



Race, Identity and Work

Occupational Activism and Racial Desegregation at Work: Activist Careers after the Nonviolent Nashville Civil Rights Movement

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OCCUPATIONAL ACTIVISM AND RACIAL DESEGREGATION AT WORK: ACTIVIST CAREERS AFTER THE NONVIOLENT NASHVILLE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Daniel B. Cornfield, Jonathan S. Coley, Larry W. Isaac and Dennis C. Dickerson

ABSTRACT

As a site of contestation among job seekers, workers, and managers, the bureaucratic workplace both reproduces and erodes occupational race segregation and racial status hierarchies. Much sociological research has examined the reproduction of racial inequality at work; however, little research has examined how desegregationist forces, including civil rights movement values, enter and permeate bureaucratic workplaces into the broader polity. Our purpose in this chapter is to introduce and typologize what we refer to as “occupational activism,” defined as socially transformative individual and collective action that is conducted and realized through an occupational role or occupational community. We empirically induce and present a typology from our study of the half-century-long, post-mobilization occupational careers of over 60 veterans of the nonviolent Nashville civil rights movement of the early 1960s. The fourfold typology of occupational activism is framed in the “new” sociology of work, which emphasizes the role of worker agency and activism in determining worker life chances, and in the “varieties of activism” perspective, which treats the typology as a coherent regime of activist roles in the dialogical diffusion of civil rights movement values into, within, and out of workplaces. We conclude with a research agenda on how

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bureaucratic workplaces nurture and stymie occupational activism as a racially desegregationist force at work and in the broader polity.

Keywords: Activism; occupational race desegregation; civil rights movement; non-violence; Nashville

Workplaces and labor markets are the sites of occupational race segregation, desegregation, and re-segregation (Sharone, 2014; Song, 2013; Tolbert & Castilla, 2017). In their pioneering study of desegregation dynamics in the US labor force after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Stainback and Tomaskovic-Devey (2012) demonstrate that occupational desegregation by race and sex accelerated during periods characterized by high levels of federal regulatory uncertainty and enforcement and by mass mobilization of the civil rights and women's movements. After 1980, as these desegregating forces waned with the onset of neoliberalism, they argue, occupational desegregation decelerated and black women workers became increasingly re-segregated occupationally from other workers. In these polarized times, examining employment desegregation contributes to our understanding of the role of worker agency in desegregating workplaces and illuminates integrative strategies for mobilizing and addressing mounting racial economic inequality (Cornfield, 2014).

Sociological research has tended to highlight segregating forces within workplaces. For example, Kanter's (1977) concepts of "homosocial reproduction" and "tokenism" highlighted the tendencies for bureaucratic workplaces to remain occupationally segregated with glass ceilings that disadvantaged and marginalized minorities and women in their pursuit of the American Dream. Kanter did maintain that managerial interventions could open organizational career ladders and shatter glass ceilings. However, Dobbin and Kalev's (2016) review suggests that managerial interventions have limited impact on reducing racial disparities in employment opportunity and career mobility outcomes. They maintain that most diversity programs rely on outdated and counterproductive bureaucratic control tactics rather than on immersive, voluntary, and participatory best practices that encourage race desegregation in workplaces (also see Cook & Glass, 2015; Williams, Kilanski, & Muller, 2014). What is more, Wingfield's (2013) theory of "partial tokenization" suggests that managerial interventions that are not attuned to intersectional differences by race, class, and gender in numerical-minority tokenization experiences will be limited in their impact on occupational race and sex desegregation.

A smaller body of sociological research has examined employment-desegregating forces in workplaces and labor markets. For example, studies show that, throughout the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, inclusive labor movements have pursued labor solidarity by championing racial equality in bureaucratic workplaces, as well as expansions in civil rights, human rights, and the welfare state in the broader polity (Boswell, Brown, Brueggemann, & Peters, 2006; Brady, 2009; Cornfield & Fletcher, 1998; Dickerson, 1986; Foner, 1974; Marshall, 1965). African American workers, for example, in the pre-Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) era and after the rise of industrial

unionism in the 1930s, led insurgent affiliates of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. Inclusive labor movements, such as the industrial union movement of the CIO and the subset of progressive labor unions associated with the AFL-CIO and Change to Win labor federations, have diversified their leaderships and memberships (Cornfield, 1989, 2006; Dickerson, 1986); collaborated in mobilizations with the civil rights and women's movements (Isaac & Christiansen, 2002; Isaac, McDonald, & Lukasik, 2006; Roscigno & Kimble, 1995); narrowed race, ethnic, and gender gaps in pay (Cornfield & Fletcher, 2001; Rosenfeld, 2014); desegregated employment by race (Ferguson, 2015); and pursued pro-civil rights public policy agendas (Cornfield & McCammon, 2010). Nonetheless, as socially embedded institutions, inclusive labor unions are not impervious to the development of internal segregationist tendencies among their leaders and members even as these unions champion civil rights and desegregation in the broader polity (Boswell et al., 2006; Dickerson, 1986; Foner, 1974; Hill, 1977; Kornblum, 1974; Marshall, 1965). What is more, Ferguson (2015) maintains that the commonly found race-desegregating effect of unionization may not be attributable to the constraints unionization imposes on managerial discretion in employment decision-making. Rather, it may be an artifact of self-selection in union-organizing drives, i.e., that unions target racially segregated workplaces that go on to desegregate after a successful union campaign.

Research in the field of "resistance studies" has shown that much socially transformative worker activism emanates from deep social inequalities in bureaucratic workplaces and labor markets. These include inequalities stemming from the rise of industrial capitalism and employer consolidation and surveillance of factory workforces in bureaucratic internal labor markets during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Courpasson & Vallas, 2016). Factories as social spaces of domination and contestation, Marx (1967, p. 763) argued, ironically mobilized workers who acted on their interests by resisting managerial control on the shopfloor or through unionization (Hodson, 2001).

In the United States, industrial capitalism emerged with a racialized class structure, as W. E. B. Du Bois (1935) and others have argued. In the decade of Reconstruction following the Civil War, "split labor markets" formed among racially segregated working classes (Bonacich, 1972; Boswell, 1986; Roediger, 1991; Roscigno & Kimble, 1995), and segregated systems of education were established, including segregated higher education institutions in the South (Du Bois, 1935). Nashville, Tennessee, the site and genesis of our case study, became one of the several urban centers of black educational institutions. In the United States, Southern civil rights activism of the 1960 era constituted a Du Boisian irony in that the urban centers of segregated educational systems became the generative social spaces for the mass mobilization and diffusion of the non-violent, desegregationist civil rights movement (Morris, 1984, pp. 195–197). "Students," according to Aldon Morris, were "ideal candidates for protest activities" (Morris, 1984, p. 196). Not only were they free from family obligations and had much discretionary time, but also "they were an organized group within

the black community who were relatively independent of white economic control” (Morris, 1984, p. 196).

The “new” sociology of work privileges worker agency in the determination of life chances and links worker agency to socially transformative action and the building of inclusive occupational communities (Cornfield, 2015). Hodson (2001, p. 16) refers to worker agency as “the active and creative performance of assigned roles in ways that give meaning and content to those roles beyond what is institutionally scripted.” The sociology of work that developed after World War II arose in the era of corporate capitalism, manufacturing, and organizational careers in internal labor markets. Worker life chances, including racial disparities in labor market outcomes, were attributed to managerial design and control of career pathways carved out in bureaucratic internal labor markets (Edwards, 1979).

The new sociology of work, in contrast, has arisen since the 1990s in an era of precarious employment in nonstandard work arrangements. Globalization, labor union decline, the increasing externalization of labor supply by large corporations, and demise of internal labor markets have led to the precaritization of employment in contingent work and freelance employment careers (Smith, 2001). Compared to the earlier sociology of work, the new sociology of work attributes the determination of worker life chances much more to individual and collective, purposive action taken by workers themselves - i.e., to worker agency as a driving if default force of career mobility, occupational community building, and social change (Cornfield, 2015). Rather than conceiving of occupational race desegregation as the outcome of employer action, bureaucratization, and historically determined class conflict, the new sociology of work attributes occupational desegregation to worker agency – individual and collective worker action that is directed at desegregating workplaces and labor markets, as well as worker action through occupational careers that encourages the expansion of civil and human rights in society (Cornfield, 2015; Isaac, 2009; Roscigno, 2007).

