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OCCUPATIONAL CONTROL IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VETERINARY PROFESSION:

A STUDY IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF PROFESSIONS

*A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of M.A.(Soc.Sc.) in Sociology
at Massey University*

Edgar A.M. Burns

1979

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the development of the veterinary profession from the theoretical perspective of the sociology of professions. In the initial chapter the three major analytic approaches in this field are discussed: trait, professionalisation and occupational control. It is argued that these approaches successively provide greater insight into the nature of professions and professionalism; and the following chapters proceed to a socio-historical analysis of the veterinary profession in order to make an assessment of this argument. In chapter two the most influential of the processual approaches: Wilensky's model of professionalisation, is applied in a limited comparative framework to the emergence of the veterinary profession. Since it offers only a partial causal explanation of occupational change it is seen to represent a half-way stage between trait and occupational control perspectives. In the next two chapters the third theoretical approach is taken up using Johnson's typology of occupational power to consider occupational change specifically in the development of the New Zealand veterinary profession. Chapter three covers the first two phases up to the 1930's and makes use of the idea of government patronage. Chapter four continues this analysis by tracing the development of the veterinary club system from the late 1930's. The concepts of state mediation and professional heteronomy are used to analyse changes in the veterinary profession during this period. The final chapter recapitulates the course of the argument. There is a major degree of support for the occupational control approach which treats professionalism as only one of several possible institutionalised variations in the distribution of occupational power. In the case of the veterinary profession, this is by far the most productive theoretical approach in accounting for differences within the profession in a variety of geographical settings and historical periods. It is then suggested that Johnson's typology might be extended in the light of the present study, by adding a fourth type to the three main forms of occupational control Johnson has already proposed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The present study breaks new ground in applying the formative concepts of recent sociologists to an investigation of the veterinary profession. There are many contributors to such an undertaking, and it is appropriate to make some recognition of them here. Two major theorists in the sociology of professions, Eliot Freidson: *Professional Dominance* (1970) and Terence Johnson: *Professions and Power* (1972), have provided the major intellectual stimulus for the present study, as indeed they have for much recent sociological research in this field. By their ability to comprehend professions within an integrated theoretical framework, Freidson and Johnson make the task of analysis exciting and encourage further use of their ideas. My thanks are due to the many veterinarians who have generously given their time, either by correspondence or in person, to discuss issues of mutual interest. In addition to conversations with members of the Departments of Sociology at both Massey and Victoria Universities, a number of library staffs here and overseas have also provided valuable assistance. I would like to thank Professor Graeme Fraser for overseeing the research, including a survey of the contemporary profession not dealt with here, despite the problems of supervising at an inter-city distance. Dr Leslie Benson performed a significant service in re-shaping the study around my early concern with the question of veterinary development. Special thanks are due to my wife Yvonne, a long-suffering fellow social scientist, who at times wondered if her support would bring this thesis to fruition. My original interest in the veterinary profession was aroused by my good friend Hans J. Andersen, B.V.Sc., and without implying his necessary concurrence with my conclusions, I would like to dedicate this essay to him.

E.A.M.B.

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