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Prestige hierarchies and relations of dominance among health professionals

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Abstract

Reflecting on Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power, the aim of our study was to determine the degree to which prestige ranking follows a logic of social recognition that transcends health professional group boundaries. Based on a previous cross-sectional survey, in which 605 health professionals ranked 19 diseases and 17 specialties, this paper draws on data from 25 in-depth interviews with nurses, doctors and nursing/medical students with the objective to understand to what degree each of the four groups dissociates themselves from the prestige ranking demonstrated in the survey. We found that all four groups have similar perceptions of prestige. However, while doctors and nurses defend the hierarchy of specialisations in medicine, medical students and nursing students to a greater degree challenge the status quo. This has no real impact, as their dissenting opinions are articulated from positions defined by their rank in the distribution of capital. Therefore, these positions cannot significantly threaten the stability of the healthcare field.

Keywords

Bourdieu, health professionals, heretical discourse, prestige, social closure, social space, symbolic power

Introduction

Scholars have found that medical specialties are informally ordered in a prestige hierarchy (Album & Westin, 2008; Album, Johannessen & Rasmussen, 2017; Hinze, 1999; Norredam & Album, 2007; Rosoff & Leone, 1991; Shortell, 1974) with surgery and cardiology ranking at the top and dermatology and psychiatry at the bottom. In addition to a hierarchy of specialties, it has also been shown that doctors and final year medical students rank diseases according to prestige (Album & Westin, 2008). In this work, factors related to the characteristics of a disease, such as organ location, aetiology, chronicity and treatment possibilities, were of importance for the ranking, along with other factors related to the characteristics of the patient, such as age, gender and risky behaviour. Their analysis showed that diseases associated with technologically sophisticated, immediate and invasive procedures in vital organs located in the upper parts of the body are given high prestige scores, especially where the typical patient is young or middle-aged. At the other end, low prestige scores are given to diseases associated with chronic conditions located in the lower parts of the body or having no specific bodily location, with less visible treatment procedures and where the typical patient is elderly.

Thus, while it has been demonstrated how doctors and final year medical students order medical specialties and diagnoses in a prestige hierarchy, less is known about whether these valuations are shared by close collaborators in the healthcare sector. Prestige is an important construct for the professions. The work of Weber on social closure has been extended by Larkin (1983), Freidson (1970), Parkin (1971) and Witz (1992), among others, to apprehend the mechanisms and strategies social groups employ in order to maximise rewards by restricting access to opportunities and singling out certain identifiable social and/or physical attributes as the basis for exclusion (for further discussion on the theory of social closure see Flemmen, Toft, Andersen, Hansen, & Ljunggren, 2017). Following Weber, individuals are located hierarchically in society by the virtue of status (*stände*), which is determined by a collective estimation of honour. The division of labour “gives rise to characteristic differences in power, and power begets privilege, and power and privilege begets prestige” (Treiman, 1977, pp. 5–6).

Thus, the notion of prestige can be considered a status-ordering phenomenon. This logic of social recognition arises only “when certain attributes are interpreted through value judgements and organized into a hierarchical order” (Zhou, 2005, p. 97). In line with neo-Weberian ideas of the formation of prestige hierarchies through social closure, Lamont (2012, pp. 204–5) argues, “subprocesses of (e)valuation include categorization dynamics, such as classification, commensuration, equivalence, signaling, and standardization (...) and legitimation dynamics, which includes the contestation and negotiation of value as well as its diffusion, stabilization, ritualization, consecration, and institutionalization.” Thus, the logic of social recognition might “generate divergence and contention, rather than consensus, in social judgment among groups” (Zhou, 2005, p. 97). Following these

arguments, the groups collaborating closely with doctors in daily hospital practice may or may not reproduce doctors' ranking of specialties and diagnoses. To be sure, the doctor-nurse relationship has often been described as a dominant-subservient relationship (Gjerberg & Kjølørød, 2001). To gauge the evidence for the existence (or absence) of consensus in health professionals' prestige order, we investigated how do doctors, nurses, medical students and student nurses within Danish public healthcare value specialties and diagnoses. We reproduced the research design created by Album and Westin (2008) and asked 605 respondents (nurses, doctors, nursing students, and early, mid and late-phase medical students) to rank diseases and specialties on a scale of 1 (lowest prestige) to 9 (highest prestige), based on how they believed most health personnel would rank them. We found prestige rankings similar to those of Album and Westin (see Attachment 1 for the results). While this may indicate a consensus in social judgment among the groups, it offers few clues as to how meaning production is constructed and how knowledge and beliefs are diffused within each group (Hindhede, 2019; Montgomery, 1991). In order to inquire if and how the valuation is contested and negotiated, in this paper, we ask, to what degree can or will nurses, doctors, and nursing/medical students dissociate themselves from the social recognition of medical diagnoses and specialties?

Theoretical background

As with previous Norwegian research on prestige hierarchies, our focus is not on practices but on discourses. This paper takes as its starting point that in order to investigate whether voices and language break with the legitimate language of the social world and common sense, a relational way of thinking is needed. To accomplish our analytic work, we draw on Pierre Bourdieu's studies of the cultural valuation of symbolic goods and social practices, in which he developed the concepts of "doxa", "orthodoxy" and "heterodoxy" (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 159–71) (see Figure 1). These concepts enable us to analyse how the processes of production and reproduction of discourse happen.

Bourdieu makes a distinction between the universe of the undiscussed and the universe of opinion. To him, doxa is the universe of the undiscussed and undisputed; it represents the taken-for-granted assumptions in social space; it defines what is thinkable and sayable. Bourdieu (1977, p. 169) links doxic eruption into discourse in situations to "the existence of competing possibles and to the explicit critique of the sum total of the alternatives not chosen that the established order implies." Here, doxa is questioned by an opinion-ruled discourse, a heterodoxy seeking to expose the arbitrariness of the taken for granted. Orthodoxy, on the other hand, "aims, without entirely succeeding, at restoring the primal state of innocence of doxa" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169).

Social spaces are "multidimensional distributions of socially efficient properties (capitals) which stipulate a set of patterned positions from which one can intelligibly predict strategies" (Wacquant, 2020, p. 17). The question of the legitimacy to define the stakes and

trump cards of the game “arises from the very possibility of this questioning, of a break with the doxa that takes the ordinary order for granted. Having said this, the symbolic strength of the participants in this struggle is never completely independent of their position in the game” (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 734). Dominant positions in social space can be characterised by an orthodox position striving to defend their own privileges by rejecting heterodox positions (dominated positions) that challenge the game, the rules of the game and the doxa. As pointed out by Bourdieu (1989, pp. 20-23) there are “symbolic struggles over the power to produce and to impose the legitimate vision of the world,” to “create visions of division (...) through the words used to designate or to describe individuals, groups or institutions.” Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic power “addresses the consequential categorization, the ability to make the world—to preserve or change it—by fashioning and diffusing symbolic frames, collective instruments of cognitive construction of reality” (Wacquant, 2020, pp. 18–19).

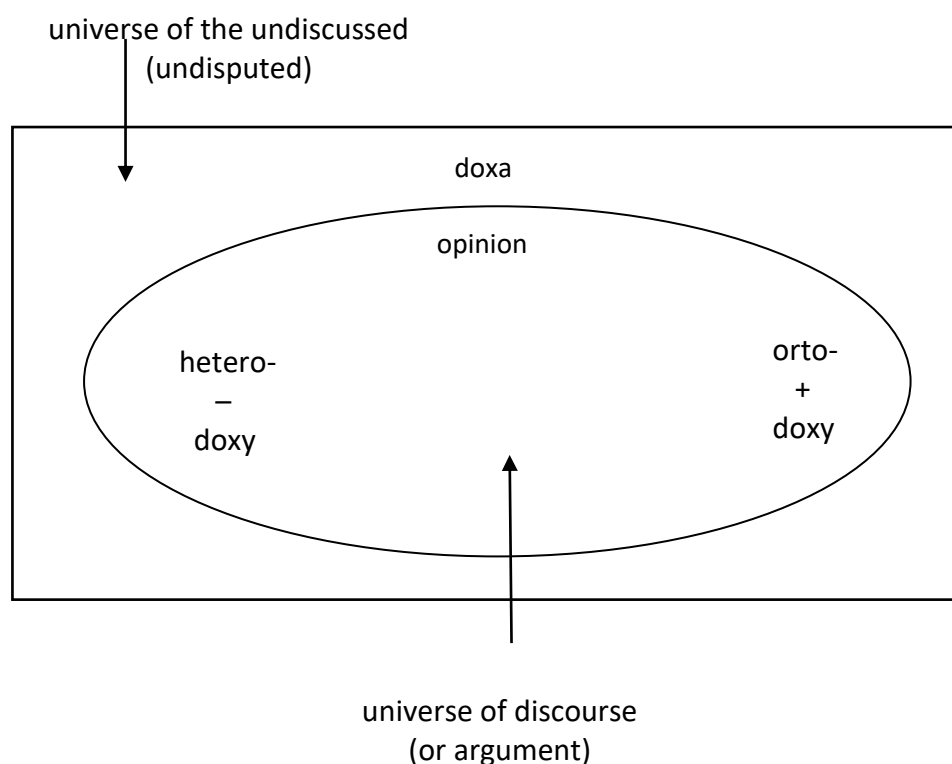


Figure 1: The relationship between heterodoxy, orthodoxy and doxa (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 168).

Methods and analytical strategy

In order to inquire into the universe of discourse among health professional regarding a social recognition of a prestige hierarchy of specialties and diagnoses, in this paper we draw on in-depth individual interviews with eight hospital-employed doctors (representing

specialties within surgery and general and internal medicine), three hospital-employed nurses (within diabetes, intensive care and surgery), five nursing students and eight medical students (early, mid and late phases), acknowledging a slight over-representation of doctors and medical students. The interview participants were conveniently sampled among survey respondents to consider the various sources of norms and attitudes towards the ranking of medical specialties and diagnoses and why some were valued as being worthier than others. The interviews were informed by the results of the survey, which were presented to the interview respondents (see Appendix).

In the analysis of the interviews, we focused on how differences in prestige were articulated and made logical. All transcripts were coded in NVivo. In the coding process, the nodes that were used the most were “implication of hierarchy,” which holds different stances on how the hierarchy influences society and the healthcare sector. “Specialty prestige” was also used a lot; this node holds stances on which specialties are considered prestigious as well as explanations for why that is, even though the explanations were mostly categorised in sub-nodes if the statements were unambiguous. Ambiguous statements were categorised in the head node “specialty prestige.”

In our analysis, we first present our inductive analysis of the interviews and the four representations of reactions and comments in relation to the results of the survey. Then we conduct an epistemological break and relate the representations to the social space in which the group is positioned, and draw on figure 1 and the relationship between heterodoxy, orthodoxy and doxa in order to consider to what degree the doctrines constructed in the survey can or will be dismissed by the four positions of professionals in social space, the characteristics of this position, its point of view (about prestige hierarchies), its perception of the valuation of specialties and diagnoses, and how it values patients.

As this project did not involve clinical interventions, according to Danish law, no formal ethical clearance was required (please see *Act on the Scientific Ethical Treatment of Health Sciences Research Projects 2017, §14, Stk2.*). We did ensure that the research was ethical: we obtained informed consent prior to the interviews, we ensured anonymity and we told participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Findings

Doctors in an orthodox and dominating position

For the group of doctors, specialties where treatment is lifesaving and acute were considered very prestigious. Several of the doctors, both male and female, explained, “there is something about having other people’s hearts and brains in your hands.” Cancer and heart disease were mentioned as prestigious diagnoses partly due to the large amount of money spent on their treatment, as “they are an economic priority of the government.”

Several of the doctors explained that these diseases have large and resourceful patient groups that successfully brand them and raise funds with grand charity shows on TV, which also raises public awareness. The doctors also agreed that anaesthesia is considered a very prestigious specialty for several reasons. As one doctor put it, “these are the people you call in when everything else has gone wrong and the situation is going haywire.” In addition, some of the doctors considered anaesthesia a very complex specialty. Anaesthesiologists, along with paediatricians, are often portrayed in the media as heroes who save the day. According to several of the doctors, this contributes to the prestige of these specialties. Psychiatry, on the other hand, is not valued as particularly prestigious, and the reasons given for this are the long-term treatment, the difficulty of measuring whether or not the patient actually recovers, the stigma attached to the patients, and the fact that it is a difficult group of patients in general. However, the prestige of this speciality is currently growing, as suggested by some of the doctor respondents here.

In general, the doctors distinguished between the various types of person behind the different types of speciality. One doctor (pathology) talked about how pathology is a “club of geeks,” and several spoke about the field of surgery as being very male-dominated, especially a few decades ago. Abdominal and orthopaedic surgery are still male-dominated, and these surgeons were described as “swaggering people” with a cynical, non-empathetic approach to both colleagues and patients, and as having a very different culture from the gynaecological-obstetric and pathology doctors, who were described as “softer, more empathetic, and less competitive.”

One doctor (respiratory medicine) talked about endocrinology not being particularly prestigious because of the non-specific lung patients who are included in this specialty “because nobody else wants them.” This type of unspecified lung patient is considered “not interesting” and “bad for business” because there is no funding attached to this type of patient. According to one of the doctors (gastroenterology), the prestigious specialties attract outgoing, attention-seeking people who thus maintain their prestige. It came as a surprise to many of the doctors that lung cancer is at the top of the ranking (see Appendix), as they valued it as a “self-inflicted loser disease.” Several of the doctors also mentioned “wastebasket diagnoses,” which are diagnoses that cannot be treated because they are actually not possible to diagnose specifically (Jutel, 2011, p. 30).

In a social space perspective, it is obvious that the group of doctors share experiences with respondents in former studies of medical prestige hierarchies (Album and Westin, 2008; Album et al., 2017). Doctors—with certain limits—rule the game on the clinical level and they articulate values and prestige in social space from a “we” or “I” position. Overall, they represent an orthodox and dominating position as they have set the norms of prestige for 200 years (Foucault, 2002; Pinell, 2011). But doctors are also differentiated in 38 medical specialties (Sundhedsvidenskabeligt Fakultet SDU, 2010), and within these there are opposed experiences of prestige as we also saw in the interviews. Therefore, the

battleground is two-fold for the doctors: they struggle with each regarding the relative prestige of specialties, but also with politicians, administrators and patient groups (Collyer, Willis & Lewis, 2017). However, in general they see themselves as primarily defending the fellowship of doctors rather than providing an internal critique of colleagues and other specialties (Bayer & Larsen, 2004). They do not perceive doxa as arbitrary. Instead, privilege is to some degree naturalised and made self-evident, shaped by their ancestors (doctors) and the wider context of social space. As Bourdieu explains, the self-evident “goes without saying and therefore goes unquestioned’ (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 166).

Medical students in an orthodox and dominated position

The medical students agreed that specialties that perform life-saving treatments are considered the most prestigious. Surgeons are considered very prestigious because they “have a craft; they fix things and are seen as heroes in the public eye.” Moreover, “they have a task, they perform it, and it is easy to see if they fail or succeed, so their work is very measurable, which is prestigious.” Some of the medical students mentioned that surgery is becoming less invasive, with robots doing much of the work. This development is seen as interesting, but one of the medical students expressed disappointment that “the craft is disappearing and that the prestige of surgery may shift due to this development.” Their reasoning for psychiatry rating low in prestige is that the work of this speciality is intangible, and “it is not that clear what psychiatrists actually do.” A handful of the medical students talked about these doctors as “shrinks who prescribe medicine to patients who will never get well anyway.” However, another handful posited that psychiatry will become more popular due to an increasing fascination with the mind and brain. According to these medical students, the vital organs, for example, brain, heart, lungs and kidneys, are very prestigious to work with, as opposed to the psyche and the skin. There was disagreement within this group about internal medicine. Some thought internists merely prescribe medicine, whereas others considered them to be very prestigious because they are the ones who figure out the most important determinant for a patient’s treatment, the diagnosis, which is seen as a very complex and difficult task that demands a broad skillset and a sharp mind.

Geriatrics is regarded as low in prestige and “not that sexy because the diseases this patient group has [are] often just the result of a long life.” Nevertheless, one student suggested that geriatrics could become more prestigious in the future because the elderly segment of the population is increasing. Many students also argue that paediatrics is prestigious due to the majority of medical students being female. The patient group, children, is also prestigious because “they can be difficult to work with” and “saving a child is more noble than saving an elderly person.”

A majority of the medical students talked about how their personal interest is the only element that guides them in their choice of speciality, although a couple of them reflected

upon how society's view of prestige might influence them. Approximately half of the students talked negatively about the hierarchy within the world of medicine and problematised how the differences in prestige influence the allocation of resources in a harmful way. Some specialties, such as psychiatry, suffer from this, and others benefit from it. One of the mid-phase medical students explained the allocation of funding as follows:

Oncology and "heart" receive far more money than psychiatry and geriatrics. Society is only concerned about the patients and the areas where we can make a significant difference. Psychiatric and geriatric patients suffer from dementia or other types of chronic mental illnesses we cannot cure. The impact of these patients being placed in a psychiatric ward or not is not that grand. Nevertheless, I'm thinking that the means are distributed unevenly and of course that's not good.

Seen from a symbolic power perspective, the medical students are not yet powerful possessors of the right kind of capital, but they are on their way—according to the progress of their study. They are not yet fully socialised in social space. Although their habitus is shaped by different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds (Bayer & Larsen, 2004), they have no interest in being heretics and display a radical and ground-breaking critique of the rules of the game. They do not challenge the doxa, as medical school shapes them not only to accept but also to support the doxa (Becker, 1961; Luke, 2007). They strive to "learn" and thereby achieve the necessary capital, enabling them to convert the position from "in process" to "product" (from a medical student to a doctor). This position makes space for challenging certain aspects, such as the unequal allocation of resources to various patient groups, while concurrently accepting the doxa. Their comments on psychiatry are illustrative: statements such as "it is not clear what psychiatrists actually do" were followed by forecasting that this specialty may grow in prestige due to their own fascination with the mind and the brain.

Nurses in an equivocal and dominated position

The nurses showed patterns partly similar to those of the doctors. One nurse (diabetes medicine) noted that it is prestigious to save lives and to have a high treatment rate. She wondered why anaesthesiology was so prestigious in the study (see Appendix), but thought it might have something to do with saving lives. She also mentioned that neurosurgery is prestigious because it is difficult and complicated. According to this respondent, general medicine is often referred to as "the bin," but she thinks it is prestigious "because in this specialty you are supposed to be able to do everything all at once." Specialties like heart surgery and lung surgery were considered particularly prestigious because politicians are interested in them and allocate many resources to their treatment. One of the nurses (intensive care) emphasised that it is not the most prestigious to only be good at the

technical side or to only be good at human contact: “What is prestigious is if you can handle both, especially for us nurses.”

One nurse (surgery) stated that she was in doubt as to whether she ranked the specialties and diseases according to how prestigious she thought they were or whether she was influenced by the way in which they are generally talked about. She found it difficult to be objective when she herself is “part of the system.” In the interviews with the three nurses, it was repeatedly mentioned that political interest makes a specialty more prestigious and therefore better as it gains more resources and increases in quality. This relationship is explained in the following quote: “The specialties that are low in prestige are occupied by the youngest and least qualified nurses, I have no doubt about that.” The nurse (internal medicine) further noted, “it is often those without experience that end up in the same place, resulting in poor quality.” Thus, the nurses agreed that the specialties that have many research benefits also provide better quality. Psychiatry was mentioned as a very difficult specialty that should be more prestigious than it was rated in the survey. This was not because of a difficult-to-treat patient group or due to being able to save lives, but rather because research in psychiatry is difficult to conduct as “the group of patients react in inappropriate ways.” In the future, however, psychiatry could become more prestigious “as politicians are increasingly focusing on this specialty.” In addition, infectious medicine could become very prestigious in the future because of the increasing amount of research in the field. One of the nurses (intensive care) explained that she believes many end up in their specialties because of where they had their internship. Another nurse (surgery) said that she found her specialty through a random job post. One thing all three nurses emphasised in their work is seeing patients as “human beings” and aiming to “prioritize human contact.” For example, one of the nurses (intensive care) said she could not be a surgical nurse as the patient progress is too short. Another of the nurses (internal medicine), who was “particularly interested in the medical specialties” was well aware that “it is not as prestigious as the other more acute specialties.” This was also evident by the fact that her ward receives few resources, which is reflected in the quality of the care. For example, the physical framework of the ward is being prioritised, which leaves no room for elderly patients, with their walking frames in the toilets. She believes that the reason for doing nothing about this problem is that these patients do not criticise the sector, which means that it does not receive political attention. In addition, she works with patients whose diseases are referred to as lifestyle diseases, which causes the patient group to become stigmatised and less prestigious. The media also influences what is considered prestigious to some extent, for example, cervical cancer due to the debate about vaccinations. Another of the nurses (intensive care) explained that she feels health professionals want to work where “things happen,” for example, in the emergency departments. Less often do they want work on long-term treatments, such as with chronic patients.

In a symbolic power perspective where power is “the power to constitute the giving by stating it, to show forth and gain credence, to confirm or transform the world view and, through it, action on the world, and hence the world itself” (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 82), we see how the nurses share the inside knowledge about “the given” gained by being part of the game in social space for several years. Their position is that of both an outsider and an insider: they provide first-hand observations of the game over the years, but can also, like anthropologists, describe and map the practices and relations of dominance. As part of this they can to some degree also understand and explain why things are as they are. According to Bourdieu, heretics may be beholden to the most insignificant of positions. The nurses talk from a dominated position in social space that somehow follows the logic of the prestige hierarchy found in our survey; for example, the least prestigious specialties also “attract the youngest and least qualified nurses.” However, the nurses emphasised and stressed that in their work they see patients as “human beings” and they prioritise “human contact.” The nurses’ position is equivocal as it is located “between” being part of and apart from the game. This is articulated as an ability to see and understand what is going on, while at the same time accommodating the fact that this is an observer position without the ability to challenge the field structure or the rules of the game. Thus, they are not real heretics, able to “fulfill the dual role of dupes and decipherers of doxa” (Berlinerblau, 2001, p. 349).

