



An Occupation's Responsibility: The Role of Social Foundations in the Cultivation of Professionalism

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In this essay, I argue that inquiry and engagement in the social foundations of education is fundamental to cultivating professionalism in education. As many commentators on the subject have noted, teaching does not meet many of the criteria of a profession derived from the sociological study of fields of work. As Joseph Newman observes, typically teaching is offered the category of "occupation," or it can be considered to be a semi-profession or an emerging profession.¹ William Segall and Anna Wilson point to the activities of professional associations, the work of education scholars, and rising standards for teacher preparation as evidence of promise for the future professionalization of teaching.² In contrast, Kenneth Strike argues that the drive for professionalism is counter-productive to the democratic aims of education,³ and others argue for recasting the debate about professionalism in terms more consistent with the moral aims of education.⁴

My own approach in this essay is to make the aims and characteristics of professionalism an object of inquiry in educational practice. Engaging in the social foundations leads us to understand that the very idea of professionalism in education is constituted by ethical practices of teaching. I wish to argue that the social foundations are crucial to help us define and defend what professionalism may look like in education, making use of the uniqueness of education as an institution and the unique qualities of teaching as a profession. Although discussions about professionalism are generally limited to the profession of teaching and specifically to public school settings, my arguments apply as well to the professional standing of educators in various educational settings, both formal and informal. While I draw mainly from philosophy, philosophy of education, and social theory, I also briefly name additional value to be gained from other foundational disciplines toward defining and cultivating professionalism. Especially in our current context, when we are witnessing fairly widespread negative effects on teacher professional-

1. Joseph W. Newman, *America's Teachers: An Introduction to Education*, 4th Ed. (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2002), 128-33.

2. William E. Segall & Anna V. Wilson, *Introduction to Education: Teaching in a Diverse Society* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: 1998), 27-44.

3. Kenneth A. Strike, "Is Teaching a Profession: How Would We Know?" *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education* 4, no. 1 (1990), 91-117; Kenneth A. Strike, "Professionalism, Democracy, and Discursive Communities: Normative Reflections on Restructuring," *American Educational Research Journal* 30, no. 2 (1993), 255-75.

4. See Barry L. Bull, "The Limits Of Teacher Professionalization," in *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*, ed. John I. Goodlad, Roger Soder, and Kenneth A. Sirotnik (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990), 87-129; Elizabeth Campbell, "The Ethics Of Teaching as a Moral Profession," *Curriculum Inquiry* 38, no. 4 (2008): 357-85; Elizabeth Campbell, "Teaching Ethically as a Moral Condition of Professionalism," in *The International Handbook of Moral and Character Education*, ed. Larry P. Nucci & Darcia Narvaez (New York: Routledge, 2008), 601-17; Walter Feinberg, "The Moral Responsibility of Public Schools," in *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*, ed. John I. Goodlad, Roger Soder, and Kenneth A. Sirotnik (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990), 155-87; Gary D. Fenstermacher, "Some Moral Considerations on Teaching as a Profession," in *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*, ed. John I. Goodlad, Roger Soder, & Kenneth A. Sirotnik (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990), 130-51; Hugh Sockett, "Accountability, Trust, and Ethical Codes of Practice," in *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*, ed. John I. Goodlad, Roger Soder, & Kenneth A. Sirotnik (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990), 224-50.

ism from high stakes accountability policy, I argue that it is important that we cultivate professionalism—particularly in the forms of professional judgment and professional responsibility—in pre-service teachers, school leadership graduate students, and other students preparing for roles as educators. For us to find social foundations being pushed to the margins or eliminated from educator preparation programs at this time is especially disconcerting, since social foundations is in my view stronger than ever before and best positioned to prepare educators for professional responses to changing contexts of power.

A Context in Social Foundations

I routinely define “social foundations” as the use of the tools of the humanities and social sciences to study fundamental problems and questions in education; I understand social foundations to be an area of scholarship, teaching, and service that expresses interest in educational purposes and social context. While topics vary tremendously in social foundations, themes that cut across the field include the contested constructs of equity, social justice, cultural tradition, and ethics. Since my first exposure to the field more than 20 years ago, I have been a participant-observer of a changing and expanding field. While we began nearly a century ago as disciplines based in philosophy, sociology, and history, our work now encompasses other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, cross-disciplinary practices, and work in thematic areas of study. At my own institution, a strong tradition of international and comparative education gives our collected practices in the social foundations a globalized and at times cosmopolitan flavor. Owing to our varied interests and commitments to disciplinary study of education, nearly all of the 10 faculty who identify themselves as part of our social foundations area also have formal or informal affiliations with other disciplinary and cross-disciplinary units in the university.

