



Call for Papers for an *ephemera* Special Issue on:

Professions at the margins

Issue Editors: Nick Butler, Shiona Chillas and Sara Louise Muhr

Professions have become well-established at the centre of public life over the last one hundred and fifty years. But they also bear an intrinsic relation to the margins. The margins are to be understood here in the broadest possible sense – social, political, cultural, economic, geographical, and epistemological. The Special Issue seeks to conceptualize the relation between the professions and the margins in all of its various forms.

While some occupations have succeeded in achieving high levels of professional recognition, others have found themselves languishing at the margins. Although medical doctors have attained a prestigious professional status, radiologists, theatre nurses and midwives have struggled to reap the same kind of social and economic rewards from their work (Freidson, 2007; Scott, 2008). Similarly, whereas personnel specialists in the UK were able to collectively organize and obtain a Royal Charter, management consultants have tried and failed to gain this official mark of distinction (Watson, 2001; Kipping, Kirkpatrick, and Muzio, 2006). The case of social workers, probation officers, massage therapists, spiritual mediums, and railway surgeons further attest to the range of failed attempts by various occupations to fully professionalize. We agree with McKenna (2008: 208) when he notes that “the specific reasons behind the institutional failures of these potential professions are far more instructive than the subsequent explanations of institutional success”.

Sometimes, professions are consigned to the margins over a tussle for power and influence. When competing occupational groups vie for access to top managerial positions in large-scale organizations, one profession may come to dominate at the expense of another. The case of accountancy’s ascendancy over engineering during the twentieth century provides a particularly illustrative example in this respect (Armstrong, 1985). This tells us that the relation between the professions and the margins is, at least in part, determined by conflict and competition in organizational settings. But the margins present an opportunity to the professions as well as a threat. It is on the fringes that new services and innovative techniques are identified, claimed, and appropriated for collective gain by professional groups. For example, business advisory services now form the core business for the largest accounting firms, alongside more traditional auditing activities (Greenwood, Suddaby, and Hinings, 2002).

Professions are also faced with issues of marginalization from within. Traditionally dominated by middle-class white men, many professions have long been accused of excluding those who come from a different class, gender, or race. Professional groups such as pilots (Ashcraft, 2005), police officers (Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010), medical doctors (Allen, 2005), and management consultants (Meriläinen et al., 2004) have all received critical attention in this regard. However, some typically male-dominated professions like IT and engineering are beginning to rebrand their image to attract more women and people from a variety of social and ethnic backgrounds (Powell, Bagilhole, and Dainty, 2009). As a result, previously marginalized employees in these occupations are now highlighted as examples of diversity in the professions.

The margins are *contested*: they mark the points at which jurisdictions of professional practice are fought over, lost and won. The margins are *unstable*: what counts as peripheral to a profession is constantly being modified by institutional reform, political restructuring and wider economic trends. The margins are *liminal*: they are the places where professionals encounter and negotiate with other professionals, non-professionals, clients and the state. Finally, the margins are *perilous*: they indicate the threshold of ethical conduct across which trained practitioners have, time and again, had occasion to pass.

We welcome all submissions that deal with the question of professions at the margins. Possible themes include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Deprofessionalization and the failure of professional projects
- Interprofessional competition and jurisdiction disputes
- Ethics and professional misconduct
- Social class and the professions
- Gender and the professions
- Race and the professions
- Marginal professions
- Parasitic professions
- Conflict between professional associations and professional service firms
- Limits of professional practice
- Boundaries between professional groups
- Diversity and equality in professions
- New frontiers in professionalism
- Social marginalization in the professions

Deadline for submissions: 31st May 2011

All contributions should be submitted to one of the issue editors: Nick Butler (niab2@st-andrews.ac.uk), Shiona Chillas (sac30@st-andrews.ac.uk), or Sara Louise Muhr (saralouisemuhr@gmail.com). Please note that three categories of contributions are invited for the special issue: articles, notes, and reviews.

Information about these different types of contributions can be found at: www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/call.htm. Contributions will undergo a double blind review process. All submissions should follow *ephemera's* submissions guidelines, available at: www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/submit.htm. For further information, please contact one of the special issue editors.

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