

THE NATURE, FORM AND PURPOSE OF CONTEMPORARY PROFESSIONAL
ASSOCIATIONS: AN EXTENDED CASE STUDY OF THE BRITISH
ASSOCIATION FOR COUNSELLING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER
APRIL 2019

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploration of the nature, form and purpose of contemporary professional associations. The research focuses on a single primary case, the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy. Through an adaptation of an Extended Case Method, the research draws on 34 interviews, both from inside the organisation and other associations. It triangulates interview data by drawing on over 1,500 articles and letters published in BACP's journal.

The research explores professional associations as hybrid organisations, home to four primary institutional logics: to the member; the profession; the public; and to the organisation. These logics change and vary their centrality overtime. Dominant logics towards the membership and profession are consistently central, but at different points in the associations' history, the logics of public and organisation have competed for centrality.

Hybridity and institutional logics effectively describe the nature of the association and why there is often a perceived conflict between its roles. Literature is often inattentive to the role of associations in this regard and has a tendency to underplay an associations importance and agency. The thesis suggests associations plays central roles in the organisation of a profession and its articulation of jurisdictional claims and defences. These roles are complicated by the inherent heterogeneity within a profession. These two roles, that create central institutional logics within an association, are explored more fully. Finally, the thesis explores the strength of institutional isomorphism as an adequate explanation for perceived high degrees of conformity between associations. It suggests associations are isomorphic at functional and structural levels, but are plurally isomorphic at a cultural level.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge several people for their unfailing support in the creation of this thesis. In particular my supervisors Paul Brook and Sarah Robinson, without whose encouragement, constant support and unfailing enthusiasm for the research and subject, this thesis may never have progressed beyond an idea.

It is important to thank my research participants, whose candid accounts form the basis of much of this thesis, and whose perceptions and views have been invaluable to my own thinking on professional associations. Many have stayed in touch and have remained interested in how the thesis is progressing. They are anonymous in the research process, but I am thankful to each and every one.

I am eternally grateful to colleagues at work, who have had to endure my existential questioning about the purpose of their organisation throughout the duration of the study. They have been kind enough to engage with me as I thought out-loud, and I am extremely privileged to work with them. To Alistair Ross, who has bought me lunch and coffee during the process, his belief that I could write the thesis sustained me in ways that I would hope to pass on to others.

Finally, to my partner Matty, who has read and reread parts of the thesis, acted as a critic, but whose fundamental support in terms of time, space and unfailing belief and encouragement made it possible. To Natasha, Thomas and Samuel, who have provided me with distraction when it was most needed.

Thank you.

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List of acronyms

BAC	- British Association for Counselling
BACP	- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
CHRE	- Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence
CIPD	- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
DHSS	- Department for Health and Social Security
ECM	- Extended Case Method
HCPC	- Health and Care Professions Council
HMRC	- HM Revenues and Customs
IAPT	- Improving Access to Psychological Therapies
NHS	- National Health Service
PARN	- Professional Associations Research Network
PSA	- Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care
SCAC	- Standing Conference for the Advancement of Counselling
UKCP	- UK Council for Psychotherapy
VSU	- Home Office's Voluntary Services Unit

1: Introduction

There has been little focused, explicit scholarship on professional associations for a period of time. There is no grand theory of associations (Knoke 1986), what exists is a series of observations and comparative studies that have looked at aspects of professional associations. Building from a single case study, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), this thesis sets out to provide a richer and fuller understanding of professional associations, to explore why and where they share degrees of conformity, together with their multiple role that combine to create a hybrid, mission-led, legitimacy seeking organisations. The association is seen to work for a range of audiences including its members, the broader profession, the wider public, yet is also required to be attentive to its own needs.

It may be argued that professional associations have historically been the dominant form of organising an occupation, the mechanism where the community of practitioners and the formal organisation combine to produce a range of normative outputs that range from shared knowledge through to the articulation of jurisdictional claims. It can be relatively easy to treat an association as a 'black box', that translates the collective will of its members to outputs, yet this underplays a deep complexity of actors and purposes within the association. They should not be seen as impervious institutions, fixed entities that change little through space and time, associations navigate, respond and adapt to a changing set of environments. The aim of the research was to focus on professional associations themselves, the formal organisations, that are often poorly attended to in the wider discourse in the sociology of professions. Associations might be better understood, rather than suggest that "[t]he professional association *is* as the professional association *does*" (Merton 1958: 50 emphasis in the original).

Motivating the study

The study forms part of my own journey through a career working both for and with professional associations, being a member of associations, and contributing to the work of others either directly through consultancy or indirectly through benchmarking groups. I have held several different roles in different associations

and consider myself an active member in the communities of practice that exist between association staff, primarily in the UK but also internationally. My initial academic interest started with a Masters degree that explored membership value propositions, differentiating between transactional services that met an immediate need and the psychological services that spoke to concepts of identity, socialisation and status. This work was recently been picked up by other authors on the subject (e.g. Williams 2013a).

In my application to Leicester I was initially interested in the question of who professional associations were for, noticing that associations often described themselves in differentiated terms, sometimes for members, the public, or the profession. Associations might use all three and this creates the potential for interesting role conflict within an organisation. This potentially paradoxical approach to describing associations was significantly removed from the casual treatments of associations that saw them as the mechanisms for delivery of a members' collective will, "simply regarded as aggregations of individuals given the task to further the goals and the standing of their members and the particular profession. This turns out to be a very limited view of the possibilities and capabilities of a collective actor" (Willke 2012: 3). In the course of the study it became apparent that the role and purpose of associations was also intrinsically tied to the phenomenon that the broad discourse within the scholarly discipline of the sociology of professions. Associations have to be contextualised within the wider debate on professions, just as professionals themselves are urged to "understand the phenomenon of professions because much of our working life is influenced by the belief we are a profession" (Bellis 2000: 317). Applied comparative studies on the functions of associations are also considered important, as they attempt to describe degrees of conformity and difference between UK associations. Interest in associations has largely been the domain of professional texts, from bodies such as the Professional Associations Research Network (PARN), although "association research remains a largely unintegrated set of disparate findings, in dire need of a compelling theory" (Knoke 1986: 2).

Millerson's (1964) historic analysis sets out the basis for the study of associations by function, and several theses have foregrounded aspects of such work and agency (e.g. Coulson-Thomas 1988, Sackville 1990, Hall 2000). More often however, associations are seen as part-players in the story of professions (e.g. Wilensky 1964). It is opportune to look at these organisations once again, to explore them within the context of the sociology of professions, the roles they play, and as organisational entities within their own right.

Context

The United Kingdom is home to several hundred organisations that consider themselves, can be considered, or use the term professional association. Each is naturally tied to at least one profession. Some exist in a binary relationship, one body to one profession, but mostly multiple associations serve multiple variations of a profession. A profession is not a universally defined unit. Some associations are seen to act with a form of state-level sanction, whilst others exist in neo-liberal self-regulating markets. Professional associations are ill-defined, often self-defined organisational entities, and the problem of further instrumental clarity is hampered by lack of categorical lists of professional associations. Quantifying the exact number professional associations is difficult without a definitive list, however almost 2,900 organisations pass HMRC's threshold tests for subscriptions to be allowed as a tax deduction for their members (HMRC 2018). Compounding these difficulties is a diverse range of nomenclature used to describe these organisations, including professional associations, professional bodies, professional organisations. Sometimes these terms are used interchangeably, other times to describe distinct and different entities. Associations appear to form in different ways, some, like BACP from the profession itself, whilst others like the Chartered Institute of Education Assessors (CIEA 2018) or the College of Policing are formed for the profession on behalf of another actor.

Professions are an academically contested form of occupation. From an applied perspective, official categorisations, such as standard occupational classifications, aid little to our quantifying professions (e.g. ONS 2018a), although the Panel on Fair Access to the Professions quantifies "over 130 different professional sectors in

the UK, with around 11 million people in the labour force working in professional and managerial occupations” (PFAP 2009: 15).

BACP represents both the counselling and psychotherapy professions. For some members, and other professional bodies, these are distinct professions, for others the terms are interchangeable. BACP often uses these terms interchangeably, although this has not always been an historic perspective. When BACP represents its members to the public, governments and employers it homogenises the professions in to a single profession. When it accredits courses, or interacts with members, it often recognises heterogeneity. In this thesis, when referring to BACP I use the term profession when exploring BACP’s outward representation of its members. I use the plural form, professions, when discussing and exploring the internal heterogeneity of the counselling/psychotherapy profession.

Aim and scope

The primary aim of the thesis is to contribute to our understand of professional associations, reassessing and revisiting them in a 21st century context. The organisational entity becomes the unit of study, how it acquires, identifies and balances the ambiguous interests that invariably define these types of organisations. Larson asked an interesting question, “what were the associations seeking to obtain?” (2013: xxiv) and these organisations are sometimes seen as messy entities, “[t]hese self-regulating associations incorporate an inherent ambiguity of interests. Such professional associations represent a delegation of state powers in order to ensure a defence of the public interest and the prevention of risk; however, as these associations hold monopolies over representation, they necessarily also stand up for the interests of their affiliated members” (Rego 2013: 2). There is interest in how the association, as a complex organisation manages the different pressures audiences bring to bear on them, and the roles they subsequently play. Some authors (e.g. Burrage, Jarausch and Siegrist 1990) express this in terms of ideal-types, however, the thesis suggests the description of associations as hybrid organisations, where institutional logics have varying degrees of centrality, is a more inclusive and useful framework. There are also questions on how an association forms and manages its legitimacy with primary

audiences, and how, why and when it elects to prioritise one audience over others. The research questions emerged from the literature review, and I became interested in how associations appeared contingent on a changing environment, how causal mechanisms routinely influenced the association, and that the association was as much defined by its environment as it was the primary relationship between it and its members. I created a series of revisions to my original research question, nuancing it to gain a deeper understanding of professional associations. The research question focuses on the nature, form and purpose of contemporary professional associations and is supported by a series of sub-questions:

How well is the nature and purpose understood by those who influence the work of a professional association?

How are the broad and large causal mechanisms articulated and understood?

How prevalent and understood are coercive, mimetic and normative explanations in shaping an associations activity?

How are these pressures understood and given meaning?

In order to study at a level of depth I elected to study one primary association, but I was also keen to be able to offer generalisations, particularly because the field appears to have aspects that could be considered high degrees of conformity between associations. To achieve this I designed a multi-method approach research approach and adapted Michael Burawoy's Extended Case Method (1998).

I did not want to undertake another positivist study of associations, but to explore them with a richer account through the perspectives of those that worked closely with them. The ECM seemed appropriate, it could be adapted to critical realism, it lent itself to case studies of organisations, institutional accounts of entities, and embraced the potentiality of own-organisation insider research. My justification is explored in more detail in Chapter 4.

I have used the term professional association without trying to tightly define it, naming conventions for these bodies can be varied. I have restricted the study to UK associations, although note that often a UK based association has a contingent, sometimes considerable, of international members. This acknowledges that some associations may not necessarily describe themselves as British, a growing trend of internationalisation of both professions and professional associations (Hanson 2013).

Overview of the study

I have organised the study in to nine chapters, following an introduction the thesis progresses through a review of the literature, a methodology, situating the primary case, findings, discussion and concludes with contributions. Chapter 2 explores both academic and professional literature on associations and professions themselves. It provides a summary of scholarly enquiry into the nature of professions, a discipline that is still highly contested and evolving, having been through several discernible turns in thinking. Rather than add to the debate, at this stage it provides a context within which associations can be situated. Associations are explored by the roles they appear to undertake, and the outcomes of their agency, and are problematised by several competing and potentially conflicting roles. Associations are also discussed as organisational entities that have complex inner-workings and decision-making, and the notion of a homogenous membership with a homogenous collective will is also challenged and problematised.

Chapter 3 explores associations through the lens of neo-institutional organisation theory, a brief summary of institutional frameworks in relation to organisations. Four pertinent frameworks are introduced for developing an understanding associations: conformity and isomorphism through DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) concepts of mimetic, coercive and normative pressures; theories of how organisations build, repair and maintain legitimacy (Suchman 1995); strategic responses to institutional pressures; and finally the concept of organisational hybridity in organisations of competing institutional logics.

The research paradigm and methodology chapter present an overview of both critical realism and retroduction, explaining why this approach was chosen over others. The chapter details the potential and pitfalls of single case studies, outlines the extended case method and the reason for its selection, before detailing how it was adapted. An applied section details the research strategy, selection of participants and semi-structured interviews, and the sourcing of the historical documents. The situation of the researcher as own-organisation and interested is discussed and applied to the extended case method.

Chapter 5 details the primary case, historical documents chart the organisation from its formation to the point this research was undertaken. Care is taken to focus on the organisation as the unit of study rather than the profession. A final section outlines BACP as it was organised at the time of the research interviews. Chapters 6, *continuity and change*, and 7, *complexity of decision-making dynamics*, explore and discuss the research findings. They combine documentary data with interview data from the primary case and the extended interviews to explore how strong the institutional logics are, and why this might be the case. They confirm where associations are similar, but also show a degree of diversity and difference in these organisations. Chapter 8 brings the discussion together, suggesting associations can be seen through a series of lenses: as mechanism for organising a profession; a mechanism that holds in tension the needs of members, the profession, clients and public, and its own formal bureaucratic needs; as an influential mechanism for articulating jurisdictional claims; as organisations that are significantly influenced by institutional forces, particularly the normative effect from their memberships; as organisations needing legitimacy; and finally an exploration of uncertainty, that takes in to account challenges to professional associations' previous dominance as a mechanism for organising and bringing together communities of practice (e.g. Millerson 1964, Freidson 2001).

Significance of the study

The study seeks to make empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions to literature. Primarily it is an empirical contribution to the study of professional associations with a focus on UK bodies, offering an empirical account of

associations, particularly through neo-institutional, legitimacy and hybridity theories. A methodological contribution is made in the adaptation and application of the extended case method, particularly in relation to its adaptation to critical realism, and its ability to hold own-organisation insider research. Finally, the thesis also makes an applied contribution for those researchers struggling in pursuing own-organisation insider research.

2: Literature Review on the Sociology of Professions and Associations

Sociologically, association and association behaviour dates back at least 10,000 years (Harris *et al.* 2016), and professional associations are neither modern phenomenon or construction, arguments are made that their conceptual antecedents can be plotted and traced to the medieval craft guilds or professional structures in Ancient Rome (Vollmer and Mills 1966: 2, Gerstl and Jacobs 1976, van Nijf 1997, Rego and Varanda 2009), trainings in mediaeval universities (Freidson 2001), and, particularly in terms of collective agency, the sixteenth century college and livery companies such as the College of Physicians (1518) and Company of Barber Surgeons (1540) (see Lewis and Maude 1952). Carr-Saunders and Wilson trace antecedents to the associations of the sixteenth and seventeenth century study groups and mechanisms of organisation that distinguished the competence and prestige of professions from other trades (1933), reflecting professions as “middle-class variant of the occupational principle of organization already represented by the working-class crafts, the difference between the two being the claim for autonomy and self-control among professions is usually based on a formal “higher” education” (Freidson 1973: 22 emphasis in original). Over the last three centuries the number of formal associations has grown (Harris *et al.* 2016), Morris in his study of British voluntary associations marks the wave of associations forming between 1780 and 1850 (Morris 1983), a move replicated across parts of Europe (Harris *et al.* 2016).

In their modern recognisable incarnation, professional associations within the UK start to appear in the early nineteenth and twentieth century with, for instance, the British Medical Association (1823) and bodies for electrical engineers (1872) and accountants (1902) (see Millerson 1964, Prandy 1965, Iliffe 2005), an era of Anglo-American associations generally (Harris *et al.* 2016, Batten 2019). In an Anglo-American context, the intervening years have seen a rapid expansion in the number of professional associations (Hager 2014), paralleling and intimately conjoined to, the rapid expansion of occupations claiming professional title (Jennings, Callahan and Wolf 2012), an outcome of specialisation derived from both industrial revolution and urbanisation (Morgan 1998). These bodies are seen

as “important economic actors in their own right, yet also have significant roles in framing, setting standards, arbitrating, regulating, and supporting wider business exchanges”, to “play an increasingly important role in contemporary knowledge-intensive societies” (Brock, Lellebici and Muzio 2014: 1), holding “a central role in the creation and maintenance of a profession, providing central elements such as social closure, credentialism, a code of conduct and a professional identity” (Reed 2018: 222), and “remain highly active in both in the de-regulated national markets as well as in the development of international re-regulation” (Evetts 1998: 63). In the absence of a distinct and organised body of work on professional associations, noting there are occasional directories (e.g. Atterberry 1999). This chapter draws on the broader discourse on the sociology of professions, a context that frames the study of these organisations. It is not the intention of this chapter to give a fully detailed account of the sociology of professions, this has been done elsewhere, but to extract associations from this broader body of work and explore their role and purpose in more detail, rather than distilling their work as markers of an occupations progress towards professionalisation, “an occupation’s rise to professional standing can be pretty accurately chartered by reference to the progress of its professional institute or association” (Reader 1966: 163).

2.1 Working definitions

Acknowledging a paucity of definitions for associations (see Knoke 1986), “I know of no general source on professional associations” (Freidson 2001: 142), and the contested nature of definitions of professions, it is important to set the boundaries of this study, what will be considered in scope. The aim of the thesis is to bring more clarity to associations, rather than rest with Merton’s perspective, “[t]he professional association *is* as the professional association *does*” (1958: 50 emphasis in the original). This has often proved difficult, with descriptions of associations varying from the distilled and overly-simple through to the complex, these “anomalous creatures” (Mow Jr 1962: 462), organisations that do not readily lend themselves to either definition or simple categorisation (Watkins 1999a, Friedman and Mason 2007, HEBRG 2011).

Professional associations

The focus on professional associations in this thesis rests at a formal organisational level. This is a departure from traditional studies of membership associations that often portrays them as “nearly always have some degree of formal structure, but most of them are informal groups, not organizations” (Smith and Stebbins 2016: 4). This approach is aligned to most detailed accounts of professional associations, where the organisation itself is the unit of study. The study focuses on the association through the decisions it routinely makes. As an organisation it is formally inhabited by both staff and members, who to varying degrees influence and create the decisions of the organisation. The study also explores associations as membership entities, and incorporates the often informal interface between organisational entity and the members who exert significant normative pressure on the entity. Professional associations vary, some will be perceived as operating a top-down approach with their members, others with bottom-up processes, but invariably the membership controls the leadership, by electing members to governance committees who oversee strategy and appoint staff.

Early accounts of professions tended to the hierarchical, focusing on the classic professions: medicine; law; clergy, military (Elliott 1972), yet other occupations had well established associations, for example, electrical engineering formed a body in 1872 (IET 2018), accountants by 1904 (ACCA 2018) and surveyors plot their path back to 1792 (RICS 2018a). The body of work on associations is quite broad, Millerson (1964) provides a rich account of a specific subset, the qualifying association, whilst the comparative studies of PARN accommodate a broader encapsulation of professional associations. Accounts of associations are varied: highly visible defenders and advocates for the perceived interests of their professions (Johnson 1972); a mechanism for controlling numbers and limiting access to professional practice positions (Evetts 1998: 62 , Evetts 2000, Ackroyd 2016); systems of occupational closure that create benefit, “Professional Associations have developed and evolved these self-regulatory systems, thereby enabling registered and licenced professionals to enjoy autonomy, security and reward” (Evetts 1998: 63); a structure that creates benefit for its members (Bellis

2000, Neal and Morgan 2000, Ki 2018); crucial for constructing professional behaviour, practices and defining professional work (Noordegraaf 2011a); mechanisms for holding communities (Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings 2002); constructing professional identity (Brouard *et al.* 2017); mechanisms of language and symbols that demarcate professions from occupations (Hall 1975); an acceptable marker of maturity of a profession (Reader 1966, Larson 2013); mechanisms that define professional work, establish boundaries, demarcate fields and form professional loyalties (Noordegraaf 2011a: 468); to classical definitions of collective interest and agency, “individuals pursuing their interests and that this activity generates more or less collectively conscious groups, who are the bearers of ideas that legitimate the pursuit of their interests” (MacDonald 1995: 297). Under van der Meer’s categorisation of voluntary associations, they would be considered hybrid, spanning interest organisations that primarily defend a members’ interest, coupled with an activist organisation that advocates broader societal interests (see van der Meer, te Grotenhuis and Scheepers 2009), and classed as mixed mode organisations that holds both instrumental and expressive functions (see Booth and Babchuk 1968).

Professional associations are seen to form in several different structures, Millerson (1964: 88-90) shows an association in the UK can be formed by Royal Charter, Act of Parliament or Companies Act, the former a “peculiarly British recognition open to at least the larger of these groups is to apply for a Royal Charter. A Charter is considered a form of legal incorporation granted by the Privy Council that gives the profession a status similar to that of a public body; in some respects it plays a parallel role to state recognition in some other countries. The principle attraction of a charter for professions is that they can, after certain conditions have been met, award a chartered title to members, which is exclusive to and governed by the body that confers it, it is a form of *de facto* reserved title” (Lester 2016: 2 emphasis in original). The association is often a conglomerate of identities and roles, sometimes a group of companies and organisational forms comprising of charity, limited company, learned society, training entities, research functions, regulatory functions, some registered with Ofqual as an awarding body (Ofqual 2017) whilst

others hold a trade union element. Associations have proved troublesome to define in the applied world of tax, as British case law indicates, for the purposes of VAT, “professional associations will be determined on a case-by-case basis” relying on the subjective Carr test (HMRC 2017). Professional associations tend to have an interest in economic activity and can fulfil quasi-governmental functions, which gives them a degree of sustainability and makes them different from other forms of voluntary associations (Witko 2011).

I have elected to rely on several existing conventions to define what constitutes inside the scope of the study of associations. First, I rely on the naming regulations of Companies House which restrict certain words, most notably British, Association and Institute, to applicants able to evidence both pre-eminence within the field and public benefit (Companies House 2017). Secondly I rely on the entry criteria for PARN, a formal UK association for associations, who restrict membership to those bodies who have individual memberships, a process by which members are held accountable, the furtherance of public interest, and the professional development of their members (Williams 2013b). There are marked similarities between PARN’s membership requirements and Millerson’s (1964) definition of professions they require; training and education; demonstrate competence; professionals held to account by adherence to a code of conduct; have a public good orientation; and are organised by a restrictive body. It should be noted that some associations are unsure of their own categorisation, for instance the debate on whether the British Sociological Association was a professional association or learned society (see Platt 2003).

Professions

A study of professional associations cannot be abstracted from a broader discourse on professions, and this theme is continually interwoven in to the narrative of the thesis. Over time, those occupations capable of laying claim to the title ‘profession’ has risen significantly, augmented by the manifold increase in the diversity of occupations in a modern society (see Watkins 1999a, ONS 2010). Professions are seen to be a special form of occupation, that are seen as a pervasive influence in modern society (Perkin 1989, Scott 2008b, Brante 2013), an ubiquitous presence in

everyday life. It has been suggested that the “English professions in the eighteenth century were an acceptable successor to the feudal ideal of landed property as a means of earning a living” (Gerstl and Jacobs 1976: 3), a concept systematically built on and broadened as “the specialization that accelerated the creation of many modern professions in the nineteenth century came about as a result of the industrial revolution and urbanisation” (Morgan 1998: 187). Julia Evetts, echoing sentiments of Herbert Spencer (*in* Dingwall and King 1995) positions them centrally, “professions are involved in birth, survival, physical and emotional health, dispute resolution and law-based social order, finance and credit information, educational attainment and socialization, physical constructs and the built environment and leisure, religion and our negotiations with the next world” (2003: 297). Such centrality is echoed in observations by contemporary authors, professions “play such a central role in our lives that we can only barely imagine different ways of tackling problems that they sort out for us” (Susskind and Susskind 2015: 3). It should be noted that the ubiquitous nature of professions in modern society is under early challenge, for instance Northern American graduate destination statistics (Hollister 2015: 301) indicate a slight shift to other forms of work..

Accepting what constitutes a profession has been and continues to be a contentious endeavour with little universal agreement (Torstendahl 1990, Cheetham and Chivers 2005, Saks 2016b), “social sciences have had a difficulty translating the common-sense concept of a profession in to a theoretical program” (Richardson 1997: 635). Putting arguments that the discipline is in a state of polysemy (Delattre and Ocler 2013), or claims of ‘intellectual shambles’ (Freidson 1994), terms are still indistinct, “despite critical attention [...] the terms professionalization and professionalism remain ambiguous and multidimensional” (Ganesh and McAllum 2012: 153). As Hanlon (1999) shows, concepts of professionalism have similarly evolved, from ‘social service professionalism’ of Marshall (1939) to a more complex place heavily influenced by the prevailing socio-economic climate. The underlying theme suggests scholars have not yet managed to secure some form of agreement on professions (see

Abbott 2001) and what constitutes a professional: “very little consensus exists except on one point: the number of people categorized as “professionals” by census bureaus throughout the developed world has been growing in a dramatic fashion (Brint 1994: 3). To illustrate, some definitions focus on the qualities of individuals (e.g. Murphy 1988, UK-IPG 2002, Davis 2009), others on the nature of work (Friedman 2019), that it cannot be “standardized, rationalized” (Abbott 1991a: 22), work autonomously undertaken (Freidson 1970b), the purposeful behaviour of collective groups (e.g. Larson 1977, Abbott 1988b, Collins 1990), and for some it is a set of institutions “which permit the members of an occupation to make a living whilst controlling their own work” (Freidson 2001: 17). Demarcation between profession and occupation, or craft (Cheetham and Chivers 2005) troubled early thinkers including Carr-Saunders and Wilson, and has proved to be a broader issue than academic enquiry, being problematic for governments (Watkins 1999a) and legislators (Williams 2000) in the UK and North America (MacDonald 1995). Demarcation is tied in to classic definitions of professionalisation, and apparent failure to professionalise (see O'Day 2000).

Caution is warranted in defining professions. Literature is often dominated by the prevailing sociological thought of the time (Abbott 2001), Larson reflects, “I do not believe that there can be a general theory of professions for all places and all times” (2013: xxii), and reflects that “[a]ny book is a reflection of the political times in which it is written; it does not only respond to the questions that defined its field but also to the intellectual styles that were then predominant”. Caution is also warranted in dependence on early definitions, noting critiques that they were driven by professions out of self-interest (Atkins 1983) and whether these professions really had a more readily identifiable set of commonalities that was attractive to researchers and commentators (Abbott 1988b).

Neoteric perspectives argue that the need for a definition is less important, an academic cul-de-sac of no benefit, a diminishing need to draw hard lines demarcating occupations and professions (Evetts 2003, Larson 2018). Whilst recent focus has moved away from debates on demarcation, broader sociological questions still remain pertinent, “[w]hy should there be occupational groups

controlling the acquisition and application of various kinds of knowledge”? (Abbott 1988b: 1) and “[h]ow do such occupations manage to persuade society to grant them privileged position?” (MacDonald 1995: xii). This thesis, taking a lead from researchers like Evetts (2003) and Dingwall (1983), does not seek to demarcate between occupation and profession. Professions are considered akin to the ‘folk concept’ offered by Eliot Freidson (1994), a common language term (Barley and Tobert 1991) rather than a hard demarcated phenomenon. Professions and associations are considered self-defined. Evetts’ concept is useful, to frame the discussion: “professions are essentially the structural, occupational and institutional arrangements for dealing with work associated with the uncertainties of modern lives in risk societies” (2000: 3). So too is Ackroyd’s “professionals are members of a limited group of high-status service occupations such as medicine, engineering and law. In addition to being repositories of authoritative knowledge these occupations have some common features: restricted entry, high-level qualifications and stringent tests of competence, together with distinctive types of formal organization” (2016: 15). This thesis treats professions as distinct occupational groups and does not subscribe to demarcations and notions based on professionalisation debates such as para-profession. Professionalisation here is the mechanism of the acquisition of professional qualities, a continuous effort rather than a linear path that pushes a profession beyond some notional threshold that demarcates it from an occupation or sub-category of profession.

2.2 Locating professional associations in the wider discourse on professions

It is impossible to study professional associations without contextualising them in the study of professions and the collective agency of a profession. A significant body of work is devoted to developing an understanding of professions and there exists more extensive chronologies and summaries than space in this thesis is afforded. Perspectives on professions inform and influence our understanding of professional associations, and what is presented next is a summary to contextualise and locate associations whose existence in the work is often tangential.

It is a field of study that started in earnest with the seminal work of Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933) and Abraham Flexner (1915), who saw a profession as intellectual, learned, practical and altruistic, although one can find earlier notional interest, for instance in the work of Adam Smith (1776). Despite premature calls to the contrary (e.g. Hall 1983), and “despite the absence of an unequivocal definition” (Saks 1995: 1) it remains of contemporary interest (e.g. Gorman and Sandefur 2011, Muzio, Kirkpatrick and Kipping 2011, Bonnin and Ruggunan 2013, Kuhlmann 2013, Muzio, Brock and Suddaby 2013, Abramov 2014, Adams 2015, Friedman 2019), albeit in a “denser and more complex” form (Carvalho, Correia and Serra 2018: 1). Conceptually the sociology of professions is seen to have progressed over several dominant chronological turns. Some of these are seen to run concurrently and all are not necessarily exclusive of each other (Torstendahl 1990), for instance MacDonald (1995) draws in Abbott’s theories on jurisdiction as part of Larson’s notion of a professional project. Older concepts are not necessarily universally discredited; for instance trait accounts are still used in modern applied interpretations. Schools of thought have been thematically grouped together, to aid in the understanding of professions, and ultimately their associations: typological approaches; scepticism and power; systems theory and jurisdictional claims; neo-institutional perspectives; and new sociology of professions. Other authors categorise these schools of thought differently.

Professionalisation and typological approaches

The initial dominant prevailing approach to understanding professions centred on developing typological descriptions, their traits and qualities that enabled judgements to be made in demarcating a profession from occupation or trade. It was hierarchical, introducing the concept of sub-classes of professions, such as semi-profession and para-profession. Significant energy and thought was expended in the production of competing lists of necessary qualities and attributes an occupation needed to acquire to be considered a profession. Table 1 is illustrative, extracted from Hickson and Thomas’ (1969: 38) revealing the divergence of opinion in the field. Despite discord and disagreement, Gorman and Sandefur (2011: 278) usefully condense these often disparate traits to four common

characteristics: expert-knowledge; technical autonomy; a normative orientation towards the service of others; and a high status, income and other rewards, not too dissimilar from Bernard Barber's (1983) four criteria: knowledge; orientation to community interest; self-monitoring; and rewards.

Table 1: Analysis of elements in various definition of professions

	Skill based on theoretical knowledge	Required education and training	Competency tested	Organised	Adheres to a code of conduct	Altruistic service	Applied to the affairs of others	Indispensable public service	Licensed sanction	Definitive professional client relationship	Fiduciary client relationship	Best impartial service given	Loyalty to colleagues	Definitive compensation (fixed fee or charged)
Bowen	◇		◇	◇	◇									
Carr-Saunders & Wilson	◇	◇	◇	◇	◇									◇
Christie		◇			◇		◇							
Cogan	◇					◇	◇							
Crew				◇	◇	◇		◇						
Drinker	◇					◇					◇		◇	
Flexner	◇	◇		◇		◇	◇							
Greenwood	◇	◇		◇	◇				◇					
Howitt		◇	◇		◇	◇				◇				
Kaye	◇		◇	◇	◇									
Leigh	◇	◇												
Lewis & Maude		◇	◇	◇	◇						◇			
Marshall				◇		◇								
Milne	◇			◇	◇	◇		◇						
Parsons				◇					◇	◇				
Ross	◇			◇	◇	◇						◇		
Simon		◇	◇		◇									

Tawney			◇	◇	◇									
Webbs						◇						◇		◇
Wickenden	◇	◇	◇	◇										

Despite trait theory being largely a product of its time, it has an enduring quality and elements of it can be found in contemporary research (e.g. Neal and Morgan 2000, Shen and Jensen 2011), and in particular professional interpretations of professions (e.g. Lord Benson 1992, UK-IPG 2002, SPADA 2009, ASAE 2016). Associations were seen to adopt the trait approach, for example W E Wickenden (in Lewis and Maude 1952), of the Electrical Engineers, reflected there were six dominant attributes to a professional institution: the possession of a body of knowledge; an education process; a standard of professional qualification; a standard of conduct; formal recognition of status by colleagues and the state; an organisation devoted to common advancement and social duty rather than maintenance of an economic monopoly. Of particular relevance to associations was the role they played in a dynamic journey to a 'professionhood'. Wilensky's (1964) empirical study of 18 North American occupations develops a sequential process of professionalisation where the acquisition of a professional association is a requirement for successful transition, whilst for Foote (1953), writing on labour in Detroit, a career supported by an association of colleagues was one of three cardinal requirements of a profession.

Geoffrey Millerson's (1964) *The Qualifying Associations* provides one of the richest examinations of associations. Limited in scope to certain associations, the study produced a taxonomy of 134 bodies that he, like others before (e.g. Hume 1853), organised in to groups: the prestige association, sub-grouped in to those that are exclusive and those that are non-selective; the study association; the qualifying association; the occupational association, sub-grouped in to the coordinating association and the protective association. For Millerson, an occupation could be organised and have closure through a restrictive formal organisation. Associations are a method of inducing a normative pattern of behaviour within their

membership, with primary functions based on the organisation of the discipline and the registration of competent professionals. He also outlines a set of secondary association functions: the raising of professional status; controlling entry to the professions; protection of both the wider public and the profession itself; and to act as an interest group on behalf of members. Sixty years later, despite the restricted scope of the study, Millerson's analysis is still germane to the study of contemporary professional associations. Millerson's research resonates with the work of Prandy, whose study of engineers and scientists devotes a chapter to their associations (1965: 61-82), as having: a study function; an education function (of non-members); a qualifying function; a professional conduct function; a protective function (based on status and prestige). Prandy makes an interesting point that is pertinent to this study, and the concept of institutional logics, that associations are very similar, yet, due to the professions they each serve and the environments that they are situated in, they may give primacy to some functions over others.

Over time typological approaches largely failed to provide a universally agreed answer: "the difficulties of defining the special characteristics, and clarifying the difference between professions and (expert) occupations, troubled analysts and researchers" (Evetts 2006: 134). Demarcation and definitions of professions seemed less important, re-enforcing the perspectives Herbert Spencer (see Dingwall and King 1995) and Everett C Hughes (1963) that it was a false question, any differential between occupation and profession is differences of degree rather than totality (Evetts 2006). Larson similarly reflected, "the idea of occupations based on special expertise is so widespread in modern societies that it has become increasingly difficult to restrict the title of "profession" to those occupations that have managed to be so recognized" (2013: xxii). Functionalist approaches could be taken to extremes. For instance, Hickson and Thomas (1969) whose study of 43 British associations makes an attempt to quantify and measure the differences among occupations in degrees of professionalisation ranking associations across thirteen criteria. Robust criticism came from authors who questioned the motivation and basis of analysis, suggesting it was the product of uncritical research that had not been stringent enough: accepting evidence at face value without analysis (Johnson

1972, Atkins 1983); suggesting an inherent investment in personal bias towards professions, “an uncritical re-iteration of professional statements of pious hopes and self-interest” (Atkins 1983: 224-225); that sociologists had become “the dupe of established professions (helping them justify their dominant position and its payoff) the arbitrators of occupations on the make” (Roth 1974: 17); “trait theory, because of its atheoretical character too easily falls in to the error of accepting professionals’ own definitions of themselves” (Johnson 1972: 5); and a political activity, that the established professions “would only allow pretensions to status if the claimants were reasonably similar to themselves” (Bellis 2000: 325). More acerbically McInlay (1973: 65) suggests an ulterior motive based on professional power, “traits were myths imposed on a gullible public”. There was a sense that trait theory “eventually strangled inquiry, as investigators worried whether or not various groups were professions” (Abbott 2001: 21169). Alternative frameworks, such as professions as Weberian ideal-types (Vollmer and Mills 1965) were put forward, but equally fallible, “ideal-typical constructions do not tell us what a profession is, only what it pretends to be” (Larson 1977: xii). Trait theory, which had, as a by-product created some of the most extensive texts on professional associations was seen as limited and problematic in furthering an understanding of professions. The next turn took a distinctive and less positivistic approach to the study of professions.

Scepticism and power

Loosely grouped together are more sceptical interpretations, the focus less on traits and functions, more on motivations: professions were a successful ideology (Johnson 1972); socially negotiated titles and status (Becker 1962); or interested in occupational control (Freidson 1970a, Freidson 1970c, Larkin 1983). An important turn in framing professions, they challenge the concept professions are “outcomes of rational and functional specific universalism” (Abbott 2001: 12167). These approaches are important to the study of associations, a potential vehicle for articulating, sustaining and managing claims. Authors became interested in the dynamics that granted professions power and privilege, improved economic rent and were permissive of professional autonomy, “a certain number of powers and

privileges, the most widespread of which has been autonomy in relation to how work is accomplished” (Brint 1994: 6). These approaches were sometimes generalised as neo-Marxist interpretations, accounts of professions acting out of self-interest, seeking ideological domination (Burris 1987: 81) to secure their position in an established bourgeoisie society, structure (Sciulli 2009) and class systems. Such Marxist classification is considered a generalisation and has been challenged by the authors to whom it has been applied, Larson reflects, “I had imagined that my allegiance to Polyani would settle the accusation of economic reductionism that any evocation of Marxist concepts, no matter how distant, seems to stir up” (2013: xxiii). Irrespective of label, these approaches can be generalised as having a more sceptical perspective on the motivations of professions that the altruistically benevolent one painted by classical authors including RH Tawney (1921), TH Marshall (1950), Talcott Parsons (1954) and Émile Durkheim (1957), fundamentally questioning the basis of a service ideal orientation (Perrucci 1973) that dates back to at least Flexner’s (1915) work, suggesting professions were essentially self-interested, creating needs from clients rather than meeting their needs (McKnight 1977). McKnight argues professions translate client need in to a deficiency, place that deficiency in the client, and separate out the fulfilment of that need to increasingly specialised professional services (1977: 78-81). Of particular interest is the creation and maintenance of professional power and control, the “[s]ocial acceptance of the illusion of professional omniscience and omnicompetence” (Illich 1977: 19). Power is stratified, capable of articulating the relationship between professional and employer, professional and client, and the relationship between one profession and another, “in each professionalized field, there is typically one or more top professions in the pecking order, with other professional groups further down the line based on ‘dual closure’” (Saks 2016a: 81). Professional power can maintain autonomy of practice, or professional authority (Øvretveit 1988) and manifests as forms of occupational control and monopolistic closure.

In her seminal text, *The Rise of Professionalism*, Magali Larson (1977) makes the important argument that professions are engaged in an attempt “to translate one

order of scarce resource – special knowledge and skills – into another – social and economic rewards” (1977: xvii). Larson is seen as extending “the interactionist analysis by drawing on Marxian ideas of production, market, and social class, and Weber’s concept of social closure through qualifications as a basis for both economic advantage and social status” (MacDonald 2007: 3661). The professional project is a mechanism “by which these privileged occupations had become what they were, or what the public and many sociologists assumed they were” (Larson 2013: xx). It is a concept of interest to the study of association as these organisations will invariably play a role in the conceptualisation, manifestation and articulation of a professional project, even if the process is more ideal-typical (MacDonald 1995) in nature. The time an association devotes to a professional project is potentially less than originally predicted (1995: 32). Briefly, the professional project is seen as an undertaking, not always successful, to secure monopolistic status and market shelter, safe harbour to practice, enhanced status and work privilege, to attempt to achieve achieving a “monopoly of competence legitimized by officially sanctioned expertise and monopoly” (Larson 1977: 77). It has proven to be a useful framework for analysing the agency of a number of occupational groups: operating department practice professionals (Timmons 2010); accountants (Richardson 1997, Edwards, Anderson and Chandler 2005); community psychiatric nurses (Godin 1996); academics (Musselin 2013); archaeologists (Leadbeater and Miller 2004); nurses (McDonald, Campbell and Lester 2009, Kroezen *et al.* 2013), chemical engineers (Mackie 2000); public relations practitioners (Meintjes and Neimann-Struweg 2009, Edwards 2013); journalists (Aldridge and Evetts 2003); librarians (O’Connor 2009); interior designers (Lees-Maffei 2008); human rights field workers (O’Flaherty and Ulrich 2010); information security professions (Reece and Stahl 2015); life-coaches (George 2013); executive remuneration consultants (Adamson, Manson and Zakaria 2015); massage therapists (Sullivan 2012); and beyond in to the professionalisation of sporting disciplines (Malcolm 2014). This is not an exhaustive list yet serves to illustrate how useful and endearing the concept has been to researchers on professional groups.

Professional associations, by inference, can be seen to have an important role in orchestrating this process (e.g. Meintjes and Neimann-Struweg 2009). If, “[u]ltimately, the objective of a professional project is to achieve degrees of regulation over a field of practice, both in terms of controlling the supply of expert labour and the behaviour of producers” (Muzio and Kirkpatrick 2011: 391) then the role of the association is implicit and helps address Berman’s question in her study of English doctors, “[t]heories of the professions do not sufficiently explain how individuals with different and often ill-defined interests can organize themselves into a group coherent enough to undertake a professional project” (2006: 157). Whilst Larson makes the distinction that associations are not synonymous with professions, the association is seen to carry out a specific set of functions, from acting as professions ‘spokesmen’ (1977: 46) to an implicit role in the maturing (1977: 5) of a professional project (1977: 154). The association, as a formal organiser within the field, can be seen to play an implicit role in creating the mechanisms by which occupational closure can take place, for instance in Richardson’s (1997) four-step process of market enhancement: market closure; professional closure. Similarly, in Weeden’s framework (2002): restrict supply; increase diffuse demand; channel demand; or signal quality to market. There is opportunity to see associations as part of the mechanism that is “the collective struggle of members of one occupation to define their conditions and methods of their work” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 147), or the mechanism that create regulative bargains (MacDonald 1995).

The challenge to these interpretations of self-interested professions is that they present idealised perspectives, dismissive of aspects of professions that have endured, especially the professional ideal of a normative service to others (Gorman and Sandefur 2011), often seen to be held in the ethics and codes of practice of many professional associations, a moderating invisible hand in the neo-liberal professional markets where the concept of *caveat emptor* appears undesirable (see Freidson 2001). For Halliday this can be reconciled, “if it can secure its occupational niche and protect its vital economic interests, then a profession’s resources can be freed from market concerns for other causes” (1987:

354). However, altruism appears apparent in professions that have not attained, or have no intention of attaining monopolistic closure, suggesting it is more fundamental than a post-monopolistic trait. Another challenge relates to the contemporary world associations inhabit, of managerialism, de-professionalisation and hybridity within employer structures (see Waring 2014), juxtapose with the concept of autonomy (Øvretveit 1988), safe harbour and monopolistic power, in a world where technical expertise “has become increasingly subject to third-party scrutiny and control” (Chamberlain 2018: 3). Although monopolistic dominance might be insurmountable for most professions and their associations, control still remains a prevailing aspect of the distinguishing features of professions, “[p]rofessions exist, in this book’s view, because they are groups that manage to acquire control –jurisdiction – of an area of work” (Abbott 2010: 175). Consideration should be given to the role of an association in how a profession moves towards forms of occupational control, closure strategies, and monopoly.

Systems theory and jurisdictional claims

The System of Professions (Abbott 1988b) presents a pertinent framework for understanding the work of associations. Critiquing trait theory for not accounting for the broader environment, under the auspices of systems theory (MacDonald 2006), Abbott argues that professions exist within and are contingent upon a competitive and changing landscape, within which they must stake a jurisdictional claim in order to enjoy the subsequent benefits. Professions are attentive to these dynamics, seizing on the opportunities presented by new and emerging markets, whilst robustly defending existing positions. The external world is extended beyond state regulative bargains, in to a complex, competitive and changing environment populated with other actors and professions making claims of normative superiority. Contemporary perspectives suggest environments are increasing in complexity with the rapid proliferation of new specialisms, often making it difficult to ascertain “whether a new jurisdiction is either an existing or newly emergent market” (Carvalho, Correia and Serra 2018: 12). MacDonald sees affinity between both Larson and Abbott’s work, “in the sense they both add real

elements to the interactionist theme” (2007: 3661). McDonald offers a sequential model: an occupational group is formed; an overall objective stated; sub-goals articulated; and finally negotiation with other actors including the state (1995: 187-189). The organising role of the professional association is implicit, even if the process for associations is less linear than MacDonald and Wilensky before him presents.

The routine business of making and defending jurisdictional claims is routinely evidenced in literature, from, for example: the interplay between the nursing and pharmacy professions and the jurisdiction of prescribing medicine to patients (see Siriwardena 2006, Kroezen et al. 2013); the contested world of evaluate bibliometrics (Petersohn 2016); jurisdictional concerns of Archivists that their “professional status seems to be limited, which opens up possibilities for other professional groups to replace them” (Kallberg 2012: 27); or how difficult it has been for journalism to maintain the ideology of professional logic of control in boundary maintenance in a rapidly changing workplace (Lewis 2012). The role of the association in making and articulating a claim can be instrumental. Larson indicates “[a] recognizable professional association of ample (even if not quite national) scope is a necessary tool for advancing “jurisdictional claims” (2013: xxiv). What is interesting is neither profession or jurisdictions appear to be distinct and clean entities. Professions are heterogeneous communities (Brint 1994, Evetts 1998, Freidson 2001, Leicht and Fennell 2001, Scott 2001, Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings 2002, Scott 2008b, Kipping and Kirkpatrick 2013, Carvalho, Correia and Serra 2018), discussed later, multiple associations can represent multiple fragmented professions, and claims can be made for part of a profession, a certain group of members, perhaps geographically, a successful claim for one portion of its membership has the potential to be to the detriment of another segment of its membership, particularly if “those specialties often compete with each other in dealing with the same kind of work problems” (Freidson 2001: 143). Jurisdictions can be fragile and temporary rather than secure and would require active monitoring and agency from an association.

Neo-institutional perspectives on professions

More recently sustained academic interest has focused on institutional attributes and accounts of professions. Neo-institutional theory has been applied to further understanding of professions (e.g. Leicht and Fennell 2008, Scott 2008b, Muzio, Brock and Suddaby 2013). Institutional theorists have long held an interest in professions, often portraying them as influential actors in their ability to create institutional effects on other groups and organisations, “classic examples of groups that exert normative pressure through their socialization (and continued re-socialization) of occupational incumbents” (Leicht and Fennell 2008: 434). Professions are described with institutional qualities: Scott summarises, “professions can be regarded fruitfully as institutional agents [...] their primary social function can be described as creating, testing, conveying, and applying cultural-cognitive, normative, and/or regulative frameworks that govern one or another social sphere” (2008b: 233). Professionalisation can be seen as processes of institutionalisation, they represent “one of several ways to give order, structure, and meaning to a distinctive area of social and economic life” (Muzio, Brock and Suddaby 2013: 705). Professions can be institutions, “profession is itself an institutional model specifying the characteristics of the social structures of those actors performing knowledge work in our society” that “over the last 30 years, have experienced profound changes” (Muzio, Brock and Suddaby 2013: 699). Institutional perspectives provide a useful lens to explore classical interpretations of professions, professional projects were seen to “carry with them projects of institutionalization” (Suddaby and Viale 2011: 423), connections are made “changes in professional jurisdictions [...] and changes in organizational fields” (2011: 423), and patterns of autonomy of practice (Teodoro 2014).

There is also a move to use the frameworks of institutional theory to closely examine professions themselves. In particular, Scott’s *Lords of the Dance* (2008b) highlights the intricacies of a profession, identifying how normative agents are created and promulgated in the form of standards, best practice and ethics alongside cultural cognitive agents that create and warrant knowledge. In his paper Scott touches on the important notion of an ‘heterogeneity-within-

professions', identifying that "[a] subset of professions are able to legitimately lay claim to a wider range of coercive power, both public and private. Such powers are employed, along with cultural-cognitive and normative mechanisms, to exert hierarchical control over their own members, but are particularly conspicuous in relating to the external public" (2008b: 227). *Professions and Institutional Change: Towards an Institutionalist Sociology of the Professions* (Muzio, Brock and Suddaby 2013) is an important paper bringing together and summarising key issues in the challenge of understanding professions as institutions and their role as institutional agents: "professionalism as an institution, with its appeals to quality, social trusteeship and public interest, represents a clear example of an attempt to ascribe to a certain set of activities a particular normative value beyond their technical requirements"; and, an appeal to "extend our analytical focus beyond the professional project and its self-interested motivations to capture how professionalization attempts to contribute to the construction, ordering, and, in short, to the institutionalization of social life" (Muzio, Brock and Suddaby 2013: 713). Literature suggests associations play an important role in organisation and the creation of collective professions identity, for instance accountants professional projects (Ramirez 2013), the creation of normative institutional effects on their memberships (Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000), or the acquisition and maintenance of professional authority (Scott 2008b). Associations within these frameworks can be seen as an institutional agent of the profession, or an institution in its own right, operating at an organisational field level, part of the system and structures by which a profession creates institutional effects within itself, and imposes and responds to them in the wider environment.

Professions as discourse

Discourse analysis is a more recent turn in the study of profession, that "has undoubtedly increased our understanding of professional cultures in work organisations" (Saks 2016b), Valérie Fournier's paper *The Appeal to 'Professionalism' as a Disciplinary Mechanism* (1999) has implications for the study of professional associations. Fournier offers "the appeal to professionalism is one of the strategies that is deployed to control the increasing margin of indeterminacy

of flexibility in work” (1999: 281), that there is a process of “forging connections between various actors (e.g. the state, the client, the sovereign customer), criteria for legitimacy (e.g. truth, efficiency, public good), professional competence and personal conduct” (1999: 288). Evetts (2014) analyses this further, demarcating between professionalism “from above” and professionalism “from within”. Whilst not getting drawn in to detail, there is a potential role for associations in these mechanisms, especially in markets devoid of large public service organisations. Karseth and Nerland’s (2007) study of four Norwegian professional associations highlights different approaches taken by associations, where their approach to knowledge work is constructed as discourse, and is seen to be different in each body, influenced by the level of standardisation and structure of the differing professional fields.

Contemporary aspects: de-professionalisation and proletarianisation

More recently, potentially an outcome of both their growth combined with a changing competitive economic landscape, professions have had to contend with uncertainty and challenge, which provide a useful context to explore the role of associations. De-professionalisation, managerialism and proletarianism, and more latterly populism (see Friedman 2019), are seen as forces that have a particular negative effect on professions that, in turn, provide an opportunity to explore the role and work of professional associations. Such concepts are not universally accepted, Freidson (1994) suggests they are more hyperbole than analytically sound phenomena, however the role of the association can be considered important in orchestrating and articulating a professions response to what might be considered a detrimental institutional pressure. De-professionalisation describes a process where a profession’s working practices and degrees of autonomy and control are externally challenged, and in some cases constrained. For some this process is part of a wider sociological movement, “[a]nother related facet of current debates about professions and power is the wider question of whether in neo-Weberian terms professional groups in modern societies have become increasingly deprofessionalized” (Saks 2016a: 80). In broader terms one might see de-professionalisation as the antithesis of a professional project, the

reverse of jurisdictional claims, routine challenges to professional autonomy and authority, and the direct and gradual erosion of existing professional status and rights. Challenge comes in many forms, including: managerialism (e.g. Randall and Kindiak 2008); technical encroachment and automation of professional work, seen as “an ‘incremental transformation’ in the way we produce and distribute expertise in society [that] will lead eventually to a dismantling of the traditional professions” (Susskind and Susskind 2015: 2); interference by the state (Freidson 2001); the rise of an inter- disciplinary and networked working environment (Lewis 2012, Guthrie and Parker 2016); the rise of the educated consumer corroding prized information asymmetry (Johnson 1972, Haug 1973, Groenewegen 2006), not valuing professional expertise (Nichols 2017); falling levels of professional expertise (Larson 2018); systemisation (Groenewegen 2006); the jurisdictional battles with amateurs (Leadbeater and Miller 2004, Cohen *et al.* 2005); government reform of state services (Givati, Markham and Street 2018); or contesting with professions and occupations (e.g. Siriwardena 2006, Kallberg 2012, Kroezen *et al.* 2013). Proletarianisation describes the impact of capital’s control over professional labour, has its roots in the seminal text by Harry Braverman (1974) and has been routinely documented and observed (e.g. Larson 1980, Marshall and Rose 1988, Navarro 1988). Whilst these are not new concepts, the regular challenge to professional jurisdiction through managerial control (Martin *et al.* 2015, Dent *et al.* 2016) together with the potential for organisational rather than occupational control to become the norm (Abbott 1991a) are regular challenges for some professions (Muzio, Brock and Suddaby 2013) and their associations. Change, either direct or sustained also presents a challenge for the concept of a profession ever being stably organised.