In line with the new sociology of work, we are interested in how workers as individual agents bring oppositional culture acquired from prior social movements into workplaces and thereby serve as desegregationist forces.¹ In this chapter, we endeavor to fill three gaps in the new sociology of racialized workplaces and labor markets. The first gap is the limited attention given to how desegregationist forces emerge within and out of workplaces. Sociological research has focused more on the reproduction of racial segregation, stratification, and marginalization in workplaces and labor markets than on desegregationist forces and processes in these institutional domains (Roscigno, 2007). The second gap is how workplaces and labor markets become infused with and shaped by external social movements, such as the civil rights movement, that champion occupational race desegregation. Although sociological research has examined the mutual infusion of the civil rights, women’s rights, and labor movements with desegregationist tendencies, we highlight the role of worker agency and activism in infusing workplaces and labor markets with desegregationist ideologies and movement praxes (Cornfield, 2015; Isaac & Christiansen, 2002; Isaac et al., 2006; Isaac, Jonathan, Cornfield, & Dickerson, 2016; Roscigno,

2007). The third gap we seek to fill is the paucity of sociological research on how desegregationist forces emanating from workplaces diffuse and inform the general discourse on desegregation in civil society and the polity. Specifically, little sociological attention has been given to the role of worker agency and activism in consciousness-raising and campaigning for race desegregation and civil rights in the broader polity.

To theorize how workers can serve as desegregationist forces within their workplaces and in the broader polity, we introduce and empirically typologize the concept of “occupational activism,” an underresearched form of socially transformative worker action. We define *occupational activism* as socially transformative, individual, and collective action that is conducted and realized through an occupational role or occupational community. We distinguish further between *peer-centered* occupational activism that constitutes intra-workplace transformative activism and *values-centered* occupational activism emanating as socially transformative action from the workplace into the broader polity.

To demonstrate how occupational activism is one vehicle for diffusing a desegregationist vision and nonviolent movement praxis (Dickerson, 2014) within and out of the workplace into the broader polity, we focus on the half-century-long, post-movement occupational careers of former college student participants in the late 1950s and early 1960s era of the nonviolent civil rights movement in Nashville, Tennessee. After working to desegregate Nashville’s businesses, many of these Nashville civil rights activists went on to become Freedom Riders and, like activists associated with the NAACP and the National Urban League (Dickerson, 1998, 2010), to embark on occupational careers as organizers, clergy, educators, writers, elected officials, judges, entrepreneurs, lawyers, physicians, social workers, and organizational managers. Social movement research on the biographical consequences of movement participation has treated post-movement occupational careers as social destinations. We extend the “biographical consequences” research (for example, McAdam, 1988, 1989) by examining not how former activists assume certain occupational roles, but rather how they *enact* them in socially transformative ways (Cornfield, 2015), beyond what is “institutionally scripted,” as Hodson (2001, p. 16) put it. As college students, they had internalized the desegregationist vision and nonviolent movement praxis in the nonviolence workshops held in Nashville (Dickerson, 2014; Isaac, Cornfield, Dickerson, Lawson, & Coley, 2012; Isaac et al., 2016) and went on to enact them “on-the-job” (Cornfield, 2015) throughout their long, post-Nashville occupational careers (Halberstam, 1998; Isaac et al., 2012, 2016). Their continuing occupational activism, long after the height of civil rights movement mobilization in the early 1960s, contributed to the “dialogical diffusion” of a desegregationist vision and nonviolence praxis in their workplaces and in the broader polity (Isaac et al., 2012, 2016).

After reviewing the sociological literature on racialized workplaces and labor markets, we frame our typology in the sociological literatures on social movement impact and diffusion and varieties of activism (Coley, 2018; Cornfield, 2015; Isaac et al., 2012). The typology is a heuristic device for linking activists’

internalization of movement praxes at the time of initial mass mobilization to their post-mobilization occupational enactment of these praxes in a multi-faceted regime of activist roles. Next, we discuss our data and methodological approach before presenting the fourfold typology of occupational activism with career-biographical profiles of four veterans of the Nashville civil rights movement: organizer Bernard Lafayette, medical educator Gloria Johnson Powell, Congressman John Lewis, and corporate manager James Murph. We conclude the chapter with an agenda of research on the development and impact of occupational activism as a desegregating force in the new sociology of racialized workplaces and labor markets.

REPRODUCING RACIAL INEQUALITY AT WORK

Sociological research on racial inequality and work has focused on the reproduction of racial inequality in workplaces and labor markets. In his 2003 review of sociological research on race at work, Vallas noted that the field was focused predominantly on “allocative” issues, i.e., race disparities in employment outcomes by industry, occupation, labor market segment, and other institutional factors. Race disparities in employment outcomes continue to be an important body of research, as this theme has been extended to institutional studies of job quality (Kalleberg, 2011), gender differences in the race pay gap over time (Mandel & Semyonov, 2016), and race differences in career mobility pathways and in upward and downward career mobility trajectories (Day, 2015; Kronberg, 2014; Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2012; Wilson & Roscigno, 2016). He called for two streams of research on how workers “do race” at work and reproduce racial inequality in workplaces.

The first stream is ethnographic research on the segregating impact of institutional actors – especially corporate human resource (HR) managers and the state. The effectiveness of HR managers was diminished by more powerful, risk-averse finance managers. Their risk aversion to litigation led them to implement diversity programs aimed at legitimizing the corporation rather than at addressing the underlying social relationships among workers of diverse social backgrounds, as per Dobbin and Kalev’s (2016) review of managerial interventions (also see Cook & Glass, 2015; Williams et al., 2014). State action was limited because of the individualistic objectives of anti-discrimination litigation to make the employee plaintiff whole through back pay and job reinstatement, rather than the collective objective of addressing the underlying social relationships among workers of diverse social backgrounds, consistent with research by Roscigno (2007), Byron (2010), and Hirsh and Cha (2017). What is more, state action as a desegregating force is inconsistent with and least effective under neoliberal political regimes (Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2012; Wilson & Roscigno, 2016).

The second research stream is the influence of socio-spatial factors – spatial segregation, racialized status hierarchies, and informal social relations – on racial inequality. Spatial segregation of diverse workers in the same workplace – e.g., minorities in back offices and whites in front offices – marginalized minority

workers by reducing their visibility, public contact, and access to job ladders and career opportunities (see, for example, Kornblum's (1974) study of ethnic-racial spatial segregation in a steel plant, Ho's (2009) study of investment bankers, Wingfield's (2013) study of black male professionals, and Lee's (2000) and Williams and Connell's (2010) studies of spatial segregation and market norms in high-end retail). In his study of Nashville indie musicians, Cornfield (2015) extends spatial analysis by examining how place-based occupational peers desegregate their occupation by building inclusive, place-based peer occupational communities.

Workplaces comprise racialized status hierarchies reinforced by informal social relations that drive a color line through career ladders and segment career pathways by race. The persistent color line, enacted through exclusionary, homophilous informal networks and glass ceilings (Castilla, 2011; Fernandez & Fernandez-Mateo, 2006; Ho, 2009; Seron, Silbey, Cech, & Rubineau, 2016), marginalizes minorities and reproduces racial disparities in career mobility outcomes (however, see Merluzzi and Sterling's (2017) study of how personal referrals facilitate the career mobility of black employees). Much recent sociological research has examined the departure of human resource management decision-making from meritocracy and finds net race effects in hiring (Fernandez & Greenberg, 2013; Gaddis, 2015; Pager & Pedulla, 2015) and performance evaluations (Castilla, 2008, 2011).

In sum, much research in the new sociology of work has examined the impact of institutional actors and workplace social organization on the reproduction of occupational race segregation. We instead highlight occupational activism as a desegregating force that originates in social movements and emanates into, within, and out of workplaces.

OCCUPATIONAL ACTIVISM AS LONG-TERM DIALOGICAL DIFFUSION OF MOVEMENT PRAXIS

We frame occupational activism as both a biographical consequence of social movements and a chief mechanism for the transmission of social movement values and practice, including the desegregationist vision and nonviolent praxis associated with the nonviolent civil rights movement. Research on the biographical consequences of social movements has consistently established that activism is linked not only to (1) greater political involvement in later life in the form of contemporary movements or other political activity (for example, Coley, 2018; Fendrich, 1993; Isaac et al., 2016; Klatch, 1999; McAdam, 1988, 1989) but also to (2) the selection of more socially oriented or service-related occupations, especially teaching and the "helping professions" (for example, Coley, 2018; Klatch, 1999; McAdam, 1988, 1989; see Giugni, 2004 for review). However, most work on the biographical impacts of movement participation does not address how movement participation might shape the *enactment* of one's occupation in alignment with a social movement objective, irrespective of where one might be located in the occupational division of labor.

