

Anglo Veterinary Professionalisation: Testing Assumptions with Empirical Evidence

Abstract

Three inferences are drawn from comparative analysis of steps in veterinary professionalization across six Anglo-American societies. This work applies the national-comparative emphasis of recent historical analyses of Euro-American societies. Distinctive historical processes led to these countries' participation today as advanced 'western-type' economies controlled by white populations, very different from the subaltern experience Spivak describes. In undercutting mid-twentieth century Euro-American ideas of linear modernisation, even on the evidence within this restricted grouping, Wilensky's methodology provides tools for *undoing* his sociology of professions that was unreflexive about its own historical positioning.

Introduction

Recent methodological shifts considering colonization, beyond distinguishing between different experiences of settler societies such as Australia and New Zealand (Beilharz and Cox, 2007) in contrast to Asian or African nations (Spivak 1994), have analysed multiple settler societies comparatively, thereby increasing focus on settler society as a species, with both commonalities of origin, and variations in historical sequence. This paper continues that testing of claims from internalist or exceptionalist national explanations of social and economic development. The downside of such work for historical scholars is, however, that using such a large canvas demands tranches of evidence from a wide range of sources, stretching expertise to synthesise the data. This may lead to interpretive or methodological critique, although this in turn is open to

counter-challenges about preferring ‘neater’ but inadequate national narratives.

Instead of interpreting modernity through primarily the unit of the nation-state, Weaver (2006) and Belich (2009) outline broader settlement formations in which indigenous populations were subjugated and white European-sourced populations established, as a useful category to think about commonalities and patterns in the development of the particular form of western modernity that predominates today. Theorists of unitary versus multiple modernity/ies such as Wagner (2010) or Ascione (2013) reflect on the contexts of this modernization, as well as providing additional evidence and arguments for deconstructing European pre-modern to modern dichotomies.

Such critique is necessary against pervasive western-centric perspectives found in a variety of guises, from socialism supplanting the dialectics of previous historical periods, to ‘end of history’ assertions. Occupations developing as professions in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries were by mid-twentieth century in the United States—more assertively than elsewhere—conceived of as (1) arriving at, or evolving towards, a state of full professionalization, and further (2) the process of professionalization was seen as central and natural in the development of modern society generally. Weaver and Belich, respectively, use terms such as ‘neo-Europes’ and ‘Anglo-worlds,’ attempting to capture some of this European settler commonality from their research. Weaver emphasises land as the fundamental productive resource, the stripping of continents’ worth funding the settler revolution through a vast transfer of wealth. Belich stresses the peopling of this new settler world, comparing for instance the explosion of Chicago and Melbourne, explicable via Anglo-settler-comparative contexts, otherwise merely curious or disconnected. Presenting supra-national variations like this helps deconstruct singular, linear, teleological conceptions of modernity.

Tools of the Master

The present paper co-opts Wilensky's (1964) methodology in *The Professionalization of Everyone?* Within a decade of that work scholarship challenged the foundations of functionalist sociology of professions. Freidson's work, *Professional Dominance* (1970) in particular, provided both historical and critical evaluation of professional control and autonomy. Johnson's (1972) monograph *Professions and Power* identified occupational self-control through a collegial system as a distinct pattern in his typology of occupational power and control. Johnson also too drew on historical material, and labour-market considerations, and incorporated comparative British imperial historical data.

Wilensky (1964: 142) described five stages in professionalization:

1. A substantial body of people begin doing full-time, some activity that needs doing.
2. A training school is established.
3. A professional association is formed.
4. The association engages in public agitation to win the support of the law for the protection of the group.
5. A code of professional ethics is developed.

The present paper is based on research that studied the veterinary profession across six anglo-sphere societies, allowing measurement of similarities and differences in the professionalization sequence (Table 1).

Evidence Gathered

Table 1: Sequences of veterinary professionalization in Anglo-settler societies

| Country | Became full-time occupation | First training school | First university school | First local professional association | First national professional association | First state license law | Formal code of ethic adopted |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| United Kingdom ¹ | 18 th Cent | 1791* | 1791* | 1858 ² | 1844 1882 | 1881 | ? |
| United States ³ | Early-mid 19th Cent | 1852 | 1879 ⁴ | 1854 | 1861 ⁵ | 1886 | 1886 |
| Canada ⁶ | Mid-19th Cent | 1862* ⁷ | 1862* | 1874 | 1948* | 1890 | 1948* |
| Australia ⁸ | Mid-late 19th Cent | 1888 | 1908 | 1912 | 1921 | 1923 | 1956 |
| South Africa ⁹ | Late 19th Cent | 1920* | 1920* | 1903 | 1920 | 1933* | 1933* |
| New Zealand | Late 19th Cent | 1904 1964* ¹⁰ | 1964* ¹¹ | 1923* | 1923* | 1926 | 1956 ¹² |

Notes: Same dates in any row marked by asterisks indicate same event.

