The Failure of Consulting Professionalism?

A Longitudinal Analysis of the Institute of Management Consultants

Nick Butler and David Collins*

***University of Hull**

Abstract

This paper offers a longitudinal analysis of the Institute of Management Consultants (IMC). Drawing on archive sources, we consider the manner in which the IMC sought to institutionalize a form of expertise specific to management consultants. Rejecting attempts to locate the boundaries of such expertise within idealized, archetypal frameworks, we analyze the IMC's attempts to secure occupational closure in the field of consulting by means of normative, cognitive and symbolic mechanisms. While others account for the Institute's professional project as a failure consequent upon consulting's fragmentary knowledge base, we suggest that this project did not so much fail as drift towards another 'hybrid' form. In an attempt a) to account for this shift and b) to outline its key contours, we offer an archival analysis that explores the manner in which the Institute sought to reconcile the multiple interests and competing logics that construct professionalism within the field of consulting.

Keywords

Management consultants, professionalism, professional project, hybridity

1. Introduction

This paper offers a longitudinal analysis of the Institute of Management Consultants (IMC). Drawing on archive sources, we consider the manner in which the IMC (renamed the Institute of Management Consultancy in 1998 prior to becoming the Institute of Consulting in 2011) sought to institutionalize a form of expertise specific to management consultants. Our account of the IMC engages with a body of literature that connects to issues around professionalism and occupational closure, yet our paper is not concerned with *the* consulting profession. Indeed, we believe that attempts to gauge the professionalization – or even the 'quasi-professionalization' (McKenna, 2006; 2007) – of management consultancy are unhelpful because they indulge forms of analysis which assume that key occupations may be located at points on a common evolutionary path towards 'real' professionalism (Wilensky, 1964). Rejecting this, our analytical approach recognises that projections of professional identity may take many forms. Furthermore we argue that (claims to) professionalism emerge over time and are immanent in the shifting patterns of dependence that shape organizational fields (see Muzio, Brock and Suddaby, 2013; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Suddaby and Viale, 2011). More specifically, we draw on the concept of 'hybrid professionalism'. This allows us to circumvent the simplistic dualism between 'collegial' professionalism and 'corporate' professionalism in order to focus on the different – sometimes conflicting – logics employed by an occupational group in order to pursue a professional project. At the same

time, hybrid professionalism also permits us to recognize the role played by the external environment in shaping the nature and purpose of professionalism within an institutional context (Hodgson, Paton and Muzio, 2015).

Accordingly, the paper is structured as follows. We will begin by charting the development of the sociological literature on the professions. In addition, we will consider the burgeoning organizational literature that has focused on the contemporary challenges facing 'professionalism'. Building on the work of Evetts (2003; 2011; 2015a; 2015b; forthcoming), we will chart the movements that have re-directed academic attention from a concern with 'professions' to a concern with 'professionalization' and, more recently, with 'professionalism'. We will account for these movements and, in so doing, we will make a case for a 'hybrid' appreciation of the forces that shape the complex and highly variable processes of professionalism (Muzio et al., 2011; Paton, Hodgson and Muzio, 2015). In the third section, we will pause to offer an account of the methodology that underpins our archival inquiry. Here we will offer an analysis of the historiographical approach, which frames our reading of the IMC's archives.

In our fourth section, we will extend our analysis of hybrid professionalism developed in section two as we consider the activities of the IMC. Here, we will argue that the IMC embarked upon a 'professional project' in the 1960s, which called upon cognitive, normative and symbolic aspects of consulting (Noordegraaf, 2011) as it attempted to secure occupational professionalism (Ackroyd, 1996). Tracing the shifting patterns of dependence that shaped both the field of consulting and this project, we will argue that,

over the next few decades, the IMC's project migrated from an *occupational* programme built around aspirations of cognitive control and collegial regulation to an endeavour increasingly defined and controlled by the larger consultancy organizations. In this regard, our analysis bears similarities to Kipping's (2011) analysis of 'image' or 'hollow' professionalism and McKenna's (2007) study of 'quasi-professionalism' among consultants. Yet our account of the institutionalization of consulting expertise differs from these and related accounts of management consultancy (Alvesson and Johansson, 2002; Engwall and Kipping, 2013; Groß and Kieser, 2006; Kirkpatrick, Muzio and Ackroyd, 2012; Kitay and Wright, 2007) insofar as we argue that the proliferation of neologisms and ideal-types that vie to explain the rise (and fall) of consulting professionalism fails to account for the 'dynamics through which…professionalism is defined and enacted' (Hodgson, Paton and Muzio, 2015: 13). While accepting that the IMC did indeed engage in activities designed to secure the trappings of professional working, we will argue that it makes little sense to ask the essential(ist) question: Are consultants really professionals? Instead, we invite the more fundamental and, we hope, more fruitful line of inquiry: What did the IMC do to (and for) those whom it sought to represent? Why did it do this and what outcome(s) did it produce? Noting the formal dissolution of the IMC in 2005, we address these questions as we offer reflections on the rise and fall of the Institute of Management Consultants. We conclude with suggestions for future research on the institutionalization of expertise within and beyond the field of consulting.

2. Professions and Professional Work

Recent scholarship on professional working has been preoccupied with the contemporary social and economic changes which confront the occupational elite that – in everyday speech – is taken to be professional in habit and outlook (Adams, 2015; Noordegraaf, 2011). Commenting upon this body of work, Evetts (2003; 2011; 2015a; 2015b; forthcoming) identifies three phases in its development, each of which is concerned with a different object of analysis: a) '(the) professions'; b) 'professionalization'; and b) 'professionalism'. As we shall see, these phases link the sociological literature on the professions with the more recent 'organizational' contributions.

a. Professions

The body of writing gathered under the label of 'professions' exhibits considerable diversity, both in its approach and in its core orientations. Yet what unifies the contributions grouped under this heading is a desire to identify the key characteristics of that specialist sub-strata of employees and independent practitioners whose training, skills and socialization has proved sufficient to carve out and maintain a privileged position, both at work and in society more generally [Author B1]. Evetts notes that this phase of writing dates back at least to the 1950s and is characterized by attempts to delineate those key traits that separate 'the professions' from other occupations (see Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933; Parsons, 1954; Durkheim, 1957; MacDonald, 1995). At the start of this period, the professions were vaunted. Indeed, Parsons (1954) suggested that 'professionals' were worthy of academic scrutiny because they acted as the custodians of socially important knowledge and brought stability to societies struggling to deal with change. In the 1970s, however, this functionalist account was challenged by a power

perspective which suggested that, far from acting as societal custodians, professionals were more properly viewed as self-serving monopolists (Johnson, 1972; Larson, 1977).

