

UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

GENDER IDENTITY AND PROTOTYPES IN CARING PROFESSIONS: THE ROLE OF
COMMUNICATION IN IDENTITY WORK AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

BRITNEY N. GILMORE

Norman, Oklahoma

2020

GENDER IDENTITY AND PROTOTYPES IN CARING PROFESSIONS: THE ROLE OF
COMMUNICATION IN IDENTITY WORK AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

Dr. Michael W. Kramer, Chair

Dr. Ryan S. Bisel

Dr. Ioana A. Cionea

Dr. Sun Kyong Lee

Dr. Shane Connelly

© Copyright by BRITNEY N. GILMORE 2020
All Rights Reserved

Dedication

To those who have gone before,
those who are present,
and those who have yet to come.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without God and the loving and generous support system I am blessed with. First, I want to acknowledge my family, blood and beyond. Mom and Dad, you both have been supportive of all of my dreams all of my life and when times were tough you both were always there for me in any way I needed. I have never felt like anything was too big for me to take on. The two of you model what perseverance looks like lived out, and now I live that way every day. I also have to shout out my friends who are like family. Ajia, Peay, Jasmine, Pavitra, Amanda, the Molinas, the Daniels, the Andersons, and the Morrisseys...we did this. Over long conversations, meals, doubt, working hard, and playing hard...we did this. My life is better because of you all. Similarly, I am grateful for many other lifelong friendships I have been fortunate to build during my time in Oklahoma.

Second, I want to thank my advisor, Michael Kramer. Thank you so much. Grad school is not easy, and I truly appreciate your mentorship, guidance, and light-heartedness. I am a better scholar, teacher, and leader from knowing you. The fact that I am your 25th advisee is a testament to your gift and patience. The gentle nudges you gave me to both move me forward when needed and to take a break when needed meant more to me than you might imagine. You showed me how to achieve balance in a busy career, and I will carry that lesson with me always. To my committee, Ryan Bisel, Ioana Cionea, Sunny Lee, and Shane Connelly: Thank you. I am grateful I had the opportunity to bring together such a supportive group. You all challenged and stretched me to give more than my “best” in many aspects. I look forward to many more conversations with you all in the future.

Finally, I owe all caring professionals, especially my participants, my gratitude. As a former K-12 educator, I felt inspired hearing the stories of the great work these individuals are

doing to improve the lives of others. It is that compassion and concern that I hope all professionals can embody. Caring work is challenging work, and even in the middle of a pandemic each one of them welcomed me into their life. We laughed a lot during interviews. My soul really needed that.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	v
List of Tables	viii
Abstract.....	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	7
Chapter 3: Method	37
Chapter 4: Findings & Interpretation.....	42
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	79
References.....	97
Appendix A: Interview Guide.....	110

List of Tables

Table 1. Participants' Demographics.....	38
Table 2. Identity Work Strategies Among Caring Professionals.....	47
Table 3. Socialization Messages from Caring Professionals.....	59
Table 4. Sensemaking of Caring Professionals' Careers.....	67

Abstract

Occupational segregation is a persistent phenomenon occurring in many professions. In caring professions, the percentage of men in these jobs is low. This interview-based study explains how men in such professions (i.e., social work and elementary education) have navigated their careers and constructed a professional identity. The analysis of 30 interviews with social work professionals and elementary school teachers revealed that participants referenced the occupational prototype to engage in identity work that allowed them to remain in alignment with professional expectations. The prototype for each occupation also determined how men socialized others within caring professions and contributed to their sensemaking process concerning occupational experiences and next steps in their careers. These results are discussed in the context of identity, socialization, and sensemaking literature.

Keywords: caring professions, gender, identity work, sensemaking, socialization, interviews

Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the beginning of “work,” career choices, job roles, and recruitment have revolved around characteristics of individuals. However, in today’s professional landscape, more individuals are pursuing careers based on their personal desires to engage in specific kinds of work. In addition, organizations are recognizing the need for diversity in various professions. The news article, “Why We Need More Male Primary School Teachers: ‘Kids Need to Know Men Care About Education As Much As Football’,” describes the call for more male elementary school teachers to serve as male role models for children in early developmental stages (Packham, 2018). In fields such as teaching, there is a preference for males to serve as role models for students (Allan, 1993). This article is not the first to encourage men to join professions that are considered female-majority professions or where women represent the majority (McPhail, 2004). Similarly, women are being encouraged to pursue male-dominated professions. Although the need to balance representation in all occupations is more prominent now, achieving diversity is still challenging (Williams, 1993). Most people have mental models, or prototypes, of what specific professionals embody: a caring female teacher, a polite female nurse, or an extremely introverted male accountant. In social and professional settings, individuals look to similar group members to define what is unique about them and how they fit into these groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Moreover, the careers individuals choose to pursue often reflect these prototypes.

Research on this topic has long explored the gendered nature of certain professions (Abbott & Meerabeau, 1998; Carr-Saunders, 1955). This literature also assumes that men in female-majority fields hold different characteristics than men who choose professions typically associated with male characteristics (Lemkau, 1984). Much of the previous research on

professional identity explores both male and female-majority professions and examines the characteristics of individuals in these fields. Recently, however, researchers have started to investigate the processes of role negotiation and identity construction of individuals who are in atypical gender professions. Current research about professions, in general, and gendered professions, in particular, has started to consider strategies used by individuals to develop a professional identity in certain contexts (Hatmaker, 2013; Pratt et al., 2006). With less than 30% of men in several caring professions (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019), and a perceived need for men in caring professions, more research is needed about men's experiences in these fields.

