how occupations actually achieve the status of professions. This emphasis, more than a particular sociological perspective, is what distinguishes it from the structural-functional. Authors who have studied the process of professionalization draw on functionalism as well as social exchange theory, symbolic interactionism, and conflict theory.

Though not incompatible with functional assumptions about the role of professions in society, in general, examinations of the process of professionalization have revealed that the elaboration of social structure is not an inherently orderly process and that occupational groupings play an active part in engineering their changes in status. The view is a politically pluralistic, dynamic one wherein occupational prestige, treated as a scarce resource, becomes the object of competing interests within a single occupational sphere or in the larger division of labor, or both. Social changes create conditions necessitating specialization, professionalization, and bureaucratization, but these necessary conditions are not sufficient in and of themselves to account for the differential rise of occupations in the status hierarchy. If the conditions are right (a situation to be viewed dynamically rather than statically), an occupational grouping or sub-segment, much like a social movement, can organize itself and act strategically to improve its occupational ranking (Bucher and Strauss, 1961).

Several authors have outlined the steps or stages over time of the professionalization process (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933; Caplow, 1954; Hughes, 1958; Wilensky, 1964). They generally agree on the substance of the steps, if not on the particular sequence.

For our purposes, Wilensky's summary is illustrative (1964: 145-46).

In sum, there is a typical process by which the established professions have arrived: men begin doing the work full time and stake out a jurisdiction; the early masters of technique or adherents of the movement become concerned about standards of training and practice and set up a training school, which if not lodged in universities at the outset makes academic connection within two or three decades; the teachers and activists then achieve success in promoting more effective organization, first local, then national--through either the transformation of an existing occupational association or the creation of a new one. Toward the end, legal protection of the monopoly of skill appears; at the end, a formal code of ethics is adopted.

"Many occupations engage in heroic struggles for professional identification; few make the grade" (Wilensky, 1964). Therefore, for the processualists, attributes that the structural-functionalists consider as static distinguishing characteristics, -particularly scientific-technical knowledge and professional norms- may be used strategically by an occupational group or subsegment to advance their status goals and to debase the competing claims of other groups. In simplified outline, the knowledge-skill base links the concept of profession in the public mind to the prestige and positive ideology of science and higher learning; the service ideal separates professionalized occupations from commercial enterprises. Other traits are derivative of these. To gain sophisticated technical skill and scientific knowledge, a lengthy training period is required in a university, which at the same time provides a thorough socialization-into-the-profession experience. University sanction also furnishes a valuable stamp of legitimation to the aspiring group which enables them to claim the privileges from society of autonomy of action, control over its training, authority over its clientele in functionally specific areas, and eventually the legal right to title and domain through licensing and/or other benefits. The claims of an occupation to these various privileges are further bolstered by promotion of a professional code of ethics and service ideal, which also serves to reassure the public that the interests of the client and the community will take precedence over the desire for commercial profit.²

In some instances, the processual line of inquiry has challenged functional assumptions about the homogeneity among members of a profession. Rather than studying individual professions as

communities of shared values, identification, roles, and interests and then identifying the mechanisms that help to create this cohesiveness, such as socialization and selectivity processes (Goode, 1957), Bucher and Strauss (1962: 326) argued that professions are "loose amalgamations of segments pursuing different objectives in different manners and more or less held together under a common name at a particular period in history." Within organized medicine, the prototypical profession, one can find great divergences, for example, according to specializations (radiology vs. pathology vs. family medicine); sense of mission to support special expertise (within surgery, the struggles between proctology and urology for separate identities); work activities (the public health physician vs. the anesthesiologist); methodology and techniques (within psychology the physiologists vs. the therapist); client relationships (the pathologists with little patient contact vs. clinicians). Given these differences, professional associations become "battlegrounds as different emerging segments compete for control" of the organization and its resources for influencing the general membership, societal elites, and the public at large.

In sum, the processual perspective takes a developmental view of professionalization, which ranges, depending upon the author, from a naturally unfolding, evolutionary process to a highly politicized, conflictual one resembling a social movement.³ In this process, the attributes that separate professions from other occupations may be used instrumentally to advance a group's interests. Steps in the professionalization process can be identified, the details of which, in a broader context of modernization, help to explain the differential status of occupations in the division of labor.

A Critique

Both the structural-functional and the processual perspectives accept and build on the values and remnants of an older aristocracy as these were carried forward under a new set of conditions--the industrial revolution. The structural approach is essentially a-historical (Ritzer, 1975); so really is the processual, despite the ostensible historicity of developmental stages. Ideologically, both still take established professions, the so-called "learned professions," as a point of departure, a standard against which the characteristics and developmental patterns of newer claimants are measured and found wanting. Furthermore, the standard may be applied unevenly, as when Wilensky (1964) assumed that only the established professions had followed a "natural history of professionalism," while new and emerging professions were "opportunistic."

From a strictly methodological viewpoint, the use of "established" professions as the basis for formulating criteria to distinguish professions and their developmental patterns from non-professions has serious scientific consequences. Assuming the existence of commonalities among the established professions, the approach set off a search for them, while sliding over their differences. At the same time it also tended to limit the investigation of similarities between the established professions and other occupations in favor of a search for differences. The outcome has been a state of conceptual/definitional confusion requiring a series of ad hoc justifications for the differential attributes that have been identified. Since many phenomena have been excluded, the resulting "theory of professions" has violated the rule of parsimony in theory construction.

A bit of ideology that has stubbornly clung to the professional concept has been its ethical purity. The view that professions are beneficial for society flows from this a priori definitional relationship between professions and the service ideal as a distinguishing attribute. In the functionalist approach, it is not that professionals have typically altruistic motivations as compared to the alleged "egoism" of businessmen. Rather, the service ideal, which broadly includes such professional norms as dispassionate objectivity, is carried out in professional role behavior because it is useful for providing more efficient service. Professional roles, in turn, are supported by an institutional context of "science and liberal learning" which is radically different from the institutional context of commerce (Parsons, 1938: 46-8). This image justifies the proposition that professionals represent an intellectual status group or class which can guide the public interest because they somehow operate beyond the bounds of bourgeois imperatives.

A substantial amount of empirical data suggest that professionals have not quite transcended the pushes and pulls of capitalistic competition. The alternative proposition that professional organizations and professional morality serve to increase the economic gains of professional practitioners and the status of their vocations is more defensible. In an early comparative study of professions, Friedman and Kuznets (1945: 391) found that "professional workers constitute a 'non-competing' group" in the marketplace, whose average earnings in comparable communities were from 85% to 180% higher than those of non-professional workers. Furthermore, they found that medical societies in the United States contributed to the comparatively higher salaries of physicians over dentists by their greater monopolistic control of entry into the profession. The monopolistic practices of the American Medical Association (AMA) have been analyzed by

Garceau (1941), Hyde and Wolff (1953-54), Kessel (1958, 1970), and Rayback (1967) among others. Kessel (1958, 1970) showed how the power of the AMA has supported profit-maximizing behavior by physicians as well as the ways in which its activities have circumscribed the choice of contractual arrangements between patients and physicians and reduced innovation in medical education. Ar-nould (1972) found that the legal profession also engaged in monopolistic practices through the widespread use of fee schedules akin to price-fixing, thereby raising the price structure of legal services. This practice was struck down by the Supreme Court in the 1970's.

