The Sociological Analysis of Professionalism

Occupational Change in the Modern World

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abstract: The paper analyses and explains the appeal of the concepts of profession and professionalism and the increased use of these concepts in different occupational groups, work contexts and social systems. The paper begins with a brief preliminary section on defining the field where it is suggested that a shift of focus is required from a preoccupation with defining 'profession' to analysis of the appeal to 'professionalism' as a motivator for and facilitator of occupational change. Then the paper examines two past, alternative and contrasting, sociological interpretations of professionalism (as normative value system and as ideology of occupational powers). In the third section the paper argues that, in the 1990s, a third interpretation has developed which includes both normative and ideological elements. Sociologists have returned to the concept of professionalism in attempts to understand occupational and organizational change and the prominence of knowledge work in different social systems and global economies. The fourth section returns to the question of the appeal of the concept of professionalism in promoting and facilitating occupational change, and considers how the balance between the normative and ideological elements of professionalism is played out differently in occupational groups in very different employment situations.

keywords: occupational change ✥ professionalism ✥ social control

Is there any future for professions or are we witnessing the final demise of the guilds (Krause, 1996) and of guild-like social institutions (Broadbent

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et al., 1997; Stichweh, 1997)? In Anglo-American societies it is frequently claimed that professions, as a special (privileged) category of service-sector occupations, are in decline. Professions, as a category, have been criticized as not a generic occupational type (Crompton, 1990) and have been perceived as under threat from organizational, economic and political changes (e.g. Greenwood and Lachman, 1996; Reed, 1996). They are portrayed as experiencing a reduction in autonomy and dominance (Freidson, 1988; Mechanic, 1991; Allsop and Mulcahy, 1996; Harrison, 1999; Harrison and Ahmad, 2000); a decline in their abilities to exercise the occupational control of work (Freidson, 1994); and a weakening of their abilities to act as self-regulating occupational groups (MacDonald, 1995) able to enter into 'regulative bargains' (Cooper et al., 1988) with states.

Many researchers, often from other than Anglo-American societies, have argued the opposite, however, namely that knowledge-based occupations are the expanding employment categories and the growth sectors of labour markets in developed (Lyotard, 1984; Perkin, 1988; Reed, 1996; Frenkel et al., 1995), transitional (Buchner-Jeziorska, 2001; Buchner-Jeziorska and Evetts, 1997) and developing societies (Hiremath and Gudagunti, 1998; Sautu, 1998). This interpretation has focused on the expansion of occupations based on knowledge (Murphy, 1988), whether or not the concept of profession is used, and the growing capacity of higher education systems in most societies to produce workers who are educated and trained.

Despite these different interpretations which stem in part from the rather unusual emphasis on certain occupations such as medicine and law in the English-speaking world, and despite the fundamental changes in the social, political, economic and market contexts in which professional occupations and knowledge-based workers work (Svensson, 2000), there is extensive agreement about the appeal of the idea of profession and professionalism and its increased use in all work contexts. It is used increasingly as a marketing device in advertising to appeal to customers (Fournier, 1999) and it is used in mission statements and organizational aims and objectives to motivate employees. It is an attractive prospect for an occupation to be considered a profession and for occupational workers to be identified as professionals. The paper suggests that a shift of focus is required and that different questions need to be asked about professions and knowledge work in global economies and societies. A shift of focus is required from a preoccupation with defining 'profession' to analysis of the appeal to 'professionalism' as a motivator for and facilitator of occupational change. Different questions include how the appeal to professionalism is played out differently in occupational groups in very different employment situations.

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Professions: Defining the Field

It is necessary to begin by considering earlier disputes and disagreements about the concept of 'profession' itself before focusing on the concept of professionalism. Some researchers have avoided giving a definition of profession and instead offer a list of relevant occupational groups (e.g. Hanlon [1998] claimed to be following Abbott [1988]). Others have used the disagreements and continuing uncertainties about precisely what *is* a profession, to dismiss the separateness of the intellectual field, although not necessarily to dispute the relevance of current analytical debates. Crompton (1990), for example, considered how paradoxes and contradictions within the sociological debates about professions actually reflected wider and more general tensions in the sociologies of work, occupations and employment.