Associations are often seen to play, and expected by their members to play, an intrinsic role in orchestrating and organising a professions observed response to these pressures. For instance, in Bhugra survey of 73 British psychiatrists a significant majority, 89%, believed professionalism to be important in modern day clinical practice; key threats to professionalism are the government, the media and other specialties and disciplines. In the study there was broad agreement that the

Royal College of Psychiatrists should lead and define professionalism (Bhugra 2008). An observation being even a body of practitioners working in a profession of multiple or dominant employers, still tends to galvanise around some form of formal bureaucratic organisation like an association. An expectation to act rests on the association, even when results were seen to be decidedly mixed, for instance the work undertaken by Scottish accountants to defend their existing positions and privilege (Walker 1991), or the example provided by Norway's public health nurses who were less attentive to the threats and, as a result, the profession fell in to a deep decline (Andrews and Wærness 2011).

These detrimental forces present two interesting observations for the study of associations. First, contemporary professions are located and embedded in an environment that is not necessarily hospitable and benevolent to them, distinctly juxtaposed to the classical view that "professional people (who) rightly or wrongly, see themselves above the main economic battle" (Perkin 1989: 117). Second, it is often the association that acts in response for the profession, potentially positioning these organisations as more central and important players in the dynamics of de-professionalisation and proletarianisation than the existing body of work (*e.g.* Vollmer and Mills 1966, Jamous and Peloille 1970, Haskell 1984, Armstrong 1985, Coburn, Rappolt and Bourgeault 1997, Healy 2004, Shafer and Gendron 2005, Pickard 2009, Dixon-Woods 2010, Timmons 2010, McLaughlin, Leigh and Worsley 2015) often credits them. If the modern general forward trend is towards a "post-professional society" (Susskind and Susskind 2015: 15), a society that "has eroded the distinction between professions and any other occupation and thus left them together as the middle-level employees of capitalism" (Krause 1996: ix), then clearly there are roles for associations either as primary preponements of a professions defence, revision and re-articulation of its normatively superior claims, or alternatively as carriers of incremental change back to the broader profession. The challenge seems clear, as *The Role and Structure of Professional Bodies: Current and Future Challenge* sets out, "[t]he degree of external change is such that professional bodies will struggle to maintain relevance unless they engage in proactive, medium-term strategy development [..]

and relationships with other market actors and public authorities” (ICAEW 2012: 4). The role of associations is potentially pivotal to the agency of a profession.

2.3 What associations are seen to do

An alternative take on associations is to synthesise the multiple roles they play, borrowing and expanding Burrage’s ideal-type concept (Burrage, Jarausch and Siegrist 1990). Associations are clearly multi-faceted organisations acting in a variety of ways, for the benefit of several audiences, although an argument is made the member remains the primary beneficiary. Literature reveals functional orientations and outputs. Burrage et al. (1990), recognising the inherent complexity, abstract the functions of an association and align them to ideal-types: those that “give primary emphasis to the knowledge of the profession”; those which “primarily seek to represent and lobby on behalf of the profession and to obtain [...] legislative relief and support; those that negotiate on behalf of their members and are often barely distinguishable from trade unions”; and those “that seek to regulate the profession” (1990: 208). In this account there are some limited synergies with Millerson’s typology. These different roles can be seen as tensions in an association, for example Komesaroff’s editorial on tension within the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, he describes “a remarkable paradox. The organisation is widely perceived to be attempting to perform two contradictory functions: on the one hand, as the professional home for its members, it is seen as a protector and shield against the demands of government and the wider society; on the other, as a body responsible for conducting examinations and supervising accreditation, it can be seen as exactly the opposite: as a remote, authoritarian agency whose job is to exercise discipline and control” (Komesaroff 2019: 147). In practice, within associations there is an everyday blurring of these roles - these descriptions are abstracted and ideal-typical. The blurring suggests that professional associations are a complex hybrid set of activity. Llewellyn (2015) observes this in an assessment and description of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, raising standards, self-regulation of practitioners, raising standards across the whole field, and the collective agency aligned to pay and conditions. This abstraction to ideal-types may also explain the perceived gap

between strategy and action in associations (Merton 1958), or the common problem in organisations, that “the official goals of the organisation are shown to differ from – to mask – the “real” objectives (Scott 2001: 25). Ideal-types orientations are not likely to have equality in terms of importance and prominence in an association, prioritisation of an orientation may vary from association to association (Prandy 1965) or over time within a single association. Similarly, associations are social entities subject to changes in both the external world and internally, the makeup and behaviour of their membership changes over time. Dorn, in an analysis of the Pacific Sociological Association notes two significant changes that have influenced the work of the association: democratisation bringing a wider and more diverse population in to the decision-making process as membership grew; and a shift from *gemeinschaft* to *gesellschaft*, as social relations between members and the association developed and changed, creating the need for an evolving and changing association (2014: 121). This marks an important point in the study of associations, they are dynamic and evolving entities, not fixed constructs. Any historical account of an association needs to be contextualised and critically appraised, both organisation and profession are seen to change significantly over periods of time.

This section can be taken as an extension of Burrage’s ideal-type construct, “one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct. [...] cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality” (Weber 1903/1949). There are limitations to the use of ideal-types (see Aronvitch 2012), and it is more preferable to see these as institutional logics (see later), more accepting of Tönnies’ normal-type descriptions. Below, Burrage’s work is expanded to cover a broader range of ideal-types or institutional logics found in the literature.

Table 2: Re-work of Burrage's ideal-type analysis

Ideal type	Burrage's ideal-types	This chapter
I	those that give primary emphasis to the knowledge base of a profession	Emphasis on the knowledge-base of the profession. Normative professional standards. Collegiate communities of practice.
II	those which primarily seek to represent and lobby on behalf of the profession and to obtain [...] legislative relief and support	Mechanisms for enhancing status
III	those that negotiate on behalf of their members are often barely distinguishable from trade unions	Mechanisms for enhancing status
IV	those that seek to regulate the profession	Normative professional standards.
V		Serving members: consumerism, commodification and psychological belonging
VI		Representing the public
VII		A business in its own right.

Emphasis on the knowledge base of the profession

The association has a primary role in the curation, development and dissemination of professional knowledge pertinent to the occupational fields it is attached to, acting as a “generic mode of formal organization of professions” (Freidson 2001: 146). This role is often described in dominant terms: “professional associations set in the forefront of their articles the extension of the science or art involved” (Lewis

and Maude 1952: 46); some “are almost exclusively focused on the development and reputation of the subject base and field of practice” (Friedman and Mason 2007: 8); engaged in standardisation (Nerland and Karseth 2015). A distinct professional knowledge base is seen as often fundamental to both definitions of professions, and assertions of such claims were regularly considered fundamentally important for new professions (Lewis and Maude 1952: 46), often the basis that underpins jurisdictional claims (Mackie 2000). At one level the association is providing an important time honoured function, enabling members to “keep pace with literary and scientific progress in their own time” (Hume 1853: 1), but on another more direct and deliberate level the association can be seen to be formally sustaining professional knowledge, and legitimising knowledge and practice through their codification in to association guidelines. The associations role appears tied to an initiate driver of professionalism, to keep oneself up to date, “[p]rofessional bodies have tended to depend heavily on the individual’s sense of moral obligation and personal initiative to keep abreast of change and new developments by reading relevant literature and attending seminars and conferences” (Watkins 1999b: 66). The association achieves this through a range of well-trodden processes, peer reviewed academic articles, guidelines, conferences, magazine articles, thought-pieces, web articles, and more recently, e-learning (Hanson and Williams 2012). This role tends to be highly valued by members (Belfall 1999, Dalton and Dignam 2007, Wotherspoon and McCarthy 2016). There are suggestions that knowledge management is key to the future of professional associations (Agarwal and Islam 2016), but associations need to modernise the channels they use (DeLeskey 2003).

The process of curating professional knowledge is a broader concept than a simple bi-directional transactional relationship between association and member. Meintjes and Neimann-Struweg (2009) evidence the work of public relations associations in legitimising professional practice through the development of its knowledge base. Yaeger (1981) makes the link between professional knowledge and an association’s role in fostering professionalism. Such activity can also acts as a mechanism for the basis of jurisdictional claims, the upskilling of practitioners as

part of a mechanism of ongoing professionalism and professional mobility claims (Friedman *et al.* 2000, Friedman, Davis and Phillips 2001). On occasions it can also be seen as a direct intervention in to the community, “professional bodies help to co-ordinate advances in innovation and promote the uptake of new techniques and technologies” (CIOB 2015: 10), evidencing that this process is both a curative and legitimising role, but sometimes also a leadership role for associations, bringing and legitimising to members outside knowledge (e.g. Swan and Newell 1995, Balla 2001, Van Achterberg, Holleman and Van de Ven 2006) and practices (e.g. Dickson and Arcodia 2010, Noordegraaf 2011a). The association builds a knowledge base for the profession through and with its members, sharing it both with the wider generic membership and within the smaller communities of practice that are held in special interest groups, chapters and divisions. The association can be seen as a learning agent (Rusaw 1995), or positioned as significant knowledge agents, they are seen as pivotal, in that they “engage in issues of knowledge development and show concerns for the professional work standards” (Karseth and Nerland 2007: 349). From an institutional perspective, the emphasis on professional knowledge positions the association as an institutional agent, organising their memberships in relation to professional knowledge, described by Leicht and Fennell, as “classic examples of groups that exert normative pressure through their socialization (and continued re-socialization) of occupational incumbents” (2008: 434). Rusaw usefully summarises this complexity, seeing roles for association as “providers of updated and extended professional knowledge, [...] builders of normative frameworks for enacting knowledge in practice” (1995: 215). As knowledge agents, the association is acting in a complex way, organising the field and giving meaning to knowledge, legitimising aspects, producing the underpinning of the professional claim, and socialising practice. This positions associations as dynamic entities, and accords with Greenwood’s challenge to institutional accounts, [t]he assumption within institutional accounts that associations are conservative agencies has been shown to be overly simplistic. Associations play multifaceted roles, whose degree of emphasis and importance vary according to the stage of the change process” (Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings 2002: 76).

Mechanisms for normative professional standards

One of the most visible and prominent roles of a professional association is its ability to create normative professional standards within a profession. This is achieved through a range of processes, from setting entry criteria through to qualifying members (e.g. Millerson 1964), credentialing (e.g. Freidson 1986), more recently micro-credentialing (Clayton, Elliott and Iwata 2014, Davis-Becker and Buckendahl 2017, ASAE Foundation 2018), and the setting and upholding of practice standards through ethics and conduct codes (Arcodia and Reid 2008, PARN 2013a, Brouard et al. 2017, Weller 2017, Carvalho, Correia and Serra 2018). Professional associations are not the only actors in the creation of professional standards. Regulators, professional service firms, governments and its agencies, education establishments and third-party organisations are also routinely seen to be originators and creators of professional standards within an occupational field. In relation to these other actors, a professional association can also be seen as a “discrete type of “parallel intermediary” – entities which influence or mediate the authorized relationships between regulatory agencies and intermediaries, or primary and secondary intermediaries, but are not formally a part of them” (Carter and Mahallati 2019: 64). Yet the setting and maintenance of professional standards has a degree of centrality in professional associations and is often part of the primary purpose of a membership relationship and contract between association and member.

Professional standards across all sectors are seen to be dynamic and changing, for example in higher education (Lemoine and Richardson 2015) and the broader professional space (Frederiksen 2013). The associations’ roles in setting and maintaining standards and creating normative effects on its members is fairly well defined, documented and prominent (Friedman, Hanson and Williams 2009). Several authors position this activity as having primacy for associations. Many see it as fundamentally central to the definition of these organisations: “[t]he role of the association providing qualifications is to ensure professional standards” (Ferguson 2005: 15); “professional associations, at their inception, operate as a somewhat avant-garde for establishing performance criteria concerning specific

services” (Moore 1970: 58-59). Professional standards act as markers of professionalism, market signals, and are often seen as the basis for status, autonomy and authority claims, “both professional status and professional autonomy rests on claims to specialized skills and knowledge” (Randall and Kindiak 2008: 343). Setting professional standards, as an ideal-type activity, is broader than entry and progression criteria; it also encompasses ethical codes and ethical competence behaviour (Friedman, Daly and Andrzejewska 2005). Here there is a more distinct potential role for associations in developing and clarifying these standards, and improving the practice of their members (Friedman 2007). PARN, in their study of 12 UK professional bodies and found broad commonality across these instances: good citizenship; competence; professional deportment; and conduct. The express duty was considerate to a range of stakeholders including clients, society, employers, public, profession, self and colleagues (Friedman, Daly and Andrzejewska 2005).

In a broader sense however, it is an aspect of the associations’ work that is considered to be under challenge, as “[t]raditional forms of professional control have migrated away from professional associations to large professional firms [...] or transnational governance structures that are increasingly bureaucratic and less tolerant of traditional normative professional controls” (Bevort and Suddaby 2016: 17). An interesting example of this phenomena and its potential impact on an associations primary role can be found in a recent CIPD report. The report reflects that “HR practitioners have a slightly stronger sense of identification with the organisation than with the profession. When under pressure from the business, organisational identity may take precedence over professional identity for HR practitioners, which could provide some explanation for the gap between ambition to uphold ethical values and actual practice” (CIPD 2017: 3). Counter arguments are put from the teaching profession, that centralisation of professional standards brings clarity and broader incentive (Ingvarson 1998). The role of, and relationship to, the state also needs to be considered as important, particularly a states tendency and disposition to interfere in professional markets. Pertinent to this case study is the current UK approach to both healthcare and psychological

therapy professions. Healthcare regulation in the UK is the outcome of several different government initiatives, and so rather than a uniform approach, is a patchwork of initiatives and is seen to be variable (see Allsop and Jones 2018, Chamberlain 2018), “or delegating legal authority to professional groups – varies by context” (Lester 2016: 1). Psychological therapies in particular consists of professions that are statutory regulated under one initiative, and therefore disconnected to fitness to practice and professional conduct processes (e.g. BPS 2018), whilst others, like BACP, are held under a different regime of voluntary regulation, and hold a hybrid mechanism of self-regulation, responsible for both conduct and fitness to practice of its members. State policies on regulation and intervention have significant impact on the role, scope, purpose and nature of professional associations. Those that self-regulate and set their own professional standards have to contend with the sometimes contradictory roles of holding both member and client interest (Lewis and Maude 1952). Where an association does hold members accountable to codes of practice (Lloyd 1950, Matzer 1973) there is seen an imperative for ensuring the functions’ prominence, “[t]he declarations of high purpose are not merely window dressing, although they are in perpetual danger of becoming so. This is particularly the case when the profession confronts a crisis in which the interests of its members seemingly or actually conflict with the interests of the public” (Merton 1958: 50). Self-regulation can also be seen as an effective association-driven closure strategy, “[t]he professional body is, however, strongly regulatory of conduct, being governed by the qualified membership. Licensing of practitioners by professional bodies a key feature, allowing effective occupational closure” (Ackroyd 2016: 22).

One interesting outcome of the setting of professional standards within an association context is how this can stratify a membership, demarcating one member from another on the basis of assessed professional standards and competency. For some, this produces a sense of a meritocratic membership grade structure, or hierarchy, depending on perspective, based on forms of professional standards: qualification; competency; and experience (Leicht and Fennell 2001, Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings 2002, Friedman, Phillips and Cruickshank

2006). From one perspective, this structuring of the profession can be seen as an enabler of effective market-signalling. A more critical perspective would see it as a closure strategy, supporting embedded power structures in the mechanism of professional elitism “despite past fictions that professions were a community of equals, they have always been stratified. In the traditional professions there has always been a prestigious elite, who usually serve power and wealth, and a much larger body of humble practitioners, who serve more humbled and less exalted customers” (Freidson 1986: 273). Freidson’s argument starts to break down as an association embraces the potentiality of micro-credentialing, a flatter approach to the setting of professional standards that does not necessarily rely on or support hierarchy. However, there are also associations whose governance only permits members of certain standing to vote and participate in decisions, a hierarchical approach to professional standards that supports Freidson’s claim.

Professional standards, when articulated through a professional association hold an intrinsic role in the formal organisation of a professions’ knowledge, practice and conduct. The association can realistically only influence those practitioners who elect to be members (Freidson 2001: 148), and activity and effectiveness of an associations’ agency is seen to be curtailed by the level of state intervention, and the strength of other stakeholders who equally lay claim to the setting of standards.

Mechanisms for enhancing status (economic and social)

I have elected to hold economic reward and status together, as MacDoanld observes “the collective pursuit of economic advantage is, in a sense, more important, but cannot in the nature of things be separated from the drive for respectability” (1995: 31). Advancing pecuniary and status interests of a group of practitioners appear to be a central tenant of an associations work, “almost all are concerned to raise the status of their practitioners as professionals” (Friedman and Mason 2007: 7). Intrinsically this links to the concept of status professionalism, a right or pursuit of a social position (Elliott 1972), and positions as status organisations (Prandy 1965), concerned with the business of the elevation of the profession in the minds of employers and state, “a professional association is

primarily concerned with status” (1965: 65). Prandy notes that different associations can be concerned with alternative strategies, some concentrating on status inflation, whilst others concerned themselves with improving economic rent. Here there is a synergy between the work of professional associations and the classical concepts of the jurisdictional claims of Abbott, the professional project of Larson, and to those theories that subscribe to the power and sceptical schools, “[t]he ideal-type ideology of professional is concerned with justifying the privileged position of the intuitions of an occupation in a political economy as well as the authority and status of its members (Freidson 2001: 106). For Freidson, the positioning of a profession and the attendant reward within a changing socio-economic landscape is of significant concern for associations, “[a]s professional association pure and simple it attempts to protect and advance the fortunes of its members as its leaders conceive those fortunes” (1986: 186). State relationships were often seen as central to success in these endeavours, attaining the perceived permanence of favourable regulative bargain, to defend against the potential impact of de-professionalisation and managerialism “[t]he task of professional associations of employed professionals [...] is to press for either legislation or administrative regulations that require jobs within professional institutions to be filled not only by their own credentialed members and that minimize the exercise of lay authority over the rank and file” (1986: 189). The association makes a collective claim for both the profession and practitioner (Beckman 1973, Colman 1973, Hooghe 2003), with governments (Gosnell and Schmidt 1935: 33), employers, clients or others. Political activity, to influence government agendas by exerting a classical normative influence appears to be a routine exercise in expressing the collective will of members (e.g. ACCA 2015, BACP 2017, RIBA 2018, RICS 2018b) that can be as much to do with the exercise of the professional ideal as it is a closure strategy to signal to the market it should only commission services of certain professional standards (Lewis and Maude 1952). And whilst the state remains integral, improving economic rent, status inflation and influencing employment practices requires the association to work across a wider set of external stakeholders than just the state, in particular employers and commissioners.

Improving status claims and economic rent of their members is routinely evidenced to be of paramount importance for members (e.g. Gilsdorf and Vawter 1983, Belfall 1999, Fitzpatrick 2002, Hooghe 2003, Dalton and Dignam 2007, Williams 2013a, Wotherspoon and McCarthy 2016). Failure to deliver on these aspirant agendas can have dramatic consequences for associations, members can leave one association and form new associations that has significantly greater express focus on these deliverables (e.g. Corfield 1999, Edwards, Anderson and Chandler 2005, Critchfield 2011). Improving status, occupational prestige (Trieman 1977) particularly the institutional logic of social recognition (Zhou 2005), and economic rent have been persistent themes in the study of professions and joining associations. It is likely that collective agency is the most effective mechanism for advocating for enhancements in these fields, and associations become a vehicle for the process that is to “strike a bargain with society’ in which they exchange competence and integrity against the trust of client and community, relative freedom from lay supervision and interference, protection against unqualified competition as well as substantial remuneration and higher social status” (Rueschemeyer 1983: 41). Weeden ‘s North American study summarises that much of this work falls to the professional association, “[f]ew lay members may give much thought to protecting their privileges, instead leaving the task to the active members of the occupation’s representative association” (2002: 59). The association is seen to play an active role in realising the collective economic and status interests of both profession and membership, and there is an assumption that this occupies significant proportion of an associations time and resource, and, in this sense, is a more pragmatic interpretation of the agency of associations than those linked to the ideal-typical professional project.

Membership relationships: belonging, consumerism and commodification

Associations are membership bodies that operate a particular form of membership based on a proposition that is regularly seen to be quite complex. The relationship with members often dominates literature on professional associations, and several approaches have attempted to understand describe it, either generally (Belfall 1999, Gruen, Summers and Acito 2000, Dalton and Dignam 2007, Dalton 2009,

Markova *et al.* 2013, Williams 2013a), or specifically in relation to certain professions (e.g. Mackie 2000, Skarlicki *et al.* 2000, DeLeskey 2003, Bhugra 2008, Ki and Wang 2016, Hall 2017, Ki 2018), with explanations on how it is changing (Sladek 2011), or how it should be managed (Fowler 1999). There is significant debate on how the membership relationship should be defined and measured.

The membership logic is normally a central logic in professional associations, with the majority describing themselves as membership bodies, and many as member-led, although evidence suggests it is important to factor in to these accounts that associations vary in how financially dependent they are on their members subscriptions (PARN 2013a). Dependency on a membership is often more than financial “[f]or an association of kindred professionals to thrive, it should be seen to be beneficial to its members” (Fitzpatrick 2002: 42). Benefits derived from a membership often have a high degree of conformity between associations (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: An example of membership benefits from Professional Associations from PARN survey (PARN 2018)

The membership relationship, putting governance to one side (see chapter 3), should not be reduced to a simple transactional value proposition, it is more nuanced, containing products and services combined with a set of psychological drivers including a sense of belonging, market signalling, opportunity to network

and social identity (Tajfel and Turner 1986). PARN, referencing Holmes (2010) delimitate membership offerings in to the tangible and intangible elements (Williams, Harrington and Hanson 2011) and effectively build on Belfall's value hierarchy (1999), whilst Hager (2014), in his study of five associations, looks at the effect of public and private incentives on membership engagement. The work of Bhattacharya evidences the nuanced relationship. It indicates membership length seemingly acts to "[diminish] the lapsing rate" and "members who participated in special interest groups that were related to the central mission of the organization had a significantly lower hazard of lapsing" (1998: 41-42). Where research on membership tends towards the overly positivist, it risks losing the essence of the proposition, "[d]elivering core services is fundamental to membership retention as well as the membership's consumption of the association's services. However, it does not increase coproduction or enhance the membership's psychological attachment to the organization" (Gruen, Summers and Acito 2000: 47). Intangible elements of the relationship are both harder to define and measure, and have been likened to a similarity to the work based concept of a psychological contract (see Holmes 2010).

There are indications that membership relationships and models are changing: prominent are changes in the demonstrable behaviour of younger professionals behaviours, how they join and relate to associations (Moore 2011, Moore 2019), together with the indeterminacy in the professional landscape that brings uncertainty of employment, and the rise of post-modern professional behaviour (Aldridge 1996, Boon, Flood and Webb 2005). Whilst there will always be strong elements of a *gesellschaft* proposition, the challenge might be better met through the scope of relationship marketing (Vincent and Webster 2013) which appeals to the complexity of the task in building relationships and renewals in membership bodies, and associations must be attentive to engagement and 'hearts and minds' (Pitts and Nadarajah 2018). However, a UK charity constructed association must also be attentive to the private benefit it can confer on members for their subscriptions (Charity Commission 2012): "the primacy of the public good and the service ideal are focal points in motivating professionals to pool their resources,

professional associations often have to appeal to the individual's interest in private benefits by providing exclusive services ranging from placement services to dissemination of information through journals, newsletters, or conferences" (Hovekamp 1997: 236). The consumption of a membership is an important consideration alongside other aspects, Ki and Wang's research on over 13,000 members indicates, "that members' perceptions of personal and professional benefits positively correlated with their intentions to renew and recommend membership. If a member perceived a higher level of benefits, he or she would demonstrate a greater likelihood of satisfaction with the benefits and therefore be more likely to renew membership or recommend it to others" (2016: 199). The challenge for associations in terms of the membership logic, however central, is to "resist overgeneralization regarding engagement motivations, outcomes, and commitment across professional fields" (Hager 2014: 39S) and not be drawn into commodifying a membership absolutely, and the production of cafeteria membership models that some predict as the future (e.g. Gold, Rodgers and Smith 2002).

Collegiate communities of practice

Professions can be seen as a series of communities of practice, often organised under a collective professional title, and associations recognise this and organise these communities, with their members in to formal groups (Merton 1958, Wenger, McDermott and Synder 2002, PARN 2013b, PARN 2014b, PARN 2014a, PARN 2015b, PARN 2019). Associations are seen to "constitute a site for formal organisation in which different voices and viewpoints meet, norms are negotiated and agreements achieved" (Nerland and Karseth 2015: 3-4). Borrowing from the discipline of communities of practice, that "does not exist by itself. It is part of a broader conceptual framework for thinking about learning in its social dimensions" (Wenger 2010: 179), it is a concept that suggests "our knowledge is not simply a cognitive process, but a social one" (Weller 2017: 362). Professional associations, through their commitment to co-creation and sharing professional knowledge, can be seen as having parallels with how communities of practice form and function (see Wenger, McDermott and Synder 2002), in that the association

“constitute a site for formal organisation in which different voices and viewpoints meet, norms are negotiated and agreements achieved”(Nerland and Karseth 2015: 3-4). This community aspect would be especially heightened in an association if the profession lacks the presence of a large state employer or sizeable professional service firms, in particular if many practitioners were contractors or self-employed. This is particularly interesting in the UK, where the Office for National Statistics report does not demarcate by profession, but indicates “The number of self-employed increased from 3.3 million people (12.0% of the labour force) in 2001 to 4.8 million (15.1% of the labour force) in 2017” (ONS 2018b). Members’ grouping together can be social learning, based on geography, or specific learnings, based on job role, specialty within a profession, or a variety of characteristics and beliefs (PARN 2015b). Associations also spend significant resource in developing and cultivating communities of practice within their memberships (PARN 2015b); however the treatment of associations and professions as homogenous entities means this important aspect of associations and professions is fundamentally under-researched and attended to in literature.

A public logic

A professional ideal that commits to the normative service of the client has been a persistent feature on the discourse of professions, “[p]rofessional ideologies [that] generally commit to addressing inequalities among clients and/ or the public as part of their altruistic ethos” (Saks 2015: 1), the embodiment of what Parsons describes as “altruistically serving the interests of others” (1939: 458). Merton (1958) noted that professional associations had a societal, public orientation: for example the improvement of health care or application of justice. A trade-off is made where the profession is afforded market privileges in return for discharging these altruistic aims: “professions are occupations with special power and prestige. Society grants [them] these rewards because [they] have special competence in esoteric bodies of knowledge linked to central needs and values of the social system, and because professions are devoted to the service of the public, above and beyond material incentives” (Larson 1977: x). The concept is disputed and some see this as “economic self interest in the name of public interest” (Lesage,

Hottegindre and Baker 2016: 14); others argue “the very great prestige of the professions is a response of the society to their apparent self-denial i.e. they can, but typically do not exploit. This is not saying that professionals are nobler than lay citizens. Instead, the professional community holds that exploitation would inevitably lower the prestige of the professional community and subject it to stricter lay controls” (Goode 1957: 196). The role of the association is to co-ordinate much of this activity, and on occasions deliver it.

The public service ideal is embodied at both a practitioner level and association level, particularly in client-facing occupations like counselling and psychotherapy. Halliday’s (1987) research on the Chicago Bar Association is of particular interest as it offers insight in to the production of public benefit beyond the pecuniary interests of professions. For many UK associations this orientation will be embedded in their constitution, particularly those constituted through the Charity Commission or formed by Royal Charter (Millerson 1964, HEBRG 2011, Privy Council 2018), itself reflective of the public good ideal by distinguished thinkers including Émile Durkheim (1957), Robert Merton (1958), Everett C Hughes (1960) and Talcott Parsons (1968). The challenge for associations is not only the articulation of the service ideal, but is to “clearly states the added value that such an organization brings to wider society” (Fitzpatrick 2002: 8). Different associations are seen to offer a range of public services (Friedman and Mason 2003a), public education, benefit and engagement (Baker 2007, PARN 2011, Tonkens 2016) and, from some, public protection (Coffee 2006, Williams, LaFosse and Harris 2011). Primarily activity is based on public education initiatives aimed at addressing information asymmetry. Almost every association seeks to manage the reputation and legitimacy of their profession, and this is often an undertaking aimed at improving public education, public understanding and public literacy. A recent study mapping public understanding of a range of disciplines (Gauchat and Andrews 2018) contributes to the field of literature on this activity of professions, and the potential role of an association orchestrating this. It is a role that goes beyond specific market-signalling, and is tied in to the legitimacy-seeking nature of associations (chapter 8).

A number of associations afford this logic a stronger degree of centrality and are seen to engage in public engagement and public protection strategies. There are services designed specifically for the public. A primary mechanism for enabling a public protection role is their common place codes of ethics and a presence of an attendant professional conduct procedure, “professional disciplinary bodies are a prominent feature of professions in most advanced capitalist countries” (Lesage, Hottegindre and Baker 2016: 14). Where the profession exists in a non-regulated market, the association, in terms of public protection, acts as a market regulator. To maintain legitimacy the association has to undertake this work effectively else risk the consequence of reputational damage and accusations of self-interest and imbalance in favour of its membership at the expense of the public. Writing from the context of the French auditing profession, “[p]rior research conducted primarily in Anglo-American countries has indicated that the disciplinary practices of the professional bodies have been focused on protecting the private interests of practicing auditors to a greater extent than protecting the public interest” (Lesage, Hottegindre and Baker 2016: 12). Associations are also seen to act collectively in the public good, for instance the short-lived Professions For Good initiative that looked to bring associations together to create a collective voice for the public benefit of professions and create agency around social mobility and fair access to the professions (PFG 2012), or the more recent challenge on social mobility and apprenticeships (PARN 2015a).

A business in its own right

Finally, the association is a mission-driven formal organisation (Blau and Scott 1962: 41). The association must be attentive to its own operations, organisation, people and finance, remain a viable trading organisation (Harvey, Mason and Ward 1995) considering both sustainability and capability. In this right they are no different to other organisations, and Friedman and Mason observe “[p]rofessional bodies that are not government funded must maintain cash flow and substantive levels of reserves [...] [i]n this they share many characteristics with all other organisations” (2007: 15). It is suggested they do this with varying degrees of competency. The study of two Australian professional associations revealed their

“boards exhibited a variable but significant commercial orientation and profit motive that appears more prominent than hitherto recognized in prior research studies in this area” (Parker 2007: 1475). Whilst association income streams vary from association to association (Friedman and Afitska 2007, PARN 2016), it must manage its capacity to deliver to its multiple roles and specific strategies. Often staff and systems are a significant proportion of an association’s expenditure and investment, and investment in these enables other non-revenue generating aspects of the associations’ work to take place, and the ongoing viability of an association (see Dugan 2015). The association must be routinely attentive to the management of this, particularly as the trend for an association as it develops is to acquire more paid staff to undertake the work traditionally the domain of volunteers. Associations, can find themselves needing to think commercially, often their services ‘compete’ with commercial offerings to members, particularly and increasingly training, directories and information provision. There is no sense in the literature that associations are self-serving in these respects, although the management of associations, aside from governance, is very poorly researched and evidenced. Raymond Fowler’s reflections on his role of CEO of the American Psychological Association are insightful: “[t]he CEO is responsible for staff, facilities, and fiscal management, as well as supporting policy development and implementation” (1999: 57). He describes a role that is organisationally orientated, a juxtaposition to the other roles and logics of associations discussed within this chapter.

2.4 Problematizing associations: heterogeneity, decision-makers and rationality

The treatment of associations so far can tend towards a concept that they are ‘black boxes’ capable of translating a need or desire in to agency, and, whilst this works in the exploration of ‘what associations are seen to do’, it hides a set of complexities that warrant exploration. I have elected to concentrate on three aspects of complications that help us understand associations: a membership tends to be heterogeneous in nature, comprising distinct groups (Freidson 1986, Friedman, Phillips and Cruickshank 2006, Williams 2013b); secondly, not all associations hold

monopolistic position with their profession(s) and exist in competitive markets; and thirdly associations have complex governance structures, often separating staff from trustees and directors (Friedman, Phillips and Chan 2002, Friedman and Mason 2003b, Otto 2003, Kuhlmann, Agartan and von Knorring 2016, Charity Commission 2017).

The issue of heterogeneity in a profession is an interesting conundrum for associations in so much as the organisation is an association of members of a specific profession that will invariably consist of subgroups (Brint 1994, Evetts 1998, Leicht and Fennell 2001, Scott 2001, Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings 2002, Scott 2008b). This produces and represents a “multiplicity of interests and structures that inhabit the interior worlds of professional groups” (Carvalho, Correia and Serra 2018: 14). Freidson observes, the profession “cannot easily be seen as a single community of interest. Established professions come to be composed of a number of highly differentiated subcommunities, loosely held together by a common occupational title, a jurisdiction in the larger division of labor within which its members struggle over subjurisdictions” (2001: 144). The subgroups of a membership can exist on a variety of stratifications, different professional titles, different professions, through to communities of interest and communities of practice. This can be seen to create tensions within associations as they pursue their role advocating for and organising a homogenised profession. Freidson alludes, “[s]ome extend and expand segments of the common corpus of knowledge and skill, and, protected by the profession’s labor market shelter, institutionalize those segments into specialties. Those specialties often compete with each other in dealing with the same kind of work problems” (2001: 143). This can be challenging where an association holds multiple differentiated professions in one body. Not all jurisdictional claims or professionalisation processes will benefit all of its members equally, some may benefit one subset at the expense of another, clearly a problematic issue for associations to manage. The second difficulty with heterogeneity is how an association manages diversity of opinion within its membership, how the ‘collective will’ of the membership is distilled and understood in order for the association to act for the broader profession as

collective agency. The association may devote significant time and resource to the curation of iterative processes where the membership debate opinion and need amongst themselves. It is important, when thinking through the nature of professional associations that the profession represented by an association is not seen as a single homogenous or uniform entity. As such its collective will and needs are often desperate and require a degree of synthesising by the association (Critchfield 2011).

Intra-profession dynamics present a challenge to traditional concepts of associations. Unless an association has achieved a regulative bargain, become a state sanctioned monopoly - membership is elective. Here the prospective member has a choice or choices of which association to belong, and the association is considered to be operating in an intra-professional competitive market. Where an association exists in a competitive occupational field it is reasonable to expect it to expend resource on developing its own propositions. A contested professional field also risks its associations having different opinions, strategies, policies and positions on key issues. The process of collectively organising and acting for a profession is therefore made significantly more difficult and potentially increasingly ineffective in terms of collective agency. In this case, at most, associations can only represent and influence their own discreet memberships. However there is evidence, when the external threat is considered enough, there is a case for the associations to work together as occurred, for example in the 1960s among the accounting bodies in Australia (Carnegie and O'Connell 2012). When describing associations, it is important, to consider it in relation to the profession and alternative representative bodies. The assumption of single profession, single association does not hold for most bodies.

Finally, these self-governing entities (Mackie 2000) have an inherent complexity in their decision-making process. It is often a tripartite governance processes consisting of elected trustees, employed executive staff and general, wider, democratic membership involvement (see Friedman, Phillips and Chan 2002, Friedman and Mason 2003b). They often differ from membership associations, those “groups defined by having a membership that controls the group leadership,

with *bottom-up* power, rather than *top-down* power” (Smith and Stebbins 2016: emphasis in original). The notion of *bottom-up* power in professional associations had already been robustly contested by Halliday and Capel (1979). Trustees have a role to set the standards and strategic direction of the association (Otto 2003), appraise and hold the management to account (Drucker 1990), and remain distant from operational management. In practice distinctions are often blurred (Harris 1992, Locke, Begum and Robson 2003) and operational and strategic decisions mix together. Membership representation can be complex. It can be difficult for an organisation to know what a membership thinks, as evidenced by Cox, “consensus within the profession has not been explored, and has not been developed via broad discussion. Council is thus not clearly aware of the mood of its constituency; nor does the constituency have a clearly thought-through position” (1984: 1159). Effective non-profit governance is a rich and evolving field of study and research in its own right. Managing these relationships is a nuanced process that creates the potential for a disconnect between the organisation and its members, as Imber and Iving ask “why they have become alienated from many of their members and locked into administrative-bureaucratic enclaves” (1999: 7). Association decision making is complex, and in some associations this process may be complexified by other agendas. Noguchi and Edwards’ (2008) study of the accounting body ICAEW, drawing on the theoretical framework of Robert Michels (1962), introduces the ‘iron rule of oligarchy’. Here the authors explore how certain groups populate and retain power within association decision-making roles to influence the direction of the association, and in this instance, the profession. They suggest, reflecting earlier literature on power, that elites influence associations to suit their own needs. Interestingly, Richard W Scott makes a similar observation: “most unions, most professional associations and other types of voluntary associations [...] exhibit oligarchical leadership structures (Scott 2003: 343). This interesting tension, between democratic and oligarchical form (Moore 1970) can be skilfully managed, as Halliday and Capel’s case study shows (1979). The implication for this thesis, and any study of associations, is to better understand how the association creates mandates from its membership, mediates the collective will of

disparate and heterogenic groups, converts this into agency, and resists the inherent oligarchical tendencies that governance processes embed.

2.5 Conclusions

An understanding of professional associations, these “formalized organizational structure[s] with a purpose and a mandate” (Moore 1970: 114), cannot be developed without deeply contextualising them in the study of professions. They cannot be abstracted out. Even the most bureaucratic functions, the management of associations, remains tied to the concept of professions, the mission-driven nature of associations quickly brings the debate away from management theory and returns to the sociology of professions. Regardless of standpoint within the sociology of professions, associations are often seen to play an important and central role in the creation of agency, “the association is the generic mode of organization for the professions and, for that matter, any occupation that has coalesced into a “community” and seeks control over its own work” (Freidson 2001: 146). Associations appear to be influential actors, having “a core role in professionalization, setting the ideals for professional identity, knowledge and practice” (Reed 2018: 222). They appear to have been the dominant mechanism for professions to achieve a variety of outcomes, in part the organisation of a profession, in some cases a normative force in its broader professionalisation, part a curator of information, a knowledge and learning agent, the mechanism that facilitates communities of practice, and a mechanism for legitimising external challenges to the profession, the later Guthrie and Parker (2016) allude to in their analysis of the accounting profession, “professional accounting associations have an important role to play in the conversation about the changing nature of accounting” (2016: 4). Associations are seen to be dynamic, not conservative entities, changing in relation to how professions and society is changing, “[b]efore the arrival of the neo-liberal politics and policies of Reaganism and Thatcherism ushered in during the 1980s, the professions were a disparate group of well-organised occupations with varying degrees of elite status and career security” (Dent et al. 2016: 3). The association also acts for the public, through a variety of

processes, and the logic of public is seen to vary in terms of centrality from association to association.

There appears a growing level of uncertainty, brought about from a range of factors from technological innovation through to sociological change that impact on both professions and their associations. Susskind and Susskind warn “the professions are not immutable. They are an artefact that we have built to meet a particular set of needs in a print-based industrial society” (2015: 3). Associations themselves, once the dominant form of organisation, are challenged: “I believe that the importance of associations for the establishment of professionalisation has been greatly exaggerated by theorists and that they are not essential for the initiation of institutions of professionalism (Freidson 2001: 146). However, there is a permanence to institutions, and professions have institutional qualities “the profession is itself an institutional model specifying the characteristics of the social structures of those actors performing knowledge work” (Scott 2008b: 233) that are applicable to their associations.

Professional associations are presented as complex entities, an extension of both members, a professions’, and public’s collective needs. It holds these in tension, best articulated through the language of institutional logics (chapter 3). They are seen to hold a multiplicity of roles, often opaquely, which makes them an interesting, and influential unit of study.

3: Professional associations through the lens of neo-institutional theory

The previous chapter provided a functional context and narrative for associations, largely based on the conceptualisation of professions from sociological theories. Separate fields of enquiry relating to management, organisations, and specifically institutional explanations have the potential to offer a different lens in the study of professional associations: “contemporary research area of professions and organizations can be considered both a branch of the sociology of professions [···] and of the organizational theory that studies the managerial aspects of professional work. In the literature these two aspects have all too rarely been brought together” (Brock and Saks 2016: 1). This chapter focuses on professional associations as organisational entities, making routine and strategic decisions, allocating resources, and navigating environments of increasing degrees of uncertainty. This situates this aspect of the thesis in the field of organisational studies, debates about organisational rationality, bounded rationality, bureaucratic dysfunctionality, and formal and informal organisations. The challenge is to treat associations as value-invested entities, rather than purely rationally efficient bureaucracies. They are subject to change and evolve, as Selznick suggests, organisations are the product of many other influences, “something that happens to an organization over time, reflecting the organization’s own distinctive history, the people who have been in it, the groups it embodies and the vested interests they have created, and the way it has adapted to its environment” (1957: 16-17). Of particular interest for this thesis are explanations of organisations that suggest organisations are legitimacy-seeking, and likely to pursue strategies that deliver this. The previous chapter indicated the perennial but growing importance of the external environment to understanding professional associations, and this ties with institutional concepts of organisations, that they are not “tightly bounded entities clearly demarcated from the surrounding environment” (Suchman 1995: 571). Researchers and authors like Selznick (1949, 1957), and more latterly DiMaggio and Powell (1983), argue organisations exist within complex environments; they “compete not just for

resources and customers, but for political power and institutional legitimacy, for social as well as economic fitness” (1983: 150).

The basis of this chapter is to contextualise associations in terms of neo-institutional accounts. I have elected to pursue this for several reasons: there is a clear interest in the intersection between professions, organisations and institutional accounts (e.g. DiMaggio and Powell 1983, Scott 2003, Leicht and Fennell 2008, Scott 2008b, Muzio, Kirkpatrick and Kipping 2011, Muzio, Brock and Suddaby 2013). Some neo-institutional accounts attribute the role of professional associations as an important mechanism (Greenwood, Suddaby and Hinings 2002, Scott 2008b, Scott 2014). For other there is the apparent high degree of structural (Friedman, Phillips and Cruickshank 2006) and process operations (Friedman et al. 2000, Friedman and Mason 2003b, Friedman and Mason 2003a, Friedman and Griffin 2014). The apparent conformity between associations warrants a discussion on isomorphism and the consideration that professions and professional associations have both institutional qualities and can be seen as acting as institutional agents. Descriptions of institutions, being resistant to change (Jepperson 1991), have reflective longevity (Zucker 1977), “as organizations become infused with value, they are no longer regarded as expendable tools; participants want to see that they are preserved” (Scott 2001: 24), and “the more enduring features of social life... giving ‘solidity’ [to social systems] across time and space” (Giddens 1994: 24) strongly resonate with accounts and descriptions of professional associations.

Neo-institutional theory situates the study of organisational behaviour within the wider context of environments and actors, developing as “a reaction against views of organizations as rational, responding exclusively to economic pressures for resources” (Suddaby, Seidl and Lê 2013: 330). This external environment, consisting of social rules, norms, values and external actors, shape organisations and in turn see them “adopt practices not for performance but *legitimacy* effects” (Suddaby, Seidl and Lê 2013: 331 emphasis in original). It necessarily follows that an exploration on organisational legitimacy, its creation and maintenance will also add to the understanding of associations, particularly if they are classified as

legitimacy seeking organisations. Through the framework offered by Suchman (1995), associations can be explored as legitimacy-seeking organisations, attentive to institutional pressures and making calculations based on the potential impact of their own legitimacy.

3.1 Neo-institutional explanations of organisations

As a theoretical framework, neo-institutional accounts are backed by empirical study (Alvesson and Spicer 2018), and have continued to evolve and refine over the past decades (see Meyer 2017, Alvesson and Spicer 2018). Scott's series of 'state of the nation' papers testifies to the development of the discipline, and also provides a useful challenge for future research in the field (Scott 1987, Scott 2008a). This chapter does not attempt a full account of the neo-institutional field, or the lines of dispute. Rather, to concentrate on the theories, I have elected to pursue in developing an understanding of associations as organisational entities. There are well received and cited texts that adequately cover the broader field in more depth, including *The Sage Handbook of Organizational Institutionalism* (Greenwood et al. 2017) and *Institutions and Organizations* (Scott 2014). Institutional theory has become an increasingly popular, if not dominant, theoretical framework for analysing organisations (Suddaby 2010) that continues to evolve and diversify (Greenwood et al. 2017). Scott usefully summarises, "[i]nstitutional theory attends to the deeper and more resilient aspects of social structure. It considers the processes by which structures, including schemas, rules, norms, and routines, become established as authoritative guidelines for social behavior [...] how these elements are created, diffused, adopted, and adapted over space and time; and [...] fall into decline and disuse" (Scott 2005: 461). Despite the rise in popularity of neo-institutional interpretations of professions and organisations, Suddaby suggests there are still significant aspects of research to pursue. In particular he presents a challenge to move from the dominance of positivist interpretations and to explore other epistemological paradigms.

Early institutional thinking: perspectives on organisations

Provided for context, early institutional thinking focused on a challenge to the then classical economic orthodoxy, by offering a different lens to explore and study organisations. Powell and DiMaggio (1991) recognise the long history of institutional thinking from Durkheim and Scott (2014) details more fully this historical contextualisation: plotting theoretical evolution from roots in economic analysis; calls from Thorstein Veblen and John Commons for consideration of dynamic systems rather than static perspectives; the incorporation of Herbert Spencer's (1876) and Graham Sumner's conceptualisations of institutions as organic systems "a concept (idea, notion, doctrine, interest) and a structure" (Sumner 1906: 53). Institutional accounts and frameworks were used across a broad range of enquiry and challenged orthodoxy on several fronts (Table 3).

Table 3: Departures from neo-classical economics by early Institutionalists, adapted from Jacoby (1990: 318-320)

Field	Comment
Indeterminacy vs Determinacy	Institutionalists highlight market power instead of perfect competition and unique equilibria.
Endogenous vs exogenous	Social institutions shape individuals' wants and preferences.
Behavioural realism vs simplifying assumptions	Psychological and pragmatic assumptions for economic motivation are preferred to utilitarian assumptions.
Diachronic vs synchronic analysis	Understanding how the economy acquired features that vary over time and space rather than 'timelessness and placeless' assumptions.

The neo-institutional turn

Contemporary interest in institutional accounts of organisations have seen a resurgence. The publication of two seminal articles, Meyer and Rowan's *Institutionalized organizations: formal structures as myth and ceremony* (1977) and Lynne Zucker's *The role of institutionalization in cultural persistence* (1977) heralded the birth of a new movement in the study of organisations that might be labelled as neo-institutionalism (Greenwood et al. 2008). An evolving body of work of papers (e.g. DiMaggio and Powell 1983, Tolbert and Zucker 1983) and

books (e.g. Meyer and Scott 1983) revitalised existing institutional interpretation. Scott (2005) provides a history of his own role with the re-emergence with an historic account that initially focused on interest in educational sectors. This is a sector that this chapter returns to in a discussion on institutional logics. Researchers developed theoretical frameworks that opened up new pathways to understanding organisations. They “captured the imagination [...] that organizations are influenced by their institutional context” (Greenwood et al. 2008: 3). Scott (2005) highlights that organisations were still considered to be rational organisations, but rationality was a culturally infused system. Organisations “depend for their efficacy—for their reality, on the fact that they are widely shared, or have been promulgated by individuals or groups that have been granted the right to determine such matters” (Scott 1983: 14). Suddaby, building on earlier work by Scott (1994), on the ideational aspects of organisations, suggests the fundamental challenge is to “understand why and how organizations adopt processes and structures for their “meaning” rather than their productive value” (2010: 15).

Some organisations use ambiguous resources and technologies to produce their outputs, and as such may be better rewarded if they follow strategies concerned with legitimacy seeking rather than technical or operational efficiency. Professional associations fit this description succinctly. Often their primary outputs are co-produced between staff and members. In these instances the institutional environment has a determining factor on the direction and work of the business: “organizations are not quasi-rational actors choosing how to function in an optimal manner but rather feel urged to follow rational myths impressed on them by their institutional setting because not to do so would undermine their social legitimacy and risk the loss of important resources and support” (Greenwood 2008: 261). Synthesised in *The Sage Handbook of Organisational Institutionalism* (2008: 4) there are five common elements: organisations are influenced by both their institutional and network contexts; institutional pressures affect all forms of organisation but those most susceptible are organisations with difficult-to-evaluate outputs; organisations adopt isomorphic

contexts to secure social legitimacy; conformity to institutional pressures may be ceremonial and contrary to efficiency rationalisation; and institutionalised practices tend to be widely accepted and change resistant. For associations, all five elements are present: the association is shown in the previous chapter to be influenced by and to influence several institutional fields including membership and employers; they are organisations whose outputs are difficult to consistently evaluate; and professional associations are, on one level a socially constructed phenomenon that has endured over several centuries.

Despite a resurgence, and in some cases dominance, institutional explanations are not without a degree of criticism, critiques and caution, often from within its own field (e.g. Tolbert and Zucker 1996, Suddaby 2010, Greenwood, Hinings and Whetton 2014), particularly its potential for over-reach (Suddaby 2010, Meyer and Höllerer 2014, Alvesson and Spicer 2018), its descriptions of organisations as, “overly passive and confirming depiction of organizations” (Oliver 1991: 146), the broad range of basis of definitions (Czarniawska 2008), lack of self-reflection (Czarniawska 2008), and the impact of the broadening field has made it more “difficult to agree what an institution is not – because institutions have become everything” (Alvesson and Spicer 2018: 7). As early as 1985, questions were being asked regarding the direction of institutional theory. Perrow (1985: 154) notes an “infatuation with cultural myths and symbols to the neglect of power and group interest”. Meyer and Höllerer (2014) produce a detailed account of some of the problems associated with neo-institutional accounts, of particular interest is the potential agency of individuals within the inner-working of organisations, and the treatment of organisations themselves “although organizations are often given human attributes, they are not natural entities – let alone natural persons. Overemphasizing their actorhood and personhood through biological or even anthropomorphic analogies or metaphors reifies organizations and conceals what distinguishes them from individuals, namely that, for instance, their existence is more malleable” (2014: 1225). There is also the suggestion that organisations themselves may be considered unruly units, “encourage more institutional scholarship that explores the taken-for-granted aspects of our current

understanding of formal organizations, analyses novel, 'subdued', or alternative forms of organizing, and critically examines the actorhood of organizations" (2014: 1224). Suddaby highlights how overly enthusiastic adopters of neo-institutional theory have often overplayed the nuances of DiMaggio and Powell's original insight, portraying organisations as "cultural dopes" or "hypermuscular supermen, single handed in their efforts to resist institutional pressure" (2010: 15).