Evetts (2003; 2011; 2015a; 2015b; forthcoming), in common with many others, is critical of attempts to name key occupational groups as *the* professions. Yet Evetts' work is unusual insofar as it seeks to counter key aspects of what has become, by now, the standard critique of the functionalist approach. For example, Evetts suggests that the oft-repeated criticism of Parsons' (1954) work is one-eyed and exaggerated. In fact, she argues that Parsons' work was perceptive because it a) recognized the role that trust, dependence and ethics play in constructing professional privilege, and so, b) considered the institutions and obligations that intervene to regulate normal market relations (see also Freidson, 1970). By the same token, the power perspective that arose in the 1970s has its own separate, yet serious, flaws. For example, she suggests that writers following this more critical tradition have been too keen to interpret the 'market shelters' enjoyed by professionals as monopoly positions. It is unrealistic, too, to imagine that professionals spend all their time engaged in rent-seeking activities; it is perfectly possible, Evetts notes, for professionals to serve their own ends whilst also tending to the interests of others, namely their clients.

Despite this attempt to temper the critiques that have grown up around the body of work concerned with (the) professions, Evetts sides with those such as Abbott (1988; 1991) who argue that any attempt to separate a class of 'professional' workers from ordinary

occupations is a fool's errand. And yet more than a few contemporary commentators –
Evetts included – have strayed on to this low road. As Evetts (forthcoming) observes:

> Most professionals, including engineers, journalists, performing artists, the armed
> forces and police find occupational control of their work and discretionary
> decision-making difficult to sustain.

Here, certain occupational groups are lumped together under the category of
'professional' whilst others, we must assume, are implicitly excluded. Similarly, Brint's
(1994) analysis suggests a wholehearted rejection of 'professional traits', yet he too finds
himself treading in the footsteps of those who, in the 1950s, set off in pursuit of 'the
professionals'. Thus Brint (1994: 3) tells us that (the) professionals are 'people who earn
at least a middling income from the application of a relatively complex body of
knowledge' and include groups such as 'economists, social scientists…lawyers, policy
experts of various sorts, professors, at least some journalists and editors, some clergy and
some artists'. Taking issue with the taxonomic urge that continues to haunt the literature
on 'professions', Abbott (1991: 8) suggests that any attempt to construct a list of
approved professions amounts to little more than the seating plan for a fantasy dinner
party. Thus he warns:

> [O]ne could start by discussing what a profession is. But the number of possible
> definitions [is] overwhelming. Moreover because the term 'profession' is more of
> an honorific than a technical one, any apparent technical definition will be

rejected by those who [disagree with] its implied judgements about their favourite professions and nonprofessions. To start with a definition is thus not to start at all.

b. Professionlization

The second phase of writing on professional working is concerned with what has been termed 'professionalization'. This body of literature is more dynamic than that concerned with *professions* and – despite periodic lapses (see above) – openly rejects any attempt to define professionals according to the possession of key traits. Instead, this perspective sets out to consider the ongoing projects that have allowed a few key occupations to carve out and maintain professional jurisdictions (Larson, 1977; Abbott, 1988; 1991; Devine et al., 2000). Different explanations are offered for the processes that drive these projects: while Larson focuses on collective mobility projects in pursuit of market monopoly, Abbott puts more emphasis on inter-professional competition between rival groups within a system of professions. Recent work in the organizational literature, meanwhile, subsumes the professions within the genus of 'occupation' (Anteby, Chan and DiBenigno, forthcoming), expanding the scope of analysis from professional projects to trends within contemporary work practices. Common to these threads, however, is the idea that professionalization is based on the development (and defence) of cognitive, normative and symbolic resources (Noordegraaf, 2011).

Evetts (2015a; 2015b) is broadly sympathetic to this line of analysis, but, again, expresses reservations. First, she wonders whether our efforts to gauge contemporary attempts at professionalization actually begin from an appropriate starting point. She notes that law

and medicine are both generally seen as the benchmark for projects of professionalization. Yet she argues that the experience of medical and legal practitioners is so exceptional that the professionalizing efforts of almost any other occupational group will pale in comparison, being labelled inevitably as 'failures'. Second, Evetts (forthcoming) suggests that accounts of professionalization tend towards teleology insofar as they assume that all professionals, 'proto-professionals' and indeed 'ante-professionals' (McKenna, 2006; 2007) may be located on a common evolutionary path towards a model that has been defined (at least implicitly) with reference to law and medicine. Third, she suggests that accounts of professionalization, inasmuch as they have been modelled on some idealized reading of *the* professions of law and medicine, assume that professionals work as independent practitioners. This assumption, of course, overlooks the extent to which those engaged in professional projects – including those operating in law and medicine – are the employees of large professional service firms, or PSFs (see Alvesson and Johansson, 2002; Muzio et al., 2011; Hodgson, Paton and Muzio, 2015).

c. Professionalism

The third phase of writing on professional working outlined by Evetts exhibits a concern with 'professionalism'. This body of literature rejects the pursuit of traits as well as the evolutionary teleology of some of the professionalization literature. As such, it attempts to explore the complex and variable manner in which claims to professionalism are sought and maintained. This perspective – in contrast to the others highlighted above – does not assume that professions can be identified in abstract. Nor does it assume that the

path taken by lawyers and doctors offers the only route to a professional identity. Instead, analyses of 'professionalism' consider the ways in which a combination of occupational values and broader discursive issues act within organizational 'fields' (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2001; Muzio, Brock and Suddaby, 2013) to shape day-to-day working relationships and broader obligations.

In this body of writing, occupational professionalism refers to a form of working founded upon the collegial regulation of entry to, certification for, and advance within any particular professional grouping (Ackroyd, 1996). Occupational professionalism is often contrasted to 'organizational' or 'corporate' professionalism (Muzio et al., 2011; Paton, Hodgson and Muzio, 2013), where occupational values and obligations – the very discourse of professional conduct – are defined not from within but from *above* the profession. A number of terms, mostly negative, have been coined to describe such 'professionalism from above', especially in relation to occupational groups such as management consultants and project managers. Kipping (2011), for example, speaks of 'hollow' and 'image' professionalism, while others prefer 'corporate' (Paton, Hodgson and Muzio, 2013) or 'brand' (Alvesson and Robertson, 2006) professionals. McKenna (2007) is more optimistic when he speaks of 'quasi-professionalism' or 'ante-professionals' in relation to management consultants, but Svensson (2006) is more pessimistic in applying the term 'pseudo-professionals' to the same occupational group. Alvesson and Johansson (2002), meanwhile, go even further by describing management consultants as fundamentally 'anti-professional' in their habit and outlook. Finally, Reed (1996) simply drops the professional label altogether, choosing instead to invoke a more

contemporary term: consultants are 'knowledge workers' who are subject to processes of 'marketization'.

