

Dealing with newly tainted work in an occupational online community: A story of bankers dealing with new moral taint following the financial crisis of 2008

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Abstract

This paper investigates how members of an occupational online community deal with new moral taint. Based upon the in-depth investigations of dynamics that took place in an online community of bankers, an occupation that has experienced new moral taint during the recent financial crisis, this research shows how participants relied upon specific affordances of the online forums in order to deal with the new taint. It then builds a grounded theory for how members of an occupational online community deal with new moral taint. We find that participants experience the new taint as a loss of positive value of their professional identity and collective appear to go through the stages of grief such as denial, anger, bargaining, depression/detachment, and acceptance. The theory also highlights unique affordances of online forums as compared to other settings in which occupational members usually deal with taint such as work settings, family and friendship networks, and professional associations. This paper adds to the literatures on tainted work by showing for the first time how an occupational community deals with a new (as opposed to existing) taint as well as to IS literature by elaborating how online communities can be used by professional groups not only for knowledge sharing, but also for social support relating to stresses of the occupation as well as how affordances of an online forum can help occupational members deal with new taint beyond traditional mechanisms.