At professional meetings, the scholarship in the social foundations area has strengthened, particularly in the meetings of the largest social foundations professional organization in North America, the American Educational Studies Association (AESA), which 20 years ago drew together more clearly delineated specialists in the founding disciplines. Now, while disciplinary specialists are still represented in the field, there is a stronger expectation that scholars will be prepared in social theory that crosses the traditional humanities and social science disciplines. There is also a strong presence of scholars in disciplines outside the foundations who nevertheless identify and benefit from the scholarship in the foundations and see themselves as making use of the foundations in their teaching, research, and service. Two close and long-time AESA colleagues who exemplify that expansion of interest are an educational psychologist who works in an elementary teacher education program and an educational leadership and policy specialist. Other fields are similarly benefiting from foundational disciplines; colleagues in educational administration who straddle AESA and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) routinely draw from the foundational disciplines for their scholarship.

My interests have consistently been in the philosophical branches of ethics and epistemology and the broad topics of equity and social justice. My two areas of scholarship in philosophy of education are professional ethics and social science foundations. I maintain that these two areas of interest have direct application to all the professional fields within education, and in my teaching, research, and service, I bring to bear my scholarship and disciplinary background as a philosopher of education to speak not only to other philosophers of education and foundations scholars but also to education scholars in general and, at particular times, to school leaders and other educators.

For one of these two areas of scholarship—my interest in the foundations of social science—I have co-written about the value of an engaged pedagogy (with influence from Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and Nel Noddings) for the preparation of educational researchers, who in the wake of the paradigm wars experience paradigm proliferation.⁵ Cindy Gerstl-Pepin and I argue for the specific value of attending to the foundations of social science for the preparation of researchers, tying theories of knowledge and theories of the social world to opportunities for our students to pursue life-projects that have meaning for them. As Aaron Pallas, James Paul, Kofi Marfo, and several others have noted, the foundations of social science are absent from many doctoral preparation programs in education,⁶ and the value of discussions of paradigms and epistemology is philosophically contested.⁷ Perpetuated by the preference for randomized control trials granted through No Child Left Behind, this contested state of affairs continues. In my own school of education, the faculty is redesigning its doctoral programs and debating about what doctoral students may need to know (if anything) about epistemology and other considerations of philosophy of science.

This current essay addresses the other area of my scholarship—specifically the contribution of the social foundations to the cultivation of professionalism. I have addressed similar issues in my work on the effects of accountability policy on educators' philosophies of education and in my most recent work on professional ethics for the accountability era.⁸ In this essay, I argue for a specific definition of professionalism and address how the social foundations of education may cultivating it.

A Context in Accountability

As I have argued in other work, public education in the United States presents a complex and challenging context for the practices of educators.⁹ K-12 education has been altered considerably by accountability policies, certainly since the signing of the No Child Left Behind Act in January 2002, but also in the series of reforms initiated in response to *A Nation at Risk* and other movements toward greater accountability of public education dollars and the expansion of private and charter competition. Eleven years later, we have witnessed the failure of federal accountability policy to reach its goals and the deleterious effects on education and the practice of teaching. New educational problems have emerged as unintended effects of accountability, such as coordinated cheating,¹⁰ the pitting of sub-populations of students (and parents) against each

5. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: Continuum, 1990); bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994); Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Michael G. Gunzenhauser & Cynthia I. Gerstl-Pepin, "Engaging Graduate Education: A Pedagogy for Epistemological and Theoretical Diversity," *Review of Higher Education* 29, no. 3 (2006): 319-46.

6. Aaron Pallas, "Preparing Education Doctoral Students for Epistemological Diversity," *Educational Researcher* 30, no. 5 (2001): 6-11; James L. Paul, *Introduction to the Philosophies of Research and Criticism in Education and Social Sciences* (Columbus, OH: Merrill/Prentice Hall, 2005); James L. Paul & Kofi Marko, "Preparation of Educational Researchers in Philosophical Foundations of Inquiry," *Review of Educational Research* 71, no. 4 (2001): 525-47.