Nursing students in a heterodox and dominated position

The inductive coding of the interviews with the five young nursing students also showed partly similar valuation patterns to those of the doctors, medical students and nurses. The medical specialties referred to as prestigious have in common that they are very complex. However, the nursing students did not agree on which specialties are most complex, but agreed that complexity should be equal to prestige. Several nursing students said that one should rank prestige for how complex a specialty is, but that this is not always the case. They agreed that anaesthesiology is prestigious. However, one nursing student disagreed with this assessment because, in her opinion, anaesthesia is just like following a recipe, and therefore not very complex. The definition of complexity varied slightly among the students. Neurosurgery and brain disorders were mentioned as prestigious, because “the brain is very complex” and “there are many things we still do not know about the brain.” General surgery was also considered prestigious by most nursing students. However, one of the respondents (early phase) stated that general surgery is “just like a craft where you just follow a recipe.” She considered psychiatry more prestigious than its score suggests because “it is much more complex.” Her fellow students spoke of psychiatry with great respect for those who work in the field, but stated that it is not prestigious because “it’s not measurable,” “the results are slow” and “you do not save lives.” In psychiatry, depression is often referred to as a disease that is stigmatised. One of the nursing students (early phase) related an experience from her internship in psychiatry in which the doctor was “completely crazy,” and the reason he was not replaced was that “there is no one who wants to work in psychiatry.” As with the doctors, nursing students also mentioned the media’s influence on prestige in terms of

specialties, but particularly in relation to diseases. Another of the nursing students (late phase) explained, “the specialties and diseases that receive many resources often get good results, which can lead to prestige. This is problematic in that we put the same requirements on different specialties, as a palliative department’s goal is not to save many lives, but to give patients a good end to life.” Two of the nursing students argued that older people are not particularly prestigious patients, as “they require a lot of help with the basic things.”

Several nursing students also mentioned that what they consider prestigious is very subjective and has to do with the specialties they are interested in. One of the nursing students is interested in anaesthesia because her mother is also a nurse in the field. They also spoke of how their internships and their friends’ internship stories affect what they consider exciting. One of the nursing students (late phase) thought that prestige is linked to experience, continuing education, payroll and high treatment rates. Some of them considered progress and measurable results important, while others were more interested in the process. Some nursing students thought that prestige equals better quality, as these specialties receive more resources. Others believed that nurses will always do their best and provide good quality care, regardless of whether the subject is prestigious. One of the nursing students mentioned that she hopes that in the future humanistic and phenomenological values will receive the same recognition as the natural sciences currently do. In her opinion, doctors weigh scientific values highly, while nurses contribute more to the other values.

In a symbolic power perspective, the nursing students have the least capital—regarding both the amount and the composition—to be employed in social space (Larsen, 2000). They are new and low positioned and therefore also have the least to lose when talking about prestige in the healthcare sector. This position offers them the opportunity to say that “complexity should count” or that anaesthesiologists only “follow a recipe” or—pushing the limits of doxa even further (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169)—arguing that “patients are human beings” or that doctors and nurses relate to natural science versus social science, respectively. These types of critical discourses bring the “undiscussed into discussion” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 168). However, “it is only when the dominated have the material and symbolic means of rejecting the definition of the real that is imposed on them (...) that the arbitrary principles of the prevailing classification can appear as such” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169). Thus, this kind of positioning has no real impact in social space that is regulated by more powerful positions both physically present (doctors, administrators) and absent (political positions, pharmaceutical industry) (Larsen, Harsløf, Højbjerg, & Hindhede, 2018). The nursing students do not yet really know the game, or rather the rules of the game. Doxa is embodied, lived and assumed whereas discourse is cognitively determined. As they lack experience with “the everyday order” and “with the language of order,” these are situations that “call for an extraordinary discourse” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 170) by heterodoxy.

Discussion

Similarly to the Norwegian studies introduced by Album and colleagues (Album & Westin, 2008; Norredam & Album, 2007), we focused on health care professionals' representations of practice. In our study, all respondents were able to more or less adequately explain how the prestige hierarchy is configured as well as how societal, political and field-internal struggles are involved in the valuation of specialties and diagnoses. Overall, and in comparison with the Norwegian studies, integrating a large number of lower-positioned agents—nurses and nursing/medical students—did not significantly change the structure or the explanations of the medical prestige hierarchy.

In another Norwegian study, Haldar, Engebretsen and Album (2016) investigated discourse among doctors and found that doctors are able to present and discuss views on disease prestige in a way that would be considered illegitimate if they were declared directly. Comparatively, this study took a relational approach and explored the discourse among four groups of health professionals.

Our study indicates that there exist rules for how the struggle for gaining positions and capital is to be carried out, namely, that the least qualified nurses are in the least prestigious specialties, and vice versa. Harrits and Larsen (2016) argue that as the medical profession has strong historical ties to the Danish welfare state, the scientific knowledge base of this group makes it easier to make uncontested claims concerning cultural authority (such as arguments defending the reputation of the medical profession in the public domain). Law and Aranda (2010) found that occupational prestige for nurses may result in increased autonomy in decision-making related to patient care. However, a consensus on status criteria and status placement forms the basis of the overall occupational hierarchy within the healthcare sector. Our data suggest that stability is built (in relations) within medical institutions, medical professions and disease specializations. Nurses are still in a low position compared to doctors, despite increasing efforts towards the academization of nursing (Petit-dit-Dariel, Wharrad & Windle, 2014). Also, student nurses struggle to resist representations of their discipline as lacking legitimacy in the healthcare sector (Sollami, Caricati, & Mancini, 2018).

We have characterised four positions of doctors, nurses, and medical and nurse students. These rough and general categories are organised around concepts of heterodoxy, orthodoxy, and doxa. However, analyses of positions in social space (in our case, doctors, nurses, and nursing/medical students) ideally need to be supplemented by reflection about diversity in habitual dispositions, background (occupation/student), gender (male/female), age (old/young), speciality, and work contexts as this contributes to what is considered the legitimate language of the social world.

In our analysis, we suggest that the nurses' position is ambivalent. Similar findings have been identified by Lalleman and colleagues (2016), who show how nurses' caring

dispositions at times hinder their leadership abilities and thereby their achievement of a more dominant role in the healthcare field. According to McDonald, Waring, Harrison, Walshe, and Boaden (2005), modern nursing can be characterised by a closer identification with medical interests, values and practices. It is by defending their decisions and actions on a scientific rather than an intuitive or conventional basis that nurses bolster their claim to professionalism.

In our analysis, we have focused on utterances that could be considered as “heretical discourse,” which is new language that breaks with the legitimate language of the social world and common sense. According to Grenfell (2011, pp. 62–63), “the efficacy of such ‘heretical’ language does not reside in the words themselves.” Rather, following Bourdieu (1991, p. 129), it resides “in the dialectic between the authorizing and authorized language and the dispositions of the group which authorises it and authorises itself to use it.” Thus, heretical language becomes authorised only through the “labour of enunciation,” which must be considered meaningful and is, therefore, socially sanctioned by the group. In our case, all dominated groups were to various degrees able to “name the unnamable” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 129). In so doing, they objectified “the pre-verbal and pre-reflexive in ways which render them common and communicable” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 129). Nonetheless, these groups were not able to destroy the self-evident truths of the doxa in social space. Rather, we were only able to identify a few symbolic struggles over the legitimacy of claims for placing specialties and diagnoses in a particular ranking, even within the large group of students. An explanation for this might be that both the medical and nursing students, during their educational programmes, internalise recognition of and deference to the commonly recognised attributes of what is prestigious and what is not. A follow-up study showed that apoplexy had increased its position in the prestige hierarchy over 24 years (Album et al., 2017), but overall, studies show a surprising constancy in the rankings, and we might ask why this is the case? According to Hindhede and Larsen (2019), the number of subfields in medicine (subfields of institutions, subfields of professions, subfields of diseases, subfields of technology, etc.) create a complex network that connects and stabilises the field, and each of these operates with relative autonomy within the broader social space. Here, all agents are equipped with a habitus that enables them to learn and recognise the rules of the game, the stakes and so on. They have general dispositions that are acquired through socialization and education and through practical experience. In order to achieve legitimacy, they must have recourse to many and varied strategies. However, they are differently positioned in the field, which offers different and opposed “conditions of possibility” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 139) for strategies and for playing the game, including having opinions about the prestige hierarchy. In other words, the four groups all have the right to speak and are recognised in social space as possessors of capital, but the capital is unequally distributed among them. For the ones that represent heterodox discourses, their position offers the “condition of possibility” of being in opposition to the prestige hierarchy. Nonetheless, they obey the basic rules of the game; that some

discourses are possible, other are impossible and some are unthinkable. They do not bring the undiscussed into discussion. They may be critical towards elements of the prestige hierarchy, thus representing heterodoxy to the established order, but the manifestation of censorship imposed by the orthodox discourse means that they reproduce many other discourses, such as blaming patients for self-inflicted conditions and agreeing that soma is more prestigious than psyche.

So, what is the value of Bourdieu's ideas about symbolic power struggles compared to, for example, neo-Weberian research on strategies of social closure and professional cultures (mentioned in the introduction)? Through the neo-Weberian lens, the professions are seen as highly motivated by benefits such as status, power and income, and are in competition with one another to secure these benefits. Bourdieu's concepts of social space and symbolic power, and the relationship between heterodoxy, orthodoxy and doxa help us see how stratification by status entails differences in social honour, and that such stratification tends to be associated with how professional knowledge is produced, legitimised and monopolised.

This study has other limitations that warrant consideration. First, we had (deliberately) very few respondents among nurses and doctors compared to the group of medical students and nursing students. However, even with very few respondents in these two groups, we were able to reproduce the findings from Norway (Album & Westin, 2008). Another limitation is that only hospital-employed nurses and doctors were included in the sample. One might speculate that health professionals in other parts of the healthcare sector might represent more heterodox discourses on prestige hierarchies and the related groups of patients. In addition, while this is obviously beyond the scope of this paper as we do not have sufficient data, an elaboration on the various dispositions of the habitus of the four groups relating to their specific employment would be interesting.

Conclusion

In this study, we used Bourdieu's theory of social power to bring attention to the processes that may be misrecognised in research on medical prestige. We found that the four groups of doctors, nurses, and medical/nursing students had similar valuations of medical diagnoses and specialties. However, there were also intergroup variations of prestige judgements. While doctors defended the hierarchy of specialties in medicine, nurses, medical students and nursing students to a larger degree produced heretical discourses by challenging the status quo. As dominated positions, these groups have an interest in pushing back the limits of doxa and exposing the arbitrariness of what is taken-for-granted, such as not treating patients as human in the healthcare sector.

In terms of doxa, many respondents across the four groups indicated the norm that it is acceptable to have less respect for diseases that patients could have avoided if they had lived by rules pertaining to proper lifestyle behaviour. We do not have any data to say

anything about how disease prestige relates to processes of prioritisation in the Northern European healthcare system. However, the doctor's oath to treat all patients alike is seriously threatened if the issue of guilt affects the priority of treatment. Moreover, some factors that affect the prestige of a medical specialty cannot be easily changed, such as the disease and body part being treated. Consequently, prestige hierarchies may act as an instrument of social stratification in that particular patient groups are being marginalised and put at risk because the specified diseases they are prone to might not be prioritised due to a socially sanctioned prestige hierarchy. In times when diseases and diagnoses are closely connected to economic resources and incentives, this is important for policy-making in the healthcare sector.

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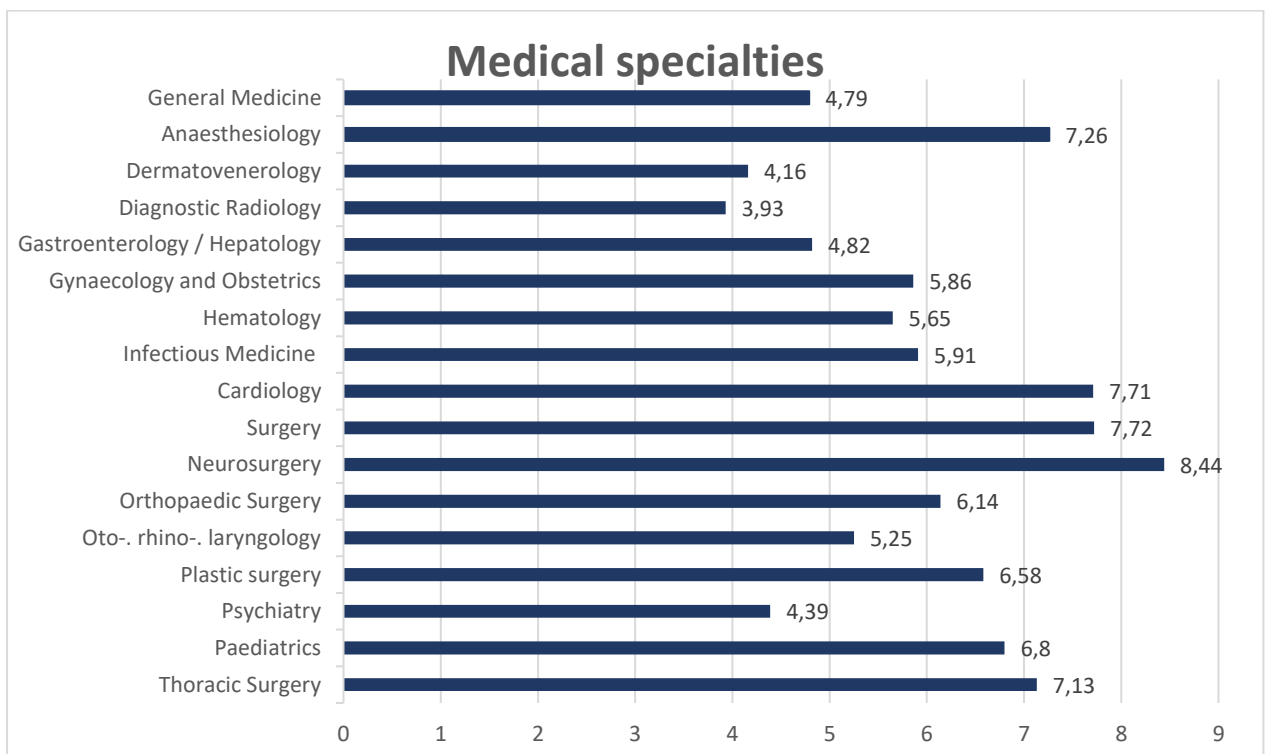
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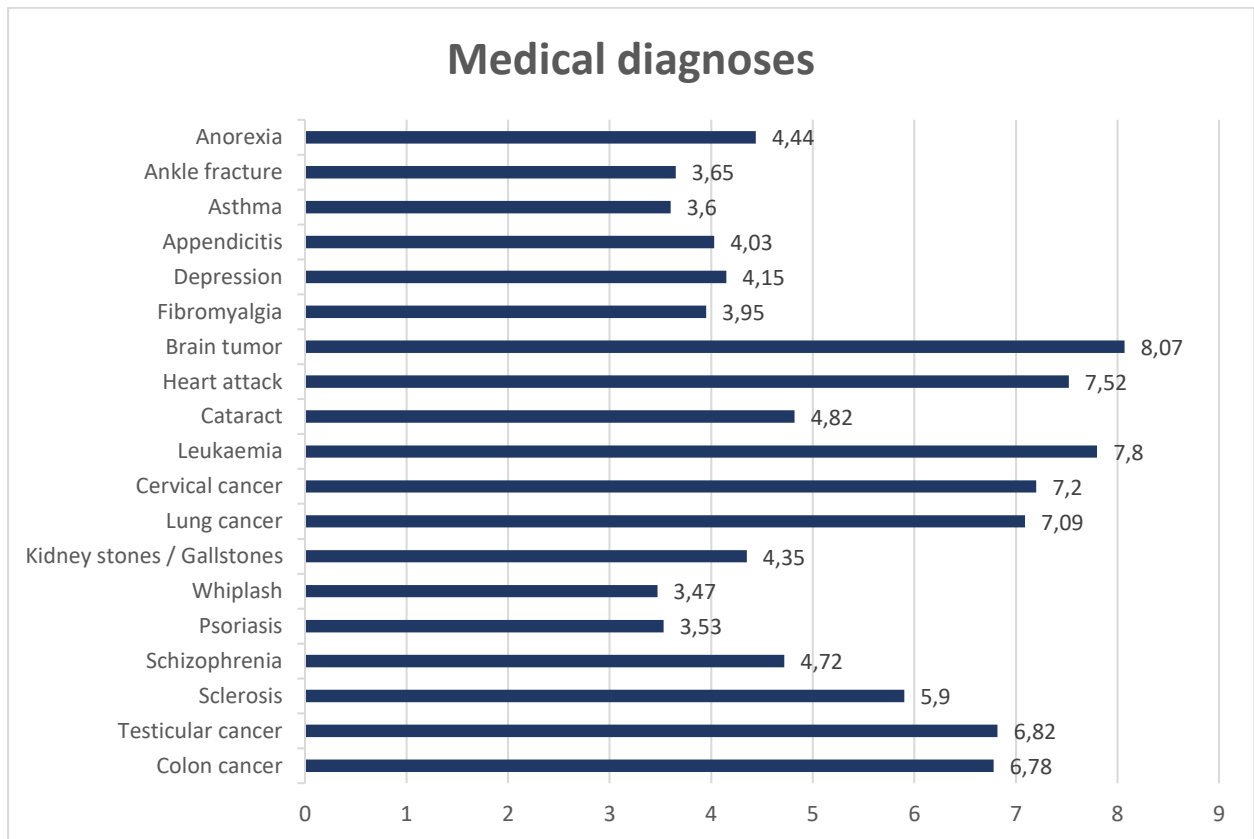
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Appendix: Results of the survey

Specialties, all occupations



Diagnoses, all occupations



A Cross-Professional Analysis of Collegiality Among Teachers and Police Officers

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Abstract

This article compares collegiality between two professional groups—teachers and police officers. The purpose is to add an open, “cross-professional dimension” to the discussion about collegiality in the teaching and police professions. By investigating collegial relations within the two professions, we provide a unique comparison. Using positioning theory, we analysed variations in stories about colleagues and found that the functions of collegiality share similar norms of trust, loyalty and professionalism. Moreover, what seems to be a case of collegial resource can paradoxically be a challenge to clients when different practices of and responses to professional behaviour are outlined. We suggest that the reason for this paradox might be found in the exposure of individualised responsibility and accountability within the two professions, which drives a perceived need for collegial community-building processes.

Keywords

Collegiality, profession, teacher, police, narrative

Introduction

In this article we suggest that a “cross-professional dimension” on collegiality in professional relations can provide a new way to discuss social and relational aspects of the teaching and policing professions. Collegiality is often described as an important component in successful collaborative professional work (Brante, 2005; Evetts, 2010; Hargreaves, 1994; Paoline,

2003). For instance, it has been claimed that teacher collegiality counteracts attrition (Heider, 2005), encourages professional development, and has a positive impact on job satisfaction and student performance (Shah, 2012). Put simply, successful collaboration based on trustful collegial relations appears to be an antidote to the teacher isolation and weak claims of teacher professionalism described by Lortie (1975). However, some research also takes a more critical stance and describes teacher collegiality as a two-sided coin, stressing on the one hand processes of joint meaning-making and consensus regarding values and norms, and on the other hand a micro-political side with conflicts of interests and different agendas between teachers or groups of teachers (Hargreaves, 1994; Kelchtermans, 2006). Research on teacher collegiality has described how different forms of collegiality evolve in schools and influence teachers' professional work (Hargreaves, 1994; Jurasite-Harison & Rex, 2010) and how emotions are involved in processes of trust or distrust in collegial relations (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000; Cowie, 2011; Hargreaves, 2001; Löfgren & Karlsson, 2016). In a previous article (Löfgren & Karlsson, 2016), we have questioned the singularity in the concept's use through an analysis of how different teachers at one school talk about their collegial relations in completely different terms. Typically, we argue, most research on collegiality among teachers is characterised by an idea that the conditions for the *teaching profession* are unique and that *teacher* collegiality develops as a result of the conditions in certain schools (Craig, 2013; Kelchtermans, 2006). Such research is rooted in the idea that school working conditions are so specific that they shape the teaching profession (Lortie, 1975) based on unique forms of collaboration and collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994). From this viewpoint, it is logical to direct attention towards teachers' collegial work as a matter of the specific conditions for teachers in a school or as a professional group in a certain context. In this article, however, we question the idea that teacher collegiality differs significantly from collegiality in other professions and discuss the importance of contextual aspects of collegiality in contrast to more general norms of inclusion and exclusion in professional groups. Therefore, we direct our attention not only to the joint work of teachers but also to another group of professionals that is also often described as having a unique collegiality and being highly dependent on certain working conditions and with an urgent need for trustful collegial relations: police officers. Research on collegiality among police officers often stresses the importance of sticking together due to the risks of the profession, for example dangerous situations and violent confrontations. It has been suggested that an autonomous perspective dominates when police officers talk about their work (Granér, 2004). This includes, for example, ideas that "real police work" includes collective abilities to identify danger and repressive powers to maintain respect.