In our view, movement experience can shape how former participants enact their occupations, such that workers facilitate the *dialogical diffusion of movement values*.² In contrast to much monological research on movement diffusion, the dialogical perspective sees diffusion of movement culture as typically controversial because it pushes against the mainstream cultural grain, and therefore is labor-intensive in its communicative and performative dimensions.³ Interactive dialogue emphasizes intense social learning (and teaching) associated with transformation in consciousness, understanding, agency, and alternative cultural practices. This approach problematizes the smooth flow of information depicted in monological models of diffusion and focuses on dialogical processes, especially in the case of the flow of oppositional culture and associated oppositional praxis.

The core cadre of the Nashville movement experienced deep and lasting personal transformations resulting from their experiences in the Nashville nonviolence workshops run by James M. Lawson, Jr (a form of movement schooling) and by repeated dangerous direct action experiences themselves (Isaac et al., 2012, 2016). The values associated with nonviolence encoded through these early formative experiences were carried forward through dialogical diffusion and practiced (in different ways) through their subsequent occupational activism. We see the potential for long-term movement-induced change taking place as highly committed activists enact movement values in their day-to-day occupational pursuits.

TYOLOGIES OF ACTIVISM

As a mechanism in the dialogical diffusion of movement values, occupational activism constitutes a coherent regime of activist roles. In contrast to the prevailing view of activism as non-differentiated action that varies in terms of volume and intensity, recent research on “varieties of activism” (Coley, 2018) conceives of activism as a multifaceted regime of activist roles that are enacted during and after movement mobilization. For example, in his study of LGBT activism on Christian college and university campuses, Coley (2018) distinguishes between LGBT participants who create safe spaces to facilitate personal change, religious participants who engage in community-wide consciousness-raising to achieve interpersonal changes, and politicized participants who engage in direct action to change policies and social structures. Similarly, in his study of peer occupational community building among Nashville musicians, Cornfield (2015) identifies “enterprising artists,” “artistic social entrepreneurs,” and “artist advocates” who facilitate personal changes, interpersonal changes, and broader-scale structural changes, respectively. Finally, in his studies of “aesthetic activism” in general and “literary activism” in particular, Isaac (2009, 2012) demonstrates the role that aesthetically creative agents can play in insurgent movements.

Research on varieties of activism has emphasized the differentiation of activist roles at the time of mobilization itself. We offer our typology of occupational activism as a regime of activist roles in the long-term dialogical diffusion of movement values — in our case, long after the civil rights movement heyday.

Two ideal types of occupational activism can be distinguished by the relationship between the activist and beneficiary of the activism. First, we refer to *peer-centered* occupational activism as an instance of occupational self-determination in which peer activists of an occupational community or multi-occupational workforce act collectively to advance the interests of their occupational community(ies). Examples of peer-centered occupational activism include craft and industrial labor unions, such as farm workers (Ganz, 2010), factory workers (Cornfield, 1989), hospital workers (Sacks, 1988), and typographical workers (Lipset, Trow, & Coleman, 1956), as well as professional associations of doctors and lawyers (Freidson, 2001).

Second, *values-centered* occupational activism is political action in which the activist deploys her or his occupational expertise on behalf of a group of beneficiaries broader than the activist's occupational community. Examples of values-centered occupational activism include activist litigators (McCammon & McGrath, 2015), clergy and social workers engaged in civil rights activism (Dickerson, 1998, 2010), epistemic communities of scientists engaged in environmental regulatory politics (Haas, 2016), labor novelists (Coley, 2015; Isaac, 2009, 2012), and political folk musicians (Roy, 2010).

DATA AND METHODS

To illustrate our typology of occupational activism, we draw on oral history interviews conducted as part of a larger study of the Nashville civil rights movement by Cornfield, Dickerson, and Isaac. Specifically, between 2007 and 2012, the senior coauthors interviewed 36 people who participated in the early Nashville civil rights movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s as members of the core cadre, grassroots participants ("foot soldiers"), or active supporters. We recruited participants by contacting people discussed in past studies on the Nashville civil rights movement (e.g., Halberstam, 1998), requesting referrals from initial respondents (especially James M. Lawson, Jr, a central leader and tactician in the Nashville movement), and circulating calls for additional participants at Sunday services of African American churches in Nashville. To build a larger dataset, we supplemented the original interviews with career-biographical interviews of 15 former Nashville activists conducted by the Nashville Public Library and 12 activists from secondary sources who were deceased or otherwise unavailable for interviews, making a total sample of 63 former Nashville activists (Isaac et al., 2016), although we focus on our own oral history interviews in this chapter.

Our interviews covered a variety of topics pertinent to participation in the Nashville civil rights movement, such as respondents' pathways into the Nashville movement, experiences in the nonviolence workshops, and modes of participation in the Nashville movement. Importantly, we also asked a series of questions about respondents' post-Nashville activities, including details on their post-Nashville careers and how their participation in the Nashville movement might have affected those careers. The interviews ranged from one to eight hours in length and were all audio-video-taped and transcribed by professionals.

For this study, we provide detailed profiles and analyses of four movement veterans: Bernard Lafayette, Gloria Johnson Powell, John Lewis, and James Murph. Why these four? To select cases for this study, we first inductively coded our interviews using ATLAS.ti, focusing on the type of occupational activism that characterized respondents' post-movement careers. Next, we excluded from our consideration those respondents who served in "support" roles in the movement (providing legal support, spiritual guidance, and governmental assistance), because nearly all of these respondents were adults who had already entered into their chosen careers by the time of the Nashville movement and whose occupational activism was thus not a post-movement consequence of the Nashville movement. Finally, we considered the remaining respondents in each category of occupational activism who had provided us with the most detailed information about their post-movement occupational activism.

We present our typology of occupational activism in the next section. Then, for each of our four cases, we provide detailed information on the respondent's (1) pathway to activism, (2) internalization of nonviolent praxis, and (3) subsequent occupational activism. We provide information on each respondent's initial pathway to activism to assess potential pre-movement influences on choice of occupation and occupational activism, and thus to better understand the degree to which each respondent's participation in the Nashville civil rights movement itself shaped her or his subsequent occupational activism.

A TYPOLOGY OF OCCUPATIONAL ACTIVISM

Our typology consists of four types of activist roles that differ qualitatively in terms of the activist's occupational mandate and that range between peer- and values-centered activism. The typology is historically grounded in a movement that had been mobilized primarily by black college students, clergy, educators, and other professionals. We induce the typology from the former participants' subsequent life-long occupational careers. In the context of occupational race and sex segregation of the mid-1960s (Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2012, pp. 84–117), their occupational pursuits would have been limited to occupations that were open to blacks and women, those positions that history has made available. Therefore, we do not claim that this typology exhausts all types of occupational activism.

Our typology of occupational activism is summarized in Table 1. The *organizer* is an advocate of human rights and grassroots democracy who facilitates others' local self-determination. As a human rights advocate whose workplace is the human community, the organizer engages in what we refer to as *humanistic activism*.

Expressive occupations are artistic, clerical, literary, and academic occupations that "constitute a creative and critical force that encourages societal self-reflection and inspires humanistic social transformation" (Cornfield, 2015, p. ix). They engage others in social criticism. As Coser (1965, p. 207) put it in his description of intellectuals as critics, "the intellectual as active critic of government and society, as agitator for a set of ideas, is not intent on power but aims

Table 1. Typology of Occupational Activism.

Type of Occupation	Occupational Activism
<i>Organizer</i>	<i>humanistic activism</i> ; advance others' human rights; mainly values-centered activism
<i>Expressive Occupations</i> (e.g., literary, artistic, academic, clerical occupations)	<i>expressive activism</i> ; engage others in social criticism; blend of values- and peer-centered activism
<i>Governance Occupations</i> (i.e., elected officials in executive and legislative branches, and judges, in federal, state, and local government)	<i>policy-making activism</i> ; create and enforce public policies; blend of values- and peer-centered activism
<i>Organizational Managers</i> (i.e., managers and owners of for-profit, non-profit, and public-sector agencies, businesses, and social enterprises, and self-employed professionals)	<i>exemplary activism</i> ; engage coworkers, clients, and customers ethically and humanely; mainly peer-centered activism

first at focusing the public mind upon a central issue and then at bringing to bear the force of public opinion upon the makers of policy." In engaging in social criticism, incumbents of expressive occupations enact what we call persuasive, consciousness-raising *expressive activism*. The workplaces of expressive activism include educational, religious, and civic institutions.