Many authors have considered the detrimental effects for the public of the licensing of occupations, a primary concern of professional associations, and justified as a means of protecting the public. Pfeffer (1974a) found that governmental regulation and occupational licensing have operated to restrict entry, increase price, and protect and economically enhance an industry or occupation. In another study, Pfeffer (1974b) also showed that the more professionalized the occupation, the more independent its income was from local economic conditions. Fech's (1974) review of the literature on the licensing of health occupations and professions presents additional support for the allegation that licensure has not protected the public interest on balance. Benham and Benham (1975) found similar practices and effects on prices and services in the optometry profession. Recent studies of the optometric profession have also dispelled the functionalist notion that greater technological sophistication has so improved the quality of services that it offsets such dysfunctional consequences as higher prices (Begun, 1979). Finally, in a slightly different vein, Walsh and Elling (1968) found that among the public health professionals in their study--nurses, sanitarians, and physicians--the greater the striving for professional status of the occupational group, the more negative their orientations to lower class clients. These findings led Walsh and Elling to speculate (1968:27) that:

...the class structure maintains itself in significant part through the efforts of work groups as a whole to establish themselves. In this process, the differential distribution of rewards affected by the class structure operates not only through the money market and its salaries and incomes, but through orientations and behaviors of members of work groups which aid them in avoiding identification and involvement with detracting or devalued elements of society. The depth of this human tragedy is suggested by the fact that

those most in need of service are least likely to receive it.

Much of the ideology surrounding professions is grounded in historical misunderstanding. It is a misinterpretation of history to equate today's concept of profession with the idea of the "learned professions" of pre-industrial times. In pre-industrial England (the most relevant source for the United States), the specialized functions now performed by established professions in a given field were carried out by a variety of occupational groupings, whose members were both university educated or organized into guilds with an apprenticeship system of training outside the university. No profession could claim a unified occupational domain over which it reigned supreme. As Freidson (1970: 5-6) pointed out with regard to medicine:

Its position is not a long established one; in fact, it is less than a hundred years old. If medicine was a 'profession' in the past, it was a profession of quite different characteristics than today's. During most of recorded time there was not a single occupation identifiable as 'medicine' for there were many kinds of healers. After the rise of the university in Europe, medicine became primarily a 'learned profession'. Only recently has it become a truly consulting profession, and only recently has it attained the strength and stability which now characterizes its preeminence.

Around the year 1200, universities grew up out of the guilds of learning organized by teachers and students and soon came under domination of the Church. For many years the ecclesiastics performed many of the specialized functions we attribute to professions, but by the 15th century, perhaps earlier, secular associations, such as the Inns of Court,⁴ and secular guilds provided the aegis for carrying them out. "Thus the earliest forms of organization among surgeons, apothecaries, and notaries, and in a certain sense also among common lawyers, took the shape of training guilds. These professions, therefore, unlike physicians, civil servants,⁵ and teachers, did not emerge out of the clerical order" (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933: 291). Nor did they require university-based education--as did physicians and civil servants--to carry out their medical and legal functions.

In pre-modern Europe the social stratification system was quite rigid, so that vocational groups, "learned" and "unlearned," came from different segments of society and often served different social strata (Larson, 1977: 3). In this stratified social system the university diploma was not sufficient to assure its learned

recipients control over an area of technical expertise. The learned professions did not have a monopoly of practice in the broader community.

On technical grounds the learned professions would have had a hard time asserting their rights to exclusive occupational control. The scientific/technical knowledge obtainable in the university was not necessarily more effective than the expertise gained from practice. Nor was it practically oriented. In 17th and 18th century Europe and the United States, university education largely sought to educate gentlemen through a classical, liberal arts orientation. It was more a mark of differential social status than it was scientific or utilitarian (Larson, 1977). In Europe, scientific education did not penetrate medical education until well into the industrial period, mid-19th century, and in the United States, not until the late 19th century.

Despite differences in the social, political, and physical features between the United States and Europe, the course of the learned professions in America was strongly influenced by developments in Great Britain and Europe generally, so that the above points still apply. For example, medical functions were performed by diverse vocational groups--surgeons/barbers, physicians, apothecaries, patent-medicine men, midwives--outside the control of university based vocations or any other monopolistic healing group up to the 19th century. And the results of the medical care of the "non-educated" practitioners were often no worse than those of the "learned professionals" of the day (Freidson, 1970: 20). In 1775, some 3,500 practitioners, who were not graduates of any medical school, gave most of the medical care in the country. Accounts of the profession in the 18th century, which usually describe it in terms of the activities of some 50, European-trained men who played a prominent part in institutional medicine or public life, distort the picture (Bell, 1970).

In short, the conception of profession as we understand it is really a modern invention. Its pre-industrial heritage was quite mixed--common and elite, "learned" and "unlearned." Modern professions, as a sociological phenomenon, actually emerged together within a relatively short, two-generational span of time, roughly 1825-1880 (Larson, 1977). The historical circumstances that imprinted the first stage of professionalization for our present professions were similar for all of them, namely the political, economic, technological and ideological conditions of 'the great transformation' from a pre-capitalist socio-economic system to industrial capitalism.⁶

Within this context, the "opportunistic" struggles of the established professions for their exalted position would tell us more about how and why some occupations succeeded than any static, a priori versions of their creation. Empirical data on the economics of professionalization support this logic. As Carr-Saunders and Wilson realized in their pioneering study of professions with respect to law and medicine (1933: 304):

The evolution of the legal and medical professions was anything but smooth; and something more than has yet been said is required to account for so tangled a history. On reflection it appears that what happened in both cases was the early segregation of practitioners, advocates, and physicians, whose function at a later date was realized to be specialist. But the associations of these specialists, having attained great power and prestige, attempted to inhibit the development of general practitioners of law and medicine of whose services the public had need. When they could not prevent their appearance, they tried to keep them subservient, and the history of both professions is largely concerned with the problems so brought about.

These considerations taken together point to the need for an alternative perspective on professions. The structural-functional perspective and much of the thinking in the processual approach begin with an a priori set of assumptions about the basis of the occupational division of labor. Professions are implicitly or explicitly the yardstick for assigning rank in the occupational hierarchy; their characteristics are assumed to be beneficial to a definable public interest without regard to differential social group interests, and functionally required for the development of modern society. Some writers have assigned professionals a unique status and role in society (Parsons, 1968: 536), "neither 'capitalists' nor 'workers', nor typically government administrators or 'bureaucrats' ... independent peasant proprietors or members of the small urban proprietary groups." Like Mannheim's intellectuals (1936: 155-64), who are largely unattached to any social class and able to transcend their relations to the system of social stratification because of their diverse origins and academy training, professionals represent a new form of moral and intellectual leadership for the society, based on the cultural criteria of legitimacy rather than criteria of political power or economic success" (Parsons, 1968: 545).

THE POLITICAL ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

The central issue in a "theory of professions" is to account for the variance in the occupational hierarchy. Why is it that some occupations have been able to achieve and maintain a special status that has come to be identified as professional? Professions as we know them arose in the division of labor during the industrial era. In advanced industrial societies this division of labor has become complex and specialized. We do not assume at the same time that the professional phenomenon is the crowning achievement of the industrial revolution, or a requirement of industrialization, found in the same form across all industrial societies, and/or certain to continue with little change into the future. To do so is to accept a restrictive ideology propounded by professionals themselves that ignores contradictory data so as to preserve a particular social order. In theory development, variables must be able to vary, and the concept of profession cannot be both the independent and the dependent variable.

Status is a human artifact. As Bottomore has written (1966: 10):

...a system of rank does not form part of some natural and invariable order of things, but is a human contrivance or product, and is subject to historical changes. More particularly, natural or biological inequalities, on one side, and distinctions of social rank on the other, belong to two distinct orders of fact. The differences were pointed out very clearly by Rousseau in a well-known passage: 'I conceive that there are two kinds of inequality among the human species; one which I call natural or physical, because it is established by nature, and consists in a difference of age, health, bodily strength, and the qualities of the mind or of the soul; and another, which may be called moral or political inequality, because it depends on a kind of convention, and it is established, or at least authorized, by the consent of men. This latter consists of the different privileges, which some men enjoy to the prejudice of others; such as that of being more rich, more honoured, more powerful, or even in a position to exact obedience.'

To understand the development and maintenance of occupational inequality, we must, then, come face to face with issues of power and the distribution of resources, within an occupational sphere and at the societal level, and in such a way as to attend to

shifting historical conditions with the passage of time. This endeavor requires a re-conceptualization of the notion of profession.