7. A case in point of the philosophical contestation is Harvey Siegel's essay about epistemological diversity being overstated in the discourse about research foundations. See Siegel, "Epistemological Diversity and Education Research: Much Ado about Nothing Much?" *Educational Researcher* 35, no. 2 (2006): 3-12.

8. Michael G. Gunzenhauser, *The Active/Ethical Professional: A Framework for Responsible Educators* (New York: Continuum, 2012).

9. Ibid.

10. Sharon Otterman & Robert Gebeloff, "Triumph Fades on Racial Gap in City Schools." *The New York Times*, August 16, 2010; Robert E. Wilson, Michael J. Bowers, & Richard L. Hyde, *Untitled Report to Governor Nathan Deal of Special Investigation of Atlanta Public Schools Systems*. Atlanta, GA: Special Investigators, Office of the Governor, June 30, 2011.

other, the diversion of public resources into test preparation, and widespread practices that are designed primarily to game the accountability system rather than serve children who most need services.¹¹ Most troubling to me is the report of widespread focus on “bubble kids” at the expense of others, bubble kids being those whose scores are closest to normal and who promise the best return of investment on educational dollars and educator effort.¹²

These developments represent significant ethical problems for the education profession,¹³ and these problems are evidence of the need for and deep challenge associated with cultivating greater professional responsibility in public education. As Gert Biesta has argued, accountability policy rewards competition and refigures the relationship between a family and a school as an economic relation.¹⁴ It is Biesta’s contention, and on this point I strongly agree, that public education entails a commitment of shared responsibility for the education of all children. A robust notion of responsibility is difficult to foster among educators when accountability systems pit educators against each other in competition for students, and when schools are encouraged to value students for their test scores. It is therefore crucial that a notion of responsibility be at the core of any notion of educator professionalism.

Caveats and Institutional Context

Having spent the better part of my career as an educator making connections between theory and others’ practice, I wish to avoid too defensive a posture. Still, my consternation at the state of affairs the foundations find themselves in currently is growing, both personally and professionally. As my colleagues revise our teacher preparation programs in my own institution, they respond to increasing demands from the state for specific content to prepare teachers in certain areas of knowledge and expertise, such as differentiation for and inclusion of children with special needs, teaching children who are English language learners, and more extensive internship requirements. In order to keep the programs competitive in terms of cost and time required to complete the degrees, the social foundations content (among other content) is relocated into pre-requisites, truncated into modules, or at times eliminated.

At the same time, there are some opportunities, because social foundations content and experiences are being added to other programs, notably to our certification programs in school leadership, where new state standards for school- and district-level leadership certification now invite its inclusion. To be clear, the opportunity for invitation is there, since it occurs under the banners of ethics, diversity, and social context; foundations content is not itself required by the state, but colleagues recognize the opportunity for adding more foundations content to their programs and incorporating social foundations themes into curriculum design. When colleagues re-designing curriculum include foundations scholars in the planning, opportunities for integration and creativity are possible. This collaboration does not always happen, and relying on others to incorporate social foundations content can be detrimental to those interests.

11. Audrey Amrein-Beardsley, David C. Berliner, & Sharon Rideau, “Cheating in the First, Second, and Third Degree: Educators’ Responses to High-Stakes Testing,” *Educational Policy Analysis Archives* 18, no. 14 (2010): 1-33. <http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/714>.

12. Laura S. Hamilton, Brian M. Stecher, Julie A. Marsh, Jennifer S. McCombs, Abby Robyn, Jennifer L. Russell, Scott Naftel, & Heather Barney, *Standards-Based Accountability Under No Child Left Behind: Experiences of Teachers and Administrators in Three States* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007).

13. Gunzenhauser, *The Active/Ethical Professional*, 25.

14. Gert J.J. Biesta, “Education, Accountability, and the Ethical Demand: Can the Democratic Potential of Accountability Be Regained?” *Educational Theory* 54, no. 3 (2004): 233-50.