Teaching and policing are two publicly funded welfare professions that share similarities. For instance, the work of the professionals is a social mission, they have close, frequent contact with the public, their knowledge has a scientific basis, they have certain qualification requirements, and in Sweden they both require certification. Further, they follow a specific professional ethical code, and share considerable autonomy and discretion

in interpreting and executing informal and formal decisions (e.g. Evetts, 2010; Lipsky, 1980). Another feature they share is the relationship to what is often described as “critical others”, that is, a sense among the professionals that their actions are often criticised in public debate by, for example, clients or policymakers. However, teachers and police officers work with very different and specific work tasks and in different sections of society. Both professions are conditioned by legislation and regulations, but they differ in terms of organisational structure and hierarchy. In many regards, specific police characteristics relate to vulnerability to danger and threats, being perceived as an authority, and demands for speed and efficiency (e.g. Skolnick, 1994). The police profession is surrounded by a discourse of sharing a strong (intra-)national *esprit de corps*, or “blue” identity (e.g. Charman, 2017; Paoline, 2003; Skolnick, 1994). In relation to critical others, their reactions are described in terms of a code of silence, isolationism and cynicism (e.g. Chen, 2016; Granér, 2004). On the other hand, and in sharp contrast, the professional identity among Swedish teachers has been described as under pressure, and the professional and collegial discourse has mainly concerned the local school context (Stenslås, 2009). We can, therefore, assume that collegiality differs between teachers and police officers, but also that social interaction among colleagues in both professions shares similar mechanisms.

By drawing on data from two different projects, one about teachers’ collegiality and joint work and one about police officers’ perceptions of their conversational climate, we conduct a narrative analysis of how professionals position their colleagues and themselves as colleagues in stories about their everyday work with colleagues. We thereby hope to add a “cross-professional dimension” to the discussion on how collegiality might influence teachers’ and police officers’ professional work. We argue that this dimension is needed in order to discuss collegiality not only as a matter of moral codes within a profession but also as a matter of more general norms about how individuals “ought” to act or react in professional groups. The purpose of this article is to show how collegiality is expressed in teachers’ and police officers’ stories about their colleagues in order to add a more open, “cross-professional dimension” to the discussion about collegiality in the work of teachers and police officers. We address the following question: How can collegiality in two different professions be understood as a resource and a challenge to their professional work?

Collegiality in welfare professions—a matter of trust and accountability

In research on welfare professionals, such as teachers, police officers and social workers, collegiality is described as one of the basic principles for professionalism based on trust in the professionals’ knowledge and authority (Brante, 2005; Evetts, 2010). It has also been shown, however, that a strong sense of collegiality can be a challenge in terms of professional authority when contrasted with critical others (Chen, 2016; Hargreaves, 2001; Kelchtermans, 2006). These professional groups interact with clients, such as pupils, parents, crime victims or families in need of assistance, and their actions are often

scrutinised in public debate. Public trust in an entire corps is therefore likely to be involved in professional identification, and the ability to ensure compliance with ethical guidelines is essential (Colnerud, 2015). Thus, collegiality is closely linked to individual professionals' competence and ability to make discretionary decisions as well as the ability of colleagues, or their organisations, to control the professional work. This kind of occupational professionalism (Evetts, 2010) is often contrasted with discourse-based New Public Management, which instead emphasises external target-setting, accountability and performance reviews (Liljegren & Parding, 2010; Löfgren, 2014). This overview shows that collegiality is a concept with normative as well as relational dimensions, stressing for example personal experiences. In this article collegiality is referred to as "the quality of the relationships among staff members" (Kelchtermans, 2006:221) in terms of personal meaningful experiences in the narratives of police officers and teachers.

In this article we analyse how teachers and police officers relate to collegiality and position themselves as professionals in their stories about their colleagues. An interesting but also potentially problematic feature is that many descriptions in both public debate and research connect collegiality with identity and belonging to an entire corps (e.g. Evetts, 2010; Stenslås, 2009). We argue that such descriptions of collegiality rarely acknowledge that most individual welfare professionals rarely or never interact with the corps, in terms of formal institutions or ethical committees, or other collegial inquiries. On the other hand, we argue, the kind of collegiality when colleagues meet and tackle everyday dilemmas is more common (Colnerud, 2015). Such situations involve questions about professionalism and what professional conduct is. We suggest that norms and values influencing the action of welfare professionals are formed in the close interactions between colleagues. Collegiality, in this sense, takes the form of negotiations concerning which professional values are at stake in certain contexts, rather than being the decision from formal institutions. Our interest in collegiality as a situated action acknowledges the significance of the local context (cf. Kelchtermans, 2006; Löfgren, 2014; Paoline, 2003) and the emotions at stake in professional work (cf. Craig, 2013; Hargreaves 2002; Löfgren & Karlsson, 2016). Still, we argue that the norms and values negotiated in different contexts have a more general character and that this also needs to be acknowledged when investigating how collegiality is shaped.

Collegiality in teaching and police professions

Traditionally, teaching is described as a profession with weak prospects to develop professional authority based on a sense of community and collegial relations (Lortie, 1975). Later, however, most research has focused on the link between teacher collegiality and collegial relations related to daily work and professionalism (see Kelchtermans, 2006). More or less static descriptions of how different school cultures influence teachers' professional work (Hargreaves, 1994), or typologies of how collegial relations and collaborative work are characterised by more or less trust (Little, 1990), may represent early examples of an

ambition to scrutinise this link. We have previously criticised descriptions of collegial relations for being polarised, stressing the pros and cons of collegiality (Löfgren & Karlsson, 2016). In such research, collegiality is sometimes causally linked to positive effects on professional development and work satisfaction (Shah, 2012) and preventing dropouts from the profession (Heider, 2005). In this article, however, we align with research that takes a more critical stance on the possible effects of collegial relations on teachers' and police officers' work, and adhere to research with a more multifaceted view on the concept of collegiality as a vehicle for both possibilities and challenges (or even problems) for professional communities and professional authority (Hargreaves, 2001; Kelchtermans, 2006). A few studies have addressed the meaning that professionals ascribe to collegiality in narratives about professional experiences. In a previous study (Löfgren & Karlsson, 2016), we illustrated how teachers positioned themselves as professionals by referring to different discourses in their stories about a collegial community at one school, and how this evoked feelings of both trust and anger. A study by Craig (2013) shows how a beginning teacher has to deal with different narratives about a teacher community at the beginning of her career. Another narrative study (Murray, 2020) stresses the profession's cultural susceptibility to individualism and how this shapes tensions within teacher collegiality in an Irish setting. Other studies have shown how anger and aggression are consequences of collegial relations (Ben Sasson & Somech, 2015) and make teachers feel questioned or vulnerable in front of their colleagues (Hargreaves, 2001).

In the police, research emphasises the *esprit de corps* as being especially strong compared to other professions. The danger surrounding daily work, with potential violence, threats and trauma, has a unifying effect among officers and generates solidarity and collegiality among peers (e.g. Granér, 2004; Loftus, 2009; Paoline, 2003). As with other professionals, new officers are shaped by the realities of the work, and through interaction with senior colleagues, new officers learn not only the work, but also attitudes, norms and values. Officers' humoristic interaction has been described as a specific way of strengthening in-group autonomy and various norms and values (Wieslander, 2019). Central values include loyalty and a (blue) code of silence among peers (Charman, 2017; Skolnick, 1994; Westmarland, 2005). Theories on loyalty within the police have attracted particular attention (Paoline, 2003; Peterson & Uhnnoo, 2012), and have been explained as significant for codes of silence (concerning non-reporting of peers), corruption, and derogatory jargon within police culture (e.g. Loftus, 2009; Waddington, 1999; Westmarland 2005; Wieslander, 2019). A cynical attitude among police officers includes a lack of hope towards citizens and distrust towards the criminal justice system (Chen, 2016). A strongly differentiated sense of "us and them" is reported, both between the police and criminals and between the police and the rest of the society; no one can possibly understand what police work is all about (Paoline, 2003). Police collegiality stands out as exclusive and specific. By investigating the function of everyday collegial relations within the police, we provide a basis for a unique comparison regarding collegial relations in the teaching profession.

In sum, we consider collegiality as a coin with at least two sides (Kelchtermans, 2006). The outcome—in terms of pros and cons—is often unclear and dependent on the micro-politics in local contexts. In this article, the attention is mainly directed to the link between collegiality and professionalism, not to the organisations (schools and the police). However, the conditions within the organisations in terms of management and performance reviews, and their local representations, frame what it is possible for professionals to say. This matter is further addressed in the conclusion.

Despite an extensive research field on what characterises teachers' and police officers' occupational cultures, teachers' and officers' own stories about collegiality have not received the same attention. With this article we hope to contribute to a broader understanding of situated everyday constructions of collegiality among teachers and police officers. As professions they share similar features, but can also be expected to offer distinct perspectives on collegiality considering the profession-specific discourses (on loyalty and trust) surrounding both professions.

Design and data

The present study was based on interview data from two different projects. In the first project, 12 grammar school teachers were interviewed about their experiences of collegial work relating to teaching and their assessment work. In the other project, 33 patrol officers in a district were interviewed about their perceptions of the conversational workplace climate, including questions about collegiality and how to act when colleagues overstep the line of appropriate behaviour (see Wieslander, 2016). Both projects used topical, semi-structured in-depth interviews (Goodson & Sikes, 2001). Both projects follow the ethical regulations of research on humans, which implies informed consent, confidentiality, and secure data storage (Swedish Research Council, 2011).

The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim in Swedish. They were translated into English in close collaboration with a professional translator. The stories chosen for more detailed analysis and presentation explicitly centre on collegial relations and perceptions of collegiality. In the analysis of all transcripts, many stories emerged where both teachers and officers described their closest colleagues in positive terms and where collegiality was cited as a significant resource, or prerequisite, for conducting their work.

Based on this initial analysis, we have chosen two stories (one from each profession) that illustrate the breadth and depth of how participants talk about collegiality as a resource. Another category that emerged was stories concerning how trust and loyalty between colleagues could sometimes cause problems or challenge collegial relations. We have selected one additional story from each profession that illustrates how collegiality sometimes challenges professional relations.

The stories have been selected because they deal with specific challenging situations within each profession. Although our intention was to illustrate a variation in how teachers and police officers talk about collegiality as a resource and a challenge, and to highlight qualitative differences, we do not claim to illustrate the full variation in terms of generalisation (Larsson, 2009). We argue, however, that the stories will probably be recognised by most practitioners in the two professions and that our analysis can contribute to an understanding of collegiality as a socially situated phenomenon.

Theory and methodology

Bamberg (1997; 2004) illustrates how people position themselves and are positioned through their stories and storytelling, thus forming images of who they are or who they want to be in relation to dominating discourses. According to Bamberg, narrators make claims that reach beyond the interview as they attach to culturally available discourses. Even if these claims are formed through and in a specific situation where the narrator recounts personal experiences, Bamberg stresses that these claims are decontextualised and have a wider significance than what is said about a specific situation. It is therefore of interest to try to understand how the narrator connects to various culturally available discourses and how these discourses shape coherence and make the story appear convincing (Talbot, Bibace, Bokhour & Bamberg, 1996). In this article, we align with a broad definition of narrative, taking an interest in how individuals use previous experiences and events to explain what they consider to be right or wrong, what happened, why, who can be accountable, and the narrator's role in the event (Talbot et al., 1996). We consider the narrators, teachers and police officers to be discourse-users (Bamberg, 1997) who shape meaning and coherence in their stories by referring to dominant discourses of professionalism. In line with Evetts (2010), we note that these references address occupational as well as organisational forms of professionalism, stressing agendas of internal collegial responsibility as well as external accountability.

Inspired by Bamberg, we conduct a three-step analysis to understand how collegiality is constructed as a resource and a challenge by the interviewed teachers and police officers when talking about their colleagues. This analysis enables us to explore how the participants narratively construct collegiality as a resource from their point of view, although this does not necessarily hold to be true from the perspective of clients or colleagues within the same profession.

First, we describe what the story is about and how the characters are positioned vis-à-vis each other. The central subject position in the analysis is the *colleague*. To analyse how the colleague's position is formed in the story, we disentangle the positions given to the main and more peripheral characters. Who is included and excluded in the fellowship, and on what grounds?

Second, we analyse how *collegiality* takes shape as a resource for teachers and police officers when positioning themselves in their discussions about colleagues. Here, we answer questions about how collegial fellowship is shaped and contrasted to others in the interaction between interviewee and interviewer.

Third, we analyse how collegiality can challenge professional relations at work. We also scrutinise how discourses of trust, loyalty and professionalism contribute to coherence, but also dissonance, in teachers' and police officers' stories about their colleagues. One central analytical question is how these discourses interface in stories about collegiality and raise questions about ethical and professional conduct in the two professions. This third step is elaborated on in a final discussion.

Findings

We have distinguished two dominating functions of collegiality as a resource in teachers' and police officers' stories about collegial relations. First, there are stories about certain groups of colleagues who are under some kind of pressure in relation to their professional core values, making it important for them to build trustful relations in order to manage a demanding workday. Second, collegiality is described as a resource when encountering potential critics of how teachers and police officers conduct their work and handle relations.

Collegiality as a result of trust in a group needing relief from demanding work

The first story is told by Boel, an experienced mathematics teacher who has worked for 15 years at different schools. The story concerns how she found support in her colleagues when her professional judgement was questioned by a psychological assessment of one of her students. The story illustrates how a strong collegial community at the school helped her deal with anger and frustration when she received the results of the assessment. By telling this story, she stresses how important the close collegial community is for her endurance in the profession. Prior to the quotation presented here, she claims that, for her, professionalism is a matter of being able to talk about difficult matters with colleagues at school because they are the only ones who really understand.

Excerpt 1, teacher interview

Collegiality Among Teachers and Police Officers

- 1 Boel I can tell you about one occasion when I felt that my colleagues supported me. And
2 afterwards we can make fun of each other, so we say things about it. Well, I've been
3 fighting pretty hard for a boy ever since grade four. I'm totally convinced that he has
4 ADHD because he has exactly those symptoms. I've been working for 15 years with
5 quite a lot of children, you know, so I thought it was, he must get help now. [...] Now
6 you have to do lots of things and there are long loops including meetings with a
7 psychologist who give suggestions that you should follow and implement, and then
8 you evaluate it. And all this didn't work out very well, it remains unresolved. And now
9 we came to this big evaluation and [...] they say "No he doesn't have ADHD, he
10 concentrated perfectly in all our tests" and the kid isn't [concentrating] in the
11 classroom. And, I felt frustrated. I'm glad, obviously, for his sake. He doesn't have
12 ADHD – that must be a good thing. But for me it was like "How on earth will I be able
13 to help him now?". Because now I don't know what this is about at all, nobody does.
14 And for him [...], he's stuck with the fact that he doesn't behave very well. But he
15 doesn't have the kind of problems we thought he had. Then I get really frustrated. And
16 I express that [to my colleagues] very clearly! I can say that I was pretty upset.
- 17 Int When you got the result?
- 18 Boel Yes, when I got the result. And then we had a meeting with the collegial team the same
19 day. Their responses were "Yes, but that's insane" or "Yes, so strange, what will you
20 do now?". Then, next time someone says "Well yes, I'm not sure I want to work with
21 you, you're so angry". They say it with a glint in the eye and then I say like "Yes but
22 now I've been angry so now I'm no longer angry". But to let it go and let go of some
23 frustration. So I don't take all that home and I don't scold my children because I'm not
24 that frustrated. And that's very important, very, very important for your own life, you
25 know. Because if you take it home and somehow try to discuss it with your husband,
26 it doesn't work. It's so exhausting and if you're not understood the frustration grows.
27 So, it's here [at school] you must do it [talk] with your colleagues. And next time it
28 might be someone else doing it and then you're supportive. There have been times
29 when someone almost started to cry because it's so hard and then you close up
30 somehow. We stick together, so I think we have a strong community. Of course, we're
31 different and obviously sometimes it hurts, and someone says something that
32 disappoints you. But still, if you don't want to work in this manner, it doesn't work –
33 you don't stay. If you don't want to work this closely, like we do, and if you don't want
34 to take part in this, then I don't think you'll stay. However, many [colleagues] say they
35 think that this social thing here is very, they have...
- 37 Int Yes, it's important.
- 38 Boel Yes, it's important. And you miss it when you come to another school.

In this story, Boel and her colleagues are positioned in relation to the psychologist and those responsible for the evaluation. The collegial community at the school is contrasted with the psychologist, who is positioned as an external expert with the power to determine whether or not the boy should be given a diagnosis (lines 9-12) and what should be done (lines 6-8). The colleagues are described as supportive, expressing sympathy (lines 19-21, 29), making jokes (lines 21-22) and sticking together (lines 29-31, 35). Boel's family is positioned as needing protection from the anger and frustration that teaching sometimes generates (lines 22-26) and from her exhausting need to talk about professional matters (lines 26-30). The colleagues are thus positioned as responsible for her professional wellbeing. Typically, the subject position *colleague* is supportive when dealing with the psychologist's decision and enables Boel to endure as a teacher (and as a mother) by listening to her when she needs to dwell on professional matters.

Thus, *collegiality* takes shape as a resource for the teacher in terms of debriefing, which facilitates sustainability in the teaching profession. The collegiality taking shape in the interview is best described as narrow in the sense that it is bound to the colleagues at Boel's own school. Earlier in the interview, she said that she had left a school because her colleagues did not collaborate much and did not share their problems. When telling this story, it is evident, however, that the teaching profession deals with negative emotions of frustration (15, 27), anger (21-22), and exhaustion (26). Therefore, this case emphasises collegial resources such as humour (20-21), support (29-30), honesty (31-32), and being understood (27) (see also Hargreaves, 2001; 2002). In the final lines, it is evident that Boel finds this particular school rich in these resources and she stresses the importance of being a *member of this particular staff*. This is also confirmed by the interviewer.

The next story is about the collegial work in a police team, told by Jim, a patrol officer with eight years of experience. In an answer to the interviewer, the officer describes what he perceives to be a good colleague. The story illustrates the significance of being loyal towards team members, not only in threatening situations but also in everyday routines.

Excerpt 2, police interview

- 1 Jim I believe a good colleague, you're straightforward and clear and you're loyal. You're
2 there for your colleague. If someone receives a job just when they're about to eat, for
3 instance, you take that job instead – if you have already eaten – instead of “Oh, I'm glad
4 we didn't have to take this job!”. You do what you can to support one another. “Have you
5 eaten?” someone asks. “No, we're just about to”, “Then we'll take this instead”, so you
6 help each other out. And you have an attitude in the team that you can ventilate problems,
7 even problems within the team. It's the same in the organisation, there you have to be
8 able to address problems that you find, yes, uncomfortable or whatever. [...] people who
9 feel they can't be part of the team maybe, you dare to address that. [...] So no,
10 straightforward, and honest, and that you're loyal. I think that's...
11 Int Loyal towards?
12 Jim I beg your pardon?
13 Int Loyal towards whom?
14 Jim The colleague! Towards each other, that you back up and help one another.

In this story, the position *colleague* is addressed in many different ways. The key subject position is explicitly centred around *the good colleague*, who is framed as a person who backs up other colleagues, who is empathetic, supportive, understanding and relieves team members' burdens (lines 1, 2, 4, 6). Being part of a team, a good colleague becomes characterised as “straightforward”, “honest” and “loyal” (lines 1, 10). In contrast, and implicitly, the story reveals that a colleague should not be self-centred or avoid talking about problems, but should put the group first and actively contribute to sustaining an open conversational climate (lines 6-9). The “colleague” is ascribed significant agency, taking responsibility not only for oneself, but also for the work and roles of others in the collective.

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When the interviewer explicitly asks for clarification about loyalty (with the whole unit, the individual officer or other potential subjects in mind), the officer seems not to hear or understand the question. The answer “the colleague!” (with exclamation mark), said in a tone of voice that made the question seem silly, contribute to 1) the question being perceived as foolish in the context; 2) constructing the colleague as a symbolic position that can be accomplished by all members of a unit; 3) visualising the taken-for-granted and natural in the context—loyalty is first and foremost directed to the colleague (and not to the employer, the supervisor or the mission).

Collegiality is narratively constructed by the interviewee as a resource in professional work in terms of loyalty, trust and solidarity. Backing each other up is central to the profession, where the working tasks are built upon unpredictable events. The closest unit working together is often two officers who form a patrol unit for the day, and they work together with two to four other units. The team decides between them when to take breaks and lunch. This dialogue is framed in the story as fundamental when it comes to sustaining *good collegiality*, formed by principles of needs and ideals of backing up and helping each other out. Although officers mostly work in pairs, it is the shift team that forms the central group constellation. The story provides evidence of the recurring metaphor in the context “all for one, one for all.” In this sense, the single colleague as an individual is diminished and the focus of a colleague is on being a *team member*.

Collegiality as a strength when encountering “the critical other”

In the following stories, collegiality is a resource when the narrators relate to external criticism of how they carry out their professional work. Who this “critical other” can be is of less relevance in the analysis, but for teachers, the critical other can be parents, supervisors, and other colleagues; and for police officers, it can be the media, the public, supervisors, and other colleagues.

This story is about a situation where an experienced science teacher ejects a student from the classroom and is questioned by the parents for using physical violence. The story is designed to inform the audience about the importance of trustful collegial relations in situations where a teacher’s professional authority is questioned by parents and students.