A traditional definition of a profession is (Cogan, 1953: 49), "a vocation whose practice is founded upon an understanding of the theoretical structure of some department of learning or science, and upon the abilities accompanying such understanding...applied to the practical affairs of men." The definition does not accommodate either all of the occupations usually considered as professions, such as law which is not based upon a scientific body of knowledge, or exclude other occupations not usually considered to be professions, such as computer programming. Status variations in the occupational hierarchy are not adequately explained by this form of definition or its underlying conceptualization.

The political-economic approach takes a different tack. In this view the concept of profession is separated from the concept of occupation. Johnson (1972: 45) succinctly clarifies this point when he states that "a profession is not an occupation, but a means of controlling an occupation. Likewise, professionalization is a historically specific process which some occupations have undergone at a particular time, rather than a process which certain occupations may always be expected to undergo because of their essential qualities." The professional phenomenon, then, may be viewed as an "institutionalized order of control" over a set of marketplace activities, which could be arranged in a typology of institutionalized orders of control, such as collegial control (professions) or patronage (Johnson, 1972).

More formally, we suggest that a profession is a quasi-corporate entity or enterprise whose members have obtained a substantial degree of control over the production, distribution, and consumption of a needed commodity. This definition is consistent with Freidson's analysis of the medical profession in the United States (1970:n 71) that "the most strategic distinction lies in legitimate, organized autonomy--that a profession is distinct from other occupations in that it has been given the right to control its own work." The degree of control is never complete; its nature and extent vary over time with socio-political, economic, ideological, and technological developments within the enterprise and the society. Similarly, the differential status of occupations in a given time period also varies as a function of the degree and form of control which an enterprise can exercise. The control exercised by the professional enterprise involves to a greater or lesser extent:

- 1) the definition of the commodity which its specialized practitioners produce and distribute;
- 2) explanations of the relationship of the production and distribution of this commodity to the broader needs of the total political economy;
- 3) delineation of the organizational parameters in and through which this commodity will be produced and distributed, including some ability to define the nature of the workplace with respect to its relation to the commodity producers, the commodity users, and the concept of commodity itself;
- 4) definition of what constitutes efficient and effective production and distribution of commodities (i.e. how its production and distribution is to be evaluated);
- 5) control over resources required to produce and distribute the commodity;
- 6) control over demand (i.e. consumer need) for the commodity, and over the number (supply) of specialized practitioners who are sanctioned to meet it--that is, a quasi-monopoly over production and distribution involving control over education, training, licensing (legal sanctions), and cultural sanctions (values, beliefs, customs, etc.).

Structurally, the professional enterprise can be considered to be a loosely ordered interorganizational system of occupational control, consisting of: a) individuals who perform roughly similar specialized functions, primarily as a means of earning a livelihood; b) associations to advance the interests of these specialized practitioners and promote occupational cohesion through political, social, and ideological activities; c) educational and training institutions to produce, reproduce, and legitimate the practitioners and their knowledge and skill; and d) cultural and legal devices to protect the established domain of occupational specialization.

The formation of successful professional enterprises and their continued hegemony over an occupational domain is not a haphazard occurrence. New enterprises are formed purposively by innovative entrepreneurs who have sufficient incentives, access to the necessary resources, and organizing talent. More specifically, people

will be motivated to found new enterprises when (Stinchcombe, 1965: 146,7):

(a) they find or learn about alternative better ways of doing things that are not easily done within existing social arrangements; (b) they believe that the future will be such that the organization will continue to be effective enough to pay for the trouble of building it and for the resources invested; (c) they or some social group with which they are strongly identified will receive some of the benefits of the better way of doing things; (d) they can lay hold of the resources of wealth, power, and legitimacy needed to build the organization; and (e) they can defeat, or at least avoid being defeated by, their opponents, especially those whose interests are vested in the old regime.

These characteristics of individual motivation are affected by social structural conditions in a complicated kind of interaction which accounts for both the rise of various classes of organization in historically specific time periods, such as guilds during medieval times, and their particular modifications and variations based on prior organizational history and social technologies available at the time (Stinchcombe, 1965; Aldrich, 1979). In accounting for the appearance of a population of organizational systems, ecology has greater explanatory power than psychology. Thus, to complete Stinchcombe's thought (emphasis added),

Better ways are communicated socially; the future is partially guaranteed by social arrangements and disrupted by social convulsions; the pattern of identification of individuals with groups which will benefit, and the legal protection of the appropriated benefits, are social phenomena; the patterns of trust and of mobility of resources which can determine whether resources can be moved to innovators are socially patterned; and the distribution of power in society is an aspect of social structure.

The general rise of professions as a form of occupational control in 19th century industrializing societies corresponds to the rise of other related forms of social organization aimed at regulating production-distribution-consumption activities, most notably business and governmental corporations and trade unions. The transformation of feudal society to industrial capitalism over several centuries provided the social structural conditions necessary for the rise of these organizational forms. To summarize these conditions briefly, they include:

(1) ECONOMICALLY - the development of a market (or money) economy as a dominant cultural force apart from the religious, political, and social fabric of life into which it was indistinguishably interwoven in an earlier era; the rise of "free laborers", capitalists, and landlords selling their services on the market for land, labor, and capital; and the corresponding growth of a middle class of consumers of commodities with the appearance eventually of the phenomenon of consumer "demand" (Heilbroner, 1970: 64);

(2) IDEOLOGICALLY - the principle of economic liberalism aimed at establishing and perpetuating a self-regulating market through laissez-faire and free trade policies (Polyani, 1957: 132); the doctrine of individualism that justifies laissez-faire, that "the good of all will be served if each individual pursues his self-interest with minimal interference" (Wilensky and Lebeaux, 1965: 34); rationality as applied to the discovery and application of knowledge and its manifestations in social organizations and the allocation of scarce values;

(3) POLITICALLY - the evolution of citizenship as an (initially restricted) institution protected by civic, political, and social rights,--especially: (civic) individual freedom and freedom of thought, religion, and the right to own property, to contract, and to justice or due process; (political) the right to participate in the exercise of political power as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of its members; and (social) the right to a measure of economic welfare and security according to standards prevailing in the society, social services, and education (Marshall, 1964: 71-2);

(4) SOCIALLY - a vast increase in urbanization, and in specialization in the division of labor involving a decline in unskilled occupations and a growth of semi-skilled, technical, and managerial work (Heilbroner, 1970: 102); and the creation of new classes that eventually displaced the old;

(5) TECHNOLOGICALLY - the growth of science and a myriad of technological inventions and their rapid diffusion throughout society; and a concomitant social reconstruction of the meaning of time, family, and work.

It has been argued that the conditions outlined above can be found to a greater or lesser degree in all industrializing societies, capitalist or socialist. As Wilensky and Lebeaux have stated (1965: 44-5),

Much of what is called 'capitalism' turns out to be features of economic organization common to all highly industrialized countries, whatever their culture; (2) the uniqueness of capitalism is often a matter of degree--for something resembling the doctrines of economic individualism if not the free market is found in noncapitalistic societies as well...

...Capital, mechanization, a monetary system of exchange, double-entry bookkeeping, the conversion of property rights into monetary terms, stable nation-states, the emergence of a working class--these are universal features of highly developed economies. They are all present in the more recent development of Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union, countries which could hardly be lumped together as capitalist.

While Wilensky and Lebeaux's observations of the objective features of economic development may be true, the "matter of degree" is not a matter to be passed over lightly, if we hope to understand the more particular forms of social organization within different advanced industrial societies. Despite occupational specialization and differentiation, the medical profession in Great Britain obviously has much less control over the production-distribution-consumption functions of health care than its entrepreneurial counterpart in the United States. Nor does the social work enterprise look quite the same in these countries (Parry, Rustin, and Satyamurti, 1979). Despite the leavening qualities of industrialization, the shape of the professional phenomenon in the USSR is also a unique product of the country's political economy (Haug, 1975).