Governance occupations are constitutionally authorized to create, implement, and enforce public policies. These occupations are officials in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches in federal, state, and local governments. Incumbents of these occupations produce and enforce public policies, for example, by issuing executive orders, and proposing, budgeting for, and enacting legislation. Judges make and enforce policy through "judicial review," i.e., preventing "the government from acting unconstitutionally," and through "judicial activism," i.e., when "the judiciary strikes down an action of the popular branches, whether state or federal, legislative or executive" (Sherry, 2016, pp. 12, 14). In making and enforcing public policies, incumbents of governance occupations can enact what we term *policy-making activism* (Weber, 1948).

Finally, *organizational managers* are managers and owners of for-profit businesses, non-profit organizations, public-sector agencies, and social enterprises, and self-employed professionals. As social activists, they infuse their work organizations with movement messages by leading exemplary work lives in relation to their coworkers, clients, and customers (Miller, Grimes, McMullen, & Vogus, 2012). In leading exemplary work lives, they enact what we term *exemplary activism*.

CASES OF OCCUPATIONAL ACTIVISM

The activism of Bernard Lafayette, Gloria Johnson Powell, John Lewis, and James Murph illustrates humanistic, expressive, policy-making, and exemplary activism, respectively. Lafayette's humanistic activism approximates values-centered activism with its emphasis on advancing human rights beyond his

immediate occupational community. In contrast, Murph's exemplary activism approximates peer-centered activism in his desegregating his corporate workplace by becoming the first black manager in his workplace. Powell's expressive activism and Lewis' policy-making activism combine values-centered and peer-center activism. Embarking on careers in predominantly white workplaces, each activist not only helped to desegregate their workplaces but also promulgated movement values beyond the movement heyday and beyond their immediate occupational communities.

HUMANISTIC ACTIVISM: BERNARD LAFAYETTE

After being invited by John Lewis to attend the workshops on nonviolence run by James Lawson, Bernard Lafayette became a member of the "core cadre" of the Nashville civil rights movement. Lafayette went on to live a life engaged deeply in the movement and related humanistic activism in an impressive array of different contexts.⁴

Pathway to Activism

Unlike many of his movement comrades, Lafayette's path to the movement and activism began before he arrived in Nashville. His desire to "change things" was first ignited by an incident involving his grandmother in Tampa when he was only seven years old. He recounts the event:

My grandmother and I were traveling by what we called the streetcar in those days. Tampa, Florida, had a streetcar that ran through Ybor City, and we had an experience where the conductor would receive us in the front of the streetcar, collect our money, coins, and then we'd have to dismount and go to the side door in the back of the car.

On this particular occasion, the streetcar driver either did not know they were attempting to climb into the back door or pulled away on purpose. Lafayette continues the story:

...they had folding steps on the outside of the car, and these steps would fold once the door closed and there was no way to board. So we used to run. So I was with my grandmother, ... She was running also, but she was sort of what they called heavyset, kind of a solid woman, she had high-heeled shoes. The heel of her shoes got caught in the cracks of the cobblestone around the tracks and she fell. And there the train was pulling off, the streetcar, and I was trying to reach to grab the door and also reach for her at the same time. And I felt torn apart as if I'd been cut in half with a sword reaching for her, because I couldn't really help her get to her feet anyway. ... And I felt helpless. There was my grandmother on her knees, skinned up and everything, she had on a nice little dress ... and she finally wobbled until she was able to get up. ... And I remember that experience and I said to myself when I get grown I'm going to do something about that problem.

At the age of 12, Bernard took a step toward "doing something about that problem" when he joined the NAACP – Youth Council in Tampa, his first step along his life's pathway to activism. Through school, church, and youthful work experiences, Bernard acquired knowledge and skills – organizing, leadership,

recruiting, writing – that would serve him well later in the heat of the movement.

A few years later, Lafayette moved to Nashville to attend American Baptist Theological Seminary (ABTS), where his major faculty mentors were Reverend Kelly Miller Smith and Reverend Grimmert. Smith was also the pastor of the First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill in downtown Nashville, and Grimmert was the state president of the NAACP. He ended up rooming with John Lewis, a student a year ahead of him at ABTS. Lafayette, Lewis, and James Bevel became close friends. The next major step toward a lifetime of activism was when Lewis invited him to attend the workshops offered by Lawson,⁵ commenting that “this is the kind of thing you would really be interested in.”

Internalization of a Praxis

At the time he entered into the workshops, Lafayette recalled that “this whole idea of nonviolence is not something I’d heard of before except having read snatches of Martin Luther King’s book, *Stride Toward Freedom*.” Indeed, he was initially resistant to the idea of nonviolence:

So I always had that propensity to see if I could change things, and it always pulled something out of me. But I got to those workshops in Nashville, the whole business of turning the other cheek and that kind of thing, I thought about it, but it wasn’t my style, turning the other cheek. But that wasn’t the issue for me. The more important issue for me was how would I feel after someone had maybe slapped me or spat on me. My biggest struggle was internal. The outside physical pain, I had endurance for that, and a great deal of tolerance for pain.

Still, the nonviolent workshops gave Bernard an opportunity to “try out” nonviolence:

So I had a chance to test it out in Nashville. I was able to resolve that issue. And I felt that that was the most powerful thing that happened. Not so much the desegregation of the lunch counters, but being able to respond to issues and problems, that you didn’t have to be violent towards people, nor did you have to cow tail and accept the humiliation. There was an alternative to humiliation as well as physical reaction.

Lafayette stated that the influence of Lawson and Smith “was a life changing experience for us” (referring directly to himself, Lewis, and Bevel). Furthermore, each movement experience gave Lafayette more material for personal transformation; through the praxis of externalization of nonviolent performance, he more and more deeply internalized the praxis. For example, Bernard described a sit-in he was part of at a bus station in Nashville in the fall of 1960. Several cab drivers isolated him and proceeded to beat him, knocked him down several times and kicked him repeatedly. He described how his assailants became baffled by not getting the response from him that they expected. At some point, Lafayette simply said to the men, “if you gentlemen are through, I’d like to finish my phone call.” He described the emotional metamorphosis that followed:

An interesting thing happened. I remember the feelings, there was kind of a warm feeling that came over me ... really together, it’s a warm, glowing feeling just below the surface of your skin, and it feels like a wholeness, a coming together of your body, mind, and spirit ... I felt

so secure, ... full of confidence, I felt very much in control, and I was not rigid at all, or tense. I felt very relaxed and ... so free to actually have compassion, forgiveness, and love towards these people who were beating me up.

He elaborated on the personal side of movement as change:

[I]t was personalized for me in terms of what I was going through, it was not just a demonstration, a breaking down the walls of segregation, I had a lot of walls on the inside that I was breaking down as well, ... I knew something dramatic and ... life-changing was happening, ... I'm not like that anymore. I was marveling at my own transformation.

Finally, watching how others — particularly women — accepted the pain, the burden, of the movement encounters was also transformative:

They were not like part of any women's liberation movement, but we as men had to come to respect the fact that women were willing to bear their burden in the movement. So I think it was transforming to all of us. I had to grapple with that whole issue. One of the most difficult things sitting in was to see someone come up, strike a match, put it to a girl's hair.

The Lawson workshops served as the initial movement school (Isaac et al., 2012, 2016), the place where they received their initial tutelage in nonviolent praxis. These workshops, combined with direct experience in nonviolent direct action, fundamentally “educated our emotions,” Lafayette put it.

Humanistic Activism

Bernard Lafayette's humanistic activism was forged during his deep involvement in the Lawson workshops and throughout the civil rights struggles during the heyday of the late 1950s and 1960s. Specifically, in the late 1950s, he became part of the Nashville movement core cadre (Isaac et al., 2012, 2016) centered on Lawson's workshops and participated in numerous nonviolent direct actions in 1960, including sit-ins, jail-ins, stand-ins, and marches. But the movement and the transformation of the world never ended for Lafayette; the version of nonviolent activism that shaped him during the civil rights movement continued to animate his entire life. It was the center of his being, of his life activity.

Lafayette embarked on his career as an organizer during the movement heyday, when he worked to diffuse the desegregationist vision and nonviolent praxis across the United States. He was one of founding members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). He was part of the Nashville group that went to Alabama to rescue and continue the Freedom Rides that had been violently halted, and the continuation of that long Freedom Ride into Jackson, Mississippi, landed him and his fellow Riders in Parchman Prison. He was involved, usually in leadership roles, in numerous campaigns across the South, including the Selma and state of Alabama Voter Registration Campaign, 1963–1964; the Birmingham Campaign (1963) where he trained young people in nonviolence, among other things; the Chicago Campaign (1964); and the Selma to Montgomery marches (1965), which led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act that year. He worked in the Chicago Open Housing Movement (1966). He served in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

with Dr King and was with him in Memphis the day he was assassinated, and held a leadership position in King's Poor Peoples' Campaign (1967-1968).