There are some specific challenges for institutional theory that are particularly pertinent to the study of professional associations. Suddaby locates organisations at the heart of his challenge for the theory to explain, "why organizations attend, and attach meaning, to some elements of their institutional environment, and not others" (2010: 15). Similarly, Greenwood, Hinings and Whetten (2014) suggest what is missing "is an attempt to gain a coherent, holistic account of how organizations are structured and managed" (2014: 1206), rather than allow the focus to drift to explaining institutional processes. Tolbert and Zucker (1996) indicate that polemics are unhelpful, suggesting that utility-maximising actors and overly socialised actors that follow norms are ends of a continuum, and what is needed is an understanding of when rationality favours one approach or the other.

3.2 Pertinent theoretical frameworks

Neo-institutional explorations and understandings of organisations are broad and contemporarily developing fields (see Greenwood et al. 2017), and the challenge to researchers is to "clarify and limit the range of concepts" (Alvesson and Spicer 2018: 12). It is important to rise to the challenge of Meyer and Höllerer (2014) and ensure the study of organisations remains a central tenant in the study of institutions, as such associations are considered organisational entities and the primary unit of study in this thesis. An aspect of the original research questions was driven by a need to understand more fully associations' shared apparent high degrees of conformity. Drawn from the previous chapter on the sociology of professions, in particular the jurisdictional claims of Abbott (1988b) and the professional project of Larson (1977) each have particular ramifications for understanding the legitimacy claims of both associations and professions. Suddaby's question on why

some institutional forces are attended to, and others not, becomes an interesting subtext to the study, as does the question about whether associations are passive in these frameworks, or whether, as Christine Oliver's (1991) work suggests, associations have choices and options when they respond to institutional pressures. There is interest in how these organisations derive and manage their legitimacy, and a question about whether professional associations themselves might be considered institutions. Scott defines institutions as "cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behavior" (2001: 33) and institutionalisation as "the process by which actions are repeated and given similar meaning by others" (1992: 117). Scott's two definitions fit comfortably with many socially constructed perspectives on some of the qualities of a professional association.

Iron-cage revisited

A starting point is the perception of high degrees of conformity in the professional association field, and how neo-institutional theories make sense of such phenomenon. Isomorphism is seen as a form of a legitimacy seeking strategy. Here, organisations are seen to compete not just for resources and customers, but for political power and institutional legitimacy, for social as well as economic fitness" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 150). In turn this creates pressures and intentions to "conform to 'rationalized myths' in society about what constitutes a proper organization" (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2017: 77). *The iron cage revisited: institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields* (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), is a seminal paper that is seen to have a broad appeal (Greenwood 2008). The paper argues that organisations become increasingly homogenous, identifying three mechanism or forces that create a convergent pressure towards conformity: *coercive*, through power relationships and external constituents such as Governments and legislation that require an organisation to adopt certain elements and practices; *normative*, which often relate to professions and professional values and duties; and *mimetic*, whereby a degree of copying of structures and behaviours is undertaken between firms largely when such firms are faced with a degree of uncertainty and look to what the deem 'successful'

organisations and seek to replicate. These pressures can be seen as emanating from topographical directions, emanating from above on the organisation, or horizontally from the organisational field (Boxenbaum and Jonsson 2017: 79). Scott (2005), who was developing his own work on institutional interpretations at the time describes how this paper stresses the importance of network connections on influencing organisations.

Each of these three mechanisms can be usefully explored in more detail and applied to concepts of a professional association derived from the work in the previous chapter. First, *coercive* pressures are seen as a conscious obedience to the incorporation of values, norms and institutional requirements (Oliver 1991) alongside the pressures exerted on the organisation from other entities upon which it has a dependent relationship. A professional association is in a dependent relationship with a number of entities, particularly governments, major employers and regulators. For associations, some of the more obvious include their particular regulators, Privy Council, Charity Commission, Companies House, and professional service firms that populate the occupational field. Each of these entities, several of which should be considered authority relations, is capable of creating a coercive force on an organisation that has the potential to develop and enhance the association fields' conformity characteristics. The list is interesting as it contains elective elements, some of which may be the outcome of legitimacy-seeking organisational decisions, for example the choice to be chartered, or a charity, and there will be variation across the association field in terms of these relationships. Taking one example, the Charity Commission for England and Wales has the potential to influence how an association is structured, manages its finances, what services it provides, its governance, and reporting. The Commission issues 110 guideline publications (Charity Commission 2019), each capable of producing an homogenising organisational effect on professional associations.

The role and attitude of the state is seen as particularly interesting in exploring coercive pressures on an association, just as it is on a profession; “[m]ost contemporary approaches to the study of the professions have increasingly emphasized the role of the state” (Hobson-West and Timmons 2016: 48). A

government's prevailing attitude towards professions generally, or a profession specifically, is interesting in the study of associations. UK governments' attitudes to professions and associations are routinely seen to be variable; for example the BBC radio programme *War on the Professions* (BBC 2008) highlights how some professions perceived a government led instrumental and sustained agenda of de-professionalisation; "[u]nder the surface, the professions are not really paddling like crazy; they're engaged in a long war of attrition with government. And they're losing". Similarly, the Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher saw professions as a barrier in free market economics; "what professions enjoyed was their high status; their self-regulation and ethical standards were nonsensical pretences" (SPADA 2009: 11). Government relations with professions have been variable, ignoring them, encouraging better self-regulation, or pursuing strategies of statutory regulation and market controls, restricting professional autonomy and "acting out the proactive corporatist state" (MacDonald 1995: 121). More recently the UK government has pursued light-touch regulation (BIS 2010). Perceived through the lenses of neo-liberal policies, associations are seen as useful mechanisms for addressing important issues for a country, for example wider social mobility issues (BBC 2012), "the state needs the professions to develop policy and politics and guarantee service provision" (Kuhlmann, Agartan and von Knorring 2016: 32).

Coercive forces can create isomorphism, but as they are applied with a degree of difference, they are also seen to create diversity within the association field. The most prominent and interesting example of this related to the UK government's approach to regulation is, "the extent to which the state has an interest in regulating professions – or delegating legal authority to professional groups – varies by context" (Lester 2016: 1); "state-professional relationships depend on specific professions as well as the internal sub-groups of both the profession and the state" (Carvalho, Correia and Serra 2018: 14). Healthcare, pertinent to the primary case study is an interesting and variable context "of the 400 professional groups [...] the majority [...] fall towards the first end of the spectrum where the state has no interest in regulation whether directly or by proxy" (Lester 2016: 2). A

series of governments from the 1980s onwards sought to better regulate healthcare, to “increase control of the health professions within a more competitive internal market based on purchase/provider” (Allsop and Saks 2002: 2), the implementation of reforms to drive and articulate patients’ rights, and concerns over public safety where the government held “a political commitment to improving the quality of public services through direct state intervention [...] place greater emphasis on quality control through the concept of clinical governance” (2002: 2). Larkin (2002: 120-121) details the growth in statutory regulated health professions from medicine and the 1858 Medical Act through to the 1960 Professions Supplementary to Medicine Act, eventually to a “new Health Professions Council to replace the Council for the Professions Supplementary to Medicine” (Allsop and Saks 2002: 2-3). Specifically, for the primary case study, these changes created variations in the field; some professions held by under statutory regulation by the HPC, whilst others under voluntary registration from the PSA. Regulation and registration with bodies such as the Charity Commission or Privy Council has the potential to create significant coercive pressure, but only in organisations held by a particular regime. There appears to be elective elements, even in the pursuit of regulation, that create diversity alongside conformity in associations.

Normative pressures are particularly interesting for the study of associations, inasmuch as these are often exemplified as a pressure from the profession acting on an organisation, and professions themselves are seen as “the most influential, contemporary crafters of institutions” (Scott 2008b: 223). The membership relationship is both critical and a central logic in associations, whose outputs and governance are often a coproduction exercise with its members. It is to be expected that a membership creates a strong normative effect that is constantly acting on an association, manifesting as either the members’ collective will, or shaping the processes, values and workings of an association. Of any form of organisation that might be influenced by a professions’ norms and values, it is potentially a professional association, by design, that is the most responsive and susceptible to these institutional forces. Gazley (2014) in a study on governance practices in

professional associations for Public Employees in North America evidences that normative forces explain Board practice to a certain degree. The normative pressure of members acting on the association is potentially so strong that it obfuscates two further normative influences on associations. First, the normative effects created by professional staff and lay committee members from outside the profession, which is of particular interest as the field of association staff itself becomes more professional, and the balance in an association switches between reliance on volunteer effort of its members to paid professionals from other disciplines. The professionalisation of staff within the sector has not developed and formalised as it has in North America, where association executives can be certified (ASAE 2019). Secondly the normative effect created by members on the association to be externally legitimate, to in effect look and feel like other professional bodies.

Mimetic isomorphism describes how organisations are inclined to model their structures and processes on other organisations that they deem successful and already infused with legitimacy. It is seen to be a useful strategy for organisations at times of uncertainty. An interesting observation is made that associations are particularly mimetic when they are created; there is a high degree of uncertainty felt by those charged with the creation of a new entity. Mimetic behaviours of associations are relatively under-researched, but there is anecdotal evidence in specific professions, for instance a recent comment from IT associations, “[m]aturity issues around professional bodies are relevant, particularly in IT, which is a relatively immature profession itself. What can we learn from CIPD, which has recently enjoyed an explosion of relevance?” (Williams, LaFosse and Harris 2011: 12). There appears a high degree of conformity in the elective elements of an association, for instance their membership structures (Friedman, Phillips and Cruickshank 2006), governance structures (Friedman, Phillips and Chan 2002, Friedman and Mason 2003b), approaches to professional standards (Lester 2008), continuing professional development (Friedman et al. 2000, Williams and Hanson 2011), and operations (PARN 2013a). This raises the question of how deliberately mimetic associations are. Similarly, there has been a dramatic rise in the number

of benchmarking activities and groups for associations within the UK. These are effectively communities of practice for association staff, and can largely be categorised as either formal associations, or informal networks: in the former there are organisations such as PARN (2018a) formed in 1998, Association for Association Executives (AoAE 2018) originally formed in 2006 as Association Resource, Institute of Association Management (IoAM 2018) which traces its history back to 1933, and informal networks such as MemCom (MemCom 2018) founded in 2000, and MemberWise (Memberwise 2018) a network of almost 5,000 formed in 2008. Each of these provides opportunity for the circulation and proliferation of ideas, which can be seen as creating the opportunity for an association to minimise uncertainty and pursue another associations successful strategy, the opportunity to follow a mimetic strategy and create conformity in the sector.

A final observation is that although deliberate mimetic strategies and forces are difficult to empirically evidence in associations, there is also something deeply mimetic within the broader sociology of professions. Initial authors suggested mimetic paths to professionalisation (e.g. Wilensky 1964), and authors have often voiced concerns about the mimetic behaviour of professions, “how a set of practices that characterised medicine and law became a rallying cry for engineers, accountants and school teachers, all of whom were in very different employment situations” (Evetts 2003: 396). The potentially strong mimetic behaviour of occupations looking to be classified as professions, however moot the debate might now be, the treatment of successful professions as prototypes (Evetts 2000: 3), how the Chicago School and Hughes “looked at medicine, acknowledging its eminent status among professions” (Larson 2013: xxi), might have a profound and deep implication for how associations operate and seek their own legitimacy, alongside more traditional forms of reducing uncertainty.

Institutional isomorphism appears to offer a rich set of explanations that help illuminate why there appears, at least on some level, to be conformity across the association field. However, associations, like professions, are not commodified, and there is significant deviation and difference in the field, as Dent et al (2016: 2)

observe “[w]hile it is the case that there are various occupations that are commonly referred to as professions or professional, when one ‘drills down’, one finds that these ‘professions’ do not always share common institutional arrangements or cognate histories”. Of course, aspects of this might be in an associations nature. They themselves create isomorphic pressures on their members and on their environments, in that they “attempt to influence the behaviour of others by setting standards, propagating principles, or proposing ‘benchmarks’ to gauge progress and guide behaviour” (Scott 2008b: 226).

Institutional logics and hybridity

In the previous chapter ideal-typical explanations for associations were rejected in terms of incorporating the concept of institutional logics. Institutional logics is a relatively modern concept, first introduced by Friedland and Alford (1991) and has subsequently risen in popularity in terms of number of articles published in the field (Ocasio, Thornton and Lounsbury 2017). Thornton’s definition of institutional logics is useful, they are “assumptions and values, usually implicit, about how to interpret organizational reality, what constitutes appropriate behavior” (2004: 70). Associations are seen as complex entities, which accords recent work on institutional pluralism (e.g. Suddaby and Greenwood 2005, Kraatz and Block 2017). The association, in needing to meet the pluralist particular needs of audiences, or in adopting certain roles in relation to their primary audiences and environments, creates a series of institutional logics that set out the orientation of teams and acceptable behaviour patterns. Not all institutional logics are audience driven, for instance the need to run an effective operational business is driven by a different set of internally focused needs. Hybrid organisations are considered entities with diverse institutional logics (Johansen *et al.* 2015). The concept of hybrid organisations (Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck 2017), and manager’s approaches to negotiating different logics (Johansen *et al.* 2015) offers a particularly interesting perspective; they “combine distinct institutional logics [...] identities [...] and/or organizational forms” (2017: 128). The argument for exploring associations as hybrid organisations ties to the concept of these bodies being legitimacy-seeking organisations (see later), “organizations in search of external

support and stability incorporate all sorts of incompatible structural elements” (Meyer and Rowan 1977: 356).

Associations can be seen as holding several distinct institutional logics, each containing several sub-logics. Building on, and synthesising the literature in chapter 2, the most obviously dominant logic is the membership logic, how the association responds and works as the voice of the member, meeting their collective wills, and the holding of a diverse membership. Second there is a professional logic, how the association works and builds strategies that contain collective agency for jurisdictional claims, improving occupational prestige and status, the learned society function, creating and curating professional knowledge, and normative professional standards. Third there is a public logic relating to the customs, practices and behaviours that seek to hold public benefit, information, engagement and protection. Finally, there is an organisational logic the running of the organisation, its attitudes to risk, and the demands created on the organisation by its employers and volunteers. By embracing institutional logics, and the hybridity of associations in holding these logics together, it is possible to let go of the notion that a professional association has a single compelling narrative, or that through lack of ownership models or profit motive, the association is somewhat diminished in terms of clarity of organisation and decision. A complexity can be introduced to the task of “the central enduring and distinctive features that define “who we are” and “what we do”” (Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck 2017: 130).

Not all logics hold the same degree of centrality in a hybrid organisation (Besharov and Smith 2014); “if multiple logics pervade organizations, then effectively conceptualizing the nature of this multiplicity is critical for organizational research” (2014: 374). Others suggest that the centrality of a dominant logic can create isomorphic effects across similar organisations (Greenwood *et al.* 2009). Conceptually this is useful, it gives space for the four primary logics of an association to vary in their centrality as the association prioritises its audiences and roles.

Institutional logics do not necessarily have to be seen in conflict, they can live alongside each other within an organisation (Johansen et al. 2015), and nor do they have to be adopted across the whole of an organisation. Albert and Whetten's (1985) usefully delineate between ideographic and holographic organisations. Ideographic organizations hold "distinct subgroups and/or separate units hold each identity". In holographic organisations, "all units hold multiple identities rather than a single one" (Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck 2017: 133). Applied to associations and DiMaggio and Powell's framework of institutional pressures, associations can be seen as both ideographic and holographic within their hybridity. Some influential staff and volunteers will carry ideographic interpretations of the purpose of the association, often linked to their specific role, whilst others will hold a more general holographic perspective. Institutional forces, particularly the coercive forces of regulators and governments, and the normative forces emanating from a membership can carry strong ideographic logics. The hybridity of an association, as a concept, has the potential to bring together several distinct aspects of this thesis, although it is a significantly under researched element of associations.

Legitimacy seeking organisations

Professional associations should be seen and understood as legitimacy-seeking types of organisations. Rarely does the state afford an association permanency in social structures, and the transitory nature of professions, and in particular jurisdictional claims, means even those associations need to be attentive to legitimacy-seeking strategies. Legitimacy for both association and profession are seen as important. Cant and Sharma's (1995) study on homeopathy and the Society of Homeopathy presents an interesting case where the pursuit of legitimacy and professionalisation creates a situation where there is a loss of flexibility and autonomy within the occupation. It suggests that the acquisition of professional traits does not necessarily lead to increased economic rent, autonomy or closure.

The need for organisations to establish and maintain their legitimacy is a staple element of institutional theory and organisational theory, broader than the study of associations. Antecedents of the argument stretch back, and are found in the

work of Weber (1978) and Parsons (1960). It is a broad field that touches on concepts of power (Dornbusch and Scott 1975), authority, structure (Meyer and Rowan 1977), and resource dependence (Pfeffer and Salancik 1978). It can be seen as “a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (Suchman 1995: 574) as “[o]rganizations seek to establish congruence between the social values associated with or implied by their activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system within which they operate” (Dowling and Pfeffer 1975: 122). Legitimacy has been the subject of a small field of professional association literature, for instance Cant and Sharma’s (1995) study on homeopathy and the Society of Homeopathy presents an interesting case where the pursuit of legitimacy and professionalisation creates a situation where there is a loss of flexibility and autonomy within the occupation. It suggests that the acquisition of professional traits by a profession does not necessarily lead to increased economic rent, autonomy or closure.

Legitimacy can be seen as important for organisations operating in institutional fields, especially where abstract formality requires external approval (Scott 1991). Associations are seen to need degrees of legitimacy from their membership, the broader profession, and from those who use their members’ services and standards. These audiences must routinely conceive the association to be a legitimate entity, and confer that legitimacy on to the association including: members through joining and continuing to their memberships; the public to trust the association as a source of both information and quality assurance; and the profession through the agreement and setting of standards and the negotiation of jurisdictional claims. Legitimacy on all three fronts is can be perceived as a pre-requisite for an effective association, which in turn can be argued as positioning associations as atype of legitimacy seeking organisation.

In *Managing Legitimacy: Strategic and Institutional Approaches*, Suchman (1995) brings together divergent literature on legitimacy from strategic and institutional schools and produces a useful taxonomy of mechanisms by which an organisation

is seen to build, maintain and repair legitimacy. Suchman offers a framework of three forms of legitimacy, each with a series of sub-categories: pragmatic, moral, and cognitive. *Pragmatic legitimacy* describes the “self-interested calculations of an organization’s most immediate audiences” (1995: 578). In terms of association audiences, pragmatic legitimacy can be particularly useful for examining both the membership, profession and public active-audiences, and “*audiences* are likely to become *constituencies*, scrutinizing organizational behavior” (1995: 578 emphasis in original). Within the frame of pragmatic legitimacy is *exchange legitimacy*, support for an organisation based on the expected value, rife in the literature on the formation of professional associations, collective agency, professionalisation and the membership proposition. Whereas *influence legitimacy*, the support of the organisation for less specific but a wider, greater good, speaks to the very heart of the altruistic notion of professional association membership, found in the more nuanced literature on the value of professional memberships (Belfall 1999, Gruen, Summers and Acito 2000, Williams 2013a). This form of legitimacy is often participatory, encompassing an “organization’s willingness to relinquish some measure of authority to the affected audience” (Suchman 1995: 578) and speaks to the co-production elements of an association’s relationship with its membership. The third is *dispositional legitimacy*, those that concern themselves with the personification of organisations, portraying them as “morally responsible actors” that share values and interests with their audiences. Again, this resonates with the concept of normative isomorphism discussed earlier in the chapter, where there is an expectation that the association will take on the personality traits of the profession it serves.

Moral legitimacy is sociotropic, resting on value judgements about whether the organisation does the right things, and again is seen as multi-faceted, generally taking four forms: evaluations of outputs and consequences; evaluations of procedures; evaluations of structures; and evaluations of leaders. If we make an assumption that associations are formed as mission driven organisations rather than self-serving organisations, then the need to hold moral legitimacy can be seen as a significant influence on organisations, and an effective mechanism of relaying

the mission-driven nature of the organisation. Judgements made on the accomplishments of organisations is described in *consequential legitimacy*, and an association here would be keen to detail how its work impacts and benefits broader sectors, particularly the public and professional communities. The externalisation of associations work and the need for some to articulate their public benefit are particularly pertinent examples from the previous chapter. Organisations can adopt accepted techniques and processes to gain *procedural legitimacy*, particularly relevant to associations where consequential legitimacy might be difficult to always document. One can posit that procedural legitimacy is a potentially significant driver for process isomorphism in associations, deliberately mimetic by the organisation, expected from the members, and expected by its regulators.

Structural legitimacy, in the association field, is the routine adoption of socially accepted forms to engender moral support for the organisation. This might explain in part the high degree of visible conformity between associations, and the benchmarking activities that surround the “easily monitored proxies for less visible targets of evaluation, such as strategies goals and outcomes” (1995: 581). Finally, the mechanism of *personal legitimacy*, looking at the power of individual organisational leaders draws on Weber’s concept of ‘moral entrepreneurs’ to explore individual agency. This is particularly pertinent to the study of associations and the role of leaders, particularly chairs and presidents who are often seen to bring a desire to change the organisation in their tenure, to disrupt old institutions (DiMaggio 1988). The final category concerns itself with *cognitive legitimacy* where the organisation is seen as either necessary or inevitable, “based on some form of cultural account” (Suchman 1995: 582). Associations, as the historic mechanism by which professions are organised, can be seen as having a cultural legitimacy in the creation of a coherent account of this organisation. They also presumably meet the challenge Suchman puts forward, that they, as “an account must mesh with both the larger belief systems and with the experienced reality of the audiences daily life” (1995: 582). Associations as potential institutions themselves, may have ascribed to them the element of ‘takenforgrantedness’,

historically at least, to organise a profession in any other way would be largely unthinkable. Suchman places these concepts in a dynamic and changing environment, the organisation must develop strategies to acquire, manage, maintain, and repair legitimacy when damaged through a series of meaning-laden actions. A study of associations is usefully augmented if they are considered as fundamentally legitimacy-seeking organisations. Understanding that strategies to build, maintain and repair legitimacy are just as useful as instrumental strategies, creates opportunity to explain association behaviour and nature with a richer, and fuller account.

Strategic responses to institutional pressures

The difficulty often encountered with exploring institutional pressures on organisations is the tendency to be unrefined in organisational accounts, as Suddaby suggests portraying organisation as either “cultural dopes” or “hypermuscular supermen, single handed in their efforts to resist institutional pressure” (2010: 15). Christine Oliver’s paper, *Responses to Institutional Processes*, explores a more nuanced and reflective range of organizational responses to institutional pressures, although the paper does not go as far as to suggest why only some institutional forces are attended to (see Suddaby 2010). It does provide an interesting framework for a typology of organisational responses and options (Table 4) for analysing the range of potential options open to an organisation, whereas previously “institutional theorists have tended to focus on conformity rather than resistance” (1991: 149). Professional associations are seen to be fundamentally influenced by their environment and constantly subject to both strong and weak institutional pressures. Many of the forces acting on an association discussed in chapter 2, although predominantly framed within the discourse on the sociology of professions, can be reinterpreted as institutional forces, for example: defence of existing monopoly and closure (e.g. Walker 1991); acquiescence to de-professionalisation agendas (e.g. Andrews and Wærness 2011); defiance to regulatory pressures (e.g. Wolf 1985, Micelotta and Washington 2013); or compromise strategies (e.g. Timmons 2010).

Table 4: Strategic responses to institutional pressures and potential examples

Strategies	Tactics	Examples	Examples
Acquiescence	Habit	Following invisible taken-for-granted norms	Professionalisation; Regulation; Professional Projects
	Imitate	Mimicking institutional models	
	Comply	Obeying rules and accepting norms	
Compromise	Balance	Balancing the expectations of multiple constituents	Professionalisation; Regulation; Professional Projects; Membership pressures; Jurisdictional Claims
	Pacify	Placating and accommodating institutional elements	
	Bargain	Negotiating with institutional stakeholders	
Avoidance	Conceal	Disguising non-conformity	Professionalisation; Regulation;
	Buffer	Loosening institutional attachments	
	Escape	Changing goals, activities or domains	
Defiance	Dismiss	Ignoring explicit norms and values	De-professionalisation; Proletarianisation; Regulation
	Challenge	Contesting rules and requirements	
	Attack	Assaulting the rules of institutional pressures	
Manipulation	Co-opt	Importing influential constituents	Professionalisation; Regulation; Professional Projects; Jurisdictional claims
	Influence	Shaping values and criteria	
	Control	Dominating institutional constituents and processes	

Subsequent studies (e.g. Milliken, Martins and Morgan 1998, Clemmens and Douglas 2005) indicate strategic responses might be industry specific, which has

connotations for the study of professional associations if they are to be considered as existing in a sector in their own right. Oliver's framework is referred to in the findings and discussion elements of this chapter. It is a useful typology for both labelling and defining an associations response to institutional pressures, and also as a mechanism for exploring why a particular strategy was adopted by an association.

Human agency

Associations are populated by people rather than technology and machines, and it is expected that they have both collective and individual agency that acts on and influences the organisation, either in supporting decisions to institutionalise, or alternatively creating divergent or entrepreneurial activity. Similarly, staff and members will carry with them, and their work informed by institutional logics based on their roles and beliefs and will have the potential to influence the centrality of each logic. Institutions must be maintained (Oliver 1992). Systems may have a tendency to break down (Zucker 1988), "Rules and norms, if they are to be effective, must be backed with sanctioning power, and cultural beliefs" (Scott 2014: 58). The role of individual actors in this process is interesting; "the institutional janitors and mechanics who deal with the mess and breakdowns of institutional mechanisms that occur as an everyday occurrence" (Lawrence 2008: 190) are also seen to be constrained to a degree in their ability to make effective choices (Lawrence 1999: 161). It becomes important, particularly in relation to this thesis and subject matter to ensure that the individuals that constitute elements of associations are not portrayed as overly-socialised reproducers of processes (Battilana, Leca and Boxenbaum 2009), that they have influence in both the collective and individual decision-making processes that result in outcomes and activities of an associations. Often individuals will hold powerful positions of influence, as Chairs and leaders of associations, as chief executives, as members of decision-making committees, or as authors and architects of association policies, guidelines or official documents.

Human agency is not restricted to individuals, and literature suggests a complex decision-making process within associations. Whilst attention has often been

given to the volunteer aspects of governance (Cox 1984, Friedman, Phillips and Chan 2002, Friedman and Mason 2003b), it is also important to consider the interface between individuals in governance structures and the staff that work in the organisation, or the member groups that seek to influence the organisation. An association's decision-making process can be seen through five lenses: the aforementioned trustee governance models and their holding of fiduciary responsibilities (Gazley 2014); the interplay between staff and trustees, particularly the balance of power between CEO and Chair; the Chair themselves who are often elected or appointed on a mandate; the democratic relationship between membership and trustees and the role of elites (e.g. Michels 1962, Freidson 1986) in decision making; and individual members with significant influence outside of the governance structure. Within complex organisations, locating the decision making unit can be difficult (Bovens 1998).

Human agency, decision-making and governance, through the democratic power of membership, should also be inculcated into this debate. Instrumental democratic power may vary from association to association, not all members of an association may be entitled to vote on all issues. Association governance is often akin to agency theory; through an elected Board or Council, it is assumed the "principal engages an agent to perform some services on his behalf" (Romano 2013: 96). Cornforth (2003) identifies six models of governance in non-profits: stewardship theory; managerial hegemony theory; agency theory; stakeholder theory; resource dependency theory; and the democratic model. These were later explored in more detail, and combined in to a contingency theory on governance for associations by PARN (Friedman and Mason 2006). The objective is not to be drawn in to debates on non-profit governance models but highlight diversity of approach. Governors, or trustees, normally elected from the membership, and the subject of Cox's (1984) study on process, set the standards and strategic development of an association, and are intended to function independently of the operational management of the association (Otto 2003: 134), in line with good corporate governance guidelines, as outlined in the Cadbury Report (1992) although in practice this relationship is often blurred (Harris 1992, Locke, Begum

and Robson 2003). Literature reflects that associations *per se* have become more instrumental organisations, and is suggestive that members have become less interested in democratic processes (Gundelach and Torpe 1996). Governance in this instance is linked to a trusteeship model, alongside the “structures, systems and processes concerned with ensuring the overall direction, control and accountability of an organization” (Cornforth 2010: 15), has elements of delegated authority (Bacharach and Lawler 1980), can be institutionally isomorphic (Hough, McGregor-Lowndes and Ryan 2005). Professional associations tend to be small organisations, and as such, the power of an individual to influence an association’s work, direction, the centrality of logics, or strategy, should not be underestimated in the wider debate about the institutional qualities of associations. Similarly, the institutional tendencies of professional associations’ should also be considered when taking in to account the perceived strength of an individual to create effective and lasting change in an organisation.

3.3 Implications for research phase and conclusions

This chapter focuses on organisational explanations of professional associations, and presents a less instrumental perspective of associations, whilst the previous chapter on the sociology of professions provides a context. These two accounts have significant overlap and are not irreconcilable. There appears significant mileage in exploring the isomorphic tendencies of professions associations, especially given the perceived conforming tendencies of professions, “how a set of practices that characterised medicine and law became a rallying cry for engineers, accountants and school teachers, all of whom were in very different employment situations” (Evetts 2003: 396).

Institutional isomorphism within professional association is a considerably less researched aspect of these organisations, especially when compared to the accounts found in the sociology of professions. Interpretations of associations, particularly the strength of isomorphic pressures, conformity and diversity, their responses to institutional pressures, associations as legitimacy-seeking associations, and the concept of their hybridity containing competing institutional

logics, can all be usefully tested and explored in the research phase. Associations are seen to be influenced significantly by causal mechanisms that shape them and their work. There is also an interest in the institutional qualities of associations themselves. They appear, *prima facie*, to comfortably fit with definitions of associations, Jepperson's (1991) criteria of resistance to change, Zuker's (1977) reflections on longevity or Scott's observation that "as organizations become infused with value, they are no longer regarded as expendable tools; participants want to see that they are preserved" (2001: :24). Similarly, these concepts of institutions fit comfortably with Suchman's (1995) concepts of cognitive legitimacy and takenforgrantedness.

By introducing neo-institutional theories and explanations of organisations, an account of professional associations can be broadened, from a relatively narrow but complex instrumental view, to a richer and deeper account of associations as social entities. Critical to understanding strategic responses is the decision-making processes in associations, and questions around this need incorporating in to the research phases of the research.

4: Research Paradigm, Questions, Methodology and Self

Research that underpins the thesis requires a systematic and coherent approach to the exploration of associations to make a meaningful contribution to the body of applied research on associations, research embedded in “the practical applications of their research on membership associations” (Tschirhart and Gazley 2014: 12). The selection of research approach was informed by and attentive to both the selection of case and my own interested position working within the field. Over the course of the study both research and practice would continually inform each other, and it was important to find a research approach that held and valued the role of insider, rather than sought to mitigate its impact. Some aspects of the research paradigm and methodology are chosen because of the unit of study, others such as a critical realist perspective are chosen and informed by my role as an insider own-organisation researcher, to challenge my natural and somewhat organisationally engrained positivist standpoint creating a natural mechanism for introspective reflexivity throughout the research process.

The research strategy evolved over the course of the PhD, initially several ideas were conceived but not progressed, for example a new functional analysis of associations to update to Millerson’s (1964) text. Such a study may still be important and yield valuable insight but appears limited on four fronts: associations are more complex than their functions; listing functions is an unsatisfactory way to describe and explain organisations; it can miss the dynamic changes that are impacting associations; and it needs to be tied to an analysis of the professions served - associations are not independent of their profession. A second approach explored an international comparative case study of three associations from either the same or different disciplines. These ideas strengthened my resolve to research one organisation at depth.

4.1 Research paradigm and ontological and epistemological perspectives

The research philosophy adopted informs the research approach and methodology (Guba and Lincoln 1994), one must be attentive to the choices of not only ‘how to research?’ and ‘what to research?’ (Remenyi et al. 1998), but significantly, ‘why

research?’ (Holden and Lynch 2004). By answering and reflecting on these questions I was able to narrow a potential multivariate study in to a single case study. I was keen to move away from a positivist interpretation of professional associations, that often dominate professional literature and in particular illustrations of the membership relationship, finding some of the most extreme explanations difficult to reconcile. Associations appear, to me, to be messy entities and a reductionist approach, whilst useful for containing and bracketing the research, has the potential to limit and curtail a broader understanding of these organisations. Rather than be drawn in to the often-presented tripartite choice between competing world views of positivism, realism and interpretivism, I preferred the concept that epistemology and ontology lie on a continuum, rather than some false polarised extreme (Morgan and Smircich 1980, Tashakkori and Teddie 1998). The research was designed to accommodate and explore the messy complexity of associations, the knotty intersection of demands from their active-audiences, and the complexities arising from associations that are both empirical entities and socially constructed. This approach aligns with some critical realist perspectives, “organisations are entities of sufficient complexity that they are not fully known to the participants themselves” (Ackroyd 2009: 535). It followed that the research design should also incorporate the ability to discover the structures, powers and capacities that make things happen (Danermark *et al.* 2002).

Critical realism

This section gives a brief overview of critical realism and how it can be applied to the study of associations. It is a metatheory put forward by Roy Bhaskar in a series of books starting in the 1970s (see Bhaskar 1975, Bhaskar 1979, Bhaskar 1987). Positioned as an alternative to positivism and constructivism, it draws on both in its approach (Fletcher 2017), recognising that there may be higher-level truths that are often imperceptible. Andrew Sayer (1992) outlines critical realism’s underlying assumptions: that the world exists independently of our knowledge of it; empirical

knowledge can inform and explain practice; objects have particular powers and ways of acting; the world consists of both events, objectives and structures; the production and meaning of actions and institutions require explanation; in order to explain and understand social phenomena we must be critical of it. Mingers and Standing summarise this as “[t]he real is the domain of enduring causal generative mechanisms; the actual is the domain of transient events generated by the interactions of real mechanisms; the empirical is the subset of actual events observed and recorded for scientific purposes” (2017: 176), and these domains are not always distinct but can merge (Bhaskar 2008). Reed summarises critical realisms’ “commitment to a stratified and differentiated ontology distinguishes [critical realism] from both positivist and constructivist philosophies of science” (Reed 2009: 431). Critical realism begins with a realist ontology, and incorporates the relativist concept that social life is both generated by individuals and impacts on them (Ackroyd and Fleetwood 2000). Critical realism’s structured ontology differentiates at three levels: the empirical domain of perceptions and experiences; the actual domain of events and actions; and the real, comprising of causal mechanisms and powers that have direct impact on people and society but cannot necessarily be perceived (Bhaskar 1978: 13). Entities are stratified, emergent, transformational, relational and processual, neither exclusively and solely atomistic events or constructed entirely from discourse. Critical realism has the potential to lend itself to the exploration of the messy elements of both associations and institutions. These domains, Fletcher (2017: 183) explains as: empirical as “events as we experience them”, “mediated through the filter of human experience and interpretation”; actual where “events occur whether we experience them or not”; and real where causal mechanisms exist that eventually are observed at the empirical.

Whereas for positivist or social constructionist researchers epistemology is necessarily of primary concern, this is not for critical realists (Ackroyd and Karlsson 2014). Critical realism points to the “underlying structures and mechanisms that produce empirical results rather than [...] the empirical events [...] themselves” (Reed 2005: 1630). The purpose is to produce a ‘thicker’ account

of a phenomena than would be traditionally be available solely through empirical enquiry (O'Mahoney and Vincent 2014). Realist research is intended to “identify, discover, uncover [...] structures, blocks and (generically) *causes*, and the particular sequences, combinations, and articulations of them at work” (Bhaskar 2014: vi-vii emphasis in the original). Bhasker (2014) usefully sets out what he describes as the transcendental features of critical realist research: that there is a double specificity in that critical realism does not say in advance what is real or not, but that is up to the researcher to determine (Bhaskar and Hartwig 2010); it focuses on structures and mechanics rather than regularities and patterns of events (Bhaskar 2008); is interested in theoretical transfactual generalisations over empirical alternatives (Ackroyd and Karlsson 2014); and focuses on abduction and retrodution, covered in depth later.

Whilst ontological assumptions are implicit in critical realist research (Reed 2005), it is not easy to tightly define what these assumptions are, and there remains degrees of ambiguity (Fleetwood 2005). Some aspects of critical realist approaches are important to the way this thesis is constructed. First is concept mediation, that our interpretations are always mediated, “[w]henever we reflect upon an entity (or a state of affairs), our sense data are always mediated by a pre-existing stock of conceptual resources” (Fleetwood 2005: 199). This applies to both the research data generated by the thesis, and my subsequent interpretation of that data, particularly as I have adopted an interested standpoint. Second the position of theory, to explore the “world as theory-laden, but not theory-determined” (Fletcher 2017: 182) that researchers “can gain knowledge ‘in terms of theories, which can be more or less truth like’” (2017: 182). “For researchers, the question is not whether to use theory or not, but whether to explicitly recognize the connections to theory” (Sæther 1998: 246). Both the sociology of professions and institutional accounts offer potential explanations that I was keen to explore in the research process. Finally there is the notion of entities, things that can make a difference in their own right by creating a causal efficacy (Fleetwood 2005), ensuring that reality is considered from several perspectives, “[a]lthough many things are real, they are real in different ways or modes” (2005: 199). Fleetwood

argues entities themselves can be usefully subdivided in to classes, whilst urging caution against adopting a taxonomic approach to such classifications, and avoid categorisation that places creates ontological ‘straight-jackets’ (2005: 199). He suggests entities change and develop and, importantly can be seen to straddle several categories. Nonetheless, Fleetwood’s classification (2005: 199-202) is useful to this study, in both the construction of the research, the dialogue created in the interviews, and the subsequent analysis phases. Fleetwood suggests modes of reality: *material entities* exist independently of perceptions, *ideally real entities* are conceptual and discursive in nature; *artefactually real entities* are conceptually mediated; *socially real entities* are dependent upon human activity, for which we are continually in the process of reproducing and transforming. In relation to this project materially real entities, “which can exist independently of what individuals or communities do, say or think” (2005: 199) are difficult to locate. Professions, and the socio-political-economic environments within which they exist are socially created; equally it might be argued, are potentially all of the problems that the professions are designed to resolve.

Professional associations, and to an extent profession, can be considered across each of Fleetwood’s categories: they can be considered *material entities* as they exist, at least in physical form, irrespective of perceptions. Professional associations may also be considered as *ideally real entities*, acknowledging that they can be constructed as discursive in nature, as “conceptual entities such as discourse, language, genres, tropes, styles, signs, symbols and semiotized entities, ideas, beliefs, meanings, understandings, explanations, opinions, concepts, representations, models, theories and so on” (Fleetwood 2005: 200). Aspects of an association may also be considered artefactually real, material entities that are concept mediated such as: membership grade structures; benefits; governance structures; and products and services. Concepts such as jurisdictional claims and professional projects, are in part materially evident, and in part discursive depending on perception and audience. These interpretations can be seen to intersect with the socially real concepts of professions to create a complex and nuanced perspective on professional associations and the environments that

influence them. Other aspects of association activity may be considered as socially real entities, for instance the sense of being a professional, professionalism, being part of a community of practice, the professional ideal, clients needs' and membership value and experience. Associations, and their activities, fit comfortably within Elder-Vass' definition of entities, "*a persistent whole formed of a set of parts that is structured by the relations between these parts*" (2010: 17 emphasis in the original).

Critical realism and Fletcher's framework are both expressive, and helpful with Roy Suddaby's quite separate challenge to neo-institutional theory researchers, to withdraw from reductionist approaches that "institutional theory has tended to treat institutions as reified constructs or black boxes" (2010: 17), providing a framework in which the association might be better understood and a mechanism that allows the richness of associations' to be explored without falling in to an empirical approach that can be limiting, "with the data simply confirming or repudiating the theoretical postulate(s) examined" (Vincent and Wapshott 2014: 149). In these terms the thesis is not looking for the grand theory of associations proposed by Knoke (1986), and purposefully eschewing a need to produce empiricist algorithms of benefits and functions, but to give a richer, theory-laden account of associations operating across several modes of reality.

Retroduction and reflexivity

Retroduction is a key epistemological process in critical realism, seen as a "metaprocess the outcome of which is the identification of mechanisms that explain what caused particular events to occur" (Easton 2010: 124). Sæther summarises that retroduction links "evidence (induction) and social theory (deduction) in a continually evolving, dynamic process" (1998: 245) seeking to identify the mechanisms that create events (Sayer 1992). Retroduction does not follow the neat and linear path of some approaches that travel from basic premise to conclusion (Danermark et al. 2002), rather it is an approach deeply congruent with critical realism's ontological commitment of emergence, "the belief that new entities and powers emerge from the complex interplay between mechanisms and entities located and operating at different and irreducible levels of reality" (Reed

2009: 431). Referencing the earlier work of Alvesson and Skoldberg, Sæther suggests, “retroduction (or, in their terminology, abduction) is suited to finding theoretical patterns, or deep structures, that if valid will help in conceptualizing the empirical and deductive patterns that are observed in a single case” (1998: 246), “We make observations of the empirical world and then hypothesize possible generative mechanisms that could, if they existed, explain them” (Mingers and Standing 2017: 174). An important element in retroduction is the identification of absences, and it can be just as important to ask why something does not happen as it is to ask why something does happen. Interestingly, several authors have already made the link between retroduction and the frameworks of neo-institutionalism (e.g. Clark 2000, Vincent and Wapshott 2014). In particular there are interesting parallels between the desire to understand the causal mechanisms of neo-institutional theory and the retroductive process “through which generative mechanisms, and their interplay in specific socio-historical situations are identified and assessed” (Reed 2009: 432). Research design must be capable of being attentive to mechanisms that might not be directly experienced or observable, “inferred through conceptual abstraction and interpretation” (Reed 2009: 432). Again, there is marked similarity, at least generally, with Burawoy’s (1998) ECM, discussed later, where the participant is asked to reflect on the macro-social mechanisms.

There are several important elements of retroduction that warrant more exploration as they serve as a guide for the work undertaken in this project. First, retroduction treats structure and agency as distinct entities, capable of interaction. Reed argues agency, drawing on structuration theory (Stones 2005), is constrained by context, where particular conditions must exist for agency to be transformative: “[i]n this view, the objects of scientific investigation and analysis are not empirical regularities and tendencies but the structure and mechanisms that underlie, reproduce, and transform them” (Reed 2009: 432). Second, “most studies are of organizations that already exist. As a result we must abduct and retroduct the causal powers and antecedents that are relevant to the organization(s) studied” (Vincent and Wapshott 2014: 150). This is pertinent to the primary case in this

study, which whilst only 40 years old, is subject to a set of sociological, economic and political powers that have shaped professions and service delivery that extend well beyond its own life, indicating the research should be a broad account of professions alongside the specificity of the primary case.

Retroduction is a process that can bring together the theoretical explanations of professions and organisations (chapters 2 and 3) with contemporary lived experiences, “[t]o set up a research project characterized by retroduction to answer these questions has several implications. There would be two initial tasks, one concerned with social theory and one concerned with evidence” (Sæther 1998: 248). Through retroduction we are able to take in to account the theories developed and advanced in chapters 2 and 3, combine these with individuals’ accounts of the truth, and look beyond the immediate for answers on the nature of associations. Reflexivity (see later) is critical in the process, particularly as the researcher brings their own perspectives on both theoretical explanations and their own account of associations.

4.2 Research questions and their history

Fletcher indicates “critical realists typically begin with a particular problem or question, which is guided by theory” (2017: 184), in this case, to develop a better understanding of professional associations. It arose from a personal desire to understand, often through a dissatisfaction with reductionist interpretations of associations. Initially I was interested in an apparent contradiction, submitting the original thesis outline ‘Who are associations for? Members, Clients or the Public?’. During the literature review I became more attentive to the bi-directional relationships that existed between association and profession, association and member, and association and service users. What was evident was a complexity that extended beyond organisation that acted as a mechanism for imposing the collective will of its membership on the environment. I also became interested in why associations shared a degree of similarity and conformity, and conversely, where and why differences arose. A refined title was submitted for ethics approval to ‘What is the nature and purpose of a professional association: a study using the

extended case method'. For this thesis, the over-arching research question is a relatively simple one: What is the nature of a professional association? In order to answer this more fully, and to construct a cohesive research strategy, several sub-questions were formed:

How well is the nature and purpose understood by those who influence the work of a professional association?

How are the broad and large causal mechanisms articulated and understood?

How prevalent and understood are coercive, mimetic and normative explanations in shaping an associations activity?

How are these pressures understood and given meaning?

These research questions informed both the initial interview schedule and elements of initial analysis. I was keen not to constrain the research, but to create an account of associations that held diverse opinions and perspectives.

Reflections on the development of the question

In 2011 I began to think about studying for a PhD and made contact with the University of Leicester with a proposal to study and write about professional associations. My perspective is informed by over twenty years work with these bodies, and their complexity, often with indistinct roles, multiple stakeholders, and often relatively poorly articulated purposes. I was interested in an apparent conflict of purposes, particularly how these were negotiated and resolved. The absence of a profit-motive appeared to remove an impetus to favour one audience over another or create a central compelling narrative capable of informing strategic and operational decision making. My Masters degree, a study on value propositions, had focused on one aspect of associations, but I was conscious it did not, even partially, explain them. The body of work that constitutes the sociology of professions largely is often largely inattentive to professional associations and, with a few notable exceptions, rarely seeks to explain them. Similarly, professional research often concentrates on features and functions without looking to the

causal and generative mechanisms that create and influence associations. In this research I hoped to bring together research on associations within their sociological context, coupled with accounts of them as organisational entities to produce a rich account of their nature, form and purpose.

4.3 Research strategy

An overwhelming wealth of research strategies are available to the potential researcher, some exploratory, others descriptive or explanatory (Yin 2003) that offers an impossible, limitless set of choices. Ackroyd, referring to critical realism, rejects the commonly held notion that there is a right methodology, an “inherently superior methods of study which if completely utilised, can secure superior knowledge” (2004: 137) but as the research questions develop a bridge can be made to likely strategy (Barrett 2006). Initially I had considered the potential of quantitate, qualitative and mixed method approaches to the research question. Ackroyd (2009) highlights the deficiency in clarity and guidance available to a prospective realist researcher, noting that empirical and observational data are both likely to be of interest to someone pursuing a realist-informed approach. For Ackroyd, with the exception of experiment, almost all forms of quantitative and qualitative approaches can have validity, as “[t]he realist-informed researcher is guided by theoretically derived conjectures about the social mechanisms at work in the world, and considers, through data collection and investigation, the extent to which theoretical ideas explain chosen outcomes” (2009: 533). Diversity of approach is a theme of neo-institutional research, Suddaby and Greenwood (2009) usefully categorise: multivariate; interpretative; historical; and dialectical. They describe the most empirically numerous in the study of institutions, multivariate methods, as adopting a positivist standpoint that “institutions and organisations are viewed as discrete and relatively autonomous elements in a social system” (2009: 179), noting that whilst these studies have provided a rich narrative on exogenous phenomena, they largely fail to capture the richness of the field, of rationalities and processes, suggesting they “mask the ‘messy’ elements of institutional change” (2009: 179). Second they describe a group of methodologies that dominated early institutional literature labelled *interpretive*, including

ethnography, participant observation, discourse analysis, content analysis and content framework analysis that, true to epistemological footings, emphasise “attending to the ways in which institutions are experienced by actors” (2009: 181). Third is a historical collection of methodologies capable of unearthing processual, path dependent interpretations of institutions (2009: 183), arguing that “there is a growing awareness amongst institutional theorists that institutions are the outcome, not of discrete choices between alternative arrangements, but rather long stretches of sedimentation” (2009: 186). Finally, the authors introduce a dialectical category, grounded in Marxist and critical theory, built on a perspective that institutions are the result of power relations. Dialectical inquiry seeks to expose the “hegemonic forms of domination” and the “contradictions that [...] conflicts and struggles become embedded in pragmatic interests and the consolidation power” (2009: 187).

The challenge for this thesis is to marry the theory-laden world of causal mechanisms with the lived experience of institutions from the perspective of actors and the historical accounts that locate organisations within a narrative context. In practice there are a number of common themes in some aspects of neo-institutional research and the critical realist approach, not least the attentiveness to mechanisms beyond the unit of study, and the thought of applying a theory-laden approach to an exploration of institutions felt both new and appropriate. Both approaches were more than capable of holding the concept of lived contemporary experience with historical accounts of organisations.

From Suddaby and Greenwood (2009) I became aware of Michael Burawoy’s (1998) Extended Case Method (ECM), a reflexive method developed around narratives in which participants are “encouraged to reflect on macrosocial forces that influence their behaviour” (2009: 187). Whilst Burawoy’s method is seen as adaptable to an enquiry in to institutions, it also seems to offer a bridge to critical realist approaches. ECM provides an approach that would allow the single case approach to be extended and make, to a degree, generalisations about professional associations on the basis that causal mechanisms that affect one association may affect many, for instance de-professionalisation. By adapting the ECM, which

seemed permissible as ECM itself “purposefully eschew[s] methodological ‘cookbooks’” (Timmermans and Tavory 2012: 180), the research approach was designed. Research data consisted of interviews from the primary case and extended from the wider sector, coupled with an historical account of the primacy case. A second primary interest in ECM was its embracing of the potential for own-organisation insider research. Whilst this was some distance from what Burawoy was describing, ECM, alongside Action Research, was one of only a few approaches that celebrated rather than mitigated the interested position of the researcher. ECM allowed me to consider researching my own organisation, from a critical realist perspective, whilst being attentive to causal mechanisms.

Single case studies

This research, under the auspices of ECM, is not strictly a single case study, but has significant commonality with the approach. Single case studies are one of many approaches (see Yin 2009), increasing in popularity (Thomas 2011) and can be viewed as either approach or method (Hamel, Dufor and Fortin 1993, Denzin and Lincoln 2011), the latter description favoured by Richard Yin (2009). Case studies have long histories in application, Hamel *et al.* (1993) identify antecedents in anthropological beginnings, highlighting an evolution from Malinowski’s *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922), from ethnographic account through to a re-emergence under the patronage of the Chicago School. Case studies are seen to be adaptable, situated across all paradigms, from social construction (e.g. Stake 1995, Merriam 2009), and post-positivism (e.g. Flyvbjerg 2011, Yin 2012) to critical realism (e.g. Vincent and Wapshott 2014).

A single case study is selected for this thesis for the following reasons. First it has potential to create a thick account of professional associations. Second case studies lend themselves to exploration of complex organisations, the “contextual detail about the different actors, agencies, events and processes” (Scott and Russell 2005: 3). Third, they are often applied, “[f]or researchers, the closeness of the case study to real-life situations and its multiple wealth of details are important [...] for the development of a nuanced view of reality”. Fourth they take in to account individual perspectives, “highlight the features or attributes of social life” (Hamel,

Dufor and Fortin 1993: 2) and explore “the dynamics of social and organisational relationships” (Scott and Russell 2005: 3), resonating with the call to bring actors to the front: “institutional work, of course, is conducted by individuals and its somewhat surprising [...] how individuals often disappear from institutional work” (Suddaby 2010: 17). Next, they offer a contextual richness to those researchers looking to explore ‘why’ (Morris and Wood 1991) and ‘how’ type questions (Yin 2003) both pertinent to a thesis of this nature; and finally the single case study is a particularly interesting approach to observe an phenomenon that few have considered and explored before (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2007).