Stated differently, then, the relationship of the division of labor to the hierarchical distribution of resources is a function, not of industrialization, but of the political, economic, and social structures through which industrialization occurred in a given society, and the ideology that interpreted and thereby helped fashion the industrialization process. For the United States, the culture of capitalism cannot be separated from industrialization; it has been its major defining force. The study of the professionalization of an area of specialized work, therefore, requires an analysis of a complex set of relationships

between and among occupational groups and segments therein, powerful elites, and consumers interacting in an encompassing, highly competitive market economy. The central concern in that investigation is to find out how, within that dynamic political economy, some particular occupational segment succeeded in establishing control (as a profession) over its sphere of occupational specialization.

A Political Economic Model of Professionalization

The achievement of professional status by an occupational group is a complex process. Minimally, for each separate profession it involved a group of organizers who wanted a professional enterprise and were able to garner the resources to construct it. Since professionalization is a population phenomenon,--a species of organization (identified here as the professional enterprise) emerged during a specific historical time period--it also involved a nurturant environment, an environment with sufficient resources and information, of a particular kind, distributed in some usable fashion, that could be tapped by occupational entrepreneurs. A political economic model fits this version of professional development and should help clarify its dynamics.

Political economy, defined descriptively, is "the interrelation between a political system (a structure of rule) and an economy (a system for producing and exchanging goods and services)" (Wamsley and Zald, 1973: 17). Political economic analysis entails the study of both systems and their interrelationships along the following lines (Wamsley and Zald, 1973: 17):

...In general, analysis of political systems has two major components: (1) ethos or values, and (2) power system. That is, 'political' encompasses both power and the values (ends) which power is used to achieve.

...An economy is a system for producing goods and services. A description of an economy consists of two parts: (1) a statement of the goods and services produced, their quantities, and through which organizational forms they were produced; and (2) a definition of the mechanisms, rules, and institutions that shape exchange of goods and services.

Since political power is often used to control the distribution of resources, and the accumulation of resources is an important source of political power, political economic phenomena are not

easily separable into their respective categories. The utility of the model, however, lies in this interaction.

The outlines of a political economic model for the development of the professional enterprise can be constructed around three sets of relationships and their interaction, --the relationship of the developing enterprise to: (1) the economic system; (2) societal elites and the class structure; and (3) competitive occupational segments within its specialized domain and the overall occupational hierarchy. We should like to begin our model construction at an abstract level with a brief overview of power relations in a dynamic environment. We shall then sketch in more detail some of the concrete tasks and variables that affected the professional project in the United States during the growth of industrial capitalism.

THE DYNAMICS OF POWER AND EXCHANGE IN THE PROFESSIONAL PROJECT

Occupational groups with professional aspirations needed an environment with the right kind and amount of resources to construct a professional enterprise and the capacity to take advantage of the available opportunities. Stated differently, the environment positively selects out those organizational forms that fit with or match its complex of opportunities and constraints (Aldrich, 1979). Variations among and within occupational groups in a given environment also affect selection, helping to explain the success and failure of professional endeavors, hence the stratification of occupations. The strategic role of environmental variables places boundaries on the activities of the founders and sustainers of any organizational endeavor. It is axiomatic that, from their standpoint, the greater their ability to control relevant environmental variables, the greater their chance for success.

For any new or continuing organizational endeavor, the elements of the environment that must be available and/or subject to control in some favorable mix consist of (1) customers (both distributors and users); (2) suppliers of materials, labor, capital, equipment, and work space; (3) competitors for both markets and resources; and (4) regulatory groups, including governmental agencies, unions, and interfirm associations. Dill (1958) conceptualized this set as a task environment, because these are the salient environmental elements that an organization must concern itself with in order to carry out its mission or achieve its ends. We would add to this list (5) symbolic information, organized in the form of political ideologies. Political ideologies are socially constructed beliefs and ideas which explain and justify the claims

that groups make for their resource requirements and allocations (Silver, 1980), as for example, the sanctity of science and technology. They become an important resource themselves for the creation and exercise of power.

The task environment can be conceived of as a political economy or an exchange field within which aspiring occupational groups operate. The characteristics of the environment or field define the parameters of constraint and opportunity for such groups, as well as their contingencies, --that is, the degree to which task environment elements may be subject to control or predictable. Control is never complete; it varies with the composition, structure, and dynamics of the field. For example, financial support in the hands of a benefactor is relatively clear as to its potential size and the conditions under which it might become available. Financial support based upon consumer demand is a much less determinate resource. Thus, the nature of the task environment elements--their substance, relative scarcity, distribution, accessibility, exchangeability, and stability all contributed to the rise of professions and the relative success of individual occupational efforts.⁷

Applying some of these ideas to the rise of professions, it might be argued that the pre-industrial occupational environment was essentially resource-poor, placid or static, and dispersed. Occupational groups operated within local consumer markets, separated from one another by the rigid boundaries of the social stratification system. The rules for production-consumption-distribution were well established by social class, and supported by legal regulations and tradition. Technology was undeveloped and its rate of development was slow. Information among the different actors in the exchange field travelled slowly; actual and potential linkage among these actors, that is, the state of interconnectedness, was low. The prevailing sense of time and distance affected both the individual and the collective sense of social change.

By contrast, during the period of industrial capitalism, when professionalization was taking place in the United States, roughly 1850-1930, the environment was much more complex, competitive, dynamic, and resource-rich. A labor market and a consumer market for professional services were being created and expanded through the growth of a "free middle class," unfettered by social class privilege and tradition. Coalitions of occupational groups were forming. Capital was being organized in new ways and new corporate forms were emerging. Regulations and norms governing economic exchanges were open to strategic manipulation. New technology was being rapidly created and diffused alongside the spread

of literacy and education. Many of these changes were interconnected, signaling a coming significant change in the state of the field as a whole (Emery and Trist, 1965). The environment, in short, provided a rich climate for opportunistic planning, as social, technological, and political economic development expanded the possibilities for linkage and control.

The concept of task environment is useful for understanding the interplay of power and exchange during the process of professionalization. In order to professionalize, an aspiring occupation group needs to control the resources in its task environment, and it interacts with others to obtain them. To the degree that their exchange partners in the task environment (individuals, groups, organizations) control the needed resources, the occupational group lacks the power to accomplish its ends. Thus, in an exchange relationship, power is a function of control over strategic resources, or independence. The greater the control, the greater the independence, hence power; the less the control, the lower the power, and the greater the dependency on whomever does control a strategic resource (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1962). So, for example, the need of an aspiring occupation for money to staff a professional association may or may not be problematic. It may lead to dependency on a private foundation which then gives the foundation a corresponding degree of power to define the professional project; it may obtain these funds from its own members, retaining more membership power to define the professional project; it may fail to locate resources altogether and either find a viable substitute, or go without. If the strategic resource is critical, the occupational group's efforts may fail.

In sum, in a complex and dynamic exchange field, or political economy, transactions go on simultaneously among many interrelated actors. The composition, structure, and dynamics of the field mediate these transactions. Power is a function of strategic resource control or the ability to manage environmental contingencies. The result of this continuous interplay is a highly politicized climate with both fixed and shifting power arrangements among the actors. Power shifts among different factions in the professional enterprise and/or its task environment as conditions change and competing elements are able to mobilize to take advantage of them. In a context of resource scarcity, "cooperation, competition, and conflict (are) transitory elements in a process to accumulate resources and achieve autonomy" (Silver, 1980: 23). Autonomy, of course, is the goal of an aspiring occupation. In market terms, when an aspiring occupation gains enough power in its task environment to regulate the production-consumption-distribution processes of its specialized commodity, largely by

itself, its drive for professional status will have been accomplished.

Tasks and Strategic Variables

During the last half of the 19th century in the United States, the growth of industrial capitalism opened potential new markets for specialized occupations and the possibility for gaining access to the older segregated markets of the traditional "professions." These opportunities stimulated various occupational groups to embark on the construction and expansion of professional enterprises for their economic self-interest. In some instances, these efforts were mutually supportive; in others they competed for resources and turf. Collectively, however, they shared the same ideological terrain, founded on the enduring tenets of U.S. political economic ideology: the sanctity of private property, the philosophy of economic individualism, the value of opportunity (Hofstadter, 1960: viii). They also faced similar problems negotiating a course through the still nascent market economy.