On the morning of April 4, 1968, in Memphis, in their last conversation Dr King said: "Bernard, the next and most important campaign we need to focus on is institutionalizing and internationalizing nonviolence." Lafayette said: "I made this my life's mission, and for most of the past half century I have strived to live out his words. No matter what I have done or what job I have had, nonviolence has always been my vocation and the way I travel every road of my life's journey" (Lafayette & Johnson, 2012, p. 148).

That "road" took Lafayette into a lifetime of organizing for nonviolent social change. In each of his numerous professional positions – he has served as Director of the Peace Education Program at Gustavus Adolphus College, Director of Peace and Justice in Latin America, Chair of the Consortium on Peace Research, Education and Development, Director of PUSH Excel Institute, and Distinguished Scholar-in-Residence at Candler School of Theology at Emory University – Lafayette has essentially "re-created Lawson's workshops," working to train young people in the desegregationist vision and nonviolent praxis associated with the civil rights movement (White, 2013). For example, at the time of our interview, he was directing the University of Rhode Island's Center for Nonviolence and Peace Studies, which he had founded, and was organizing workshops at a local prison to train prisoners in nonviolence. He has also traveled to countries such as Nigeria, working to spread the values of the civil rights movement internationally (White, 2013).

Bernard Lafayette explained the meaning of and motivation for his life's work in the following words: "The reason I went and prepared myself for this work is because I wanted to make sure that those who attempted to assassinate Martin Luther King's Dream – missed" (Messman, 2012).

EXPRESSIVE ACTIVISM: DR GLORIA JOHNSON POWELL

Gloria Johnson Powell was active in the Nashville civil rights movement, participating in multiple sit-ins and marches while she completed her MD at Meharry Medical College in the late 1950s through the early 1960s. Following her time in the movement, Powell served as a faculty member at UCLA's medical school and later became the first tenured black woman professor at Harvard Medical School. She also wrote a book on the effects of school desegregation on school children, *Black Monday's Children*. Through such work, Powell engaged in expressive activism throughout her career until her death in 2017.⁶

Pathway to Activism

Growing up in Boston, Powell planned a possible career in medicine long before her participation in the Nashville civil rights movement. Powell explained that her father spent a significant amount of time in a hospital due to mental illness.

Because doctors were not able to treat her father, she said, “by the time I was in the sixth grade I knew that I was going to be a psychiatrist.”

At the same time that she was forming an interest in medicine, Powell began developing a political consciousness by participating in organizations promoting civil rights in Boston. Powell attended weekend meetings of the youth NAACP and the Baptist Youth (which held regular meetings to discuss issues facing the black community). She also joined “Freedom House,” a local community organization in Boston that organized debates around social and political issues. She gradually became outraged over McCarthyism and US wars against communism, and she said that by the eighth grade she “decided never ever to salute the flag, that my alliance belonged to the whole world.”

Powell became so interested in philosophical issues that her mother became worried about her social development, as she explained:

Now my mother would always shake her head at me that I would come from the library, maybe I was tenth grade, ninth grade, not with these novels but these philosophical kinds of things, you know. But she let me go. Gloria’s different, that’s alright. I didn’t date, I didn’t like going to parties . . . At about 15 my mother made my two older sisters take me to some of the parties.

Her blended interests in psychiatry and social justice led her to specialize not only in pre-med but also in sociology at Mount Holyoke, where she attended college. Furthermore, when it was time to select a graduate school, she strategically decided to attend Meharry Medical College, a black medical school in Nashville, so that she could both pursue her medical career and contribute to the emerging civil rights struggle in Nashville.

Internalization of a Praxis

Powell’s time in Nashville would prove to be quite formative. Soon after she arrived, Powell was invited by her then-boyfriend Rodney to attend James Lawson’s nonviolence workshops. The idea of nonviolence was not new to Powell – she had learned about it at the Freedom House in Boston. Still, she had not yet had the opportunity to put nonviolent theory into practice, and the sit-ins and stand-ins in which she participated in Nashville gave her the opportunity to do so:

You know, you think about your life and what do you want it to be. And all those philosophical [discussions] that you had in college. And you realize this is the time. All those things that you believe in, this is the time that you fight for it... This is it...It’s here.

The nonviolence she was putting into practice did not come naturally to Powell or to her boyfriend Rodney. For example, she and Rodney purposely decided to split up when they were attending different actions – if she were attending a stand-in at one theater, he would attend another – because if someone were to come over and attack her, Rodney thought it might be difficult for him to stay nonviolent. Still, throughout her participation in these demonstrations, she reported that nonviolence became more and more ingrained in her.

Over time, Powell's commitment to nonviolent resistance developed to such a degree that she considered abandoning her medical education to join the Freedom Rides. It was at this potential turning point in her life, through a conversation with Dr Martin Luther King, Jr, that the Nashville civil rights movement made a significant impact on her subsequent life trajectory:

Well at one time when Dr King was there . . . with us, and things were getting really very difficult, the [Freedom Rides] buses and what have you, and so I said to him they need more people to get in the buses, I think a lot of kids had been in jail and what have you, and I said that I was going to leave medicine, medical school.

However, King emphatically discouraged Powell from participating in the Freedom Rides:

...He said you will stay in school because one of these days we're going to need you. And he knew that I wanted to be a child psychiatrist . . . He was very interested in that, and then when he told me that I must stay in school he was very forceful, you must stay in school.

Expressive Activism

By telling her that she must continue with her medical education and pursue a career as a psychiatrist, King reaffirmed rather than changing or transforming her initial career trajectory. However, by reframing this medical career as an extension or component of the civil rights movement — telling her, “one of these days we're going to need you” — King gave her a way to bring her medical career and her passion for civil rights in harmony.

Indeed, throughout her subsequent career, Powell said that she had found ways to fuse the values of the civil rights movement with her medical career. One way was by choosing to practice her trade in places where she could make a major difference in people's lives. For example, shortly after graduate school, she traveled to Africa to help treat children in Ethiopia and Tanganyika, and she saw her work there as an extension of her work in the civil rights movement:

When I left Meharry we went to Africa, first Ethiopia, and then the next year or two Tanganyika. Then we came back and I did my internship in Minneapolis.... When I'd been in Ethiopia I'd been doing work at the Children's Hospital and then at a woman's college that had two physicians who were from the South Pacific. They had been well-trained and the women would lie in their villages and then at the labor nobody would pay attention to them and so they would end up with a dead baby . . . And so these two doctors said you're from the United States and you finished medical school, you can help us. So they had me doing these complex operations, I learned a great deal... Dr King had said you must stay in medical school because one of these days we're going to need you. And to see some international, having been trained in medical school, I had not done my internship yet, but they felt you went to an American medical school, you can do anything. And so I was doing a lot of surgery with them, but then I was doing surgeries without them because there was so much to be done.

When she returned to the United States and finished her residency, she then took on a series of faculty jobs at UCLA, Harvard Medical School, and the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, where she quickly became a change agent both in her academic field and at her schools. One of her earliest books, *Black Monday's Children*, published in 1973 while she

was at UCLA, focused on the impacts of school desegregation on children in the south, and she selected Nashville as one of her primary cases:

that's when I did my research on school and went to three cities in the South, and then those outside of the South . . . Students in desegregated schools and segregated schools. We started off doing it in three Southern, New Orleans, Nashville, and . . . Greensboro. And then we tried to do it in the Northern, it was harder. . . They didn't have any black schools, that was supposed to be black schools, they didn't have a lot of black teachers . . . What they did not have in the black schools in Los Angeles were the superb black schoolteachers in the black schools in the South. And that's why those kids were doing well. . . It's very different going to a black public school in New York or Boston or what have you, they're in the ghetto areas, they don't get teachers who stay, it's in and out. Whereas the black schools in the South, the teachers were really invested in them.

Powell has not only written books about desegregation but also helped to desegregate her own workplaces and promote racial justice at her institutions. At Harvard, she was told that she was the first black woman to receive tenure at the medical school. Furthermore, at the University of Wisconsin, she assumed a position as an associate dean for faculty development (where she helped recruit faculty of color), served as director of the Center for the Study of Cultural Diversity, and helped launch the Center for the Study of Cultural Diversity in Healthcare (The University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004). Powell's work with those Centers is credited with inspiring legislation — “the first civil-rights legislation for the twenty-first century” — to create a similar new minority health center at the National Institutes of Health (Mount Holyoke College, 2016).

