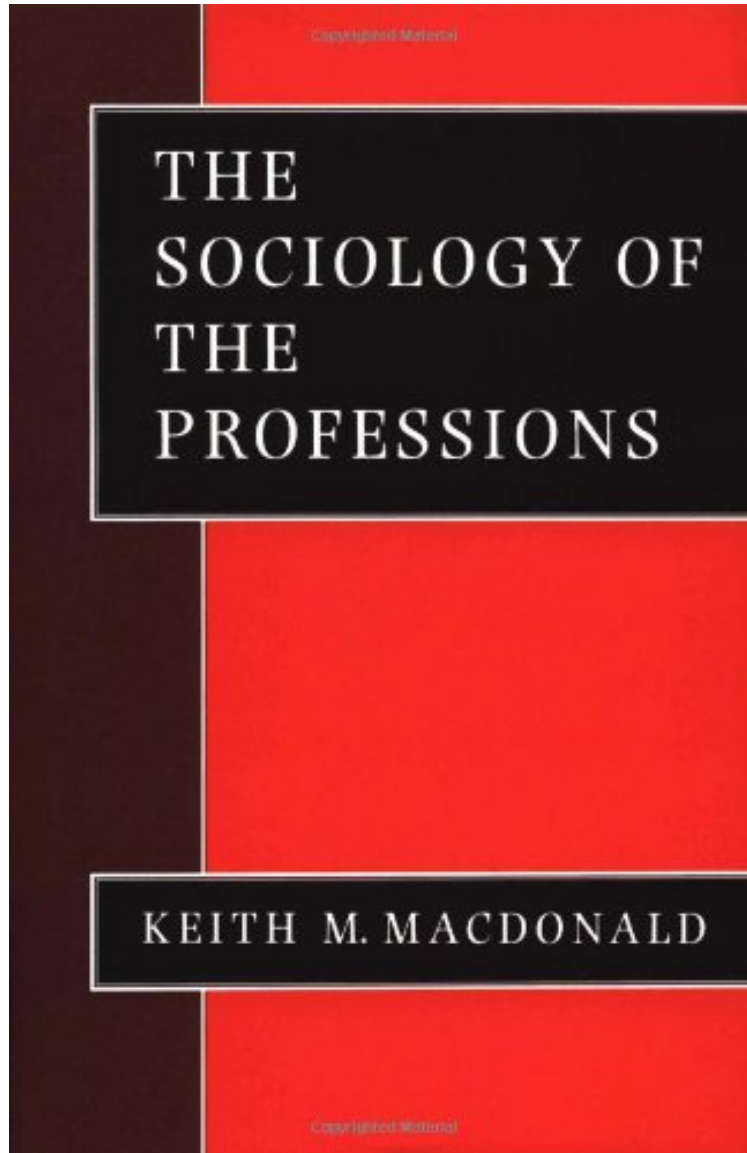


[Free] The Sociology of the Professions (Theory, Culture and Society)

The Sociology of the Professions (Theory, Culture and Society)

Keith M Macdonald

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This much-needed book provides a systematic introduction, both conceptual and applied, to the sociology of the professions. Keith Macdonald guides the reader through the chief sociological approaches to the professions, addressing their strengths and weaknesses. The discussion is richly illustrated by examples from and comparisons between the professions in Britain, the United States and Europe, relating their development to their cultural context. The social exclusivity that professions aim for is discussed in relation to social stratification, patriarchy and knowledge, and is thoroughly illustrated by reference to examples from medicine and other established professions, such as law and architecture. The themes of the bo

Current available literature on the sociology of work has been lacking an up to date, comprehensive overview of theoretical and empirical work relation to the professions and their development. The arrival of [the book] on the bookshelves has gone a long way towards rectifying this problem... Overall this book provides a well-rounded and workable analysis of the essential features of professional development and advancement.... a book of this nature is a welcome contribution for those academically interested in debates surrounding themes of professionalization' - Work, Employment Society Macdonald's is a book seeking to restore the study of the professions, after some 15 years, to mainstream sociological analysis.... The professions, according to Macdonald, lost their sociological allure because of the dead hand of functionalism; but their fortunes can be revived by the adoption of a Weberian interactionist approach. This requires the substitution of the old and essentially static question of "what part do the professions play in the established order of things?" by the more challenging and dynamic question of "how do such occupations manage to persuade society to grant them a privileged position?" At root, after all, the professions are just another interest group in society which, in the search for economic reward and social status, have successfully sought to monopolise (and thereby define) a given body of knowledge and range of practices.... Macdonald does not just enrich the study of the professions by fully contextualising them. He also uses them as a case study to illuminate more fundamental issues in society such as social stratification, patriarchy and the nature of knowledge. As in any good text, the conceptual framework and empirical evidence are clearly presented. The author's theoretical position is eclectic but nonetheless rigorous. His "ideal type" of professional project is qualified by an awareness of national and sectoral differences. Interesting contrasts are drawn between the establishment of professions in the United States and Britain where the relative importance of democratic and class pressure have traditionally placed a different emphasis on examination qualifications and "gentlemanliness" - The Times Higher Education Supplement This book provides an interesting introduction to the sociology of the professions, covering much of the necessary conceptual ground. It begins by examining some of the major theoretical perspectives on professions, including the functionalist, interactionist and Marxist theories. At this stage, the author indicates that his own commitment is to the neo-Weberian approach and the notion of the "professional project" as a means of understanding and accounting for professions and professionalism. There then follow a number of useful chapters largely centred on this theme, encompassing such subjects as professions and social stratification; the cultural context of professions; professions and the state; patriarchy and the professions; and knowledge and the professions. Finally, the last chapter of the volume draws together the various threads of his neo-Weberian analysis of the professional project through the empirical example of accountancy.... The main reason for buying this book, however, is for the critical theoretical insights that it provides onto the analysis of the professions of the Western world, especially from a neo-Weberian standpoint. Here it stimulatingly profiles the work of influential contributors like Larson and Johnson - not to mention Foucault - as well as the development of a number of professions that figure in the text as case studies.... the book helps to fill a significant gap in the literature in the sociology of the professions.... this is a sophisticated text which should find its way on to many final year undergraduate and postgraduate reading lists' - Medical Sociology News Macdonald's work is richly nuanced, eminently comparative, and singularly suggestive - and thoroughly engrossing, to boot' - Choice `Current available literature on the sociology of work has been lacking an up to date, comprehensive overview of theoretical and empirical work relation to the professions and their development. The arrival of [the book] on the bookshelves has gone a long way towards rectifying this problem... 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- Medical Sociology News

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About the Author Keith Macdonald has published numerous papers in Sociology, The British Journal of Sociology, and has contributed to many edited editions on the Sociology of Work and the Professions.