1. *Veterinary Record* (1945) and personal correspondence with B. Horder, Librarian, Wellcome library.
2. Barber-Lomax (1963).
3. Wilensky's date of 1875 is replaced by Ho's (2005) date: 1879, p. 7.
4. *Veterinary Record*. (1945). Alexander Liautard, an alumnus from Toulouse, is recorded as founding the first viable veterinary college, p. 624.
5. *Veterinary Record*. (1945). June 1861 is given as the foundation date of the United States Veterinary Medical Association (USVMA), renamed in 1895, p. 624. However, the first meeting was held in New York, June 9, 1963.
6. Personal correspondence with C.A.V. Barker, University of Guelph, Ontario.
7. Cameron (1953). However, a difference source gives both these dates as 1864.
8. Hindmarsh (1962). Also personal correspondence with J. C. Beardwood, Australian Veterinary Association Archivist.
9. Diesel (1963). Also, Gilfoyle and Brown (2010).
10. Burns (2007).
11. Shortridge, Smith and Gardner (1998). Also, Thompson (1919).
12. Inferred from Laing (1974).

Three inferences challenge professionalisation theory

Ascione (2013, 1) observes that, 'modernity remains the privileged theoretical frame and narrative for long term processes at the global scale'. The evidence can be re-read by stepping outside this dominant historical and sociological framing. The problem is, however, that 'non-[Euro]centrism is lacking, for the most part, a theory and explanation of European adaptiveness' (Hobson 2012, 25 in Ascione 2013: 8). The argument here is that it is the perspectival level

not the empirical level of analysis that has been determinative in the earlier readings noted above, revealing a process of ‘unthinking modernity,’ to use Ascione’s title phrase. Professionalization needs to be read as more than conjunctural with an essentialised concept of Europe.

1. Comparative Perspective

The chief criticism is that Wilensky’s model lacks compelling relevance outside the country where it was developed, namely the United States. Johnson (1972) cautioned against the uncritical use of the notion of professionalization that arises from lack of exposure to comparative settings. From his historical-comparative examination of professional development in a range of countries that were colonies of the former British Empire he concluded that there were basic differences in the pattern of their occupational emergence in contrast to developmental process professions followed in the United Kingdom itself. The keys to unlocking historical differences affecting veterinary and other professions’ development in Britain’s second empire (Pocock 2005) are the imperial, political and economic networks of which the United Kingdom was the centre and these colonies the periphery (Johnson, 1973; 1978). Largely because of this, but not appearing in internalist accounts of professions, there is a considerable time period elapsed before the establishment of professional associations in these countries. Later establishment in turn meant a modified professional structure in these countries because of other social changes of modernization such as continuing industrial development, emergence of white-collar classes, and the presence of large bureaucracies.

Johnson did not write about the veterinary profession, but he lists (1972: 28-9) a number of contrasts between the United States and United Kingdom professionalization sequences that show the limitation of the model, including for instance, the role of universities in professional education, and the functions of professional associations. ‘It is clear’, he says, ‘that the sequence

outlined here by Wilensky... is historically specific and culture bound'. While most of Johnson's work involved comparative analysis of the process of professionalization in the United Kingdom and the former British colonies, parallel differences are found between both the United Kingdom and the United States, and former colonial nations and contemporary underdeveloped countries (Pocock, 2005). The colonial experience outside these Anglo-settler societies can be seen as qualitatively different in Weaver's (2006) analysis.

2. Cultural Iterativity

From a contemporary perspective it makes better sense of the data to see it as having had a provisional and interactive dimension as it now sits in summary on the page in Table 1, not a simple linear presumption of individual parallel evolution. This is a form of cultural traffic, to use Beilharz and Hogan's (2012) terminology. That is, not only can Wilensky's model be critiqued for its lack of comparative perspective, but from a point of view within the multiple paradigms of sociological theory today, it can be seen that even a comparative difference is not absolute. In key ways, the awareness of, and copying from, other nations, is recursive, feeding back into the practices and institutional arrangements around professions of the perceiving and emulating societies. This is not automatic recapitulation—palingenesis is the biological term Ascione (2013) uses in debating this. The present data, even though dealing with individual historic events, is not discrete and independent; events are interleaved, one event influencing the occurrence of another nationally and internationally through imperial and globalised information networks. Thus, even within this settler-society grouping, these differences go beyond contradicting adaptations to European modernity or the 'adaptiveness' of Europe, to start narrating the construction of Euro-modernity in relation to implicit and invisible non-Europe others.