This paper does approach professions as a generic group of occupations based on knowledge both technical and tacit. It does not, however, attempt to draw a hard and fast line between professions and other occupational groups, preferring instead to emphasize the shared characteristics and common processes. Professions are essentially the knowledge-based category of occupations which usually follow a period of tertiary education and vocational training and experience. A different way of categorizing these occupations is to see professions as the structural, occupational and institutional arrangements for dealing with work associated with the uncertainties of modern lives in risk societies. Professionals are extensively engaged in dealing with risk, with risk assessment and, through the use of expert knowledge, enabling customers and clients to deal with uncertainty. To paraphrase and adapt a list in Olgiati et al. (1998), professions are involved in birth, survival, physical and emotional health, dispute resolution and law-based social order, finance and credit information, educational attainment and socialization, physical constructs and the built environment, military engagement, peace-keeping and security, entertainment and leisure, religion and our negotiations with the next world.

In general, however, it no longer seems important to draw a hard definitional line between professions and other occupations but, instead, to regard both as similar social forms which share many common characteristics (Hughes, 1958; Crompton, 1990). The operational definition of profession can be highly pragmatic. The intellectual field includes the study of occupations which are service- and knowledge-based and achieved sometimes following years of higher/further education and specified years of vocational training and experience. Sometimes professional groups are also elites with strong political links and connections, and some professional practitioners are licensed as a mechanism of market closure

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and occupational control of work. They are primarily middle-class occupations sometimes characterized as the service class (Goldthorpe, 1982).

The sociology of professions is a field in which international comparisons have been particularly fruitful. This is illustrated by the productive contrast between Anglo-American approaches, which have tended to concentrate on occupational closure and the creation of what Freidson (1982) called 'market shelters', and the approach developed in France and elsewhere in continental Europe, where professions are defined somewhat more broadly and where the focus shifts to questions of occupation more generally including occupational identity, career trajectories, professional training and expertise, and employment in public sector organizations. Collins (1990: 15) expressed the contrast in a different way, claiming that the Anglo-American ideal-type 'stresses the freedom of self-employed practitioners to control working conditions' whereas the Continental ideal-type emphasizes 'elite administrators possessing their offices by virtue of academic credentials'. This is also reflected in different types of professionalization where the former focuses on 'private government' within an occupation and the latter on the political struggle for control within an elite bureaucratic hierarchy (p. 17). Also McClelland (1990: 107) distinguishes between 'professionalization "from within" (successful manipulation of the market by the group) and "from above" (domination of forces external to the group)'. Although this categorization by McClelland was intended to differentiate Anglo-American and (in this case) German forms of professionalization, it will be returned to later in this paper as a way of indicating different occupational usages of, and benefits from, professionalism, as well as how the balance between normative and social control elements is played out differently in different occupational groups. Svensson (2001) has also reminded researchers that in Europe generally professionals have been and are mainly employed in the public sector and closely connected to and controlled by state authorities; only a small minority have been self-employed (see also Burrage and Torstendahl, 1990).

Although some researchers continue to be absorbed by the problem of definition of profession, some general conception such as 'the occupational control of work' (Freidson, 1983); the sociology of middle-class occupations (Dingwall, 1996); or theories of occupations of expert labour (Crompton, 1990) is probably sufficient to delineate the types of occupation within the intellectual field. Instead it is more fruitful to move on to consider the appeal of the concepts of 'profession' and particularly of 'professionalism'. This includes a return to a question asked by Larson (1977) of how a set of practices that characterized medicine and law became a rallying cry for engineers, accountants and school teachers, all of whom were in very different employment situations. Now other

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occupations need adding to Larson's list since pharmacists, social workers, care assistants, librarians, computing experts, the police and the armed forces are claiming to be professions and to demonstrate professionalism in their occupational work. In all of these occupational groups the balance between the normative and social control elements is played out differently. The expansion of the service sector and knowledge work in the developed world and the growth or re-emergence of professions in both developing and transitional societies, indicate the appeal of the concept of 'professionalism' as well as the strength and persistence of 'professions' as an occupational form.

Theoretical Background: Professionalism as Value System and as Ideology

The concept of 'professionalism' has had a chequered history of use and contrasting (even contradictory) interpretations in the sociological literature. This section groups the many different interpretations of professionalism into two: as normative value system and as controlling ideology. Professionalism as value system or as ideology can both be seen as operational on macro (societal, state and market), meso (organizations and institutions) and micro (groups and actors) levels. The most obvious difference is that while professionalism as value system is guardedly optimistic about the positive contributions of the concept to a normative social order, professionalism as ideology focuses more negatively on professionalism as a hegemonic belief system and mechanism of social control for 'professional' workers. Not surprisingly, professional workers themselves prefer and utilize the normative discourse in their relations with clients, their occupational identities and their work practices.