Case study approaches, despite enjoying strong and popular support, are critiqued and challenged (e.g. Walker 1983, Atkinson and Delamont 1985). Positivist epistemological stances tend to question their validation, proof, testing, and deficiencies in representativeness, lack of rigour, and lack of understanding on the impact of bias. Pragmatically, Yin in his book *Case Studies Research: Design and Method* provides a rather telling warning for would be researchers, “[d]o case studies, but do them with the understanding that your methods will be challenged from rational (and irrational) perspectives and that the insights resulting from your case studies may be underappreciated” (2003: xiii). Yin (2009) acknowledges that for some social scientists, case study method is seen in the context of hierarchically arranged methodologies, only appropriate for the descriptive phase of an enquiry, preferring experiment methods for the distinctly positivist testing of propositions. Some have subsequently changed perspective, for instance Donald Campbell’s foreword to Richard Yin’s book argues “it epitomizes a research method for attempting valid inferences from events outside the laboratory while at the same time retaining the goals of knowledge shared with laboratory science” (Yin 2003: ix). This some distance from an earlier comment that saw little validity or virtue in such approaches (Campbell and Stanley 1966). Generalisability is seen as an inherent problem of single case studies (Kedde 2006), although there is a question as to whether this is a semantic epistemological problem associated with positivist standpoints (Ruddin 2006). Ruddin (2006: 798) further questions whether generalisation could or should be an appropriate requirement of case

studies at all. Generalisation, and in particular the concept of strength of generalisability is pertinent to the design of an ECM study, where efforts are made to explore generalisability through an iterative process of research with participants and the wider field (Evens and Handelman 2005), rather than an inductive process.

Early approaches to case studies largely situated the approach in inductive epistemology, suggesting “the empirical details that constitute the objective under study are considered in light of the remarks made in context [...giving] depth and dimension to the sociological explanation” (Hamel, Dufor and Fortin 1993: 16). Critical realists argue that the approach fits comfortably within their domain. Particularly pertinent for this thesis is its applicability to organisational studies, the “clearly bounded, but complex phenomena such as organisations [and] interorganisational relationships” (Easton 2010: 123).

Extended Case Method

The relatively underused ECM (Wadham and Warren 2014) is considered a good fit as a research strategy, aligned to the research questions, and the situation of the researcher. First is the potential link between ECM and critical realist research, that it encourages researchers and participants to “reflect on macrosocial forces that influence their behaviour” (2009: 187), and has parallels with critical realisms conceptualisation of a theory-laden world and the potential for theory-informed research, “bringing theory to bear on a particular ethnographic case” (Wadham and Warren 2014: 5). Burawoy summarises ECM: it “applies reflexive science to ethnography in order to extract the general from the unique, to move from the ‘micro’ to the ‘macro,’ and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexisting theory” (1998: 5). Second is the “respectful, sensitive and reflexive” methodology of ECM (Cock 2010: 297) whereby the researcher is encouraged to engage with participants, to move with them through the interviews, rather than a distant observation of actors *in situ*, a particular useful research approach for studying institutions, that “reveal much about themselves when in stress or crisis, when they face the unexpected as well as the routine” (Burawoy 1998: 14). Such an approach facilitates holding both an insider-

researcher's prior knowledge and understanding, and lends itself to aspects of theory-led critical realist approaches. It both pre-supposes existing theory, one again drawing comparisons with critical realism and theory-led interviewing (e.g. Pawson 1996), and by rejecting what has been labelled as "a remote and detached academic elitism" (Cock 2010: 297) embraces the role of the researcher as central to the process.

Burawoy's method, although not its intention, aligns itself and lends itself to both neo-institutional enquiry and critical realist paradigms. The method forces the researcher to look beyond the immediacy of the case, to think beyond and not always accept what participants initially present. Epistemologically, ECM is seen to draw on both critical and social constructivist theories (Samuels 2009) and, interestingly, ECM can in all but name be considered a retroductive technique, drawing on both inductive and deductive approaches to build theory (Ruddin 2006), differing from traditional inductive and deductive approaches to ethnography, suggesting theory can be reconstructed as a continual process rather than in post-fieldwork analysis. It is important to note that Burawoy in his paper does not make this claim, nor does he explicitly make this link.

By "building a bridge between interpretive and critical approaches [ECM] represents a valuable addition to the toolkit" (Wadham and Warren 2014: 5) but is not without critique. Perhaps because it "purposefully eschew[s] methodological 'cookbooks' worried that they would result in fetishization of methods and crass empiricism" (Timmermans and Tavory 2012: 180), it has not been widely applied (Wadham and Warren 2014). The advantage of ECM lies in its liberal application, not being a formulistic approach, and is open to interpretation and adaptation. Traditionally it consists of four stages *intervention*, *process*, *structuration* and *reconstruction*, challenging the researcher to move beyond dialogue and explore contextualisation and historical documentation to produce an account capable of generalizability. *Intervention* at interview stage, is critical for getting beyond superficial responses, a mutual process of working together to gain insight. The insider situation of the researcher is a pivotal departure from methods that aim to control and limit connections between researcher and those studied (Leahey

2008). For Burawoy, the researcher's role is critical at this stage acting as "anything but the non-intervening observer" (1998: 10), creating an informed, if not partisan, partnership with participants. *Process* is the intention to aggregate situational knowledge in to social processes and structuration, breaking free from Bourdieu's 'scholastic enclosure' (Cock 2010). Here the researcher "moves with the participants through their time and space" (Burawoy 1998: 14). *Structuration* takes the research beyond the dynamic of researcher-participant, seeking contextualisation within the wider environment. Burawoy argues exogenous elements cannot be taken as a constant, but have their own, separate dynamic beyond "the purview of participant observation" (1998: 15). Again, this has significant resonance with critical realisms' challenge to identify the "relationships and non-relationships, respectively, between what we experience an, what actually happens, and the underlying mechanisms that produce the events in the world" (Danermark et al. 2002: 21). *Reconstruction* seeks to explore the theories through refutations (see Popper 1963), with the aim of extending and adding to existing theories, combined with a process akin to the concept of developing a 'strength of generalisability' (Ruddin 2006). Burawoy's method was constructed to meet some of the challenges of the dominant positivist science paradigm, and he goes to great length to explain and address this (see Burawoy 1998: 10-13) and inadvertently may be seen as advocating a retroductive technique redolent with critical realist principles. He seeks to apply inductive and deductive inquiry that is attentive to social forces "that for the most part lie outside the realm of investigation" (1998: 15). His application of situational knowledge aggregated in to social forces is reminiscent of a critical realist view of reality and appears to fits with Stephen Ackroyd's (2004: 156-160) seminal list of implications for critical realist research practice: theory is indispensable; data is somewhat independent of theory; theory construction and data collection establish generation of mechanisms; research does not privilege particular kinds of data; research is creative and interpretive; research is iterative and on-going; critique is a legitimate goal of research; knowledge of causal mechanisms makes research policy relevant; and events can be changed by intervention. Each of Ackroyd's points can be either found or accommodated in Burawoy's approach.

There are only a few applied examples of ECM for the researcher to draw on, most notably Candice Hollenbeck's research *E-collaborative networks: a case study on the new role of the sales force* (Hollenbeck et al. 2009) and *Retail spectacles and brand meaning: insights from a brand museum case study* (Hollenbeck, Peters and Zinkham 2008). Whilst acknowledging that these lines of research are a world away from the study of associations and institutions, these two papers provide useful examples of the application of ECM in research strategies.

Adapting the ECM

Hollenbeck's studies are adaptive in nature although they retain the observational aspects Burawoy initially laid out. The adaptations I make to Burawoy's approach, aligning to the study of organisations and institutions, moves it away from its ethnographic and observational roots, but holds the four-stage framework of intervention, process, structuration and reconstruction. At a process level, the intervention stage consists of a series of extensive interviews with staff and volunteers both within the case study organisation and beyond in to the wider sector. My role, as an insider own-organisation interested researcher situates me comfortably as "anything but the non-intervening observer" (Burawoy 1998: 10). Theory-led interviewing, drawing in conceptual frameworks for professions and institutions is designed to help "move with the participants through their time and space" (1998: 14). Taking in to account interviews tend to be contemporary accounts, historical documents are used as both a contextualisation, and as alternative accounts of the organisation offered by other voices, forming the *structuration* element. From a critical realist perspective, the combination of interviews and historical accounts speaks to the need to hold data at both extensive and intensive levels (Fletcher 2017). Historical documents provide access to a wider set of accounts, from a more diverse population, and augment the interviews. By incorporating a historical narrative, and voices from beyond the association, I believe the research commits to Burawoy's original hopes for ECM in terms of generalisability.

4.4 Application of research strategy

The application of the research strategy required careful consideration of access, depth, voices and its ability to be extended. The first consideration was selection of primary case and, in discussion with supervisors a decision was reached to use BACP. The decision was reached by balancing the potential drawbacks of insider own-organisation research with the pre-existing knowledge of how to access deeper rather than superficial accounts of an organisation. A detailed account of the organisation follows in the next chapter, but in terms of brevity, BACP is a UK association that would be categorised as a large and substantial body, which in itself is unusual given its relatively young age.

Semi-structured interviews

Interviews are one of the most common methods of research (Atkinson and Silverman 1997, Smith and Elger 2014) and play a fundamental role in my adaptation of ECM. They are attractive to researchers, as Smith and Elger summarise, providing the “researcher direct access to the *point of view* of interviewees, both in terms of attitudes they hold and their accounts of their experiences” (2014: 110 emphasis in original), and, from a critical realist perspective to explore “[w]hat caused the events associated with the phenomenon to occur” (Easton 2010: 123). There is an ongoing debate about the relative merits and values of structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews, and it is not my intention to either contribute to, or become embroiled in, the “moribund corners of the methodological literature” (Pawson 1996: 295). Adopting a theory-led approach, through semi-structured interviews appeared congruent with both research strategy and approach. I elected to pursue interviews based on the principles of the guided interview (Patton 1987), sensitive to the structure and outline of the theory-led interview described by Pawson (1996) where both participant and theory are the subject matter. The interviews, reflective of, and sensitive to Burawoy’s original concept, are designed as a reflexive process, described alternatively as either a social encounter (Cicourel 1964, Dingwall 1997) or an active interview (Smith and Elger 2014). The interview is designed to hold an

element of ‘give and take’ (Holstein and Gubrium 1995), affording the interviewer the ability to “move with the participants through their time and space” (Burawoy 1998: 14). This felt comfortable and fitted with the notion interviews can change participants’ perspectives (Klave 1996).

The construction of the interview questions was attentive to available best practice: the importance of asking clear questions (Cicourel 1964); avoidance of jargon (Klave 1996), particularly with the introduction of theory-led interviewing; sequencing experience and behavioural questions before feeling questions (Patton 1987); following up (Patton 1987) and providing interpretive feedback (Klave 1996); opportunity for confirmation or falsification of theory (Pawson 1996), and mindful to factors that may influence a participants response such as ulterior motives, bars to spontaneity, desires to please, and idiosyncratic factors (Dean and Whyte 2006: 102-103). The interview schedules were constructed to create space for participants to consider causal mechanisms, the varying contexts in which such mechanism operate, and resultant outcomes.

“People are always knowledgeable about the reasons for their conduct but in a way which can never carry total awareness of the entire set of structural conditions which prompt an action, nor the full set of consequences of that action [...] In attempting to construct explanations for the patterning of social activity, the researcher is thus trying to develop an understanding which includes, hypotheses about their subjects’ reason within a wider model of their causes and consequences”

(Pawson and Tilley 1997: 162-63)

The interview process intended to create room for both theory and participants’ own perspectives, in an exchange of ideas Pawson describes as “I’ll-show-you-my-theory-if-you’ll-show-me-yours” (1996: 307), a process consistent with Burawoy’s reflexive interview process, and the notion that the interviewee “is there to confirm or falsify and, above all, refine that theory” (Pawson 1996).

Table 5: Semi-structured interview questions used in the research

General opening questions	
1	Describe to me BACP?
2	Why do some occupations seem to need a professional association and others not?
Complexity	
3	There seems to be a complexity in associations, serving members and clients just one of these. How do you see this complexity?
4	Which audiences do associations favour when making decisions? Why is that the case?
Heterogeneity within the profession	
5	Is membership diverse? And if so, how do you meet the collective needs of a membership?
Professional associations	
6	It strikes me that they all look similar. Do they? Why do you think that is/ isn't the case?
7	How are associations seen to be attentive to themselves?
Environments	
8	How does the association respond to changes in external environments? What challenges does this bring?
Counterfactual questions	
9	What would happen if BACP/ associations suddenly didn't exist?
10	Is there anything else you would like to add or think I should have asked?

Selection of participants

The selection process of participants for this thesis attempted to balance a population that can speak to issues of reliability and consistency (Hammersley 1992), provide an adequacy of accounts (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007), and combine voices of both senior actors (Scott 2014) those of the so-called under-researched institutional mechanics and janitors that populate organisations (Lawrence 2008). To provide the ECM with a balance, consideration was given to four populations that might usefully contribute to the interview stage: staff within BACP (Group A); members who had held decision-making roles in wider

governance structures of BACP (Group B); leaders and senior figures of other associations (Group C); and individuals who organised and ran functions that supported associations (Group D). An attempt was made to achieve a balance across all groups, ensuring half of participants were from the primary case, a quarter from other associations, and a quarter from the wider field. An initial list of 40 potential interviewees were invited to participate, of which 34 accepted and were interviewed. Of the six that did not participate, two withdrew during the process objecting to the principle of being anonymised, and four did not respond to initial invite. Candidates from Group A and B were selected within the tight constraints imposed by the University's ethical approval process, stipulating no direct reports to the researcher should be interviewed. External candidates were selected on a broad sampling frame, picked from a pre-existing list of professional associations. Selection was a pragmatic task, that took in to account the pragmatic advice "that *no* selection strategy guarantees that you will *actually* select the settings and participants that best allow you to answer your questions" (Maxwell 2012: 95 emphasis in original).

The 34 interviews reached a critical point of saturation (see Dworkin 2012): responses produced regular and repeatable patterns, although never reaching a distinct uniformity of answers. Within the anonymisation process participants were given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym. Twenty of the participants took this option, often reflecting that they would like to be able to see their own contribution in the finished work. Several participants selected pseudonyms that were of a different gender. Table 6 lists each participant and, as anonymisation was a substantively discussed part of the ethical approval process it would be improper to reveal additional biographical detail. Several participants in Group A also hold dual roles, as members of the association.

Table 6: Interview participants: pseudonym and group

Group A - Staff		
	Danni	BACP staff
	Imogen	BACP staff
	Jo	BACP staff
	Michelle	BACP staff
	Natalie	BACP staff
	Peter	BACP staff
	Remi	BACP staff
Group B – Members who hold or have held roles in governance		
	Adam	Senior member who has served in Committee structure
	Alison	Senior member who has served in Governance structure
	Bea	Senior member who has served in Governance structure
	Duncan	Senior member who has served in Governance structure
	Gregory	Senior member who has served in Governance structure
	Harry	Senior member who has served in Governance structure
	Mark	Senior member who has served in Committee structure
	Riccardo	Senior member who has served in Committee structure
	Sarah	Senior member who has served in Governance structure
	William	Senior member who has served in Governance structure
Group C – Leaders of other associations		
	David	Senior manager in a Chartered association
	Gael	Senior manager in a professional association
	Gray	Senior manager in a Chartered association
	James	Senior manager in a Royal College
	Jane	Senior manager in a Chartered association

	Kai	Senior manager in a professional association
	Liam	Senior manager in a Royal College
	Oliver	Senior manager in a Chartered association
Group D – Wider field		
	Adrian	Active in benchmarking and bringing associations together
	Anna	Active in benchmarking and bringing associations together
	Callum	Active in benchmarking and bringing associations together
	Jen	Providing support and services to associations. Also member of Group C
	Mary	Providing support and services to associations.
	Philip	Providing support and services to associations.
	Rachel	Providing support and services to associations.
	Rae	Providing support and services to associations.
	Thomas	Active in benchmarking and bringing associations together. Also member of Group C

Interviews took place at a variety of locations and by a variety of methods, often seeking a neutral venue, particularly for those from Group A. Interviews were mostly physical, and for many I travelled to their location. A small number of interviews took place over the telephone, mostly when a physical meeting could not take place. Physical interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder, whilst telephone interviews were recorded with BTMeetMe. All recordings were deleted on transcription. To transcribe I used F5 software to slow the recordings down and dictated them through Dragon software to a Word document. This transcription was sent to the participant for any corrections and re-seeking their approval before being anonymised and uploaded in to NVIVO for subsequent analysis.

Documentary data

Participant interviews provide the research project with contemporary perspectives on associations, but has two potential drawbacks: contemporary

accounts for the organisation may be different from historical accounts; and the population I have elected to interview will have a limited perspective by virtue of the positions they hold (MacDonald and Hellgren 2004: 265) and in some instances accounts may need to be treated with the caution a researcher applies to interviewing elites (see Dexter 2006, Mikecz 2012). By incorporating an historical account of the association, with different voices and actors, it is possible to both create the contextualisation, mitigate any contemporary skewing of the organisation, and, importantly broaden the perspectives of the organisation that would be difficult to achieve otherwise.

Documentary analysis is a technique of categorising, investigating and interpreting data within the limitations of physical sources (Payne and Payne 2004). Documents span a wide, sometimes contested plethora of data (Prior 2003). Here, documentary analysis is being used to augment interview data. Combining two methods to investigate the same phenomena (Grix 2001), the research strategy is producing a form of method triangulation (Mouton 2001) and a form of data triangulation. Triangulation is a particularly important aspect in historical documentary analysis, helping distinguish between what Lowenthal (1985) describes as organisational history and organisational memory. From a critical realist perspective historical documents can form an important part of retrodution (Mutch 2014: 225), a source in their own right, and to contextualise other data sources, capable of exploring a facet of the interplay between structures, cultures and agency over a time period (Archer 1995).

In this project I have opted to concentrate on written and published accounts, seeking to bring in the voices of members in to the research. There are obvious limitations to this dataset. Written and published accounts will have been through an editing process, only some will have passed a threshold for publication. It is important to note that this body of accounts produces a dataset that is seen to be both critical and supportive of the association and its policies. Nonetheless, the research is limited by the data I have access to, and caution is urged, mindful that documentary data is often created with a purpose, based on existing assumptions, and for particular audiences (Grix 2001), and elements may be formulated to

represent how managers and executives at the time want to be seen (Ott 1989). The Letters page of the journal, for instance, is a different type of data to formal organisational histories, company accounts, minutes and reports which, although they can be heavily edited, still provide useful and insightful data (Rowlinson and Hassard 1993, Rowlinson 2004). I elected to use a broad set of historical data to give an account of the association through time, including the association's own regular accounts of its activities to its members through annual reports, briefings and updates, thoughts of the Chair of the association often expressed in a regular column to members in the magazine, discourse in the form of articles on substantively large issues that impacted on the whole profession, and the letters pages of the magazine where members express their views on a wide variety of topics. This produced a substantive and significant dataset (Table 7). Each article was scanned with an OCR scanner to produce a readable digital file that uploaded in to NVIVO alongside the interview data.

Table 7: List of documentary dataset and size

Documentary data	Date range	Data size	Comment	Used for
Annual Report of SCAC	1973-1977	5 booklets	An edited account of the previous year. Contains relatively frank details of discussions and discourse at AGM.	Case study context and analysis chapters.
Annual Report of BAC/ BACP	1978-2018	41 booklets	An edited account of the previous year. Earlier editions contain details of discussions and discourse at AGM.	Case study context and analysis chapters.
Chair's Column	1978-2016	Circa 500 documents that range from a paragraph to page	Published semi-regularly, the Chair's columns appear in most issues and discuss a variety of pertinent issues.	Findings and discussion chapters.
Letter's pages	1973-2016	Circa 500 documents that range from a page to five pages	Letters were published in every edition of the journal with very few exceptions. Letters could run from 1 or 2 per edition to upwards of 15. Likely to be subject to prevailing editorial policy.	Findings and discussion chapters.

Editorial	1978-2016	Circa 500 documents that range from a paragraph to page	Largely introducing each issue, this data set was pertinent when the organisation or profession found themselves under stress.	Findings and discussion chapters.
Occasional feature	1978-2016	Circa 100 documents that range from a page to a whole edition.	Published infrequently, this data was included when then association was undertaking something large that impacted on all members, such as regulation and accreditation. This often-published alternative perspectives from members.	Findings and discussion chapters.

Data coding

Data from both interviews and documents was uploaded in to NVIVO to create a single coded dataset. Initially looking at the data thematically, I searched for the “‘demi-regularities’ at the empirical level of reality” (Fletcher 2017: 185). I adopted an approach guided by Fletcher’s work, who acknowledged the lack of prescriptive guidelines for approaches to critical research analysis, he “used a primarily deductive yet flexible (i.e. ‘directed’) coding process [...] that drew on existing theory and literature. A list of codes was drawn from the literature review, theoretical framework” (2017: 186). Fletcher describes a re-iterative process, discarding and refining coding schematics, a process described as fracturing the data. Eventually I settled on structuring the data in to 12 major categories, plus a nil-return category, each of the 12 with up to 34 sub-categories. These major thematic categories were: constructed definitions and the felt complexities of an association; the membership ideal-type and relationship; the profession ideal-type, contested terms and heterogeneity; the public ideal-type; who is the association for; neo-institutional theoretical explanations; legitimacy seeking theoretical explanations; associations and states; views on powers, elites and decision-making; counterfactual responses; technological encroachment in to professions; and theoretical explanations from the sociology of professions. Within each category confirming and non-confirming data were coded and

assigned. As with Fletcher's approach, nothing was considered un-important, although documentary data that was not specifically about the profession or the association was coded to a separate section, but not subsequently used in this thesis. This process created 3,393 data points over 251 categories, from 772 data sources for subsequent analysis and interpretation. Data points broadly varied across all nodes (Figure 2).

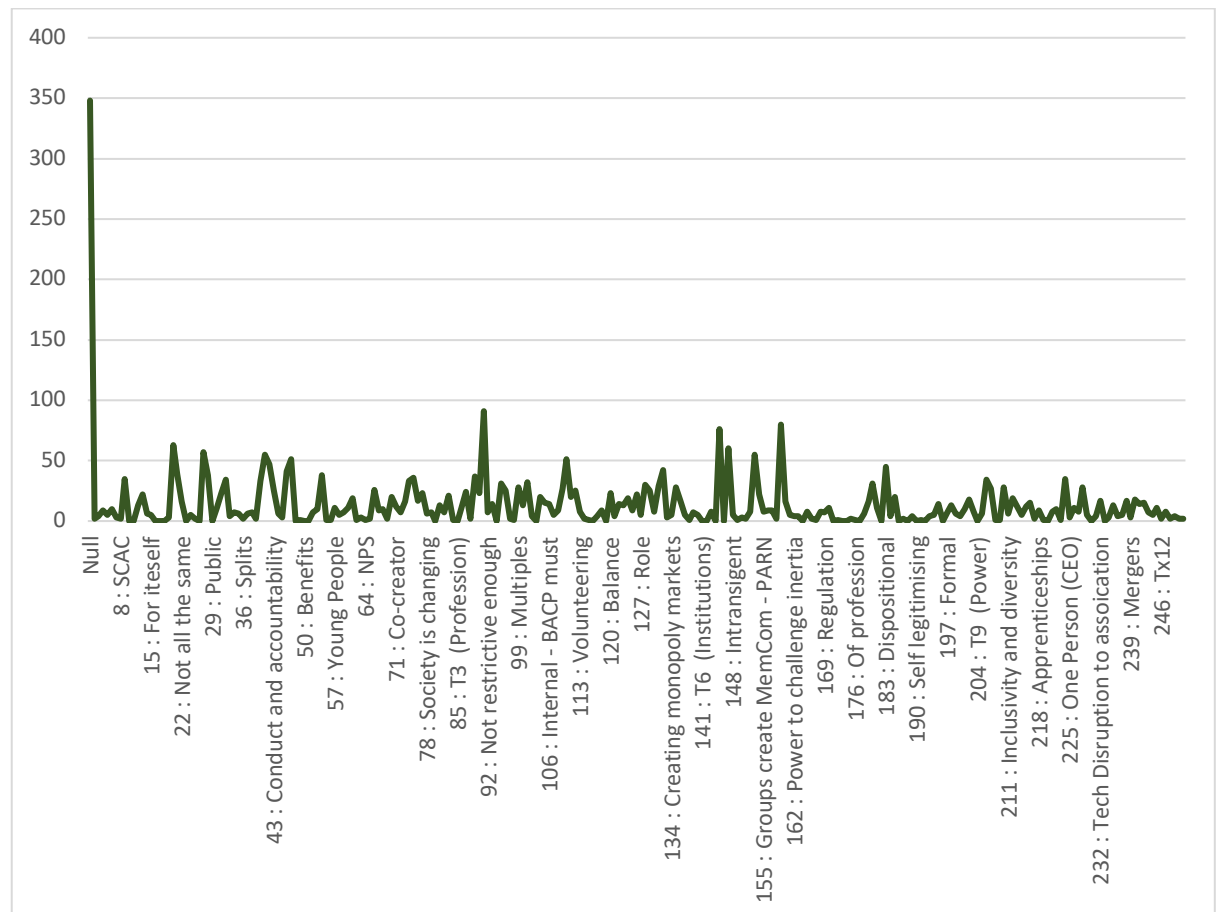


Figure 2: Data spread at node level

Situation of the researcher: implications and mitigations

As an own-organisation insider researcher I hold dual roles, potentially made more complex because my organisational role was, at the time of this project, a senior one. Read's (1996) study, describing his navigation of dual roles in researching a magistrates court was particularly useful as background reading highlighting many of the issues I faced in this project. It creates a triparte set of issues that, whilst central to the research and ECM, can be considered deeply problematic from some perspectives. The University ethics approval process was particularly attentive to

these sensitivities, and I relied on a body of work that highlighted the significant contribution to rich insights that insider perspectives can yield (see Kanhuna 2001, Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, Burns *et al.* 2012, Holian and Coglan 2013), and a smaller body of work of employees researching their own organisations at this level (e.g. Coglan and Brannick 2014). It is important to be circumspect and pragmatic, not every challenge to insider own organisation research can be answered in a way that would fully satisfy the most staunch proponent of outsider research. Rather than be drawn in to the epistemological polemics of insider-outsider emic-etic positions (see Merton 1972), or debating whether it truly is a dichotomy (Olson 1977, Chavez 2008), it is more useful to see insiderness and outsiderness as extreme points on a continuum. It might be considered a frame of reference (Surra and Ridley 1991, Simmons 2007, Thomson and Gunter 2011) along which the researcher and research moves. The concept of ‘degrees of insiderness’ is useful, particularly in sidestepping polemical arguments of how ‘outside’ is an outsider (Christensen and Dahl 1997). Degrees of insiderness is an important concept given the nature of this thesis, where as a researcher I can aim to avoid the pitfalls of being one thing or another in favour of occupying a space in the middle where the researcher can draw on their multilayered identity, and pre-existing knowledge (Riemer 1977), facilitating familiarity whilst maintaining an analytical degree of distance” (Burns *et al.* 2012: 59). Here the researcher is then both insider and outsider (Mercer 2007). Developing a reflexive, introspective approach is essential to provides to ensure that the ethics of such an approach are sensitively addressed.

The concept of being a ‘full member’ of the organisation to be researched (Alder and Alder 1987, Smyth and Holian 2008) is multi-layered. Through my formal role I am a member of staff (group A), but through other formal and informal roles, I may also be considered a member of groups C and D. If concepts of research impacting researchers holds, then followed through to their logical extreme, all outsider researcher become, to a degree, insiders as they are exposed to privileged information and the reflexivity of the research process. Implicitly relationships, questionnaire design and interview technique needed to be attentive to this position of insiderness, but to draw upon pre-acquired knowledge to inform both

the research process and analysis (see Reed and Proctor 1995, Labree 2002, Costley, Elliott and Gibbs 2010), and inform the relationship between researcher and participant (Leslie and McAllister 2002). During the design phase of the research, before opting for ECM, consideration was given to pursuing action research as it holds a rich repository of debate on advantages and drawbacks of insider and own-organisation positions (see Holian 1999, Coglán and Brannick 2001, Holian 2007, Brydon-Miller 2008, Holian and Coglán 2013, Kumar 2013, Coglán and Brannick 2014). Rather than be drawn in to arguments for or against insider researcher, it is more pragmatic to acknowledge all research approaches are contestable, and each has implications for both researcher, participant and process that require attention.

One potential issue in insider-research that needs to be recognised and cannot be fully mitigated concerns the interview process and the dynamics that effect how the information is both given and interpreted. There will always be questions of objectivity and truth (Simmel 1950) and it can be difficult to discern if participants are telling their honest truth (Barone 1995), or feel the need to censor their responses (Floyd and Linet 2010). It is important to be attentive to power dynamics, researchers *per se* are seen to hold more power than participants, they set the questions and often parameters of the research process. The challenge to attempt to create a sympathetic account of professional associations, to reach an empathetic neutrality (Patton 2002). In seeking to be attentive to building trust and rapport with participants (Edwards 1999) I found it important to be as transparent as possible, the opening invitation set out what was and was not in scope, questions were sent ahead of the interview, and participants were twice asked for permission, once at interview, and once again once they had time to edit their transcripts. As an own-organisation researcher there will always be questions relating to how the relationship between the researcher and colleagues impacts and effects the stories told by participants. Whilst the research question focused on the nature of the organisation rather than a critique of its performance, pre-existing relationships, trust in the researcher and research processes, and participants potential own agendas will have impacted on these stories.

One particular advantage of insider research, which does not wholly mitigate the relationship questions, is that participants often want to tell their story to someone who has pre-understanding of the organisation and its issues (Bell 2005). This can have a positive effect on a participant, whose own perspectives on researcher and research questions will influence their responses (Drever 1995). Equally, I found the reflexive process of theory-led interviewing, and the “I’ll-show-you-my-theory-if-you’ll-show-me-yours” (Pawson 1996: 307) helped create a conducive context for the interview process. Finally, and not unique to my approach, the issue of bias needs to be considered. In particular, those of my own theoretical and cultural biases (Greene 2014), or the challenge of staying objective and being able to maintain a critical perspective, refraining from overly sympathising with interview accounts (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The challenges to insider research cannot fully be mitigated (Sikes and Potts 2008, Drake 2010). Reflecting back, I did not get an overt sense that significant censoring had taken place, either by participants, or in my own analysis process but remain open to the notion that it may have happened unconsciously. I found the process of reflectively speaking about the research (Van Heugten 2004) to others outside the research process to be invaluable in helping me navigate my own internal biases. Conversations with supervisors, University upgrade meetings, progress meetings, and conversations with colleagues about the research over the seven year duration of the PhD created a focused and reflexive place to manage my own thinking on the research subject. As an insider own-organisation researcher it is inevitable that relationships with participants continue post-research phase. It is interesting to note that subsequent to the research process, many participants reflected that they enjoyed the process, and time to think abstractly about professional associations and are often they are keen to hear what conclusions have been drawn.

Ethical considerations

The initial threshold test for the research to begin was to successfully pass the University ethical approval test, and this process produced a point for critical reflection as I discussed approaches with the ethics team. Allum (1991) suggests that qualitative researchers must address four interrelated considerations

connected to their insiderness: the author must locate themselves within the text, which in itself might disclose advanced knowledge and problems encountered; the negotiation of objectivity and accuracy, particularly with the insider armed with pre-understanding; to reject the sense of familiarity, and develop a process of personal distancing; and finally constructing and deconstructing presumptions of truthfulness that might be developed differently by those without insider-knowledge. The primary concern relates to role ambiguity, and its potential to impact on the researcher, researched, and the organisation itself requires particular attention (Coglan and Brannick 2001). First, role ambiguity is a variable rather than fixed entity and its degree of relevance will change from participant to participant. As a researcher I attempted to delineate between my two roles, in practice a discipline of keeping them balanced (Holian 2007). Here I drew on the autoethnographic elements of Hoilan's (1999) study, where she gave clear process guidance on keeping distance between roles, but acknowledged that despite this, to many participants she was still the same person. Similarly, I relied on Kumar's (2013) pragmatic contextualisation, that role ambiguity in organisational settings for staff was a norm, they are often asked to hold multiple roles.

One particular aspect of role ambiguity is the potential for disclosure of information from a participant that would require immediate disclosure to the organisation. This was planned for, even though it did not occur in the research, the researcher must stop the research and consider what to do with the information. In this case, ethical practice is required to dominate, and a plan was made to end the research with that participant and offer a second meeting, outside the research process to re-raise and address the issue. Secondly, there is risk tied to the concept of pre-understanding (Coglan and Brannick 2001), the researcher will make assumptions based on prior knowledge (Finlay 2002) that they do not possess (Krim 1988). My approach here was to adopt reflective and reflexive approaches, embedded in both ECM and theory-led interviewing that supports challenge from participant to interviewer and subsequent discussion (Pawson 1996), to mitigate the degree of these risks. Thirdly, there is the difficulty of anonymity and participant anonymity that can never be fully guaranteed. Steps

can be taken to ensure best practice is used to provide the best possible securities. The single case study produces a potential deductive disclosure (Floyd and Arthur 2012) and it is important to understand that deductive disclosure does not have to be correct. Readers may well wrongly identify participants, attributing another's contributions to a particular person. Whether the identification is correct, or misplaced, it can still be problematic and needs to be carefully considered. Coupled with this is the consideration the researcher needs to think carefully through the publication process that an outside reader should also not be able to identify the participant (Tolich 2004). Confidentiality is of paramount importance for the own-organisation researcher, they, rather uniquely, have to live with the on-going consequences of the publication of the research as they maintain their full membership of the organisation (Drake 2010), and the impact on the organisation of the narratives given.

My approach was to acknowledge, think through and develop strategies aimed at addressing rather than mitigating these risks. Giving time and space to think through ethical considerations is particularly paramount for insider researchers (Workman 2007). First, individuals were given anonymity in the research, and offered the opportunity to select their own name. Secondly, I elected not to interview any direct reports although a strong argument could have been constructed to challenge this restriction, and a small body of work including Pass' research (in Rose, Spinks and Canhoto 2014: 175), and Homa's PhD on re-engineering of Leicester Royal Infirmary (in Cogan and Brannick 2001: 50), are evidence of this consideration being managed. Pragmatically I was able to draw on a sufficient dataset to work around these limitations. Third, invitations to participate were sent from the University of Leicester email address to highlight that this was research conducted by a student and bring some clarity to the potentials of role ambiguity. I actively outlined that no participant should feel under pressure or obligated to participate and that they may withdraw their contribution at any time. Reinforcing the concept that this was a student-led research project, email invitations to the organisation that were not responded to were purposefully not followed up with a reminder. Invitations clearly set out the

nature and scope of the research, contained a draft list of ‘typical questions’ and explicitly stated that the research was not seeking to forensically examine either their performance or the organisations. This was a particularly important aspect of the invitation process, drawing on literature that highlighted the study was “not about scrutinising individual practice but rather aimed to capture the broad spectrum of practice” (Burns et al. 2012: 54). Fourth, potential participants were offered the opportunity for a pre-interview informal conversation to clarify and address any points of concern or question. Several took this up. Fifth, the location of data and security was considered important. I elected not to store data on any organisational server, rather storing the data at home on an encrypted device. Transcription and anonymisation was undertaken as quickly as possible to minimise any risk of identification. The only remaining trace of a participant’s real identity is their signed permission forms and the email trail concerning approval of transcripts, the first stored off site, and the second on the University system. At submission of final thesis, the later will be deleted with the closure of my university account.

The second group of ethical considerations concern the relationship with the sponsoring organisation. Best practice was followed and a contract with the sponsoring organisation was deemed useful to ensure transparency and understanding (Coglan and Brannick 2001), particularly during the research phase where I committed to keeping line managers informed of progress (Rose, Spinks and Canhoto 2014). There were potential issues to consider, such as those faced by Holian (1999), whose research findings made uncomfortable reading for organisational executives, an occurrence she felt unprepared for, that had significant consequences. I was helped here as the organisation was both research attuned, and aspects of its work had been considered in other PhD thesis (e.g. Aldridge 2011, Symons 2012). During the course of the PhD, spanning eight years, organisational change meant that original sponsors left, and the thesis had to be renegotiated.

Reflexivity

The third group of ethical considerations concern the development of reflexive practice, Cogan and Brannick (2014) suggest that it is imperative that the researcher finds the time and space to re-orientate themselves, and develop reflexive skills (Costley, Elliott and Gibbs 2010: 4). Authors suggest work-based research must be attentive and respectful of the culture and values of the organisation, show the relevance of the research, and embrace consensual techniques and empathetic understanding of participants. To support reflexivity I have situated myself within the research, seeking to navigate and understand the complexity of associations. In this chapter I have followed Homa's (1998) lead, documenting the dilemmas and difficulties.

I was aided, to a degree, by working in a relatively reflexive organisation serving a reflexive profession. Reflexivity, itself a contested term (Lynch 2000), has grown from its roots located in introspection to an important element of both critical realist and postmodern research (Finlay 2003). I attempted to hold a position of "thoughtful, conscious self-awareness" (Finlay 2002: 532), and rather than produce a reflexive statement, I wanted to integrate reflexivity with how I positioned myself in the research throughout the text, one that "facilitates a critical attitude towards locating the impact of the research(er) context and subjectivity on process design, data collection, data analysis, and presentation of the findings" (Gough 2003: 22). I wanted to acknowledge that whilst reflexive author statements have their roots in "ethnographers and anthropologists [...who...] were concerned to unravel their own biographies intersect with their own interpretations" (Finlay 2003: 4), reflexivity has moved beyond confessional accounts (Seale 1999) to a place of both reflective practice and subjective self-awareness (Finlay 2002). For me, reflexivity was as much about having time and space to think, as it was an applied discipline. For instance, I found Finlay's guidance in particular stayed with me at the analysis stage, challenging me to become alert to one's own 'ambivalent response' as a signal for the need to be reflexive (Finlay 2002). An example is how reflexivity allowed me to consider my own journey towards the selection of critical realism, mirroring the journey described by Geoff Easton. *Critical realism in case study*

research (2010) outlines how the author became troubled with the concepts of positivism and interpretivism, and a search for a more personally satisfying alternative, a chance to “use causal language to describe the real world” (Easton 2010: 119). Easton’s consideration of the challenge to both the positivist “nomothetic epistemological stance which implies that there exists regularities or law-like generalisations [...that...] allows positivists to believe that they can make causal statements” (2010: 118) and interpretivism standpoints, “what is not clear that in the interpretivist approach is by what standards one interpretation is judged better than another” (2010: 118). Easton’s journey led him to more questions about ‘why?’ and this was intrinsically more interesting. Easton’s paper helped me understand my own dilemmas in my approach to the research question, and aided my interest in seeking the “underlying structures and mechanisms that produce empirical results rather than [...] the empirical events [...] themselves” (Reed 2005: 1630) that constitute some critical realist approaches.

Industry sponsored bias

One final consideration must be given to the potential for industry-sponsored bias. It is introduced to acknowledge the potential to undermine the integrity of this thesis, from the perspective of either insider own-organisation research or sponsorship. Importantly, by considering the issues fully, it provided another facet and space for reflection on the thesis. Industry sponsored bias can materialise in both qualitative and quantitative studies, to the very upper echelons of the hierarchy of evidence (Luborsky, Diguier and Seligman 1999) and evidence of researcher reflexivity (Brydon-Miller 2008). The process of thinking through where bias might creep in to the study is an important aspect of addressing such claims (McLeod 2010). There are processes to help, including the ethical principles within a management school (Hammersley 1995, Nichols and Skiiglund 1998), “the ethical responsibility of the faculty and the university to protect the validity and purity of research results regardless of what organization funds the research. University faculty have the responsibility not to allow anyone to call the tune when it comes to the conduct of the research and the outcome of the research” (Nichols and Skiiglund 1998: 387), committing to publishing findings (Baldrige, Floyd and

Markoczy 2004, COPE 2011), and speaking with others outside the process as the research progresses (Van Heugten 2004). The latter was particularly useful and I was able to not only use the expertise and reflections of my supervisors and other colleagues from the University, but also the broader academic and professional communities I belonged to. This helped me, in an iterative process, to reflect on what I was thinking, finding, analysing, and eventually the conclusions I was able to draw. Reflecting on organisational bias provided a strong opportunity to think and rethink about what the research was telling me. How it accorded and disrupted pre-existing knowledge were considered welcome opportunities to further think and become self-aware in the research process.

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter sets out in full the approach I elected to pursue to answer the research questions. It is an approach that takes a position of sensitivity, trying to find a comfortable conceptualisation of truth that works for the research subject and participants. Equally, it takes the same challenge to the concept of truth in trying to answer the research questions. The adoption and adaptation of ECM becomes fundamental to the process, accommodating critical realism, institutional accounts of organisations, and insider own-organisation research. The latter as an approach has significant drawbacks, and these are acknowledged and strategies for addressing them are outlined. The choice of single case study, own-organisation insider research, and the use of an underutilised research approach in ECM are a difficult set of choices. Other research approaches, other research subjects, and other questions may have presented easier, less challenging research projects. However, I believe when combined, the selection of case, method and approach present an interesting opportunity to study associations at a level of depth other approaches would not be able to claim, they facilitate, as Easton discovered in his own journey, the asking of the important 'how' and 'why' research questions.

5: Contextualising the primary case study: BACP

This chapter aims to contextualise the primary case study, BACP. The findings chapters that follow draw on the history of the association, and as such, significant space is dedicated to constructing an historical and contemporary account of the organisation. I have elected to draw on historical documentary evidence from the organisation itself, using the annual reports of SCAC, BAC and BACP. There is, of course, inherent limitation in historical accounts of organisations, and this chapter is presented for context rather than as a definitive history of the organisation, it will vary in its account from lived and remembered experiences of those who played roles in the organisation, and from third party perspectives on the organisation.

Associations as a dominant form of organisation

Millerson's chronological catalogue of the qualifying and non-qualifying bodies provides an interesting oversight of the field and its history. Initially this was an elite and restricted organisational form, the earliest Inns of Court in the 14th century, the Royal College of Physicians (1518) and the Society of Apothecaries (1617). Millerson (1964: 17-21) plots the rise of early associations and societies, including the Barber's Company, the Royal Society, the Society of Arts, Royal Academy and the Society of Gentleman Practisers in the Courts of Law and Equity. The 19th century saw a growth of professions and in turn, there was a sudden growth in the number of associations, tied to the emergence of professions: "[i]f association is an acceptable marker for the maturity of the professional project, then professions emerged in England and in the United States in a wave of association" (Larson 2013: xxiv). Study societies, such as the Chemical Society (1841), Linnean Society (1788) and the Royal Geographical Society also formed at this time (Millerson 1964: 22) and of these, several would now consider themselves, in part, professional associations. Millerson notes that the arrival of qualifying professional bodies began in 1818 with the Institution of Civil Engineers, and the Institute of British Architects in 1834, the Pharmaceutical Society in 1841 (Millerson 1964: 23). Whilst BAC had yet to form, Millerson's book provides a useful overview of the development of professional associations in to a dominant form of

organisational structure. Precedents for associations already existed in the field, for example the establishment of the British Psychological Society (1907), the London Psychoanalytic Society (1913), the British Psychoanalytic Society (1924), the Group Analytic Society (1952), the Scottish Pastoral Association (1959) (see Feltham 2012), and internationally precedents for counselling associations had already been set with the American Counselling Association, under the then name of the American Personnel and Guidance Association, had formed by amalgamation in 1952 (ACA 2018).

Overview of sector

The broader psychological therapies field accommodates a wide range of disciplines and professions, in which counselling and psychotherapy can be located. Historically there have been varying degrees of state intervention in the sector: some professions are statutorily regulated by HPC, whilst others, after a change in government policy, are partly held in the broad field of 63 disciplines that hold voluntary registration with PSA (PSA 2018b). Other bodies elect to be held by neither.

Counselling and psychotherapy, as occupational fields, are home several professional associations, and whilst there is no room to detail all, a brief introduction to some associations is given, as they are referenced in the following chapters. As this is a study of formal associations, it does not cover less formal organisations of counsellors and psychotherapists, despite their value, such as the Independent Practitioners Network, founded in 1995, based on “the establishment of small autonomous groups of independent practitioners linked together as a network” (Postle 2012: 62). Many of these associations hold registers accredited by the PSA. This section is not designed to act as a comparator between organisations, but to demonstrate that there are other bodies in the field that, to one degree or another, influence the story of the primary case. Each association has its own history, independent of this account, which will be richer and quite different from the treatment here. Associations in the field are traditionally seen to work independently of each other, but there is evidence of associations coming together to address high-level field issues, such as regulation. For example BACP, UKCP,

BCP BABCP and COSCA all participated as members of the Psychotherapists and Counsellors Professional Liaison Group that met between 2008 and 2009 to produce a series of recommendations regarding statutory regulation (HPC 2009).

The UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) narrates its existence, like BACP, as a response to the Foster report and its unfulfilled recommendation to regulate psychotherapy (Jones 1998, Davies 2009). UKCP was established on 20th May 1993, tracing its' antecedents back from a Standing Conference in 1989 (Balfour 1995, Feltham 2014), and before that The Rugby Conference, which BAC participated in. The fledgling body held an initial membership focused on training institutes, which grew to hold over 80 (Szymanska and Palmer 2002), initially focusing on mapping the profession; taking steps towards statutory regulation, a position in Europe; and raising the profile of psychotherapy (UKCP 1994). Since then, membership has significantly broadened to include individuals and UKCP is a sizeable association with over 8,000 individual members and over 70 training and accrediting organisations, structured in to colleges and special interest groups (UKCP 2018a, UKCP 2018b). UKCP's role is "to promote and maintain high standards of practice of psychotherapy and psychotherapeutic counselling for the benefit of the public throughout the United Kingdom" (UKCP 2018a). British Psychoanalytic Council (BPC), formerly known as the British Confederation of Psychotherapists, is "a professional association, representing the profession of psychoanalytic and psychodynamic psychotherapy made up of fourteen member institutions" and holds 1,500 registrants (BPC 2018) across 18 member institutions and societies (BPC 2019). Its formation appears tied to a breakaway movement from the UKCP by four training institutes: The Institute of Psychoanalysis (founded under Freud), the British Association of Psychotherapists (founded under Jung), Society of Analytical Psychotherapists and the Tavistock Clinic (Davies 2009: 40). The National Counselling Society (NCS) is both a learned society and not-for-profit company with a membership open to both organisations and individuals (NCS 2018b), formed in 1999 (NCS 2018a). The British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP) describes itself as an interest group, formed in 1972 as the British Association for Behavioural

Psychotherapy (BABCP 2018). BABCP was formed with a range of members including psychologists, psychiatrists and nurses who were interested in the practice of the discipline (Lomas 1995), and was originally a UKCP member organisation, withdrawing in 2009 (BABCP 2019). COSCA, Counselling and Psychotherapy Scotland was formed in 1990 as the Confederation of Scottish Counselling Agencies, and links its initiation to the breakup of the Scottish Association of Counselling (Magee 2008). The organisations mission is “[t]he advancement of education, the advancement of health and the relief of those in need by reason of ill health by advancing, developing, maintaining, improving and expanding all forms of counselling and related activities and therapies in Scotland and beyond for the public benefit” (Scottish Charity Register 2018).

The Association for Christian Counsellors (ACC), a body set up in 1992 (ACC 2016) and describes as “a professional body whose purpose is to facilitate quality counselling, psychotherapy, pastoral care and related training” (ACC 2018). There are many more associations in the field, some with registers held by the PSA (PSA 2018b), others as formal groups and communities, and a range of informal communities. The list of accredited registers is quite broad and not restricted to counselling and psychotherapy: As of March 2018 the list included: Academy for Healthcare Science; Alliance of Private Sector Practitioners; Association of Child Psychotherapists; ACC; British Acupuncture Council; British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy; British Association of Play Therapists; British Association of Sport Rehabilitators and Trainers; BPC; Complementary and Natural Healthcare Council; COSCA; Federation of Holistic Therapists; Genetic Counsellor Registration Board; Human Givens Institute; NCS; National Hypnotherapy Society; Play Therapy UK; Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists; Register of Clinical Technologists; Save Face; Society of Homeopaths; UK Board of Healthcare Chaplaincy; UKCP; UK Public Health Register. (PSA 2018c). The purpose of this section is to paint the landscape in the field as both complex and significantly differentiated.

5.1 History and development of BACP

An association and its profession have, to a limited extent, shared stories, they influence and are influenced by each other. The focus in this section is to concentrate on the story of the association. The story of the profession is told in other, separate accounts, particular well in the PhD thesis by Sally Adridge (2011). The story of this association's formation is not too dissimilar to academic accounts of the formation of other associations, for instance those tied to Harold Wilensky's (1964) professionalisation process, or a profession acquiring a bureaucratic form of organisation as an acceptable marker of maturity of a profession (Larson 2013). It is the detail of the history of the association that becomes interesting, particularly when relating back to the concepts of institutional logics.

Counselling and the pre-association field

Substantive histories of the discipline in the UK are the subject of several text. Aldridge's PhD and book (Aldridge 2011, Aldridge 2014) together with *An Introduction to Counselling* (McLeod 2013) would be requisite reading for those interested in the subject, tracing the profession from its multiple roots (Syme 1994), diversity and competing claims. The occupations were still relatively new and emerged in a changing social landscape, "[t]he significance of all these developments, however, lies in the fact that they took place within the framework of existing social arenas and largely as a response to emerging social problems and cultural shifts" (Dryden, Mearns and Thorne 2000: 469). From the 1940s counselling became a more planned and organised activity (Syme 1994), and over time, formalised trainings to support a broadening demand (Syme 1994), coupled with emerging student support services in educational establishments in the 1960s (Newsome, Thorne and Wyld 1973) saw the expansion of the nascent profession. A transformation in to public understanding, active support from the NHS, and the rise in private practice have seen dramatic changes in the activity base of the profession. Dryden *et al.* reflect back, as recently as the year 2000, "[t]he word 'counsellor' was almost unknown in Britain when the present writers embarked on their therapeutic careers, but it is now in common parlance and features regularly

in the media even if its meaning sometimes remains cloudy and is still confused with advice giving or the immediate support offered to the victims of traumatic events or violent incidents. In some ways the present time could be seen as the 'age of the counsellors', and there can be no doubt that there now exists in the population as a whole a much greater readiness to seek help for psychological and emotional concerns than was the case 20 years ago." (Dryden, Mearns and Thorne 2000: 470).

Several themes emerge for the association: the circular arguments on the difference and similarity of the professions themselves (Woolfe, Dryden and Charles-Edwards 1989, Woolfe 1997, Aldridge 2014), "the alleged differences [between counselling and psychotherapy] are indeed confusing and even many of the most prominent practitioners disagree" (Feltham 1999: 5-6); the position of the profession in relation to employment and philosophy, "[a]lmost none of the counsellors in ASC and APCC in 1976 would have been receiving fees direct from their clients (none would have had 'patients') and in APCC particularly many would have been working in an entirely voluntary capacity. What is more, their work would have been informed not so much by the medical model as by educational and spiritual understandings of human dysfunction, growth and development" (Dryden, Mearns and Thorne 2000: 469); a field supportive and embracing difference, "an array of orientation and modalities, "numerous and competing traditions, theories and techniques as well as several similar professions, that is continuously being developed" (Feltham 1999: 16). Aldridge concludes, "Counselling has multiple pre-cursors, leading to incomplete boundary setting and inadequate definitions and therefore to weak jurisdictional claims" (Aldridge 2011: 2). Heterogeneity is a phrase that aptly describes an occupation that consists of different titles, theoretical orientations, whose members work across a range of conditions, client groups, employment patterns and situations. It is also an occupation that has not always universally welcomed aspects of professionalisation (House and Totton 1997, Totton 1999, Bondi 2004).