Professionalism: Teaching, Leading, Educating

In his review of the concept of professionalism in teaching, historian Joseph Newman positions teaching not as a profession but as an occupation and notes that teaching is variously characterized as a semi-profession or even an emerging profession.¹⁵ Drawing from sociological literature, Newman argues that a profession is characterized by three features: “a profession performs a unique, essential social service; ...has a defined, respected knowledge base; [and] has autonomy.”¹⁶ Newman argues that, as an occupation, teaching faces challenges with each of these features. While he acknowledges movement in the area of certification standards, Newman points out the widespread use of emergency certification, the hiring of non-certified teachers in private schools, and other phenomena (to which we might add the continued popularity of Teach for America), which suggest that the public is willing to tolerate numerous exceptions to the expectation that teaching is a unique service that only those specifically trained can provide. Newman further suggests that a distinct knowledge base is not assumed to any significant extent; he points to the difficulty and absurdity of developing a standardized test of teaching competence when in actuality there is no widespread agreement on what those competencies may be. In a mark of a field not yet a profession, Newman notes that teachers lack the autonomy of other professions, such as law and medicine, which the public more widely recognize as professional.

In their review of the status of professionalization of teaching, Richard Ingersoll and Elizabeth Merrill confirm the distinctions that Newman makes about the exceptions made to professional preparation in private schools.¹⁷ From the sociological literature, they draw a longer list of seven characteristics of professions: credentials, induction, professional development, specialization, authority, compensation, and prestige. Important to understanding these characteristics is that they draw on what sociologists determine to be features of work, occupations, and professions across society, the project being the derivation of a fairly common (if ideal) categorization of profession across various disciplines. For their part, Ingersoll and Merrill argue that much discussion of teaching as a profession tends to overlook the work of organizational sociology, and partly their project is to assess education in relation to the seven characteristics of professions. For many of the same reasons that Newman names, teaching does not fare well in this assessment, although of note is that school principals seem to display much more robust demonstrations of the professional characteristics expected of other areas of work.

Discussion of whether or not teaching is a profession is in Kenneth Strike's estimation asking an unprofitable question, and I must agree.¹⁸ There may be some resultant benefit to convincing the public that education is a profession, whether through a public relations campaign, striving for better working conditions, securing greater autonomy, or by perfecting knowledge and practices that make education look more like law or medicine. However, Strike argues that the movement assembled around the push for greater professionalism is not necessarily in the best interest of education.¹⁹ Strike is critical of the primacy of autonomy as a goal in the pursuit of professionalism, offering instead that public education calls for more deliberative and democratic decision making. Below, I follow Strike on both points, advocating a more collaborative

15. Newman, *America's Teachers*, 129.

16. *Ibid.*, 129.

17. Richard Ingersoll & Elizabeth Merrill (2011), “The Status of Teaching as a Profession,” in *Schools and Society: A Sociological Approach to Education*, 4th ed., ed. Jeanne H. Ballantine & Joan Z. Spade (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press/Sage Publications, 2011), 185-9.

18. Strike, “Is Teaching a Profession: How Would We Know?”

19. Strike, “Professionalism, Democracy, and Discursive Communities: Normative Reflections on Restructuring.”

notion of professionalism, but also reconfiguring autonomy differently. Taken together, these points support a prior claim about education and professions: I would argue that, if the goal is to cultivate professionalism in education, comparing education to other professions is of only limited value; practices and conditions from other disciplines should only be adopted if we are convinced that they are educationally purposive.

Key differences between fields of work implied in Ingersoll and Merrill's synthesis of the sociological literature on professions and the distinction in that field between professionalism and professionalization:

[Professionalization] refers to the degree to which occupations exhibit the structural or sociological attributes, characteristics, and criteria identified with the professional model. [Professionalism] refers to the attitudinal or psychological attributes of those who are considered to be, or aspire to be considered as, professionals. From the latter perspective, a professional is someone who is not an amateur, but is committed to a career and to public service.²⁰

In my own discussion here, I do not wish to elide this distinction, but my project is to think differently about how these two concepts relate to one other. As Ingersoll and Merrill note, not all professions are specifically geared toward helping others or serving others, so in those professions, an attitude of concern for the welfare of others (patients, students) is a mark of professionalism, while in other fields it is not. I argue that as educators we can make more of this distinction and turn to the uniqueness of education as a field of practice for a richer and more appropriate notion of professionalism. We can later talk about the process of professionalization that may lead us to spread professionalism more systematically among those who call themselves teachers and educators by creating institutions and support structures.