On one level, these opposing accounts of professionalism from within and professionalism from above serve to highlight the variability of professional projects. They also remind us of the potential gulf between (professional) plans and outcomes. Yet this stark contrast can foster a certain reductionism inasmuch as it indulges the suggestion that professionalism is *either* from within *or* from above. In an attempt to develop an analytical approach that genuinely seeks to situate the full complexity of professionalism, Evetts (2011; 2015a) – among others (see Hodgson, Paton and Muzio, 2015; Paton, Hodgson and Muzio, 2013) – argues for an approach that can recognize and allow for 'hybridity'. This hybrid approach offers useful analytical and practical insights. Notably, it views professionalism as a struggle, and thus 'highlights the work required to balance and reconcile competing logics of professionalism and the competing interests of stakeholders' (Hodgson, Paton and Muzio, 2015: 2). A focus on hybridity allows us to circumvent an all-too-easy dualism between 'collegial' professionalism and 'corporate' professionalism, and instead permits us take into account the ways that occupational groups selectively draw on components from both types of professionalism in order to pursue their strategic aims. In addition, it is worth noting that 'hybrid' professionalism refuses to privilege any particular pattern of organized relationships, so freeing us from the proliferation of neologisms and ideal-types that have developed around those who act as advisors to management in PSFs and elsewhere.

A hybrid understanding of professionalism is much needed, therefore, because it allows us to avoid the drawbacks of the three aforementioned approaches (i.e. the professions, professionalization, and professionalism). Our study contributes to studies of consulting professionalism in two main ways. First, we build upon the insights offered by a hybrid appreciation of professionalism by considering the rivalries and patterns of dependence that have shaped the institutionalization of expertise in the field of consulting. Recent organizational scholarship has tended to focus on changes that have transformed professionals from trustees of socially important knowledge to (mere) agents of formal knowledge. For example, commentators have analyzed the advance of 'corporate' over 'professional' aims as well as the tensions that arise between public statements of professional ethics and the private concerns of professional institutes (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2008; Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings, 2002; Cooper and Robson, 2006; Muzio, et al., 2011; Muzio, Brock and Suddaby, 2013). In particular, the likes of Kitay and Wright (2007), McKenna (2006; 2007) and Kipping (2011) have suggested that management consultants cannot be counted as *proper* professionals because they lack both a common knowledge base and a shared (public) ethos. In contrast to this approach, an emphasis on hybrid (consulting) professionalism permits us to explore how professional associations have decided – at different times, and for various reasons – to pursue variegated modes of professionalism (e.g. collegial, corporate) (Hodgson, Paton and Muzio, 2015).

Second, we argue that the IMC's attempt to institutionalize expertise was a deliberate, if negotiated, strategy pursued through collective organization which, according to its own

success criteria, failed. Others have, of course, sought to account for the 'failure' of the IMC's professional project in terms of the fragmentary knowledge base of consulting (Alvesson and Johansson, 2002; Fincham, 2006; Kitay and Wright, 2007). We argue, however, that this account of consultancy's fragmentary knowledge base is only a part of the story. Indeed, we suggest that wider field-level transformations – most notably, the rise of large professional service firms with the ability to set standards of conduct and competence among practitioners – have done much to shape the contours of consulting professionalism. This suggests that hybridity is, in part, a tactical response to changing institutional contexts as much as it is a strategy of occupational advancement. But before we turn to these matters, we must first pause to outline the method that underpins our inquiry.

3. Method

Previous research on the professional aspirations of management consultants in the UK has turned to the archives of the Management Consultancies Association (MCA) for empirical material (Kipping, 2011; Kipping and Kirkpatrick, 2013; Kipping and Saint-Martin, 2005). Few studies, however, have explored the archives of the IMC. This is a significant oversight for, while the IMC and the MCA share a common ancestry, they actually project quite different orientations and aspirations. Thus it is worth observing that while the MCA has taken steps to regulate conduct in the field of consulting by, for example, requiring members to sign up to a code of conduct it remains, above all else, a trade association for consulting firms [Author B2]. The IMC, in contrast, was from its inception constituted as a 'more typical professional body' (Kipping and Kirkpatrick,

13

2013: 787), and so sought to control and regulate access to the expertise of practicing consultants (Tisdall, 1982). This distinction between the aims and orientations of the MCA and the IMC, combined with the relative neglect of the Institute of Management Consultants in academic inquiry, suggests that a study of the IMC's archives should offer valuable insights on the nature and contours of professionalism in the field of consulting.

This paper draws on archival data from the IMC lodged at the University of Warwick and within the private collection of a former IMC President. The Modern Records Centre contains a large, though uncatalogued, collection of IMC archival material covering the period from 1962 to 1992 (Ref. MSS.340). These materials were donated by a former IMC Council member. The material lodged at the Modern Records Centre was read in full by the first author of this paper over two week-long visits in 2010 and 2011. Extensive notes were taken from the materials on the first visit and, on the second visit, information was fact-checked and key events in the history of the IMC were explored in greater depth. Access was also granted to an extensive collection of documentation (again uncatalogued) located in the personal archives of a former IMC President, which spans the period from 2001 to 2006. The material in this private collection was loaned to the first author of this paper for a period of two months. Taken together, these materials span five decades and include minutes from the IMC Council and Executive Committee meetings, policy statements, discussion papers, annual reports and the back catalogue of the IMC's in-house journal. It is worth observing, however that these materials are, inevitably, fragmentary in nature and, of course, incomplete. In this regard our work is, we acknowledge, based upon historical sources which provide but 'traces' of the past

14

(White, 1987). This is potentially limiting but it does not detract from the insights that can be gained from analyses that reflect the 'historic turn' in organization studies (Booth and Rowlinson, 2006; Üsdiken and Kieser, 2004). Indeed, it is worth noting that Suddaby and Greenwood (2009: 178) suggest that institutional change understood 'as a complex phenomenon in which multiple political and economic pressures coincide is best studied with *historical* methods' (emphasis in original).

To facilitate our analysis of the shifting rivalries that constitute the field of consulting, we employ a historiographic approach to archival research (Ventresca and Mohr, 2002). This involves reading through organizational files, and other written materials, in a systematic manner a) to gain an insight into the nature of institutional and organizational change and b) to develop a rich and detailed historical narrative of the organization and its members (Rowlinson, 2005). The aim of such historiographic research is to 'identify stages of continuity, diversity, and change by analyzing how varying historical conditions produce different institutional and organizational arrangements' (Suddaby and Greenwood, 2009: 183). The approach adopted in the paper, therefore, follows Suddaby's and Greenwood's (2009) call for a social construction orientation towards historical analysis. Towards this end, we employ a qualitative and interpretivist approach that seeks to reconstruct the motives of organizational actors and the consequences of their actions (O'Brien, Remenyi and Keaney, 2004; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2009).