In the data presented here at least three identifiable cultural-political feedback mechanisms that can be discerned: (1) Except for the United States politically (but less clearly, economically), all the other Anglo-settler societies represented in the table existed in permutations of a formal metropolitan-periphery relationship within the United Kingdom's imperial network over the past two centuries. They fed the need for officials, technical experts, production of raw materials, and governing cadres affected veterinary development along with other professions and disciplines as mechanisms of imperial governance; (2) Most of the societies represented here have another iterative loop of influence and response in their federal-state hierarchies. Copying, or restraining, events in one part of society is inherent in the functioning and regulatory arrangements established even before considering the diffusion of ideas and practices in meetings, reports, communications and policy initiatives; (3) Inter-country interactions are seen in a variety of events and process noted here: establishment of veterinary schools responded to widespread disease; establishment of government agricultural departments or veterinary divisions; legislative permission for professional closure and variations in the modes of closure; later willingness to fund training schools; setting up professional associations (or obtaining a Royal charter), all show awareness of (a) other national societies' activities, and (b) other groups' professionalizing efforts. In Table 1, the succession of timing shown in column 2 within which full-time veterinary work developed, and then subsequent patterns across the Table setting out when specific events occurred, can be re-read much more easily as consequential upon different societies' similar responses to similar issues at least partly because they were each *reading* the responses of others in their own modernizing social and anthropo-animal environments.

3. Government Veterinary Departments

The single most important factual omission in Wilensky's professionalization sequence of veterinarians in these selected national profiles is the role of the state in each of these chronologies. Every instance witnessed establishing a government organization for the core veterinary functions of disease management and control, and supervision of animal slaughter and hygiene issues. The action of establishing government animal health management agencies is as relevant to the English-speaking countries as to other European states and nations elsewhere. The view that professions are essentially free agents created through a naturalized professionalization process is not borne out in the data in and surrounding events shown in Table 1. Even in Wilensky's Table, the United States' new Veterinary Medical Association was among the groups that promoted the establishment of the United States Bureau of Animal Health (1863). In the United Kingdom the British Veterinary Association was formed nearly twenty years *after* (1882) the formation of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAF) in 1865; and in New Zealand no professional association existed until 1923, thirty years *after* the government Veterinary Division was formed in 1893. The veterinary profession in these countries conforms in many respects today to the Anglo-American ideal of an independent, self-regulating profession, but historically the role of the state in 'calling into being' a nascent professional group, legitimating and promoting veterinary oversight of national animal populations, is a major ingredient in the development of veterinary work. The state agencies acted as substantial employers, allowing veterinarians to investigate, do research, and recommend control and management practices. Such patronage, to use Johnson's (1972) term, provided critical impetus to occupational development. Wilensky's sequence of steps, however, ideologically brackets out the role of the state, and stands in marked contrast to the work of writers contributing to the edited volumes by Torstendahl and Burrage (1990) and Burrage and Torstendahl (1990) and others in which the role of the state is considered more evenly and not bracketed out. Hellberg's

(1990) description of veterinary work is the obvious case on point illustrating this.

Wilensky's formulation of professionalization has been widely used as a succinct statement of professional development. Data from a restricted comparative group of countries has been gathered here to provide some insight into the model's empirical and theoretical scope. Basic limitations concerning its theoretical adequacy have come to the surface in the course of the present investigation, particularly the narrow comparative applicability of the model, the explanatory limitations of similarity and differences, and how well it stands up to the empirical data. Thus, while Wilensky's idea has an attraction in providing a framework to gather specific evidence on occupational professionalization, the inadequacy of the model as a theoretical explanation of professions comes to light in the case of veterinary professionalization. Even viewed as descriptive rather than analytic it reflects nationalist, modernist, and cultural discourses selecting steps used in the model to read the data. Interpretations are read out of the model, rather than deriving these from proper attention to the historical data, or from a broader-based empirical or historical-theoretical understanding of modernity (Wagner, 2008; 2010). To contextualize a more evidence-based view of veterinary professional development historical-comparative landscape is necessary more than abstracted presentist certainty.

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