In order for the professionalizing sectors of a growing "middle class" to organize and control these competitive markets, they had to accomplish several tasks. Ideologically, they had to construct a "monopoly of credibility" with the public to secure a clientele, and they had to conquer "official privilege" so as to obtain "a set of legally enforced monopolies of practice." The precondition for successful management of these external ideological tasks was an internal task, "the unification of the corresponding areas of the social division of labor under the direction of a leading group of professional reformers." The heart of the unification project was the creation of a system of training which would centralize and standardize the production of the professional commodity, namely, the professionals themselves, who gained the specialized expertise (Larson, 1977: 16-17).

To fully explicate the political economic model, these tasks can be refined into a more specific set of economic, political, and ideological tasks which the founding members of any professionalizing occupation need to carry out to successfully build an enterprise.

ECONOMIC TASKS

- (1) create a marketable (needed) commodity;
- (2) ensure sufficient production of the commodity by:
 - a) securing and training a production force,
 - b) securing production sites,
 - c) instituting centralized systems of product control to maintain a commodity of standardized quality;
- (3) acquire control of outlets for distribution and sales;
- (4) establish and negotiate an acceptable rate of return for investors;
- (5) create a consumer market of clientele for its commodities.

POLITICAL TASKS

- (1) induce individuals and groups of potential providers and other resource holders or managers to invest labor and capital in developing and producing the commodity, providing work space, distribution outlets, etc.
- (2) define the boundaries of the new enterprise so as to include and exclude desirable and undesirable members;
- (3) establish the domain of the enterprise by overcoming competitors for resources and markets;
- (4) negotiate favorable agreements with regulatory bodies to protect investments in the enterprise (preferably a monopoly).

IDEOLOGICAL TASKS

- (1) convince the potential members of the enterprise that they share a joint mission;
- (2) convince legitimating bodies that the enterprise is worth sanctioning, --including relevant segments of the ruling class;
- (3) convince the public of the superior quality of and necessity for its commodities.

Though similar to other industrial ventures, some aspects of this organizing effort are (and were) unique because of the unusual type of commodity to be marketed. Variations in the commodity and in other, less singular but still strategic resources and their management, account for the differential success of particular professionalizing occupations in the past. They also continue to affect the professional phenomenon in the present. We shall list three variables and briefly discuss them here in order to complete a political-economic model. Divided into three groups, they are:

ECONOMIC VARIABLES

- (1) the intangible quality of the commodity;
- (2) patterns of consumer demand, consumption, and distribution;
- (3) the ability to attract producers to join the enterprise.

POLITICAL VARIABLES

- (1) the social status of the founders and other members of the enterprise and the strength of their ties to members of the ruling class;

IDEOLOGICAL VARIABLES

- (1) ideological justification and the capacity to communicate it.

These variables are not independent of one another. For example, the social status of the founders affects the ability to attract selectively other producers as well as the political ideology of the enterprise. However, they may vary independently of one another. In addition, the political process in an exchange field is a function of multiple opportunities, contingencies, and ideological constructions, and the skills which actors bring to the interplay. The analysis of individual professionalizing efforts ultimately involves sorting out these variations and determining the effects of combinations of multiple interactions on the outcomes.

The Intangible Quality of the Commodity

Professionalizing occupations had, and continue to have, a unique set of production and distribution problems that derive from the nature of the commodity they seek to exchange in the marketplace. For most professions the commodity is an abstract, intangible service of uncertain worth--"an intellectual technique"--rather than a tangible good with ultimate utility (use value) which is immediately visible or apparent to a potential consumer or investor. In Larson's words (1977:4),

...professional work, like any other form of labor, is only a fictitious commodity; it 'cannot be detached from the rest of life, be stored or mobilized', and it is not produced for sale. Unlike craft or industrial labor...most professions produce intangible goods; their product, in other words, is only formally alienable and is inextricably bound to the person and the personality of the producer.

This intangible quality creates several difficulties pursuant to establishing a degree of market security sufficient to offset high "investment and production" costs. Mainly they can be considered under the headings of visibility and cognitive superiority.

For a commodity to be marketable, it must have sufficient visibility for potential consumers and investors to identify it as something they value. This visibility, in turn, depends upon both perceived utility and standardization, or how well the commodity can be identified in the public's mind with the solution of a problem, meeting of a need, or resolution of an uncertainty felt as real and significant. "Professional" commodities vary in their potential to demonstrate visible benefit. Some are inherently more "useful" because they can be defined by the producers in terms of individual, clearly articulated needs for a large group of potential consumers, such as legal services to obtain a

favorable contract or judgement regarding disputed life, limb, property; or medical care to treat common afflictions or specific maladies. The benefits of other types of "professional" commodities may not be as readily apparent because they are bound up with conflictual societal values and/or more ambiguous individual needs, such as psychiatric treatment or social work services.

In the interplay between meeting needs and shaping needs, the desire of producers to establish the immediate utility of their commodities may also affect the way they define them for the public. An example is the representation of health care as the treatment of illnesses or individual "curing" rather than "prevention." Furthermore, the utility of some commodities may be easier to demonstrate because the relationship between the applied technology and a beneficial outcome may be dramatic and direct rather than indirect, close in time sequence rather than protracted, or empirically more capable of support, hence less subject to debate about beneficial effects. Medicine has had many of these advantages in its professionalization efforts. When a commodity controlled by a professionalizing occupation is also, in fact, demonstrably superior to its competitors, e.g. sulfa drugs by physicians, the construction of a professional enterprise may be greatly advanced.

Standardization of an intangible commodity, as with the more tangible goods, enhances its visibility for several reasons. It allows the commodity to be recognizable to a wide public; it facilitates claims to a defineable professional domain; it makes commodity production possible in dispersed locations but identifiable with the same occupational group; it facilitates production of sufficient quantities to meet market needs. In a situation where new professional markets had to be developed altogether during the industrial revolution, standardization was a major requirement.

But standardization also poses some unique problems. Since the "professional" commodity is not separable from the producers, the ability to produce it in sufficient quantity and quality, uniformly, requires that "the producers themselves be reproduced. In other words, the professionals must be adequately trained and socialized so as to provide recognizeably distinct services for exchange on the professional market" (Larson, 1977:14). In industrial terms, in effect, the situation requires quality control over the mass production of human beings who will attain mastery over "an intellectual technique" which can be marketed as distinct and recognizeable services. This degree of control necessitates highly selective screening of applicants and rigorous education and socialization in a standardized setting where the producers

can closely supervise and regulate the training process. Institutions of higher education, programmatically controlled by producers, lend themselves to these needs better than apprenticeship arrangements in diverse settings. During the generational period of the professional project, the development of compulsory education, the growing prominence of science, and the growth of the modern university all complemented the requirements of the professional market. In the new industrial democracy, higher education became the convenient arbiter of merit--achieved status over ascribed status--through the use of purportedly universalistic criteria for recruitment and performance evaluation. In the process it abetted and legitimated professional monopoly by these same criteria in the occupational sphere and the ever more subtle perpetuation of social stratification (Larson, 1977).

The difficulties of securing a professional market are compounded by the intangible quality of the "professional" commodity in still another way that also supports the thrust towards monopoly. Ultimately, the intangible quality is a function of the more abstract "theoretical" principles of the cognitive base that underpins the specialized technology. Internally, while battles over cognitive superiority may be quite intense (Turner and Hodges, 1970: 26), colleagues can still make a reasoned, even scientific, assessment. Externally, since the layman does not ordinarily share the specialist's universe of discourse, evaluation is more difficult. The professional has difficulty establishing the authority which will make a client seek out professional advice and follow it. Therefore, cognitive superiority must be partially established through ideological means. Some commodities have greater potential for ideological exploitation than others, and some occupations by their nature can make better use of institutionalized ideological supports to advance their claims for functional authority. The trappings of educational credentials, expensive office furnishings, prestigious associations, social status, and legal regulation often substitute as supportive data for any public evaluation of cognitive superiority (Freidson, 1970). When a legally protected monopoly of practice can be established, the professional enterprise gains official sanction for its expertise which now does not have to be continuously proven.