Professionalism as Value System

Most analyses of professionalism as a normative value system have been at macro and meso levels of analysis and these will be the focus for this section, though micro analysis will also be indicated. There is a long history of attempts to clarify the meaning and functions of professionalism for the stability and civility of social systems. Durkheim (see 1992) assessed professionalism as a form of moral community based on occupational membership. Tawney (1921) perceived professionalism as a force capable of subjecting rampant individualism to the needs of the community. Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933) saw professionalism as a force for stability and freedom against the threat of encroaching industrial and governmental bureaucracies. Marshall (1950) emphasized altruism or the 'service' orientation of professionalism and how professionalism might form a bulwark against threats to stable democratic processes.

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The best-known, though perhaps the most frequently mis-quoted, attempt to clarify the special characteristics of professionalism and its central normative values was that of Parsons (1951). Parsons tried to clarify the importance of professionalism through 'a theoretical base in the sociology of knowledge, in terms of a socially-grounded normative order' (Dingwall and Lewis, 1983: 2). Parsons recognized, and was one of the first theorists to show, how the capitalist economy, the rational–legal social order (of Weber), and the modern professions were all interrelated and mutually balancing in the maintenance and stability of a fragile normative social order. He demonstrated how the authority of the professions and of bureaucratic organizations both rested on the same principles (for example, of functional specificity, restriction of the power domain, application of universalistic, impersonal standards). The professions, however, by means of their collegial organization and shared identity demonstrated an alternative approach (to the hierarchy of bureaucratic organizations) towards the shared normative end. This interpretation has been revisited in a recent analysis by Freidson (2001) who analyses professionalism as a third logic in contrast to the logics of the market and the organization.

Unlike Parsons, Hughes regarded the differences between professions and occupations as differences of degree rather than kind. For Hughes (1958), not only do professions and occupations presume to tell the rest of their society what is good and right for it, but also they determine the ways of thinking about problems which fall in their domain (Dingwall and Lewis, 1983: 5). Professionalism in occupations and professions implies the importance of trust in economic relations in modern societies with an advanced division of labour. In other words, lay people *must* place their trust in professional workers (electricians and plumbers as well as lawyers and doctors) and some professionals must acquire guilty knowledge. Professionalism requires professionals to be worthy of that trust, to maintain confidentiality and conceal such guilty knowledge by not exploiting it for evil purposes. In return for professionalism in client relations, professionals are rewarded with authority, privileged rewards and higher status. Subsequent analysis has interpreted higher rewards to be the result of occupational power rather than professionalism but this was one result of the rather peculiar focus on medicine and law as the archetypal professions in Anglo-American analysis, rather than a more realistic assessment of the large differences in power resources of most occupational groups.

The work of Hughes also constitutes the starting point for many micro level ethnographic studies of professional socialization in work places (e.g. hospitals and schools) and the development (in new) and maintenance (in existing) workers of shared professional identities. This shared

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professional identity is associated with a sense of common experiences, understandings and expertise, shared ways of perceiving problems and their possible solutions. This common identity is produced and reproduced through occupational and professional socialization by means of shared and common educational backgrounds, professional training and vocational experiences, and by membership of professional associations (local, regional, national and international) and societies where practitioners develop and maintain a shared work culture. One result is similarities in work practices and procedures, common ways of perceiving problems and their possible solutions and shared ways of perceiving and interacting with customers and clients. In these ways the normative value system of professionalism in work, and how to behave, respond and advise, is reproduced at the micro level in individual practitioners and in the work places in which they work.

The work of Parsons, in particular, on the core aspects of professionalism and the special characteristics of professional work, has subsequently been subject to heavy criticism. Sometimes, although mistakenly, Parsons's work has been interpreted as leading to the trait approach (for example Johnson, 1972: 25–32). In addition, Parsons's work has been over-zealously criticized because of its links with functionalism (Dingwall and Lewis, 1983). In the 1970s and 1980s, the concept of professionalism as value system was rejected and replaced by a critical assessment (see next section) which resulted in a general scepticism about professions which were seen instead to be elite conspiracies of powerful occupational workers.