Early years: transitioning from the standing conference

The association was created by the Standing Conference for the Advancement of Counselling (SCAC). SCAC itself was a body initiated by the National Council for Social Services, supported by funding from the Gulbenkian Foundation (see Aldridge 2011), established in October 1971, Bedford Square, London, and held its first meeting a year later. The conference held a broad remit to “draw together counsellors from a variety of settings and interest the government and educationalists in counselling” (Syme 1994: 7) and quickly became a forum for sharing ideas. SCAC quickly developed organising tendencies as Halleson’s remarks testify at an early conference; “As S.C.A.C. becomes a more effective body it will hopefully become one of the channels in which new and experimental approaches in counselling and psychotherapy get distributed, tested, established, discarded, modified” (Halleson 1974). SCAC can be seen as having a guiding hand in the development of both profession and association, reminiscent of Larson’s observations that “the modern profession itself – has to be created rather than be a “unified actor at the onset” (2013: xxv).

As Syme (1994) indicates, the field was already becoming more planned and organised. SCAC’s creation followed several organisations in the field: the Marriage Guidance Council began in 1938 and by 1943 was offering counselling in London (Relate 2016); Cruse, the bereavement care charity in 1938; Westminster Pastoral Foundation in 1969 (WPF Therapy 2018); the Albany Trust since 1958 (Albany Trust 2018); Bristol Off the Record in 1965; and Mind, as the National Association for Mental Health in 1946. SCAC’s membership was eclectic, holding both those that practiced with those with an interest including training colleges, national societies, government departments, and church groups (see SCAC 1974: for the full membership list). The organisation produced information for both members and non-members, and in 1974 produced its first directory of local counselling services. Within that membership there were also professional associations and it is interesting to note here that the development of this profession was not solely located with the practitioners, but a much larger and involved process. Some of these early associations held their own jurisdiction in

the field: the Association for the Advancement of Pastoral Care and Counselling; the Association for Student Counselling; the Association of Psychotherapists; the Association of Child Psychotherapists; the British Psychological Society; Royal College of Psychiatrists; and the International Round Table for the Advancement of Counselling³. Others had an interest from further afield but still contributed to SCAC: the British Medical Association; British Institute of Management (now the Chartered Institute of Management); Royal College of Nursing; and the Institute for Careers Officers. Interestingly there is no evidence of any making a play for a jurisdictional control over this new profession or the body that SCAC would eventually create.

As previously alluded to, diversity was a hallmark of the profession, and SCAC recognised this by organising itself into eleven groups based on settings: Churches; Medical Professional; Teaching Professional; Social Work; Other Professional; Training; Counselling in Education; Careers Counselling; Therapeutic Counselling; Voluntary Organisations; and Others. This diversity was, at different times, considered both a strength and weakness and a prevalent topic in the very earliest discussions about the remit and role of the standing conference (SCAC 1975c, SCAC 1976a). The conference was not always a harmonious activity, and this was reflected in many of its documentations, “[t]ension and emotion, with a pull towards and apart was [...] the sense of all work in this field and would inevitably be always present in the life of S.C.A.C. One participant capped [the meeting] summing up with “That’s my best friend, she’s a horrible girl”” (SCAC 1973: 7). Definitions and boundaries in the field also proved habitually problematic for the early organisation, for instance the use of the word

¹ The Association for the Advancement of Pastoral Care and Counselling (APSCC) and the Association for Student Counselling (ASC) would later form Divisions under the newly created BAC.

² Formed in 1949 as the Provisional Association of Child Psychotherapists (Non-Medical) and now holding, like BACP, a voluntary accredited register with the PSA.

³ IRTAC was formed in 1966 in Switzerland and would later become the International Association for Counselling.

counselling, “[o]ur use of the word “counselling” was rather like our use of the word “green”. Counselling [...] might be seen as the colour “green”. There were various shades of “counselling” as there were various shades of “green” (SCAC 1973: 3).

SCAC appears to have very quickly set about organising the profession in classic form. For example, in 1974 a working party of members was established to explore ethical standards in counselling for the “growing numbers of professional and voluntary counsellors” (SCAC 1974), at the same time broader discussions were underway on general professional standards for the occupation (SCAC 1973). SCAC was also concerned with its own future, with a general consensus that it should transform in to a more permeant structure, created in response to both the needs of practitioners and an external environment that held that aspects of the profession should be restricted. Discussions in 1973 concerned the formation of an Institute for Counselling as a “constructive response to the Foster Report’s comments on the need for client protection” (SCAC 1973: 8), or a British Association for the Advancement of Counselling. Sir John Foster’s Enquiry into the practice and effects of Scientology made several recommendations including “psychotherapy (in the general sense of the treatment, for fee or reward, of illnesses, complaints or problems by psychological means) should be organised as a restricted profession open only to those who undergo an appropriate training and are willing to adhere to a proper code of ethics, and that the necessary legislation should be drafted and presented to Parliament as soon as possible” (Foster 1971: v). The conference also began to broaden its reach, making itself more accessible to individual practitioners, and changing the dynamics of normative pressure. In 1974 there were only 15 individual subscribers to SCAC, compared to the 107 full and associate organisational members. This created difficulties for the fledgling organisation as it wrestled with dilemmas such as whether professional and volunteer counsellors should be treated separately (Nelson-Jones and Coxhead 1978), together with students (BAC 1979b), based on ability to afford the membership fees (SCAC 1976b, BAC 1980), whether practitioners and fellow travellers were to be delineated, or whether some practitioners be accredited by

some form of competency assessment (SCAC 1976a) and how to hold organisational membership (SCAC 1975b).

The concerns of the conference were not restricted to the membership lens. Early SCAC documents provide empirical evidence of the association considering and attentive to both coercive isomorphic pressures, for example the Foster Report and mimetic as it explored other professions and their associations, the potential range of benefits other occupations enjoyed. There were suggestions that the organisation follow a mimetic path, and membership models, fee structures, governance, activities, and publications operated by the Society of Authors, Playwrights and Composers and the American Personnel and Guidance Association were given serious consideration. The organisation was also considering who its primary beneficiaries were, and this appeared unclear, for example as far back as 1973 there were calls for the organisation to have a primary role in public protection, replaced later with a challenge to focus on members. Two years on a Nicholas Tyndall in his address to the AGM on the proposed inauguration of BAC suggested that “the most important outcome of the formation of BAC would be better service to clients” (SCAC 1977: 2). There appears to have been ambiguity from the beginning, which is likely to be caused as much by the profession as it is the nature of associations and organisation professions.

SCAC eventually concluded that it needed to evolve in to a form of professional association, and by 1975 a clear intention was brought forward as a resolution at SCAC’s Annual General Meeting, a proposal to form a British Association for Counselling. The proposed BAC was to be built to emulate existing legitimate professional associations. The new organisation was to have traditional scope: sharing and mutual learning; public protection through standards setting; facilitation of an effective training field. Members were considered the primary beneficiary at this point, they sought an organisation “which would represent the interests of individual counsellors in many settings” (SCAC 1975a). It would also act as a mechanism to pursue what might be described as either professionalisation or a professional project, although neither term was used. Reflecting the early debates on the position of the public in the organisation, the

new body would also form under the rules of the Charity Commission (SCAC 1977: 3). BAC was not created in a vacuum, and there are indications that the association had a negotiated birth, underpinning its legitimacy-seeking nature, as it set about to “enter in to negotiations with organisations representing the interests of counsellors, regarding the introduction of a British Association for Counselling to include a professional individual membership” (SCAC 1975a: 3).

Growing pains: Establishment and fragility 1973-1984

The proposals were accepted, and at the 1976 SCAC annual general meeting the British Association for Counselling was inaugurated on 19th November 1977 (SCAC 1976b), membership open to anyone with an interest in the field for a fee of £5. Whilst SCAC had focused on the profession, and the need to bring this together (SCAC 1973, SCAC 1975a, SCAC 1975c, SCAC 1975b, SCAC 1976a, SCAC 1976b, SCAC 1977), one early focus for the embryonic BAC was the need to be self-attentive. The idea of having an association, and that association being able to sustain itself initially proved different concepts. Documents reveal that the first few years of BAC were dogged with questions over its long-term viability: concerns over precarious finances (BAC 1979b) and “fighting for funds to survive” (BAC 1978a), themes that would be recurrent through to the mid-1980s (BAC 1982, BAC 1985). The association appointed its first executive officer David M Charles-Edwards (BAC 1982), and devoted time to working out where it would be based and how much to remunerate staff (BAC 1978b) alongside trying to sort out differences in organisational membership (BAC 1983a). The association was also attentive to the purpose for which it had been created. Heterogeneity, in terms of specialisation within the membership were considered important, and Divisions of members were created, rapidly growing from two to seven (BAC 1978c) as former members of SCAC, like APSCC and ASC, “surrender[d] its autonomy and become a founding ‘Division’ of the vulnerable new fledgling” (Dryden, Mearns and Thorne 2000: 468), and new Divisions of Counselling in Medical Settings, Pastoral, Sexual, Marital and Family Division and the National Association for Young People’s Counselling Service a year later in 1978 were created (BAC 1978a, BAC 1979a). Communities of practice were not restricted to sectors, and a nascent branch

structure was launched in 1978/9 (BAC 1979a), linked to an independent Scottish Association for Counselling⁴, formed on the same day as BAC, and an independent Northern Ireland Association for Counselling (BAC 1979a) formed in 1974 in Belfast. Committees were constructed to help the creation and dissemination of the burgeoning fields of knowledge and practice, the new body set about publishing a journal and set about collecting and administering a library of films (BAC 1980) which it later found it could ill-afford (BAC 1982). Professional standards and accreditation had been discussed since the earliest days of SCAC, and development of schemes began in earnest, introduced for practitioners in 1983, supervisors in 1988 (McMahon 2002), trainings in 1987 (BAC 1987b) and trainers much later in 1997 (McMahon 2002). Standards were central, but already proving challenging to early BAC, “We aim to be a standard setting body: we must say what our standards are” (Godden 1981: 8). Early codes of ethics were developed, and BAC became an organisation that regularly took stock, regularly revising its codes and complaints procedures (BAC 1985). The association also took an early role in the articulation of normative pressures on behalf of the occupation, with evidence of it routinely seeking to influence government consultations (BAC 1979b), sometimes to position the profession and sometimes to position its members (BAC 1980), particularly prominent were concerns about the effect of unemployment, seeking support for counselling in schools (BAC 1981b). The application of a normative pressure was not restricted to professional matters. The early association held interests in how society was structured; for example BAC involved itself in arguments on the deployment of nuclear weapons in the UK (BAC 1983a), and making schools more humane places to be (BAC 1986a). The association made significant progress in legitimising the profession, establishing a media voice working with Radio 4, London Weekend Television and Channel 4 (BAC 1983b, BAC 1984, BAC 1985, BAC 1986a). Membership proved popular, and by 1977 numbers were already over the 1,000 mark. The early association tentatively worked through its relationship with members, and the expectations

⁴ The Scottish Association for Counselling was inaugurated in 1977 and dissolved in 1989 with its members being offered membership of BAC.

they placed on the organisation it was seen to be concerned about its own reputation as members advertised themselves (BAC 1981a). When the annual membership levy rose 50% from £5.00 to £7.50 (BAC 1978c) the association felt the need to spell out how under resourced it was: the £7.50 was split between divisions (£2.50), journal (£3.00), salaries (£0.50), committee expenses (£1.00) and rent (£0.40). Not much remained, “[t]his leaves 10p to cover services to members [...] subscription collection, project work, regional organization etc” (BAC 1979a). Finances restricted the early association’s ambition and aspiration. Reflecting on the previous year, the Chair openly admitted “unfortunately, although the Executive team were looking at these issues, nothing concrete had been done” (BAC 1982: 2). That team, under BAC’s first manager Doreen Schofield, numbered four (BAC 1979a). A move to Rugby, Warwickshire, and continued financial support from the Home Office, through the Voluntary Service Unit (VSU) kept the association supported but dependent on external sources of funding, for example £3,000 from the Tudor Trust (Counselling News 1980b), these contracted, BAC became both vulnerable again, and unsure of its legitimacy and place in governmental interest, “since the phasing out of the VSU grant, it has become increasingly apparent that we do not seem to belong to the Home Office, the DHSS, not the DES, and are suffering some sort of homelessness” (Miles 1985: 4). By 1983 the young association’s future appears far from certain and as membership numbers started to decline, the association realised that it could not maintain a status quo; “[t]o survive in its present form BAC needs to double its membership income in the next two years” (BAC 1983b: 12).

Turnaround, growth and establishment 1984-2001

A focus on membership, in particular encouraging its growth, yielded returns, and this produced much needed revenue to support the non-revenue generating professional aspects of the associations’ work, Chair Tom Leary was able to report in his opening statement to members, “I am pleased to be able to say that the past year has been one in which some of our objectives have been realised” (BAC 1986b: 5). The organisation was in a precarious position, reliant on external funding to support developmental initiatives (BAC 1988): a donation from Control Data

Limited funded the creation of the first public facing list of members (BAC 1986b); the Artemis Trust funded the association's first information service for members and clients (BAC 1987a); its first telephone system purchased through a donation made by Rugby's charity shops (BAC 1987a). The rise in staff numbers to 14 in 1987 was partially funded by the Manpower Services Commission (BAC 1987a), which ceased unexpectedly that year leaving the association with a critical funding gap exasperated by the increasing need from the growing membership (BAC 1990), serving 3,294 members was providing burdensome for the capacity of its single Apple II computer. Growing numbers also created a greater heterogeneity, "[t]he Association has always tried to maintain a balance between providing for the professional counsellors and providing for volunteer counsellors and those who use counselling skills. We want to consider carefully the consequences if we choose to cater more for one group than the other" (Casemore 1985: 6).

A new strategy in 1987 set out a broader set of ambitions: financial viability; accreditation and standards; organising the training of counsellors; developing publications; improving public relations; servicing members; and its own operational effectiveness (BAC 1987b). The ambitious strategy and workplans appear to be underpinned by the nascent legitimacy of the profession, "Counselling is a young occupation in this country, as BAC is a young organisation, and its identity is still a little uncertain in the public understanding. The public presence of BAC is important in defining and establishing this identity" (BAC 1986b: 8), This required clarity, and again standards featured highly, "[f]undamental to BAC's unique role is its responsibility for debating and articulating standards" (BAC 1986b: 8), but accreditation, by 1989, had only attracted 10% of the membership (BAC 1989). One of the most challenging issues was the association's relationship with psychotherapy, a jurisdictional quandary reminiscent of Abbott's theories, and those forces and decisions that had created BAC. BAC was influential in the formation of the Standing Conference for Psychotherapy, although internally there was uncertainty for BAC on what this potential separation might mean; whether it would emerge from the process a, "a butterfly or moth" (BAC 1986b: 10). This standing conference created a separate

professional a body, UKCP, in 1994. BAC at this juncture returned to focus for the time on one singular profession, although these lines of distinction were blurred from the very start (BAC 1993). Both UKCP and BAC subsequently embarked on an initial relationship of mutual collaboration and working together.

Standards again appear to prove problematic. It is interesting to note that there is clear evidence that the association was working and engaging with external organisations in the setting of its own standards; “BAC is commissioned by The Department of Employment as Project Manager for The Differentiation Project. This is an extension from the Feasibility Study undertaken by Julie Janes Associates Limited in 1991 and will differentiate between Advice, Befriending, Guidance, Counselling Skill and Counselling” (Counselling 1991a). This was not always a universally excepted approach, leading some to question this external influence, “[w]hy are we moving in this direction for training and do we have to?” (Counselling 1991a). Between 1991 and building through to 1994 BAC and its members were active in responding to the consultations of the National Lead Body for Advice, Guidance Counselling and Psychotherapy. The output of this “controversial exercise” (BAC 1994b: 1) would eventually incorporate as National and Scottish Vocational Qualifications within the newly established National Council for Vocational Qualifications (Woolfe 1997, Aldridge 2011). Standards were also on the agenda with the formation in 1994 of the United Kingdom Register of Counsellors, a joint initiative between Relate, WPF and COSA. Chair Elsa Bell reflected on both NVQs and UKRC “[t]hese two activities have been the greatest challenges for us to describe our work, our standards and our principles in ways that are accessible to those who are outside our profession” (BAC 1994b: 1). The pressures to create standards had to be balanced by a growing focus on maintaining membership legitimacy, Elizabeth Davies, then General Manager, rather tellingly indicates “BAC is primarily a membership organisation and its priorities must be ordered accordingly” (BAC 1988: 9). There were some obvious growing pains. Some members could feel distant from the organisation (Counselling News 1979: 4). This was a recurring theme; “[l]ong standing members can remember early meetings in basement flats in London. This would be difficult

to arrange for 4500 members!" (BAC 1989: 6) and AGM voting levels were significantly low, typically between 1 and 3% engagement.

Diversity within the field was also seen as a point of tension: "those employed as counsellors versus those who see it as a component part of other work they do; those who are paid and those who work voluntarily; those who identify strongly with different theories or schools and hold other perspectives to be inadequate; those who have been clients and those that have taken less introspective paths; those who are radical and expect counselling to change society and those whose remit is to work with the individual (Woolfe, Dryden and Charles-Edwards 1989: 17). One speculation on the perceived imbalance was that those members who influenced the organisation "tended to come from amongst the paid counsellors and consequently the Association's output has been disproportionately geared to counsellors rather than [...] pastoral or voluntary work" (Woolfe, Dryden and Charles-Edwards 1989: 17). As BAC grew, so it appears it became more difficult to be agile to a changing and demanding environment, "BAC is in the midst of change to meet new expectations from clients, purchasers and external bodies" (BAC 1999: 2), its President reflected, "[t]o speak of large organisations being like super-tankers – slow to turn but getting there eventually – is a cliché; but a true one for all that. BAC is, perhaps, one such organisation" (BAC 1999: 2).

The attention the early profession had received had largely been positive. For example, in 1993, a VAT tribunal ruling (11855) legitimised BAC as a learned society, and, and in part, counselling as a profession in the UK. The tribunal was persuaded that "counselling was found to be a branch on knowledge in [the] British Association for Counselling [...] based on academic courses and the level of articles in the Association's journal" (Needham 2011: 228). The homogenous nature of the membership again became apparent: "[t]his same tribunal noted that not all BAC members are professionals. This reflects that BAC is an Association 'for' not 'of' counsellors and not all members may wish for professional status" (BAC 1994b: 3) and became a cause of concern. The association began to develop its membership structure into a form of meritocracy: "[o]ne of the strengths of our Association is that it has never been elitist, and yet we need to recognise that people do differ in

skills levels, educational background and so on. With 10,000 members it is probably now necessary to work out categories of members rather than simply have one category for individuals and one for organisations” (BAC 1993: 1). Not all external interest helped legitimise association and profession. For instance, in 1996 comedian Bernard Manning joined the association, specialising in racial awareness and sexual matters (Independent 1996). The subsequent fall out, aside from creating new checking procedures, caused high profile reputational damage to both organisation and profession (Bond 1996). Operating in an environment that was both supportive and challenging of the profession required the association to be adequately resourced. During this period (1984-2001) staff numbers rose dramatically, 14 to 58 and more roles transitioned from volunteer members to paid staff, bringing with it questions over the locus of control - “[w]hat functions belong with Individual members, Divisions, Organisations and at Rugby?” (BAC 1997: 2). The association continued to broaden its work, venturing in to a more commercial field of operations by transfer of deed, acquiring its first trading subsidiary, Yuill Kennedy-Browne Associates Ltd⁵ in 1986 and undertook the secretariat role with the fledgling European Association for Counselling (BAC 1994a), whose membership of similar associations stretched across Ireland, Switzerland, Italy, the then Czech Republic, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and France (EAC 1994).

Contemporary association and re-invigoration 2002-2014

By 2001 the association was stably organised and resourced, creating a set of outputs that would fit with most contemporary professional associations (see Friedman and Mason 2003a, Friedman, Phillips and Cruickshank 2006, Friedman and Mason 2007, Friedman and Griffin 2013, Friedman and Griffin 2014), Chair Craig McDevitt reflected “BACP has clearly become a very attractive and influential professional body in the eyes of many people in the field, as well as the public. BACP is seen as being at the leading edge of the profession.” (BACP 2002: 3). Jurisdictional issues came to the fore again, as the association looked to better

⁵ Yuill Kennedy-Browne Associates continued trading until 1991 when the subsidiary was renamed BAC Advertising Ltd, BACP Advertising Ltd in 2001, and eventually the extant BACP Enterprises Ltd in 2005

meet “the needs of many BAC members whose work was termed psychotherapy and [they] also acknowledged the general changes over the years in the public perception and understanding of counselling and psychotherapy” (BAC 2001b: 3). A proposal to change the name of the association to the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) was carried at the general meeting, although only 2% of the membership voted. Nonetheless the resolution was carried by 309 votes in favour, 43 against and 36 abstentions. In September 2000 BACP was registered. Interestingly, five years on, BACP began to consider its relationship with the growing discipline of coaching. Years later similar arguments surfaced for recognising the coaching profession with BACP, however the outcome was different. Rather than seeking to rename the body, the association developed a strategy to form a special interest group to hold members who practice coaching (BACP 2006). The Coaching Forum would go on to become BACP’s newest Division and the only new Division other than the now defunct RACE since the very early years.

The external landscape continued to present a challenging mix of jurisdictional battles. Counselling had transcended what was envisaged as a ‘golden age’ (Dryden, Mearns and Thorne 2000) in to contested terrain, in particular the NHS. Counselling had long held a foothold in the NHS, albeit gained by stealth (Eatock 2000), but it now found itself fighting rear-guard action against a modernisation agenda that was less receptive to the profession (Eatock 2000). Agenda for Change, evidence based-practice, and practice based commissioning were creating a difficult and disadvantageous environment and jurisdiction for the discipline (BACP 2007a), one that members’ looked to their association to defend. These difficulties were compounded in 2010 when psychological therapies became the focus of a new national government initiative, Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) (BACP 2010). IAPT’s adherence to one theoretical orientation, CBT, proved to be sometimes divisive for a broad, diverse and complex profession. There were more welcoming and inclusive environments for the profession in workplaces, where an economic argument for the intervention could be made (McLeod 2001), and within schools where there was a supportive political will

(BACP 2003a). An employment survey indicated the impact of a growing membership and a profession struggling with jurisdictional battles, indicating higher numbers of counsellors working in private practice, self-employed, or within the voluntary sector (Critical Research 2014). Jurisdiction in higher education was also problematic. The sense that “[t]here is a slowly increasing number of professors of counselling in the UK— perhaps another indicator of progress towards professional maturity, acceptance and respectability” (2000: 446) — could not be sustained as counselling training programmes in higher education slowly declined. The association was seen to take an active role in marshalling and co-ordinating both the defence and claims of the broader professions.

During the period, the potential for statutory regulation dominated both work and demanded attention from the association (see Aldridge 2011, Waller and Guthrie 2013). The association found itself responding to an evolving and often changing government regulation agenda, ever attempting to create influence on behalf of the profession. Oliver (1991) may have classed the associations’ initial work as a manipulation strategy, an attempt to “advise Government on the appropriate mechanisms for regulation in the field” (BAC 2001a: 3). There is evidence that as early as 1982 BAC had been invited to discuss with the Minister the prospect of regulating both counselling and psychotherapy (Godden 1982). Over time, this strategy appears to have evolved to one of acquiescence: “[a] key issue this year, and for the future, is public protection through regulation by the Health Professions Council” (BACP 2003a: 4). The association was seen to constantly create space for dialogue with its members as it navigated an evolving prospect of regulation through a series of articles, for example *Regulation Coming Soon* (CPJ 2001a) and *Another Step Towards Regulation?* (CPJ 2005a). The association continued to act as a mechanism for holding the debate “we can have a debate within the Association on the advantages and disadvantages of regulation. That will help us to see the issues which need particular attention” (Mearns 2002: 15). Letters show the split between those who saw potential benefit of regulation to members, clients and the profession, those who were opposed to the idea, either philosophically (e.g. Thorne 2002) or choice of regulator (e.g. Letters 2002c).

Initially, BAC adopted an approach to influence the process — an attempt to “advise Government on the appropriate mechanisms for regulation in the field” (BAC 2001a: 3). This yielded little benefit, and the field of those seeking to influence policy became contested and complicated. The association quickly adjusted its approach to acquiesce (see Oliver 1991) and fall in line with the initiative once it realised that statutory regulation would be imposed on the professions (Mearns 2002: 15): “[a] key issue this year, and for the future, is public protection through regulation by the Health Professions Council” (BACP 2003a: 4) once it realised that statutory regulation would be imposed on the professions (Mearns 2002: 15). A change in Government saw a change in policy, and despite all the preparations, this new policy favoured a lighter touch regulation (BACP 2011). In February 2013, BACP became the first register to successfully achieve accreditation by the PSA (BACP 2014a).

The period saw substantive growth and change in the association as it developed a broader footprint of activity. Research came to the fore, resourced and “designed to enable us to explore to what extent our profession will have to adapt itself to remain accessible and relevant” (BACP 2004). Supporting this agenda, BACP ventured in to academic publishing and launched its own academic journal. Prior to the launch BAC held a cordial relationship with the Editorial Board of the British Journal of Guidance and Counselling, establishing its first formal links in 1984/5. Technology was making it easier to communicate and interact with the public and in 2004 *The Age of Therapy* was commissioned in a bid to understand how the profession was situated in modern society (Brainchild 2008). This report provided the foundation for an external public facing website aimed at raising the legitimacy of the profession and educating the public. *ItsGoodToTalk*, was an “educational resource designed to help people learn about the benefits of counselling and psychotherapy” (BACP 2011: 11) and proved immediately popular generating over 30,000 visitors a month in its first year (BACP 2011). The association continued to develop its professional standards, sometimes using a mimetic rhetoric, as individual accreditation embraced the modern sector-wide concept of continuous professional development (see Friedman 2012): “the strong emphasis on

Continuing Professional Development for re-accreditation brings us well into line with other professions” (BAC 2001a: 3). After an in-depth consultation with members (BACP 2003a) a new, and potentially revolutionary Ethical Framework (Dryden, Mearns and Thorne 2000) launched. In 2014 a new Certificate of Proficiency was launched, requiring the majority of existing members needed to sit the test, itself a substantive and expensive undertaking (BACP 2014a, BACP 2015a, BACP 2016a). A new department was established to run and administer the processes. The association also invested in its staff and resourcing capabilities.

Ken Lewis had left as CEO in May 2001 after less than three years in the role and the newly appointed CEO, Laurie Clarke, would remain in post for almost 14 years. Staff numbers put pressure on physical resources and new offices in Rugby were rented at Graphic House, soon renamed BACP House. A new senior management team were appointed in 2002, and by 2005, with 77 staff, the association was again on the hunt for a new home. With the financial insecurities of a decade before truly laid to rest, in September 2006 the decision was made that the Association would leave Rugby, its home for over 20 years and relocate to nearby Lutterworth (BACP 2007b) in the first property it owned. Staff numbers continued to rise and would peak close to 120. The association appears to still be attentive to its own legitimacy, as evident in its strapline, “[t]o be the professional body for counselling and the automatic reference point for anyone seeking information on counselling in the United Kingdom” (BAC 2000: 34) that evolved to a more outwardly looking “[t]o enable access to ethical and effective psychological therapy by setting and monitoring standards”. Whilst organisationally BACP appeared secure, the profession was facing difficulties and the environment it operated in challenged the employability of its members (Critical Research 2014). A new CEO, Dr Williams, and Chair, Dr Reeves, set about refocusing the association in 2014 resulting in a new strategy, staff team, and focus back on the profession and the public.

5.2 BACP at time of study

This section details the structure of BACP at the time of the research. Certain aspects have changed between research phase and submission of the thesis. Detail is drawn from the recently published *Annual Review and Financial Statements 2017/18* (BACP 2018b) unless otherwise expressly stated otherwise.

Stated purpose

BACP states its purpose through its Articles of Association, described as charitable objects. They are:

(i) to promote and provide education and training for counsellors and/or psychotherapists working in either professional or voluntary settings, whether full or part time, with a view to raising the standards of counselling and/or psychotherapy for the benefit of the community and in particular for those who are the recipients of counselling and/or psychotherapy; and

(ii) to advance the education of the public in the part that counselling and/or psychotherapy can play generally and in particular to meet the needs of those members of society where development and participation in society is impaired by mental, physical or social handicap or disability (BACP 2018c).

These charitable objects have remained largely untouched, save minor adjustments, since the organisations inception and original registration with the Charity Commission. Registration creates two important considerations for the organisation, in that its activity must be constructed for the public benefit, and second, that all its purposes must be orientated towards charitable aims, not just some (Charity Commission 2013). The Charity Commission further defines public benefit in two parts, benefit and public. The benefit aspect: “a purpose must be beneficial - this must be in a way that is identifiable and capable of being proved by evidence where necessary and which is not based on personal view”; and “any detriment or harm that results from the purpose (to people, property or the environment) must not outweigh the benefit - this is also based on evidence and not on personal views”. The public aspect: “benefit the public in general, or a

sufficient section of the public — what is a ‘sufficient section of the ‘sufficient section of the public’ varies from purpose to purpose”; and “not give rise to more than incidental personal benefit” (Charity Commission 2014).

In 2016 the association launched a new organisational five-year strategy, *Counselling changes lives*, that set out the work-streams and outputs of the association across ten strategic intents (BACP 2018b). These are listed in full here, in part because they describe the short-term purpose and activity of the association, and in part because they research phase was undertaken during the creation and launch of the new strategy and it serves as a good reference point. The strategic objectives are to:

Table 8: BACP Strategic Intents in 2018

	Strategic intent
(i)	promote expertise in the counselling professions to enable confidence in BACP and its members;
(ii)	use our resources efficiently and effectively to fulfil our internal and external strategic objectives to maximise impact;
(iii)	be alert to change and encourage innovation in a fast-moving world and our policy and interventions will be informed and evidence based;
(iv)	commission, undertake and encourage research and relationships to ensure that we can champion the practice of the counselling professions;
(v)	uphold the highest standards of differentiated practice, ensuring that our standards are fit for purpose and communicable to clients and commissioners
(vi)	educate the public about the practice and benefits of the counselling professions and learn from people how to develop responsive services;
(vii)	position the profession in the minds of commissioners and employers, to argue the case for best practice and the benefits of the counselling professions;
(viii)	develop relationships with the wider professions and all our stakeholders;
(ix)	define the scope and standards of training and practice for the counselling professions, drawing on evidence and experience, reflected in differentiated membership categories;
(x)	commit to the highest standards of customer service, public engagement and membership engagement.

The strategy was devised to address a number of long-term issues within the association, and to re-orientate the organisation, to focus on members and their clients, rather than self-serving objectives aimed at the entity itself. The ten strategic intents are complex and can be seen as a tangible signal of where the association seeks to improve, where it feels external challenges need to be met, how, and interestingly, how the divergent profession might be recognised for its diversity rather than homogenised.

Activities and membership

In the early association, membership numbers were cause for considerable concern, the income they produced directly contributed to the viability of the association, creating a distinct need to reach a critical mass capable of sustaining an organisation with aspirations. As the association became more established the growth became more rapid, sometimes growing by 30% in a year (e.g. 1990). More recently membership growth has slowed, if not plateaued, dropping from 9% in 2002, to 6% in 2010, and more recently just a couple of percent, before recently unexpectedly returning to 9% growth (BACP 2018b, BACP 2019). The slow-down in growth belies a relatively stable regular increase in net numbers of membership. Membership, since its inception, has been divided into two categories, individual and organisational (BACP 2018c) with the organisation having close on 48,000 individual members and just under 1,000 organisational members. Individual members are categorised in a hierarchical structure based on experience and competence, starting at student level and moving through to an assessed senior accredited grade, and eventually on to a retired category (BACP 2018f). Post-qualification, most members are expected to pass a BACP set and administered Certificate of Proficiency. Registered members are then on the association's Professional Standards Authority approved register, where they submit to being audited on their supervision, continuous professional development and holding appropriate insurance. Subsequently, members may progress to Accredited status by submitting themselves to a further assessment of competency. Since 2004 members in higher grades have been permitted to use designatory letters to publicly signal their level of membership (CPJ 2004d). All members, at joining and

renewal, become contractually bound to observe the Articles of Association, Standing Orders, and terms of conditions of membership which include the association's *Ethical Framework for Good Practice*.

Surveys indicate that for the majority of members working involves managing a portfolio range of activities that tend towards self-employment and private practice. The NHS in its broadest terms employs a significant number of members (18%), as do schools and colleges (10%) and Universities (6%) (Critical Research 2014). Historically, it is by employment setting that the association groups its membership, and a member has an option to join several divisions of the association: workplace; children and young people; spirituality; universities and colleges; coaching; private practice; and healthcare. Around one in four members takes the additional subscription of a division (BACP 2014a). Whilst the association tends not to differentiate between counselling, psychotherapy, members often do: just under half of members self-identify as a counsellor; a third use both titles; whilst 1 in 20 use just psychotherapist (Critical Research 2014, Ashridge 2016). The new strategy indicates that differentiation is possible, and there is evidence of that work being undertaken for counselling and psychotherapy, "[t]he intention is to offer clarity around entry levels, scope of practice and training pathways for the benefit of clients, commissioners and trainees" (BACP 2018b: 13).

Governance and organisational structure

A Board of Governors takes responsibility for the setting of strategy and the maintenance and integrity of the organisation, and Board members also hold trusteeships of BACP. The Board consists of up to a maximum of seven Governors elected by the membership, and four appointed by the Board, this mix of member and lay-member is a relatively recent invention, and prior to 2014 the Board comprised only of elected members. The Chair and Deputy Chair of the association are appointed by members of the Board for three-year terms. This is a modern conception, and prior to 2014 the Chair was elected by a vote of the general membership. Dr Andrew Reeves is the sixteenth Chair of the Association, appointed to his first term in 2014, and currently serving a second. The Board delegate elements of their role to a committee structure: Finance and Policy

Committee; Strategic Direction Committee; and a Register Advisory Board that oversees the elements of voluntary regulation process. During the course of this research, Strategic Direction Committee and Register Advisory Board were disbanded, and in 2018 a new committee structure was formed consisting of Finance and Policy; Public Protection; Membership and Professional Standards; and Audit. The Board are also able to appoint both President and attendant Vice-Presidents, together with a Patron.

Staff profile and roles

Since 1982 the Board has appointed a Chief Executive to whom day-to-day management of the organisation is delegated. In terms of senior leadership, the association can be considered pretty stable, the current Chief Executive is the just the sixth General Manager/ Chief Executive in 35 years⁶. In 2015 the organisation restructured itself (BACP 2014a, BACP 2015a, BACP 2016a), bringing together individual directorates and business units in to two functions: internal and external affairs⁷. Each of these are further separated though functional teams supported by a senior manager (Table 9).

Table 9: 2017 Departmental structure of the organisation at the time of interviews

External	Registrar	Professional Conduct Registration and Audit Professional examinations
	Professional standards	Professional standards Accreditation Ethical framework Practice support
	External communications	Media Policy and Public Affairs

⁶ David M Charles-Edwards (1982-1987); Elizabeth Davies (1988-1990); Judith Baron (1991-1998); Ken Lewis (1998-2001); Laurie Clarke (2002-2014); Dr Hadyn Williams (2015-)

⁷ In 2017 there was further rationalisation, and internal and external teams were brought together.

		Divisions Public Engagement
	Research	
Internal	ICT	
	Finance	Finance Facilities
	People, Culture and Governance	Human resources and L&D Volunteer management Governance
	Membership, Engagement and Services	Membership/ Accreditation applications and renewal Marketing and social media Online services Customer services Events and cpd services Systems and operations

Comparatively BACP operates with a higher than average staff to income ratio (see PARN 2018b) and staff numbers have largely increased year on year until most recently (see figure 2). Interestingly there has always been a visual correlation between staff numbers and turnover (*see figures 2 and 3*).

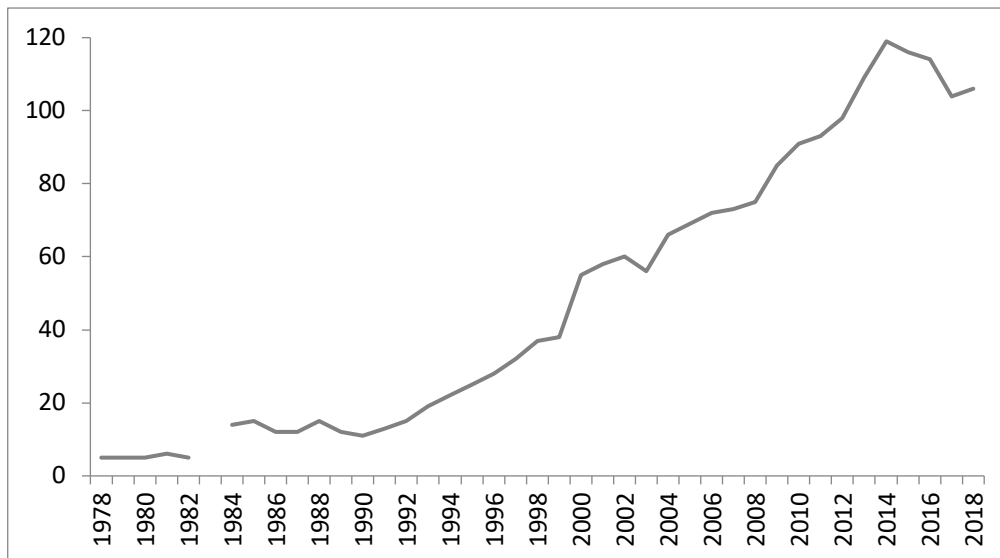


Figure 3: Staff numbers at BACP 1978-2017

Financial performance

At the time of the research BACP consists of three organisations: the over-arching charity and two wholly owned-subsidiaries, BACP Enterprises and BACP Research Foundation⁸. The association itself is a company limited by guarantee without share capital, the guarantee for each member of the company is limited to £1. A sizeable income in 2018 of £8,446,709 is devised primarily from membership subscriptions. This income is augmented by commercial trading, grants, and when markets are favourable, property and share investments. Comparatively, when measured against an industry average, the association is appearing disproportionately reliant on membership fees with an under-developed commercial function. A PARN survey indicated that 38% of responding organisations receive more than half their income from sources other than membership fees whilst for BACP, close to 84% of income is generated this way.

⁸ BACP Enterprises has a long history as a subsidiary trading company and derives its income from advertisements. BACP Research Foundation is a registered charity itself and was inaugurated in 2014 to generate funding to run research projects, although at this point only has one such project and was dissolved during the course of the writing up of this thesis on 6 February 2018

Interestingly there is no apparent strategic intent to address this ratio within the association, despite sector trends to the contrary (PARN 2013a, PARN 2016, PARN 2018b). Under the new reporting guidelines the association declares it spends across five areas: projects; representation; registration; research and governance (Table 10).

Table 10: 2017 Expenditure by function from annual report

Section:	Expenditure (£)	% of Expenditure
New projects	1,297,991	15% (9% 2016)
Representing profession	5,022,061	60% (64% 2016)
Register	1,260,293	15% (17% 2016)
Research	566,394	7% (7% 2016)
Governance*	207,682	*

*Governance fees are re-absorbed in to other costs

Association numeric performance

Performance of an association can take many forms and can be judged from several standpoints: its members; the profession; the clients; benchmarked to other associations. These narratives can produce a composite picture, albeit often subjective, of the organisation. In terms of immediately observable metrics the association appears successful, consistently generating revenue to cover expenses (BACP 2014a, BACP 2015a, BACP 2016a) as turnover and membership numbers continue to be stable.

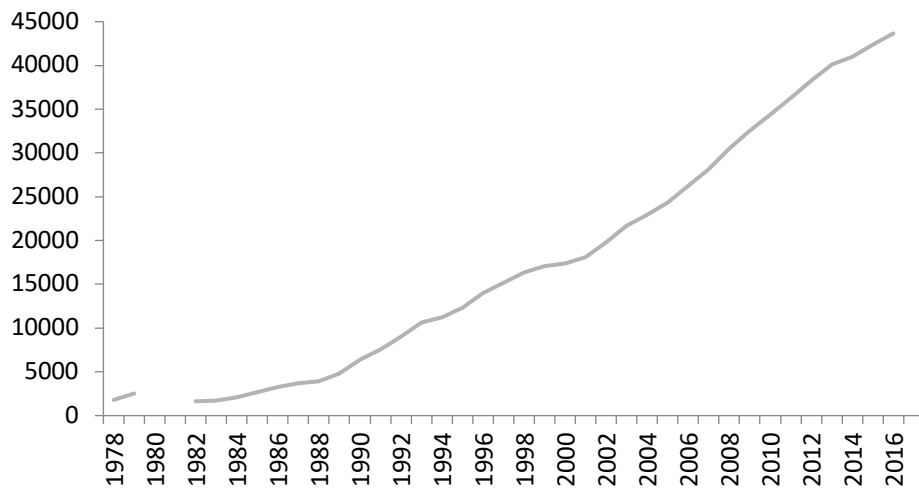


Figure 4: BAC/BACP Membership numbers 1978-2016: data not available between 1982-4

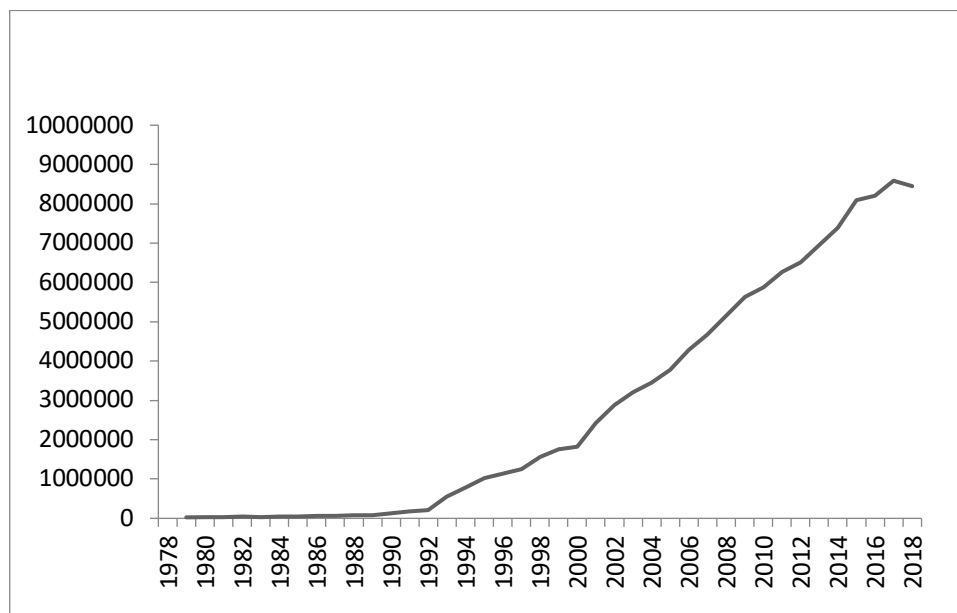


Figure 5: BAC/BACP Turnover 1978-2016: data not available between 1982-4

Metrics where available appear to indicate members value the professional services most (scale 1-10), with the ethical framework (9.1), good practice guidelines (8.9) and professional information/ updates (8.5) all scoring highly. Members feel that they share the values of the association (8.9) and saw how membership afforded professional credibility (8.3). They were a little more circumspect on whether the association was working hard for them (6.4) (Ashridge 2016).

Contextualising BACP by other associations

It is a difficult task to determine whether BACP is typical or atypical of professional associations in numerical terms. Within its own field it certainly is the largest, by a significant margin, and has the broadest output. PARN's *Financial Benchmarking Report 2016-7* (PARN 2018b) allows a casual look at the association in comparison to other associations (Table 11).

Table 11: Comparative analysis of BACP against professional body sector averages

Field	Metric	BACP Context
Status	48% charities	BACP is a charity and therefore sits with the large minority of professional associations
Staff	large 10% medium 24% small 35% micros 31%	BACP, with 114 staff, would be considered a medium sized association but in the top third in terms of staff size.
Members	more than 20,000 25% 5-20,000 33% 5,000 or less 42%)	BACP, with 47,000 members would be considered in the top quarter in terms of member size
Incoming resources	Total income £7.8m	BACP's income at £8.2m is similar to the mean income streams of most associations.
Membership income	Average proportion of income 41%	BACP has a significantly high reliance on membership income than most associations: 77%
Staff costs	Mean: 40.9%	BACP operates a significantly staff heavy structure 57%

In terms of membership numbers, and despite its relative youthfulness, BACP can be considered a large UK professional association. However it only attracts a mean average income and has not the turnover from a range of commercial activities (see PARN 2016, PARN 2018b) that a typical large professional association might expect. The data suggests that the association has a disproportionate dependency on membership subscriptions. Aside from this anomaly the association's activity base compares to most large associations (Friedman and Griffin 2014), as does its

governance (Friedman, Phillips and Chan 2002), and its range of member services (Friedman and Mason 2003a) and membership structures (Friedman, Phillips and Cruickshank 2006).

5.3 Chapter conclusions

The chapter describes how the association has grown from a concept and an idea in to a sizeable formal organisation with a substantive membership, activity base, staff and income. The journey has been precarious and at times the association had to consider its ability to sustain itself. Over time the association has formed a shape and a set of functions that are shaped as much by the external world as they were by the reflexive relationship it has with its members. The original purpose of the organisation has not been lost in the work of the contemporary association, although it is evident over time, those with influence, particularly Chair's and CEO's have nudged and adjusted the association in certain directions, forcing it to focus on particular aspects of its work and audiences. It is difficult to ascertain typical BACP is, as there are significant variances in key performance metrics that associations report.

6: Continuity and change

Dominating accounts of professional associations are taxonomic lists of functions, products and services, but a richer understanding of these bodies may be gained by exploring them from the perspectives of the audiences they serve (see Evetts 2000: 2 , Tschirhart 2006: 525). Serving these audiences creates a series of bi-directional relationship of varying strength, which in turn can be seen as the manifestation of multiple internal institutional logics of varying centrality. The association is presented as a hybrid organisation attentive to a diverse, developing and changing set of needs and requirements from each audience. When using the term audience, I am not referring to a passive relationship, rather a reflexive, bidirectional one. Each audience, to a varying degree is seen to be an actor with differing degrees of agency and influence on an association and as such, this agency can be directly applied, through the interaction of the relationship or indirectly applied through societal mechanisms. The use of the term audience in this thesis is not to diminish the relationship between association and stakeholder, and the term active audience, borrowing from the concept of active interviewing, may well be more descriptive of the relationships described in this thesis. Carvalho, Correia and Serra make a similar point, using the phrase ‘bidirectional relationship’ to indicate that professions and society have a complex and twoway influencing relationship (2018: 11).

Associations here are portrayed as having an inherent complexity, and an interesting first question to explore in the research is how well this complexity is understood and articulated. Thematically, from the datasets, four potential audiences or institutional logics are evident, broadly: to members; to the profession; to the public; and to itself. Other actors, such as the state or other organisations also require attention and resource. Such a synthesis with the public statement made by the CEO of the Chartered Institute of Building, Chris Blythe that “professional bodies must answer to three masters: their members; the industry at large; and the public interest” (CIOB 2015: 3). In a sense the association is described as a hybrid form of organisation that holds Blau and Scott’s (1962) mutual-benefit, service and commonwealth typologies. Each of these orientations

provided a rich dataset of confirming and conflicting accounts, adding a richness to understanding the complexities inherent in associations. It was also evident that participants largely constructed their own view of associations socially and independently, an outcome of their own experiences. The dataset also indicates where the primary case was similar to other associations, and where it felt divergent, allowing for some generalisations to be made about professional associations in the UK. The dataset also reveals how strongly causal mechanisms are both felt and influence professional associations, and that any study of these bodies needs to be contextualised in a changing and influential environment. To give space for the findings to be explored, and provide balance, each active-audience and logic is treated in this chapter in an ideal-type way, initially from the perspective of the primary case, groups A and B, data drawn from historical documents, and then contextualised by the extended interviews, drawn from groups C and D, to points where generalisations of the sector can be made.

6.1 How associations are understood, competing logics

The literature pertaining to associations is not overtly descriptive and tends to leave them ill-defined. There is a sense, driven from a holistic perspective taken from chapter 5, that associations are also dynamic entities that change, and so definitions may need to be fluid rather than fixed, although not to the extreme of Merton's statement that "[t]he professional association *is* as the professional association *does*" (1958: 50 emphasis in the original). A starting point in the research was to try and understand how participants and associations defined these organisations. What became pertinently obvious is that the lack of definition from academic perspectives was replicated in interviews. Participants constructed their own descriptions and understandings of associations, without relying on external or agreed definitions. Interestingly, only three participants answered the question by relying on an external definition, given by PARN, although two of these admitted that they could not recall what this definition was with any degree of clarity, only acknowledging that PARN had produced some work on this. Participants also used several naming conventions in their answer, often interchangeably, including 'professional association', 'professional body',

‘membership body’, ‘regulator’, and ‘learned society’. Two participants attempted to offer a demarcation between professional body and professional association, before finding the task particularly difficult, and concluded without adequate delineation. Descriptions were highly personal and individual, and often participants defaulted to functional, visible aspects of professional associations, describing them as the sum of their outputs and functions. There were divergent accounts in the interviews, a few gave very structural accounts, and a small proportion attempted to describe associations as functions of a broader sociological context, the mechanisms by which professions seek to solve society’s problems. As interviews progressed, several participants returned to revisit their initial answers, often then describing associations in a deeper and more complex way as narrow descriptions broadened and complicated through the discussion.

The complexity of associations was a recurrent and common theme, participants discussing multiple orientations, drivers and audiences, and the tension in an association holding multiple roles. Natalie[A] considers, “there is an inherent conflict built in to departments, functions”, and Peter[A], illustrative of the debate on ideographic organisations and logics carried by staff, uses a different language: “there are multiple sorts of vested interests around, some of which become quite dominant”. Dominant roles included an association as a membership body, regulator, and its role in acting in the public interest. Participants often alluded to the tensions competing logics created but were equally capable of reconciling and holding the difference. Sarah’s[B] perspective is illustrative; “those elements have always been in tension, but in a way the objectives of each aren’t dissimilar. In order to properly support members, you have to support the public. To protect the public, you have to support the members in encouraging best practice”. Dani[A] provided an example where roles were a little more problematically squared, “it acts as a club in a way, doesn't it? In that way, it is a club for professionals to further the profession itself [...] we also have that flipside as well, but all professional associations have, we are a regulator and perform a regulatory function. I see those functions as quite different”. And this was equally felt by some members who reflected on their own relationship, such as Mark[B], “I think it is several things,

and in this it is partly an obligation. The organisation provides a canopy of protection and professional credibility for members”.