Patterns of Consumer Demand, Consumption, and Distribution

A profession is a form of collegiate control by a group of practitioners over a set of production-consumption-distribution activities of a specialized occupation. Other forms of control are also possible, namely patronage and state mediation. With

patronage, subdivided into oligarchic and corporate types, consumer control over occupational services becomes institutionalized. "Patronage arises where the dominant effective demand for occupational services comes from a small, powerful, unitary clientele" (Johnson, 1972:65), either an aristocratic elite or a small number of large-scale corporations who may become major consumers of the 'expert' services. With mediative control by the state, "the state intervenes in the relationship between practitioner and client in order to define needs and/or the manner in which such needs are catered for" (p. 77). State mediation can be distinguished from corporate patronage by public agencies in that "the state attempts to remove from the producer or consumer the authority to determine the content and subjects of practice" (p. 77). In all of these forms of occupational control, patterns of consumer demand and consumption represent the major sources of environmental uncertainty affecting the form of institutional control which develops.

Occupational control in the form of professions appeared in the latter part of the 19th century with the emergence of an urban bourgeoisie who provided consumers for specialized services and the recruits for the body of aspiring practitioners. Successful professionalization could not occur without "an effective demand for occupational skills from a large and relatively heterogeneous consumer group" (p. 51). In an environment with only a small number of powerful clients, a professionalizing occupation would lack the broad base of support necessary to secure a sizeable market investment and/or it would be highly dependent upon meeting the needs defined by the group paying for its services.

Professionalization efforts benefit as well from an unorganized consumer population because organization can be an effective means to balance power dependency by consumers through collective control over the demand for services. In this respect, the recent development of Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO's) and third party payment systems in the United States have led to some shifts in the control of professional medical services, though not yet to a national health service. Services provided to consumers on a one-to-one, fee-for-service basis through solo or group partnership arrangements also strengthen professional control, despite the contention of classical liberal economists that this arrangement maximizes consumer choice. Consumer power is decreased, rather than maximized, when the consumer population is large and heterogeneous, and the provider group is carefully restricted, and when large inequalities exist in the ability to pay for services. Furthermore, the individual approach reduces the consumers' ability to collectively define problems, needs, and

roles, and thereby potentially to alter the demand for certain kinds of benefits or services.

The professionalizing efforts of both law and medicine benefitted from the type of consumer population which was available in the mid-19th century and their pattern of demand. Both professionalizing occupations provided services for an expanding, urban, middle class market, which sought and paid for them on an individualized basis, whether privately or entrepreneurially. "Needs which had been restricted to the upper stratum of society filtered down and outwards so that medicine, law, and architecture, for example, were no longer small, socially prescribed cliques, but large associations servicing competing status groups of near equals" (p. 52). Engineering, on the other hand, provided technical and economic consultation that could be better assessed by its consumers, and, more to the point, engineers were generally salaried employees of large-scale economic enterprises rather than independent consultants or entrepreneurs (Larson, 1977: 27). In still a different pattern, social work services in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were neither sought out nor paid for by the direct users of the services, the urban poor. The real clientele of social workers were the philanthropists, and eventually the state, who actually paid for the services and thereby restricted the collegiate control that social workers could establish in their sphere of occupational expertise.

As is evident from the above, other consumption patterns also affect the ability to professionalize. While consumer utilization of specialized services is usually a voluntary matter, the need for particular services is affected by socio-cultural patterns and is distributed differentially according to socio-economic status. Need itself is, therefore, elastic--subject to custom, economic capacity, and ideological manipulation. The struggles to build a profession and a corresponding professional market have involved, not only the identification of need, but also its creation. With the pre-eminence of the professional phenomenon in 20th century industrial capitalism, the role of powerful professions in creating need has come under scrutiny and sharp criticism. The tenor, if not the substance, of this critique is captured in the trenchant writing of Ivan Illich (1977: 27).

The disabling of the citizen through professional dominance is completed through the power of illusion. Religion finally becomes displaced, not by the state or by the waning of faith, but by professional establishments and client confidence. The professions appropriate the special knowledge to define public issues in terms of problems. The acceptance of this claim

legitimizes the docile recognition of imputed lacks on the part of the layman; his world turns into a chamber of needs. This dominance is reflected in the skyline of the city. Professional buildings look down on the crowds that shuttle between them in a continual pilgrimage to the new cathedrals of insurance, health, education, and welfare. Homes are transformed into hygienic apartments where one cannot be born, cannot be sick and cannot die decently...

Consumption patterns and demands also may affect the ability to control the distribution of a specialized commodity. In patronage and state mediative arrangements, where definition and demand for a commodity are much less strictly regulated by the producers or the marketplace, as for example with public school education, the distribution of services is also much less subject to producer control. This lack of autonomy may contribute to crises of legitimacy for a professionalizing group (Baum, 1978).

Additionally, the nature of the specialized commodity or service itself affects the ability of producers to control its distribution. For example, routine medical examinations can be performed in a private office, but non-routine medical care often requires other facilities, e.g. the hospital or nursing home, and/or other specializations. Though education can be provided on an individual tutorial basis, for reasons of cost-effectiveness and sometimes pedagogy as well, educational services do not lend themselves well to such individualistic arrangements. Thus the distribution requirements of specialized commodities vary as to: size and complexity of physical facilities machine implements and hard technologies (computers, x-rays, etc.), ancillary labor, interdependencies with other specialized groups (heteronomy), legal sanctions, and legitimacy. All of these distribution requirements represent sources of dependency in its "task environment" that a professionalizing occupation must deal with successfully to gain collegiate control. These dependencies may also change for many reasons, as for example, newly organized demands by consumers for more control over the commodity, or the need for new and sophisticated technologies controlled by other specialized groups, or competitive professionalizing occupations. The relationships between production and distribution, as well as production and consumption, then, may become major sources of tension for an aspiring occupation or an existing profession.

Ability to Attract Producers

The construction and continuation of a professional enterprise requires a steady stream of recruits able and willing to pay for the protracted education (and overhead set-up costs in some cases) to become its specialized experts. Since investment costs in time and money are high, potential recruits have to be convinced that their endeavors will be worth it socially and financially. Once a professionalizing group has established its monopoly of practice, the attraction of producers is simplified. In the absence of such a monopoly or prior to its attainment recruits must be attracted on other grounds. Usually these have involved the promise of individual payoffs in the form of social status, high income, secure career, autonomy over the conditions and content of one's work, social class socialization to the value of intellectual of "gentle" vocations, and/or a persuasive mission or ideology.

In general, the ferment of industrial capitalism provided a rich soil for recruitment. The expanded middle classes formed a labor pool; individualism as a pervasive value orientation stressed individual status and financial remuneration as worthy cultural objectives; the university became the arbiter of merit, the accepted agency of individual social mobility and legitimator of social status; the growth of large public and private corporations offered new opportunity markets for occupational specialization; and science and research applied to all manner of human endeavor were optimistically advanced as the avenue to alleviate social stress. Even so, professionalizing occupations varied in their ability to attract producers.

Professionalizing occupations with a core of elite producers trained in already prestigious universities--the older "learned" professions of medicine and law--had the advantage of prior social standing and accepted mission to lend to their attractiveness. Taking medicine as an example, while battles for control among sub-groups raged during the last half of the 19th century, and medical societies actually lost their licensing powers for a time before the Civil War, the field continued to attract large numbers of prospects. Despite, or perhaps because of the title "doctor," at the turn of the century, the United States had one of the highest doctor-to-patient ratios in the world (Larson, 1977). But if the average yearly income of most doctors was low, in the laissez-faire market system of medical practice, so were the costs of becoming one. When the American Medical Association eventually succeeded in gaining control of the medical schools in the early decades of the 20th century, and forged the educational reforms that enabled professionalization (in our terms), the desired effects of market monopoly were set in motion. The number of medical schools

and the supply of physicians decreased, the length of education and training was extended, and access to the profession was greatly restricted, particularly for women, blacks, and working class persons. At the same time, the status and income of the average physician was considerably improved (Larson, 1977: 164).