Professionalism as Ideology

Critical attacks on professions in general as powerful, privileged, self-interested monopolies, that were prominent in the neo-Weberian research literature of the 1970s and 1980s, resulted in a general scepticism about the whole idea of professionalism as a normative value. Johnson, for example, dismissed professionalism as a successful ideology which had entered the political vocabulary of a wide range of occupational groups in their claims and competition for status and income (1972: 32). More recently Davies (1996) has urged researchers to abandon claims to professionalism and instead to recognize the links between such claims and a specific historical and cultural construction of masculinity which fits uneasily with newer and more feminized professions.

During the 1970s and 1980s, when sociological analysis of professions was dominated by various forms of professionalism as ideology theorizing, one concept that became prominent was the 'professional project'. The concept was developed by Larson (1977) and included a detailed and scholarly historical account of the processes and developments whereby a distinct occupational group sought a monopoly in the market for its

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service, and status and upward mobility (collective as well as individual) in the social order. The idea of a professional project was developed in a different way by Abbott (1988) who examined the carving out and maintenance of a jurisdiction through competition and the requisite cultural and other work that was necessary to establish the legitimacy of the monopoly practice.

Larson's work is still frequently cited and MacDonald's textbook on professions (1995) continues to use and to support her analysis in his examination of the professional field of accountancy. The outcome of the successful professional project was a 'monopoly of competence legitimised by officially sanctioned "expertise", and a monopoly of credibility with the public' (Larson, 1977: 38). Larson's interpretation has not gone unchallenged. Freidson (1982) preferred market 'shelters' to complete monopolies in professional service provision, which indicated the incomplete nature of most market closure projects. It is also the case that Larson's careful analysis has been oversimplified by enthusiastic supporters such that some researchers talk about *the* professional project, as if professions and professional associations do nothing else apart from protecting the market monopoly for their expertise. One aspect of Larson's work is of particular interest in this paper, however. Larson asked why and how a set of work practices and relations that characterized medicine and law became a rallying call for a whole set of knowledge-based occupations in very different employment conditions. This question points to the importance of the appeal and attraction of the concept of professionalism to occupational workers themselves in all types of society in the modern world.

Another version of the professionalism as ideology interpretation has been the notion of professions as *powerful* occupational groups who not only closed markets and dominated and controlled other occupations in the field but also could 'capture' states and negotiate 'regulative bargains' (Cooper et al., 1988) with states in the interests of their own practitioners. Again this was an aspect of theorizing about professions in Anglo-American societies which began in the 1970s (e.g. Johnson, 1972) and which focused on medicine and law. It has been a particular feature of analysis of the medical profession (e.g. Larkin, 1983) where researchers have interpreted relations between health professionals as an aspect of medical dominance as well as gender relations (e.g. Davies, 1995).

Returning to Professions: Back to the Future

Since the mid-1980s, the flaws in the more extreme versions of this professionalism as ideology view have become apparent. Annandale (1998) has queried aspects of medical dominance and has linked this with

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diversity, restratification and growing hierarchy within the medical profession itself – namely only *some* doctors can become dominant, along with *some* nurses and *some* midwives. More generally, it has turned out that radical governments could successfully challenge the professions. Professions do sometimes initiate projects and influence governments but as often professions are *responding* to external demands for change, which can be political, economic, cultural and social. This has resulted in a reappraisal of the historical evidence, which is still incomplete. One line of development has been the view that the demand-led theory of professionalization needs to be complemented by an understanding of the supply side (Dingwall, 1996). Instead of the question – How do professions capture states? – it is suggested that the central question should be – Why do states create professions, or at least permit professions to flourish? This has resulted in a renewed interest in the professionalism as normative value system interpretation and in the historical evidence about the parallel processes of the creation of modern nation-states in the second half of the 19th century and of modern professions in the same period. It is suggested, for example, that professions might be one aspect of a state founded on liberal principles, one way of regulating certain spheres of economic life without developing an oppressive central bureaucracy. The work of the English sociologist Herbert Spencer has provided a useful starting point for this analysis (Dingwall and King, 1995) and Dingwall (1996) takes this argument further by considering the need for social order in the rapidly developing global economies and international markets, and how professions might make a normative and value contribution in meeting this need.