Extended interviews were generally less expressive in terms of associations as a mix of competing logics. For many participants the dominance of the membership logic obscured other roles. Gael's[C] account was typical, “a professional association is a membership body where the organisation offers those members benefits and the members agree to abide by certain rules and standards”. Others like Rachel[D] saw the difficulty in associations of the logics of accountability and conduct, with membership benefit, “It is sort of a double-edged sword really, I have often noted professional bodies can find quite difficult maintaining the balance between the authoritative voice and the body that maintains professional competence, whilst also keeping most professionals happy with their membership”. There was also a strong disposition to describe associations functionally. Thomas[D] was one of several whose definition of associations was both centred on the membership logic, but expressed in terms of functions, “it enhances a professional status; comprehensive support; and a collective voice for members. To a greater or lesser degree, organisations offer these three elements with different emphasis and importance placed on each”. The extended interviews also portray divergent explanations for associations. Jane[C], was one of several that challenged the membership logic's dominance in associations suggesting there was often a higher purpose to their work, “many can tend to be too member focused. In trying to keep members happy they lose focus on making membership meaningful”. The extended interviews also introduced the concept that a public logic might be more central than a membership logic in some associations. Oliver's[C] interview is a case in point:

“there probably are two types of professional association. There are those that are simply interested in the interests of the members with a slight veneer of public or patient benefit. And then there are those that have reassessed themselves over the years and have fundamentally thought that serving the interests of members is in its nature self-interested, and as such this would cause serious problems for the development of the profession”

Coupled with a complexity of definitions, there was a sense that the association changed over time. Over time, institutional logics changed in terms of their centrality. This was particularly evident in the BACP interviews, with many participants keen to demarcate between an older organisation and the modern contemporary one. Interestingly a change of address in 1992, which saw the association move to larger premises so that it could expand staffing, was a symbolic time indicating a shift in the feel and nature of the association. That year BACP moved offices from Sheep Street, Rugby an office located above a Butcher's shop, which it had occupied for the past ten years. It is likely that this change reflected a more stable organisation (chapter 5), and is a combination of its capability to recruit more staff, deliver more functions and embrace new opportunities (see Syme 1999). Several participants made mention of it in their description of the association, juxtaposing the organisation from then to now, leading to a sense that change in the nature of an association is both continually, and step-change. For Natalie[A], it was important: "I think those early days were what I call the 'butcher's shop mentality' [...] the good old days when you could stand at the bottom of the stairs and shout to the top and everybody knew what everybody was doing". Many interviewees tied the fortunes of the association to the growth experienced by the profession, again Natalie[A] offers, "the profession itself has grown [...] so, the organisation has grown alongside of that", and growth created complexity, as Peter[A] observes, "I think part of the complexity is the introduction of some of these new functions that actually create tension but, in the end, are necessary [...] it's like evolution". Change was a recurring theme in the BACP interviews, and in extended interviews, but, perversely, resistance to change was a more common theme in the later datasets. David[C] in his account on defining an association reflected, "this is a semantic or maybe etymological conversation. Some associations have traditions and behaviours that can be traced back to the 19th-century. The buildings and names and titles sound terribly grand and people think about you in a certain way [...] this means that associations fall foul of 'institutionalised' behaviours".

The complexity of associations was often accepted by many participants, who did not find it necessary to tightly define what an association is. This might be because their memberships are often complex, populated by people and organisations with competing perspectives, in a professional field that is constantly developing. Summarising BACP, Duncan[B] offers, “it is like a very large ship with lots of countervailing currents under the water. Forever feeling where it is and nudging forward [...] a vibrant professional body is doing that. The world has got more complicated, so we have got more sophisticated [...] nevertheless, society is shaped by our ability to respond, to shape the environment BACP is sitting in”. Associations appear to sit comfortably with the concept of organisational hybridity, that they openly embrace a variety of logics, audiences and roles. The centrality and dominance of these roles potentially varies from association to association. The centrality of a logic in an individuals’ response may be as much about the organisation they are discussing, as it is their own belief system that a particular logic best describes a professional association. The research process did not produce a definitive definition of associations but exposed their complexity. For some they are best described as socially constructed. As David[C] argues, “I think it is whatever you want to be. If you look at professional associations [...] you will see that they are largely a product of their history. Associations have to ask, ‘Who are we and what are we for?’”, whilst for others they are best described by a list of functions, or their activities creating communities or acting as an occupation’s collective voice. The only thread of commonality being that professional associations appear to be many things to many people, and the primary logics require further exploration.

6.2 The membership logic: several roles and relationships

The membership logic, as expected, is both central to associations and dominated many interviews. Whilst it is abstracted to an ideal-type in this thesis, its strength can lead to assertions that an association is primarily designed to serve the collective immediate interests of a membership (e.g. Freidson 1986). Within the primary case, BACP, it was expected that this logic would have a strong centrality, the organisation electing to use the reserved title ‘association’, binding it to a set

of conventions, normally based on a one-member-one-vote and non-profit distribution clauses (see Companies House 2017), its governing documents hold the instrumental relationship with its membership (BACP 2018f, BACP 2018c). The body is also seen to be particularly reliant on membership fees, proportionally more than most associations its size (see PARN 2018b).

The membership relationship, as laid out here, aims to describe the organisations orientation and relationship to its members. The interview process produced a strong sense of accountability from participants towards members. Remi's[B] account typical, "I feel accountable to the board and to the members, I definitely do [...] if I didn't represent a member well, I feel bad about that". There was also an explicit understanding of legitimacy dynamics, that the association was legitimised through its relationship with its members, as Bea[B] observes, "BACP is a membership organisation, and gets its legitimacy from its members. If the members don't think what you do is worthwhile for them, and valuable, then they will leave and that is the end of BACP".

The research indicated that the membership relations was a deeply nuanced set of bi-directional relationships, negotiated between a member, the larger membership and the association. There was evidence of the associations' role as an organiser, its role in creating and facilitating communities, as a knowledge agent in the sharing of ideas, and trying to articulate the collective will of a heterogenic community of practitioners. These roles were set against a consistent challenge to provide private value to members, "and yet we still get letters from branches and individuals saying what is the use of B.A.C.?" (Leary 1986). The association is often seen to use the language of a membership body centrally in its descriptions of itself, for example, "I am confident that the majority of members will know of the commitment that the team at Rugby has to making BAC a 'Better Association for you as a Counsellor'" (Counselling 1999c: 273). It has also routinely sought to understand and meet the needs of its members, often through regular surveying (e.g. Nelson-Jones and Coxhead 1978, CPJ 2005b, Ashridge 2016), itself common practice amongst professional associations (PARN 2015b). The data suggests that the association routinely seeks informal conversations, ideas and challenges from

its members, “please write in if you have ideas for activities or comments on policy which you would like to make” (Godden 1983: 5), encouraging “members to write to the Management Committee suggesting topics and issues that should be addressed” (Counselling 1992c: 71). Active informal participation appears to continue to be encouraged by the current Chair, “[m]y hope is to ensure that the governance of the Association is as transparent and accessible as possible. Our Association needs to reflect the diversity and difference that are among the hallmarks, and strengths, of its membership. With that in mind, I am always happy to be contacted with suggestions, ideas and thoughts” (Reeves 2015a: 47). Pulling together themes from the literature review and primary research, the membership logic is explored in more depth.

The facilitative logic

First the association is seen to have a role in holding and bringing a broad community of practice together to share, debate and develop knowledge and practice (see Gruen, Summers and Acito 2000). The documentary data suggests that, in practice, the association holds multiple communities of practice within a profession. Members are held in terms of both the generic membership of the broader profession, and by their specific interests, specialisms and professional networks. Through a fairly standard set of activities, its magazines, research journals, events, conferences, guidelines, letters to the editor, member groups and networks, it seeks to be both a knowledge agent and a mechanism of community, through which aspects of the profession, and the practitioner can develop.

“One thing BACP has done has provided a means by which conversations can be had, so that the whole thing doesn’t break up into schisms. There can be dialectical relationship between different parts of the organization through therapy today, through conferences, through letters. People can feel part of something without having to agree with everything. BACP provides a dialectical channel that allows people to disagree with one another, air their views, and feel part of the discussion”

Peter[A]

There were concerns, that in the digital information age, this role may be diminished. Yet participants, both internal and extended, appeared bullish on the subject of technical encroachment as Liam [C] illustrates, “even in the world of mass information you still see the need for somebody to curate and distil the information for you”.

The logic of embracing heterogeneity

Multiple communities of practice within an association are a hallmark of deep heterogeneity, directly challenging the fallacy that an association is comprised of a commodified and uniform profession. As Freidson claims, “a profession cannot easily be seen as a single community of interest” (2001: 44). Membership and professional heterogeneity was discussed and explored in almost all interviews. Historical data suggests that in BACP’s case, several taxonomic approaches can be used to explore the difference in membership: by grade and experience (e.g. Wheeler 1999: 386 , Letters 2012: 15); title or profession⁹; geography, most prominently felt across the four nations (e.g. Hope 1990, Letters 1990c); or through a myriad of trainings and approaches to practice; communities of practice; by sectors of employment or self-employment¹⁰; work with specific client groups; or communities of practice focusing on specific presenting problems. The association can be seen as a mechanism by which a diverse membership community can be held together, and its collective needs understood, defined and articulated. BACP is seen to have always held a diverse membership, reflecting “the multiplicity of interests and structures that inhabit the interior worlds of professional groups” (Carvalho, Correia and Serra 2018: 14). Gregory[B] explores the profession as anything but homogenous, but with certain central commonality: “what is it the holds it together? It is a common belief? The fact is that everybody is in the same

⁹ Counsellor (38%); Counsellor/Psychotherapist (39%); Psychotherapist(7%); Counselling skills user(1%); and Coach(1%)

ASHRIDGE. (2016). *Bacp Membership Survey*. Berkhamstead: Ashridge.

¹⁰ Private practice(22%); Volunteer(20%); Employee(14%) CRITICAL RESEARCH. (2014). *Member Employment Survey*. London: Critical Research.

medium even if it is going this way or the other way. That medium seems to me to be about a belief in the potential for people to change, moving away from a position of pain and distress and discomfort and dissatisfaction, to somewhere that has a bit less those things". Traditionally diversity is seen as an advantage for the association, "[w]ithin counselling and BAC [...] there is an inevitable tension between the 'pulling together' spirit and divisiveness. The former derives from the need to present to the general public, funders, clients and referrers a coherent overall picture of counselling that is intelligible and hangs together" (Charles-Edwards 1988: 3). Tim Bond, as Chair writes "[o]ne of the great successes of BAC is that it has provided a single umbrella over a wide variety of traditions and counselling orientations" (1994: 250).

However, the applied need to understand and articulate the needs of diverse population could be problematic at times, as Peter[A] suggests, "the different interest groups are quite diverse, and maybe at times might have slightly conflicting agendas. Any organization that tries to meet the needs and interests of 40,000 members will end up being complicated and diverse", which in turn can cause difficulties for those staff trying to convert collective will in to coherent action. Remi[A] reflects the challenge, "one wants us to lobby for regulation, another won't. That's a great challenge". A heterogeneous membership is not always harmoniously brought together, and within the historical documents, less so in contemporary accounts, intra-professional tensions could be problematic, "the counselling and psychotherapy community needs consciously to recognise and confront professional envy, sometimes escalating into paranoia, which can exist between different individual approaches, schools of thought, modes of practice and training institutions" (Counselling 1998: 2).

Navigating the conflicting needs and views of a heterogenic membership required careful relationship building with members. Rather than appeal to one group over another, both internal and extended interviewees indicated they would often look outside the organisation to help them create resolution. Remi[A] illustrates, "we often bring that diversity of opinion together using an evidence base. We focus on issues where there's strong evidence". Oliver [C] was one of several that reflected

Remi's earlier observation that the association often squared competing tensions within its membership by looking to third parties, "it can be one of the biggest challenges [but] if we look at the patient's interest, 99% of the profession will say 'that's why we are here'".

The logic of leadership

Explicitly tied to role of being a knowledge agent, there is also the notion of the association legitimising knowledge, as Callum[D] alludes, "professional associations are there to primarily disseminate knowledge". The documentary dataset creates an opportunity to trace and evidence how legitimisation works for new forms of practice. One example is the gradual legitimatisation of online counselling as a form of practice. It is seen to transition and develop in the dataset, from a practice the community share in a small groups (Counselling 1999b: 276), embraced by the association despite some reservations (Mearns 2002), debated by the membership (CPJ 2003c, Letters 2004: 6), broadening learning opportunities through events (Counselling 2000a), legitimisation through a series of articles in both the main journal and specialist publications (e.g. Cottrell 2005), before becoming the subject of official guidelines (Goss *et al.* 2002, Bond 2015, BACP 2016b) and incorporated in to ethical frameworks (Therapy Today 2011a).

The association is also seen to take a leadership role on certain issues, and the research indicates external threats are one of the primary determinants of an association adopting this more direct relationship with its members, particularly when it needs to either re-organise the profession, or legitimise to its membership external challenge and change (see Nerland and Karseth 2015: 4). Interviewees reflected on this issue, with recurrent themes such as changes to the threshold for evidence of efficacy for legitimate practice, and state actions in relation to regulation. Bea[B] reflects on her experiences of counselling's jurisdictional struggles within the NHS and locates the association with a central co-ordinating and leadership role, "look at what happened in primary care. We were warned that if we didn't get our act together and learn and react to the changes, articulate our value enough, some go getting professional body would come over our heads and capture primary care counselling [...] we'd be side-lined. And that's exactly

what happened. We need people to keep the finger on the pulse, to be in there when decisions are made, to know what decisions are being made". It is a position that reflects literature's position, that "two things are necessary: changes in professional work and organizational relations have to be *explained* and *qualified*" (Noordegraaf 2011b: 1355 emphasis in original). This leadership and organising role repeats through the historic dataset on a wide variety of themes: organising the members in to categories to create more effective market signals (Counselling 1992a, CPJ 2004c); systematically raising standards of practice (Counselling 1992a, Letters 2001b, Therapy Today 2012a); responding to explicit challenges such as statutory regulation (CPJ 2001a, Aldridge 2006, Aldridge 2012); responses to NHS initiatives such as agenda for change (Gray 2008) and IAPT (Therapy Today 2008b, Therapy Today 2008c, Therapy Today 2008d, Therapy Today 2008e); or understanding and meeting a changing set of client needs (Brainchild 2008, Therapy Today 2008f).

Also evident is a variety of approaches to this task, ranging from gentle normative encouragement of members, through to and ultimately in institutional terms, coercively applied rules. Approaches appear dependent on the potential impact change. The association's leadership role in relation to professional standards provides an interesting example: accreditation, launched in 1983 (BAC 1984: 16-17) and again in 1986 is an example of where members were normatively encouraged to participate (see Counselling 1992a); whilst the introduction of the certificate of proficiency was mandatory for new and some existing members (see Therapy Today 2012b). Looking further in to the data, the reason for the change appears critical, the "accreditation scheme for individual counsellors came into being in the early 1980's in direct response to the demands of BAC members. These demands focussed on the need to safeguard clients and to educate the general public by setting standards regarding the training and practice of counsellor" (Lambers 1991 :1), whilst regulation and registration emanated from the state, and so had potentially more pronounced consequences for lack of organisation. Extended interviews touch on how associations are naturally normative in their relationship with members, Gael[C] describes his own organisation, "it is

something that can be articulated around promotion of standards and practice, with a role of trying to develop a professional and inspire them to something more”.

The ability for an association to sustain a leadership role requires it to build and maintain its legitimacy with its members. The documentary dataset suggests this mandate is often opaque, and the association sometimes unsure of the strength of mandate (e.g. Baron 1992, Syme 1999: 177). The data suggests that this uncertainty means the association often adopts a normative leadership style and regularly seeks to bring membership with its decisions. Bea[B] gives an example, exploring the implementation of accreditation standards, “we learnt that it wasn't enough to have a good idea, that idea had to be communicated well. We learnt that you had to interact with members to get their support or you couldn't get anywhere with proposals”. An example of the association’s consultative and iterative processes can be found in the decision to add psychotherapy to the name of the association. The historical data evidences the subject being discussed at length through the journal, raised at meetings (Davis 1990c: 2), arguments made for and against through the letters pages and articles (e.g. Townsend 1993, Letters 1994c: 8, Letters 1994b: 172, Letters 1999a, Letters 2000a: 342), and culminating in a specific membership vote (McDevitt 2000). Members, through the governance mechanisms of the organisation, often have the ability to ratify or reject decisions. As Allison[B] recounts, “you need to have the majority of members with you because they can out vote you at any point. So that both empowers the organisation in certain directions but equally puts in ever increasing lines within which it needs to walk”. A leadership role for an association is an iterative process with a membership, which can produce regular challenge to decisions, for instance the launch of a new ethical framework for members caused considerable debate around the association’s mandate to lead: “[t]hat statement suggests that a new ethical framework would be adopted without consultation with BACP's members, without the case for so radical a change having been argued and without ratification by vote of the membership at an AGM or EGM” (Letters 2001b: 17). Through the historical data it is evident the association often seeks opportunity to

discuss change, particularly the raising of standards, with its broader community of members, having committed significant effort to the launch of accreditation (Lambers 1991), and equally evident in an early statement on regulation from a CEO, “[p]art of the work that comes out of that involves taking a mandate from the members because this is so important to the future of the profession” (CPJ 2003d: 6). There is also evidence, particularly early in the association’s life, that if it was unsure of its mandate, or membership census was unclear, the association would not act. An example is found in its approach to a proposed government bill, “in view of the wide variety of views held by BAC members, it was not possibly for BAC to speak for members on this matter, and that it had no mandate to do so” (Counselling News 1980a: 2).

Extended interviews resonated with BACP interviews that a leadership role was a nuanced and interesting role. David[C] articulates the challenge well, “there’s a difficult balance to be struck between serving and supporting member interests so they can advance the profession. We have to do that by coaching, inspiring, and very occasionally by applying a disciplinary procedure. We are guardians of our professional reputation”. However, as Harry[B] points out, “it struggles to represent a collective interest as it often adopts a parental role, where it knows best for its members”.

Finally, interviews alluded to several potential challenges in membership relationships. First was the changing influence of the commodification and consumerism of memberships, how commercial adoption of membership models (see Baxter 2015: 2-3) was considered to be influencing and changing how members negotiated their relationship with their associations. Thomas[D] summarises his concerns, “all these corporate entities, like Netflix, are adopting the membership model”. It is reflected in a growing awareness that associations have to provide worthwhile tangible and intangible benefits, an attractive mix of private and public benefits, that have ushered in an interest in attention to metrics like value, value for money, net promoter score (Bugher 1983, Belfall 1999, Fowler 1999, Gold, Rodgers and Smith 2002, Dalton and Dignam 2007, Markova et al. 2013, Williams 2013a, Ki and Wang 2016). There is a sense that this has been a perennial issue for

associations and their relationships with members, “I have gained nothing from membership except receiving the magazine” (Letters 1979: 11) and for their leaders, “I’m only a few weeks into this new role and this is clearly a top priority to evaluate. The question I would ask is: For the membership fee, do you get what you want as members? What do you get and what do you want?” (CPJ 2002e: 9). Literature suggests professional associations have become more attentive to the value proposition recently (see Williams, Harrington and Hanson 2011, Williams 2013a, PARN 2017) and when reflecting on why this dynamic was important, and changing, most participants pointed to socio-economic changes within UK society. William[B] summarises the sentiments of many participants, suggesting associations exist in an age that is more attuned to these concepts, “ultimately, we are all Thatcher’s children. That for me is when the shift occurred, philosophically, culturally and sociologically [...] we can subtly find ourselves working at the transactional level, rather than the greater good [...] I think association started to lose that greater sense and was becoming more transactional and business orientated”. Alongside an acceptance that this was ‘how things are’, some in the extended interviews articulated a worry that it was a logic that could become too dominant, Adrian[D] represents, “my criticism of a lot of professional bodies has been that they did get enticed into the deals providing material things to their members to keep them happy, supposedly to compete with each other, and that, I think then they began to lose sight of the longer term”.

The logic of indefinite change

Additionally, and only evident in the extended interviews, was a concern that generational changes, particularly those of Generation Y and Millennial members, had implications for associations, that the social behaviours of younger members differed significantly in relation to critical concepts of joining and belonging. Thomas[D] was one of several who felt they were having to urge their associations to change to remain relevant to younger members.

“the younger generations of members have a culture that points towards the requirement for tangible benefits — what will help me earn more money?”

How can I progress in my career? What will save me time? What will improve my work-life balance, what will make me feel good? All those tangible things have pushed professional status or enhanced professional status a little bit sideways for some professions”

Societal change was also perceived to be influencing how professions were conceived by professionals, contextualised by changes in employment patterns in the UK, and the potential impact of a post-modern professional landscape (see Aldridge 1996, Boon, Flood and Webb 2005). There was a sense that professional communities, and professional roles were becoming increasingly specialised rather than homogenised. Research participants suggest that this presented two challenges to the membership relationship. First, it tested the ability of a homogenised association to be relevant to increasingly specialised communities of practice. Rachel [D] summarises this, “I think it is becoming more and more challenging for professional bodies to accurately reflect and represent the huge diversity of individuals that make up their members [...] there is such variety in job roles these days, people have many elements to their roles, and they may find that they just don’t need one professional body to meet their needs but they need more than one professional body”. Secondly, there was a sense that the old ‘cradle to grave’ membership models were challenged by a changing attitude to work, and careers. There was a general sense in interviews that associations were ill-prepared and ill-equipped to meet these challenges, and that the membership logic, however centrally located, could be considered old-fashioned and only partially relevant.

“What we are on the cusp of but probably don't realise it, is a very challenging period for professional bodies[...] they have historically relied on a social cultural model of work that is changing now. The concept of finding a career to do for the rest of your life is going. The way the job market works now means this is now a more fluid place, traditional pathways and industries have fragmented and broken down. We've adapted reluctantly to that as organisations, but our social psychology wiring hasn't really changed. The next generations' social construct is completely different. They have grown-up entirely in the fully connected age. They

recognise they can't realistically achieve lifelong careers, but more importantly[...] it's something that they want to go out and do. I think that creates a challenge to professional bodies, people's concept of belonging to professional organisations is just different now. We don't really understand why or how it is different, but as a generation they are reluctant to join, or stay for as long"

Liam[C]

The membership logic is particularly interesting. On one hand it can be seen, and justifiably so, as a central competing institutional logic, embedded in the orientation of staff and the members that govern associations. At another level, it is a bi-directional set of relationships where membership and association are seen to influence and be influenced by each other. The mandate for the association to lead is often unclear, and opaque, and the association is often found to be regularly and routinely negotiating this mandate. At a third level, the association appears an effective mechanism for organising an occupation. At a fourth level, the association also finds itself legitimising the external world to members and the profession, a role that is in stark contrast to classical perspectives that describe professions foisting their perspectives on the world. The profession, through the association's work, is able to navigate an increasingly complex and disinterested external environment of state, employers and jurisdictional claims of other professions. Only two research participants gave very traditional views of associations, the bureaucratic mechanism of exercising collective will, that they were — as Mary[D] describes, “a fancy name for trade union”. These descriptions were generally at odds with most interview narratives and the evidence is suggestive that the relationship is far more complex, and problematic: firstly, there is no clear mechanism for the articulation of every member's will; secondly, memberships are heterogeneous and so a collective will, if it can be expressed, is likely to be a negotiation of competing views and perspectives. The association holds and organises not just a profession, but the collection of social communities, communities of practice and communities of interest. The relationship between members and association is considered important, transcending the transactional, one where the member has the opportunity to both co-create with its association,

and is embedded in a psychological contract that holds identity, socialisation and sense of being a professional. As Allison[B] explains, “associations provide an identity for the individual to belong to, which is why individuals choose their professional association carefully. It is about wanting to find a reflection of what you believe you do in something bigger than yourself and be with like-minded people”. The association here holds the community, and to a degree, is seen to encourage both its self-development and guided development.

The relationship with members is oversimplified if membership is considered homogenous. David[C] was one of several who reflected on how differentiated their profession was, responding to the frustration of homogenising tendencies and views: “there is no unified profession in our case, this is a problem for us [...] you find the number of people who describe themselves precisely as the name of the association suggests is probably less than 10%. So we have a professional body for a profession where majority members won't have this professions title in the job description. This is clearly a dilemma”. Evidently, the membership logic describes a series of bi-directional relationships with a number of populations, rather than a one-way relationship with a homogenous audience. Despite the membership logic's centrality, the association has often described itself in hybrid terms, “[a]ccording to Ms. Davies, BAC is an umbrella-type organisation with certain professional aspects, and is one that serves both counsellors and the public” (Letters 1990a: 74). The membership logic needs to be considered in relation to other dominant logics that inhabit associations.

6.3 Organising and developing the profession, standard setting and claims

The association has a role in relation to the organisation and development of the profession, which it undertakes either for the whole profession, or for the discreet population of practitioners that elect to hold a membership. BACP, through its incarnations has never held a monopolistic role in the field, and the SCAC documents evidence established associations before BAC, some folded in to the new organisation, others elected not to, and remain today. However, the documentary data indicate that the association has often acted for the benefit of

the whole profession, counselling and psychotherapy, particularly in supporting undifferentiated jurisdictional claims and legitimisation strategies. The association appears to have been conceived and created to, at least in part, organise aspects of the profession (see SCAC 1974, SCAC 1975b, SCAC 1976a, SCAC 1976b, SCAC 1977, Hooper 1978), and the early association is seen to want to be as representative as it can for the whole counselling profession (Davis 1990b: 3), and interviewees like Duncan[B] reflected that, “it has a key role in terms of securing standards and ethics”.

The standard-setting logic

One of the most obvious ways an association can organise an element of a profession is the creation and legitimisation of a set of professional standards. This role, as a standard setting type of organisation was central to many interviewees’ initial descriptions of associations. William[B] for example describes the association in terms of “standard setting, functions that help us think about what [...] we need to know to be able to do what we do professionally. It set standards but also helps us think around ethics”. For Danni[A] “one of the principal functions of the professional association is to further the professional. It did need furthering in our profession”. For BACP, setting and raising standards is a formally documented role and purpose, enshrined in its charitable objects (BACP 2018c). The appeal to professional standards was often rooted in descriptions of the complexity of the professional relationship. Callum[D] considers this when wondering why professions had associations at all, “maybe it is about the complexity or the potential of not getting something right, which is why professional bodies are so committed to maintaining standards and are committed to the advancement of their professions”.

“Associations should be forward-looking, they should have points of view, and be constantly setting better and more contemporary standards that reflect the latest learnings and the environment within which we live. All professional bodies have a duty to be constantly pushing the boundaries of the profession, embracing contemporary trends and new thoughts”

On one hand the setting of professional standards, be they forms of assessment, guidelines on practice, or ethical obligations, is seen as an introspective activity, a process of co-creation between the formal association and its membership. On the other hand, it is important there is an external legitimising element to the process, particularly if the profession is dependent on the environment to legitimise its member's work, "the basis for professional work today lies, as in previous times, in the capacity to perform work in ways that are informed, guided by and validated against shared knowledge and established conventions for practice" (Nerland and Karseth 2015: 2). A similar perspective was shared by many interviewees in their description of associations. Gray[C] for example said "we hold the standards, and develop these so members understand about professional development, a continuum of learning to the point of qualification beyond".

Legitimation and diffusion of standards is an important role of the association. They are seen to "contribute to the diffusion of innovation across workplaces, both directly, by disseminating information to members through seminars, mailings, and websites, and indirectly, by facilitating networks of "weak ties" that promote the exchange of new knowledge" (Gorman and Sandefur 2011: 283). The documentary data on BACP shows this activity to be more purposeful — the "task to maintain and raise the standards of counselling training and practice" (Leary 1986: 3). The association seems to have been at the centre of the debate on the creation of standards and clarity for the profession: "we must therefore be prepared to say what we mean by 'standards', what we consider to be the minimum and how this can be improved" (Counselling 1985: 4). To achieve this the association appears to have undertaken routine activity to define standards with set of principles of practice and assessable standards (Charles-Edwards 1988: 7), develop formal accreditation schemes (*e.g.* Lambers 1991, Potter 2000: 477) and publish early codes of conduct. It is evident that this was always more than an introspective exercise, "[t]he work on the three general codes of ethics and practice and accreditation are major steps forward, but BAC has far to go before it can begin

to boast of an adequate strategy if it is to help in the task of establishing the recognition of counselling” (Charles-Edwards 1988: 7).

Ethical standards are seen to hold particular prominence in BACP interviews and were significantly largely absent from other accounts. These ethical standards are seen to have been through a significant evolutionary journey in the associations (Potter 2000), transcending from being a list of what could or should not be done in a therapeutic relationship (Mearns 2002: 15), transformed in to something that might instrumentally be considered a set of shared values (e.g. Letters 2002e, Letters 2002f). For many interviewees, the ethical framework was considered more than a set of formal professional standards. As Imogen[A] explains, “a major part of us is the ethical framework and that is really important, the foundation of the profession”. Some interviewees also recounted that the ethical framework’s influence in the organisation of the profession transcends the confines of traditional membership boundaries. Sarah[B] explains, “I see training institutions around the world using it. That’s how good it is”.

Traditionally the association’s approach to setting and improving professional standards has been generally normative ,encouraging its membership to adopt and legitimise them — a form of normative leadership. The process of introducing professional standards in terms of a new form of accreditation (see Foskett 1992, Grant 1992, Howard 1992, Lambers 1992, Martin 1992, Rowan 1992) followed a process where the association tried to build legitimacy with its members, rather than assuming legitimacy. Both members and the association had long been debating and discussing the introduction of a form of higher accreditation (e.g. Nelson-Jones and Coxhead 1978, Counselling 1981). The association, and its members were seen to make arguments for and against a new form of professional standard before and after its introduction. The association has largely followed this mode of operating since. William[B] reflecting on recent changes to the ethical framework says, “[it] has been developed from what we think is best practice from the discipline. If we had had 15,000 members resign their membership in protest, I am pretty confident we would have revisited the ethical framework very quickly

to see what we had missed. Legitimacy is given to us in virtue of the fact that the contract [with members] holds”.

Professional standards, either in the form of accreditation, guidelines or ethics and conduct are seen to underpin both a profession’s ability to create effective market signals, make jurisdictional claims, or enhance its legitimacy claims. Kai[C] summarises how important this is: “standards really don’t mean anything if no one understands what the proposition is”. Extended interviews reflected strongly the link between the organisation of a profession through standards, and its legitimacy claims, for Phillip[D], “the bodies are essential where standards and having professionals educated on the body of knowledge and a level of competence is critical to a profession or field of work. A continuous professional development programme, and a disciplinary process are essential in these cases, and professional bodies are responsible for this”.

“The standard-setting and best practice aspects of a professional body are vitally important. I think it is a unique attribute for Britain and its professional associations [...] I think Britain has an incredible wealth of professional standards, and there is a challenge for professional bodies to play an important role in communicating these”

Jane[C]

The logic of jurisdictional claims

These concepts link to another prominent organisational role in the datasets, the articulation of a professions’ jurisdictional claims and defences, and its legitimisation strategies. The documentary data evidences that early incarnations of BAC appear attuned to the need for the organisation to assume a role of making jurisdictional claims and defences on behalf of its membership and, importantly, the wider professional field. This is seen as a central role despite evidence of early sporadic uncertainty (e.g. Charles-Edwards 1988: 7), that there was a clear expectation from members that this was an important function of the association (Critical Research 2014, Ashridge 2016, Letters 2016: 39). Counselling “needs to be recognised as a fact by those who are concerned with the decisions about resources

and money in our society” (Hooper 1978: 9). The association’s role was seen to be both prominent and significant: “[t]here was a need for a much more effective national voice for counselling than existed at present, and BAC was regarded by the other organisations to have a pivotal role in this development” (Charles-Edwards 1988: 6), tackling both “the place of the counselling movement within society and the place of B.A.C. within that movement”. Initially the term counselling was an indistinct term that caused concern for professional identity, “the word ‘counselling’ by all and sundry which devalues the word so that it almost loses the meaning B.A.C has given it” (Leary 1986: 2). The annual reviews of the association provide evidence of this being a central activity: the association active in a range of markets, responding to consultations, joining working parties, working with press, media and public engagement, with governments and other agencies and employers, to establish the legitimacy of the profession and its members authority. This is seen to take place across a broad range of fields, NHS, counselling in schools and higher and further education, and the workplace all see the association creating agency, both historically, and more contemporary times (e.g. BACP 2017: 5-7).

These documents indicate an association active both in large-scale jurisdictional claims and defences, combined with a more regular set of sustained activity aimed at maintaining and improving legitimacy claims. They provide a number of examples that reveal the role of the association tied to the fortunes of the profession’s. One of the most prominent charts the strength of the professions claims in a changing National Health Service (NHS). The association is seen to play a fundamental role, with others in embedding the profession, “[w]ith the advent of NHS Agenda for Change job profiles and pay scales for counsellors and psychotherapists in December 2004, psychological therapy provision established itself fully as part of the healthcare mainstream” (Gray 2008: 29), and the creation of established job profiles for counsellors linked to pay scales (Aldridge 2006). However, change on several levels, from NICE guidelines, to the government sponsored IAPT programme are seen to significantly challenge a once secure jurisdictional claim. These changes happened relatively quickly. Just three years

on from Gray's positive overview of incomplete but largely successful jurisdictional claim, the profession was faced with challenge, "[w]e are very aware of the plight of many NHS counsellors and are still engaged in the NICE debate, working hard behind the scenes to ensure that counselling and a range of psychological therapies are included in recommended commissioning guidelines" (Hawkins 2011: 7). As jurisdictions that had previously created safe harbour became contested and congested (Therapy Today 2015c), the perceived weight of expectation to defend the claim appears to rest on the association.

"everyone was looking forward to it becoming mainstream. One in every school, every workplace. That we would be accepted by the NHS as being co-workers. Those things haven't happened. There's now a degree of cynicism, and we get blamed. We haven't been able to deliver, provide all these jobs that member's think is in our gift to provide".

Natalie(A)

The response is hardly surprising given the centrality of the association's role, "[t]hose of us who earn our living by counselling are in need of all the things that a professional association gives to other professionals: standards, discipline and clear statements to other professionals of what our labour is worth" (Letters 1996c: 98). The increasingly competitive nature of healthcare markets mean the association has to be particularly attentive to making and defending jurisdictional claims, as Jo[A] alludes, "the challenge is that we have entered in to competition with much more established medical professions, probably entered in to that competition before we were really ready for it". A small number of participants challenged whether this was the association's role or not. Reflecting Charles-Edward's own uncertainty, Adam[B] challenges, "BACP becomes like this place where the rationale for BACP is to give you a job. That is a complete fantasy. It was never the rationale BACP".

The presence of multiple associations in the field, whilst undoubtedly producing competitive market choice for prospective members, was largely considered unhelpful to the task of organising a profession to make these claims and defences,

an observation on associations that has been made for as long a long time (e.g. Eppley 1957). More recent initiatives in collaborative working between professional associations (e.g. Reeves 2015b) was largely welcomed in interviews, Natalie[A] reflects that there is “more strength in working together than scrapping, which probably makes us look ridiculous to the outside world and the NHS. I imagine we would have had a larger voice if we combine our numbers, speak with a unified voice about standards”. This notion, that an ability to make claims was weakened by multiple bodies was reflected in extended interviews. Jane’s[C] account of the association sector as a whole is illustrative of issue and problem: “the professional bodies themselves are far too factionalised. There are often too many of them, just look at the number of engineering bodies, or accounting bodies. Having factionalised standards does nobody any favours, and at worst promotes a highly factionalised, exclusive view of the professions”.

The association is seen to continue to make legitimacy claims for the broader profession, particularly through its public relations functions that have the aim of maintaining and repairing legitimacy (Counselling 1994a: 167 , Baron 1996, Bond 1996), “the PR image of counselling. Now is the time to come to the aid of the party! We are at a watershed in terms of public perceptions of the profession, and of counsellors' views of themselves as professionals. If only one in every ten members played a part in the PR work, we would create a surge of involvement which would be impossible to ignore” (Counselling 1997d: 6). Equally, when the association was publicly challenged, it had ramifications for the whole profession (Bond 1996, Letters 1996a).

A small number of participants, almost but not entirely exclusively from the extended interviews, suggested that the future of jurisdictional claims may not be fought profession to profession, association to association, but with technological encroachment in to the professional space. Here technological advances and automation were seen as new entrants in to the traditional space of professions making normative claims of superiority. It reflects a small body of literature on the subject (see Eriksson-Zetterquist, Lindberg and Styhre 2009, Susskind and Susskind 2015), especially where the work involves routine tasks in predictable

environments (see McKinsey Global Institute 2017) or is expected to make incursions in to previously human tasks (NatCen 2018).

“it is interesting times for these organisations. Without considerable reinvention, they risk being irrelevant. [...] the professional body has to show leadership and indicate how to take things forward, how to support members to cope with potentially very dramatic changes that threaten parts of what they do. Potentially some areas there are no escape from [...] the technology revolution has been particularly strong in healthcare”

Liam[C]

The logic of professional socialisation

Finally, returning to the general theme of organisation of a field, the datasets reflected that the association can be seen as a mechanism that created a form of professional socialisation for members of the broader community of practice, the “internalization and development of professional identity” (Zarshenas *et al.* 2014: 432). Professional identities are multi-layered “shared with a group of others who have (or are believed to have) some characteristic(s) in common” (Ashmore, Deaux and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004: 81) and “implicit agreements regarding their profession’s standards”, and “generally contain structural as well as attitudinal aspects” (Bayrel, Horton and Jacobs 2018: 169). If “individuals are active authors of their own identity scripts” (Bevort and Suddaby 2016: 17), then their choice of professional association potentially plays a significant role. Literature already identifies this role within BACP, “[i]t has a clear identity, underpinned by the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP) body of knowledge, nationally recognised qualifications and a national register that makes explicit continuing professional development requirements, client contact hours and supervision” (Hughes 2013: 59). Several respondents touched on this theme in more holistic accounts of associations. Sarah’s[B] experience is reflective of this: “for me it is a professional home [...] there is an element of rules and regulation to it, and an element of protection. There is a sense of being part of a family. Of all, it gives me a professional identity [...] that collective professional identity has a

particular value”. Professional socialisation and occupational prestige appear tied, or at least, similar concepts. Riccardo[B] stresses the importance of external legitimacy, “an organisation that gives me a stamp of credibility within and beyond my profession to people who might want to use my services, be they clients, patients or other organisations”. Interviewees often linked concepts of professional socialisation, identity and legitimacy. For others, like David[C], “why should you carry a membership card that marks you out as a member of professional body? It [...] suggests compliance with a code of conduct and a commitment to passing a public benefit test. It says that ‘I am a trustworthy professional because I am a member of my professional association, I have been assessed by my peers and I abide by a set of professional standards’”.

In summary, the association is seen as an important formal organising mechanism for a profession. It undertakes this work at two levels, within its discreet and elective membership, and often, more broadly, for the profession at large. Interviewees often reflected that the profession existed on longer time frames than the association dealt with, and the association in its formal and informal organisation of a profession, held a responsibility to this. David[C] argues, “all those that have gone before, all those that are here now, and all those will become members in the future”. The organisation of the profession was in part an introspective iterative conversation between practitioners and their body, setting standards of practice, and also a mechanism that looked to incorporate the challenges of the external changing environment. In its approach, BACP is seen to adopt a largely normative style, working with and co-creating with its members, and encouraging them to adopt standards. In certain instances, this changes, particularly in relation to professional standards relating to conduct. Here the relationship and institutional logic is significantly different, and terms are used that the association is parental, instructional, distant or regulatory. It was a challenge reflected in several extended interviews, Rachel [D] was keen to illustrate, “they are the body that holds a professional accountable for the conduct and practice. It is sort of a double-edged sword really, I have often noted professional bodies can find quite difficult maintaining the balance between the

authoritative voice and the body that maintains professional competence, whilst also keeping most professionals happy with their membership”. This challenged the centrality of the membership logic, and a professional logic presented a conflict in some bodies. David[C] explains that his association’s orientation to the profession and the public is a source of tension, “members may take a different view, many do. They may feel the body is there for them, but that's not the case if you look at our charter”. Whilst standard setting was seen as a central function within associations, claims that this role was transitioning to other actors within the environment (see Bevort and Suddaby 2016) were present in both datasets. There were routine examples of the association legitimising change in the environment and incorporating it in to its own guidelines and standards (see Chapter 7).

6.4 The public orientation

Literature suggests a public orientation within an association consists of four dominant paradigms, public education, public legitimacy, public protection and public engagement. It suggests that not all of these paradigms will be present in every association, there will be variations in how prominently these are held. Interestingly, all interviewees discussed a public orientation. It held a stronger prominence and centrality in associations that held public-facing professions, and featured less regularly in conversations where the profession did not serve the public so directly. Anna[D] gives a response that is illustrative of the later, “in the science sector there is still as great a need and desire to educate the public about science, through public engagement, and empower the public to help them make decisions about the profession”. Often it was treated as a central logic, sometimes even a causal mechanism that creates the need for associations. Anna[D] provides an example, “it is public demand that drives the need for a professional body”. Often interviewees extended the concept of the public service ideal of professionalism to the organising tendencies of professional associations. Oliver[C] provides an example, “if you want to improve patient health, you want to come together and collect and collate information, then you need some form of structure to do that”.

The logic of public education

The historical dataset provides a rich narrative on the public logic, and how it has evolved, together with insights into its centrality within the association. It was present at the formation of the association as Nicholas Tyndall's 1977 address to the AGM underscores, "the most important outcome of the formation of BAC would be better service to clients" (SCAC 1977: 2). This dataset indicates public education logic is seen to be a major and consistent strand of work for the association: its activities aimed at addressing information asymmetry. Early leaders appear to indicate that this was a central role for the organisation, "our task to promote understanding and awareness of counselling through society" (Leary 1986: 3), "to educate the population at large about the nature and potential benefits of counselling" (Letters 1996b: 186). The association used significant resources, despite tight funds, to undertake this work. A donation from Control Data Limited funded the creation of the first public-facing list of members (BAC 1986b), Artemis Trust funded the association's first information service for members and clients (BAC 1987a), and the association also published public leaflets, *Counselling: Is it for Me?* (Counselling 1990b). The logic appears with a degree of centrality, the association continuously seeking to be "a key reference point for people wanting to know more about the world of therapy" (Therapy Today 2011c: 45). Extended interviews reflected a markedly similar set of processes and roles. Rae [D] observes a public orientation has become more important for many associations, "increasingly they seem to be moving into the public area as well, in terms of providing public information". It is likley, but remains interesting to see whether, this is driven by the challenge of statutory regulation and state intervention in professional markets.

The logic of public protection

Several participants suggested the association acts as a mechanism of holding a profession and professionals responsible to the public they serve. As David[C] suggests, "a professional should be accountable to society the public at large [...] the association gives a framework and structure whereby the accountability can be defined". David's comments usefully tie the two logics of public protection and

public legitimacy together, “[i]t is important that an association clearly states the added value that such an organization brings to wider society. This can be vital in terms of gaining the support and trust of governmental and other agencies” (Fitzpatrick 2002: 8), and central to some descriptions of associations, “[t]he public duty of care is part of a professional body’s remit” (Williams, LaFosse and Harris 2011: 13).

The logic of public protection within BACP appears closely tied to the creation and maintenance of professional standards, although it is important to note they are not the same concepts. Interestingly the setting of standards is often classed as a public benefit by associations incorporated as charities. Alison[B] recollects the initial drivers for the creation of effective standards, “there was a sense of worry about the quality of some practitioners out there, and we decided we had to set something up. I think that, generally speaking, it was a genuine public protection issue. Maybe it was not the language”. The lexicon of public protection is seen to enter the association’s publications around the millennium (e.g. CPJ 2002c), likely linked to the language of potential statutory regulation of the profession (Counselling 2000c). The potential of regulation can be seen as a causal mechanism, impacting on the work of the association (e.g. Counselling 2000c, CPJ 2001a: 4 , Aldridge 2006), and creating within the association debate on the nature of effective public protection (e.g. Letters 2005b, Aldridge 2006, CPJ 2006b: 29 , Letters 2006b: 23). Danni[A] reflects “I think we always knew we had a public protection role. It has been enhanced though because this whole public protection thing is based on a focus on the public brought about by the regulatory function”. General societal change in the structure of healthcare created similar causal effects. Peter[A] suggests, “I think that is the case across all professions in healthcare, professions are much more accountable these days. There used to be doctors and consultants that sort of had godlike characteristics, and they couldn’t be questioned by anybody [...] This whole thing around public accountability is a social shift isn’t it?”. Specifically, the centrality of a public protection logic appears to have been reinforced by external events, as Riccardo[B] recalls a response to the Francis Report, reminiscent of Freidson’s autonomy and control arguments, “we

had to respond and we decided that if we didn't do something then someone else would do it for us. If that was to be done by someone outside the profession, well we might not like that. We might lose ownership of the ethical framework, and that is an exceptional BACP product. BACP had to adopt the language of accountability and so on". Public protection was emphasised as a major theme in the majority of interviewees, who discussed its current centrality. William[B] summarises the views of many, "it is the right thing to do to make sure that people are protected". Anna[D] was one of several comment on its centrality in associations, "now it seems to be more about safety and regulation and control, rather than just public interest".

The logic of public engagement

Finally, there was an emerging logic of public engagement, embodied in the association's new strategy (BACP 2018a). Michelle[A] reflects, "in a way it emphasises the public at the forefront of the charity, the public at the forefront of the association". Many participants from Groups A and B reflected on the potential change, Natalie[A], "there is much more emphasis on the needs of the service user than on the needs of the member". Interviewees understood that public engagement was a dynamic bi-directional relationship William[B] illustrates, "one of its functions is to position the occupation in society in a way that is meaningful. To be able to do that then it has to be responsive to that society and its changing needs". Public engagement appears to have been an idea articulated by previous CEO's considering the associations role if it were to lose, under statutory regulation, some of its standards setting functions, "I can see a post-regulation landscape where BACP would again play a critical role for members, clients, stakeholders and the public" (Clarke 2008: 29). Whilst not extending fully in to the realms of public engagement, there is evidence of the association seeking to explore the views and perspectives of the public on the profession, the services its members offer, and how they might be developed (e.g. Brainchild 2008, Therapy Today 2008f, IPSOS-MORI 2014). These perspectives were often subsequently reflected back to the membership through a series of articles (e.g. Therapy Today 2010b, Therapy Today 2011b). A small cohort reflected

how associations were making the public logic more central, Philip[D] felt a change was taking place across associations, citing the European Society of Cardiology, “It's aim is to reduce heart disease in Europe. It has an aim that is orientated to the benefit of the public, not specifically to educate heart surgeons”. Two participants indicated how the logic of public engagement was a bi-directional relationship, and the public audience was considered active, rather than passive recipients in the relationship. James[C] gives an interesting example of how his association has moved away from peer review for competency, “some have lay members that sit on the practical examination, you have laypeople giving a view on the professional. I think the best professional bodies now are broad in scope”.

In summary, the institutional logic of the public is both a central and important mechanism for understanding associations. A profession's relationship with the general public can be seen as partly mediated through the association, “[i]n a variety of guises, professions take steps to provide prescriptive guidance to numerous special publics and to the general public. Such actions take differing forms, including issuing principles or guidelines or promulgating standards ranging from the appropriate size of threads for screws to the frequency of vaccinations” (Scott 2008b: 225). There are multiple logics that play beneath a public orientation, and the direction of travel appears to be for the association to work on ensuring clients and the public have an active voice in the association, “[w]hat I have noticed is that we are strangely shy of our client point of view and much more confident to write and speak from our professional point of view” (Letters 2001a: 21). Natalie[A] reflects similarly, “it seems so obvious, that I am surprised we've not worked to that tune before”. A public orientation appears to be a natural orientation for an association, one that is often driven by causal mechanisms that emanate from beyond both immediate association and profession. On observation is that challenge appears to lie in how associations manage its centrality, particularly where it competes for supremacy with a membership logic.

6.5 An orientation to the self

The final logic relates directly to the association's formal, organisational form, and its requirements to be attentive to its own needs and capabilities as an organisation (Clarke 2002). Having previously described associations as mission-driven organisations, this institutional logic will not, in any sustained way, hold a degree of centrality at the expense of either membership, profession or public logic, but may be seen to underpin all three.

The documentary dataset provides an interesting example of how this logic has moved, in terms of centrality and importance, through the life of the organisation. During its early years, the association had difficulty in operating in a self-sustaining way, and there is evidence of the logic being given prominence in the hope that members would understand the issues: "we have to survive - and in addition we are in a situation where we are becoming more and more aware of the many opportunities for furthering our objects and serving our members and the community and yet find ourselves inhibited, even disabled, by lack of funds from taking advantage of them" (Godden 1982: 3). There is also evidence that, for some, it was a primary mechanism for understanding the work of the association, "BAC has, like many organizations, three primary tasks. The first is to survive. The second is to consider in what ways it needs to develop and grow to fulfil its aims. The third task is to be able to respond flexibly to important new demands" (Charles-Edwards 1988: 8). For many though, its centrality was an inconvenience, that distracted from other purposes (Godden 1982, Miles 1986), "the organisation is there to support the organism not the other way around" (CPJ 2002d: 7).

The revenue generating activities of the association are seen to come under routine challenge, including raising membership fees to fund professional activities (e.g. Letters 1994a: 172) and the commercialisation of activities such as creating advertising revenue (e.g. Counselling 1995a: 2, Letters 2010: 36). An orientation to the self can lead to suspicions of the higher motives of the association. According to Mark[B] for instance, "from my experience there is a sense that the organisation is there for itself rather than its members". The generation of revenue is often seen

as challenging for associations. Rachel[D] reflects on her own work in helping associations identify how they can diversify income. During the course of her interview she indicated that several initiatives failed as they felt they would be unacceptable to the broader membership, “one of the things came out about diversification of income, the barriers to diversification and being more commercial was concerns about how the members would react”.

The centrality of the self-logic appears to have drifted since the 1980s. The interviews took place at a time when the association was in a reasonably and sustainable financial position, and the extended interviews did not touch on sustainability issues. William[B] reflected that it was important that it did not dominate in the new strategy, that the association was a mission-driven rather than self-driven entity, “I think the association started to lose that greater sense and was becoming more transactional and business orientated. I considered that there was a fracture between the association and its members”. There is an interesting juxtaposition that can be made that supports William’s observation earlier strategic plans (e.g. BACP 2003b) held a strong emphasis on the organisation’s growth and capability, whilst the latest iteration (BACP 2018a) is more outward facing and largely devoid of organisational needs and capabilities.

Running a sizable organisation will always require the attention of trustees and managers of that organisation, and as Sarah[B] reflects, this can have unintended consequences, “there seems sometimes to be a huge disconnect between a huge professional body and Joe Bloggs who is paying the membership fee. It can, not through any bad nature, just unintentionally”. This sense of frustration is evidenced in the historical dataset set, and there are frequent examples of association representatives seeking to justify the capability of the organisation and its resource allocation strategies.

“There is endemic among some BAC members the feeling, not to say the conviction, that BAC is a face-less bureaucracy more intent upon fulfilling its own needs than those of the members, probably subservient to the Establishment and in its pay.

Those of us who work for BAC feel not a little bewildered by all this. The

'bureaucracy' in the office consists of 1 General Secretary (only just appointed), 1 Administration Secretary, one Membership Secretary (part-time only) and one junior office girl. Is this an embryonic "Whitehall"?"

(Counselling 1979)

The concept of being a mission-driven organisation strongly resonated through all interviews. The notions of generating revenues and running businesses were largely portrayed as the underpinning structures that facilitated the membership, public and professional logics. Gray[D] reflects “the organisation is never more important than the members”. Sarah[B] usefully summarises this, “the sustainability of the organisation, basically you want to charge fees and generate lots of money to do things. Many of our members don’t earn much money but for BACP to do what it has to do, then you can’t have a free membership. I think those tensions have become more difficult”.

Many interviewees recognised that there was an ever present potential for the needs of the formal organisation to become too central. This needed careful management and had potential consequences if unchecked. Rachel[D] observes, “sometimes an association can get bogged down in its own outputs and not really focus on responding on what’s going on in the sector”, and Gray[D] warns, “associations can lose their purpose and can become about themselves, and in that you end up with a situation like votes of no confidence from the members. Associations can easily find themselves out of kilter with the memberships. There is a sober lesson to be learnt when you put organisation over member. A membership will only allow you to take that so far”. Balancing the needs of the organisation with the needs of the membership and profession appeared to be a serious and challenging task, and others reflected, like Sarah, that this was a nuanced set of activities that was often difficult to get right.

