Review of: "Solving tensions within Technical Rescue in England and Wales"

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I enjoyed reading this article and learned a lot from it. It creates tensions around professionalism and professionalisation that are not normally met in the sociology of the professions. If we take the classic trinity: law, medicine, and church, we can see the bonds of education, class and status, and closure. Are these all present in mountain rescue? Clearly not. But aspects of them are present. Education or training is vital for obvious reasons. Within this the work of Harry Collins on expertise might be useful. He analyses the development of expertise from the individual trajectory (eg university degree) to the more socially acquired aspects of training (eg internships and apprenticeships or articled clerks). While professional bodies determine the content and form of university qualifications jointly with academia, academia is the gatekeeper here. In the next stage the professions become the owners of the rites of passage. And this is emphasised through continuing professional development in order to maintain one's operating licence. Much of the latter is based on tacit knowledge which the author discusses. I think it is fair now to enquire how homogeneous professions are. We know in the legal profession--my field--that lawyers can be demarcated by client type: those that work for corporate clients (eg mergers and acquisitions) and those that work for individual clients (eg criminal, divorce). In mountain rescue there are different bodies but they appear based on skills rather than status, if I read the article correctly.

There is another aspect to professionalism worth considering as it is implied in the article. Terry Johnson, in Professions and Power, talks of 3 types of professionalism: collegiate control where the professional dominates the professional-client relationship; patronage where the client dominates; and mediation where a third party controls the relationship between professional and client. An example of the latter is where the state intervenes, eg provision of legal aid for clients, or an organisation effectively the controller, eg a large hospital. With mountain rescue it seems largely to be the first but elements of the third, eg Royal Accident Society (?), are moving into their territory. One other aspect that occurs to me is the ecological approach espoused by Andrew Abbott. This is where particular groups claim jurisdiction over activities, eg in law barristers argue in court and solicitors do transactions. These jurisdictions are not inherently stable and are open to incursion. This appears the case in mountain rescue where some groups may make extensive claims.

Finally, the author's use of figures 2 and 3 were not clear to me. I couldn't really see what the difference was. That should be made clearer.

In sum, I am left with the question about how much mountain rescue is in search of professionalism. What would the benefits of professionalism actually be? Would the effect of professionalisation be exclusionary in a Weberian sense? But a good paper always raises questions.