In the 1990s researchers began to reassess the significance of professionalism and its positive (as well as negative) contributions both for customers and clients, as well as for social systems. This indicates a return to the professionalism as normative value system interpretation. One result of this return and re-appraisal is a more balanced assessment, however. Thus, in addition to protecting their own market position through controlling the licence to practise and protecting their elite positions, professionalism might also represent a distinctive form of decentralized occupational control which is important in civil society (Durkheim, see 1992). It has also been argued that the public interest and professional self-interest are not necessarily at opposite ends of a continuum and that the pursuit of self-interests may be compatible with advancing the public interest (Saks, 1995). Professionalism might also work to create and represent distinct professional values or moral obligations which restrain excessive competition and encourage co-operation (Dingwall, 1996).

The claim is now being made (for example Freidson, 1994, 2001) that professionalism is a unique form of occupational control of work which

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has distinct advantages over market, organizational and bureaucratic forms of control. In assessing the political, economic and ideological forces that are exerting enormous pressure on the professions today, Freidson (1994) has defended professionalism as a desirable way of providing complex, discretionary services to the public. He argues that market-based or organizational and bureaucratic methods impoverish and standardize the quality of service to consumers and demotivate practitioners, and he goes on to suggest how the virtues of professionalism can be reinforced. Thus, professions might need to close markets in order to be able to endorse and guarantee the education, training, experience and tacit knowledge of licensed practitioners, but once achieved the profession might then be able to concentrate more fully on developing the service-orientated and performance-related aspects of their work (Halliday, 1987; Evetts, 1998). The process of occupational closure will also result in the monopoly supply of the expertise and the service, and probably also in privileged access to salary and status as well as in definitional and control rewards for practitioners. In respect of these privileges, it is necessary to remember the dual character of professions which include both the provision of a service (and the development of an autonomous form of governance) and the use of knowledge and power for economic gain and monopoly control (which poses a threat to civility). The pursuit of private interests is not always in opposition to the pursuit of the public interest, however, and indeed both can be developed simultaneously (Saks, 1995).

Halliday (1987) has also argued that the emphasis on market monopolies underestimated the breadth of professionalism, especially concerning professional influences on states and legislative bodies. For Halliday the closure of markets might only be an issue during the early stages of professional development. In Halliday's analysis of the Chicago Bar Association, the preoccupation with market dominance was confined to early developmental stages and once completed its importance declined. In the later phase of 'established professionalism' the professional projects are different and a broader range of work is undertaken. Indeed, Halliday (1987: 354) argues that 'if it can secure its occupational niche and protect its vital economic interests, then a profession's resources can be freed from market concerns for other causes'.

In general, then, some recent Anglo-American analyses of professions have involved the re-interpretation of the concept of professionalism as a normative value system in the socialization of new workers, in the preservation and predictability of normative social order in work and occupations, and in the maintenance and stability of a fragile normative order in state and increasingly international markets. This current interpretation has built on earlier (perhaps less critical) analyses and the result is now a more balanced and cautious reappraisal. There is due recognition, for

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example, of the power and self-interests of some professional groups in wanting to preserve and indeed promote the professionalism as normative value system interpretation. This current interpretation of professionalism as value system involves a re-evaluation of the importance of trust in client/practitioner relations (Karpik, 1989), of discretion (Hawkins, 1992) as well as analysis of risk (Grelon, 1996) and expert judgement (Milburn, 1996; Trépos, 1996). It also includes a reassessment of *quality* of service and of professional *performance* in the best interests of both customers (in order to avoid further standardization of service provision) and practitioners (in order to protect discretion in service work decision-making) (Freidson, 1994).

A different version of this re-interpretation of the concept of professionalism has involved the use of Foucauldian concepts of legitimacy (Foucault, 1979) and of the control of autonomous subjects exercising appropriate conduct (Foucault, 1973, 1980). Using these ideas in her interpretation of professionalism as a disciplinary mechanism, Fournier (1999), following Miller and Rose (1990), has explored professionalism as the government of professional practice 'at a distance'. These interpretations can also assist in understanding the appeal of professionalism as a mechanism of occupational change in the modern world.