The value of archival research lies – obviously – in the fact that it grants access to organizational narratives of the past, especially those enacted at the level of strategy and

executive decision-making (e.g. minutes, policy documents, discussion papers). In addition, archival research offers access to documents concerned with image and self-presentation (e.g. in-house magazines, annual reports) (Rowlinson, 2005). However, it is important to recognize the limitations of this mode of inquiry. Archival research is, for example, inherently political and requires careful handling because certain voices and perspectives will have been preserved in the archives while others will have been marginalized (Ventresca and Mohr, 2002). Furthermore, minutes will often record only decisions rather than the (often fraught and complex) discussion that led to a decision.

In the light of these methodological precepts and precautionary warnings, the following section builds upon archival materials to present a longitudinal study of the IMC from the early 1960s until the mid-2000s. It is broken into four sub-sections, each corresponding to a particular theme: a) the emergence of consulting and the development of the IMC; b) the legitimation and regulation of work practices; c) jurisdictional shifts and organizational changes; and d) the move from an 'occupational' to a 'hybrid' model of professionalism.

4. The Professional Project of Management Consultants

a) The Emergence of Consulting and the Development of the IMC
The origins, contours and dynamics of the consulting industry are much discussed but little understood (Alvesson and Johansson, 2002; [Author B2]; Sturdy, 2011). However, it would be fair to say that the importance of management consultancy as a distinctive

occupational category was formally recognized, in Britain, in 1948 when the British Institute of Management (BIM) adopted the recommendation of the Board of Trade and produced a report into the organizational usage of consulting services (Ferguson, 2002; Kipping and Saint-Martin, 2005). The report concluded that a 'Register of Management and Industrial Consultants' should be drawn up to provide a directory for prospective clients so that appropriate consultancy providers might be 'approved'. While the primary aim of the Register was to guarantee the quality of services to clients through a system of voluntary registration, this innovation was also intended to raise the status of consultancy by excluding disreputable firms and individuals from the marketplace. The Register, therefore, marked an early attempt a) to group together the disparate ideas and activities that constitute 'management consultancy' under a single organizational rubric and b) to develop a set of common standards for conduct in this arena (Tisdall, 1982).

In 1956 four of the then-largest firms in the UK – Associated Industrial Consultants (AID), Personnel Administration (PA), Production Engineering (P-E) and Urwick Orr – combined to form the Management Consultants Association (MCA – now the Management Consultancies Association) (Kipping and Saint-Martin, 2005). Like the British Institute of Management before it, the MCA wanted to raise and safeguard standards of conduct in consultancy by establishing a code of ethics. Unlike the BIM, however, the Management Consultants Association sought to locate this code within an industry body dedicated to those working in a consulting capacity. Yet the membership criteria adopted by the MCA (membership was granted only to those firms employing more than five full-time consultants) acted to exclude the large number of sole

practitioners active in the field. Furthermore, this restriction on membership caused the MCA to retain the character of a trade association (dedicated to the protection of organizational interests) as opposed to that of a professional association which would have been expected to focus more upon the interests and activities of consulting practitioners (Kipping and Kirkpatrick, 2013).

In 1962 practitioners from four key firms – Urwick Orr, PA, P-E and Harold Whitehead – combined to form the Institute of Management Consultants (IMC) (Tisdall, 1982). The IMC was founded upon the coat-tails of the MCA but, unlike its predecessor, admitted individual consultants and was established with the explicit intention of seeking what Ackroyd (1996) terms 'double closure' – that is, control over both the (external) labour market and (internal) organizational practices. To this extent, the IMC was launched as a professional project in order to 'translate a scarce set of cultural and technical resources into a secure and institutionalized system of social and financial rewards' (Muzio and Kirkpatrick, 2011: 361).

Commentators tend to agree that the aims of a professional project reflect 'a spatially and temporally contingent negotiation between various institutions in an organizational field', (Suddaby and Viale, 2011: 425-6) – typically the state, clients and the university sector. However, Suddaby and Viale add that nowadays 'large organizations' (2011: 426) also need to be recognized as key players in programmes of professionalism. This, as we shall see, is an insight that is particularly relevant to our account of the IMC.

Attempts to advance claims to professionalism, as we noted in our opening discussion, tend to mobilize cognitive, normative and symbolic 'mechanisms' (Noordegraaf, 2011: 469) that, in concert, act to structure work, legitimate occupational spaces and regulate work practices. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that the IMC's attempts to secure 'occupational professionalism' was based upon the development of a codified body of knowledge, as set out in its founding articles of association (*Memorandum and Articles of Association*, 1962). Yet as Suddaby and Viale (2011) remind us, such efforts to delineate a cognitive base for management consultants need to be recognized in the context of broader attempts to legitimate and regulate work practices in the field of consulting. We take up this issue in our next sub-section as we consider the IMC's pursuit of a Royal Charter.

b) Legitimation and Regulation of Work Practices

Perhaps the most ostentatious symbol of the IMC's professional aspirations was its coat of arms, designed by the College of Arms in 1965. In a letter to members of the Institute, the President of the IMC explained the meaning of the coat of arms. The design, he said, consisted of a flaming sun that 'signifies the "overall" approach by consultants, the all-embracing nature of their work'; a cogwheel to represent business and industry; a red shield to denote 'the lifeblood of the industry'; an open book indicating 'knowledge and [a] scientific approach'; a cornucopia to imply prosperity and plenty; a white fess with black dots that alluded to the punched tape used to programme early computers; and the motto of the Institute, 'Knowledge and Progress', emblazoned on a scroll (letter from the IMC President, 1968).

But a coat of arms does not a profession make. In the UK, claims to professionalism are strengthened by the possession of a Royal Charter which is, unlike coats of arms, closely regulated and thus vested with greater symbolic significance. Royal Charters are awarded by the Privy Council to collectives that represent a unique body of knowledge and are deemed to be pre-eminent in their field. Unsurprisingly, a Royal Charter was seen by the IMC as 'a great honour and thereby indicative of high reputation' (*Policy Statement by Council*, 1971). In 1972 the IMC members' journal sought to explain the significance of a Royal Charter by suggesting that it would confer legitimacy on the activities of the Institute. Moreover, in providing 'legal protection for the term "management consultant"' (IMC members' journal, December 1972: 19), a Charter, it was argued, would allow the IMC to control entry to and conduct within the field of consulting.

Yet to apply for chartered status, the IMC first needed to secure control over the cognitive mechanisms of consulting. To this end, the Institute sought to introduce an entry examination. However, the IMC did not view the entry exam in narrowly cognitive terms. Highlighting the symbolic significance of this examination, the IMC observed that it would provide 'an outward sign that high standards are demanded and thereby the reputation of the Institute would be enhanced' (*Policy Statement by Council*, 1971).