Excerpt 3, teacher interview

Collegiality Among Teachers and Police Officers

- 1 Mark Last year I ejected a student from the classroom. Sometimes you have to bite your
2 tongue [...]. These words, like “old bastard” that come when you close the door. I
3 usually ignore them if the kid got the message. But this time I didn’t. So I got even
4 angrier because of these comments. So, I went out and was about to say “Now you’d
5 better calm down”. And then the student turned around, so I grabbed his forefinger and
6 turned him around, saying “Listen to me now”. At [the student’s] home this was twisted
7 to me having pushed him into the window [disturbing noise] so they planned to report
8 it and so on. And in that situation, Erik who was working here, he had heard when I got
9 really mad. So, “Something is happening”, so even if I didn’t know it he had been
10 watching the whole thing.
- 11 Int. The scenario.
- 12 Mark So he could explain afterwards. Explain what had happened and relate that to my image.
13 And that was a relief to me, but at the same time I noticed that the parents became very
14 [...] “OK he’ll protect...”, you know. But to me it was rather nice that someone that
15 was loyal and had been listening. That he went out and watched what happened because
16 another colleague might have not even bothered to look at what was happening. And
17 that was nice. And I feel like here we have it. I mean, if we see someone, because
18 conflicts happens. That we go into the situation and support each other. Then, what
19 matters is to not knock someone down, if someone need help. So, if you need help
20 sometimes and sometimes you have those kinds of student that can make you really
21 mad. Now, in this case he was a rather nice guy normally, but this time he was
22 [laughing].
- 23 Int. Yes, yes, but they are humans and it happened in certain situations.
- 24 Mark Exactly, and then it was right. Then this loyalty from Erik was very nice. That he
25 actually had been looking out and could say “Oh but I... this happened”. That was pretty
26 nice.

The colleague Eric is described as observant because he heard a noise outside and bothered to look at what had happened. He is also positioned as loyal to Mark, since he gave his version to the parents even if it is unclear if he had seen the whole situation. The student and the parents are positioned as hostile and as a threat to Mark’s professional legitimacy. They accuse him of using violence and imply that they plan to report his behaviour. In their version of what happened, Mark is positioned as a potential perpetrator. That position is negotiated and questioned through the testimony of the colleague who has the authority to “explain”, that is to give an objective version which the parents reluctantly accept (lines 13-14). The subject position *colleague* in this case is a loyal resource who helps out in a situation where Mark’s professional reputation is at stake.

When telling this story, Mark is positioned as a victim of extraordinary circumstances where the student and parents could have overturned his professional authority and legitimacy. It is implicit in the interview situation that Mark’s actions were ethically acceptable, because the story is told as an example of how important colleagues are within the teacher profession. The story stresses that teachers have to (re-)act when students do not behave in the classroom (lines 2 and 5), and that this puts teachers in situations that expose them to criticism from an ethical viewpoint. This is confirmed by the interviewer (line 23). However, respect for students’ personal integrity and wellbeing is at the core of ethically acceptable behaviour for teachers (Colnerud, 2015). Mark claims to have done the right thing (lines 1-3)

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and stresses that the situation was extraordinary (lines 2-5, 9). *Collegiality* is constructed as a resource that makes it possible for Mark to act and react in ethically critical situations relating to students, and to cope with criticism from parents or other external critics, “the critical others”. The actual physical act (lines 5-7) is not discussed as a problem because the story is framed as an example of “good collegiality”.

The next story deals with how a collegial crisis, in terms of an act that is perceived as a betrayal, is handled in a police unit. David, with seven years of experience as an officer, works in a patrol unit with many older, experienced colleagues. David describes how this group of 15 officers uses a closed chat function to communicate information to the group members. On one occasion, a picture leaks from the chat to the local media. The picture, framed as a joke, is of an officer who points a gun towards his head, pretending to shoot himself to escape a boring educational session. The media never publishes the picture, but does contact the district chief with concerns about the subculture in the police¹. This was one of the reasons why the interviewer was invited to investigate collegial relations in the district. The story, told in a firm voice, is labelled as a “big crisis of confidence” by the narrator, and as an example of how the group “resolved a conflict”. The excerpt concerns how the leak to the media was received by the group members:

Excerpt 4, police interview

¹ A group of officers had been involved in another media scandal a few days earlier concerning inappropriate words used during an operation.

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1 David: There it is, in black and white, that one of the people in here has given this [picture to
2 the media] [...] So, one colleague [Karl] ended up in a bloody jam, and the management
3 even talked about taking his gun and reassigning him. The picture is never published,
4 but he takes a... yes, well in my opinion it's bad taste or poorly considered, but he takes
5 a picture where he places the gun against his temple. [...] The rest of the group attends
6 a lecture and [wrote in the chat] "Haha, shoot yourself, 'cause this is so damn boring".
7 We [David and Karl] were supposed to attend it a few days later. And Karl does it "yes,
8 I'll do it". The picture is taken out of context, no, even with context with the text
9 accompanying the picture in the chat, and ends up with the media. And there we have
10 it, that was our first... we have always talked about our freedom of speech in the group,
11 that we can joke and fool around with each other, and then this turns up. Me, I was badly
12 affected, since I'm part of the [special unit that the officers perceive as the target of the
13 leak]. So I took it to the group and sent messages to each and every one I knew I could
14 trust [...] and expressed my frustration instead and just wrote "Unfortunately,
15 information from our group has leaked, we can no longer use this [chat]". Then, we
16 decided to set up a meeting, right after duty, so we used the authority's premises, and
17 we sat down and everyone had the chance to speak. And really, the thing that affected
18 me most was not really that the media got hold of this picture. We are supposed to endure
19 transparency from media, but the fact that it is taken from a private group, I mean we
20 officers tend to develop a peculiar sense of humour. It is a coping effect sort of, it's in
21 all different, I can think of doctors and nurses and the like, but the fact that this is
22 exposed. So we had a crisis for a while, many people were upset, sad, disappointed, me
23 included. But then, really, we aired this, and I among others said that "If someone has
24 been careless with this picture and it's official, just say it, so we can deal with it". If you
25 haven't [done that], we're not allowed to investigate the source, and I was very clear
26 that "We don't care who gave it to the media, it doesn't matter, the question is how it
27 left the [chat] group". But no one really took the blame, and I had really hoped that
28 someone would be that brave and say "Yes, it was me, sorry it was me". [...] But, there,
29 nothing. No one said anything. Then I think it sort of gradually developed, I knew who
30 I could trust before, I still know who I can trust. [...] We closed that chat group and
31 created a new one where we kept the level to "No, we can't use this forum to bullshit
32 and joke around with each other, we just have to use it for "who is assigned to the outpost
33 this shift, what's the plan for our workplace meeting" and so on. Purely informative. So
34 that was that. And from there it has grown. It's like pruning a tree, sort of. To begin with
35 it's the trunk and then branches will grow again. And yes, you know who you can trust.

In this story, the subject position "disloyal colleague" is constructed. The team crisis is built up around "the colleague who leaked" to the media, thereby putting another colleague in a "bloody jam" (line 2) and betraying the trust of the team. "The colleague who leaked" broke what is framed as an open agreement of group norms, where the team is framed as one where jokes and freedom of speech have long been an essential part of the norms of the group (lines 10-11). This means that the picture should be treated as a joke, and therefore not be handed over to "critical others". The following "and this turns up" (line 11) shapes a contrast, in which the informal agreement is not only destroyed but also seems to be an illusion. The foundations of the group cohesion have been modified. "The colleague who leaked" is also framed as indebted to the team, but who can, through honesty and a "sorry" (line 28), be given the opportunity to rebuild relations and the group's sense of cohesion.

Another position constructed in the story is the unit, metaphorically described as a tree. The unit is characterised by a long history of talking and joking (lines 10-11, 20), based on the

foundations of trust between the members (lines 13, 30). The chat was used as a “safe space” (Wieslander, 2019) for “inappropriate” behaviour and speech. This can be understood in terms of “backstage” and “frontstage” behaviour (Goffman, 1956). The media and the police management (line 2) are framed as “the critical others”, and problems arise when the jargon in the chat (the backstage manners) reaches these actors and becomes part of the group’s frontstage. On the other hand, the narrator explicitly frames the problem as not being scrutinised by “the critical others” (lines 18-19, 26), but that a team member disclosed information from a closed group, and thus betrayed the unit. The narrator’s metaphorical use of a pruned tree to describe the new status of the unit stresses how important trust and loyalty within the unit are to him. In short, the subject position *colleague* is trustful and loyal.

The officer’s long narrative about the event (which lasted for eight minutes without any questions from the interviewer) is an indication of a personal engagement and this being an important story to tell. This story is designed to make claims of giving the true version of what happened. None of the other officers in the unit spoke to the interviewer about this event, even though explicit questions were asked about the chat. The narrator positions himself as an engaged, responsible, and problem-solving colleague who takes the initiative to address the problem with the team (lines 11-17). This is in sharp contrast to the unknown and disloyal colleague who did not address what was regarded as a problem with the team. In this way, the focus is placed on the cause of the crisis, rather than a solution to the crisis. It is not considered that the crisis (the leak) could be a reaction towards an unethical practice or culture within the collegial group, rather that the misconduct is assigned to “the disloyal colleague”. Leaking information from the close team becomes a betrayal and an unethical act.

Through this story, *collegiality* is vital in the encounter with “the critical other”, reinforcing a sense of “us and them” between the team and potential critics, and thus creating a sense of a strong and unified “us” while keeping the norms of the team intact and unquestionable. The collegiality becomes a resource to the narrator through the way the group makes jokes and talks freely among themselves in an uncensored way, but also more specifically in the way the group handles the situation.

Discussion—collegiality as a two-edged resource

In this discussion, we argue that adding a “cross-professional dimension” to the analysis of collegiality in two professions contributes to a wider understanding of how professionals negotiate and constitute norms that are fundamental to their professional authority. Our results indicate that even if there are specific characteristics regarding how collegiality takes shape in each profession, collegiality is constructed around similar norms concerning trust, loyalty and professionalism. Previous research on the teaching and police professions often stresses that collegiality comes as a consequence of the unique characteristics in certain

situations or in local contexts (e.g., Craig, 2013; Hargreaves, 1994; Kelchtermans, 2006; Paoline, 2003). We agree on this, since this is where people meet and norms are constituted. However, we argue that it is also necessary to widen the perspective and pay attention to the more general norms that are common in most welfare professional relations. This is important in order to scrutinise the complexity of collegiality. We agree that both the front and the reverse of the coin of collegiality (Kelchtermans, 2006) need to be addressed, because they both have important implications not only for the professions but also for the clients—in this case students, parents, and the public. First, we address the front of the coin, that is, when collegiality stands out as a resource, according to the interviewees, that improves the professional work and community among teachers and police officers. Then, we discuss how collegiality sometimes challenges the internal relations between professionals and their trust vis-à-vis clients. Finally, we draw some conclusions on how the cross-professional analysis contributes to research on collegiality and professionalism.

Collegiality as a resource based on trust, loyalty and professionalism

The similarities between the two professions with regard to collegiality as both a resource and a challenge are not necessarily surprising. However, we argue that our results are interesting because they show in detail how extensive and in-depth these similarities are. One common feature that we think may explain this is the strong presence of a “critical other” in the narratives. In both professions, a collegial “us” emerges in the stories, an “us” that helps and supports one another in various situations, conflicts and choices that welfare professionals (at least police officers and teachers) need to make in their work. The instant decisions that are made by professionals in emotionally demanding professions are not always thought through and do not always turn out as intended or as suggested by the professional code of ethics. The teacher’s story about the colleague witnessing potential maltreatment against a student is strikingly similar to events in the everyday work of police officers. Both professions risk being subjected to wrongdoing in their interaction with the public. Conflicts between teachers or officers and various actors are described as a natural feature of both professions. In both professions, a strong collegial loyalty is stressed that involves colleagues not betraying each other. Similarly, the results suggest that not only police officers (cf. Westmarland, 2005; Wieslander, 2016; 2019), but also teachers, share a reluctance to criticise one another. For the individual teacher or police officer, it is reassuring to know that they have colleagues who support them in relation of external critics. We will soon, however, get back to how this rationale also challenges professional relations and public trust.

Comparing the stories between teachers and police officers, we find similar statements about high expectations or demands for collegial support in terms of loyalty. More specifically, this collegial support means facilitating working for each other, giving support concerning work-related issues, and providing the opportunity to vent in an emotionally

strenuous workday (cf. Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000; Cowie, 2011; Hargreaves, 2001; Löfgren & Karlsson, 2016; Paoline, 2003). The need to vent and to receive emotional support from colleagues is not only made central but is also related to professionalism in the sense that both teachers and police officers construe this as necessary in their profession. For instance, in the teachers' stories, it is shown how collegial support becomes a necessity for teachers in order to avoid personal stress or dealing with extraordinary events. The police officers' stories are also framed by the need for strong and solid collegiality to endure the conditions of their professional tasks. In this profession, however, surrounded by potential danger, threats and extraordinary events, being honest with and sharing one's daily situation with one's colleagues is vital, not only for the police officer but also for his or her colleagues (cf. Granér, 2004). This likely makes a strong sense of loyalty more important to the work of police officers than to the work of teachers. In the stories of both professions, discourses on loyalty and professionalism thus co-relate and create coherence and legitimacy in what is said. The approved ethical and professional conduct is to be open with the challenges encountered at work. Professionalism in this sense involves talking and listening in a loyal and confident way to one another, and ensuring that what is said stays inside the collegial community's rather narrow borders, and thus becomes a matter of trust. Through the stories, the narrators themselves claim to be colleagues who take responsibility, act professionally and understand the importance of these internal norms for their specific work.

Loyalty and humorous language are often framed as central to the police culture (e.g., Wieslander, 2019). The findings presented here indicate that humour and loyalty are also central to the teaching profession, as shown, for instance, when one of the teachers mocks a colleague for being too angry. The final police story illustrates the importance of understanding the difference between jokes and seriousness, having a sense of confidentiality, and putting loyalty to the team first. The story reinforces trust between team members and, thus, portrays both trust and loyalty as central to professional behaviour (cf. Paoline, 2003; Wieslander, 2019). By advocating this, the narrators become committed representatives for collegial authority that governs occupational discretion and control. Apparently, such norms go across the professional borders.

Collegiality as a challenge to professional relations at work

Perhaps the most striking result is that what the teachers and police officers describe as resources are also sometimes burdens for colleagues and clients. A recurrent theme in the stories is that of colleagues who do not live up to expectations of how a colleague should be and act. This can, for example, concern misbehaviour, and situations might be awkward and thereby risky—not only for the people involved, but for the whole professional group. For example, rough action like ejecting a student and bullying behaviour within professional groups risk discrediting the whole professional community if they become public. Awkward situations, like the picture in the closed chat, are often awkward just because they become

public or reach external critics. This might give rise to risky situations for those involved, just as relations between the professionals can become forced, strenuous and perceived as disloyal.

Misconduct and unethical behaviour among teachers and police officers are defined in both legislation and regulations, and in codes of ethics specific to each profession (Colnerud, 2015; Granér & Knutsson, 2000). Professionals must have clear perceptions of what defines unethical behaviour, but our findings suggest this is negotiated in specific contexts and subjective in concrete situations (cf. Colnerud, 2015). For instance, it is not clear what is right or wrong in the story about the student being thrown out of the classroom or in the police officer's story of defining who is breaching an ethical stance. Taking a stand for a colleague can be part of or turn into an ethical dilemma—especially when there are actors other than colleagues involved. For instance, the involvement of “the critical others”, such as the external expert, parents, the media, and the police supervisor, meant that the professionals felt forced to come together to create consensus around an acceptable version of what happened. In all these cases, professional trustworthiness, credibility and authority are at stake.

Collegiality as a resource can also lead to a challenge for professional relations when someone breaks the (unwritten) rules of acceptable behaviour. Our results indicate that there are differences regarding what is valued by individual professionals, and that this creates dissonances concerning norms of trust, loyalty and professionalism. Internally, in each story a sense of solid collegiality takes shape, based on the idea that everybody agrees on how the norms are interpreted. This solidity is not as solid as it seems, since conflicting interests are common among professionals (Kelchtermans, 2006; Löfgren & Karlsson, 2016). Externally, vis-à-vis clients, such conflicts of norms influence professionals' decisions and authority. For instance, criticising external experts, protecting a colleague's potential misbehaviour, or punishing a colleague who breaks a norm might affect professional decision-making.

Further, when collegiality causes feelings of disappointment and frustration, it may lead to morally questionable decisions and actions—which might even be regarded as unprofessional. As a consequence, individual students or citizens might be put at risk. Paradoxically, what can be regarded at one moment as a collegial resource and strength is treated as a betrayal when trust and loyalty are perceived to be challenged or broken. This is when professionalism is put at stake.

Conclusion: Distinct or similar understandings of collegiality?

From a cross-professional point of view, neither teacher collegiality nor police collegiality stand out as being as unique as is often suggested in previous research. In this article, we

have identified some specific characteristics for each profession. For example, the jargon and jokes could be described in terms of police cynicism, and the emotional management related to the perceived lack of diagnosis in the first case could be described as the front side of the coin of teacher collegiality (e.g., Chen, 2016; Granér, 2004; Kelchtermans, 2006; Wieslander, 2019). However, a main conclusion is that fundamental norms concerning trust, loyalty and professionalism play a significant role regardless of the profession when professionals talk about collegial relations. But why do these similarities occur and what are the “roots” of the professionalism in the two professions? The answer indicated earlier in the article mainly refers to the occupational form of professionalism described by Evetts (2010) which stresses joint responsibility and collegial control. Other answers to the question, however, might follow the rationale in the organisational form of professionalism, stressing external management by goals, accountability, and processes of standardisation. None of the professions define their collegiality, or their professionalism, in a vacuum and there is a clear “standardising” influence from external experts, managers, rules, and regulations in the narratives presented in this article. We suggest that the exposure of individualised responsibility and accountability within the two professions drives a perceived need for collegial community-building processes.

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University Teacher Educators' Professional Agency: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This paper presents a scoping review and thematic analysis of literature on university teacher educators' professional agency between 2007 and 2019. Its aim is to map empirical studies to date and identify gaps in research to inform a future research agenda. 28 articles that met the inclusion criteria were subjected to thematic analysis, using line-by-line open and axial coding. Four main interrelated themes were identified: (i) education policies, (ii) professional development, (iii) identity, and (iv) social justice. This thematic intersection reflects intricated factors promoting and hindering the achievement of teacher educators' professional agency. Findings suggest that more research is needed to develop theoretical and empirical understandings of the multidimensional character of their professional agency, and the myriad of opportunities and constraints impacting on it.

Keywords

Agency, professional development, identity, social justice, educational policies

Introduction

Over the last two decades, the critical but increasingly demanding role of teacher educators (TEs) in preparing quality teachers has received growing attention (Ben-Peretz, 2001). Extensive research on TEs' professional development, transition to academia, identity,

pedagogical beliefs and attitudes has deepened our understanding of their profession (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Davey, 2013; Ipkeze, 2016; Isotalo, 2017). And while some overviews cover specific subject TEs, and themes of professional identity, self-study practices, and professional learning (Izadinia, 2014; McEvoy, MacPhail & Heikinaro-Johansson, 2015; Ping, Schellings & Beijaard, 2018; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015), noticeably absent is a synthesis of knowledge on their professional agency at work. Given the current debates on the effects of dominant neoliberal education policies upon initial teacher education (ITE) and TEs' professionalism across countries (Clarke & McFlynn, 2019; Cobb & Couch, 2018), mapping out the central themes of scholarly literature on their professional agency may contribute to illuminate the complexity of their work, and inform future research and policy agendas.

The notion of agency has been widely discussed in sociological (Archer, 2003; Giddens, 1984), psychological (Bandura, 2001; Vygotsky, 1978) and educational studies literature (Lipponen & Kumpulainen, 2011; Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2015), illustrating the variety of perspectives and possibilities for its research. Similarly, notions of professional agency have been drawn from a social justice approach (Pantić & Florian, 2015), a subject-centered sociocultural perspective (Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hökkä & Paloniemi, 2013) or a lifecourse viewpoint (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). Therefore, my approach to this literature review was recognizing that multiple forms of agency—individual, collective, strong, weak, agency-as-resistance— could be identified and achieved in any given situation. By doing so, a more thorough comprehension of its fluid, contextual and temporal nature (Forsman, Collin & Eteläpelto, 2014) may be gained.

But to understand TEs' agency, then their professional heterogeneity needed consideration. They may come from varied professional backgrounds, adopt multiple roles—second-order teachers, gatekeepers, curriculum developers, researchers—and work in diverse settings, such as higher education (HE) or schools (Lunenberg, Dengenrink & Korthagen, 2014). Because university- and school-based TEs greatly differ from each other, specifically regarding qualifications, professional roles and expectations from their workplaces (White, Dickerson & Weston, 2015), the study was limited to TEs located in HE institutions.

The reasons for conducting a scoping review are to (1) describe the extent and nature of existing published research; (2) evaluate undertaking a systematic review; (3) summarize and disseminate research findings; and (4) identify existing gaps in research (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The aim of this study was aligned to reasons one, three and four. That was, to map the current literature on TEs' professional agency and identify any research gaps to inform a future research agenda. Since research questions in scoping reviews should be broad, focusing on synthesizing the breadth of literature (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), the overarching research question was:

RQ1: What is known from the existing literature about the factors involved in the achievement of university teacher educators' professional agency at work?

Accordingly, key concepts on human and professional agency are introduced first. Then, the chosen methodological approach is explained. Once presented the findings from the descriptive overview and thematic analysis, they and their implications for future research are discussed. Finally, conclusions are drawn with recommendations for researchers, TEs and relevant stakeholders.