Analysis of legitimacy, as a property of both systems and actors, has been developed most fully in the work of Foucault and his followers on the nature of governmentality and the constitution of citizen-subjects within modern societies. In respect of professions as systems Foucault (1979) argued, following Weber (see Bendix, 1966: 417–30), that the development of particular forms of expertise was a crucial element in the formation of governmentality from the 16th century onwards. Summarizing Foucault's argument, Johnson (1992) showed how the extension of the capacity to govern depended on expertise in its professionalized form and the development of expert jurisdictions and systems of notation, documentation, evaluation, calculation and assessment. This extension of the capacity to govern necessitated a shift in the basis of legitimacy. Acceptance of the divine right of the sovereign declined and was replaced by a discourse that held 'popular obedience to the law' to be the sole source of legitimate rule (Foucault, 1979: 12). This was not expressed by Foucault as overt domination but rather as the probability that the 'normalized' subject will obey (Johnson, 1992).

The professions were intimately involved in these processes of normalization which were crucial to the reproduction of legitimate power in the liberal-democratic state (Johnson, 1992). Normalization also included the reproduction of the authority of the expert. Acceptance of the authority of professional experts went together with the consolidation of the authority of states. Acceptance of the authority of governments and of

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professionals have been interrelated and have been part of the process of normalization of the citizen-subject. Perkin (1988) also highlights the close and interconnected role played by both the nation-state and professionals in the creation of a legitimate capitalist order in the UK in the 1880–1920 period. In some respects, the organizing principles of the professions can be seen to model the process of normalization: the professional's training is, in theory, supposed to cultivate a proper balance between self- and collectivity interest which is sustained by interaction with the occupational community of his or her peers and by the desire not to lose their good opinion by excessive greed or abuse of power. Such a model may be deeply problematic as numerous critical writers have observed but symbolically it remains very powerful and continues to explain the appeal of professionalism at the system or occupational level.

At the level of individual actors the concept of normalization of the citizen-subject was also a central requirement in Foucault's argument since legitimate political power depended on the obedience of subjects. As a consequence Foucault focused much of his later work on the role of discipline and punishment in the development of such subjects in his case studies of the penal system and of the regulation of sexuality. These highlight the way in which outright coercion has given way to normalization, to the way in which the discipline of selves has become self-discipline, where the key controls are internalized and proactive rather than external and reactive.

Using Foucault's interpretation of normalization, and interpreting this as legitimation through competence and autonomously 'choosing' to act in appropriate ways, Fournier (1999) considers the appeal to 'professionalism' as a disciplinary mechanism in new occupational contexts. She suggests how the use of the discourse of professionalism in a large privatized service company of managerial labour serves to inculcate 'appropriate' work identities, conducts and practices. She considers this as 'a disciplinary logic which inscribes "autonomous" professional practice within a network of accountability and governs professional conduct at a distance' (1999: 280).

At the level of individual actors the appeal to professionalism can be seen as a powerful motivating force of control 'at a distance' (Miller and Rose, 1990; Burchell et al., 1991). At the level of systems, such as occupations, the appeal to professionalism can also be seen as a mechanism for promoting social change. In these cases, however, the appeal is to a myth or an ideology of professionalism which includes aspects such as exclusive ownership of an area of expertise, autonomy and discretion in work practices and occupational control of work. In fact the reality of the professionalism that is actually envisaged is very different. The appeal to professionalism most often includes the substitution of organizational for

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professional values; bureaucratic, hierarchical and managerial controls rather than collegial relations; budgetary restrictions and rationalizations; performance targets, accountability and increased political control. In this sense, then, it can be argued that the appeal to professionalism is an 'effective' mechanism of social control at micro, meso and macro levels.

Explaining the Appeal of Professionalism: Occupational Change in the Modern World

In conclusion, and returning to the question of the appeal of professionalism, it is necessary to try to understand how professionalism as normative value system and ideology is now being increasingly used in modern organizations, and other institutions and places of work, as a mechanism to facilitate and promote occupational change. Why and in what ways have a set of work practices and relations, that historically have characterized medicine and law in Anglo-American societies, resonated first with engineers, accountants and teachers, and now with pharmacists, social workers, care assistants, computer experts and law enforcement agencies in different social systems around the world?

The ideology of professionalism that is so appealing to occupational groups and their practitioners includes aspects such as exclusive ownership of an area of expertise and knowledge, and the power to define the nature of problems in that area as well as the control of access to potential solutions. It also includes an image of collegial work relations of mutual assistance and support rather than hierarchical, competitive or managerialist control. Additional aspects of the ideology of professionalism and its appeal are autonomy in decision-making and discretion in work practices, decision-making in the public interest unfettered only marginally by financial constraints, and in some cases (for example the medical profession historically) even self-regulation or the occupational control of work (Freidson, 1994).