While the IMC had intended to introduce qualifying exams in 1973, these initial plans were shelved and not tabled again until 1977. Following trial runs in 1978 and 1979, the IMC council decided that a written examination would be mandatory for new members

entering the Institute from May 1980 (IMC members' journal, January 1977; May 1978; November 1978; February 1979; June 1979). Up until this date, practitioners had been able to join the Institute as Associates (the entry-level grade) if they had acted for at least six months as a management consultant under the guidance of either a Member or a Fellow of the IMC (*Bye-laws*, 1968). From May 1980, however, new members would have to pass a written examination and would, in addition, have their work experience verified by a Member or Fellow (*Guide to Membership*, 1982). Recognizing the broad cognitive base of management consulting, the IMC decided that candidates should be examined, principally, on their chosen specialist subject (such as human resources, strategy or marketing) and on their competence in the more generalized practice of consulting to management (IMC members' journal, January 1977).

In a letter sent to principals of consultancy practices to solicit new members, the IMC argued that the introduction of written entry examinations marked 'a critical point in the history of the Institute' (letter from IMC Secretary, 1980). The recent introduction of the written examination, this letter observed, aimed to turn the IMC into a 'distinguished standard-setting body' that would 'set qualifications high enough to make membership worth having' (letter from IMC Secretary, 1980).

The IMC was confident that entry examinations would lay the foundations necessary to boost membership and to improve the wider legitimacy of the Institute (IMC annual report, 1980). Yet just two years after mandatory entry examinations had been introduced, the Institute was forced to admit that they had not had the desired effect: 'It is

disappointing to report that not all eligible persons entering the profession are sitting the

Institute's examination for Associateship…Without a higher level of new entrants the

Institute's total strength of some 2,900 members will decline' (IMC annual report, 1982:

2). In fact the numbers were already decreasing: the Institute had 3,021 members at the

end of 1980, 2,920 at the end of 1981, and just 2,731 at the end of 1982 (*Discussion*

Paper, 1983). By 1983, therefore, the IMC found itself in difficulty. Three options were

considered to address this issue (*Discussion Paper*, 1983). First, the IMC contemplated

the continuation of its policy of using written examinations to restrict entry to the

Institute. This option was not favoured, however, because it risked a collapse in the

Institute's membership. The IMC also considered relaxing its entry requirements in the

hope of attracting new members. It was noted, however, that this option would do little to

bolster the Institute's desire to secure a Royal Charter. A third option (not pursued for

another 22 years, again for fear of undermining any bid for chartered status) was a full or

partial merger with another professional institute.

Doubtless the IMC had overstretched itself both financially and administratively with the

introduction of written entry examinations (Council minutes, June 1982). But the decline

in membership and the associated reduction in subscriptions to the Institute, as our next

section will relate, were symptomatic of a) wider jurisdictional shifts in consulting

expertise and b) broader organizational developments which, to the IMC, suggested the

need for a 'fundamental change of strategy' (*Whither IMC?*, 1983).

c) Jurisdictional Shifts and Organizational Changes

Reflecting upon its predicament, and operating with a somewhat restricted account of consulting [Author B2], the Institute's review of its own capabilities and prospects suggested that key consultancy firms were now offering 'other services' such as IT support (*Whither IMC?*, 1983). Noting jurisdictional shifts in the consulting field, the IMC opined that such services 'may be related but are not management consultancy' (*Whither IMC?*, 1983). Leaving aside questions as to the purity of 'real' consulting, it is worth observing that the Institute was painfully aware that this new cadre of advisors 'tend[ed] to view themselves as information scientists/technologists or computer specialists rather than management consultants' (*Whither IMC?*, 1983). Furthermore, the Institute understood that these practitioners were inclined to seek recognition, not from the IMC, but from alternative bodies such as the British Computer Society (now the Chartered Institute for IT) or the British Production and Inventory Control Society (now, as part of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, the Institute of Operations Management).

Beyond these jurisdictional issues, the IMC was also becoming aware of key organizational changes that would have ramifications for the broader field of consulting. It recognized, for example, that the larger consulting organizations had cooled towards the Institute's attempt to take control of the normative and cognitive mechanisms of consulting practice. This shift impacted the IMC directly on two levels, according to an internal steering document: first, employees within the larger firms were no longer encouraged to seek IMC membership and, second, the managing directors of organizations such as PA and P-E who had come together to form the IMC were no

longer willing to serve on the Institute's governing council (*Whither IMC?*, 1983). As the

role and influence of the larger consulting organizations declined within the IMC, so the

interests of smaller firms and sole practitioners became increasingly prominent in the

Institute. This movement in the contours of the IMC's membership was recognised as a

problematic development. It was feared that any significant increase in the influence of

the smallest firms within the IMC might jeopardise the professional project by a)

allowing narrow commercial interests to trump broader professional concerns, b)

dampening the residual support of the large consultancy firms, and c) demonstrating the

irrelevance of the IMC to those larger accountancy-based practices that had recently

added business advisory services to their portfolio (*Whither IMC?*, 1983).

These concerns led the Executive Committee of the IMC to undertake a 'painstaking

reappraisal' of the Institute's professional role and activities, focusing in particular on its

membership strategy (*Report of Council Proceedings*, 1983; IMC annual report, 1984).

To facilitate this reappraisal, the IMC Council convened for a one-day meeting at

Redfields Training Centre in Hampshire in October 1983 to discuss the future of the

Institute. As the President made clear in his introduction to the *Report of Council*

Proceedings (1983), the Redfields meeting led to 'a number of significant and, in some

cases, radical changes in policy, emphasis and direction'. Arguably the most important

change was the decision to discontinue the written Associate's examination and to

replace this with an oral interview. This change, it was argued, would allow the IMC to

take into account other criteria for entry, such as the candidate's practical experience,

their record of professional conduct and employer sponsorship. Ultimately, scrapping the

written examination would make entry-level membership easier to attain and, it was hoped, more attractive to busy practitioners (*Report of Council Proceedings*, 1983). The changes agreed at Redfields were implemented swiftly by the Institute and necessitated the publication of a revised version of the *Guide to Membership* (1984)*, which outlined the new membership criteria.

By effectively lowering its entry requirements, the Institute hoped to reverse the decline in membership. However, it was becoming evident that, while membership and subscriptions were gradually increasing from small firms and sole practitioners, the IMC was still failing to attract significant numbers of new Associates from large consultancy firms and accountancy-based practices (Council minutes, October 1984; June 1985; Executive Committee minutes, November 1984; July 1985). Indeed, it was estimated that in 1985 there remained 1,600 staff in the ten largest practices in the UK who were not yet members of the IMC (Council minutes, March 1985). This was worrying for the Institute as a desire to increase membership within the larger firms had been one of the main reasons for the thoroughgoing change in IMC policy agreed at the Redfields meeting. The failure to attract a more significant number of entry-level members, the IMC reasoned, would necessarily imply that the Institute could not claim to speak on behalf of consultants and would therefore be unable to establish itself as the voice of the (putative) consulting profession (Council minutes, March 1985: 9).