Defining key concepts

Diverse conceptualizations of agency emerge across disciplines. In cultural studies, it is individuals' socially constructed capacity to act, neither totally governed by free will nor completely determined by social structure (Barker, 2003). In social theory, Archer (2003) sees agency as conditioned by social structure and the result of individuals' reflexivity or deliberative "internal conversations." Through reciprocal relations, collective reflexivity supports corporate agency that is characterized by "articulating shared interests, organising for collective action, generating social movements and exercising corporate influence in decision-making" (Archer, 2000, p. 266). In lifecourse theory, Emirbayer & Mische (1998, p. 971) view agency as a chordal triad with three dimensions corresponding to three different temporal orientations (past, future, present). These temporal orientations are always simultaneously present, but one of them dominates at a given time, determining whether the structures within which the individual operates are transformed or reproduced. Following Emirbayer & Mische (1998), the ecological approach sees agency caught between past and future; it is a "dialogical process by and through which actors immersed in temporal passage engage with others within collectively organised contexts-for-action" (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 136). Therefore, it is not a capacity that individuals have, but something that they can do or achieve under certain ecological conditions (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137). In psychology, agency is the ability to act intentionally—either individually or collectively—with collective agency being deliberate efforts to achieve a desired outcome through group action (Bandura, 2001). In sociocultural theory, rather than a trait or activity, human agency is a contextually enacted way of being in the world, mediated by psychological and technical tools, such as language or computers (Vygotsky, 1978). In post-structural theory, agency cannot exist outside discourse, lying in the dynamic interaction between power and resistance (Foucault, 1980, p. 95). Consistent with ideas of liberal capitalism, the neoliberal view of agency regards individuals as a flexible bundle of skills, which they are supposed to commoditize, and where the "self is run like a business" (Gershon, 2011, p. 546). Neoliberal agents accumulate and improve skills continuously, and trade them in business relationships that are assumed morally and socially uniform (Gershon, 2011).

Conceptualizations on agency have also extended to professions. Grounded on activity theory, relational agency refers to individuals' capacity of working with others, negotiating and integrating professional knowledge to serve shared goals, leading to an enhanced form of professional agency (Edwards, 2005). Here the focus is on social collaboration rather than individuals' autonomy. From a subject-centered sociocultural perspective, professional agency is the subjects' capability for making choices, using discretionary opportunities that allow them to affect their work and negotiate professional identity (Eteläpelto et al., 2013). Here, professional identity is the set of attributes, beliefs, values, motives and experiences through which individuals define themselves in a professional role (Ibarra, 1999). Aligned with the ecological approach, teachers' professional agency emerges from the interplay of individual capacities and social, material and temporal environments (Priestley et al., 2015). It entails the capacity to negotiate the conditions and content of their work, impacting educational change processes; teacher agency is strong when they actively influence working practices meaningful to them, and weak when they lack opportunities to do so (Hökkä & Vähäsantanen, 2014, p. 5). Even without controlling the construction and direction of reform, teachers can achieve reserved or progressive agency when evaluating and deciding on how to deal with it. If the former implies high resistance and the performance of the minimum required activities, the latter involves teachers' active, innovative and approving engagement with change (Vähäsantanen, 2015). Inextricably linked, teacher identity influences the achievement of teacher agency while activated and sustained by it (Wilson & Deaney, 2010). Moreover, both are vital components of teacher professional development, seen as the ongoing reshaping of their professional identities on coherently positive lines, and the continuous strengthening of professional agency (Alvesson, Ashcraft & Thomas, 2008).

Concerning TEs, their professional agency is the "capacity to meaningfully construct and display their professional identity within socially defined contexts; in other words, their capacity to (re)negotiate their professional identities within their local work practices" (Hökkä, Eteläpelto & Rasku-Puttonen, 2012, p. 86). This definition acknowledges that TEs' social settings and working conditions frame their achievement of agency when crafting their professional identities. Within macro- and meso-structures of national education policies and institutional policy implementation, those conditions and settings are currently saturated with managerial logics of neoliberal agency, austerity, digitalization, labor precariousness, and collegiality imposed "from above" (Avis & Reynolds, 2018; Samuelsson, 2018). This situation is troublesome when TEs are committed to raising students' critical awareness of the systemic barriers to learning for all, and prepare them to teach for social justice, defined as the just distribution of rights, opportunities and resources for everyone in society (Ketschau, 2015).

Far from an exhaustive list, the notions of agency and professional agency above allow the recognition of their multiple forms (e.g., corporate, relational, strong or reserved). They

encompass innovation and creativity but also resistance and rejection. Located and enabled by structural contexts as well as time-embedded, agency and professional agency emerge as continual reflexive processes to negotiate their own containments individually or through a web of relations with others. Adopting different modes, they are an essential resource for identity negotiations that, in the profession of TEs, can be mobilized by several factors, such as commitments to social justice, professional development or the discursive power of macro- or meso-structures. Thus, these factors and their intersections provide the necessary scene for different modes of TEs' professional agency to be achieved and are central in the studies included in this review.

Methods

Adopting the methodological conventions of a scoping review, this study surveys the literature on TEs' professional agency. This is an exploratory mode of knowledge synthesis that maps the extent of research in a given field, clarifies its key conceptual anchors, reveals existing literature gaps, and determines the feasibility of further research (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). Although a scoping review does not assess article quality as a systematic review does, its methodology requires similar systematic activities, being them constructing well-defined research questions, setting a clear search strategy, and embarking on analysis (descriptive numerical summary and qualitative thematic analysis) (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Levac, Colquhoun & O'Brien, 2010).

Inclusion-Exclusion Criteria

After an initial scan of the literature, the last 12-year period was determined because the observed increase of research on university TEs' agency, reflecting concerns regarding the transformations that neoliberal education policies brought to their working conditions. Then, the following inclusion criteria were set to include: (1) studies published between 2007 and 2019, (2) published in peer-reviewed journals, (3) English language publications, (4) specified methods for collection and analyses of TEs' data, (5) focused on TEs' professional agency. Accordingly, the exclusion criteria were: (1) not published in peer-reviewed journals (PhD and Master's theses were excluded because of accessibility issues), (2) languages other than English, (3) research not employing any data collection or method (quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods), (4) papers describing others than TEs at higher education institutions. Thus, data on university and college-based TEs were deemed relevant while school-based TEs were excluded. Heads of departments were not considered unless specified.

Review Process

The electronic databases searched for peer-reviewed literature were EBSCO, ERIC, SCOPUS, ScienceDirect, Springer Link, and Wiley Online Library. Key descriptors were sought in the papers' titles and abstracts: *teacher educator(s)* OR *university teacher(s)* OR *professor of education* OR *university-based teacher educator* AND *agency* OR *agentic* OR *agency at work*

OR professional agency. Search limiters ensured the retrieval of only English-speaking articles published between 2007 and 2019. The initial search generated 1,033 references using the descriptors, from which 350 duplicates were removed. Following abstract reading of the resulting 683 papers, 216 were categorized as potentially relevant. Finally, these papers were retrieved and fully read considering the inclusion-exclusion criteria, and 16 studies were selected. The excluded 200 papers encompassed studies making a passing reference to TEs' agency; with no defined research methodology; commentaries, and non-empirical articles; and studies where TEs' data was unrecognizable from the one of other participants. A follow-up search in Google Scholar was also conducted to check for potentially missed articles, identifying another nine relevant studies. Later, a manual search of the reference list of the selected studies, alongside the content of all journals containing two or more relevant articles yielded another three papers. The scoping review included a total of 28 articles (Figure 1). All data extracted was then collated and summarized in an Excel template.

Data analysis involved a descriptive summary and thematic analysis, which is a method to examine the most significant constellations of meaning in the data set (Joffe, 2012). To familiarize with their data, all 28 papers were read several times and then uploaded to ATLAS.ti software for an inductive qualitative thematic synthesis in three stages (Thomas & Harden, 2008). The first stage began with line-by-line coding to identify recurring words, concepts, and phrases of relevance to the research question. Next, after comparing codes across articles (axial coding), they were clustered into 17 descriptive sub-themes, according to content and meaning. Finally, similarities and differences among the sub-themes were grouped into four overarching themes. Throughout this iterative process of continuous interaction with the data and its analysis, themes did not change but sub-themes were constantly revised and refined.

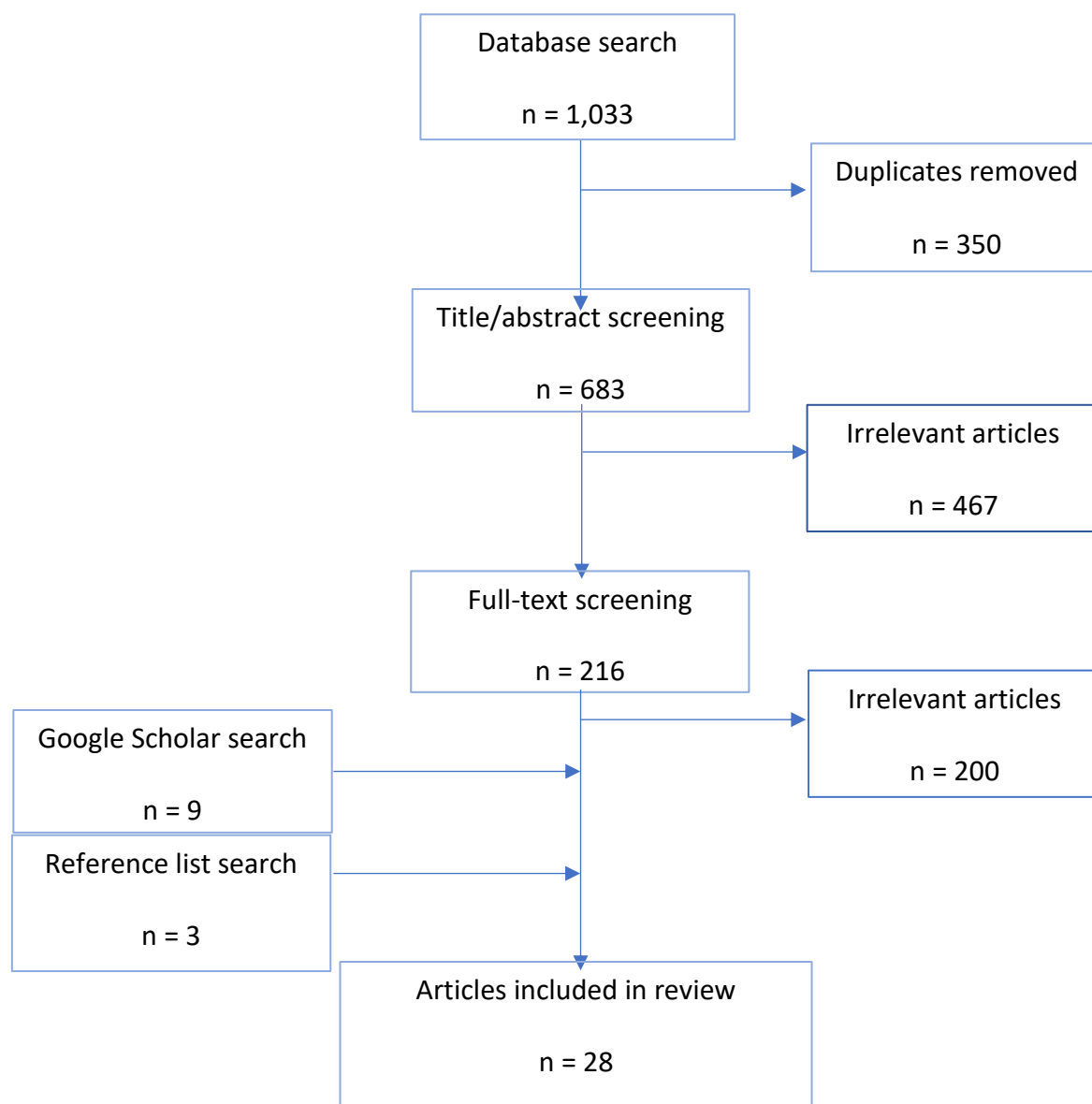


Figure 1. *Scoping review flowchart*

Findings

Descriptive Overview

Research was largely conducted in the USA and Western Europe (n=18), with the remaining studies from Asia, Africa and Oceania (n=10). Although with a fluctuating trend in the number of publications, the bulk of peer-reviewed literature concentrated between 2014 and 2019 (21 studies out of 28). Sample sizes ranged from one (self-study) to 23 participants. Qualitative methodology was prominent (n=26), with the remaining studies being mixed-method (n=2) (Table 1).

Table 1. *Descriptive summary of the included studies*

Characteristic	Number
Study type	
Self-study	3
Mixed methods	2
Phenomenology	5
Autoethnography	3
Case study	3
Action research, intervention, mixed longitudinal, and qualitative meta-analysis research	4
Ethnography	5
Narrative research	3
Study location	
The United States	10
Finland	4
Australia	4
South Africa	2
Hong Kong	2
The United Kingdom	2
Pakistan	1
The Netherlands	1
Ireland	1
China	1
Publication year	
2007	1
2011	1
2012	2
2013	3
2014	8
2015	1
2016	2
2017	3
2018	5
2019	2

Thematic analysis

Four salient, intertwined themes emerged from the data to answer the research question for this review (Table 2). Most of the 28 articles have a prominent theme that intersects with any of the others. Hence, education policies is an overarching theme present in most of the studies. And although an article may focus on professional development, it would also explore issues of professional identity or social justice (Table 3).

Table 2. *Codes, sub-themes and emerging themes*

Codes	Sub-themes	Themes
Professional standards* Teacher performance assessment Accreditation Accountability Resistance Reinterpretation of standards Compliance Identity* Make choices Academic capital Structure* Self-study Autoethnography*	Neoliberal policies Quality assurance systems Policy enactment Addressing the self in research	Education policies
Collaboration Motivation Research/teaching divide Self-reflection Collective* Narratives Authority	Professionalism Reflective communities Identity construction Professional learning Conflicting professional roles	Professional development

Support		
Self-discipline	Professional identity	Identity
Surveillance	Cultural identity	
Discourse*	Racial identity	
Emotional labor	Gender identity	
Critical consciousness*		
Professional identity renegotiation*		
Ideology		
Sexism		
Race		
Diversity		
Awareness*	Critical pedagogy	Social justice
Change	Cultural awareness	
Writing	Multiple identities	
Feminist	Ethics of care	
Power		

* Codes associated with more than one theme

Table 3. Themes and sub-themes per article

Authors	Sub-themes	Themes
Baker et al. (2016)	I	Education policies
Bartlet et al. (2017)	SJ	
Newcomer & Collier (2015)	SJ	

Bourke et al. (2018)	PD	
Cross et al. (2018)	SJ, EP	
Ellis et al. (2014)		
Solbrekke & Sugrue (2014)		
Henning et al. (2018)	SJ	
Bronkhorst et al. (2013)	I	Professional development
Hökkä et al. (2017)	I, EP	
Liu & Ye (2019)	I	
Edwards-Groves (2013)	I, EP	
Leibowitz et al. (2012)	I	
Mandikonza & Lotz-Sisitka (2016)	SJ EP	
Roberts & Weston (2914)	I	
Yazan (2018)	I	
Yuan & Lee (2014)	I	
Taylor et al. (2014)	I	
Harris (2011)	SJ, EP	Identity
Trent (2013)	PD	
Hökkä & Vähäsantanen (2014)	PD, EP	
Hökkä & Eteläpelto (2014)	PD, EP	
Hökkä et al. (2012)		
Urrieta & Méndez	I, EP	Social justice
Shealey et al. (2014)	I	
Black et al. (2017)	I, EP	

Gallavan & Webster-Smith (2012)	PD	
Halai & Durrani (2018)	I, EP	

EP: *Education policies*

PD: *Professional development*

I: *Identity*

SJ: *Social Justice*

Education policies

Eight out of 28 articles reported findings on the effects of education policies on TEs' achievement of professional agency within their working contexts. Following global HE trends, where financial imperatives shape learning and teaching decision-making, the top-down implementation of e-learning in Arts education affected Australian TEs' professional identities and perceptions of agency (Baker, Hunter & Thomas, 2016). Underpinned by activity theory, the proletarianization of TEs by their institutions' denial of opportunities to accumulate academic capital (research publications, grants) revealed the complex relationships between individual agency and the British HE value system that prioritized research (Ellis, McNicholl, Blake & McNally, 2014).

Along with state-mandated Teacher Performance Assessments (TPAs) in the US, came TEs' difficulties to implement them in ITE programs. By story-telling and collaborative reflection, four TEs researched the effects of TPAs on their justice-oriented agency, while keeping committed to educating pre-service teachers to meet and resist the demands of standardized testing (Henning, Dover, Dotson & Agarwal-Rangnath, 2018). Aligned to feminist research, a group of TEs used collective art-based poetic inquiry to address their emotional experiences—from despair and resignation to agency and empowerment—when confronting high-stakes testing and standardization of ITE, contrary to their social justice commitments (Cross, Dunn & Dotson, 2018). Another study detailed how the actions by special education teacher education programs to appropriate TPAs enhanced or weaken TEs' participation, democracy and agency (Bartlett, Otis-Wilborn & Peters, 2017).

Neoliberal policy changes and prescriptions to ITE were contrasted with TEs' accounts of transformed, but not undermined, professional agency. Solbrekke & Sugrue (2014) and Bourke, Ryan & Ould (2018) investigated the agentic practices of Irish and Australian TEs, working under the pressures of accountability, professional standards, and accreditation processes. Similarly, Newcomer & Collier (2015) explored American TEs' interpretation of

new language education policy, and its implementation through their classroom practice in ways they believed were best for their students.

Professional development

Ten studies examined the close link between TEs' professional development and agency. Shared learning and collaborative analytical dialogue within professional communities empowered TEs' collective agency and identity and counteracted the effects of managerial governance on professionalism (Edwards-Groves, 2013; Hökkä, Vähäsantanen & Mahlakaarto, 2017). And collaboration between Dutch TEs and educational researchers fostered TEs' individual and collective agency in an intervention research, where everybody took the role of a researcher and learner (Bronkhorst, Meijer, Koster, Akkerman & Vermunt, 2013). Additionally, a collaborative self-study with school mentors investigated the tensions between individual and collective agency for university TEs and mentors, working together as co-educators, and the value of professional development in communal spaces (Taylor, Klein & Abrams, 2014).

Also, the need for contextually sensitive professional development, positively influencing professional agency, was emphasized. Meaningful professional development enhanced TEs' agency and identity negotiations, maximizing their professional self-worth while counteracting a research-intensive institutional culture that undervalued teaching (Leibowitz, van Schalkwyk, Ruiters, Farmer & Adendorff, 2012). Roberts & Weston (2014) analyzed the intersection of professional development, identity and agency in an academic writing support program, and its positive effects on TEs' sense of professional self since it addressed professional learning instead of the explicit demand for publications. And Mandikonza & Lotz-Sisitka (2016) detailed the enhancement of South African TEs' agency and reflexive practice by an initiative to develop professional competencies for environmental and sustainability education. Yet, the opposite case of lack of professional development support could also happen, as demonstrated by TEs in Hong Kong, struggling to cope with the demands of the "publish or perish" culture, and bridge the researcher-practitioner divide (Yuan & Lee, 2014).

Because professional development may involve the exchange of roles and tasks, its success would depend upon TEs' progressive agency to delve into and renew their professional identities. This is the case of Yazan's (2018) self-study, who explored his identity construction, and efforts to assert agency and self-development in the quest for the necessary growth of pedagogical knowledge. While Liu & Ye (2019) examined the Confucian practice of *ren-de* agency as a form of professional agency helping Chinese TEs, engaged in international professional development, overcame the challenges of integrating their global and local (glocal) identities and experiences abroad and upon returning home.

Identity

Five articles addressed the role of TEs' professional agency in weaving together the different strands of identity—racial, religious, gender and professional—into a complex but dynamic fabric at their work settings. The more agency they achieved at work, the more successful they were at their identity renegotiations. Thus, Trent (2013) detailed novice language TEs' transitions from schoolteacher to university teacher educators in Hong Kong; their learning opportunities and conflicting experiences of identity reconstruction. Furthermore, studies were focused on Finnish TEs' achievement of individual and collective agency to negotiate their professional and sometimes conflicting identities, enhance their professional learning and promote organizational change within their working contexts (Hökkä & Eteläpelto, 2014; Hökkä, Eteläpelto & Rasku-Puttonen, 2012; Hökkä, & Vähäsantanen, 2014). Finally, Harris (2011) reported white TEs' dilemmas of preparing teachers for a culturally diverse world at an American Christian university, affecting their professional identity and agency. Framed by Foucauldian ideas of disciplinary power, her findings revealed their self-discipline and self-censorship practices under institutional surveillance, especially when discussing racial identity and racism in a predominantly white institution.

Social justice

Social justice was the main theme in five papers exploring TEs' embrace of their change agent roles within (and despise) the institutional framework of their workplaces. Such was the case of Black, Crimmins & Henderson's (2017) autoethnographic space of voice and agency to discuss gender inequity and the culture of the neoliberal university affecting their lives in Australia. Similarly, studies addressed the confluence of racial identity, ethnicity and gender, and TEs' agency to resist, subvert, and challenge the white normativity of academia in the US, contributing to the cause of social justice (Shealey, McHatton, McCray & Thomas, 2014; Urrieta & Mendéz, 2007). The development of cultural competence as a journey that enriched TEs' sense of professional agency was traced by Gallavan & Webster-Smith (2012) in a self-study and action research. But how do TEs model social justice in their classes? Halai & Durrani (2018) answered this question by analyzing TEs' construction of national identity, and the promotion of peacebuilding in Pakistani conflict-affected zones. Their evidence revealed that TEs relegated social cohesion to the peripheral curriculum of their programs, despite understanding its relevance.