“If your organisation is about self-interest, ‘me me me’, it will not work. Although occasionally an association might produce a very needy strategy, all about itself, it needs then to reinterpret that, and see the strategies as a way of doing the right

things that will get them to a situation where they are viewed and recognised how they want to be”

Oliver[C]

There was a complete absence in interviews and documentary data that the self-logic was anything more than supporting the members, profession and public through the continued survival of the association. There were challenges to be clearer about this, as Sarah[B] suggests, “I think the only way to manage these is to be explicit about them, ‘we can only do so much, and this is what you get for your money’. In the interviews there was a strong sense of working for mission-driven organisations, and often a reluctance to discuss in depth the running of an association, its finance and stability. In interviews at least, other logics were more dominant. However it is an important logic, that the association is run effectively, efficiently and properly, has the capacity to undertake the demands and multiple roles that are placed on it, and has resources at its disposal that it can allocate. Thomas[D] reflected, “the organisation is there for the good of its members and the general public. There are not many other entities that should be able to create that provision”, and felt it was important that the association was capable of sustaining itself to sustain this activity.

6.6 Chapter summary

This chapter brings together interview and historical data to give an account of the messy complexity of an association, an organisation that holds continuity and change in equal measure. The concept of primary institutional logics helps thematically separate out often conflated accounts of associations. The concept of these logics holding different degrees of centrality, coupled with the concept of sub-logics brings a degree of clarity to the nature and purpose of professional associations. The centrality and importance of these logics are seen to vary, both over time in one association, and from association to association. As Rachel[D] observes, “when you are funded and owned by your members [...] there is a need for the balance. I think it works differently in different professions. The more established or regulated professions and professional bodies, those that have a

more traditional relationship with the members, like the medical or accountancy ones, those bodies tend [...] to be less worried about always trying to please members”.

The logics are also seen to be points of tension. Not all sit comfortably together within the hybridity of the central association. The logics are seen to be built on reflexive relationships with a wide degree of audiences. The association itself is seen to be in a reflexive relationship with its environment (chapter 7). There was a sense of institutional qualities of conservatism, the continuity element of associations, that had to be held alongside change, often driven by causal mechanisms beyond the profession and association itself, “threats as real and are looking at the professional bodies to help define and deliver professionalism in the 21st century” (Bhugra 2008: 329). The association and profession, with their institutional tendencies (chapter 7) were being challenged, and the association not only has to hold the conflicting and competing logics that are inherent in a professional association, but manage the challenges of post-modern professions, new membership models, socio-economic challenges and behaviours of new, younger members, communities of practice rather than homogenous memberships, educated publics, de-professionalisation, managerialism, and increasing external scrutiny. The associations response to these challenges was to continue to hold audiences in reflexive relationships, seeking to influence and be influenced as the landscape shifts and changes.

7: Complexity of decision dynamics within professional associations

The previous chapter explores how associations can be described by a series of competing reflexive logics. These logics determine the nature and roles associations adopt and the centrality of the audiences they interact with. This creates a framework that brings some clarity to the messy complexity of professional associations but is limited and constrained as it assumes a bounded rationality of organisations. However, associations are more complex than this, and this chapter, in-line with how the literature review is constructed, attempts to explain other aspects of the nature of associations. Degrees of conformity and the strength of explanations of institutional isomorphism are discussed, together with an exploration of how the environment is perceived to be an influence, decision-making processes, and the causal changes that threaten the long-term future of associations. The chapter focuses on neo-institutional and legitimacy theories, and how applicable they are in participant's understanding of associations, and how far they may explain that associations, like other organisations may not always "conform to rational or efficient expectations" (Baba *et al.* 2012: 74).

7.1 Isomorphism: are associations similar?

The literature review notices potential high degrees of conformity amongst the functions of associations and highlights neo-institutional explanations as to why this might be the case. Interviewees often reflected on the question, declaring that it was either not something they had given particular thought to before, the natural state of how things were, or contested the notion. As interviews progressed, participants from groups A, B and C were able to construct strong rationales for why this was or wasn't the case. Interviewees from group D universally saw the field as having conforming qualities, leaving the impression that for them, associations were organised as an informal sector, whilst for participants from the first three groups, perspectives on a single association were often initially compartmentalised without a sector perspective.

Many perspectives were located in the pragmatic 'way of the world', that associations were similar because they did similar things. Remi's[A] gives a

functional, and typical account, “they all have to look after members, they have to look after their media presence, market and advertise, deal with the government, have a website. There are only so many differences”. Isomorphism was considered by others to be a product of a societal set of causal mechanisms based on the legitimacy of occupations and institutions. Associations were considered similar because an association could derive legitimacy from other associations by replicating form, structure, process and outputs. Riccardo[B] illustrates his own feelings about the organisation suggesting “people want to be defined in a way that is credible and recognised from the outside, so you have to have an association”. This concept of a legitimacy of systems creating conformity in associations was further built on by William[B] who saw associations as part of a societal system of organising, “as human beings we function within systems that we know. We want systems to be the same because this gives some form of legitimacy”. In these interviews, isomorphic behaviour of associations is portrayed not as an explicit, but implicitly deliberate strategy.

Not all participants accepted concepts and arguments of conformity. At a level beyond functions, they felt associations were quite different. Duncan[B], reflecting on BACP, suggests that it is “not a particularly mimetic organisation”, that, “aside from performing certain positivist tasks that the organisations are not truly similar [...] so I would take similarity with a very big pinch of salt, except as a superficial generalisation, that they all do the same thing”. The culture of an association was considered a significant point of divergence and independence in associations. As Danni[A] alludes, “they may look the same but are run differently”. These themes, of similarity and difference, ran through the extended interviews. Participants offered a range of classical views on similarity. For instance conformity was a legitimacy driver for Liam[C] as “a way of knowing that what you are looking at is a professional association”. For Jane[C], there was a pragmatic need to fulfil similar functions regardless of profession, “I think if they do their job well then there will be obvious similarities”. The extended interviews also replicated BACP interviews, confirming that conformity could only be stretched so far, and culturally associations were different. Gray[D] argues, “culture between associations isn’t

always the same. On the surface, they may look the same, in reality they can be very different organisations”.

The retroductive technique, particularly attention to absences, evidences that interviewees did not touch on certain functional differences between associations, particularly those that do and do not hold a conduct procedure, those that are self-regulating, those that are international rather than domestic, and forms of incorporation. Extended interviewees were more candid on the subject of whether isomorphism was the product of deliberate mimetic strategies, the coercive effects of regulators like Privy Council for Chartered bodies, and the structural and procedural requirements created by the Charity Commission, or the normative influence of professional staff. Extended interviews suggested there were many reasons for isomorphism, including: the homogenising influence of staff moving between organisations, replicating successful structures and systems in their new organisation; a consequence of a small population of association governance lawyers creating isomorphism in the governing documents of associations; or the increasing influence of benchmarking organisations, particularly PARN, whose activities were felt to create an isomorphic pressure on staff within associations to conform to best practice. In these interviews there was a general acceptance that professional associations could be considered similar types of organisation, although the degree of similarity was contested. Conformity could easily be extended to incorporate structural and functional processes, particularly driven by the need to be considered a legitimate organisation or follow and replicate a successful strategy. This would fit with institutional accounts regarding stability, “cognitive, normative, and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behaviour” (Scott 2014: 33). However, culturally, the idea of conformity is strongly contested, where the normative relationship with the specific profession is felt to create unique professional associations. Having established where incidents of isomorphism are most evident, the next question is to explore how purposeful this activity is.

Purposeful mimetic isomorphism?

There are several theoretical accounts that seek to explain why an organisation may rationally set out to mimic other organisations within similar sectors: risk mitigation; fashionable; or a calculated assessment of the benefits. Of particular interest is the concept of organisational legitimacy, which featured strongly in accounts of isomorphism at both association and profession levels. As discussed in chapter 3, the mimetic behaviour of professions is implicit in much of the literature concerning the sociology of professions, and there may well be causal links between this behaviour and potential isomorphism in associations. Classic interpretations of professionalisation, such as that offered by Wilensky (1964) contained implicit mimetic behaviour. The establishment of an association was what professionalising occupations did. A number of interviews relied on similar rational, for instance Sarah[B] said “counselling wants to be seen as professional, and you establish a professional body to help with the process of being seen as professional”.

The documentary data is more problematic. There are hints of the strength of mimetic drivers in some decisions: in professionalisation processes (SCAC 1975d); accreditation processes (Grant 1992); the construction of member services (CPJ 2001b); promotion of the profession to the external world (Counselling 1992d); and the design of professional conduct processes (Counselling 1991b: 3, Therapy Today 2007). At many of these points the association appears to be aware of what other professions and associations are doing, and intimates that a mimetic strategy of replicating success has the potential to yield similar benefits back to the profession, to “avoid reinventing the wheel” (Counselling 1986: 1). However, the strength of this behaviour is hard to gauge, and equally it is difficult to determine whether it influenced ultimate decisions in the association. Interviews in groups A and B were telling, revealing that the staff and members’ orientation was primarily back to the occupational field, and not the association sector. Natalie[A] gives a useful account of her own knowledge base, “I don’t know what the professional body trends are overall”. Only one interview Bea’s[B] made explicit reference to mimetic behaviour, and this was still confined to the specific occupational field, “BACP always looked to broader influences, other countries, places like America

and Australia where counselling was different”. Whilst there was low-level awareness of prominent associations in the interviews, many participants made reference to the British Medical Association’s handling of new working arrangements (see Campbell 2016). The presence of this relatively timely, unique, and high profile set of circumstances is suggestive that association staff were not as insularly unaware of other associations as they often suggested.

Conversely, the most prominent pattern in the interviews were non-conforming accounts. There was a sense that the association was deliberately divergent from, rather than conforming to, other associations. It purposefully appears to eschew mimetic behaviour in favour of relevance to the qualities of its own professional field. Several critical examples, most notably the association’s ethical framework and accreditation processes, were considered both vitally important, and a product of co-creation with the profession, rather than a mimetic copy of another associations code of conduct or professional standards. Gregory[B] reflects on the ethical framework for members as “a good example of where we have not created a copy, or a poor copy of somebody else’s work”. This divergence from mimetic approaches appears to hold significant residual value for participants, as Bea[B] illustrates, “one of our most fantastic pieces of creative thinking was the ethical framework. It was streets ahead of anything else out there. It broke away from the old-fashioned codes used by other counselling associations across the globe, it showed a kind of maturity for BACP”. Similarly, to the ethical framework, the historical dataset evidences how accreditation of members was purposefully built to the needs of the profession, “systems of accreditation, not merely for counsellors, supervisors and trainers, but also for whole training courses have emerged. These have not been modelled on the practices of other professions or counsellors in other countries, but have been constructed through peer co-operation and review” (Mearns 1999: 344). Where the association was seen to deliberate a deeply mimetic strategy, it was challenged. There was only one incidence of this in the research process, a consideration that training, a diverse field (Aldridge 2011), could move to Level 6, raising training standards to academic levels of other healthcare professions. Natalie[A] argues that it was a deeply

mimetic process, “we needed it because others had it”. Ultimately though, true to form, this was not progressed, the association keener for academic formation to be reflective of the professions’ own needs, as Sarah[B] recalls, “people working with people should come from the broadest possible spectrum. Talk about pursuing something like Level 6 is purely about status, trying to put us on the same level as other professions”. These accounts produce an interesting challenge to concepts of isomorphism, in that it could be conceived as stratified. At one level, associations are seen to have common functions, they set standards, they have conduct processes, they produce guidelines. At a granular level, the implication of these common functions is clearly diversified. They may have common themes, such as in their ethical codes (Friedman, Daly and Andrzejewska 2005), but commonality often exists at a point of abstraction rather than detail.

Alternatively, the extended interviews were more open and candid about purposed mimetic behaviour as a strategy within associations. Thomas[D] was one of several who considered the behaviour to be both appropriate in following the broader causal trends that impacted on all associations. Reflecting on the membership proposition “at the moment ‘member experience’ is the thing, the buzzword, but is moving to this ‘experience thing’”. He recounted how associations had, as a sector, previously looked to member value, and before that, satisfaction as performance indicators. Several interviews identified as important the mimetic forces created by the rise in prominence and influence of UK based benchmarking organisations, particularly PARN, Memcom, Associations Congress and Memberwise, who share best practice through publications and events. Adrian[D] who was involved in these organisations, saw this as a way of professionalising the association sector, “in some way that is the power of what I’m trying to do, to enable and help the professional body sector to reflect on itself as a sector”. Typically, purposeful isomorphism in the extended interviews reflected theoretical concepts of risk reduction. Mary[D] summarises, “it creates a diffusion of innovation across the sector. It creates a normative way of being, deciding what is adopted, and also what is not tried because it’s failed elsewhere”. Participants were

able to construct logical narratives that suggested mimetic isomorphism was an effective strategy for an association.

“When one association sets itself up, it looks at the best practice, organisations sometimes need copycat structures, in benefits packages and membership hierarchies. I don’t think it stifles innovation; somebody has to have an idea somewhere. I think that happens in every industry, and actually although is not about direct competition, people can deploy and implement ideas better, acting as a diffuser of innovation”

David[C]

The split between BACP and extended interviews in the acceptance of purposeful isomorphism as a strategy was particularly interesting. It does not account for the functional conformity of BACP to other associations’ but alludes to a preference to build to a strong normative influence from the profession and members, and a general distance from those connected to the association to the wider association field. There were also potential consequences for not following mimetic strategies, as Adam[B] alludes, “the National Health Service has adopted almost exclusively the medical model. How we access something is through very structured routes and those routes have become very powerful, professional, and territorial. I have seen the dynamics and structures, and how rivalrous competitors can be. Counselling has often been seen as a junior partner because it did not sign up to the medical model. It’s actually saying it might be better to get someone to talk about something rather than prescribe medication”. The long-term consequences were yet to be played out, as Mark[B] indicates, “some elements of our profession have been excluded from the NHS because it’s been intransigent to change, incapable of changing dynamically rapidly. An old argument where legitimacy is used as power”.

7.2 Institutional accounts of environment influence.

Neo-institutional explanations consider that the environment can have a strong conforming influence on the organisation, either coercively or through the

organisation's need to be legitimate. The research process reveals this to be both an important and deeply complex set of institutional pressures that act on an association, not only creating conformity between associations, but also to the profession specific environments.

Profession specific influences

Interviews within BACP readily identified several key environmental factors that had shaped the association, its processes and its work. Most prominent of these were from a broad set of changes that were working their way through the healthcare sector. Michelle[A] summarises “there have been some really big drivers, there's been an enhanced regulatory framework because of Shipman, and there has been a huge evidence-based medicine movement and rationing of healthcare which has had an impact on BACP”.

As previously discussed, association-state relationships are important (MacDonald 1995) and the potential for statutory regulation of the profession by HPC, and the subsequent move to voluntary registration of registers by PSA, are seen to have a significant influence on the association, changing its language, modifying some of its roles, and most evidently, its approach to organising its members. This created a series of changing institutional effects that impacted on the association over a sustained, fifteen year period (e.g. Letters 2000b, CPJ 2001a, CPJ 2002d, Letters 2002b, Thorne 2002, CPJ 2005c, CPJ 2005a, Letters 2005b, Aldridge 2006, Letters 2006b, Letters 2006c). The dramatic change in institutional logic within the government, from a preference for voluntary rather than statutory regulation, created causal effects that were felt immediately by the association, “then came the general election and everything changed, virtually overnight. The new Government decided we were not a huge risk to the public and indicated that a ‘light touch’ regulation was needed for us and the other professions that were queuing for take-off on the regulation runway” (Hawkins 2012b: 45). Both the healthcare and regulatory sectors can be seen as examples of causal mechanism that manifest as coercive isomorphic pressures on the association, creating a tendency to conformity.

The documentary dataset suggests state relations between BACP and the UK governments have created a relatively constant set of pressures on the association, some advantageous, others not so. Examples include: fund-holders influencing training standards (Counselling 1994b); perspectives on professional standards (Counselling 1992b); initiatives impacting on training standards, such as NVQ's (Counselling 1993b, Letters 1995b, Letters 2002d) and AIDS and HIV counselling (Counselling 1990a); mapping NHS counselling provision (BAC 1986b); legislative rulings on practice (Counselling 1997c); the impact of NHS-led change initiatives across workforces (Wheeler 1999, Gray 2008, Proudlock 2008); and government preference for working practices (Letters 2006a) such as NICE guidelines (CPJ 2004b, CPJ 2006c, Therapy Today 2008a). This list is not exhaustive but indicates patterns of empirical evidence of the phenomena.

The dataset indicates that the association was aware of the broader societal generative mechanism that had the potential to create institutional forces on the association: responding to the needs of an ageing population (Hooper 1978: 8); clients expectations to use technology (Counselling 1984); being on trend (Leary 1986, Counselling 1997b); or an increasingly sophisticated and educated consumer (Brainchild 2008). The association was seen by many as the mechanism by which a profession could respond to change. For Mark[B] there was no choice, "we could be a profession that might die on its arse if we are not attentive and quick-witted to changes in customers", moreover "there is a customer shift, people are coming to therapy looking for a way to manage their lives on their terms, rather than the old differential power therapist model. The client is driving a lot of this. Clients are encouraged to ask therapists things, and therapists are encouraged to answer them so that legitimacy as a form of differential power does not create problems".

Association specific influences

The research also reveals two large-scale patterns of sociological change that influence and shaped the association: the absence of state interference in a neo-liberal economy; and a changing sociological pattern in clients in respect to professions. Causal mechanisms, emanating from societal change, impacted directly on the association. First, Bea[A] argues that counselling's legitimacy was

tied to the needs of a changing society. The organisation and profession “responded to a socio-economic change. People’s situations were changing, people were moving, away from their families they were moving around the country and becoming detached from social institutions. That in turn saw them becoming more reliant on things like counselling and psychotherapy”. This created what might be described as a ‘golden age’ for the profession (Dryden, Mearns and Thorne 2000) where it became established. Secondly, a neo-liberal economy often requires some organisation to regulate quality of work and provide redress. In the absence of state regulation, this role is adopted by professional associations, as part of their public logic. Mary[D] suggests, “professional bodies take a lot of burden off the government. If they did not exist then their role would need to be done somewhere, and some of this may well fall back onto the government or a form of state-controlled environment”. There was a sense, in some interviews, that this role played by professional associations was often undervalued and under-appreciated by governments.

“I can imagine a Yes Prime Minister scene, where the Minister wants to take away the power of a profession, and the Sir Humphrey character says “of course there is a much easier way of doing this, we will let them think they are still professions but we will erode it away quietly in the background, we will remove their barriers”. Successive governments want plasticity. If it can be safely done by a cheaper option that is preferable. It depends how keen you are on conspiracy theories. But the free market cannot do it all, you still need informed consumers”

Liam[C]

Strategic responses

Each of these examples can be explored as institutional forces acting on an association, and often the association has choices in how it responds. Understanding these, though the dataset, helps in the understanding of associations. Oliver’s framework on strategic responses (1991) is useful for classifying these. BACP is seen to adopt several different responses, often

determined by the strength and legitimacy of the organisation(s) creating the challenge, and the consequences attached to strategies of resistance or acquiescence. It is not my intention to categorically detail these one by one but provide illustrations of variance and suggestions as to why this variance exists. For instance, where the legitimacy of the profession is challenged, the association is seen to adopt strategies of defiance, particularly in relation to attacks in the media (e.g. Bond 1996, Letters 1996a, CPJ 2003a). Where the institutional pressure comes from government sources, the association appears more prone to adopt compromise and influence strategies, particularly in the challenges to the profession from IAPT and NICE (e.g. Therapy Today 2008c, Therapy Today 2008b). At each turn the association acts for the whole profession rather than a discreet membership. In part, Oliver's framework, examined through the historical dataset, helps to explain why this association in particular is attentive to some institutional pressures, where they are favourable or can legitimately be challenged, and where it acquiesces to others. Unfortunately the data does not provide information on why other forces are unattended to.

7.3 Membership as a normative influence on an association?

The membership relationship is central in professional associations, and as expected, these relationships are seen to create one of the strongest institutional forces on an association. A professional practitioner field, primarily if not wholly consisting of members, presents an interesting case to study neo-institutional theory, and the specific features where professional influence is considered a force towards isomorphism. Predominantly neo-institutional accounts portray professions creating institutional pressures on organisations. It stands to reason that a professional association presents a unique opportunity to explore more richly how these forces manifest.

The association, in managing its legitimacy with its members is seen to actively embrace these pressures, which are often interpreted as beneficial. Often this relationship is expressed as a sharing of values between association and its membership. An early General Manager wrote about creating an organisation that

“reflects the values of BAC and counselling, so that the Association, where appropriate models what it is advocating” (Charles-Edwards 1988: 8). Over time, as the association is seen to recruit professional staff, the mechanisms by which this influence can be exerted and felt are also seen to change, yet whilst staff have been employed by the association to undertake operational roles, members hold key governance, decision-making and committee roles (BACP 2017).

The association is seen to encourage a relationship that actively embraces normative institutional pressures from the profession. The historical dataset indicates the association routinely consulting with members on a range of topics and issues: setting up of registers (Bond 1994, Counselling 1996: 4); professional and training standards (Counselling 1991c, Counselling 1994a: 166 , CPJ 2001b: 21 , Barden 2003, Therapy Today 2013); ethical standards (Counselling 1995b: 3 , Therapy Today 2015b); policies (Counselling 1993a: 240); members services such as the journals (Counselling 1999a: 338); and strategy formation (Davis 1990a, Therapy Today 2015a: 45). Along with this there is evidence that members have opportunity to formally appraise the association through regular member surveys (e.g. Nelson-Jones and Coxhead 1978, Counselling 1989, CPJ 2005b, Ashridge 2016). Through its journals, the association is seen to encourage members to engage with their opinions on the work of the association and the direction of the profession, “make your voice heard and take time to read and hear what others have to say. The strength of the Association is in the informed involvement of all members” (CPJ 2002a: 44). The letters page provides a rich collection of data that provide examples of members’ views on the association being discussed, for example: to tighten standards in relation to better define the profession (e.g. Letters 1996a: 98); resist new standards (e.g. Letters 1998c: 260-261); develop a position on regulation (CPJ 2005c); on professional practice; to better advocate for the profession (e.g. Letters 2002a: 25), or certain heterogenetic elements of it (e.g. Letters 2005a: 22 , Letters 2007b: 26 , Letters 2007a: 25); through to adopting an organisational environmental policy (Letters 1990b: 73).

Interview data were equally revealing about the strength of the normative pressure on the organisation. Bea[B] for example recounted how difficult it was to launch

accreditation, “of course, we got quite a bit of flak at the time. People took some convincing, especially the counselling trainers. But experience has shown it was the right move. Lots of organisations would have stuck with what they knew, done the conservative thing, not gone into uncharted territory”. It is evident that the association did not always acquiesce to these strong normative pressures. One example was the issue of whether members should have personal therapy. The association had to negotiate its position on this with the membership (Letters 1998d) who held strong opinions, either way on the subject (e.g. Letters 1987a, Letters 1987b, Letters 1997: 163 , Letters 1998a, Letters 1998b, Letters 2008). Allison[B] recounts “BACP has sometimes ducked tough decisions though, it did on the issue of personal therapy. But at other times, like with accreditation, they didn’t back down when I think there was pressure to”. Adopting a leadership role with a membership equally had to be negotiated, and the association had to be attentive to the strength of normative forces. Allison[B] indicates, “you need to have the majority of members with you because they can out vote you at any point.

Each interview discussed the strength of the normative pressure members created. It was discussed either in terms of the collective will of the membership, or the problems in discerning the collective will of a heterogeneous membership. The documentary data evidences members exerting routine and regular influence on the organisation, either as individual members of a profession, through letters pages, or through communities of practice, knowledge sharing, information provision and the legitimisation of knowledge. An effective association is seen to co-create, rather than routinely impose, on its membership, and this process naturally creates a strong system that allows normative institutional pressure to influence the association. Where interviewees described work of an association, with pride it predominantly focused on activities that were sensitive to, and created with, its membership. The normative institutional effect of a membership is part of the nature of a membership body, and therefore a strong element of a professional body. It can be restrictive, Rachael[D] suggests an association might tend to be conservative because members expect it, “we can't do anything too

different from what we are doing now because the members won't like it". Evidencing the normative effect of a membership is a relatively simple task. Understanding its nuances and putting it in to action proved difficult for some. A normative effect was open to interpretation. Anna[D] considers this in her interview:

"I wonder who controls the process of legitimisation? Who drives that legitimisation? Who calls the shots on what's legitimate and what's not? Is it the members or the association? The association has to align to what's acceptable and what's not acceptable in day-to-day practice. Members' have a responsibility to feed back to the professional association about what is happening to them and the outcomes of the processes that they are undertaking so that the association can assess what the current trends are to build guides and standards. Someone has to draw the line on what is normal within a practice. I think that is a really difficult task, [...] I think the pressure on an association normally comes from the members, or employers, pushing associations to operate in a certain way to meet their needs"

Finally, on the subject David[C] reflected on how the normative pressure of members might be better accommodated in professional associations, how the recruitment of staff needed to be based on both a technical competence, and the profession's ideals:

"Historically, I think professional associations have recruited solely on the basis of competency [...] they haven't challenged interview candidates on their values and tested for the behaviours required to deliver a modern outward looking professional association [...] an IT team needs to be good at programming, or content management, but it's equally important that they can show that in joining a professional Association, they are prepared to support and inspire its members to serve public the interest".

It is evident that the normative institutional effect is closely tied to both the mission-driven aspects of the association, the aims of the wider profession, and the thoughts and contributions of the wider membership. It appears to be an important aspect of an association, both in terms of maintaining its legitimacy, but

also in ensuring its continued relevance. Although expected and obvious, it appears important to state all associations are both defined by this and should be producing strategies that are attentive to it. It influences significant proportions of the associations' role and purpose and defines part of its nature.

7.4 Internal influences on association decisions

So far, this chapter has looked outside the immediate, formal organisation, to explore influence on it. It would be naïve to treat associations as black boxes, receiving inputs and producing outputs. The internal mechanism of an association, particularly relating to decision making, staff, and governance systems concerned many participants as they sought to define professional associations. On paper, BACP's decision making system is presented as relatively straightforward in that its Articles of Association (BACP 2018c) and Standing Orders (BACP 2018f) set out its powers and the role of the governing body, aligned to Charity Commission guidance (CPJ 2003b). Its annual financial statement sets out the delegated responsibility of the staff team through the Chief Executive (BACP 2017). However, literature on non-profit governance indicates that associations can have complex internal decision-making processes (Friedman, Phillips and Chan 2002).

The interview process asked how decisions were made in professional associations, and who made them. Often this topic was reached and covered in the interview process before the question was asked. Complexity, being a natural state for associations. Responses to the questions largely fell in to two categories: instrumental and functional responses; thoughts that largely decisions were made inside the organisation. A number of respondents gave instrumental answers based on process. Jo[A] for example, in his interview offers "trustees are voted for and hold the legal responsibility of making the right selection of the senior leadership team. The senior team are then responsible for putting before the trustees the areas we want them to start thinking about". Remi[A] was one of a small cohort who suggested that there was an internal process, "decisions are made inside the organisation". Oliver[C] reflected on his own experience, that decision-

making in associations was often time critical, and formal decision-making processes of committees were not agile enough, describing a hybridity to his approach, “there two types of decision, those where you ask permission, and those where you ask for forgiveness”.

The documentary dataset indicates that as the association grew, so too did the complexity of its decision-making processes, and the addition of paid staff in greater numbers blurred classical lines of decision-making. Adam[B] suggests, “you have to make that transition if you want be a professional organisation. The level of knowledge and skills required to operate certain things do go beyond just volunteers”. The dataset regarding staff roles in decision-making is quite insightful. It shows that originally staff were recruited to support the volunteers in the running of the organisation, with strategic decision making firmly restricted to members (Charles-Edwards 1988: 3). Over time there is evidence of greater staff involvement and some autonomy to make decisions (Counselling 1992f), however, even at this juncture, the General Manager appears to only attend trustee meetings in the capacity of Company Secretary (Counselling 1994c: 13). This remains the case in the contemporary association — the Chief Executive attends Board meetings and is not a member of the decision-making process. They do not vote on decisions. Their presence though, will undoubtedly be an influence, and the question, ‘who makes decisions’ was a purposefully blunt one. Over time boundaries become less distinct and messy, with evidence that senior staff and trustees are involved in the creation and evolution of strategies (Hawkins 2012a), although the trustee board remains the ultimate decision-making unit (CPJ 2004a, BACP 2018c, BACP 2018f, BACP 2018b). Bea[B] recalls this transition clearly, “my early involvement was in the days when BACP had very few professional staff, work was mostly still done by volunteers. BACP was a very different animal, it was run the way that most of us were doing counselling then”. Members also populate the working parties and committees of the association, affording them a significant role in the decision making of the association, a pattern of control consistent pattern through the organisation’s history (e.g. Charles-Edwards 1988, Davis 1990c, Counselling 1992e, Counselling 1997a, McDevitt 1999), “[a] good number of

members are immensely generous in the gift of their intelligence, intellect and time” (Syme 1999: 177).

“Most professional bodies began [...] as purely voluntary. All the work was done by the members of the profession. Then they gradually began to hire people. Usually just low-level administrative support. But gradually higher- and higher-level people. Now most professional bodies [...] are run by full-time staff who behave in a professional manner”

Adrian[D]

Aspects of demarcation and delineation between trustees and staff are an important part of corporate governance, especially trustees holding fiduciary responsibilities (Gazley 2014). The decision-making relationship was nuanced. Allison[B] recalls that although volunteers made the decisions, staff influenced these and that “you have to think about what the staff will make of it, will they be supportive or sabotage it”. It is also important to note that in these structures it is individual members that hold decision-making power, not the membership at large. Elected and appointed trustees, committee chairs and members held positions of influence in the organisation, and good governance was critical to ensure that this remained effective. William[B] was concerned by the potential of this, “ultimately all decisions are made by a very small group of people, and that’s not necessarily the committees or the board”. Ultimately, members, albeit individual ones, remain at the centre of decision making, particularly the democratic process of the election of trustees, who “are responsible for shaping strategy and policies for the Association and for scrutinising the operations of BACP to ensure on your behalf that the organisation exercises financial and ethical probity” (CPJ 2004a: 55). It is difficult for a small group of individual members to be representative of the entire membership, despite intention, a “decision-taking body is representative of our membership” (CPJ 2001b: 20). When questioned, BACP interviewees tended to reject the notion of ruling elites and closed clubs (see Michels 1962, Freidson 1986). Gregory[B] reflects, “I’m not sure that I would recognise this in BACP. I have not experienced such things at BACP. We put efforts

in to increase democratisation in consultations, and in trying to engage more people in voting and expressing their views”. Similarly, Allison[A] charts her own progression within the organisation, “there was no sense of ‘my turn next’ in my experience”.

Extended interviews produced a broader and more diversified dataset to the question of decision-making in associations, although membership control was considered an essential element of good governance. Kai[C] describes his own association, “at the top you need a strong council or board that sets the strategy that filters down into the committees, which also need strong committee chairs”. Although the power of the CEO was debated, it was generally felt to be influential but restricted. Gael[C] reflects on his own role, “the one thing I’ve learnt is that as a CEO you have huge influence but you are not in control”. The extended case interviews resonated with juxtaposed accounts from BACP. James[C] suggests “nominally the membership representatives have the final say in the governance structure. They may even be trustees. So many decisions are made by the staff who do that in consultation with the officers and trustees”.

Extended interviews appeared more readily to see and recall patterns of behaviour that were different from the BACP account. Here there were more concerns with elite groups within a membership, the power of individuals and vested interest. Often the interviewee would refer to some ‘unnamed’ other association as an example of poor practice. A note of caution is issued in that it was unclear whether they were speaking of specific examples or some general assumed bad practice. For Gael[C], the age of the association was important. Newer associations did not hold with the institutional trappings of old-world legitimacy that more established associations actively demonstrated, “meritocracy might be important for new associations, but older ones still have oil painting on their wall and the symbolism of putting a chain round your neck”. Gael was one of several who commented that the modern contemporary world of work required associations to be modernised, but older associations were more institutionalised, conservative, and resistant to this. For Rachel[D], the challenge was striking “although professional bodies can be more diverse, when you see the pictures of all the board members of the council

or the committees it is often white middle-aged men that are on them. I think that there are still elements of elitism there". There was a sense of change in many interviews from an extremely institutionalised space:

"Everything is a progression, is a slow movement that has gained momentum.

When I started in 2003 it was still the case that white middle-aged men were in many key positions. I think that the difficulty has been the professional bodies are by their very nature very slow to change. It is very difficult to change your mem and arts, because you have to do it in the of confines of maintaining your status. It is questionable whether enough has changed. Alongside this we have seen dramatic feminisation of professions, particularly in healthcare, where the majority of entrants to professions are predominantly female. We are seeing the social cultural context changing rapidly, far more rapidly than a lot of associations can cope with"

Liam[C]

Despite very public initiatives to broaden and diversify the population of an associations' membership, particularly in terms of social mobility, change was still considered to be too slow, or non-existent; some form of professional power resistant to new entrants. Discussing his own association, David[C] is concerned about the difference between rhetoric and reality, "even after a lot of thunder and lightning around the creation of a membership offer at lower skill levels e.g. apprentices and technicians, we have not managed to make a large impact in terms of diversification".

Two potential explanations for the difference between BACP accounts and extended interviews go some way to explaining the diversity. First, the association would be classed as relatively new and had not established its legitimacy in past times. BACP, even at 40, is the outcome and product of a relatively modern process. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, the normative influence from the membership that is so influential comes from a professional population that has purposefully avoided many of the institutional trappings of power and bureaucracy, a movement based on a broader set of values, to borrow from David Charles-Edwards, "a commitment to encouraging individual and group growth

and autonomy within a wider framework [...] to thinking things through and being-open; to liberation from oppression and elitism; to supporting and valuing the kind of leadership that facilitates leadership and empowering in others; to cherishing and respecting each other” (1988: 10).

One pattern that did emerge from the dataset was the limited but recognisable power that a single individual could have within the organisation. William[B] summarises this through BACP’s history, “the association has benefited and struggled at different times from strong personalities. When you think of an association and has been built up to 44,000 members, it is interesting or worrying that someone can come in and exert such an influence”. The power of individuals, both within the governance structure or outside featured in many interviews. Michelle[A], reflecting back to the organisation’s history recounts, “initiatives at BACP have come from individuals rather than the organisation’s core strategy”. Remi[A] reflects on how high profile members can influence the organisation: “if someone shouted really loud then an individual could influence the organisation, be it in the leadership or a very influential member”. Yet the early association appeared to benefit from the individual agency of certain members for instance Nicholas Tyndall (CPJ 2006a: 26) and Hans Hoxter (CPJ 2002b), without whom neither SCAC or BACP may have been formed, and Professor Tim Bond’s work on the ethical framework. Many internal interviews touched on how central Professor Bond was to the creation, establishment and longevity of the Ethical Framework. Bea[B] illustrates, “at BACP, even with the ethical framework, it was one member in particular who brought a lot of creative thinking to its development”. Individuals working in small focused groups to develop standards and codes have also been a fundamental part of how the association has worked, and again several interviewees touched on how a group of members had led the establishment of accreditation standards within the profession. Allison[A] recounts, “the ethical framework and accreditation are really good examples of where you have passionate people [...] who were determined [...] ethics has been the best thing we have ever done”.

Extended interviews touched on similar themes regarding individual agency. Kai[C] summarises, “a good board would leave that there and not get too involved in operations. But in some professional associations the president or chair is working longer hours for an association and becomes the ultimate decision maker”. Thomas[D] held a more sceptical perspective, suggesting from his experience, those in power could be disruptive with what he called “pet project syndrome”, “you get a new president, or chair, who has a real bugbear in a particular area, and all of a sudden they are scurrying off and wanting people, and drawing people in to do very specific projects , [regardless of the] day to day activity that needs to be done”.

Members controlled much of an association’s high-level decision-making processes through their positions as trustees, chairs, presidents and sitting on committees, and associations tend to structure themselves around concepts of representative democracy. William[B] indicates, “decisions probably have to be made by a small number of people otherwise they don’t get made, but they do have to be scrutinised by a larger number of people”. Participative democracy also was seen to play a significant role in associations, with several interviewees reflecting that the final decision a board of trustees makes often requires the tacit or explicit approval of the wider membership. Gael[C] illustrates, “any professional association will have a constitution whereby at an AGM the membership can have a say on the big decisions. I guess that they can be seen as the decision maker of last resort”. Good governance appeared to be critical to an association, the demarcation of decision-making made by trustees, and those made by staff. Decision-making was seen to be a complex process, consisting of the inter-relationships between staff and volunteers, trustees and the wider membership, which often blurs. Professional associations tended towards inclusivity and engagement. As William[B] indicates, “getting the governance right has to be part of that, because if that’s right it creates the opportunity for anybody and everybody to shape the profession”. The association, as it formalises its processes is seen to tend towards representative rather than participative democracy. In its early life the data suggest that the association significantly invested in participative

democracy before moving to more instrumental representative forms of democratic decision-making. This is reflected in Bea [B]'s comment, "I think BACP consults with members less now than it did. Sometimes the first we hear of things is when they are finalised and published in the magazine". Whilst literature reflects that associations *per se* have become more instrumental organisations, and suggests members have become less interested in democratic processes (Gundelach and Torpe 1996), within the data, there seems a continuing importance attached to the membership relationship and creating opportunities for members to influence the direction and work of associations. This occurs formally, voting at AGM's and creating motions, or involvement in the broader formal and informal decision-making governance mechanisms all associations share.

7.5 Associations as institutions, counterfactual perspectives

In the process of each interview I asked a counterfactual question, "What would happen if BACP/ associations suddenly didn't exist?". The question had a dual purpose. Firstly whether it might reveal any additional thinking on the nature of associations, and secondly to explore the strength of claims of their institutional qualities, particularly the sense that they are enduring. Participants were asked to speculate on what would happen if the association was to disappear overnight, and in their responses, many made reference to the recent failure of several high-profile charities which served to make the question less abstract. Thematically, responses fell in to two distinct groups, those that felt that an association was vital to the organisation of a profession, and those that felt that an association was becoming potentially an outmoded mechanism for organising the profession. Irrespective of potential outrun, almost all respondents were concerned that the disappearance of a professional association would have detrimental impact on the continued development of the profession.

"The bottom line is that everybody thinks that they are indispensable, but nobody is indispensable. I think if it were to happen with us, if I was to say that the whole profession would take a step back, then that would be a terribly immodest and

delusional thing to say. However, on some level, some people would come together and group as they do now, to be together and to represent a profession. But this happens anyway outside of a professional body, in social media for example.

There is always somebody willing to fill a gap or pick up the mantle”

Jane[C]

For those who had invested energy and their own personal time in to the work of the association, responses to the question could be very emotional. Bea[B], for instance suggested, “all the hard work, the ethical framework not least, would have disappeared. I would grieve for the loss of a lot of things, the journal, and accreditation. They are really important. I wonder who would understand the political world and make sure the counsellors were informed about it”. For all interviewees, the disappearance of an association would be felt, albeit to varying degrees.

The modern connected world was considered a particular challenge for the future role of associations. Adam[B] gave a response that was typical of many who felt that rather than come together as a whole, a profession would split in to communities of practice, “I don’t think the membership would rebuild BACP. I think you would see huge fragmentation”. Building on this theme, Alison[B] speculated something similar would take place, “nobody would stop practising, and the voluntary regulator offers protection for practice. I don’t think clients would notice though. I think we would go along for a while in a slightly less organised way”. Several participants suggested that communities of practice would form, an intrinsic professional need to come together. And for some of these communities, there would be a need to create legitimacy, organisation and representation. Gael’s[C] thinking on this is illustrative, “I think if the main organisation ceased to exist then lots of mini organisations would form, they would start to come together over a period of about a decade and start to remake the profession. A bit like water droplets, they can go everywhere and disperse, but ultimately all come back together”.

“Individuals within a profession would start to build their own communities to meet certain needs. Those professionals that want to regulate the profession, or promote the profession, may well start to build something like professional bodies again, so they may eventually evolve again”

Anna[D]

There was a sense in the interviews that the functions and purpose of a professional association were important to both members of the occupation and the development of a profession itself. Peter[A] was one of several who suggested that members would look for a new professional home, “people would join other bodies, or form themselves a new one. I think there would be lots of schisms, a fringe schism. That there would be a fragmentation. What BACP does is hold things together”. These responses tie a number of themes together from the previous chapters, the role of the association in holding communities of practice under a broader umbrella, their meaning to individuals, their role in organisation of a profession, and its collective will. For some participants there was something inevitable about a profession having an attendant formal organisation, Duncan[B] suggests “I suspect that if an organisation like BACP disappeared, it would have to be either re-invented, or other bodies would have to take the role”. The association, as William[B] suggests held a pivotal role in building the legitimacy of the wider profession, “in the public consciousness they don’t know what BACP is, but oddly they know what counselling is, because of what BACP does. I think it is the lifeblood of the profession”. Several participants made the link between the importance of an association and jurisdictional claim of the profession, suggesting the absence of an organising force that is capable of articulating a claim or defence had the potential to seriously damage the future prospects of the profession. William[B] provides a good example: “I imagine some professions would love to come in and obliterate us, make us redundant. The dams that we have had to build around the profession are holding back these formidable forces. If the dams started to crack because they are no longer maintained and managed, and the water starts to seep through, it wouldn’t take long to start gushing through”.

The majority of respondents tended to focus their answers around the membership and professional roles of an association. A few participants answered the question with the public interest in mind. Gael[C] argues, “it almost is that the starting point now is the market and neoliberalism is the natural order. This has meant that professional bodies have had to take up a role of trying to defend public good in a way that they didn’t have to do 40 years ago because the government would have done this instead”. Several, in their answer deliberated on the regulatory aspects of an associations’ role, and what would happen here. Harry[B] for instance suggests “if the government can’t regulate the market, it has a preference for professional bodies to do that on their behalf. The sign of a profession coming-of-age I guess is that the government doesn’t feel the need to interfere”.

These accounts tended to be more questioning, rather than definitive. Interviewees openly wondering who would fulfil important roles. Only a small minority felt associations were inevitable. Phillip[D] for instance, held a traditional perspective, “they would develop in exactly the same way — to the finely-honed set of bodies and organisations”.

For many though, professional associations were a product of a particular time and space and had been the dominant form of formal organisation. For them aspects of society were changing, and, in response to this question, raised fundamental questions about the future of associations. Adam[B] wondered about the need for the homogenising role of an association, in that “the advent of post-modernism, everything becomes individualised”. Duncan[B] understood things were changing on a deep level, and this had implications for associations, “there is a bigger movement I think at work, which is something to do with the way the citizens’ roles and the state’s role are changing as well, in the context of globalisation. There is something about whilst becoming economically more disparate, there is also correspondingly greater sense of entitlement”. Technology was also seen as a significant future threat to how professions organised themselves, both within formal organisations like associations, and outside, through informal communities of practice”. Technology had the potential to

disrupt how professions connected with each other and shared knowledge, and there were questions asked about the future of associations as an intermediary in these processes, Rae [D] was one of several that felt there were major challenges to certain association functions, “previously for associations they were the primary source of industry and professional information — that’s no longer the case. I think that sort of model is declining”. Beyond this, technology was seen to be encroaching on some traditional and important association roles, for instance market-signalling. David[C] illustrates, “until fairly recently there was only one way of tracking down a reliable and competent professional outside of your own sphere of influence – you contacted the relevant professional association. Now you can simply Google a set of post-nominals and a list of potential contacts is returned

Finally there were also questions raised about the future of associations, particularly their membership models, in a social world where the needs and behaviours of the next generation of professionals different significantly from the older generations. Thomas[D] suggests, “a lot of these professional bodies have been set up on a baby-boomer mentality, being a member of a collective, or a club, very traditional. The sense of belonging was enough for them to keep paying their subs”. Similarly Jen[D] was concerned that the membership model was being challenged, “Baby Boomers are more loyal typically and respect authority, and that lends itself well to a professional body model. Whereas the younger generations are more interested in self-organising and collaborating, not having somebody above them that does it and expects them to do what they say”. Liam[C] worries, “people may say that they are not prepared to pay £300 a year to an organisation that does stuff that I don't care about. Instead going to pay £30 a year to a site that allows me to get a star rating”. There was a sense in the interviews that the technological challenge to the role of associations was significantly underestimated, and associations were poorly prepared for adapting to these changes.

The question usefully created a significant dataset, that both acted to confirm previous responses to questions, but also highlighted that although associations may usefully be considered to have institutional qualities, they potentially needed

to change and adapt in order to remain relevant to new generations of professionals. Some of their institutional qualities were perceived to inhibit this. Liam[C] summarises, “professional associations have, to some extent, their status granted, regulation can stop new entrants forming. So, it is quite interesting that this can slow the process down in responding to social change. The status quo can create unease, but you have to change to meet this new generation, who might be working more flexibly and not for all the classic reasons”. Contemporarily, there are questions about how their role is seen to be changing, what remains a unique classical and valuable role for associations, and how associations need to change and adapt to remain relevant to members, the broader profession, and publics.

7.5 Summary

The chapter explores associations as complex entities, operating in an increasingly volatile environment. The association is seen to be responsive to and shaped by several institutional forces, particularly the coercive forces that emanate from legislators and the external market as they force the association to take legitimate form and act through legitimate forces. These are seen to create degrees of, rather than absolute conformity. The association is particularly shaped by the normative forces that emanate from its membership and the profession. It is especially susceptible to these forces as the institutional logics of professions and membership are consistently held centrally in the organisation. This creates both an isomorphic effect and differentiation, all associations are alike in that they are different, their culture and orientation are to their membership and profession. One association may feel similar in terms of functions and structures, but culturally, the influence of the membership and profession will create substantive differentiation. Because the membership occupies the primary decision-making mechanisms of an association, both the membership logic and professional logic continually reinforce this centrality. Members’ individually and collectively are able to exert influence on the organisation, although instrumental and representative democratic process are replacing participative democratic processes, which limits the full involvement of the members. Interestingly, in contrast to classical perspectives on associations, the membership is

heterogeneous, and therefore does not regularly, if at all, create a homogeneous collective will. The association in turn is seen as a mechanism for holding this heterogeneity and competing views in balance, synthesising them into a set of collective, complex and nuanced needs. Legitimacy, vital in the membership relationship, is negotiated, and association decision-making processes appear attentive to managing and balancing this. Finally, there is a question about the future of associations. Members' needs are perceived to be changing, often by generation. Technology is allowing clients to access professions in different ways, without mediation from associations. Technology also facilitates professions coming together and sharing knowledge, particularly in communities of practice. The question for associations is how attentive they are to these threats, and whether they respond to them with creativity and agility, or institutional steadfastness. The difficulty for participants to imagine a world without associations suggests a taken-for-grantedness (see Suchman 1995) legitimacy has been a successful strategy for associations. Whether they can survive the disruption that interviewees perceive is a question for current association leaders.

8: Discussion

The thesis aims to explore associations from several different aspects in order to build a richer understanding of these entities. Functionally instrumental descriptions and comparative taxonomic lists of outputs and processes, adequately described in professional literature, only tell part of the nature of professional associations. Most notable is work of PARN, whose significant body of work tends to be largely under-referenced and overlooked in academic literature on associations. Professional associations are seen to be more interesting than simple treatments give the credit for, suggesting they are simple mechanisms of articulating member's collective will misses many roles associations adopt. These bodies have played important roles in how certain occupations are structured, how the profession legitimises itself, and manages its legitimacy with external forces that it is largely contingent upon. They still remain a dominant, and often preferred, mechanism for organising an occupation, a role that the wider literature from the sociology of professions has often touched on.

The study of professional associations does not benefit from a reductionist approach, that the organisational type can be explored in sufficient positivistic detail that its essence can be reduced and distilled into a simple single compelling narrative, an overarching purpose and way of being. Rather than seek a grand theory of associations (Knoke 1986), the thesis embraces an approach to understanding professional associations that acknowledges their complexity as part of their nature, rather than a deficiency in analysis.

This discussion chapter is split into several sections. First is a discussion on the concept of hybrid organisations and its applicability to understanding the inherent complexity of professional associations. Next, the chapter discusses associations in their primary role of organisers of professions and how this role is quite nuanced. Thirdly, the chapter explores the centrality of professional associations in articulating a profession's jurisdictional claims and defences. Here, the professional association's role is considered more attuned to the theories of Andrew Abbott rather than the creation and articulation of professional projects,

although there is space for both theories to co-exist. Next, the association is described in terms of legitimacy, and how it is dependent on the legitimacy of diverse groups, in particular its membership, but also employers, government and public. The association is seen to need to make multiple legitimacy claims, and expound significant energy on building, maintaining and repairing legitimacy. Finally, the association is discussed from the perspective of neo-institutional interpretations of conformity. The strength of institutional isomorphic explanations is tested and apparent variations in conformity are explored.

8.1 Hybridity: an organisation of competing logics and active-audiences

The observation that several naming conventions were used to describe professional associations is indicative of a lack of uniformity in the field and hints that different professional associations have different central logics. Participants referred to these organisations with often interchangeable names, including ‘professional association’, ‘professional body’, ‘membership body’, ‘regulator’, and ‘learned society’, whilst various literature assigns them roles as “a standard setting body”, “a knowledge agent”, “a learning agent” or “the collective will of members”. From the insider perspective, professional associations are often seen as organisations that hold competing, and sometimes conflicting roles and functions that need holding in balance (CIOB 2015, Komesaroff 2019). These explicit and implicit roles can be abstracted, and this approach is favoured by some authors who produce Weberian ideal-typical descriptions of associations (e.g. Burrage, Jarausch and Siegrist 1990). The drawbacks of ideal-type analysis, its attention to describe the extreme of aspects of an association, and its shortcomings at acknowledging the interplay between competing roles, provide too many limitations for a useful study of an association. Institutional logics, “the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality” (Thornton and Ocasio 2008: 804), present an opportunity to explore the ideal-typical abstraction without polarisation. The concept of hybridity, those organisations that “combine distinct institutional logics [...] identities [...] and/or organizational

forms” (Battilana, Besharov and Mitzinneck 2017: 128) is particularly useful for holding the role complexity of professional associations, how they hold and meet the needs of the diverse audiences they serve. Professional associations can be described as organisations that hold multiple institutional logics. In turn the association is populated with staff and members that carry both ideographic or holographic perspectives.

It is useful to consider at least four primary institutional logics: those that address its relationship and roles with its members; those that describe its relationship and role with the broader profession and a wider array of actors; those that describe its role in acting in the public interest; and finally logics that concern it acting as an effective and efficient organisational entity. Logics, the “assumptions and values, usually implicit, about how to interpret organizational reality, what constitutes appropriate behavior” (Thornton 2004: 70) inform the internal actors within the professional association. Interestingly, over the history of the association each logic can be seen to vary its degree of centrality. This provides an interesting opportunity to explore emergence and change in institutional logics (see Suddaby and Greenwood 2005, Ocasio, Thornton and Lounsbury 2017). The logics that orientate the association to its membership and broader profession have maintained centrality since the inception of the organisation, although they have changed and evolved as the organisation, the membership and the profession evolved. Early on the organisational logic moved to a central place as the association faced an uncertain future. As these, sometimes critical, difficulties were resolved this logic moved into a more distant logic, evident that it was largely absent from internal interviews, its historical centrality could only be derived from the documentary data. The public logic evolved over the life of the association, but appears to have moved from a consistent professional ideal to a central organisational logic as the debate about statutory regulation impacted on the association, and the broader sociological environmental context within which its members worked similarly embraced this logic.

The four logics presented in the discussion can be considered metalevel, they comprise and are made up of several other institutional logics. For example the

membership logics are seen to hold a facilitative logic, of embracing heterogeneity; of leadership; and of membership change. The professional logic holds standard-setting, jurisdictional claims, and professional socialisation logics. The public logics, those of public benefit, education, protection and engagement. In reality, there are many logics in an association, some explicit, others implicit.