These comments were prescient. As the 1980s progressed, the IMC found itself increasingly marginalized as an institutional actor in the field of management

consultancy. Indeed by the 1990s it was clear that the IMC had been obliged to shift away from the principles that had underpinned its professional project in the early 1960s to embrace quite a different conceptualization of its reach and role.

d) Hybrid Professionalism

During the 1980s, the largest accountancy firms had been gradually extending into areas beyond their traditional jurisdiction. By the 1990s, these firms were providing not only auditing but also financial, legal, tax and business advisory services to clients (Stevens, 1991). In addition, these accounting firms had been joined by IT providers who had, in similar fashion, chosen to add consulting to their portfolio of services (Kipping, 2002). Such organizational and jurisdictional developments intensified further when accountancy firms, in response to the 2002 Sarbanes-Oxley Act, were obliged to sell off their consulting divisions. This legal obligation precipitated fundamental shifts in the field, effectively allowing a few large professional service firms such as KPMG, Capgemini and IBM Global Business Services to dominate (McKenna, 2006; McDougald and Greenwood, 2012). The origins of these firms in the domains of accountancy and IT meant that they were not persuaded by the IMC's willingness to act as an external sanctioning agent for consulting services. Indeed, these larger firms were not at all inclined to cede the responsibility for the maintenance of the cognitive and normative mechanisms that shape consulting professionalism to the IMC. By the early 2000s, therefore, the membership of the Institute had declined significantly. Where once in the late 1960s the Institute had attracted almost 60% of UK-based practicing consultants to its ranks (IMC members' journal, October 1969: 1), by 2002 the IMC could claim just

7% of an estimated 57,000 UK consultants as members (Council minutes, September 2002).

The IMC responded to these field-level transformations, we suggest, by shifting from an 'occupational' to an alternative model of professionalism which, in responding to field-level changes, might usefully be labelled as 'hybrid'. This journey towards a hybridized professionalism involved a number of steps.

In 1998 the Institute renamed itself the 'Institute of Management Consultancy'. This apparently modest change in nomenclature, however, reflected a more significant shift in policy. Crucially, it meant that the IMC had begun offering membership not only to individuals but also to organizations. Whereas the IMC's Registered Practice (RP) scheme allowed firms to enrol on a database that was accessible to potential clients, the Certified Practice (CP) scheme went further by delegating responsibility for the affirmation of practitioner skills to their employers via their in-house development and training programmes. The scheme thus removed the IMC from the regulation of consulting knowledge and practice and, in this respect, represented an implicit acknowledgement that the locus of control over professional expertise would no longer reside with an association for practitioners but rather with the firms themselves. This change carried serious risks for the IMC, as the Chief Executive of the Institute made clear: 'There is a danger inherent in the [CP] scheme that, once certification is achieved, the immediate aim of the firms is realized and the harvesting of members, an important outcome for the Institute, is not necessarily aligned with the ambitions of the firms

themselves' (*Briefing Paper*, 2002). Thus the CP scheme allowed the IMC to regulate access to a symbolic mechanism of professionalism – a '"badge" of IMC accreditation' (*CMC Review*, 2002). The problem being that this 'badge' had little real or enduring value for the larger firms.

The shifting locus of regulatory control was also indicated by the IMC's approach to the constitution of consulting expertise during this period. In its early years, as we have seen, the IMC had sought to establish management consultancy as an occupational elite founded upon a set of core cognitive and normative mechanisms. Yet, by the early 2000s, the IMC had been obliged to develop a broader competency-based model of knowledge which recognized that practitioners were likely to identify with an alternative – and competing – set of cultural and technical resources in the first instance. As an IMC position paper reflected:

> Many members of the Institute also belong to another institute, e.g. the Institute of Chartered Accountants or the Chartered Institute of Marketing, for their professional expertise. In a sense this answers the question about detailed technical regulation. This is provided by the consultant's primarily professional discipline. Consultancy is about the delivery of that technical specialism in a consulting context and the skills and, hence, the technical requirements of consultancy are primarily behavioural. This stresses the importance of competences, more difficult to define and measure than technical requirements, and ethical standards. (*Position Paper*, 2002)

This commitment to broad competences marked a significant reversal in the role the IMC saw for itself as a professional association insofar as the 'Certified Management Consultant' (CMC) qualification offered practitioners the chance to gain supplementary certification *in addition* to their core expertise. The IMC had hoped that this portable CMC qualification would help to attract new members to the Institute, particularly those practitioners whose principal professional allegiances lay elsewhere. By this point in time, however, the CMC qualification carried little weight because the larger consulting organizations had developed their own internal training systems as well as taken steps to establish themselves as 'brands' with company-specific attributes (*CMC Review*, 2002).

In 2003 plans were hatched within the Institute to integrate with another organization (Council minutes, May 2003; September, 2003; November, 2003). This integration, it was hoped, would act both to reverse the decline in membership and to stabilize the Institute's dwindling financial resources. A few options were considered at this time, including a merger with the Management Consultancies Association. However, it was eventually decided that the IMC should become a part of the much larger Chartered Management Institute (CMI) – formerly the British Institute of Management – which had at that time approximately 76,000 members. While the IMC would be allowed to retain its outward identity and logo, integration within the CMI meant that the Institute could no longer function as a fully autonomous association and, according to provisions in its *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, would have to be dissolved (*Options for the Future*, 2003).

5. Concluding discussion

This paper has offered a longitudinal analysis of the professional project instituted by the IMC. Drawing on both sociological and organizational accounts of professional working, we have suggested that recent analyses of consulting have tended to imply that professionalization is the end-point of an evolutionary journey that is completed when an occupation reaches a particular state of maturity (Wilensky, 1964). Taking issue with this approach, we have sought to demonstrate that professionalism – or perhaps more properly, the attempt to institutionalize embodied expertise (Abbott, 1988; 1991) – is a deliberate (if negotiated) strategy pursued through collective organization. In an attempt to make sense of the IMC's professionalization strategy and its subsequent tactical shifts and retreats, we have located our analysis of the Institute's endeavours within an account of the organizational field (Suddaby and Viale, 2011). This approach has allowed us to locate the IMC's attempts to project a professional identity by means of normative, cognitive and symbolic mechanisms (Noordegraaf, 2011) within an account of the changing patterns of dependence that transformed an occupational programme into a more limited endeavour. While others have accounted for the IMC's professional project as a failure consequent upon consultancy's fragmentary knowledge base (Alvesson and Johansson, 2002; Fincham, 2006; Kitay and Wright, 2007), our analysis of the IMC inserts certain qualifications within this narrative. Our analysis demonstrates that management consultants were indeed unable to secure jurisdictional control over a clearly defined set of skills and capabilities. Yet our reflections on the IMC's archives suggests that this jurisdictional issue needs to be located within the context of broader

field-level transformations that acted to bring new forms of expertise and employment concerns into the advice industry. We therefore argue that the IMC's ambition to secure occupational professionalism foundered upon the unwillingness of these large firms to cede the control of cognitive and normative mechanisms to the Institute. As a result, the IMC came to adopt a hybrid model of professionalism by opening its doors to large organizations and loosening its grip on normative and cognitive mechanisms.

