We're not like those crazy hippies: the emergence of an occupational group from a social movement

This paper analyzes the emergence of nascent occupational groups whose mandate is based on the demands of an anteceding social movement. There have long been theoretical and practical concerns regarding the professionalization of social movements (Hwang & Powell, 2009; Lounsbury, 1998; Lubove, 1965; Staggenborg, 1988). Most studies, however, have focused on the professionalization of individuals inside social movement organizations, examining the consequences of the increased bureaucratic organization of social movements, pressures of rationalization and financialization, and managerial training of social movement leaders (Hwang & Powell, 2009; Michels, 1911; Staggenborg, 1988). However, this trend of professionalization not only applies to individuals who work directly in social movement organizations, but it is also reflected in new occupational groups who work across various types of organizations to address social and environmental concerns that have previously been the domain of social movements.

In this paper, I examine the processes of occupational emergence from a social movement. One previous case of this type of occupational emergence is the establishment of personnel managers. In the 1960s, the movement for equal opportunity in the workplace, which was successful in part through the passage of the Civil Rights Act, was then carried forth predominantly by a new occupational group of personnel managers (Dobbin, 2009). The mandate that undergirded this nascent occupation was based on the demands of a social movement who called for fundamental changes to how organizations recruited, hired, evaluated, compensated, and dismissed workers. Personnel managers are only one example of an occupational group founded on social movement pressure – others include affirmative action officers (Edelman, Petterson, Chambliss, & Erlanger, 1991), diversity officers (Dobbin, Kalev, & Kelly, 2007; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998), recycling managers (Lounsbury, 1998) and corporate social responsibility managers (Risi & Wickert, 2017).

Although we can identify a common origin amongst these occupational groups, the pathway of their emergence and their relationship to the anteceding social movement remain underexplored. In this paper, I focus on this transition through the case of the occupational emergence of sustainability managers. Sustainability management grew out of increased pressure on organizations to make their practices "sustainable," or in line with concerns of environmental, economic, and social responsibility (Brundtland, 1987; Scoones, 2007). In my investigation, I address the following research questions: *When a new occupational group emerges from social movement pressure, how does the occupational group establish their identity, meanings and practices vis-à-vis the anteceding social movement?*

I use an inductive qualitative mixed methods approach to address this question, utilizing interviews with sustainability managers to capture identity relationships and archival data on the creation of standards to investigate processes of establishing meaning and practices (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013; Ragin & Amoroso, 2010). I focus locally on the processes within my case and use them to build theory of how occupational groups emerge from social movements.

Through my inductive analysis, I find that the sustainability managers engage in two mechanisms, each with three underlying processes, to establish their identity, meanings and practices vis-à-vis the anteceding social movement. The first mechanism is *occupational identity partitioning*. It includes three processes. First, the sustainability managers engage in acknowledging the role of the anteceding social movement in establishing the occupational group. Second, they express that they hold a shared identify with the social movement. Third, although they identify with the social movement they also employ processes of distinguishing themselves from social movement members. The second mechanism I find in the transition between social movement and occupational group is *jurisdictional distancing*, and it also includes three processes. In the process of creating their occupational jurisdiction, the sustainability managers engaged in jurisdictional distancing as they employed processes of 1) avoiding politics; 2) reifying objectivity; and 3) separating the personal from the professional.

My findings highlight how new occupational groups emerge from social movements, and they serve to broaden and challenge some previous assumptions about occupational emergence (Anteby, Chan, & DiBenigno, 2016). Prior work has recognized that occupations emerge from technological change (Barley, 1986, 1996), jurisdictional conflict (Kellogg, 2014), existing roles "hiving off" work (Hughes, 1958), and the establishment of paid work that was previously voluntary (Nelsen & Barley, 1997). However, it is not widely acknowledged that occupations can also emerge from social movements. This paper adds to our understanding of this process, which is worthy of attention. Additionally, while previous studies have primarily focused on how nascent occupations establish identity, asking "who are we?" (Ashcraft, 2012; Nelson & Irwin, 2014; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006), in this study I find that it is just as important for this group to clarify and signal "who aren't we?" as they place partitions between themselves and the anteceding social movement. And finally, while work to date has emphasized that nascent occupations focus primarily on expanding their jurisdiction, working to corral up tasks and responsibilities (Abbott, 1988), I find that in my case the early focus is on defining not only on "what do we do?" but also "what don't we do?" In the process of defining the group's jurisdiction, meanings were changed and practices were shed as the occupational group worked to distance its jurisdiction from the social movement.

Finally, I explore the results of these processes, which shifted the identity and occupational jurisdiction for sustainability managers away from concerns of "social justice" and towards a more apolitical and professionalized sphere. In summary, my findings suggest the types of practices and pursuits that are lost in the reorganization and professionalization of social and environmental concerns from movements to managers.

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