New aspiring professions or those whose status, financial promise, and autonomy were less certain because of the clientele they served or the organizational context of their work, relied more on ideological persuasion to attract recruits. These occupations benefitted from the ideology already attached to the professional concept in general, such as an association with "science" and education, as well as the substantive ideological potential of the particular aspiring vocations, such as the nobility of public service moral reform, or social justice. These professionalizing occupations, such as nursing, social work, teaching, already in a disadvantageous position in the occupational hierarchy, remained much more open to women, minority group members, and working class persons who were excluded from the older "professions" by the ostensibly neutral meritocratic criteria that masked sexual, racial, ethnic, and social class discrimination.

Founder Status and Ties to Power Structure

Occupational groups whose members are connected to societal elites have a competitive advantage in the political and ideological struggle to establish a monopoly of practice. Wealthy elites command the resources to define and legitimate knowledge, values, priorities, social problems and needs and different ways of meeting them. They can sanction a professional enterprise, invest resources in its development and upkeep, and help it to fashion and control its consumer market.

Members of the "learned" professions of law, medicine, and theology brought a pre-industrial inheritance of wealth, aristocratic traditions and ties, political title, and university education (with little technical expertise) with them into the competitive 19th century period of professional expansion and development. In medicine, to use an example from the archetypical profession, this inheritance gave physicians in the United States a competitive edge over other healing occupations to establish themselves as the controlling segment (Freidson, 1970a, Larson, 1979).

The nineteenth century United States was a society with a spacious frontier and an egalitarian ethic. As one form of healer on

the scene, physicians did not have a demonstrably superior technology, nor could they regulate producer or consumer markets. For the elite of physicians, connected to the most prestigious medical schools, urban hospitals, and public offices, this situation was temporarily worsened by the reform of higher education in the 1860's which brought technological and professional training and scientific research into the universities and set off an era of tremendous expansion (Ben-David, 1964; Bledstein, 1976). The new middle classes now had access to credentials and legitimacy for a broad range of healing practices.

As medical specialities developed within the physician group and outside it, e.g. nurses, midwives, chiropractors, homeopathic doctors, surgeons, the medical field also became confused and over-crowded. To oversimplify a complex history for the sake of a point, ultimately, through its connections to the corporate and university power structure, the elite specialists from the most reputable Eastern medical schools prevailed over the medical domain. An enforcement of licensing became more feasible through an expanding network of county medical societies, the Flexner Report of 1910, also promoted by the AMA and funded by the Carnegie Foundation, spurred the reform of medical education and the consolidation of the medical field under the "scientific doctors." Flexner's recommendation, essentially for "fewer and better doctors" was not the most significant aspect of this history; high level commissions commonly make recommendations that are never followed. Rather, it was that the recommendations were sanctioned and implemented through resources controlled by societal elites. According to Larson (1977: 164),

Much more than official sanction and punitive measures, foundation money brought about the implementation of Flexner's recommendations. The leading foundations clearly favored the Northeastern medical establishment: between 1911 and 1936, The Johns Hopkins Medical School got about \$10 million of Rockefeller money and \$2 from the Carnegie Corporation. Between 1910 and 1938, the nine leading foundations gave more than \$154 million to medical schools, most of it going to the best private schools. The Rockefeller General Education Board gave slightly under \$66 million to only nine schools.

Recently, in "The De-professionalization of Everyone?", Haug (1975: 211) advanced the perceptive proposition that "societal trends, both technological and ideological, are rendering the concept of profession obsolete," so that the future may bring, not the end of expertise, but de-professionalization in the sense of a status-equalizing process. The forces challenging and eroding the

historic importance of status for professionalization include: the rise in the general educational level of the public, attacks on credentialism without the requisite experiential component, trends towards patient and consumer education in specialized fields, the availability of technological information stored in computers and readily retrievable, mistrust of the service ethic as evidence in malpractice suits, and the stiffer monitoring of the rights of human subjects in experiments, --in short, a general weakening of professional autonomy and authority. "The de-professionalization of everyone would usher in an age of the client as consumer, a consumer who is expected to question, compare and treat all advice with a skeptical ear," and "the moral and evaluative overtones of the professional model" would decline (Haug, 1975: 212).

Haug's observations can be accepted without reaching the same conclusions. There is no evidence that the capitalistic vision of economic man has been seriously weakened in U.S. culture. We assume that in a competitive capitalistic society prestige will continue to be associated with occupation and income. Therefore, occupational groups will continue to compete for status, creating and re-creating an occupational hierarchy. Since expertise alone is not the basis of occupational prestige, even if expert knowledge becomes widespread and the consumer more assertive, occupations that already have attained the status of "profession" and the monopoly that goes with it, and other aspiring occupations, will still value and protect the rubric of "professionalism." This assumption in no way implies professions forever. It does suggest, though, that our current economic, political, and social institutions would need to be modified. When production and allocation decisions are not so strongly governed by the political economy of the marketplace, differential status could eventually be based on criteria other than occupation and income. In this new context, professions may then lose their social class trappings to disappear entirely or be replaced by a new occupational hierarchy based upon characteristics consistent with the new social order.

Ideological Justification and Communication Capacity

As part of their political struggles for monopolistic privileges, professionalizing occupations must engage in several ideological tasks. These involve convincing relevant segments of the ruling class and the public of the merits of their demands for autonomy, and that privileges, once granted, will not be abused, but on the contrary, will benefit society. Successful exercise of these ideological tasks in the main requires two kinds of

ideological resources: (1) the construction of a persuasive rationale or justification; and (2) an effective capacity to communicate proof of the occupation's merit.

The justification for monopolistic advantage that aspiring occupations developed in the 19th and 20th centuries fit with the tenets and values of industrial capitalism; it also helped to shape its development. Eventually, this justification became an ideology of professionalism still used by aspiring occupations today. As discussed in earlier sections, the content of this professional ideology centered around the cognitive superiority of specialized knowledge/technology based on science as a method, and the norms of impartiality, objectivity, and non-commercial advantage embodied in a service ideal. This ideology was responsive to and promoted at the same time such dominant values as individualism, free competition, the application of science (as a method and a world view) and technology to human endeavors and social progress, and the rationalization of the economy and community life to secure a stable environment for business and industry (Kolko, 1963; Wiebe, 1967). It supported and received support, in turn, from such major developments as the reform of the university to be more compatible with the industrial world and its rise as a status-transforming and status-conferring institution, and the growth of large-scale bureaucracies in the public and private sectors of the political economy. In the eyes of at least one observer, this professional ideology would have to be placed as the centerpiece of an entire culture of professionalism that permeated middle class life in the United States between 1840 and 1915 (Bledstein, 1976).

Ambitious individuals in America were instrumental in structuring society according to a distinct vision--the vertical one of career. The most emphatically middle-class man was the professional, improving his worldly lot as he offered his services to society, expressing his expanding expectations at ascending stages of an occupation. Professionalism emerged as more than an institutional event in American life, more than an outward process by which Americans made life more rational. It was a culture--a set of learned values and habitual responses--by which middle-class individuals shaped their emotional needs and measured their powers of intelligence...