It is worth noting, however, that the subsumption of the IMC into the Chartered Management Institute in 2005 does not signal the end of consulting professionalism. We may well harbour reservations about the way consultants are managed and controlled. But we should not overlook the fact that those who retain the services of management consultants still expect their employees to manage their affairs within a discursive regime bounded by notions of trust, ethics and accountability. The changes we have observed, however, do signal a movement from the occupational form first sought by the IMC to an alternative, hybridized, form located within and beholden to the organizational practices that now act a) to construct expertise and b) to define the manner in which such forms of expertise are to be performed and enacted on the client's behalf.

Taken as a whole, our longitudinal analysis of the IMC's professional project charts the processes that have allowed the large 'professional service firms' to play a prominent role in developing norms of behaviour and in setting standards for knowledge, conduct and practice within the field of consulting. These changes, we suggest, have resulted in the rise of localized forms and processes of consulting that, while corporate in ethos and

31

accountability (Faulconbridge and Muzio, 2008), nonetheless remain 'professional' insofar as their meanings and effects call upon occupational values and broader discursive formations as they seek both local consent for managerial action and broader social legitimacy (Paton, Hodgson and Muzio, 2013). This points to the increasing importance of what we – and others (Evetts, forthcoming; Hodgson, Paton and Muzio, 2015; Noordegraaf, 2007) – call 'hybrid professionalism'. This model of professionalism signals a break with traditional symbols of occupational professionalism (e.g. chartered status, entry examinations) in order to generate broader market appeal for the products of expert labour, yet without entirely foregoing traditional safeguards over professional work (e.g. market protection, state recognition). While this hybrid professionalism has played out in the accounting professional with the tension between auditing on the one hand and consulting on the other (Malsch and Gendron, 2013), we also find this hybridity at work *within* consulting itself – as the case of the IMC demonstrates. It is important to note that hybrid professionalism is defined only in negotiation with an external environment comprised of different, often competing, organizational actors, which is why it is crucial to study the trajectory of a professional association such as the IMC in relation to its strategic mobilizations and tactical deployments within a broader institutional field.

In closing, it is worth observing that our analysis of the experience of the IMC presents us with an intriguing conundrum. On the one hand, management consultants have been unable to secure the 'classic' (Noordegraaf, 2011: 473) form of professionalism that is built upon 'double closure' (Ackroyd, 1996). Yet this failure does not seem to have acted

as a barrier to the social and economic advancement of this occupational grouping. Indeed, some have suggested that private corporations and public-sector institutions are now increasingly shaped by an elite 'consultocracy' (Hodge and Bowman, 2006; Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 1996; Saint-Martin, 2000). The rise of this 'consultocracy' plainly merits further consideration. In undertaking such analytical work, there is, we believe, a need to ensure that that future inquiry is not restricted by some unwarranted commitment to trait-based conceptualizations of 'real' or 'genuine' consulting professionalism. Further research in this area, therefore, should be located within an analysis of the complex and historically-situated patterns of dependence that, our analysis suggests, act to structure claims to professionalism in general and the field of consulting in particular. An analysis of hybrid professionalism is therefore useful for focusing attention on the different – sometimes conflicting – logics employed by occupational groups to secure control over a jurisdiction of knowledge (Hodgson, Paton and Muzio, 2015), instead of relying on a simplistic and outmoded dualisms between 'collegial' professionalism and 'corporate' professionalism.

References

Abbott, A. (1988) *The System of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Abbott, A. (1991) 'The Future of Professions: Occupation and Expertise in the Age of Organization', *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, 8(1): 17-42.

Ackroyd, S. (1996) 'Organization Contra Organizations: Professions and Organizational Change in the United Kingdom', *Organization Studies*, 17(4): 599-621.

Adams, T.L. (2015) 'Sociology of Professions: International Divergences and Research Directions', *Work, Employment and Society*, 29(1): 154-165.

Alvesson, M. and A.W. Johansson (2002) 'Professionalism and Politics in Management Consultancy Work', in T. Clark and R. Fincham (eds.) *Critical Consulting: New Perspectives on the Management Advice Industry*. Oxford and Malden: Blackwell.

Anteby, M., C.K. Chan and DiBenigno, J. (forthcoming) 'Three Lenses on Occupations and Professions in Organizations: Becoming, Doing, and Relating', *The Academy of Management Annals*, DOI: 10.1080/19416520.2016.1120962.

Booth, C. and M. Rowlinson (2006) 'Management and Organizational History: Prospects'. *Management & Organizational History*, 1(1): 5-30.

Brint, S. (1994) *In an Age of Experts: The Changing Role of Professionals in Politics and Public Life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Carr-Saunders, A.M. and P.A. Wilson (1933) *The Professions*. Oxford: Clarendon.

Cooper, D.J. and K. Robson (2006) 'Accounting, Professions and Regulation: Locating the Sites of Professionalization', *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 31(4-5): 415-444.

Devine, F., J. Britton, R. Mellor and P. Halfpenny (2000) 'Professional Work and Professional Careers in Manchester's Business and Financial Sector', *Work, Employment and Society*, 14(3): 521-540.

Durkheim, E. (1957) *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, trans. C. Brookfield. London: Routledge.

Engwall, L. and M. Kipping (2013) 'Management Consulting: Dynamics, Debates, and Directions', *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 7(2): 84-98.

Evetts, J. (2003) 'The Sociological Analysis of Professionalism: Occupational Change in the Modern World', *International Sociology,* 18 (2): 395-415.

Evetts, J. (2011) 'A New Professionalism? Challenges and Opportunities', *Current Sociology*, 59(4): 406-422.

Evetts, J. (2015a) 'Professionalism, Enterprise and the Market: Contradictory or Complementary?', in H. Sommerland, S. Harris-Short, S. Vaughan and R. Young (eds.) *The Futures of Legal Education and the Legal Profession.* Oxford: Hart Publishing.

Evetts, J. (2015b) 'The Concept of Professionalism: Professional Work, Professional Learning and Practice', in S. Billett, C. Hartes, and H. Gruber (eds.) *International Handbook of Research in Professional and Practice-based Learning, Vol. 1*. Heidelberg: Springer.

Evetts, J. (forthcoming) 'Hybrid Organizations and Hybrid Professionalism: Changes, Continuities and Challenges', in A. Wilkinson, D. Hislop and C. Coupland (eds.) *Perspectives on Contemporary Professional work: Challenges and Experiences*. Cheltenham and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.

Faulconbridge, J. and D. Muzio (2008) 'Organizational Professionalism in Globalizing Law Firms', *Work, Employment and Society*, 22(1): 7-25.

Ferguson, M. (2002) *The Rise of Management Consulting in Britain*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Fincham, R. (2006) 'Knowledge Work as Occupational Strategy: Comparing IT and Management Consulting', *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 21(1): 16-28.