POLICY-MAKING ACTIVISM: CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS

When he was a student at American Baptist College and then Fisk University, John Lewis served in the core cadre of the Nashville civil rights movement. He not only organized and participated in multiple nonviolence workshops, sit-ins, stand-ins, marches, and jail-ins in Nashville, but also participated in the Freedom Rides during the late 1950s through the early 1960s. After leaving Nashville, John Lewis served as the chair of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), helped organize the 1963 March on Washington, coordinated the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer project, and led the 1965 “Bloody Sunday” march in Selma, Alabama. In 1986, Lewis won an election to the US House of Representatives, where he has served for 15 terms, serving as a desegregationist force both within his own workplace as an active member of the Congressional Black Caucus and throughout the broader polity by working to diffuse the values of the civil rights movement.⁷

Pathway to Activism

Growing up in rural Troy, Alabama, Lewis did not immediately set out on a path of social movement activism and congressional service. Rather, he aspired to be a preacher, having performed “practice sermons” from a very young age

to his family's farm animals (Lewis, 1998, ch. 2) and having delivered his first public sermon at the age of 16 (Lewis, 1998, pp. 50–51).

At the same time, Lewis was bothered by the racism, segregation, and discrimination that pervaded everyday life. For example, he recalls that a monument to John Wilkes Booth, the man who killed Abraham Lincoln, stood in his own front yard (Lewis, 1998, p. 35), and that Confederate flags and monuments were ubiquitous in Troy. Describing his early memories of segregation, he wrote in his memoir:

I have a lot of memories about Troy that remain painfully strong. Like the washrooms at the bus station, the nice clean one marked "WHITE," and the dirty-run down one marked "COLORED." And the drinking fountains at the five-and-dime store, one a modern, chrome-spouted water cooler, the other nothing more than a rusty spigot – and I don't need to say which was which. (Lewis, 1998, p. 36)

Furthermore, in our interview, he recalled an early experience with discrimination at his local library:

In 1956 at the age of 16 with some of my brothers and sisters and first cousins we went down to the public library in the little town of Troy trying to get library cards, trying to check out some books. And we were told by the librarian that the library was for whites only and not for coloreds.

With these encounters with racism seared in his memory, radio sermons by one of his favorite preachers, Martin Luther King, Jr, who organized the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955, led him to wonder if he might work for justice not only "over yonder" in the "next life," but also "down here in this life":

I was so deeply inspired by listening to Dr King... I heard Dr King on the radio preaching a sermon once that he was not just concerned about over yonder and the next life, but he was also concerned about down here in this life. He was not concerned at all about the pearly gates and the streets with milk and honey, but he was concerned about the streets of Montgomery. That was real for me, that was real for me.

After he moved to Nashville to attend American Baptist College to pursue a career in ministry, he heard about nonviolent workshops being held at a nearby church, and the stage for his eventual participation in the Nashville civil rights movement was set.

Internalization of a Praxis

Through the workshops held at the church, Lawson taught Lewis and other attendees about a tradition of civil disobedience and resistance that ran through "all the great religions of the world" (Isaac et al., 2012):

When Jim Lawson would be teaching us it was almost like a professor, and he was a teacher, he was a good teacher, wonderful teacher, in the classroom. And sometimes it was almost seminar style, where you would be sitting around a table. And other times he would get up and walk around and we all would be so moved and it would become sort of group participation. But it was not just throwing out facts and putting information in some type of historic content. He made it real, he made history come alive. And he would give us examples. He not only talked about Gandhi and what he did and what he attempted to do in South Africa,

what he accomplished in India. He not only talked about Thoreau and civil disobedience, but a central theme running through all the great religions of the world. He made it current when he described what Dr King and the people in Montgomery was all about or what others whether they were pacifists, protesting against war in America or Europe or wherever. And he gave us some examples of the resistance on the part of people during World War II.

Lawson also engaged the students in “social dramas” or practice sit-ins that gave students the practical experience necessary to participate in the Nashville sit-in campaign of 1960 (Isaac et al., 2012, 2016). The big take-away from these workshops was the importance of nonviolence as a way to dismantle segregation, something which resonated with his faith, and which was not only a technique or tactic but also a “way of life”:

Jim prepared us. He abused us. He grounded us with this concept of passive resistance, this idea of love is greater, it is powerful, that it's the best way, it is the right way, it's the moral way, it is in keeping with our faith. And so many of us that came out of a religious background saw this idea, this concept of nonviolence as an extension of our faith, that it was in keeping with the teaching of the great teacher. So whether it was somebody who was religious or not, they could on sort of a humane or humanitarian reason, a moral reason, could accept the way of nonviolence and passive resistance. And the great majority of us, because of Jim Lawson, I really believe this today now more than ever before, grew to accept nonviolence not simply as a technique or as a tactic but as a way of life, as a way of living. And when you're going through the social action or the drama, because people asked me along the way from time to time what should we do, and I said we have to find a way to dramatize it because Jimmy taught us that you need drama, you have to make it real, you have to put a face on it.

Explaining why Lawson was so effective in instilling the importance of nonviolence in these students, Lewis said that Lawson himself was the “embodiment,” the “personification of the philosophy and the discipline of nonviolence”:

Jim Lawson came across as someone who was very smart. He was brilliant. He knew what he was talking about. He was not just reading a speech, making a statement, but he believed in it, he was convincing. He persuaded us. He came across as the embodiment, as the personification of the philosophy and the discipline of nonviolence. He was not just preaching a sermon. In a sense he was living it. And he was literally pouring out his soul, his gut, to us.... And he would say that you're students, you're young people, but ordinary people can be part of a great movement. You can do things, you can change things. And he started talking about the beloved community, about making Nashville an open city. And when he would speak about the beloved community, this concept, this idea, it was very appealing to me and to so many of us. An all-inclusive community that recognized the dignity and the worth of every human being. It was almost saying like we're one family, that we're one house, that we're one table, that we almost have a place at the table. It didn't matter whether we were black or white, native American or Latino, protestant, Catholic, or Jewish. We were all in this thing together.

Policy-making Activism

Lewis says that his time in Nashville – both his time in these workshops and his subsequent participation in nonviolent resistance – dramatically changed his direction in life, such that he would leave behind a career in full-time ministry and instead pursue a “life of civic engagement, a life of involvement.” For example, when asked whether the Nashville experience could rightly be described as “transformative,” Lewis replied:

It would not be off-base to say it was an awakening. It changed my life, it changed my direction . . . It prepared me for a life of civic engagement, a life of involvement. To see the world from a different set of eyes really. You know I would never forget in Nashville the day I was arrested for the first time. I was arrested in downtown Nashville on February 27th, 1960. That day I felt so free, I felt liberated, I felt like I'd crossed over. Because I'd been told over and over again growing up in rural Alabama by my folks, don't get in trouble. In Nashville I got in trouble, and I tell people today it was good trouble, it was necessary trouble. It made me stronger, it made me better, Nashville, as the old song says, been made better, stronger, and wiser. I don't know where I would be really if it hadn't been for my experience in Nashville.

Although Lewis was active in a variety of civil rights organizations and activities following his time in Nashville, including his work to organize the famous March on Washington in 1963, he has become especially known for his nearly three decades of service in Congress, where he is often called the “moral conscience of Congress” (Whack, 2016). Lewis noted that Nashville gave him the specific language necessary to craft both campaign themes and speeches from the House floor; for example, he has worked to promote his vision for a “beloved community” characterized by racial equality:

When I first ran I used some of the same words, same language, that I used during the Civil Rights Movement. I talked about justice, talked about fairness. I talked about what is right, what is fair, what is just? I talked about creating a community at peace with itself. This was fresh out of the Nashville movement. Creating a society where we can forget about race and color and see people as people, as human beings. That is textbook from the Nashville movement. . . . Every campaign that I've been involved in, and even today on the floor of the House, in discussion with my colleagues I talk about the beloved community. Talk about creating a society, not just an American society, but a world society, a world community that is at peace with itself. That we have to learn to lay down the tools and the instruments of violence. And it was the Nashville movement that taught me to come to that point, where you say violence is obsolete, war is obsolete, there's a better way, that we should be prepared to sit down and talk and not be so quick to use weapons of violence or tools and instruments of violence.