Professionalizing occupations vary in their capacity to use the ideology of professionalism strategically, either because they cannot convey an image sufficiently consistent with the ideology or because their capacity to communicate the proof of their claims

is in some way deficient. Ideological resources to communicate justification include: symbolic resources--the status of the aspirants as a symbol itself, and the special language and dramaturgy of their practice; and formal and informal vehicles of communication--journals, textbooks, conferences, conventions, occupational associations, and the mass media. The symbols associated with an occupation can convey or reinforce persuasively a belief in the highly unique knowledge and skills of its practitioners. "The more abstract and ambiguous the language, the more superhuman the practitioners and their challenges are portrayed, the more exclusively the occupational dramaturgy is enacted with clients (who must assume the good faith of the practitioners) rather than customers, the more convincing these symbols are..." (Nilson and Edelman, 1976: 24). A familiar illustration of the power of symbols to justify occupational prestige has been the successful, long-running, and stereotypic TV portrayal of the ethical sensitivity, drama, and skill of physicians and lawyers at work. Similar efforts to portray social workers and nurses have been unsuccessful.

Conclusion

Each of the perspectives we have presented above regards the professional phenomenon differently, and as such takes a different stance towards professional ideology. The ideology of professionalism has become an accepted part of the dominant ideology of United States society. "Put forward by established authorities, the dominant ideology praises traditional arrangements, denies the existence of conflicts of interest between authorities and subordinates, and opposes political change...Its major significance lies in its influence over how alternatives are defined" (Katznelson and Kesselman, 1975: 356,7). In capitalist society, "ideology conceals the existence of class and the basic structure of exploitation" and "emphasizes individualism and individual solutions" (Larson, 1977: 156).

The structural-functional perspective of professions accepts and supports the dominant ideology. Professions are viewed as liberating for society, an integrative force that brings the wisdom of science to the service of the public interest. Social class is not an issue. The processual perspective questions prevailing arrangements in the division of labor, viewing these as the outcome of a pluralistic political process in which occupational groups must engage. It does not question the competition over status and rewards nor the basic structure of inequality itself. The ideology of professionalism is supported by accepting

and using its tenets as the measure and means of achieving professional status. The general assumption is still that professions are beneficial for all groups, and social class is, therefore, not a concern, except as it may become an issue in individual service delivery.

The political-economic perspective ties professions squarely to social class. Professions are an integral part of the social stratification system in United States society. As Western societies were transformed by the industrial revolution, professions arose like other corporate ventures to take advantage of newly forming economic markets. In a competitive and rapidly expanding capitalist economy, workers who had information and services to sell--an intellectual technique--needed to find a means of protecting their labor. Those workers who could garner resources by virtue of individual talent and the advantages of institutional ties to the structure of power--through family, education, and social class positions--were able to consolidate occupational functions in a given sphere and control them by building a professional enterprise. Professions tie workers into an existing power structure and serve it through their expertise in order to advance their own class interests and status aspirations. With the dominant ideology thus exposed to criticism, professions can be examined as potentially detrimental or obstructive to the objective interests of other groups. The structure of inequality is laid bare as a fundamental issue.

The issue is not merely academic. The willingness of social work professionals to examine structural inequality and their part in preserving it can be a beginning step in the re-definition of capitalistic institutions to more socialistic patterns. The prerequisite of that re-definition, however, is the development of class consciousness. Here professional ideology is notably obstructive.

Among the many changes in post-modern society, the most heralded have been the unprecedented growth in the numbers of professionals, managers, and white-collar workers, and the centrality of theoretical knowledge for development, planning and policy analysis (Bell, 1973). The questions are whether this potentially powerful aggregation constitutes a new social class, who belongs to it, and whether it can become conscious of its objective interests and united around the reduction of structural inequality (Wenocur, 1975). Professionals clearly belong to a middle or upper-middle economic stratum in the society, but to know that is to know very little. "There are many intermediate strata, conveniently referred to as the 'middle class,' the boundaries of

which are difficult to state exactly, and membership in which cannot be determined in any simple fashion" (Bottomore, 1966: 12). Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich (1977) among others have argued that a coherent professional--managerial class is emerging, whose members share an overriding common "culture" or lifestyle, despite some internal antagonisms. Perhaps. But the ideology of professionalism within this class is divisive;⁹ it inhibits the development of a progressive, shared political consciousness.

The issue of structural inequality is especially pressing for social workers in post-modern society. For not only does social work have a unique historical tradition rooted in social reform, but its mission brings social workers into daily contact with poor and working class people who suffer most from inequality. Social workers (not alone among professionals) are caught between their class interests as aspiring professionals and their democratic and humanitarian ideals. If they hope to act on their ideals as they come to terms with the multitude of issues facing the profession in post-modern society, they need to explore and understand the historical development of social work from a political economic perspective. We believe this will enhance the capacity of social workers to find socially progressive alternatives, and in concert with other progressive groups, eventually to create a different social reality.

NOTES

1. The figures in this table were compiled from two sources: 1) The Statistical Abstract of the U.S.; 1975 U.S. Factbook, Table No. 568, "Employed Persons by Major Group and Sex: 1950-1974", p. 350, U.S. Bureau of Census, Department of Commerce, October 1974; and 2) a summary of three tables presented by Lewis Corey in "The Middle Class", contained in Reinhard Bendix and Seymour Martin Lipset (eds.) Class, Status, and Power: A Reader in Social Stratification, Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1953, pp. 371-380. The three tables which were summed were Tables Nos. 3, 4, and 6, Independent Professionals, Technicians, and Salaried Professionals: 1870-1940. The original source for these tables was the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

2. Wilensky has used the dual attributes of technical/scientific knowledge and the service ideal to challenge the contention that the occupational structure as a whole is becoming more professionalized (Foote, 1953). This is a particularly convenient bit of ideology because it contains a number of unproven assumptions about the virtues of professions and does not seem measurable in any reliable fashion. According to Wilensky (1964: 148) neither specialized technique nor theory is sufficient for the professionalization of labor. There is an optimal base for professional practice "neither too vague nor too precise, too broad nor too narrow."

If the technical base of an occupation consists of a vocabulary that sounds familiar to everyone (social science and the arts of administration) or if the base is scientific but so narrow that it can be learned as a set of rules by most people, then the occupation will have difficulty claiming a monopoly of skill or even a roughly exclusive jurisdiction.

By the same token, rules which govern working conditions and production standards may help assure "technically competent, high quality work," but do not ensure that a service ideal will be followed. Nor can union rules, which are designed to protect employees more than the public, be equated with the "moral norms" of established professions. An example of the former would be seniority rules; an example of the latter would be the routine referrals made by professionals to their colleagues, even if a fee is lost, when the client's needs fall outside one's own domain of specialized competence. Nor are either of these attributes alone sufficient for an occupation to claim professional recognition. Both must be present.

3. Professional movements differ from social movements in many ways. The analogy holds best in terms of the presence of shared ideology, interest group association, and the passions engendered in the struggle for professionalization. The analogy breaks down in the consideration that the ideology is not a counter-ideology to an established institutional order, but rather a struggle by groups with resources for a still greater share and more powerful position in the existing institutional structure.

4. "In the fifteenth century the Inns of Court were active educational institutions. They were, in effect, the residential colleges of a (purely legal) university, filling the gap left by the exclusion of the common law from any place among the studies pursued in the recognized seats of learning" (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933: 37).

5. Civil servants were university-trained clerks who studied civil law to pursue careers in the civil service. With the recession of church influence, both civil lawyers and canon lawyers declined before the 16th century. Common lawyers, not requiring training in the university, became prevalent and were involved in a wide range of legal and semi-legal activities (as they are today), such as politics and various administrative/managerial positions (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933: 2943).

6. U.S. institutions were influenced by this transformation in many ways, though a feudal system never existed in the United States. This historical difference partially accounts for the differences in the structure of U.S. professions compared to those in Europe.

7. A number of organizational theorists have described the composition and structure of organizational environments. Some of these include: Levine and White, 1961; Thompson, 1967; Aiken and Hage, 1968; Emery and Trist, 1965; Terreberry, 1968.

8. This section is based upon the work of Terence Johnson, Professions and Power, 1972, and unless otherwise indicated all quotations are from this source.

9. The Professional-Managerial Class consists of "salaried mental workers who do not own the means of production and whose major function in the social division of labor may be described broadly as the reproduction of capitalist culture and capitalist class relations" (Ehrenreich and Ehrenreich, 1977: 45).

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