Discussion

This scoping review maps the multiple factors involved in the achievement of university TEs' professional agency at work. Depending on how they interrelate, these factors (e.g., professional standards or the researcher versus practitioner identity divide) offer opportunities or constraints for the emergence of different modes of agency (e.g., collective, reserved or progressive). In the thematic analysis, they organized themselves in four interconnected themes (figure 2). Hence, education policies are overarching across

most of the studies while professional development is vital to sustaining professional identity, and constructing a strong identity is critical to efforts to teach for social justice.

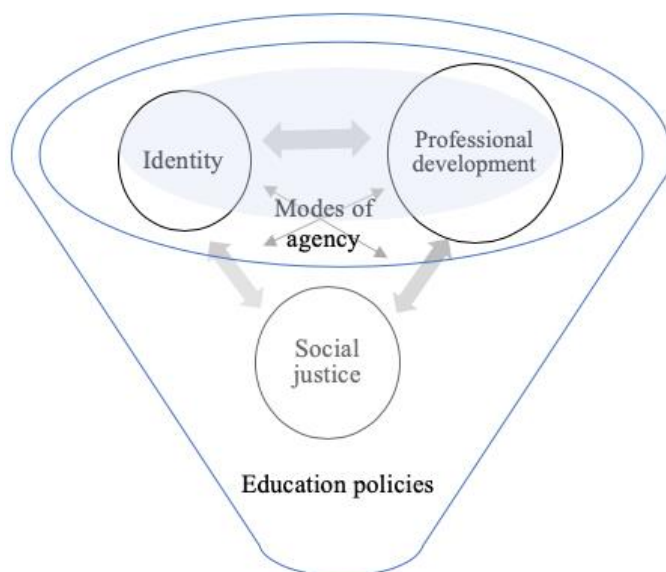


Figure 2. *Thematic representation*

Teacher education has traditionally suffered from low status within academia (Laberee, 2008). Then, it is unsurprising that the managerial mindset of productivity and performativity in ITE and HE policies affects TEs' professionalism. It challenges their professional development, undermines their professional identity, and hinders or makes more urgent their action for social justice and change. But if the theme of education policies shows how their implementation and top-down controls and prescriptions condition TEs' work, it also reveals that structural change brings the potential for agency achievement.

Following the ecological perspective on agency, it could be argued that the findings suggest that TEs are as much "able to be reflexive and creative," acting counter to the structural constraints of education reform, as "enabled and constrained" by their contextual and biographical factors (Priestley et al., 2015, p. 22). Hence, despite being precarized by discourses of competitiveness, performativity and academic capitalism (Ellis et al., 2014), they find spaces for expressing their emotions, and engaging in critically reflective dialogue and writing that enhance professional agency (Cross et al., 2018; Henning et al., 2018). For TEs, language becomes a creative tool to achieve agency in their professional lives, challenging and resisting their working environments and conditions collectively. Here, overlapping with professional development and social justice issues, they exercise reflexivity and collaboration in taking responsibility for their agency and driving change. This is pretty much in line with Archer's (2000) view that articulating shared interests, organizing for

collective action, and exercising collaborative decision-making may realize corporate agency.

Opportunities for strong or reserved agency are found in the reviewed studies. Entwined with TEs' interests, assumptions and experiences, they enable them (more or less successfully) to adjust policy requirements to their beliefs and values to safeguard their agency in their contexts of practice. Thus, the constraints of education policies and quality assurance regimes can open TEs possibilities for strong or reserved agency through innovative teaching with a culturally relevant pedagogy; creative compliance to performance management demands to keep autonomy and responsibility; or active resistance through policy reification to make it viable in teaching settings (Bartlett et al., 2017; Bourke et al., 2018; Newcomer & Collier, 2015; Solbrekke & Sugrue, 2014). In these studies, neither professional agency can be separated from the dynamics of power nor from individuals' career stages, experiences and beliefs.

Concerning macro- (government) and meso- (institution) levels, TEs achieve weak agency when acting upon major reform or institutional policy decisions but strong agency at the micro-level, in their responses to imposed change through their teaching practices. Connected to the theme of professional identity, the findings from Baker et al. (2016) indicate that broader ITE reforms trigger TEs' ambivalence, resistance, a sense of eroded agency and considerable difficulty in identity renegotiations. Such findings are aligned to Vähäsantanen's (2015) assertion that professional agency can reveal itself through maintainable to transformative actions when negotiating professional identity. Either educational change is a factor influencing TEs' renegotiation of their identities or is insufficient to trigger identity renewal. These studies make the case for considering fostering TEs' appropriation of policy through participatory and democratic policy-making, which turns weak and reserved professional agency into strong and progressive through a more bottom-up approach to education reform. Nevertheless, in the studies above, education policy discourse and practice manifest a limited understanding of what enhances TEs' professional identity and agency.

Here professional development is inextricably linked to education policies and identity, providing a lens to understand their relationship with professional agency. As universities must fulfil the requirements of HE and ITE policies, TEs are left with one foot in the academia and the other in the realm of professional practice. In the review, an identified challenge is creating professional development that gives them opportunities to balance autonomous practice with mandates of standardization and quality assurance, face the demands of international mobility and scholar productivity, or agentically delve into and renew professional identities (Leibowitz et al., 2012; Liu & Ye, 2019; Roberts & Weston, 2014; Yazan, 2018;). Otherwise, without spaces for effective professional development, TEs may feel at lost navigating the tensions of conflicting identities and increasing scholar research and teaching demands (Yuan & Lee, 2014).

As Loughran (2014) recommends, to make professional development meaningful, TEs must be afforded agency to bring their vision of what they need to learn into deliberately conceptualized opportunities to advance their knowledge and expertise. Giving them individual or collective ownership of the purpose of their learning processes is a condition for their agency to shape and being shaped by professional development. The findings suggest that professional development, nurturing individual and collective agency, helps TEs step out of professional isolation, interrogate the audit and performative culture of their workplaces, carve out a space to regain professional responsibility and autonomy, and create new possibilities for professionalism (Bronkhorst et al., 2013; Edwards-Groves, 2013; Hökkä et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2014). And by engaging in collaborative professional learning communities and critical reflection, they develop the stance and knowledge needed to become agents of change in the educational or broader societal landscape (Mandikonza & Lotz-Sisitka, 2016).

Certainly, agency in academia is not only rooted in “the freedom to make, think and speak but significantly the freedom to ask why, to disagree, disrupt, and transform” (Gale, 2019, p. 6). Intersecting with issues of identity, the theme of social justice illustrates how TEs strive to achieve agency for change and social justice despite the constraints of institutional practices and socio-cultural beliefs, imbuing their teaching and research with ethical, moral and social dimensions. Thus, located in a particular “deficit-othered” position—ethnic, racial minority or female—TEs may find balancing research, teaching and service more challenging than their white peers, even more so when they attempt to instill social justice and multiculturalism in their professional practices (Shealey et al., 2014; Urrieta & Méndez, 2007). But their agency-as-resistance allows them to oppose and reject confinement and self-subjugation within predetermined discourses of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1980), being implicitly functional to identity and social justice.

In Gallavan & Webster-Smith (2012) and Black et al. (2017), feeling the power of their critical voices is vital for TEs to develop a sense of agency, and position themselves as change agents in and out their professional spaces. Such stories illuminate the confluence of professional agency and diverse identities. They also highlight how TEs oppose the promotion of neoliberal agency, and its values of individualism and entrepreneurialism, through collectives, collaboration and critical consciousness. But notions of social justice are closely tied to individual perspectives, specific sociocultural and sociopolitical contexts that cannot be ignored, defying any reductionist attempt to define it (Halai & Durrani, 2018). Moreover, TEs' subjectivities and intersectional identities, especially in terms of race, gender and religion, are crucial to understanding how agency is achieved within their particular contexts.

The overlap of identity with social justice and education policies further problematizes the achievement of TEs' professional agency. On one hand, although their professional identity is grounded on the recognition that they are agents of choice within their professional

communities, the structural conditions of their transformation-resistant institutions contradict their efforts for culturally sensitive and inclusive pedagogy (Harris, 2011). On the other, they still achieve agency when making choices to craft their identities, despite the pressures of managerial imperatives forcing them to be passive implementers of top-down driven change (Hökkä et al., 2012; Hökkä & Eteläpelto, 2014; Hökkä, & Vähäsantanen, 2014). Also, findings (Trent, 2013) highlight the centrality of agency in novice TEs' complex identity reconstruction, adjustment to a new work environment, and the alleviation of their fear of research (especially when they may primarily identify themselves as teachers). TEs' awareness of their agency is vital to renew their identities, and successfully position themselves within their professional and academic communities.

The four themes compose a fabric of interconnected factors, presenting opportunities and constraints for TEs' achievement of different modes of professional agency, which cannot be reduced to the aggregation of individual agentic capabilities. When education policies promote managerial and marketized types of governance in HE and ITE, undermining the ethical and professional dimensions of university TEs' work, structural constraints can become opportunities for agency. Extending the anchoring definition of TEs' professional agency for this review (Hökkä et al., 2012), it can be said that, as social settings and working conditions pose challenges to their agency achievement, they are also critical in molding the types of agency that sustain their identities while confronting such challenges. As they are positioned and position themselves at temporal and social contexts defining their possibilities of action, such modes of professional agency unfold when TEs carve out opportunities for adapting, resisting and contesting the dominant culture of metrics, quality assurance and academic capitalism. Collectively or individually, through teaching practices, meaningful professional development, learning communities and qualitative research—where personal experiences become central focus and resource of enquiry—university TEs do not succumb to the performative effect of neoliberal agency in HE. And by doing so, they strive to engage in humanizing pedagogy and research that question neoliberal values in education and empower them as agents for social justice and change.

Agenda for future research

Meeting the inclusion criteria of this scoping review, the 28 selected studies reflect the paucity of research focusing primarily on the subject. Furthermore, the selected studies show little emphasis on the close connection between TEs' emotions, professional agency and institutional dynamics. From a sociological standpoint, future research could clarify the role of emotions in agentic interactions at social micro-levels, and their effects on meso- and macro-level structures. Also, since the review illustrates the relevance of self-study and autoethnography in exploring agency, further research could examine the significance of critical reflexive practice in nurturing individual and collective professional agency. Although the importance of communities of learning is not underestimated in the current literature, research could be fostered to better understand how they enhance the achievement of TEs'

professional agency and their professional development. Questions remain unanswered on the interplay between individual and collective agency; for example, how TEs' agency is achieved in specific classroom contexts, and how it operates when they are members of collectivities. There is also scope for research regarding the impact of ICT and digital technology on TEs' agency. Identifying how technology influences educational reform and, subsequently, TEs' agency could contribute to a better understanding of the possibilities for enhancing their creativity and innovation within professional spaces in rapid digital transformation.

Further research could examine the tensions that the market principle of "student as consumer" brings to TEs' agency, working under regimes of measurement of students' satisfaction. The "potential splitting between teachers' own judgements about 'good practice' and students' 'needs' and the rigors of performance" (Ball, 2003, p.221) destabilizes TEs' scope for agency, being pressed into performativity and compliance to meeting the demands of a customer service model. Against the background of a discourse positioning students as customers, it would be beneficial to explore the possibilities that such discourse offers to TEs as change agents. Moreover, how TEs (re)shape their agency under the influence of the relationships with student-teachers may need further examination. The dynamics associated with their interactions could be considered for a thorough understanding of what agency means in ITE, and how they should support the achievement of their student-teachers' agency.

Since the small number of participants in the yielded studies (16 have six or fewer), much of what can be claimed as known about TEs is context- and subject-specific, precluding the possibility of general claims, and challenging the long-term maturation of the field of research on agency. This is not to question the value of qualitative studies with few participants, but to suggest that mixed-method studies could be crucially informing common issues of TEs' professional agency in diverse institutional or cultural settings, through smaller-scale subject or context-specific studies. Hence, quantitative methods could help examine the complexity of the interplay between agency and relational structures (e.g., whether changes in perceptions precede or follow changes in practices), while qualitative methods could capture the nature of context-embedded inclusive practices (e.g., with a smaller sample of participants). Considering the dynamism of TE's professional agency, longitudinal designs could research the conditions influencing its achievement through their career stages, or those in which TEs tend to act as agents of change.

Limitations

One limitation of this review is that only English-speaking publications were included and most of these originated within Western developed countries, limiting its generalizability. Therefore, the effects of cultural and social differences must be acknowledged. Another limitation arises from including only articles published in peer-reviewed journals, excluding a significant body of knowledge contained in conference papers, dissertations, theses, and

book chapters. Finally, samples in the studies were small and thus findings are contextually-bound and may not apply to other settings. Examining the reference list of the selected publications and performing trial searches helped to mitigate these limitations.

Conclusion

This scoping review synthesizes research on university TEs' professional agency, mapping four salient themes from literature: education policies, professional development, social justice, and identity. The themes intersect in most studies, forming the basis for identification of the factors—opportunities and constraints—involved in TEs' achievement of professional agency. English-language research on this field has grown in the last decade, yet it remains sparse and limited to national contexts. Strengthening international networks of TEs and researchers may facilitate the implementation of cross-cultural research and should contribute to better understandings of their agency amidst heterogeneous socio-cultural and institutional contexts. Greater exchange and promotion of knowledge could help stakeholders, such as policymakers and HE academic leaders, to recognize and develop effective conditions to strengthen the profession of TEs and enhance ITE programs.

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Essay

New Technology and Professional Work

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Abstract

Until recently, the main effect of technology on professional or knowledge-based work has been to augment and expand it, partly as described in Autor, Levy and Murnane's 2003 analysis. There are now increasingly instances of knowledge-based work being automated and substituted, developments that are more familiar from factory and basic administrative settings. Two widely-quoted studies, by Frey and Osborne (2013) and Susskind and Susskind (2015), point towards significant technology-driven job losses including in professional fields. Subsequent analyses indicate that while some occupations will disappear or be deskilled, others will be created. The argument made here is that the most significant effect will be occupational transformation, necessitating different types of skills in a net movement towards work that is more digitally-oriented but also complex, creative and value-based. These changes have implications that are already beginning to affect the way that professions are organised and how practitioners are educated and trained.

Keywords

Professions and technology, technology and work, Industry 4.0, Frey and Osborne, Susskind and Susskind

Introduction

A popular interpretation of emerging technological advances is to posit a "fourth industrial revolution" (Schwab, 2016) or "second machine age" (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). This

can be seen as a step-change from the initial emergence of computerisation and automation, analogous to the impact on the water- and steam-powered industrial revolution of electrification and the internal combustion engine. As has happened with previous technological advances, there is an expectation of widespread disruption to jobs, changes in the way that work is organised (e.g., Johannessen, 2019), and in some quarters a revisitation of ideas such as the 'end of work' (Rifkin, 1995).

A significant difference between the initial computer age and current advances is that the latter are expected to have a widespread impact on the nature of professional and knowledge-based work, and potentially on the organisation of professions themselves. The main effects of computerisation on professional jobs have so far been to enhance what practitioners do or make them more efficient, to enable new ways of working, and to create new fields of work associated with the technology itself. To date, large-scale disruption to employment has tended to occur in lower- to middle-skilled occupations, particularly in manufacturing and in basic administrative work, leaving professional work largely unaffected. Increasing technological capability is now predicted to encroach significantly on knowledge-based work, with consequences for professions, their organisation, and the education and training of practitioners (e.g., Susskind & Susskind, 2015).

A difficulty with making predictions about the effects of technological advances is that they are dependent on assumptions about how technology can be transferred into the workplace (and used by the populace in general), the economics of technological substitution, choices made by actors from governments and multinational corporations through to individuals, and the way in which work and its organisation is able to evolve. There is a danger of descending into speculative futurology which can make for thought-provoking reading but is rarely a good basis for policy decisions or deciding on practical matters such as the design and content of professional courses. A common tendency ("Amara's law") has been to overestimate the effects of technological changes in the short term, but underestimate (and mispredict) them in the longer term.

The remainder of this paper examines current evidence and discussion on the impact of technology on work, and argues that while there will be implications for professions, making sense of these needs to consider more than the ability of emerging technologies to automate or substitute for tasks currently associated with professional occupations.

Technology and work: A summary

A widely-used model for conceptualising the effect of technology on work is that set out by Autor, Levy, and Murnane (2003). These authors propose three principal effects of introducing new technology. Firstly, it can *enhance or augment* jobs, when it makes work more effective, efficient or less difficult, or enables tasks to be done that would otherwise be impossible, unsafe or uneconomic. Secondly, it can *automate* them, as has happened with much assembly-line work, removing or reducing the need for human input. Finally, it

can enable them to be *substituted* by alternative means of achieving equivalent ends, as has happened with telephonists and typists. To apply their model, Autor and colleagues divide work into four types, namely, routine manual (e.g., picking, sorting and other rule-based tasks), non-routine manual (such as driving and janitorial tasks), routine cognitive (e.g., book-keeping, filing and retrieval), and non-routine cognitive (activities that require the use of mental models and abstract thinking). They conclude that routine manual work is most susceptible to automation, and routine cognitive work to substitution. Technology tends to complement or augment non-routine cognitive work, while there is limited opportunity to substitute, automate or complement non-routine manual tasks.

Since Autor et al.'s paper, advances in technologies such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, optics, and mobile robotics are making automation of increasingly non-routine manual tasks possible, as well as providing improved complementarity (for instance, through the use of augmented reality and global positioning systems). In addition, some apparently non-routine cognitive activities, particularly those relating to analysis, diagnosis, and some types of research and drafting, now appear within the scope of automation or substitution (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2011; Casserta & Madsen, 2019; Frey & Osborne, 2013; Susskind & Susskind, 2015). In part, this is being made possible by focusing on what computers can do most effectively, such as processing vast amounts of information ("big data") or making precise measurements very quickly, rather than attempting to create algorithms that emulate how humans would go about a task (cf., Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986). Nevertheless, most writers agree that there are limits to automation or substitution, both due to technological limitations or "bottlenecks" and in relation to social acceptability (e.g., Arntz, Gregory & Zierahn, 2016; Frey & Osborne, 2013). "Bottlenecks" occur where it is difficult or impossible to emulate or bypass human activity; Collins (2018), for instance, discusses the limitations of computers in relation to social and contextual intelligence, and argues that a qualitative leap in machine learning is necessary before significant advances will be made in this area.

A more recent perspective on Autor and colleagues' model is provided by Nokelainen, Nevalainen and Niemi (2018), who modify their two dimensions to routine-complex and instrumental-meaningful. Routine instrumental work is most susceptible to technological automation or substitution. In the longer term, much complex instrumental work will increasingly also be displaced, as there is no additional value provided by having it performed by people and the only limitations are the capability and affordability of technology. Routine meaningful work (typically straightforward tasks where there is social value through human interaction) might ideally be done by people, but there may be economic pressures for automation. As Share and Pender (2018) indicate for social care, in some cases there can be benefits from tasks being done by machines; in the current coronavirus pandemic, for instance, there are obvious benefits relating to infection control. In complex meaningful work, including "ethical decision-making, artistic, philosophical,

therapeutic and caring tasks” (Nokelainen et al., 2018, p. 21), intrinsic value is provided by the activities being carried out by people, making it relatively resistant to automation or substitution; ultimately, the potential for displacement is not principally a factor of technological capability. Nokelainen et al.’s conceptualisation has the benefit of building on the work of Autor, Levy and Murnane (2003), while avoiding the latter’s assumptions about technological limitations based on complexity; it offers a more resilient model in the light of subsequent discussions such as those of Susskind and Susskind (2015), Crookes and Conway (2018), and Blease et al. (2019).

One of the most widely-reported recent studies of the potential impact of technology on work is that of Frey and Osborne (2013; 2017). Their quantitative study examined 702 occupations from the United States occupational database O*NET. According to their analysis, 47% of US occupations do not contain significant technological bottlenecks and therefore are at risk of automation over the next decade or two, given foreseeable developments in technology. However, subsequent analyses of their approach suggest that it contains two significant flaws. Bonin, Gregory and Zierahn (2015) attempted to apply the same methodology in Germany, and Arntz and colleagues (2016) across the OECD countries. By taking a finer-grained approach which looked at tasks and activities within jobs, both groups concluded that while many jobs include automatable activities, the proportion of occupations that are likely to disappear is around 9%, rising to 12% in countries with a large manufacturing sector such as Germany. Not dissimilarly, McKinsey (2017) suggest that 60% of occupations have at least a third of their tasks capable of automation, but only 5% can be fully automated. However, a caveat is necessary in that all of these studies focus principally on activities that can be automated or directly substituted for. They pay less attention to wider-scale substitution, where activities that may themselves not be easily performed by technology—Susskind (2018) for instance gives the example of lawyers representing clients in court—nevertheless may be at least in part substituted by different, technology-facilitated approaches that achieve equivalent ends.

The second objection to using Frey and Osborne’s conclusions as a prediction of labour market impact is that they treat occupations as fixed in the face of advancing technology (Frey & Osborne, 2013, p. 39). This doesn’t take account of the likelihood of new areas of work emerging (De Groen, Lenaerts, Bose, & Paquier, 2017); of jobs and occupations being transformed rather than eliminated (Bonin et al., 2015; Gifford & Houghton, 2019); or substantial differences in the make-up of nominally the same occupation in different workplaces (Autor & Handel, 2013). In addition to automation, substitution and complementarity, technology can also create work, as well as transforming it where workers take on different, hard-to-automate responsibilities and tasks (Bonin et al., 2015; CEDEFOP, 2017). More subtly, the boundary between complementarity and substitution can be fuzzy, for instance, where efficiency is increased to the point where less workers are required,

sometimes accompanied either by upskilling or deskilling of those who remain (Fischer & Pöhler, 2018).