The reality of professionalism in most service- and knowledge-based occupational contexts is very different, however, and even medicine and law in Anglo-American social systems are no longer exempt. Fiscal crises have been features of most states and such crises have been explained by governments as resulting from the rising costs of welfare states and particularly social service professionalism. Remedial measures to attempt to contain the fiscal crises have been taken (sometimes motivated as in the UK by a New Right ideology) and these have included cut-backs in funding and institutional 'rationalizations' as well as the promotion of managerialist/organizational cultures in the professional public service sector including medicine. As Hanlon (1999: 121) has explained: 'in short the state is engaged in trying to redefine professionalism so that it

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becomes more commercially aware, budget-focused, managerial, entrepreneurial and so forth'.

Accountability and performance indicators have now become a fundamental aspect of professionalism. Professionals of all kinds and the institutions in which they work are subject to achievement targets to justify their receipt of public expenditure and which enable the performance of particular organizations (such as schools, universities and hospitals), and the professionals who work in them, to be measured and compared. Accountability has been operationalized as audit. Likewise other work organizations also specify such targets and sometimes by means of devolved budgets are requiring all budgetary units to clarify and maximize income streams while controlling expenditures.

Thus, in most if not all organizations, the reality of professionalism that is actually envisaged in new and existing occupations includes financial constraints and budgetary devolution; often a reduction in personnel but a work force which is disciplined and more highly trained and credentialized; an enlarged and expanded work role and the need to demonstrate the achievement of externally (and often politically) defined targets; in bureaucratic, managerial and hierarchically organized places of work.

It is also important to consider the appeal of professionalism as a disciplinary mechanism at the micro level, and as a system of normative values. Fournier (1999: 290) has demonstrated how the reconstitution of employees as professionals involves more than just a process of re-labelling, 'it also involves the delineation of "appropriate work identities" and potentially allows for control at a distance by inscribing the disciplinary logic of professionalism within the person of the employee so labelled'. In new and existing occupational and organizational contexts, service and knowledge workers and other employees are having to, and indeed choosing to, reconstitute themselves in organizational and occupational forms which incorporate career development alongside the self-managing and self-motivated employee (Grey, 1994; Fournier, 1998). In other words, those who as workers act like 'professionals', are self-controlled and self-motivated to perform in ways the organization defines as appropriate. In return, those who achieve the targets will be rewarded with career promotion and progress.

Another interesting aspect of this question of the appeal of professionalism is how the balance between the normative and ideological control elements of professionalism is played out differently in the various service and knowledge-based occupational groups with very different employment situations. In considering this aspect, it can be argued that the Anglo-American over-emphasis on medicine and law as the archetypal professional groups has been largely unhelpful. One consequence has been that Anglo-American social scientists have developed a distorted

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view of the power of a limited number of occupational groups to influence states, demand and retain regulatory powers from those states, and control (through monopoly practices) the markets for their knowledge and services. For other occupational groups, however, the ideology has worked, and has been worked in other ways. In general, then, a focus on (previously) powerful occupational groups has deflected attention away from analysis of occupations who have generally been less successful in using the ideology in their own interests (such as engineers and teachers) and indeed has handicapped and prevented discussion of how and why so many new service- and knowledge-based occupational groups are attracted to the normative aspects of the ideological appeal.

In trying to understand how the balance of normative and ideological elements varies between different occupational groups, it might be useful to return to McClelland's categorization (1990: 107) of 'professionalization "from within" (successful manipulation of the market by the group) and "from above" (domination of forces external to the group)'. This categorization was intended to differentiate Anglo-American and German forms of professionalization but it might be used instead to indicate and explain the various usages of and indeed returns to the appeal of professionalism in different occupational groups. Where the appeal to professionalism is made and used by the occupational group itself, 'from within', then the returns to the group can be substantial. In these cases, historically the group has been able to use the normative aspects (and the discourse) in constructing its occupational identity, promoting its image with clients and customers, and in bargaining with states to secure and maintain its (sometimes self) regulatory responsibilities. In these instances the occupation is using the ideology partly in its own occupational and practitioner interests but sometimes also as a way of promoting and protecting the public interest.