Professionalism is something that should be cultivated in educators, not defended as already present or the exclusive province of unions or other professional organizations. In the field of education we lack the institutional arrangements we need to be in the position to argue that we are in control of our own profession. As faculty in schools of education, we are in a strong position to encourage professionalism, however, and in my own teaching, I attempt to make a direct contribution to the professional preparation of principals, superintendents, and related administrators in P-12 education, to higher education administrators, and to future higher education faculty. My own contribution to P-12 teaching is less frequent and more indirect, due to the distribution of social foundations teaching labor in my current department, but it is the more common stock in trade of social foundations faculty in other institutions.

Within the field of educational scholarship, the move toward greater professionalization is well-documented. While Strike is ambivalent about its goals and its potential for positive effects on education, he chronicles a widespread effort to strengthen teacher preparation standards, to encourage stronger students to go into teaching, to raise standards for what all students should be expected to know, and significantly for Strike's emphasis, to articulate more comprehensively what it means to have a professional knowledge base about teaching. Strike argues that the traditional idea of professionalism actually relies too heavily on a notion of a knowledge base, which he argues in education is too diffuse to be plausible, is excessively bureaucratic, and turns parents and children into clients.²¹

20. Ingersoll & Merrill, "The Status of Teaching as a Profession," 186.

21. Strike, "Is Teaching a Profession?"

As I suggested above, autonomy needs some reframing if we wish to retain it in educator professionalism. Rather than emphasize the aspects of medical training and medical practice that characterize our understanding of medicine as profession, we might instead look to some other aspects of medical practice for more meaningful analogues to education and see what implications they may have for the concept of autonomy. First is the following of medical protocols which serve to structure and clarify when a care provider needs to make a decision, what counts as evidence, and how to access evidence. Second is the consultative and collaborative nature of medicine, especially when an individual patient presents conflicting symptoms. I would argue that the professional nature that unites these concerns is not autonomy so much as the respect for the cultivation and exercise of professional judgment. Further, while a degree of autonomy is desirable, there is an element of isolation in autonomy that actually works against the cultivation of practices and improvements that would make educators more professional. In her case study of school in a rust belt community, Veronica Kozar describes a situation in which teachers both desire autonomy and resent isolation.²² However, they resist opportunities to collaborate around practices that may enhance their ability to serve their students with greater facility. Kozar suspects that collaboration would enable them to enact more consistently their values of taking responsibility for those in their community, a commitment abundantly evident when someone in the community is in crisis. While the community knows how to come together to enact its values in certain contexts, it has a much more difficult time doing so to cultivate among themselves a community of educational professionals. Otherwise, one may be tempted to view the teachers' apparent autonomy more positively than further investigation suggests.

For Strike, it makes more sense to think of educational communities themselves operating with autonomy (relatively free from hierarchical, bureaucratically determined constraints), and within them schools operating as deliberative communities, with democratic procedures, tempered by some basic protections for individual teachers to be able to exercise judgment about their own teaching.²³ We could use Strike's formulation to argue that while autonomy is important, in education, we should place it in context of other features of educational practice. To guard against isolation and the calcification of educational practice, it must be balanced with professional development that respects collaborative practices and teachers' professional autonomy at the same time.

While Newman's and Ingersoll and Merrill's characterizations of professionalism are important for identifying some ways in which professionalism may be cultivated,²⁴ both individually for teachers and for the professional as a whole, there are some additional considerations about teaching and education in general that could lead to a richer and more productive notion of professionalism. Such a conceptualization would need to draw more intentionally on the particular nature and opportunity of teaching and education, rather than forcing it into an inappropriate mold and, as I address later, smuggling in questionable cultural assumptions of the ability of individuals to act in complicated power dynamics.

22. Veronica Kozar, "Accountability from the Inside Out: A Case Study of Isolation and Autonomy" (PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh), 2011.

