



Professionalism Reborn: Theory, Prophecy, and Policy

Eliot Freidson

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In industrialized societies, professionals have long been valued and set apart from other workers because of their specialized knowledge and skill. But has their role in these societies declined? Of what significance are they today?

In this concise synthesis of the major debates about the professions since World War II, Eliot Freidson explores several broad questions about professionalism today--what it is, what its future is likely to be, and its value to public policy. Freidson argues that because professionalism is based on specialized knowledge, it is distinct from either bureaucratic or market-based forms of work. He predicts a rebirth of the professions during which practitioners lose some of their independence and become more accountable to standards of a professional elite. And, defending professionalism as a desirable method of providing complex, discretionary services to the public, Freidson argues that market-based or bureaucratic methods would impoverish the quality of service to consumers, and suggests ways the virtues of professionalism can be reinforced.

The most accessible survey available of almost fifty years of theory and research by the scholar whose own work helped define the field, this book will appeal to the growing international body of scholars concerned with studying and theorizing about the professions.

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