The most striking qualitative headline from the above is the extension of automation and substitution into areas of cognitive and complex manual work that have hitherto seemed immune to it. Quantitatively, however, the predictions are of a continuing hollowing-out of middle-level occupations, where more easily automatable and substitutable jobs in administration, manufacturing, construction and the like are lost, balanced by growth in professional and managerial work, personal service occupations, and non-routine but low-skilled and often temporary or on-demand manual and customer-facing work (among others, Frontier Economics, 2018). Predicting the long-term impact on the labour market is extremely difficult as it depends in addition to technological capability on factors such as how the returns to technological investment are distributed, the social, political and economic actions of decision-makers, and what new areas of work become necessary and valued. The current consensus is that predictions of “the end of work” are very wide of the mark, and while the “second machine age” will create significant disruption to jobs and to society more generally, its net quantitative effect is likely to be balanced with a mixture of job losses and gains (Autor, 2015; Hislop, Coombs, Taneva, & Barnard, 2017). What does appear inevitable, however, is that this disruption will extend to professional occupations much more than has previously been the case, affecting the day-to-day work and skills of practitioners but also extending to the way that professions are conceptualised and organised.

The potential impact on professions

The idea of “a profession” is difficult to define precisely, as any characteristics that can be posited for professions are typically either found among at least some occupations that would not normally be regarded as such, or are lacking in some fields that are widely thought of as professions (Lester, 2017). The best that can be done is usually to posit a few attributes that epitomise what is intended. At a theoretical level, expert knowledge, the exercise of independent thought, and commitment to the field in a way that extends beyond any employment or contractual relationship are fairly widely-applicable principles (Hoyle & John, 1995). Practically, some form of self-organising structure is typically present, with criteria for becoming a member of the profession (in modern terms, usually including attainment at degree level or above), and scope to eject members who practise incompetently or unethically (Belfall, 1999). The purpose here is to focus on occupations that approximate to the above criteria as opposed to “higher-level” or knowledge-based work more generally, although parts of the discussion will have this wider relevance.

As noted in the previous section, the main effect to date of advancing technology on professions has been to complement and enhance work, as well as to create new fields relating to the technology and its application. Technology has typically made practitioners

more efficient and better-informed, enabled them to carry out new tasks, increased communication and accountability, and in some cases increased their exposure to market forces and client or patient choice. Its structural effects have nevertheless tended to have been limited and evolutionary within professions themselves. It has had more effect on ancillary occupations, for instance, assistants who might have typed up practitioners' reports, managed their appointments, researched and collated straightforward data, or organised documents for processing. New fields have typically been accommodated within existing ones (such as the various branches of engineering, or the library and information field), or created new professions that so far have formalised themselves to only a limited degree. Some of these newer fields, such as computer programming and software engineering, have evolved rapidly in parallel with the development of the technology, while others such as web design are partly rooted in technology and partly in pre-existing fields such as graphic design, communications and marketing. The structural effect on established professions has been minimal, and societal, economic and legislative pressures appear to have had greater effect in for instance the reform of the UK legal professions; the increasing diversity of professional entry-routes; the upgrading of nursing and social work to graduate professions; and the emergence of "splinter" and cross-professional groups such as family mediators, vocational rehabilitation practitioners and physician associates (Lester, 2009; Lester, 2016).

The emergence of technologies that are able to automate, enable substitution of, or substantially reduce the time spent on even quite complex professional tasks is, however, likely to have a more direct impact on professional occupations, at least in the medium term. Susskind and Susskind (2015) are informative about the kinds of changes that are taking place and that *might* happen here. Their basic analysis accords with that set out in the previous section in that certain types of professional work will be capable of being performed more effectively by machines, including much analysis, diagnosis, and retrieval and assembly of data. The implication of this over time is that professional work will move away from the acquisition and distribution of knowledge, and focus on areas such as making interpretive and moral decisions that are less susceptible to technology. A second theme that they identify is the capacity of technology to empower consumers to access knowledge and make decisions that are commonly the preserve of professionals, potentially making available "professional" expertise at minimum cost. In the longer term, they envisage substantial erosion of knowledge-based work and consequent widespread technological unemployment, along with challenges both to individual professions and to the professional ideal of ethically responsible, self-regulating practitioners.

Susskind and Susskind's conclusions differ in some important ways from those presented by, among others, Bonin et al. (2015), Frontier Economics (2018), Hislop et al. (2017), and McKinsey (2017). In part this can be explained by their analysis being more conjectural and extending over a longer timescale (up to five decades rather than two), as well as taking

greater account of the potential that technology provides for substitution. Nevertheless, they make assumptions that mean that their conclusions need to be treated with caution. They view professional work as essentially technical-rational, emphasising the application of expert knowledge to convergent matters, and they also place it in a transactional, market-driven context. While many professionals do focus on work that is transactional and technical-rational, this fails to recognise the importance or even presence of work that is creative, interpretive, concerned with divergent and value-based matters, and collaborative. They are also largely dismissive of professional ethics, suggesting that these can be substituted by organisational, contractual and market arrangements (Susskind & Susskind, 2015, p. 233 et seq.). A result of framing work in this way is that aspects that are complex and meaningful or are more subject to technological bottlenecks are downplayed, leading to the potential for substitution or automation being overestimated. Secondly, and shared with Frey and Osborne's 2013 analysis, there is underestimation of the opportunities created by technology, both directly and by transforming jobs by removing tasks that are better-performed electronically. Even if highly knowledgeable workers become no longer essential for many technical-rational tasks, there is plenty of intellectually complex, creative and indeterminate or value-driven work that can be done, some of which is likely to become increasingly vital as rising populations, increasing demands for goods and services, and unanticipated events continue to create existential threats. A recent British study of the impact of artificial intelligence on work (Gifford & Houghton, 2019) indicates that artificial intelligence systems are, at least at present, creating and expected to create more opportunities for work than they are replacing or rendering redundant. Again, social, political and economic decisions are likely to play at least as important a role here as are purely technological capacities for substitution or automation.

An example that illustrates the continuing need for human interpretation and decision-making is what has been described as the "black box" issue (e.g., Casserta & Madsen, 2019; Remus & Levy, 2017). This refers to situations where the logic used by computers in producing outputs or predictions is not transparent, enabling, for instance, harmful or unethical factors to become unintentionally embedded into decision-making or into the legal system. An example of this is provided by recruitment selection, where even highly complex algorithms that are set up with full awareness of discriminatory factors can nevertheless result in decisions that are biased against underrepresented groups (Bogen & Rieke, 2018). The problem is not that individual "black box" issues cannot be overcome, but that they can arise unpredictably and therefore require an ongoing need for human oversight. Collins (2018) points here to the danger of a "surrender to machines," accepting computer outputs as authoritative without considering the possibility of errors, misinterpretations and malfunctions.

On balance, it is likely that a significant proportion of professional tasks will become susceptible to automation or substitution, and as Susskind and Susskind argue, some will be

done more effectively, efficiently and consistently by machines. Areas such as medical diagnosis (Blease et al., 2019), legal drafting (Susskind & Susskind, 2015), routine research and data analysis (Pandit, 2018), and the assembly and auditing of accounts (Conway, 2018) are obvious examples, but in principle any activity that follows an operational logic is susceptible—over time, anything that can be described as “complex-but-routine,” which may increasingly approximate to Nokelainen and colleagues’ (2018) complex and instrumental work. This kind of work is likely to become increasingly commodified, with the likelihood of practitioners becoming displaced in one way or another. Displacement may be into standardised and increasingly price-sensitive work (the province of what Johannessen, 2019, terms the “precariat”) or out of the field altogether, but it can also involve movement into complex and meaningful activities which as suggested above are likely to become more necessary and critical. Overall, therefore, a gradual qualitative shift in professional work can be posited to activities that are complex and meaningful, typically employing creativity, contextual interpretation, value-based decisions, and interpersonal negotiation (e.g., Conway, 2018; Flood, 2019; Valin, 2018). This accords with an increasing focus for professionals on the “swampy lowland” of divergent issues and wicked problems that are not subject to neat solutions (Schön, 1983), with creative-interpretive activity (Lester, 2017), and with relationships concerned with realisation (Schiff, 1970) and co-creation (Reeves & Knell, 2006). In common with what has been said above about work in general, the result is likely to be both job losses and gains, along with the deskilling of some professional work to technician-type or paraprofessional roles, and the upskilling of other aspects as the focus moves to consistently non-routine and complex-meaningful activities.

The effect of these trends on individual professions will be influenced by a range of factors. The obvious one is the proportion of the profession’s mainstream work that is complex-but-routine. Where this is relatively large, other things being equal there will be a high degree of technological disruption as many activities become automated or substituted. Whether this results in job losses or widespread deskilling then depends on further factors; the most significant one is whether enough non-susceptible work can be substituted so that the net result is job transformation rather than job losses. In addition, there may be limits to acceptable technological decision-making in some fields due to safety or ethical concerns, as well as continued (or resurgent) markets for some personally-provided services analogous to the growth in interest in craft-produced goods and foods. Several scenarios then emerge. On a rough continuum, these start from (a) minimal impact because the profession’s work is not widely susceptible to automation or substitution; (b) relatively straightforward transformation, where enough non-susceptible work emerges to accommodate the majority of practitioners, with or without significant reskilling; (c) major disruption, with a mix of transformation and job losses; and (d) atrophy, where there is no continuing outlet for the profession’s skills and expertise in their current form. This is further complicated by the emergence of new fields, some fast-moving and ultimately, at least partly, substitutable (cf.,

the evolution of computer programming), which will interact with existing professions in potentially complex ways.

Professional organisation and education

The above analysis, even if not as extreme as Susskind and Susskind's conclusion, still suggests some far-reaching implications for how professions are organised and for the education and training of professionals.

A prominent theme in the discussions above is that some occupations will disappear, some will undergo transformation, and other new ones will appear. For professions, this creates structural pressures, and suggests that some existing groupings will need to be rethought if they are not to become redundant. Professions define themselves in various ways; for some the idea of a body of knowledge is central, some newer groupings have coalesced around occupational functions, while a trend over the last two decades or so has been definition around what might be termed a body of practice. This latter is broader than the idea of a set of functions or skills, and encompasses underlying principles and how they are embodied in practices that can typically evolve and be applied across an indeterminate range of contexts, in what has been termed a "centre-outwards" perspective (Lester, 2014; 2017). *Given the same level of occupational disruption*, functionally-defined professions are likely to be most vulnerable to change, while those that start from a body-of-practice perspective will be most resilient. Groups that are relatively specialised and have come into being or evolved to provide well-defined services are the most likely to become redundant, while those that take a broad view of their fields and can transcend occupational functions and bodies of detailed knowledge are potentially more resilient. Further factors include deskilling, in some fields making professional modes of organising less useful to practitioners and their clients or employers; the growth of new technology-oriented occupations that may be too dynamic to allow traditional forms of professionalisation to appear; and the evolution of relatively new fields, such as those concerned with the environment, with ethics, and with human-machine interaction, into clearer professional groupings (though not necessarily formal professions).

Implications for education and training are perhaps the most difficult to predict, as they are affected by all of the factors discussed above. There are some obvious implications in terms of the technology itself, so that existing practitioners will need to be increasingly technologically adept (including in fields where technology has to date played a limited role), including being able to work competently with related risk-related and ethical matters. As specific, detailed knowledge becomes easier to access via technology, continued movement is likely away from the learning of a "body of knowledge" as the foundation for professional practice, and towards a concern more directly with practices (Boud, 2016). Echoing a trend reported more than a decade ago (Lester, 2009), increased emphasis will be needed on understanding the principles underlying the area of work in order to aid, among

other things, knowing what knowledge and skills to acquire and apply, how to interpret information and develop practice in context, and how to interpret and maintain oversight of information and analyses provided by machines. This suggests a (continuing) shift away from purely technical-rational expertise towards creative-interpretive professionalism and critical judgement, with areas such as ethics, sustainability, interpersonal, and intercultural skills becoming more important (Penprase, 2018). On the other hand, care is needed to avoid losing the skills and expertise that enable practitioners to recognise problems and intervene effectively when technology malfunctions, is sabotaged, or produces suspect answers (Billett, 2018).

A second major need is towards increased flexibility of professional development, parallel with the expected evolution of professional fields. This may point to more interprofessional courses, different pathways to specialism, and overall a greater range of routes to qualifying that are less predicated on teenage career choices or constrained by “silos” dictated by current professional boundaries. These directions are an extension of what is already happening, although route flexibility is likely to become more common and extend to more professions that is currently the case.

Alongside this, there are likely to be implications for early-career, work-based training. A common pattern in many professions is to serve a fairly loose form of apprenticeship as the final preparation to practise. In this model, the time taken up by training is often balanced by the novice practitioner undertaking tasks that are initially relatively routine, but are nevertheless necessary and contribute to the employer’s business. As Susskind and Susskind (2015) argue, not only is this generally inefficient as a training process, but if in future many of these tasks are automated or become unnecessary, work-based training will need to become more focussed, particularly where it is accompanied by commercial pressures to bring the novice practitioner up to speed more quickly. Studies by Eraut (2008) and Allen and colleagues (2015), among others, point to practitioners needing creative-interpretive skills increasingly early in their careers, generating pressure for more expansive and effective initial training. Putting these factors together suggests that early-career training will need to be geared to developing deep insights and high-level practice relatively quickly. An emergent example is provided by degree- and master’s-level apprenticeships in the UK, where academic and workplace learning are specified through an apprenticeship standard and delivered in a way that (at least in the best examples) is genuinely integrated rather than through simply running off- and on-job training in parallel (Kuczera & Field, 2018; Lester & Bravenboer, 2020).

Conclusion

The “fourth industrial revolution” or “second machine age” is widely predicted to have a significant effect on work, particularly as technology starts to automate or result in the substitution of more complex types of activity. On balance, current analyses suggest that

this will result in job losses in some areas, broadly offset by the emergence of new occupations. More significant, however, is occupational transformation, with implications for both initial education and reskilling. Importantly, many professional occupations will be affected directly by automation and substitution, with human expertise becoming less essential for even some highly complex tasks. This does not, however, spell mass redundancy across these occupations, but it will see changes to the tasks, fundamental skills and modes of organising of practitioners.

An increasingly nimble response is likely to be needed from professional governing bodies, whether these are state-backed regulators or independent associations, and higher education institutions. The former to some extent hold the key to adaptability, as where professional boundaries and entry-routes are maintained too rigidly, practitioners can be inhibited from developing their roles in new directions and educational institutions from developing programmes that are capable of preparing practitioners for upcoming challenges. In the latter, there are some good examples of programmes and frameworks that support learning for the kind of creative-interpretive practice discussed above, but there are also programmes that assume a largely “business as usual” approach even in areas where there is a high likelihood of substantial change.

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Essay

On Comparative Methodologies, or, How Professional Ecologies Vary

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Abstract

Based on the authors' own research experiences, this essay discusses the potentials of a "cross-jurisdictional" comparative methodology in the sociology of professions, which aims to describe similarities and variations in patterns of inter-professional interaction across substantively different work domains. This approach, the essay shows, stands in contrast to two more prevalent comparative methodologies in the field, dubbed here "cross-national" and "intra-national," respectively. Drawing on Andrew Abbott's seminal framework, cross-jurisdictional comparisons refrain from abstracting professional groups from their wider ecologies of inter-professional relations. On this basis, and invoking the methodological suggestions of Monika Krause on qualitative comparisons, the essay spells out key axes of variation between contemporary professional jurisdictions and ecologies, including along the lines of post-national analysis. The essay ends by highlighting more general reasons as to why reflecting further on new comparative possibilities may at present constitute a key stake for the future of research on professional change.

Keywords

Comparison, jurisdiction, Abbott, inter-professional relations, post-national analysis

Introduction

Comparative inquiry and analysis, whether explicit or implicit, enjoys a long and venerable tradition in the sociology of professions (e.g., Svensson & Evetts, 2010). Notoriously, the very concept of “profession” rests on a comparison with other occupational groups, first undertaken explicitly by Everett Hughes (Evetts, 2013: 780), pointing to differences in degree rather than kind when it comes to social status, cognitive authority, work autonomy, legal exclusionary closure, or (usually) some combination hereof. A literature review conducted a decade ago locates a steadily growing stream of comparative research on professional groups since the 1960s (Bourgeault, Benoit, & Hirschhorn, 2009). Still, the sociology of professions remains marked by a relative scarcity of explicit discussion on comparative methodologies. This is surprising and arguably hinders more concerted field-wide learning, especially when considering the sheer plurality of ways in which knowledge of professional work, organizing, and regulation may be fruitfully extended by comparative means.

In this essay, I draw on collaborative research experiences to discuss a particular approach to comparing professional interactions across work domains, one that we dub “cross-jurisdictional” (Blok, Lindstrøm, Meilvang, & Pedersen, 2018; Blok, Lindstrøm, Meilvang, & Pedersen, 2019a), in an attempt to outline new research agendas for the field. Taking the notion of professional jurisdiction from Andrew Abbott’s seminal work (1988) as a starting point, our qualitative research focuses on and compares dynamics of inter-professional competition and collaboration around three sets of emerging globalized task domains. These include water-based climate adaptation (engineers, landscape architects), lifestyle disease prevention (doctors, nurses), and innovation management (business economists, management engineers), all with a view to how inter-professional negotiations partake to wider reforms in the Scandinavian welfare state setting of Denmark. Crucially for the meta-reflections that follows, this research thus aims to understand similarities and variations in patterns of jurisdictional interaction across substantively different professional groups, organizational work settings, and allied political institutions.

While the notion of professional jurisdiction is widely invoked in the sociology of professions, the number of in-depth single-case jurisdictional studies remains relatively scarce (Liu, 2018), with even fewer studies adopting a multi-case cross-jurisdictional design. As highlighted in a recent contribution (Heusinkveld, Gabbioneta, Werr, & Sturdy, 2018: 259), part of this no doubt stems from the fact that jurisdiction-level comparative analysis remains a “highly challenging research opportunity,” as this essay will also reflect. Yet, with growing emphasis among research funders on collaborative multi-case research (Deville, Guggenheim, & Hrdličková., 2016), our own experiences arguably reflect a growing need across the sociology of professions to discuss further the new comparative possibilities opening up. In this respect, I draw in this essay particularly on the work of sociologist

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Monika Krause (2016), whose interest in better describing the variable properties of fields—“how fields vary” (Krause, 2018)—I here transpose to our interest in professional ecologies.

Like jurisdiction, the notion of ecology invoked here stems from Abbott’s (2005b) re-appropriation of the interactionist Chicago School tradition, allowing him to study how professions forge alliances across adjacent university and political settings in processual terms (see Liu, 2018). While entailing its own distinct emphases, such an ecological approach also shares many theoretical assumptions with what neo-institutionalist and neo-Bourdieuian approaches to professions conceptualize as fields and field-level dynamics (Suddaby & Viale, 2011). As such, much about comparative methodology that I discuss here in reference to Abbott will have relevance as well, I believe, to scholars working in these latter traditions, even as I will also draw on Abbott’s own (unpublished) reflections (Abbott, 2005a) to highlight certain instances where theoretical differences between the approaches of ecologies and fields may matter.

My discussion unfolds as follows. First, I reflect on the notion of cross-jurisdictional comparison by way of sketching how sociologists of professions otherwise carve out their units of analysis and what implications such practices carry. I then turn to outline how and why a variation-finding approach to comparison, as Charles Tilly (1984) dubbed it, entails many benefits to the sociology of professions, while also posing new challenges. Finally, like Krause (2018), I sketch how ours is a project that raises the prospect of post-national approaches to professional comparison, and discuss more generally the issue of scale as relevant to understanding professional change today. I end, as indicated, with a few reflections on why comparative methodologies may at present constitute a key stake for the field writ large.

Three comparative tactics for studying professional change

In general terms, practicing comparison implies settling difficult questions as to what constitute appropriate units of analysis to compare, and in what ways. Along these lines, as Krause (2016) has highlighted, qualitative comparative methods have long been overshadowed by a particular meta-theory of the proper aims of comparison, one which she dubs “linear-causal explanation.” According to this meta-theory, colloquially put, one should not compare “apples and oranges.” Instead, one should compare most-similar cases (say, two revolutionary movements) in order to single out the causal factors or variables that explain divergent outcomes (say, degrees of political change). As Krause details, and as her own work on field variation shows (Krause, 2018), this dominant understanding has meant that more descriptively detailed and variation-finding aims of comparative inquiry has tended to be downplayed across the social sciences. Our own approach to cross-jurisdictional comparisons of professional change seeks to address this imbalance.

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In short, then, any comparative approach is bound up with wider questions of method and theory in a specific field of research. Along such lines, it would be possible to rethink the entire sociology of professions as having evolved in no small part through the contested and historically shifting negotiation of what dominant strands in the field as a whole considers valuable and legitimate comparisons. In a recent commentary on Everett Hughes, Howard Becker (2010: 10) intimates as much when stating that what made Hughes stand out as an eminent scholar of work and occupations was his willingness and capacity to engage in “unconventional comparisons,” such as when comparing how prostitutes, priests, and psychiatrists each handle the “guilty knowledge” of their clients. Today, Becker continues, students of professions are more likely to take what the literature casts as conventionally defined professions as the basis for a comparative analysis. Such, he states—not without disappointment!—is likely to prove less fruitful.

