

(Draft-do not quote)

The Changing Employment Class Structure and the Pivotal Role of

managerial professional employees are now among the most highly organized groups of hired skilled workers in many countries

abstract knowledge to address social needs and skilled trades using specialized knowledge to treat physical objects has become increasingly blurred. The standard conventional criteria used to distinguish professionals in recent times have been: establishment of post-secondary educational programs for advanced training in the systematic knowledge of an occupation; formation of associations to represent the general interests of those in the occupation; and development of bodies to regulate codes of practice and licensing (see Adams, 2010; National Initiative for Cybersecurity Education, 2012). But the extent to which these features characterize occupations with either established or aspiring professional statuses varies widely, as well as the sequence in which they have developed these features. In recent generations, a wide array of old and new occupations have made claims to professional status, including most of those with grounding in any form of

Without trying to make fine distinctions, we will first look at compositional changes in occupations generally categorized as professionals and skilled trades as proportions of the employed labour force, as well as proportions of established professionals, semi-professionals and technician categories, according to the

Pineo, Porter and McRoberts (1977) and their colleagues

increasingly dominated by professional an

unions or both through the 2004-2016 period. This contrasts with declining minority membership in such organizations for most of the rest of the non-managerial labour force through this period. A majority of the declining numbers of skilled trades continue to be members of trade unions. But professionals are now the most highly organized and growing part of the non-managerial labour force.

The imposition of a licencing requirement to permit practicing is perhaps the strongest criterion for the recognition of occupational knowledge. Once again, the majority of professionals require licencing to practice in their field. The same remains true of skilled trades. Professionals and skilled trades remain distinctive in this regard.

These general profiles indicate that, in one of the most highly educated labour forces in the world, professional occupations are now accessible in

Changing Class Structure and Development of Professional Classes

Professional employers own either large or small enterprises and possess ultimate control over their own work and the goals of the organization, and managerial prerogative over hired workers, subject mainly to environmental contingencies.

Self-employed professionals without employees have ultimate control of their own work, although they may now contract themselves to larger enterprises at times.

Table 4 summarizes the general class structure of the employed labour force from 1982 to 2016, with some refinements beyond the previously published 1982-2010 analysis. Owners continue to make up around 15 percent of the employed labour force. Managerial employees have continued to grow overall, now approaching a quarter of the labour force. In addition to upper managers who control a plant, branch or division of an entire organization, this includes middle managers, supervisors and forepersons, and also professional managers who first identify with their professional occupation and then indicate they also play a managerial role. Middle managers appear to have increased the most, now making up nearly half of all managerial employees while professional managers may also have increased.

Among non-managerial employees, the growing number of professional employees may now outnumber declining industrial workers at around 20 percent of the employed labour force. Clerical, sales and service workers have declined

Sources: CCS 1982; NALL 1998; WALL I 2004, WALL II 2010; CWKE 2016.

If we look more closely at the class distribution of professional occupations, comparable patterns are found. As Table 5 indicates, during this period of expansion of professional occupations as a portion of the labour force, professional employers and self-employed professional business owners have remained

All of these professional classes are embedded within the more general employment class structure. Professional employers typically run small businesses and continue to contribute their labour to the development of these enterprises. Self-employed professionals work on their own account dependent largely on their own specialized knowledge. Professional managers oversee the work of most other non-managerial hired labour. Professional employees are now a growing component of the non-managerial labour force. The treatment by some class analysts of professional employees as a distinctive *intermediate* form of semi-autonomous labour may reflect the current strategic import of their sorts of

industrial workers who have historically been the majority of hired labour and most excluded from such control.²

Table 6 summarizes the extent to which different employee classes have perceived that they can plan and design their own work. The vast majority of upper managers continue to perceive a high level of discretion, perhaps with some decline as the managerial hierarchy has expanded greatly. Conversely, the proportion of service worker and industrial workers who see themselves as having discretion to design their own work has increased since 1982, perhaps reflective of greater mediating roles for them in increasingly automated labour processes. Among professional employees, the sense of being able to design their own jobs declined from strong majority proportions comparable with managers to numbers similar to service workers and industrial workers. In this aspect of workplace power, all non-managerial employees are becoming less distinguishable.

Table 6 Plan or design own work ``all or most of time``, Canadian wage and salary employees, 1982-2016 (%)

Employee class	1982	2004	2010	2016	1982-2016 change
Upper Manager	97	85	72	81	-16
Professional employee					

been centrally targeted to share their specialized knowledge through involvement in organizational decision-making on strategic issues (e.g. Drucker, 1998). Prior research has found that actual practices of greater involvement have been severely constrained (Harley 1999; Osterman 2000). Table 7 suggests that the reality for most professional employees has indeed been quite limited. Virtually all upper managers have been involved in strategic decision-making throughout this period (as have most lower managers). The majority of s

Table

The capacity to withhold their labour to negotiate for more tolerable working conditions is the most basic right of hired workers in capitalist economies. The right to strike has

declined significantly. All non-managerial classes, including professional employees, have been weaker defenders of the profit motive throughout this period

Table 11 Identify as ``working class`` (or lower class), Canadian wage and salary employees, 1982-2016 (%)

Employee class	1982	1998	2004	2010	2016	1982-2016 change
Upper Manager	13	11	17	7	8	-5
Professional employee	13	14	24	8	11	-2
Service worker	33	30	38	23	28	-5

Concluding Remarks

Professional occupations originated in close allegiance with ruling classes in the earliest historical societies, largely to develop and maintain forms of specialized knowledge needed to ensure the social order. In the process of industrialization during recent centuries, numerous new professions developed expert knowledge and organizational power to aid in providing more widely needed goods and services and thereby achieved somewhat more independent occupational status (e.g. Perkin, 1989). such as Canada, professional occupations are a growing proportion of the employed labour force. While those in any specific professional occupation continue to share origins in specialized training, they also have different class interests as professional owners, self-employed professionals, professional managers and professional employees. The hired labour force is becoming dominated by managers, and professional managers are becoming an increasing proportion of professionals. But professional employees remain the majority of all professionals and a growing part of the non-managerial labour force. Their working conditions and economic attitudes are becoming very similar to those of the rest of the non-managerial labour force. *In many respects, professional employees may be considered the skilled trades of the “knowledge economy”*. While skilled trades themselves are now declining as a portion of the labour force, they were the most highly qualified part of the hired labour force in late 19th century and led the organization of the labour movement for much of the 20th century. Professional employees are now the most highly qualified part of the current labour force and already the most highly organized within their own fields (Livingstone and Raykov, 2014). A central question for the employees will continue to give their allegiances narrowly to their specialized fields and and diminishing relative advantages within established work organizations. Or will professional employees increasingly recognize their common interests with other non-managerial hired workers and play a more strategic role in the mobilization of a labour movement for more sustainable economic alternatives in the current century?

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