His movement participation has also inspired Lewis to sponsor, co-sponsor, and vote for legislation that promotes racial equality, including several laws designed to diffuse the desegregationist vision and nonviolent praxis of the civil rights movement throughout the broader polity. For example, he has been primary sponsor of 17 bills that were eventually signed into law, including a 1989 law to establish a federal national trail route from Selma to Montgomery, a 1994 law that funded activities related to the national Martin Luther King, Jr, Holiday, and 2001 and 2003 laws that spurred the creation of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (Govtrack, 2017).

Finally, Lewis has even led his colleagues in nonviolent direct action. Specifically, Lewis recently led his colleagues to participate in sit-ins in support of gun reforms on the floor of Congress. Lafayette said he was unsurprised that Lewis was engaging in the sit-in, because “the confidence that direct action can bring about some changes” was “engrained” in him (Whack, 2016). Following the sit-in, Lewis himself commented, “Sitting there on the floor, I felt like I were reliving my life all over again” (Davidson, 2016).

EXEMPLARY ACTIVISM: JAMES MURPH'S CORPORATE MANAGEMENT CAREER

As a student at Tennessee A & I in 1960, James Murph was trained in nonviolence at the First Baptist Capital Hill church and subsequently marched and sat down at lunch counters to end Jim Crow in Nashville. After graduating A & I in 1965, Murph went on to have a 30-year management career in industrial engineering with General Electric until his retirement in 1999. His exemplary activism took the form of helping to desegregate a large US corporation by pursuing a corporate career path at a time when few African American men were embarking on such careers (Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2012, p. 107).⁸

Pathway to Activism

Murph encountered the Nashville civil rights movement on his own pathway of career mobility. Prior to enrolling in Tennessee A & I, he had no involvement in the civil rights movement or with civil rights organizations. Growing up in Boynton Beach, Florida, he did not “like the separate but equal thing . . . but I didn’t know how to get it done,” as he put it.

The son of a sawmill worker and a house cleaner, Murph, pursued a college degree, with the encouragement and support of his father, “so I could go where I wanted to go.” A college degree was a ticket out of a racially segregated Boynton Beach that constrained his physical and career mobility:

my world was well-defined. Boynton had basically four streets and to the north we had a canal. That was the boundary to the north. To the east we had the railroad tracks, that was the boundary there. And to the south they had like a forest or a lot of growth, so that was the boundary there. And to the west we had the dump and the graveyard. So I used to always tease about they’re going to bury them at the dump, which wasn’t funny but it was kind of sarcastic was what I was trying to say. So long as I stayed within those boundaries I was fine. Nothing happened to me, basically I was happy. But once I moved outside of those boundaries things would happen that I couldn’t understand. You would get stopped for no reason.

Local police enforced these boundaries by constraining Murph’s physical mobility. As he put it:

You get outside of those boundaries you were fair game. I had a little motorcycle and I remember I’d drive outside of that community and a policeman would stop me and I’d say why did you stop me, and the first question he asked me was whose motorcycle is this? Well why did you stop? Whose motorcycle is this? Why - ? And I would keep doing that and because I would never answer the question they would keep me at that stop sometimes 15, 20 minutes and then they’d let me go.

The Nashville movement coincided with Murph’s arrival as a college student at Tennessee A & I. Swept into the movement after the Greensboro sit-ins in 1960, Murph became involved in a movement that aimed to remove the Jim Crow restraints on his mobility. As Murph explained, he joined the movement because it was “a way out, this is a way I can fix what I’ve been trying to fix all my life . . . Just to be me, just to go where I needed to go, do what I needed to

do, not have people telling me what I can and cannot do, and just to move forward in my life.”

Internalization of a Praxis

As he put it, Murph’s participation in the movement “changed my whole life.” For example, participating in the nonviolence workshops at First Baptist Capital Hill and in movement actions gave him “a method” for confronting authority:

it gave me a method. See my method before was just to confront authority. Remember when the guy stopped me on the motorcycle, only thing I had was why’d you stop me?

Murph developed his “method” from his workshop experiences and interpersonal interactions during movement actions. Nonviolence did not come easily to many of the protesters (Isaac et al., 2012, 2016), and prospective protesters were barred from participating in nonviolence actions if they were unable to remain nonviolent in the face of threatening and abusive actions by movement antagonists:

they would train us as to what it meant to be nonviolent because we really didn’t understand nonviolent. We felt like, I felt like tooth for a tooth, we could take anybody out whenever we wanted to. But now I had to learn a whole new concept, this nonviolent concept, so that was my first thing . . . they said before you can, they stressed very highly before you participate we want you to come into the church and we’re going to go through some workshops with you . . . So we went in the workshop and in the workshop they would put the speakers up and they would tell us how we were to conduct ourselves during the movement. For an example they’d say now what we want you to do is when we leave the church we want you in files of two, you’re not to be looking to the left or the right, just look straight ahead. And even if the person beside you get hit, just don’t react, . . . don’t do any words that would cause any kind of disturbances.

The workshop message of purposive, sustained, nonviolent confrontation with authority or with non-authorized abuse from antagonists was reinforced by Murph’s interpersonal interactions during movement actions. He recounted this story about a disciplined response to abuse during a march to downtown Nashville:

On the first march I went out on, . . . there was a student that was walking beside me, he happened to be white, and we were walking and he got hit. Of course I kept my eyes forward like they told me to, but I said to him, he got hit pretty bad, he was bleeding, and I said to him why are you doing this? You don’t have to do this, you could be over there throwing the rocks. And he said to me, it’s okay, throwing a rock don’t make it right, let’s just keep marching. And that one I guess really set the tone for what I was going to do next, so I knew I wasn’t going to fight, I wasn’t going to fight back, I was going to follow that rule.

The workshops had taught Murph how to restrain himself during the severe and unjust abuses, and tenuous relations with non-protective police, he experienced when he sat down at the lunch counters without protection from violent antagonists. The nonviolent movement could only remain viable if the protester did not fight back. Murph described his disciplined self-restraint at lunch-counter sit-ins:

At one point, yeah, I would want to fight back. They would get me to a point, especially them cigarettes, they kind of burned, that you'd really want to fight back and I knew I couldn't. But if I could walk, then yeah, you can holler at me, you can throw stones at me, and I can kind of duck or whatever . . . I been to the workshop and I understood the nonviolence . . . the message I got out of the whole thing was you could mess the whole thing up by fighting.

Exemplary Activism

James Murph's exemplary activism consisted of integrating himself as an industrial engineer and as the only African American in the industrial engineering unit of a unionized General Electric factory in Kentucky. His method of entry into General Electric paralleled the self-restraint and disciplined nonviolent method he had deployed at the lunch counters challenging the pre-existing, Jim Crow social order in the face of hostile white men and a tenuous relationship with abusively complicit authorities.

At his initial job interview, Murph engaged in self-advocacy before a skeptical recruitment officer. He had to convince the recruiter that he could master General Electric's "method time survey" (MTS) technique for designing efficient work procedures on a factory machining floor.

As his work on the machining floor commenced, Murph entered a hostile work environment. Workers threw physical objects at him. He discerned that the workers' hostility seemed to emanate not from racial hatred but from their perception of him as a management intruder into their autonomous work space which lacked an industrial engineering presence and to which they had grown accustomed over a substantial period of time. He endured the physical abuse, especially as he discerned that it was not directed at him personally:

So when I joined GE I was the only African American in that department, in the methods and work measurements department, so my whole environment basically around me were white . . . I found out later, they had not had a methods and work time standards person on the machining floor in a long time, but that's where they put me. And as I went out with my equipment to do my job, they were throwing [physical objects] at me, they were throwing in my direction, I shouldn't say at me. But what was so interesting was that they threw a lot of things but none of them hit me . . . So from that I gathered that you can't throw at a person that many times and miss them every time, so they were not trying to hit me, they were trying to scare me away. So it wasn't that they didn't like me, they didn't want no methods and works measurement specialist over there. I just happened to be the guy that happened to be black. So I just went on and did my job.