Freidson, E. (1970) *Professional Dominance: The Social Structure of Medical Care*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.

Greenwood, R., R. Suddaby and C.R. Hinings (2002) 'Theorizing Change: The Role of Professional Associations in the Transformation of Institutionalized Fields', *Academy of Management Journal*, 45(1): 58-80.

Groß, C. and A. Kieser (2006) 'Are Consultants Moving Towards Professionalization?', *Research in the Sociology of Organizations: Professional Service Firms*, 24: 69-100.

Hodge, G.A. and D.M. Bowman (2006) 'The Consultocracy: The Business of Reforming Government', in G. Hodge (ed.) *Privatization and Market Development: Global Movements in Public Policy Ideas*. Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar.

Hodgson, D., S. Paton and D. Muzio (2015) 'Something Old, Something New? Competing Logics and the Hybrid Nature of New Corporate Professions', *British Journal of Management,* 26 (4): 745-759.

Johnson, T.J. (1972) *Professions and Power*. Basingstoke and London: Macmillan.

Kipping, M. (2002) 'Trapped in their Wave: The Evolution of Management Consultants', in T. Clark and R. Fincham (eds.) *Critical Consulting: New Perspectives on the Management Advice Industry*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kipping, M. (2011) 'Hollow from the Start? Image Professionalism in Management Consulting', *Current Sociology*, 59(4): 530-550.

Kipping, M. and I. Kirkpatrick (2013) 'Alternative Pathways of Change in Professional Services Firms: The Case of Management Consulting', *Journal of Management Studies*, 50(5): 777-807.

Kipping, M. and D. Saint-Martin (2005) 'Between Regulation, Promotion and Consumption: Government and Management Consultancy in Britain', *Business History*, 47(3): 449-465.

Kirkpatrick, I., D. Muzio and S. Ackroyd (2012) 'Professions and Professionalism in Management Consulting', in M. Kipping and T. Clark (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Management Consulting*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kitay, J. and C. Wright (2007) 'From Prophets to Profits: The Occupational Rhetoric of Management Consultants', *Human Relations*, 60(11): 1613-1640.

Larson, M.S. (1977) *The Rise of Professionalism: A Sociological Analysis*. Berkley: University of California Press.

MacDonald, K. (1995) *The Sociology of the Professions,* London: Sage.

Malsch, B. and Y. Gendron (2013) 'Re-theorizing Change: Institutional Experimentation and the Struggle for Domination in the Field of Public Accounting', *Journal of*

Management Studies, 50(5): 870-899.

McDougald, M.S. and R. Greenwood (2012) 'Cuckoo in the Nest? The Rise of Management Consulting in Large Accounting Firms' in M. Kipping and T. Clark (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Management Consulting*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

McKenna, C.D. (2006) *The World's Newest Profession: Management Consulting in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McKenna, C.D. (2007) 'Give Professionalization a Chance! Why Management Consulting May Yet Become a Full Profession', in D. Muzio, S. Ackroyd and J.-F. Chanlat (eds.) *Redirections in the Study of Expert Labour: Established Professions and New Expert Professions*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Micklethwait, J. and A. Wooldridge (1996) *The Witch Doctors: What Management Gurus are Saying, Why it Matters and How to Make Sense of It*. London: Heinemann.

Muzio, D., D.M. Brock and R. Suddaby (2013) 'Professions and Institutional Change: Towards an Institutionalist Sociology of the Professions', *Journal of Management Studies*, 50(5): 699-721.

Muzio, D. and I. Kirkpatrick (2011) 'Introduction: Professions and Organizations - A Conceptual Framework', *Current Sociology*, 59(4): 389-405.

Muzio, D., D. Hodgson, J. Faulconbridge, J. Beaverstock and S. Hall (2011) 'Towards Corporate Professionalization: The Case of Project Management, Management Consultancy and Executive Search', *Current Sociology*, 59(4): 443-464.

Noordegraaf, M. (2007) 'From "Pure" to "Hybrid" Professionalism: Present-day Professionalism in Ambiguous Public Domains', *Administration and Society*, 39(6): 761-785.

Noordegraaf, M. (2011) 'Remaking Professionals? How Associations and Professional Education Connect Professionalism and Organizations', *Current Sociology*, 59(4): 465-488.

O'Brien, J., D. Remenyi and A. Keaney (2004) 'Historiography – A Neglected Research Method in Business and Management Studies', *Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*, 2(2): 135-144.

Parsons, T. (1954) *Essays in Sociological Theory*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Paton, S., D. Hodgson and D. Muzio (2013) 'The Price of Corporate Professionalism: Analysing the Corporate Capture of Professions in the UK', *New Technology, Work and Employment,* 28 (3): 227-240.

Reed, M.I. (1996) 'Expert Power and Control in Late Modernity: An Empirical Review and Theoretical Synthesis', *Organization Studies*, 17(4): 573-597.

Rowlinson, M. (2005) 'Historical Research Methods', in R. Swanson and E.F. Holton III (eds.) *Research in Organizations: Foundations and Methods of Inquiry*. San Francisco: Barrett-Kohler.

Saint-Martin, D. (2000) *Building the New Managerialist State: Consultants and the Politics of Public Sector Reform in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stevens, M. (1991) *The Big Six: The Selling Out of America's Top Accounting Firms*. New York: Touchstone.

Sturdy, A. (2011) 'Consultancy's Consequences? A Critical Assessment of Management Consultancy's Impact on Management,' *British Journal of Management*, 22(3): 517-530.

Suddaby, R. and R. Greenwood (2001) 'Colonizing Knowledge: Commodification as a Dynamic of Jurisdictional Expansion in Professional Service Firms', *Human Relations*, 54(7): 933-953.

Suddaby, R. and R. Greenwood (2009) 'Methodological Issues in Researching Institutional Change', in D.A. Buchanan and A. Bryman (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Research Methods*. London: Sage.

Suddaby, R. and T. Viale (2011) 'Professionals and Field-Level Change: Institutional Work and the Professional Project', *Current Sociology*, 59(4): 423-442.

Svensson, P. (2006) 'Marketing Marketing: The Professional Project as a Micro-Discursive Accomplishment', *Research in the Sociology of Organizations,* 24: 337-368.

Tisdall, P. (1982) *Agents of Change: The Development and Practice of Management Consultancy*. Heinemann: London

Üsdiken, B. and A. Kieser (2004) 'Introduction: History in Organization Studies', *Business History*, 46(3): 321-330.

Ventresca, M.J. and J.W. Mohr (2002) 'Archival Research Methods', in J.A.C. Baum (ed.) *The Blackwell Companion to Organizations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wilensky, H.L. (1964) 'The Professionalization of Everyone?', *American Journal of Sociology*, 70(2): 137-158.

White, H. (1987) *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.