Becker’s remark on Hughes surely sets a high standard. But it also risks setting us off the well-trodden trail of competing interpretations of the value of the Chicago School tradition to contemporary studies of professions (compare, say, Saks, 2016 to Liu, 2018). While we have ourselves engaged, this important discussion elsewhere as concerns Abbott’s work (Blok et al., 2019a), my aims in this essay are different and more modest, pertaining simply to starting up a more sustained reflection on how comparative tactics are used and might be mobilized differently in the sociology of professions. Towards this aim, I will start here by outlining what I take to be three broad versions of such tactics, drawing on the overview provided by Ivy Bourgeault and colleagues (2009) while also adding my own methodological focus.

First, *cross-national* comparisons of the trajectories of emergence and institutionalization, in particular professions across two or more countries, have in many ways become the standard comparative operating procedure in the sociology of professions writ large. As highlighted also by Bourgeault et al. (2009: 479), such studies tend to adopt a macro-societal level of analysis, cast in terms of variable profession-state relations, whether conforming or not to the classical distinction between “market-dominated” Anglo-Saxon and “state-dominated” Continental contexts of professionalism (see Svensson & Evetts, 2010). Intellectually speaking, such historical-comparative research may be traced back not least to Max Weber’s studies of law-society relations (Larson, 1986). Similar tactics have been successfully deployed, however, to shed light on key cross-national differences in the fates of medical professions (Saks, 2015), economists (Fourcade, 2010), and many other professional groups, with work too numerous to mention.

Without going into detail, it is worth noting that proponents of the neo-Weberian approach to the study of professions highlight the centrality of comparative sociology in this tradition as amongst its “cutting edge” when compared to competing theories (Saks, 2010: 909). However, such blanket claims downplay the *internal* debates among researchers working in

a macro-societal vein. For instance, some notable scholars now question the relevance of the Anglo-Saxon-versus-Continental split, in view of globalized neoliberal changes to professional regulation (Evetts, 2012); while others stress the continued relevance of national cultural-political path-dependencies in shaping also contemporary professional outcomes (Fourcade, 2010). More generally, and importantly for my argument in this essay, to align the comparative ambition too closely with a neo-Weberian approach, as does Mike Saks (2010), is arguably to overlook or downplay the more general importance of comparative work across *all* of the sociology of professions.

Relative to cross-national approaches, our own work is more concerned with how trans-national (Faulconbridge & Muzio, 2012) and trans-local (Blok et al., 2018) re-scaling processes nowadays impinge on the path-dependencies of professional relations in a Scandinavian welfare state context like Denmark (as I unfold later on). As such, while we acknowledge the potential for adding more of a cross-national dimension to our work later on, ours is initially closer to (yet not co-extensive with) a second strand of comparative tactics, one that I dub *intra-national* standing. This is work which, as Bourgeault and colleagues show (Bourgeault, Benoit, & Hirschkorn, 2009: 479), often address micro- and meso-level questions of working conditions, associational strategies, professionalization trajectories, or gender- and class-based compositions of two or more professional groups within the same country. As for cross-national studies, this comparative tactic understandably remains widespread in the sociology of professions (see, e.g., Harrits & Larsen, 2016).

Cross-jurisdictional comparison: Defining new units of analysis

From the point of view of Abbott's (1988) notion of professional jurisdiction, however, intra-national shares with cross-national comparisons the problem of risking to abstract professional groups from their wider ecologies of *inter-professional* relations. According to this view, the key dynamic of professional change is constituted by disputes among diverse expert-based groups seeking to control a specific domain of work, a specific jurisdiction. This is true historically, as Abbott (1988; 2005b) shows through case studies in England and the United States, for shifting relations and inter-professional settlements among doctors and nurses, clergy and psychiatrists, architects and engineers, lawyers and accountants, amongst many similar examples. Famously, Abbott (1988: 2) thus claims quite generally that an "effective historical sociology of professions must begin with case studies of jurisdictions and jurisdictional disputes."

Accordingly, beginning with Abbott himself (1988: 60ff), a small but important literature has sought to compare the varieties of inter-professional dispute and settlement, ranging from full control by a single profession to the subordination of one profession by another. Others' follow-up work in this ecological vein has shown the importance of standardization and commodification processes to how medical jurisdictions, in particular, unfold (Timmermans,

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2002). Moreover, drawing on interactionist ideas of professional segments as sub-groups sharing cognitive techniques and senses of mission (Bucher & Strauss, 1961), related work has shown how *intra-professional* status relations among medical specialties matter for such segments' ability to exercise jurisdictional control over ancillary groups of technicians (Halpern, 1992).

Our own notion and practice of *cross-jurisdictional* comparison, as should be clear, belongs to this third strand of analytical tactics, as we seek to combine a focus on intra- and inter-professional relations in the study of divergent domains of work-based disputes and settlements (Blok et al., 2019a). Specifically, as noted, we seek in our project to describe and compare the forms now taken on by a set of professional jurisdictions emerging, or so we claim, at the intersection of globalized societal challenges like lifestyle-related diseases, on the one hand, and localized professional and organizational attempts at problem-solving, on the other hand. In other words, what ties our cases of inter-professional change together, we argue, is the fact that they involve local professional segments into new tasks of handling globalized societal challenges on behalf also of a welfare state itself undergoing restructurings and local-global re-scaling (Blok, Pedersen, Meilvang, & Lindstrøm, 2019b). Yet, the processes and patterns through which this happens and hence the forms that such emerging jurisdictions take remain quite different, motivating careful cross-case comparison.

In pursuing this aim, we simultaneously seek to extend further the processual and ecological turn in the sociology of professions to which Abbott's work contributes, in continuation of prior Chicago School commitments (Liu, 2018). Specifically, this means that we study professional change over a 20-to-30-year timeframe, from the 1990s until today, drawing on a combination of archival professional association material, interviews with professionals, and short-term workplace ethnography (Blok et al., 2019a). It also means that we conceptualize and analyze this change as enacted at the intersection of self-conscious projects driven by emerging professional segments, who seek to renegotiate the intra- and inter-professional authority relations in which they work, including by seeking out alliances with adjacent university and political agencies at local, national, and transnational scales. As I detail in the following sections, this means that what we dub inter-ecological and cross-scalar alliances become *themselves* key objects of analysis and comparison, in ways that extend also Abbott's framework in new and, we believe, fruitful directions.

For the time being, to summarize, my key argument is that the tactic of cross-jurisdictional comparison allows us to cast contemporary professional change in a new light, posing questions that neither cross-national nor intra-national tactics of comparative inquiry are suitable for pursuing. These questions have to do, first, with patterns of intra- and inter-professional dispute and settlement, which may take on widely varying forms across distinct domains of professional work, organizing, and regulation. Second, they have to do with the

wider shape of those adjacent political and university ecologies to which professional projects are wedded, across variable “trans-local” scales of organizing (Blok et al., 2018). I turn now to unfold more of how and why we believe such an approach to variation-finding across professional ecologies in general, and an attention to post-national ecological relations in particular, are likely to lead to better ways of describing professional change, relative to the current state-of-the-art.

Why and how to do variation-finding across professional ecologies?

Undertaking cross-jurisdictional case comparisons, in short, means searching for new knowledge on important similarities and differences in professional interaction across domains of expert work. Meanwhile, it entails a commitment to rendering such variation more analytically *explicit* than what is arguably usual in the sociology of professions, for reasons just sketched. As Krause details (2018), this means working to draw distinctions and accumulate insights into key dimensions of variation among professional jurisdictions, or differently put, to strive for a more fine-tuned vocabulary for describing ecological variations (see also Liu, 2018). In our own research, we hope only to commence such an exploration, which overall has the character of an extensive research agenda. Here, I will stick to some initial observations, grounding these also in specificities of Abbott’s (2005a) own reflections on the dimensions of jurisdictions.

As Krause (2018) highlights for field theory, there is arguably an inherent tension to attempts at formalizing dimensions of variation within research traditions otherwise committed to thick descriptions of social relations and processes, such as in Abbott’s Chicago School inspiration. Indeed, this tension seems important to Abbott himself, who compares his ecological theory to Bourdieu’s field theory in exactly such terms, criticizing the “quasi-structuralism” of the latter. Hence, Abbott states (2005a), “I treat the topological location of this or that profession [in a jurisdictional ecology] as a completely empirical matter, defined by competition that can be in many dimensions, over many things, with many different groups.” This is purportedly also why Abbott, unlike Bourdieu, refuses to draw or otherwise visualize his professional ecologies, for fear of reifying what his social ontology casts as situated and dynamic processes.

Theoretical niceties aside, however, what Abbott’s argument here overlooks, I believe, is exactly the discussion to which Krause (2016) contributes, on how comparative tactics may be re-adjusted away from causal explanation and towards the aim of better describing relational forms. Comparison, she notes (Krause, 2018: 7), may “add to the project of grasping particularity by making forms of particularity visible that would otherwise be naturalized.” Arguably, this is the sense in which a comparative ambition of variation-finding across the patterns of intra- and inter-professional relations and processes of diverse jurisdictions should be seen as eminently compatible with, and as adding valuably to, an

Abbottian sociology of professions. Indeed, Abbott's (1988) own suggestions on the various types of jurisdictional settlement is an instance of such relational, pattern-oriented comparison, and one that has helped us describe our own cases. Hence, for instance, whereas doctor-nurse relations in prevention work still carries many traits of hierarchical subordination, engineer-architect relations in climate adaptation are shaped more by horizontal interdependence, with clear implications for work coordination in the two jurisdictions.

Such ideal-typical settlement patterns, however, still do not amount to a full-fledged search for more general *dimensions* of variation among professional ecologies. Again following Krause (2018), this would rather mean searching for and systematizing a vocabulary to articulate variation in key dimensions of professional ecological structuration, such as the degrees and kinds of inter-professional hierarchies, the degrees of contestation or consensus amongst professional segments, and the types of symbolic and epistemic oppositions and alliances shaping any given jurisdiction. As hinted, to my knowledge, there is at present little work along such lines in the sociology of professions writ large, neither in the Abbottian tradition nor indeed as regards field-based or other approaches. Yet, as Krause suggests (2018: 8), this situation should be seen as problematic, because it fails to push the Abbottian (and other) research program(s) in the sociology of professions "to develop and differentiate its vocabulary and specify its hypotheses."

Differentiating inter-ecological relations: Some initial steps

To reiterate, we ourselves do not claim for our research to have gone far in this general direction, although we do claim to have helped forge some of the methodological stepping-stones needed for doing so (including as discussed in this essay). Where we *have* made head-way, however, is along a more confined track that we conceptualize as the *inter-ecological* alliances at work in professional projects seeking to lay claim to emerging jurisdictions, or what we have come to dub "proto-jurisdictions" (Blok et al., 2019a). Under these circumstances, we show how professional segments must forge and stabilize new alliances with resourceful agencies across university and political ecologies; alliances which professionals may in turn leverage as part of renegotiating workplace task allocations and management-infused organizational scripts. In short, along Abbottian ecological lines, our comparative work seeks to differentiate the kind, the strength of, and the moral bases for diverse professional alliances to university and political agencies.

Not surprisingly, the specific nature of professional inter-ecological alliances turns out to vary greatly across the three proto-jurisdictions in our research. For instance, whereas the prevention-active segment of nurses in Danish hospitals gain leverage vis-à-vis medical doctors in part by leveraging state-sanctioned World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines (Pedersen, 2020), landscape architects seeking to strengthen their standing vis-à-vis engineers over climate adaptation depend in particular on their ability to ally with municipal

sustainability agendas (Meilvang, 2019). Relatedly, expanding the institutional base for university expertise in innovation management proves central to the professional project of management engineers, who pursue a strategy of “epistemic arbitrage” (Seabrooke, 2014) by engaging in international standard-setting efforts meant for re-import into Danish companies and new MBA education programs (Blok et al., 2018). By contrast, such university connections are far less prominent for environmental engineers active in urban climate adaptation, who rely rather on long-standing state backing.

More surprisingly, perhaps, our comparative endeavors *also* help uncover and conceptualize a set of broad-based *similarities* in how diverse professional segments seek to expand their jurisdiction. Specifically, we show how segments as diverse as adaptation-active landscape architects, prevention-active nurses, and innovation-active management engineers, in each their settings, simultaneously pursue three modes of boundary work (Blok et al., 2019a). First, at the everyday workplace level, professionals engage in “pragmatic boundary reshuffling,” at times reinforcing and at times softening the boundaries marking off their task domains from those of adjacent professions. Second, at the organizational level, professional segments engage in “tactical boundary renegotiation,” trying to ally with or take on mid-level management positions with importance to fostering their project. Third, as noted, professionals engage in “cross-ecological alliance seeking,” trying to secure critical resources for themselves inside networks spanning into university and political settings. Rather than choosing any one of these levels as the sole site of analysis, then, our argument implies the need to simultaneously study how professional projects work across them.

This observation in turn raises many research-practical questions about methods and data, beyond the scope of this essay (see Blok et al., 2019a for an extended account). For present purposes, and to sum up, my key argument in this section is that an Abbottian approach to professional change entails not only the promise of cross-jurisdictional comparisons, but also enables a broader research agenda of searching for the key dimensions of variation in professional ecologies across diverse substantive domains, all the while remaining true to the processual and relational assumptions of ecological analysis (see also Liu, 2018). Our own work on the modes of boundary work enacted by professional segments within emerging trans-local proto-jurisdictions testifies, I venture, to how a comparative methodology may be productively leveraged for such twin descriptive and concept-developing purposes. My hope with this essay, ultimately, is to inspire or provoke others to join in—or indeed to criticize—this suggested wider research agenda.

Post-national analysis: Comparing professions across scales

From the outset, as should be clear, our research seeks to challenge what, from a casual reading, might be seen as Abbott’s (1988) methodological nationalism: the fact, that is, that his analyses of professional change assume ecologies organized primarily at the *national* level. Importantly, however, our attempt to question this assumption and to pay attention

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to trans-national and trans-local relations is itself *facilitated* by the ecological theorizing of Abbott and others (Liu, 2018). This is true since, overall, ecological theorizing gives priority to empirically based (rather than *a priori*) observations of relations of variable scope and extension, as seen also in Abbott's (2005) own work on historical shifts in local-national profession-state relations. Hence, rather than taking the Danish national political-economic context as externally given, our study compares also how that "national context" is *itself* being reworked, in part under the influence of new forms of professional authority that extend both sub- and trans-nationally (Blok et al., 2019b).

This is why we conceptualize our object of study as emerging "trans-local" (proto-) jurisdictions (Blok et al., 2018), whose socio-spatial characteristics in terms of authorized professional relations and interactions are themselves objects of analysis. Here, for instance, not only are interactions between doctors and nurses over lifestyle disease prevention work in Danish hospitals nowadays shaped by guidelines emanating from the WHO, serving as transnational resources for local professional projects. We also elucidate how regional differences amongst Danish hospitals in how such guidelines are translated into organizational routines create local, sub-national variations and inequalities in support for profession-driven prevention initiatives (Blok et al., 2019b). Similar dynamics are at work in the domains of urban climate adaptation and innovation management, yet with many variations in effective patterns of relations—cross-scalar patterns which, from a post-national point of view, must themselves be compared.

The key move here, in short, is to stop posing the challenge of transnational professionalism in purely epochal terms—as if implying a wholesale shift *from* national *to* transnational professional jurisdictions (Faulconbridge & Muzio, 2012)—and to instead render such change subject to a differently configured comparative ambition. What this means, overall, is that socio-geographical scale itself should be identified as an additional dimension of variation among professional jurisdictions and ecologies. Consequently, our work seeks to "trans-localize" (Blok et al., 2018) Abbott's framework such that issues of scale and scale-making, from the local to the global, become endogenous to our study of contemporary professional projects. In other words, far from theorizing scalar structuration as pre-given, we need to conceptualize professions and professional segments as themselves agents of scalar re-negotiation, whose acts of seeking out alliances to political and other agencies across dissimilar scales have consequences, potentially, for broader organizational and societal understandings of the proper ways of dealing with globalized challenges.

The domain of urban climate adaptation vividly illustrates these points about scalar re-negotiation. Such happens, for instance, in new networks of local municipal, university-based, and professional consultancy actors joining forces to develop so-called surface-based solutions to problems of drainage, as more and heavier rains threaten to regularly inundate urban areas (Blok et al., 2018). These networks frequently seek inspiration from similar

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efforts in other countries, and they often orient to and justify new profession-driven regulations in reference to United Nations-backed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the same time, the professional standards guiding these cross-scalar efforts are themselves negotiated mainly at the national scale, through the leveraging of long-standing “hinge” organizations (Meilvang, 2019) between the Danish state and the engineering profession, in particular. Professionals active in this proto-jurisdiction, in short, routinely orient to reference points from across different scales.

As for the other dimensions of variation in professional ecologies, we only claim for our own research to have started to scratch the surface of how scale-making happens differently as part of contemporary (or indeed historical) jurisdictional developments. The same is true for other scale-related aspects that should ideally form part of the wider research agenda sketched here, including how scale becomes a stake in competitions among professions within a given jurisdiction and the relative value accorded to transnational resources across divergent domains of professional work. To be sure, there is now research in the sociology of professions that valuably raises such questions, such as Marion Fourcade’s (2010) on the role of transnational influences in structuring national jurisdictions of economists. What is still largely lacking, I argue, is the attempt to address such questions more systematically by way of a cross-jurisdictional comparative tactic, in search of conceptual tools for better describing ecological variations.

To reiterate, one reason this post-national comparative ambition matters greatly to the present juncture in the sociology of professions, I believe, is to move beyond the rather sterile debate associated with competing claims either to the neoliberal near-eclipse (Evetts, 2012) or the continuing over-importance (Fourcade, 2010) of specifically *national* frameworks of professional regulation. Here, it seems more productive to reformulate such alternatives into competing hypotheses for the empirical study of diverse professional jurisdictions, in that nation state-based regulations conceivably play widely varying roles across diverse contemporary professional projects and jurisdictions. Such, for instance, is visible in domains of so-called “corporate” or “management” professions believed to operate mainly in loosely organized transnational fields (Heusinkveld et al., 2018). While this observation is relevant also to our own study of innovation management, comparing to other domains leads us also to question the strong assumption that national-scale resources would no longer co-shape such a project of corporate professionalism. Rather, what needs emphasizing are cross-jurisdictional differences in the *kind* and *degree* of such influence.

To summarize, we take a post-national comparative aspiration attuned to diverse professional projects of scale-making across local, national, and transnational spaces as integral to the wider agenda of articulating the varieties of professional ecologies that this essay sets forth. Such an aspiration, it should be noted, in no way annuls the continuing importance of doing also cross-national comparative research into professional change, in

ways that may qualify also our own findings from a Scandinavian welfare state context (Blok et al., 2019b). Yet, it adds new dimensions to this well-worn research tactic, in that it forces analysts to pay attention to how professional projects emerge within and through hinges to university and political ecologies whose scalar, socio-geographical characteristics may themselves vary, across jurisdictions in the same country and across countries differently situated in world-wide political economies. Going forward, and as Ellen Kuhlmann in particular has argued (2013), a fully articulated comparative agenda for the study of professional change may well want to strive for a truly global yet persistently context-sensitive reach, going beyond the traditional Anglo-Saxon-versus-Continental European frame.

Coda: New comparative possibilities in the sociology of professions?

My ambition in this essay has been to leverage our own collaborative experiences from studying professional change in and beyond Denmark as a springboard for articulating a wider research agenda in the sociology of professions, one based on a sense of comparative possibilities and ambitions still underarticulated in the field at large. Following Andrew Abbott's (1988; 2005b) seminal contribution to reengage with classical Chicago School ecological theorizing, I conceptualize this as an agenda of cross-jurisdictional comparative tactics attuned to variation-finding across diverse domains of professional work, organizing, and regulation. In particular, I suggest that such an agenda pays close attention to varying patterns of intra- and inter-professional dispute and settlement, to variations in those inter-ecological alliances and modes of boundary work supporting professional projects, and to patterns of how local, national, and transnational scales of organizing matter differently to historical and contemporary negotiations of professional change.

There are, I believe, three main reasons why meta-reflections on comparative possibilities in the sociology of profession may be particularly important at the present juncture. The first has to do with the fact that one finds in this research field surprisingly little by way of sustained dialogue and mutual critique at the level of comparative methodologies, even as comparative ambitions have always mattered greatly to how the field has developed and how its theoretical struggles have played out. As I have suggested, this relative lack has allowed *some* rather than *other* comparative tactics to become standard operating procedures in the field, procedures that may not be appropriate for all empirical and theoretical purposes. Second, becoming aware of such self-limitations and alternative possibilities seems particularly acute at present for quite quotidian reasons, including the way changes in research funding scripts at European and other levels increasingly favor multi-researcher or multi-country projects with some comparative element (Deville et al., 2016). Consequently, responding creatively and with methodological acumen to such change seems important to the field's future.

Finally, following Monika Krause (2016) whose methodological work on comparative possibilities in many ways sparked this essay of mine, the third reason is more general and shared by sociologists of professions with many fellow researchers across the social sciences writ large. Stated briefly, this entails the prospect, as Krause (ibid.: 45) nicely puts it, of “free[ing] the academic practice of comparison from its theory”, that is, from what I previously called its meta-theory of the proper aims of comparison. Quite standardly, as noted, this meta-theory limits legitimate comparisons to a search for causal inferences across standardized, variable-based, or otherwise linearly construed cases. Instead, I have suggested with Krause, decentering such assumptions would mean freeing up more space for leveraging comparative tactics towards the aim of better describing and better conceptualizing the situated and context-specific variations in professional interaction, organization and regulation, whether conceptualized or not in Abbottian cross-jurisdictional terms. Indeed, I believe this would have the added bonus that, Abbott’s (2005a) own hyperbolic suggestions aside, it might serve to place his ecological theorizing more on a par with other key developments in the research field, showing that it is interesting but surely not “beyond comparison.”

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