Murph exercised disciplined, self-restraint as he endured intense, verbally abusive, but successful negotiations with shop-floor union leaders over the redesign of piecework and piece rates. Murph's corporate superiors also took notice of his exemplary actions:

So I did the first job and what happened was when I did the job the rate per hour increased, and so what you do, once you finish with the job you meet with the operator [worker] and the union [leader] . . . in an office and you go over it, so it took me probably from, we started about 8 o'clock in the morning and about 12 o'clock after they had called me everything they could think of, and I had gone over this particular job literally 30, 40 times, and they found no errors in it but still they were very, very ugly. I mean it was very ugly . . . It never got racial

. . . a lot of swear words, curse words and so forth, SOB's and that kind of thing. So about 12 o'clock I said now listen, you've gone over this job at least 30 times, you haven't found anything, so here's what we're going to do. The rule says you have a right to grieve it so what we're going to do starting Monday morning, because this was on a Friday, Monday morning this job is going into effect, I'll see you guys later. So I packed my little stuff up and left the office. Well as I was going back to my office the unit manager of that department, who was hearing all of this from another office, came very swiftly by me and went into my boss' boss office. The next thing I know my boss was calling my name very loud . . . Jim Murph, get in here, get in here. So I went in the office, I didn't know what was going on at that point, and he gave me a raise. I said I don't understand. He said you handled yourself in such a fashion that it was unbelievable. I said well thank you. So he . . . gave me a raise and I was pretty happy about that . . . so I started doing all these jobs and everything, and the throwing stopped, the harassment stopped, because they couldn't make me angry.

OCCUPATIONAL ACTIVISM AS A DESEGREGATIONIST FORCE

Our fourfold typology of occupational activism models a dialogical diffusion mechanism of social movement values. In this occupational model of dialogical diffusion, the workplace and occupational career constitute the chief institutional arena and platform from which a worker engages in socially transformative action.

Derived from the case of occupational careers of former activists in the late 1950s and early 1960s era nonviolent Nashville civil rights movement, the typology models the dialogical diffusion of a desegregationist force – and a movement praxis – out of the civil rights movement and into, within, and beyond workplaces via the former activists' long-term occupational careers in the broader polity and economy. This model of dialogical diffusion comprises the activist's initial internalization of a movement vision and praxis during movement mobilization and the activist's subsequent enactment of the praxis in the daily practice and on-the-job inter-personal interactions of their post-mobilization occupational career.

The four types of occupational activism – humanistic, expressive, policy-making, and exemplary activism – together constitute a coherent regime of occupationally differentiated activist expressions in diffusing desegregationist values within and beyond workplaces. Their coherence as a regime of expressions derives from the common internalization experience shared by an activist cohort of the same social movement in the same place, historical moment, and life-course stage. These activist expressions range between “peer-centered activism” – exemplary activism that focuses on intra-workplace desegregation as illustrated by the case of James Murph's desegregation of a corporate workplace – and “values-centered activism” – humanistic activism that diffuses desegregationist values beyond workplaces in multiple institutional contexts, as in Bernard Lafayette's career as an organizer. The policy-making activism of Congressman John Lewis and the expressive activism of Dr Gloria Johnson Powell combine peer-centered activism by helping to desegregate their own workplaces – i.e., Congress and universities, respectively – and values-centered

activism, as each engaged the public in social criticism and policy-making through their occupational careers in government, civic, and educational institutions.

A model of a desegregationist force, our typology of occupational activism is a sociological tool for unpacking “desegregation dynamics” within and beyond workplaces and labor markets.⁹ Research in the new sociology of race and work has focused on forces that sustain and reproduce occupational race segregation and racial economic inequality. The typology of occupational activism provides a lens for examining how desegregationist forces enter, permeate, shape, and emanate from workplaces into the broader polity.

CONCLUSION: THE WORKPLACE AS OBJECT AND PULPIT FOR RACE DESEGREGATION ACTIVISM

Sociologically, work and occupations are enduring, generative social spaces for the realization of social transformation and social justice. As activists, workers often endeavor to reorganize social relationships and employment arrangements at work to eradicate inequalities and injustices in their workplaces and thereby transform their workplaces into exemplary institutions; or, they enact their occupational roles in such a way as to encourage the realization of social justice in the broader polity, far beyond their immediate workplaces. Occupational activism, as our profiles suggest, arises from the intersection of the career-biographies of individual workers, social movements such as the 1960-era Nashville civil rights movement, and the subsequent unfolding and enactment of long-term occupational careers in a variety of workplaces and occupational roles.

Our typology of occupational activism argues for an agenda of research on occupational race desegregation, and on occupational activism addressed to realizing social justice more broadly, in the new sociology of work. The new sociology of work emphasizes the socially transformative role of worker agency and activism. Although our typology itself does not address the continuing impact of occupational activism on race desegregation in workplaces and labor markets, it does suggest a sociological research agenda about (1) how workplaces may nurture and stymie the development and expression of peer- and values-centered occupational activism on any social issue or in any policy domain and (2) the career-biographical pathways toward occupational activism taken by those co-workers or occupational community members who do become peer-centered and values-centered activists.

In an economy organized around bureaucratic work organizations, occupational activism will be stymied in hierarchically organized work organizations that demand worker conformity to a top-down organizational culture and to rigidly defined job roles (Barry, 2007). This suggests that values-centered occupational activism, such as humanistic activism, will flourish most in non-bureaucratic workplaces or in values-driven organizations such as universities, governments, and civic institutions. Freelance and self-employed organizers,

whose workplace is the human community, work in the interstitial space between public and private bureaucracies and therefore may be among the freest occupations to engage in values-centered occupational activism.

Peer-centered activism is likely to flourish in flexible bureaucracies whose workers enjoy considerable power to constrain management labor-allocation decision-making. Flexible workplaces offer employment in non-precarious “good jobs,” especially jobs that afford workers autonomy, decision-making discretion, job security in long-term contracts (for example, academic tenure) and opportunities for collaboration and that reward workers for their creativity and inclusive team-building skills (Findlay, Warhurst, Keep, & Lloyd, 2017; Kalleberg, 2011). Furthermore, peer-centered activism is likely to prevail when marginalized minorities of a corporate workforce share collective power with their majority co-workers in an inclusive labor union that rationalizes labor allocation processes through collective bargaining and contract enforcement. Under conditions of flexibility and worker collective power, we suggest, workers who constitute themselves as a desegregationist force have the greatest capacity for engaging in peer-centered occupational activism.

Our research suggests that the intersection of family and the social movements of one’s adolescence and young adulthood define multiple pathways to occupational activism, and especially values-centered activism. From a “family-embeddedness” theoretical perspective, families may inspire activism but may constitute a constraint or force of aversion to undertaking high-risk occupational activism, or “biographical availability” to participate in activism (Coley, Cornfield, Isaac, & Dickerson, 2017). Cornfield (2015), for example, distinguishes between “family-inspired” activism that is inspired by one’s family upbringing and “movement-inspired” activism that is inspired by the cultural and political movements of one’s adolescence. His study of “artist activists” suggests that movement-inspired activists were those whose occupational activism ventured farthest from the activist’s immediate circle of peers in taking a lead role in envisioning and executing the strategic orientation and institutional logic of occupational trade unionism. Similarly, our research on Nashville civil rights movement activists indicates that movement-inspired students who had left their hometowns and families to attend college in a Nashville-area college were among those who became movement leaders and who subsequently engaged in values-centered activism via their careers in organizing, expressive, and governance occupations (Coley et al., 2017).

This research agenda deploys our typology of occupational activism in an examination of institutional constraints on the development and expression of occupational activism within and beyond bureaucratic workplaces. Examining these constraints can deepen a sociological analysis of how the civil rights movement and worker agency influence “desegregation dynamics,” as well as identify pathways to activism for achieving race desegregation at work, and social justice more generally, in the broader polity.

NOTES

1. The question of individual agent impact on workplaces is a separate but related question. Here, we are concerned only with how individuals carry such movement-based oppositional culture into workplaces.

2. We focus on long-term dialogical diffusion of movement oppositional culture and praxis as one source of occupational activism, not the only source.

3. The dialogical perspective on diffusion has its roots in the work of Bakhtin (1981) and has been developed in various ways for the study of movements and contentious politics in Steinberg (1999), Isaac (2009, 2012), Chabot (2010, 2012), Scalmer (2011), Isaac et al. (2012, 2016).

4. Unless otherwise indicated, this is based on an interview with Bernard Lafayette, July 8–10, 2008, conducted by Larry Isaac at the Center for Peace and Nonviolence, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI.

5. The workshops were conducted under the auspices of Kelly Miller Smith, the president of the Nashville affiliate of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

6. Unless otherwise indicated, this is based on an interview with Dr. Gloria Johnson Powell, June 1, 2009, conducted by Larry Isaac in Nashville, TN.

7. Unless otherwise indicated, this is based on an interview with Congressman John Lewis, August 11, 2008, conducted by Daniel Cornfield and Larry Isaac in Congressman Lewis' office in Atlanta, GA.

8. Based on our interview with James Murph, May 1, 2010, conducted by Daniel Cornfield in Nashville, TN.

9. From a social movement scholarship perspective, this is an intriguing and novel example of long-term biographical movement impact and movement extension.

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