23. Strike, "Professionalism, Democracy, and Discursive Communities."

24. Newman, *America's Teachers*; Ingersoll & Merrill, "The Status of Teaching as a Profession."

Ethics and Professionalism

To continue in that direction, I draw in considerations of ethics. To the characteristics that the previous authors draw from the sociological literature, Segall and Wilson add that a profession should have “a code of ethics agreed upon by all members of the profession.”²⁵ Segall and Wilson highlight the regulatory aspect of a code of ethics, in which members of a profession are held to a standard of behavior built into the code of ethics, with monitoring procedures in place in order to ensure professionals enact the code. While codes of conduct have been at place at various times throughout the history of education (one immediately recalls the strict standards of behavior to be followed by the 19th Century schoolmarm), one would be hard pressed to argue that the limited codes of conduct in education (such as those instituted by state departments of education, including the one in my state) carry the same regulatory power of those in other fields. In my state, an educator has to seriously breach a standard expectation of behavior in order to face a sanction based upon this code of conduct.

As other scholars have noted, Segall and Wilson are onto something significant with their inclusion of ethics in professionalism, and that is the moral nature of educational practice. We might think of ethics as fundamental to the education enterprise. In their essays on the moral dimensions of teaching, Barry Bull, Walter Feinberg, Gary Fenstermacher, Hugh Sockett, and Elizabeth Campbell establish solid connections across ethical theories about the meaning and value of grounding educational practice in ethics.²⁶

These theorists make ethics central to educational professionalism. Fenstermacher argues that the rhetoric around the professionalization of teaching is grounded in knowledge rather than moral activity. He argues that the “essential meaning of teaching” is lost when the focus is on “notions pertinent to knowledge, such as expertise, skill, competence, objectivity, validity, and assessment.”²⁷ While scholarship in this area has proliferated since Fenstermacher wrote his essay, the concerns remain. As Campbell more recently explains:

the moral dimensions of teaching and the ethical nature of the teacher’s professional responsibilities often seem to be taken for granted in both the academy and the practitioner communities, overshadowed by cognitive theories connected to teaching and learning, effective approaches to measurement and assessment, classroom management strategies, and other aspects that, while naturally important, are rarely viewed from a moral or ethical perspective.²⁸

For her part, Campbell argues that educators’ moral agency should be the defining feature of their educational practice. For Campbell, what she refers to as teachers’ “ethical knowledge” provides a much stronger basis for their practices than codes of ethics. She argues that teachers who are attuned to the moral development of their students and to the dynamics of their relations with students are able to ground their practice with greater clarity of purpose.

25. Segall & Wilson, *Introduction to Education*, 29.

26. Bull, “The Limits of Teacher Professionalization;” Feinberg, “The Moral Responsibility of Public Schools;” Fenstermacher, “Some Moral Considerations on Teaching as a Profession;” Sockett, “Accountability, Trust, and Ethical Codes of Practice;” Campbell, “The Ethics of Teaching as a Moral Profession;” Campbell, “Teaching Ethically as a Moral Condition of Professionalism.”

27. Fenstermacher, “Some Moral Considerations on Teaching as a Profession,” 132-3.

28. Campbell, “The Ethics of Teaching as a Moral Profession;” Campbell, “Teaching Ethically as a Moral Condition of Professionalism,” 358.

All of these considerations draw attention to the concept of responsibility and its importance for the educational enterprise. Drawing from John Dewey, Feinberg argues that the moral responsibility of public schools is to create a public out of a diverse population.²⁹ While codes are indeed important and useful for guiding educational practice, more meaningful is a broader conceptualization of responsibility for the educational experiences of students. My definition of educator professionalism pays particular attention to the ethical aspects of teaching, leading schools and school districts, and associated work that educators do in teaching and non-teaching roles. Consideration of multiple ethical theories causes us to align with the notion of “responsibility” as the key ethical concern of an educator and the profession as a whole, consistent across the various educators who have a role to play in the success of students. Cultivating those relations of responsibility should be the central project of teacher preparation, the central commitment from which specialized knowledge is deemed necessary and desirable. This reorientation of ethics provides the opportunity to conceptualize teacher preparation in different ways, to generate inquiry in different ways, and to collaborate in multiple ways.