Rather than analyse associations by audiences (e.g. Evetts 2000: 2 , Tschirhart 2006: 525), the dual concepts of institutional logics and hybridity allow the association to be seen as a dynamic entity that is responding to its multiple audiences, external actors and pressures. The association is responsive to these audiences and pressures, the relationship should be considered bi-directional where the institutional logic is one of being actively open to influence. The association, in its adoption of servant leadership (e.g. Greenleaf 1977, Athitakis 2019) style ensures it is predisposed to being influenced, and this permeates through its each of the institutional logics¹¹. Through this lens the association is significantly more complex than a simple vehicle for articulate the members' collective will.

Hybridity is a concept that is useful to encapsulate several competing logics within an association. The logics themselves, detailed in the previous chapter evolve and change. In interesting indicator of degrees of change are found in the association's own strategic responses to the institutional changes that are imposed on it. For instance the professional logic has undergone significant evolution for the association. In the early days of the organisation the association had a relative degree of freedom to set its standards, these needed to be negotiated largely with its members¹². Its condensed professional knowledge was also largely welcomed by successive governments, and the association was able to significantly influence how the services of its members would be provided, for example the HIV/Aids projects (Counselling 1990a). Yet as the field of mental health became more central

¹¹ It may be argued that this in itself is a meta-institutional logic.

¹² Noting that this in itself was not an easy task and often contested.

in government agendas, the field became more established, yet more divergent, the association's role and logics began to change. The association, still capable of significant influence, for example the provision of counselling in schools in Wales (Welsh Government 2011), is seen to change its role and position. It becomes the legitimiser of external influence, helping re-organise its membership to adapt to a changing, and less malleable environment. The meta-level professional logic remains constantly, but it evolves and changes within the association, generating different work and priorities. If one were to contextualise these changes against Oliver's framework of responses, it evidences the internal professional logic moving from manipulation strategies to compromise strategies, concepts like professional autonomy with broader discussions on professional authority.

Other logics are also seen to expand and emerge in relation to external institutional pressure. The public logic is seen to have transitioned from public benefit through to public protection. Its position as a central logic has moved concomitantly, occupying a more central place. The membership logic, itself a complex series of nuanced interactions has changed substantively for the association. It remains central, but socio-economic changes to how memberships are commodified and changed, and a growing membership that needs to be served present interesting challenges. The membership logic, although remaining central, has changed significantly as the organisation has professionalised. At inception, members inhabited the formal organisation, and it serves a small and connected membership. This has evolved and changed over time, perhaps naturally, and the modern association is seen to hold a different relationship with its membership, whilst still providing similar services, than it did in its transition from SCAC to BAC. The organisation's changing role with members is also routinely influenced by what appears to be a dramatically changing external landscape, the traditional professions in the Anglo-American world are facing new challenges, the decline of collegiality and client loyalty, the endurance of gender and racial inequality, changing regulatory structures, and the threat of automation and artificial intelligence" (Liu and Adams 2018: 341), combined with the impact of post-modern

professions and professional landscapes (e.g. Aldridge 1996, Boon, Flood and Webb 2005). Here the association is seen to retain a central membership logic, but that logic is adaptive and flexible to

Hybridity describes professional associations as a container of competing logics, but these logics are seen to change and evolve as the organisation responds to a dynamic external market. The concepts of pluralism and complexity (Jarzabkowski, Matthiesen and Van de Ven, Ocasio, Thornton and Lounsbury 2017) present the association as a body with multiple roles, working for multiple audiences and outcomes. This was largely reflected in the extended interviews where these four logics were present in all interviews. Various associations described different central logics. Some described a public orientation holding more centrality than the membership orientation. More often than not, as expected, the majority traditionally described associations as having dominant membership and profession logics.

8.2 Associations as formal mechanisms for organising

Classic definitions of associations often allocate them a central role in the organisation of a profession. Abbott's definition of a fully formed profession discusses it being an organised body (1988b), and introduces the concept of 'association' in his review of professionalisation (1991b). In part, these types of descriptions start to answer why an occupation will have a professional association: it is traditionally a component part of an occupation being considered a profession. The question 'why does an occupation have a professional association' elicited a variety of detailed responses, from protecting the public, to educating and supporting members, and on to setting standards. Effectively, regardless of role, the association acts as a formal mechanism of organisation. The difficulty with some accounts, is that the role of the association is not often defined. For instance the problem with Abbott's account is that it does not feature the role

of the association in the list of processes an occupation might create, “occupations often create examinations, licensing, associations, and ethics codes” (1988a: 432). This can be contested, in that it is associations that create these rather than occupations. The research suggests that professional associations are more central to many organising roles, both as a mechanism for organisation, and a mechanism for instigation.

Data indicated from its earliest inception as SCAC, a formal association was deemed necessary to bring organisation to the occupational field. Its creation was seen as a natural process for the new occupation to organise and hold a form of autonomy over its work. Freidson observes generally, “the association is the generic mode of organization for the professions and, for that matter, any occupation that has congealed into a “community” and seeks control over its own work” (2001: 146). The association’s organising role is seen to be dual fold. On one hand it consists of the introspective bi-directional co-creation with its members of standards, guidelines, support and the legitimisation of knowledge. On the other, there is an obvious recognition that the profession and its standards require legitimisation from the external world. In this relationship there is less evidence of imposition, and more of a bi-directional relationship with an external world that in turn influences the profession itself to engender legitimacy claims. Associations like BACP were required to be attentive to both intra and extra-environmental considerations, “[a]s counselling is taken ever more seriously in the outside world, so our failures become more evident” (Hooper 1992: 1).

Early BAC approaches to the organisation of the field were initially informal and tentative, bringing together practitioners and organisations, curating and synthesising knowledge to share within the community, and make representations on the profession’s behalf (see Tyndall 1977). Formal organisation quickly followed, particular with the incorporation of divisions, and the normative influencing of the membership that arose from the introduction of a programme of conferences, publishing newsletters, directories, local networks, and the intention of improving standards across the field. As the association grew and became established, more formal mechanisms of organisation became

commonplace. The organisation was seen to lead on the introduction of frameworks for setting and evaluating standards, the introduction of assessed grades of membership through accreditation (see Lambers 1991, Counselling 1992a, Grant 1992, McMahon 2002), accreditation of courses, more stringent entry standards to membership (CPJ 2004c), the introduction of general membership examinations (BACP 2018d), codes and frameworks for ethical practice, and the legitimisation of knowledge and practice in guidelines. These are described as aspects of a professional logic, the desire to raise standards, interestingly seen as a central early role for the association (Godden 1981, BAC 1986b: 8), was routinely foregrounded in strategies since.

The process of professionalisation of the field appears to have been a long term direct and indirect strategy for the association. The benefits and drawbacks of professionalisation appear to have been contested within elements of the membership, often leading to resistance to approaches to introduce practitioner accreditation or consolidate ethical codes in to one framework. The process also appears to have been disjointed, in some sectors, such as healthcare and university settings, the divisions were seen to lead on the challenge as the profession managed its portfolio of jurisdictional claims.

The primary challenge in effectively organising an occupational field relates to the strength of the mandate to undertake the activity, receiving legitimacy from those who are being organised. Here the association was not always certain on the strength of this legitimacy, and so often created opportunity to create iterative debate within the membership to gauge strength of feeling, often informally through magazine thought-pieces, but on occasions formally, through consultations and votes. The association adopts a leadership role reminiscent of servant leadership (see Greenleaf 1977). The association is seen to use servant leadership techniques like listening, empathy, awareness, persuasion, foresight and stewardship to engage with its membership and retain a leadership position. On occasions the leadership role calls in to question the purpose of the organisation, and who its primary audience should be. Over the years this has produced lively debate, “BAC is an association for counselling and not for

counsellors. This seems to me one of the most fruitful aspects of our association. It reflects the dynamic and organic nature of counselling and I rejoice in our use of a mobile verb rather than a static noun in our title” (Letters 1995a), “after all it is not the British Association for Counsellors, but the British Association for Counselling” (Letters 1999b).

Having established the central role of associations in organising a profession, the research indicates three limiting factors that curtail its ability to undertake this work. First, the associations agency is largely limited by the proportion of the practitioner field that elect to hold membership. BACP would be seen as typical of many associations, it neither holds a government-sanctioned regulative bargain that mandates membership, and the profession has little in the way of occupational closure. The association is only home to a proportion of the membership, and therefore effectively it can only directly influence those practitioners. Secondly, the setting of professional standards appears a contested field (Bevort and Suddaby 2016: 17), and other types of organisation, including employers and governments, are seen to be actively engaged in aspects of setting professional standards. On occasions, like micro-credentialing, this is in partnership with the association, but significantly, it is often done beyond the associations sphere of direct and indirect influence. Naturally, this has the potential to curtail, by degrees, the dominance of the association in this field. Third, the association continues to evolve and develop in relation to a changing professional and external field. The professional field, evidenced by debates such as those concerning post-modern professional lives (Aldridge 1996, Kakiyama and Sørensen 2002, Rognstad, Aasland and Granum 2004, Boon, Flood and Webb 2005, Randall and Kindiak 2008, Jeffrey and Troman 2010). How associations adapt and evolve into this new space is largely still to be decided. Fourth, the digital connectedness of professionals questions the need for a dominant organising hub. Associations are no longer the only mechanism where professionals can connect and share together, and the advent of technology enables communities of practice to come together without the need for formal bureaucratic organisation. There is still evidence that some communities of practice still prefer to form under the

broader umbrella of the association but is challenged on many fronts. This digital landscape makes it more difficult to answer Berman's important question, "how individuals with different and often ill-defined interests can organize themselves into a group coherent enough to undertake a professional project" (2006: 157) in the modern contemporary landscape. Associations are no longer the only answer. Next, the association's ability to be effective for the whole profession is limited by the number of other associations that represent the occupational field. The question of collaboration is raised in the interview data, and there is evidence of other associations from different disciplines, for instance engineering (Uff 2016), contemplating formal and informal alliances. Within BACP's sphere there is also evidence of collective discussion and agency to better represent the field, particularly when the issue is significant and can have occupation-wide impact. The potential of statutory regulation provides a good example; "a Reference Group of all the known counselling and psychotherapy organisations who hold registers (about 40)" (Barden 2008: 10) was brought together in order for the profession to "get in there and have a say" (2008: 10).

8.3 Mechanism for articulating claims

Professions can be seen to exist within, and be contingent upon, a competitive and changing landscape. Here they are seen to stake jurisdictional claims, largely against other occupations in order to enjoy the subsequent rewards (see Abbott 1988b). The research evidences that BACP has been and remains central to the orchestration of a jurisdictional claim, either directly through its own agency, or in a process that co-creates agency with its members.

Evidence of this is relatively plentiful in the data, for instance: the AIDS Unit of the Department of Health (see Davis 1990b); and school counselling in Wales (Therapy Today 2010a) and broader UK-wide implementation (BACP 2015c). Of interest is that the jurisdictional claims made by the association are less often specific, neat and tightly defined activities. Often, they are the outcome of a culmination of a series of opportunities and actions that over time resemble a jurisdictional claim. An example of this can be found in how the profession

established jurisdictional claims by stealth in the NHS (Eatock 2000), and then faced the need to adapt (Davidson 2000), similarly, the professions gradual growing claim to jurisdiction in the workplace (Hooper 1990, Carroll 1997, McLeod and Henderson 2003, BACP 2015b).

The association often collates, documents and presents a profession's normative claims to a jurisdiction, that the work of its members can be seen as a solution to a particular problem. In BACP's case the evidence base for the effectiveness of the profession is, in part documented through academic articles and research, and in part through the associations' own publications. For instance, BACP has routinely commissioned work on the evidence base of the profession, for example the workplace (McLeod 2001) or primary care (Hill *et al.* 2008). The association also produces evidence for certain aspects of professional work to underpin jurisdictional claims in tighter defined occupational spaces, including depression (Brettle 2012b), adjustment disorders (Brettle 2013), post and ante natal depression (Brettle 2012a), eating disorders (Timulak *et al.* 2013) and for certain populations, such as children and young people (McLaughlin *et al.* 2013). On one level, this information is exchanged with its members as it fulfils its knowledge-agent role, but on another it also is created for external audiences, providing the underpinnings for jurisdictional claims. BACP further strengthens its role as an orchestrator of jurisdictional claims for the profession with the production of a series of documents aimed squarely at external audiences, for instance the professions contribution to the health and wellbeing of society (Ardino and Knapp 2011, BACP 2013), making arguments for consideration of parity of esteem between physical and psychological health (BACP 2014b) or its potential economic benefits (McLeod 2001, McLeod and Henderson 2003, Knapp 2013).

One specific point of interest is that the association makes jurisdictional claims for the whole profession, often irrespective of membership allegiances of individual practitioners, for example a recent campaign to safeguard higher education student counselling services, "[w]ith one in four students experiencing mental health difficulties during their studies, specialist counsellors, embedded within universities and colleges and dedicated to providing student support, are needed

more than ever” (BACP 2018e). In these cases the association is acting for the whole profession rather than strengthening its own position in the field. It acts *de facto* for those in the operational field without a direct mandate from them.

This role as a mechanism for articulating jurisdictional claims is interesting on several levels. First, literature on the jurisdictional claims of professions do not always position associations as central to the work. Second, the creation of jurisdictional claims occupies significant attention within associations. Third, jurisdictional claims are seen to be both explicit and targeted, but also a continued indistinct activity of building messaging and research that creates a cumulative effect of a jurisdictional claim. Fourth, the association is often seen to act for the whole profession rather than for its own membership. Finally, a jurisdictional claim can also be made for a specialist subset of the membership rather than the whole profession itself. In BACP’s case its interest groups often lead on articulating these claims on behalf of their own membership. Healthcare provides a good example where the specialist division, Counselling in Medical Settings (CMS) was seen as a driver of this work, within the association’s broader framework, “[t]he Executive of the old CMS had been aware that the old structure was unable to meet some of the members’ most urgent needs. One of these needs was the requirement for CMS to be able to be involved more directly in employment issues. Another was the ability to enter members on a register, in anticipation of any legislation concerning the regulation of counselling. We needed to get our house in order as soon as possible” (Counselling 2000b: 79), and through the introduction of specialist registers (Counselling 2000b).

The data indicates that jurisdictional claims are temporary, and the association holds a vital and central role of monitoring the strength of a claim, the measurement of threat that destabilises these claims, and the mounting of any defences. Challenge emanates from either the normatively superior claims of other professions, or from changes to the structure of the market itself. For BACP healthcare again provides a good example, and the association’s role featured in the majority of group A and B interviews. The profession had been seen to grow on an “ad hoc basis” with the majority of GP practices having an on-site counselling

service (Hill et al. 2008: 6) and its jurisdictional claims insecure. BACP, and other associations, had been instrumental in working to secure the profession and pay scales (Gray 2008: 32). The advent of several government initiatives, including the IAPT programme, provision of psychological therapy in the NHS became a contested jurisdiction. The association struggled to make superior normative claims on behalf of the profession in light of a change to claim criteria, for instance meeting NICE guidelines (Brown 2008, Cooper 2011). The association took on two distinct roles in its bid to continue to represent the profession and its claims. Alongside the external work to promote the profession, the association undertook work to re-organise, to produce more evidence to underpin the claim, to educate members about the changes, and equip them to continue to exist in a changing landscape. On a similar topic the association also appears to hold a central role in responding to de-professionalisation and managerialism agendas. Again the association is seen as a mechanism for monitoring changes in the market-place, and producing guidelines and documents to support the professional authority of its members as they carry out their practice.

It is evident these activities are not concerned with the creation of monopolistic power. In contrast to Halliday query, “how little time a professional body actually spends on the pursuit of monopoly” (MacDonald 1995: 32), the pursuit of monopolistic power evident in literature feels somewhat overstated, and fully realised professional projects are beyond many modern professions (e.g. Edwards, Anderson and Chandler 2005, Muzio, Kirkpatrick and Kipping 2011, Thomas and Thomas 2014). In this context, rather than the pursuit of monopoly, the making of jurisdictional claims and defences more adequately describes professional association activity.

8.4 Conformity and disconformity: organisations shaped by institutional forces

Chapter 3 focused on the suggested neo-institutional explanations for organisational behaviour. In particular the concept of institutional isomorphism was considered to be important because of the apparent high degree of conformity

between associations. The creation of BAC and its first functions appears to have been, at least in part, a mimetic act. The professional association was the dominant form of occupational organisation at the time, an accepted marker of the progress of an occupation's journey towards professionalisation, and there is evidence of existing professional associations as members of SCAC who took a role in the early decisions. Yet BAC was not a direct, template copy of a pre-existing association. From its earliest incarnation it was built to be sensitive to the community of practitioners it served, itself not necessarily incompatible with isomorphic theory.

It is very difficult to evidence through the data sustained direct and deliberate mimetic strategies that shape the form and work of the association. There was a prevailing sense that professional associations were isomorphic in nature, 'just the associations were'. Purposeful mimetic strategies appear to be the least evidenced and weakest explanation for association similarity. However, it remains an interesting concept, as professions themselves are seen to have inherently mimetic qualities. Evetts' observes this, questioning "how a set of practices that characterised medicine and law became a rallying cry for engineers, accountants and school teachers, all of whom were in very different employment situations" (2003: 396). Larson is more succinct, whilst not subscribing to Wilensky's model: professions were "replicating the structural links between formalized and relatively systemic training and the social division of labor is a goal that was adopted by many different status-seeking occupations" (2018: 30). The mimetic tendencies of professions are likely to flow through their associations.

Normative isomorphism offers a more interesting explanation for conformity. There was evidence of two strong forces acting on the association, one to conform and one to be divergent. A professional association, over almost any other kind of organisation, should feel the normative pressure from a group of professionals acting on it, influencing and shaping it. The strongest force described by participants, and one routinely evidenced in the historical data, was a normative pressure on the association to reflect the profession it served. In institutional terms this would be a driver to divergence rather than conformity but seen as an essential strategy for an association to undertake. Participants universally described

associations as 'culturally different' from each other. At a functional level, the commonality of associations, so often the subject of comparative benchmarking studies, is not underpinned by a cultural conformity, quite the opposite. As evidence of the strength, members often described with a sense of pride aspects of the associations work, such as the Ethical Framework, or its accreditation systems as being profession-sensitive, profession-orientated, rather than copies of generic association models. This produces an interesting paradox of institutional isomorphism; it can be seen as layered. At a sector level BACP appears similar to all bodies, it has an ethical code, and a set of criteria and processes for assessing the education and practice standards. However, at a granular level, these have been built purposefully as non-mimetic. The second normative force is seen to act towards isomorphism. Members need the association, and profession, to be seen as legitimate. In this sense there is a low, but perceivable set of weak but constant pressures on the association to behave and look like other associations, to have similar functions and undertake similar activities. This pressure is seen to be replicated from other stakeholders, governments, employers, commissioners, and publics will have pre-conceived, socialised perspectives on what a legitimate association, and a legitimate profession look like, and the association, attentive to these stakeholders and the normative pressures they create, is seen to be responsive to this.

Finally, the research evidences a significant set of strong coercive external forces acting on the association, that the body often feels it has no choice but to acquiesce to. These are seen to emanate from a diverse range of institutions for instance: organisationally, bodies like Companies House, Privy Council, regulators and the Charity Commission create routine coercive forces on associations that push them towards conformity and structural and process isomorphism. The profession also operates in certain sectors, and these influence the association in a range of ways. Using healthcare as an example, there was evidence of the association responding to NICE guidelines, the evidence-based movement, and more recently the patient choice and patient involvement movements, coupled with institutional forces that came from structural forces, such as Agenda for Change and IAPT. These forces

were seen to significantly influence the association — “[i]n this time of change, the profession has to redefine what it is in relation to the external world” (Barden 2008: 13), and its processes of legitimising change for its members.

There is evidence that associations are subjected to all three isomorphic institutional forces. They provide an interesting framework to explore the association’s relationship to a changing and evolving dynamic set of environments. The research suggests that associations are responsive to these environments, and an explanation may be in their nature of being legitimacy-seeking organisation. The concept of institutional isomorphism only fully holds at certain levels of analysis, in that associations themselves are only similar by degree. It is a strong concept when describing comparative analysis of functions and structures. From a cultural perspective, the tendency is for the association’s behaviours to reflect the professions they serve, and this creates the sense of a divergent field of organisations. The behaviour of an association is also influenced by external environment upon which the profession and its association are dependent. It is reasonable to suggest that an association from a long-established, highly regulated, closed, healthcare profession will differ significantly from a newly established, self-regulated, and still developing profession. Institutional accounts of professions, for example “an institutional model specifying the characteristics of the social structures of those actors performing knowledge work” (Scott 2008b: 233) read across in to the functions and roles of their associations and reinforce the concept that associations themselves have strong institutional qualities that replicate across the sector. For professional associations, and this study, it may be more accurate to describe isomorphism from an institutional logic perspective. Here “shared commitments or conformity to institutional logics will lead to isomorphism among organizations [...] that share the same logics” (Ocasio, Thornton and Lounsbury 2017: 524), accepting that the normative pressure from members, and the environments a specific association and operate in, cause this to be more accurately described as a pluralistic isomorphism.

8.5 Legitimacy seeking organisations

Associations are seen to be legitimacy dependent, their ability to influence and be effective contingent on deriving legitimacy from a wide number of other actors. Like institutions (see Scott 2014), a professional association is dependent on forms of social accessibility and credibility. The association seeks legitimacy for itself, its members and for the broader profession, and as such are bound by the same need as other types of organisations to “establish congruence between the social values associated with or implied by their activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system of which they are a part” (Dowling and Pfeffer 1975: 122). Suchman’s (1995) concepts of building, repairing and maintaining legitimacy are particularly insightful when applied to the study of professional associations who appear to routinely undertaking these activities across member, public and professional domains, alongside state and employer actors.

Membership legitimacy is central, and the association is seen to adopt a number of processes, combining pragmatic strategies, where it appeals to the interests of its members, with moral strategies where it intends to be seen as acting in the right way. Within the dataset there is clear evidence of the association seeking to evidence its legitimacy through its procedures, structures, and most often the personal legitimacy of those that lead the organisation. Moral legitimacy in these terms has significant overlap with the normative relationship between members and association described earlier. From time to time, pragmatic legitimisation strategies are also pursued, designed to meet the “self-interested calculations of an organization’s most immediate audiences” (Suchman 1995: 578). Often these are described in the broadest terms, rather than the production of private benefit, seeking support for the organisation’s policy as a response to wider needs of society and clients. The association underpins its legitimacy claims with its membership most effectively when it describes itself in terms of the membership — ‘BACP is its membership’, or ‘BACP is primarily a membership body’ — and when it is seen to co-create and co-produce products, services and agency with its members, including the production of content, events, journals guidelines, and jurisdictional claims. The legitimacy relationship with the membership is of primary importance,

requiring constant attention. The association, through its actions can positively enhance membership legitimacy, or occasionally damage it, whereupon it sets out plans to repair the legitimacy. Its centrality and importance were underscored throughout the research, summarised here by Bea[B] “BACP is a membership organisation, and gets its legitimacy from its members. If the members don't think what you do is worthwhile for them, and valuable, then they will leave and that is the end of BACP”.

Secondly, public legitimacy is seen to be important to both organisation and broader professional field. A public facing profession like counselling or psychotherapy requires significant public legitimacy to strengthen its jurisdictional claims, and to enable members to work. The management of the profession's, and later association's, public legitimacy is seen to be of concern from the inception of the organisation. The existence of a strong information asymmetry explains why the association adopts moral legitimisation strategies, particularly procedural and structural, to create a narrative that the profession is legitimate, and the association's standards are in the clients' best interest. Evident in the dataset are turbulent times, where the legitimacy of profession and association have been strongly challenged and damaged, and the association has set out to repair and rebuild its legitimacy. Beyond this, and more regularly, the public, employers and government must accept the association's standards, credentials and market signals it affords its members. Professional standards must be understood and deemed legitimate if the profession is to benefit, and the association is seen to invest heavily in this area, particularly market signalling.

Professional associations, like professions themselves, are seen to be critically dependent on being considered legitimate. The association focuses its attention on maintaining its legitimacy. Organisational theorists would consider that “an empirical focus on organizational efforts to become legitimate can aid in explaining and analyzing many organization behaviours” (Dowling and Pfeffer 1975: 122), and there is significant benefit to perceiving associations as being fundamentally legitimacy-seeking organisations, coupled with professions needing to be legitimacy-seeking forms of occupation. In turn, this may well

implicitly answer in part Suddaby's question, at least in relation to associations, as to why organisations are attentive to some institutional pressure and not others.

8.6 The complication of uncertainty

A recurring theme in all four interview groups was the sense that associations were experiencing increasing degrees of uncertainty. This uncertainty appears on two levels. First it relates to a challenging environment and market for professions as a whole, the pressures created by de-professionalisation, managerialism, technology and automation, and the market forces that strengthen claims from lower intensity cheaper alternative occupations. Secondly, the association as a dominant form of occupational organisation is also seen to be under challenge. Changing membership behaviour patterns, the growing commodification of membership, professional career expectations, credentialing by employers and other organisations through open badges, and the internet-enabled sharing economy all put pressure on the traditional bureaucratic organisationally formed professional association.

The degree of change, in both profession and association sectors makes it a particularly interesting time to study these organisations. Participants openly reflected on the future of both associations and professions. The nature of professions and professionalism were also seen to be changing, and this too was seen to impact on associations. Hughes and Hughes reflect, "[p]rofessionalism and professional institutions have developed and changed very gradually in recent decades, such that there are conflicting and competing definitions of what it means to be a professional" (2013: 28). These changes create stress points for associations. If we subscribe to the adage that institutions, "reveal much about themselves when in stress or crisis, when they face the unexpected as well as the routine" (Burawoy 1998: 14) it explains why the interview research revealed a more reflective and introspective set of accounts. There was a sense that these challenges were encroaching gradually on the association space, and as such, no one respondent could articulate an effective mitigation strategy. There was a sense, sociologically, that many reference points that institutionalised associations were

dependent upon were changing. For example, a concern that the student to member, to senior member traditional membership model, employed by most associations was fundamentally challenged by a post-professional attitude to work, that younger professional might have several careers and may enter, leave and re-enter the profession on an ad-hoc basis. Equally, professions themselves were under challenge, often having to produce foresight documents to navigate change, or prone to asking introspective existential questions of themselves, for instance, “[p]rofessions in the built environment have enjoyed legitimacy through the 20th century. But the primary question can be posed another way: do the built environment professions still have legitimacy?” (Hughes and Hughes 2013: 29). Hughes and Hughes also note, similar to Chris Blythe’s comment that “professional bodies must answer to three masters: their members; the industry at large; and the public interest” (CIOB 2015: 3), noting, “there are at least three constituencies of interest: the members of a profession, the professional institution and wider civil society” (Hughes and Hughes 2013: 29). These concepts underpin the notion of three of the four primary institutional logics discussed earlier.

Millerson’s account of professional associations did not have to overly contend with concepts of societal change and the uncertainty this causes for professional associations, although the 1960’s and 70’s were periods of significant change for professions. Within this research change and potential change for associations was seen as a central and important narrative to describe contemporary associations. Whilst associations undoubtedly have taken on institutional qualities, these approaches no longer safeguard the body from changes in the external environment.

8.7 Conclusions

A richer and deeper understanding of associations can be gained by looking beyond their functions and outputs, to see them as complex legitimacy-seeking organisations with multiple roles, serving multiple audiences that in turn create competing institutional logics. The thesis ties associations closely to the processes described in the sociology of professions, arguing that their role in organisation

and mounting jurisdictional claims is underplayed, and under-researched, in most general accounts. Reductionist accounts of associations are unhelpful, the association is a complex entity, and several frameworks allow us insight in to a broader understanding of the nature and purpose of professional associations.

Hybridity in organisations is particularly useful tool for analysing the complexity of associations and their different roles, it gives space for the association to hold four primary institutional logics, and allows the researcher to explore these independently, rather than trying to reduce them to a single purpose, and in doing so, lose the detail and nuances that best describe these types of association. Secondly, the association appears to hold central roles in the organisation of a profession, and the mounting of its jurisdictional agency. These are highly nuanced and complex activities, and not always deliberately pursued with a fixed end-goal in sight. The making of these claims appears to be a significant portion of an associations work, and how on one level it responds to the collective needs of its members.

In order to organise a profession, raise standards and work to creating public benefit, association's are required to hold a degree of legitimacy. They seek to create and hold legitimacy from their membership, the broader profession, from the public, state and employer groups. The legitimacy they seek to build in multilevel, for themselves as an organisation, for their members and their practice, and for the broader profession's normative claims and jurisdictions. Legitimacy claims are not often stable, particularly in a fast moving and changing environment, and the association is seen to be attentive to monitoring and managing the strength of its legitimacy.

An association may also be considered from an isomorphic perspective. Using DiMaggio and Powell's framework, coercive, normative and mimetic forces are explored as the act to create degrees of uniformity across professional associations. How change and disruption impact on associations, and whether that creates greater divergence or commonality remains to be observed.

9: Contribution

This thesis aims to contribute to the understanding of professional associations, given that there has been little focused, explicit scholarship on these bodies for a significant period of time. Acknowledgement of the research carried out by some organisations, particularly PARN, who have regularly explored specific aspects of these organisations is made. PARN's work is often overlooked by academic researchers and one driver of this thesis was to combine both academic accounts and research with professional research and accounts. The thesis does not seek to present the grand theory of associations that Knoke (1986) looked for, but rather seeks to describe them in a rich, theory-laden account that recounts their complexity, their multiple roles and nuanced relationships. Contributions are made on several levels: at an empirical level through the applied use of ECM; at a theoretical level that explores associations as a dynamic, hybrid entity that holds four competing and sometimes contradicting institutional logics; at a methodological level through the application of ECM within a critical realist perspective; and finally a methodological contribution that broadens and adds to the field of own-organisation insider research.

BACP is explored as a primary case, and aspects of this research through the use of ECM are considered generalisable. Incidents of difference, where BACP accounts are divergent from extended interview accounts are considered equally interesting. The question of ownership of professional associations was an implicit theme that ran through the research, never satisfactorily resolved. Ownership is a contested issue, charities do not have owners, and the Charity Commission's guidelines on membership charities suggests "[i]n a membership charity, there is an added complexity because decisions are shared between the trustees and the members. In some cases this can mean more scope for disagreement over decisions" (Charity Commission 2012: 10). Implicitly, the greatest claim was that an association is its members, but there are also perspectives that the association is primarily for the profession. Either way, the associations relationship with both is seen as symbiotic, it cannot disconnect its self and decide to do something different. This resonates through descriptions of associations as mission-driven

entities, the association seen as fundamentally tied to the values and drivers of the profession it serves to represent. In practice, this was imperfect, and all associations waxed and waned in relation to how successful they were at maintaining this, a concept that underpinned its legitimacy claims. The ownership question should not interfere with the notion that the association is a hybrid organisation, holding multiple institutional logics, particularly the development of the profession and the public interest. Concepts of 'articulation of collective will', 'occupational closure', or 'improving economic rent' are largely seen as the subtext to the organisation of the broader collective mobilisation of the profession.

The association is also a sizeable organisation and needs to be attentive to its own operations. It can be relatively easy to treat an association as a 'black box'. Pragmatically the professional association has organisational form consisting of formal and informal decision-making and operational processes. The association, in this context, is a container that holds staff, trustees, volunteers and members in formal roles. Members in general interact with the association, as do other entities such as governments, regulators, employers and the public, with varying degrees of influence. The association also serves these broader sets of audiences, although the broader membership is one of these audiences, it also routinely has primacy. Professional associations should be considered dynamic entities that change shape and focus over their lifecycles (Rodenhauser 1999); they change over time. Although they hold and maintain institutional qualities, they are also seen to be responsive, with varying degrees of alacrity to changes in the profession, membership behaviour, technical encroachment, government will and wider socio-economic changes in society. They should not be considered impervious institutions, fixed entities that change little through space and time. Associations can usefully be seen as mission-led, legitimacy-seeking hybrid formal organisations, that are tied to specific professions and the professionals that inhabit these occupations.

Millerson (1964) describes the primary functions of the qualifying association as the organisation of the discipline and the registration of competent professionals, supported by secondary functions: the raising of professional status; controlling

entry to the professions; protection of both the wider public and the profession itself: and to act as in interest group on behalf of members. From a taxonomic functional perspective BACP appears similar to other professional associations, but divergence and difference appear when associations are explored less from 'what they do' question, but from the perspectives of 'why they do' and 'how they do'. Here the concept of associations as mechanism that balance the needs of multiple audiences, as a hybrid organisation, becomes useful. Different, sometimes competing logics are seen to be carried and move in the organisation, occupying varying degrees of centrality. The association is seen as a mechanism to hold these inter-related and co-dependent logics in tension.

Change is a central and defining feature of contemporary associations and professions. Change however, is seen to be presenting challenges to both associations and professions alike.

“some questions may well be more important than ever, especially for occupations that deal with risk and uncertainty by institutional arrangement: what are experts for, what are they expert in, who should the public trust and why, and most emphatically, to whom are experts accountable? These questions are relevant for all expert occupations and it remains to be determined empirically whether the well-established professions have better ways, and better tools for answering them than newer, still little-known specialties”

(Larson 2018: 39)

The thesis contributes on several levels. I have separated these out between theoretical contributions, empirical contributions and methodological contributions, briefly describing each in turn. The chapter concludes with thoughts on the limitations of the thesis, and ideas on where further research might be undertaken to continue the development in the understanding of associations.

9.1 Theoretical contribution: associations as legitimacy-seeking, mission-led, hybrid organisations with four primary logics.

The problem with most descriptions of professional associations is that they largely fall in to one of three categories. Associations are treated as the formal organisation of the collective, and often selfish will of their members, or they are treated as a part of a broader process of the professionalisation of an occupation. Finally, a third group of descriptions describes them by their functions, producing taxonomies of associations, or comparative studies of these functions. There are substantive inherent short-comings in each of these approaches. They do not adequately describe associations, just some of their features. Willke's observation is pertinent here: that "[m]ostly professional associations are simply regarded as aggregations of individuals given the task to further the goals and the standing of their members and the particular profession. This turns out to be a very limited view of the possibilities and capabilities of a collective actor" (2012: 3).

This thesis describes professional associations with a richer account. First, the association is described as a hybrid organisation that holds competing and sometimes conflicting institutional logics, each with degrees of centrality that move over time. Hybridity is a more inclusive and applied way of looking at these organisations, preferable to ideal-type narratives or the drive for a single compelling narrative that explains associations. Four thematic logics are discernible in the research: the member logic; the profession logic; the public logic; and the organisational logic. Each of these has held varying degrees of centrality in the associations' life. In BACP's case the membership and professional logics are seen to naturally maintain their centrality. Other logics, such as the organisational logic has moved away from a position of early centrality to become a facilitator of other logics and purposes.

In reality the association holds a series of roles that form internal logics within the organisation. These roles interact with each other and, as is the nature of logics, can sometimes create role conflict (see Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury 2012). Thematically each primary logic consists of several sub-logics. The research

evidences the membership logic as holding facilitative, heterogenic, leadership, and change logics. The professional logic held standard-setting, claims, and socialisation logics. The public logic consisted of education, protection and engagement logics. The contribution is not to claim that this is the definitive taxonomy of institutional logics that inhabit associations — that would require a different type of study — but to demonstrate that there are a variety of institutional logics that compete for resources and centrality. The introduction of hybridity also allows us to understand how various institutional logics are championed by actors, rising to Suddaby's challenge to bring actors to the front, "institutional work, of course, is conducted by individuals and its somewhat surprising [...] how individuals often disappear from institutional work" (2010: 17), one should not treat organisations as "reified constructs or black boxes" (Suddaby 2010: 17).

The centrality of logics creates divergence in how an association is seen to prioritise its audiences. For example, the centrality of the public logic may well be determined by how public-facing the profession is, or, the degree of public legitimacy the association and profession is perceived to need. Institutional logics and hybridity allow us to see associations as more than bureaucratic black boxes, converting the collective will of a membership to a form of beneficial agency. Each of these logics is carried by both staff and decision-making members, but also ties to an active-audience that works with and influences the association. For the membership and profession, often the association co-creates with its audiences, and there are perspectives in the research that this may be a trend that also moves to the public audience. Staff and decision-makers present the association as both an ideographic and holographic organisation (see Albert and Whetton 1985). From an ideographic perspective, interviews suggest staff, volunteers and the membership often carry particular aspects of the association's identity. Different departments of the association, and different committees are often ideographic, carrying and championing a certain logic and negotiating its centrality. However, the association may also be considered holographic, in that each research participant was able to relate to the concepts of multiple roles, and conflict, and

made attempts to hold these in balance. The association should also be seen as a legitimacy-seeking organisation, dependent on a series of critical legitimacies: from its members; the wider profession and its stakeholders; and varying degrees of public legitimacy. The professional association is seen to continually expend energy on building, maintaining and repairing strategies through a series of nuanced activities.

A professional association has many roles. For an association to be effective in any of these roles, the activity has to be legitimised. Often legitimacy is conferred from multiple audiences, for example professional standards need to be legitimised by members willing to be held by them, employers willing to accept them as markers of quality, and for many public facing professions, the general population to accept these standards as mitigations to information asymmetry. The thesis defines and explores associations as legitimacy-seeking hybrid organisations. This gives space to explore role ambiguity, conflict and complexity without the need to overly simplify associations as simple organisations.

9.2 Empirical contribution: a comment on the strength of isomorphic accounts

An early observation, and initial driver in the research, centred on why associations looked similar to each other and why, especially in comparative accounts of the functions of associations, they were seen to undertake similar work. Institutional isomorphism initially appears to have significant validity explaining the high degree of apparent conformity in the sector. Associations have similar traits, functions, structures, processes, and undertakings. This seems largely to be accepted in both academic and professional accounts of these organisations.

However, the association is also highly contingent on its environment. The environments associations inhabit can be classified as elective — the association make choices — and contingent, driven largely by the environment its profession or it inhabits. Often the association is seen to be able to choose elements of its nature, particularly in terms of organisational form. Some are charities, others

limited companies, some held by Privy Council, some pursue regulation, whilst others not. Similarly governance structures, membership structures, scope, internationalisation and degree of membership control all appear elective choices an association makes. These choices introduce a degree of elective variance that challenges some aspects of arguments for isomorphism. Functions of associations also vary on themes, some are learned societies and hold that logic centrally, others are self-regulators and hold that role centrally. Equally associations and their professions inhabit different and divergent markets, the coercive institutional forces of healthcare will be to some degree different to those in accountancy, engineering or graphic design.

Yet there are also converging institutional forces that act on associations, created by broader sociological conventions, institutions and change. These causal mechanisms include how we perceive the legitimacy of a profession, the legitimacy of our associations, and how we join and use services, changes to the nature of professions, our developing and challenging relationships with authority and institutions, how we consume knowledge, and how we expect to socialise. These causal mechanisms universally act on associations who look across the broader sector to articulate and manage their strategic responses.

BACP as a case in point appears significantly shaped by changes in its and its professions environment, but still held within societal conventions of how professions are organised, create jurisdictional claims, how communities of practice share and legitimise knowledge, and how stakeholders expect their professions to be organised. The centrality of the primary institutional logics also creates a set of divergences in terms of isomorphism. An association may look, through a questionnaire, to have similar functions, but how priorities and resources are allocated in relation to the primary logics will vary in response to their centrality.

Secondly, the normative pressure of a membership pulls the culture of the association towards the profession, away from some hypothetical generic sector association culture. It would be interesting to see how this juxtaposes with North

American associations, where the association sector is more formalised and organised, with credentialing and qualifications potentially creating a degree of conformity in the sector.

Institutional isomorphic accounts, and descriptions of institutional qualities of associations are useful frameworks. They facilitate a more nuanced and richer exploration of associations, and in particular how associations are influenced by their environments. If associations are to be considered legitimacy-seeking, then associations become contingent on their environments, and are seen to need to be adaptive as they navigate through a changing social world. There is a messiness to associations, that makes them interesting units of study. There are considerable variations in their environments, coupled with their hybridity, and the varying degrees of centrality each holds different institutional logics. Institutional isomorphism works at a functional level, describing the outputs of associations as very similar. Institutional isomorphism is also a useful concept when explaining, at a high level, what society, members, employers and members expect a legitimate association to look like, and to do. A degree of this filters down in to how a legitimacy-seeking association will structure itself. However, it important to return to Prandy's (1965) observation, that associations are very similar, yet, due to the professions they each serve and the environments that they are situated in, they may give primacy to some functions over others. Associations vary in what they are over time, and this is contingent on a wide range of factors, which in turn create divergence at many levels, most prominently culturally. Similarity exists only at the high-level and functional level in an association, inside, they will appear quite different.

9.3 Methodological contribution: extended case method

The main methodological contribution of the research is the adaptation and application the relatively underused (Wadham and Warren 2014) ECM. Burawoy's approach has been adapted to study both a specific organisational entity and type of organisation. Rather than strictly adhere to the process set out in Burawoy's paper, interview participants and historical documents, rather than observation,

were used to produce the research data and account of the organisation. Research participants were used for the primary case (groups a and b) and extended elements (c and d). The research was designed around Burawoy's four-stage process: intervention; process; structuration; and reconstruction. I found the ECM approach had strong links to constructs within critical realism's structured ontology, both in its use of retroduction, and the principle that seeks to "extract the general from the unique, to move from the 'micro' to the 'macro,' and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexisting theory" (Burawoy 1998: 5). In line with critical realism's paradigm, I embraced theory-led interviewing in an attempt to bring in to the interviews a space to explore the three levels of reality: the empirical domain of perceptions and experiences; the actual domain of events and actions; and the real, comprising of causal mechanisms and powers that have direct impact on people and society but cannot necessarily be perceived. Theory-led interviewing allowed participants to speculate, accept and reject ideas on the nature of things, of the causal mechanism that impact not only their profession and association, but the broader world of professions and associations. ECM further facilitated and was sensitive to the study of institutions and institutional behaviour, congruence was found in its ability to allow researchers and participants to "reflect on macrosocial forces that influence their behaviour" (Suddaby and Greenwood 2009: 187). This often resulted in a revealing exchange between researcher and participant on questions that had not been asked or thought about previously. Equally, it created a reflexive space for the researcher, and often challenged perceptions of pre-existing knowledge the researcher held. The application, and adaptation of ECM, through a critical realist lens, to study an organisation proved to be both facilitative and enlightening, neither constraining the research nor allowing it overly strong degrees of freedom. ECM was useful in the study of institutions and institutional behaviour. The research process felt contained by both interviewees' perspectives and theories and challenging as participants considered and re-considered their views of associations. The addition of an historic account through document analysis was also important. It was vital for establishing and detailing an organisation in change, and contextualised interview accounts of the organisation,

sometimes confirming them, and at other points acted as an important check against presentism factors.

ECM has significant potential for the study of organisations, institutions, and causal mechanisms that shape and influence organisations. It allowed the research to focus on the larger questions, and not be drawn in to comparative accounts of each association's functions, and actively encouraged space for a critical realist perspective on organisations, capable of generating and holding several perspectives on the nature and purpose of professional associations.

9.4 Methodological contribution: insider own-organisation research

A methodological contribution is made to the body of work that comprises own-organisation insider research. This aspect of the research was challenging, aided by other researchers' accounts of the difficulties they faced and how they overcame or mitigated them. The thesis is potentially useful for other post-graduate researchers interested in embracing own-organisation insider research that, despite obvious cautions, can play a valid role in the research of organisations.

Insiderness and interestedness are seen to be multi-layered rather than being held in a binary polemical distinction, positioning the researcher as either in, or outside the organisation, together with degrees of pre-existing knowledge. I adopted these labels of insiderness and interestedness to situate the research, process and myself, in particular to consider the ethical implications of the research. In reality, both positions moved and fluctuated at different points in the research process and subsequent analysis phase. The interview process presents a pertinent example. The ECM is designed to be "respectful, sensitive and reflexive" ECM (Cock 2010: 297). My position in relation to research participants changed interview to interview. The conversations produced opportunity to explore a significant divergent set of opinions on professional associations, more often than not introducing concepts and explanations that were new to me. The introduction of theory-led interviewing, from an inquisitively critical standpoint, again proved a useful reflexive process that mitigates the researcher's pre-existing knowledge, allowing researcher and interviewee to hold a conversation about the validity of

these concepts. The activity of “I’ll-show-you-my-theory-if-you’ll-show-me-yours” (Pawson 1996: 307) produced perspectives that often created points for reflexivity for participant and interview.

ECM was a useful approach for the insider own-organisation researcher, particularly when adapted to a critical realist perspective. Its inherent flexibility allowed me to address directly Allum’s (1991) four considerations for insider research. First the author must locate themselves within the text, and, centrally ECM provided a framework where this could be sensitively documented and held. The introduction of theory-led interviewing was particularly useful for addressing pre-existing knowledge of the researcher, allowing a sensitive conversation to take place about the theories that explain associations. Secondly there is the notion of objectivity and accuracy, which again relates to pre-understanding. Alongside theory-led interviewing, having access to a second data source, the historical documents of the association, helped in the contextualisation and reliability of the interview process. Objectivity and accuracy were also addressed by embracing aspects of critical realisms paradigms, in particular the retroductive process of looking for absences in the data. It became apparent that the two datasets often contained different interpretations on similar events, and often in places where the interviews were silent, accounts could be found in the documentary dataset. The reverse also being true. Rejecting familiarity and developing a process of personal distancing was more difficult given ECM’s tendency to centrally locate the researcher as part of the process. The use of disruptive techniques, particularly when combined to the theory-led interviewing element, and congruent with ECM, often allowed a ‘third person’s perspective’ in to the interview, a perspective that could be thought through and discussed. The thematic analysis of historical documents represented many other voices and brought them in to the research. These voices, perspectives and challenges were previously unknown to me, accounts of the organisation that I was not familiar with. These processes do not fully mitigate this issue but do address it. Finally, Allum (1991) suggests constructing and deconstructing presumptions of truthfulness that might developed differently by those without insider-knowledge. Insider-knowledge

cannot be put to one side, it develops over the course of the research process. Insider-knowledge should not be seen as a constant. My views on the nature and purpose of associations, my insiderness, changed during every element of the thesis. How I think about associations now, as I write my contribution, is significantly different from where it was at research stage, analysis stage, and first draft.

Two final considerations should also be made. First, during the course of the interviews some participants would reference me or my work. This occurred in both sets of interviews. Initially I found this disconcerting and had to find a way of managing this. Largely this was dealt with by re-introducing the question and asking the participant to reflect on the answer in less specific, more general terms. It was an unexpected event that I could have better planned for, as I do not think it could have been avoided. Secondly, in electing to approach this thesis from a critical realist perspective I opted to use a research paradigm that I had no previous familiarity with. It directly challenged my positivist, and somewhat engrained, pre-disposition. I found this choice both important and enabling. As a researcher I often had to stop and think about my own thoughts, the data, and my analysis from this different perspective, to look for causal mechanisms rather than empirical and countable features, to look for absences in the data rather than patterns of conformity. This adoption of critical realism unexpectedly created a consistent reflexive process, as I tried to relate my understanding of associations to this standpoint, and through this it routinely helped me challenge my pre-assumptions about associations. I found I was open to a wider account of associations, and this in turn became enabling. Insider own-organisation will always be fraught with difficulties, and my approach is imperfect. It can never mitigate all the challenges that need to be considered. However, it documents my attempt to navigate some of the problems and issues, and as such, contributes in an applied way, to the work in this field.

9.5 Limitations and future research directions

Undoubtedly there are limitations. Firstly, the research is situated within the geographical confines of the UK, which creates a natural geographical limitation to the conclusions and generalisability of the findings. Professional associations may be significantly influenced by how both occupations and professions develop and are controlled in different countries, and as such any generalisation of the conclusions of this thesis need to take these significant variables in to account. Internationally, professions and associations have different relationships with the state, existing in environments that vary and therefore impact on the effectiveness of associations (Fung 2003: 518). This study has the potential to be tested and generalised beyond the UK, particularly in Anglo-American cultures. Beyond this, particularly including Europe, profession-state cultures will vary more widely but there is enough in accounts of association's agency (e.g. Mazibuko and Gray 2004, Meintjes and Neimann-Struweg 2009, Chatterley *et al.* 2012, Rada, Măgdoi and Rada 2017) to suggest some form of commonality. The existence of international associations, European and global federations of professional associations, internationally recognised professional association-driven qualifications, strategic alliances between national associations, and international conferences such as the Association of Association Executives World Congress, suggest there will be degrees of similarity between associations to warrant further exploration of the ideas and conclusions of this thesis.

Secondly, there are the limitations in the design of any single case study that the application of ECM does not fully mitigate. The thesis, unlike Millerson's work or the publications of PARN, does not seek to produce empirical regularities that measure professional association activity. Associations are seen to be messy entities, subject to continual changing, yet thematically similar. Looking beyond the veneer of instrumental comparisons of functionality, a comparative research project, at this level of depth, with an association from a different sphere, outside of both health and social sciences, for instance engineering or accountancy, could produce an account that could be compared and juxtaposed with this study. Whilst associations from other sectors were represented in the extended

interviews, a more in-depth study would mitigate some of the limitations of the contribution of this study.

Thirdly, timing is seen to be important in the contribution of this study. The research was conducted at a particular time, and the documentary data provide evidence that associations change, as does the centrality of certain logics. The fortunes of a profession are likely to wax and wane, rather than be held, in perpetuity, by some concept of a successful professional project. How a profession fares is seen to have a profound impact on the work of an association and its symbiotic relationship with its membership. Equally there are potential changes in how members of a profession connect, share, and create identity. Aspects resonate with changes in society, from hierarchy to networks, and a move from paternalism to consumerism (The Work Foundation 2002), and the opportunities of self-organisation that are ushered in through practitioners use of technology. Of primary interest is the question as to whether, over time, professional associations remain the dominant form of organising professions in the future, or whether technological encroachment and new ways of organising will eventually replace this institutionally embedded form of organisation. At the time Millerson conducted his research it seems inconceivable that professional associations would be challenged in this way. As Abbott (2001) and Larson (2013: xxii) infer, professions move with the times, and theories of professions need to take this in to account. The same must be for the study of professional associations.

Finally, there are limitations in epistemological approach. This study has a broad scope and has attempted, within the constraints of a PhD to give a rich and detailed account of professional associations. However, associations are not presented as empirical regularities capable of being described wholly, or through their functions perfectly. The voices of other audiences, public, members, governments, regulators, and employers could be accommodated in a comparative study of the association from a different perspective. It would yield a range of different views that I have attempted to represent in this study.

This work does not claim to be definitive, and I have attempted to outline five areas of research that would continue to focus on professional associations and build our understanding of them. First, future work on professionals can test the validity of this research and findings. Of particular interest would be comparative studies from different countries, particularly where the state-profession relationship significantly varies from the Anglo-American models. Second, this study is based largely in classical definitions of professions, and in part attempts to locate associations in these arguments. The professional landscape is changing, and so are ways of understanding professions. Researching the role of associations within these interpretations, for instance professions as a discourse (Fournier 1999, Strand and Jensen 2012) would yield a potentially valuable different set of perspectives. Third, a comparison between a profession with no professional body, and how it organised itself and articulated its claims, compared to an occupation with a formal organisation, creates the opportunity to explore the distinct contribution associations still make. Fourth, I arrived at the concept of hybridity and individuals carrying institutional logics within associations in the analysis phase. Deeper research on this, and how it impacts decision-making in associations would contribute to both understanding of these organisations, and the wider non-profit governance field. Finally, and linked to this, a comparison of how informal communities of practice compare to organisation of formal professional associations has the potential to yield further understanding about the benefits and drawbacks of formal organisations, and a sense of where the field may go next.

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