In the case of most contemporary service occupations, however, professionalism is being imposed 'from above' and for the most part this means the employers and managers of the service organizations in which these 'professionals' work. Here the normative values (of dedicated service and autonomous decision making) are part of the appeal of professionalism. These values are inserted or imposed and a false or selective ideology is used to promote and facilitate occupational change and as a disciplinary mechanism of autonomous subjects exercising appropriate conduct. This ideology of professionalism is grasped by the occupational group since it is perceived to be a way of improving the occupation's status and rewards collectively and individually. However, the realities of professionalism 'from above' are very different.

When professionalism is constructed and demanded 'from within', *and* it corresponds with a (supply side) state's willingness and perception that

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the delegation of professional powers is in the state's best interest, then the normative values aspects of professionalism can be paramount. The professional group also constructs and controls the ideology, however, which it continues to use in its own as well as in the public's interest. The historically powerful professions of medicine and law have sometimes demonstrated opposition to 'moral conduct' and 'appropriate behaviour' mechanisms, however, particularly in their development of alternative interpretations of the public interest. Crompton (1990: 163) showed how doctors in the UK developed their oppositional case against the government's introduction of quasi-markets in the NHS using the language of professionalism. She argued that, while it is important to retain a healthy scepticism about the interests of the medical profession, it is also necessary to remember the significant moral (and normative) elements which have been entered in this debate.

It is, however, this willingness by states to concede professional powers and regulatory responsibilities (and for occupational groups to construct and demand professionalism 'from within') that is now almost universally in question. The consequence of this is still diversity in the balance of normative values and ideological control aspects of professionalism between different occupational groups – although this diversity might be reducing. The legal profession now (in contrast to medicine) is perhaps the best example of an occupational group in a relatively privileged normative position and still able to construct professionalism 'from within'. There are however numerous occupational groups within the profession of law and in general those occupations categorized as social service law professions rather than entrepreneurial law professions (Hanlon, 1999), those who are publicly funded compared with commercial practices, are occupations where the ideological control elements are stronger than the normative. The medical professions are similarly highly stratified and differentially powerful in the sense of being able to construct and demand professionalism 'from within'. It is also interesting to observe that the professional groups who are becoming powerful in international markets (for example some accountancy and legal professions) might be different from the occupational groups who have been powerful at the state levels in the sense of constructing and demanding professionalism 'from within' (for example, medical professionals).

In order to be able to analyse and discuss these occupational shifts and changes at state and international levels, however, it is necessary to be able to assess, evaluate and compare the balances between the normative and ideological control elements of different occupational groups both historically (over time) and comparatively (between groups and in different social systems). In many of the new occupational contexts, where professionalism is being imposed 'from above', the normative value of

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the concept of professionalism is being used as an ideological instrument and a mechanism to promote and facilitate occupational change. In effect, professionalism is being used to convince, cajole and persuade employees, practitioners and other workers to perform and behave in ways which the organization or the institution deem to be appropriate, effective and efficient. And 'professional' workers are very keen to grasp and lay claim to the normative values of professionalism.

The meaning of professionalism is not fixed, however, and sociological analysis of the concept has demonstrated changes over time both in its interpretation and function. All of these different interpretations are now needed in order to understand the appeal of professionalism in new and old occupations, and how the concept is being used to promote and facilitate occupational change.

The different balances between the normative values and ideological control aspects in occupational groups, and the differences between professionalism constructed and operationalized 'from within' or 'from above' can help to explain the wider and more general appeal and attraction of professionalism. These different balances between occupational groups can also be applied in other societies and parts of the world where issues to do with the closure of markets or the 'capture' and manipulation of states have never occurred. Thus Freidson's analysis (2001) of professions as the third logic – namely control via the occupation rather than by the logics of the market or the organization – is only partially correct. Control continues to be by normative and ideological means but the balances vary between different occupational groups and are critically dependent on where the professionalism is constructed and operationalized.

It is precisely the highly contestable nature of the meaning of professionalism which according to Fournier (1999) makes professionalism as an ideological mechanism such an imperfect form of governance. For all occupational groups this leaves space for professional institutions (where they exist) and for professional workers to act as a countervailing force against organizational as well as political and state bureaucracies of ideological control. This entails that professionalism, as both normative value system and ideology of control, needs to continue to be contested and challenged in new and old occupational contexts.

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