Power and Professionalism

More than ten years of federal accountability policy has made clear to many educators the conflicting power relations at work in public education. Theorists who have used the work of Michel Foucault to understand the power relations at work in education pay particular attention to the ways in which individuals are constrained by but simultaneously resist domination in their power positions.³⁰ Using Foucault's theory of normalizing power demonstrates how teachers find themselves in positions to discipline themselves and to constrain the possibilities of their students.³¹ In his use of Foucault to reconceptualize ethics and autonomy, Finn Daniel Raaen brings together a number of the concerns I have expressed in this essay. He argues for the place of care of the self and parrhesia in professional teaching practice as ways for teachers to negotiate the power relations operating through them as they enact practices in changing institutional arrangements.³² For modern institutions such as the school, Raaen points out, disciplinary power makes it necessary for teachers to believe that they are acting autonomously and independently. As emphasized in Foucault's later work, domination implies the potential for resistance, and so Foucault advocates learning the reasons why one may think the way one does and to explore alternatives (the philosophical value of thinking differently).³³ As Raaen suggests, and I have argued, professionalism in our current context in education requires speaking out against constraints on educational practices that educators believe to be harmful to their students.

Raaen points out that there is evidence that institutional arrangements throughout the professions, perhaps especially the previously detached and autonomous medical professions, through power relations are being brought more into line with commercial concerns and profitability. It should not then surprise us that even the professions we think of as the most professional and the most autonomous may no longer represent the ideals identified by sociologists.

29. Feinberg, “The Moral Responsibility of Public Schools.”

30. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 2nd ed. trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures At The Collège De France, 1981-82*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2005).

31. Finn Daniel Raaen, “Autonomy, Candour and Professional Teacher Practice: A Discussion Inspired by the Later Works of Michel Foucault,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 45, no. 4 (2011), 627-41.

32. Ibid.

33. Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality, Volume 2*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1985), 9.

Educators need increasingly sophisticated understandings of the ways in which power works to constrain their practice and what it means to resist the relations of power. A professional ethics grounded in resistance to normalization may provide educators the opportunity to create alternative action, especially if they are able to ground their sense of professionalism in a commitment to responsibility for the students in their care.

Conclusions and Opportunities

The role of social foundations in the cultivation of educator professionalism is varied. Opportunities abound. Most basically, arguments from the philosophy of education are needed to articulate the bounds of professionalism that are unique for education. The relatively recent discourse about the moral purposes of schooling and the place of ethical relations in the construct of professionalism needs further elaboration for the new contexts in which teachers and other educators operate as a result of accountability. In my work, I have tried to help educators see the value of using critiques of the normalizing tendencies of high-stakes accountability policy. The changing relations of power brought about by the outsize influence of standardized tests need critique, and alternatives need to be framed. At the very least, students of education who anticipate going into roles as teachers and administrators need an understanding of how their roles are shaped by relations of power beyond the scope of the institutions within which they work.

Addressing relations of power is important for helping educators bridge their ideals and their practice. This requires thinking of oneself as a creative thinker, the promotion of which is a fundamental aim of philosophy of education, along with articulating ideas of what aims, practices, and experiences are possible; the implications of our ideas for the larger aims of education and for the future of education; and the identification of unanswered questions.

While I have focused mostly on philosophy in this essay, I have also touched on other disciplines and drawn from practitioners in those areas. From history of education, educators can benefit from placing the role of the professional in context with what has come before, not only in the tradition of mainstream public education, but also the history of African American struggle to provide high-quality education in segregated communities.³⁴ From sociology, there is of course the tradition of the sociology of the professions, which I have argued, should be treated carefully if we are to draw implications for educational practice. In addition, sociology provides explanations of how groups operate, how institutions work, and how education interacts with other institutions in society. All of these areas of scholarship contribute to our understanding of how acting professionally interacts with other social forces.

Various other areas of inquiry are of direct benefit to our conceptualizations of educator professionalism. Anthropologists and those working in ethnic studies have much to convey to us about the interactions between ethics and culture, including descriptive ethics of cultural groups and critiques of dominant culture from the perspective of other cultures and sub-cultures. Economists and political scientists explain to us how capital works in contemporary societies and how political economies alter the contexts within which we act, constraining and making possible opportunities for professional action.³⁵

34. James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988); Vanessa Siddle-Walker, *Their Highest Potential: An African American School Community in the Segregated South* (Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 1996).

35. Pauline Lipman, *The New Political Economy of Urban Education: Neoliberalism, Race, and the Right to the City* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

The various disciplines within the social foundations contribute various features to our understanding of professional ethics. Working across the various ethical traditions, as I have tried to show in this paper, provides multiple ways of critiquing and creating opportunities for the cultivation of professional ethics. And in this last section, I have just begun to show the potential addition implications of the other social foundations disciplines.

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