Although popular occupations, caring professions are often seen as work that does not have a high enough status to be considered a profession, and are often referred to as semi-professions (Etzioni, 1969), which by definition is indicative of work that is viewed as less than a profession. These professions may have previously been seen as lacking qualifications, expertise, and legitimacy. Abbott and Meerabeau (1998) explained that, "female occupational groups have aspired to professional status by claiming an area of expertise and by extending the education and training required to become qualified" (p. 9). Therefore, rather than being based solely on traits associated with expectations of women, such as providing care or emotional work (Hochschild, 1983), professionals in these fields base status on other factors. The term *caring professions* emerged to describe professions related to providing practical care for others, and represents a set of occupations that are an important part of societal functioning (Abbott & Meerabeau, 1998).

Work in caring professions involves looking after people, which can range from small children to adults who are ill. Professionals in these occupations perform a broad spectrum of

activities including teaching, family support, organizing, planning, and managing their own responsibilities and others (Abbott & Meerabeau, 1998). Examples of caring professions include social workers, teachers, and nurses. Even though these professions require expertise and qualifications, they still suffer from low wages and less perceived legitimacy. Research has explored identity construction as a tool to increase occupational status by relying more on the scientific and technical aspects of caring professions through what is called “educated caring” (Abbott, 1988). Traditionally, the idea of “care” is not viewed as work. Terms such as “educated caring” highlight the professional aspect of these jobs by emphasizing the ability to provide care and expertise as requirements necessary for these roles. Including more rigorous knowledge, skills, training, and technical aspects to jobs that involve caring creates a stronger parallel to being viewed as a true profession, and thus, viewed as more prestigious and legitimate.

Furthermore, caring professions are predominately composed of women. The literature consistently identifies three caring professions: social work, elementary education, and nursing. According to the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019) caring professions have significantly lower percentages of men in these fields: social workers is 18.1%, teaching preschool or kindergarten is 1.3%, elementary and middle school is 19.5%, and registered nurses is 11.1%. Given that in the United States caring professions currently are experiencing shortages and foster several negative narratives around, it is important to understand the narratives shared about who fits in these fields, and make sure the fields are inclusive of all people in order to provide quality services. Knowing how these narratives affect men’s professional identities, growth, development, and work life is also critical to continue to reduce occupational stereotypes that

limit membership in these positions. In this study, I examine two of the three caring professions: social work and elementary education.¹

Professional identity develops from a professional's values, practices, and attitudes, and provides a definition for who someone is, based on their professional role (Brott & Myers, 1999; Schein, 1978). Professions such as social work, teaching, and nursing represent caring professions composed of highly educated individuals who are relied on by several stakeholders, such as families, clients, students, parents, administrators, physicians, and patients. Additionally, individuals in these roles endure emotional and physical hardships that are not associated with other professions. For example, teachers are expected to have high performance when they teach large class sizes, receive little emotional, financial or administrative support, and have a broad range of students at different academic and maturity levels. Similarly, social workers are often tasked with removing children from their homes and reporting abuse. Nurses frequently have to handle death, lifting patients, sharing difficult news, and handling a variety of illnesses that involve injuries and "dirty" outcomes. Given these tasks, identity development is necessary to seeing oneself in a role. Identity is a critical aspect that constitutes belonging to a profession by asking "Who am I?," in a particular role (Schein, 1978). Considering the burdens and challenges faced by individuals in caring professions, it is important to understanding who has membership in these professions, how these challenges shape individuals' experiences, and how expanding membership affects these challenges. Thus, professional identity provides a conceptual lens to integrate specific attitudes, values, and motivations individuals hold and their career navigation.

¹ Initially, this study included an investigation of men social workers, elementary teachers, and nurses. However, due to the strain on health professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic (the time when this dissertation was completed), nurses were removed from the sample under examination.

In addition to characteristics and labels, professional identity research often focuses on the question of identity development and outcomes. Previous studies about professional identity have documented antecedents of professional identity such as a need to belong, training, and need for a positive image (Molleman & Rink, 2015). Research has also conceptualized the positive outcomes or consequences of strong professional identity for specific professions. For example, medical professionals' professional identity influences their willingness to collaborate and communicate within and across specialties, and an increase in motivation to provide care (Molleman & Rink, 2015). More generally, professional identity can also affect workers' psychological well-being (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Although caring professions cover many types of occupations and roles, a vast amount of the literature on identity construction is in management and sociology. This literature often explores a single time frame, such as medical school, a single profession, and strategies individuals use to construct identity in caring professions, in general, rather than to negotiate professional identity and gendered expectations (McEntee-Atalianis & Litosseliti, 2017; Pratt et al., 2006). These studies typically involve management of the identity conflict for a brief time or strategies employed to increase legitimacy. There is little exploration into how individuals restructure or resist occupational prototypes through their interactions and their way of doing work. By considering caring professions and gender identity simultaneously, there is an opportunity to examine how individuals manage gender as an aspect of professional identities, find value in their work, and then promote new narratives of their work to others.

For this reason, this study contributes to the literature on professional identity by examining how professional identity is developed and maintained during individuals' career spans when a prototype match is not available or is in conflict with an individual's mental model

of an occupation. Further, this study explores how professional identity has helped or hindered men in caring professions adapt throughout their careers by examining the retrospective accounts of men with varying tenures in caring professions. This study focuses, specifically, on the role of communication in facilitating identity processes for men in caring professions, such as how men engage in managing or deconstructing a prototype that fails to represent or include their identity and create a prototype that portrays their professional identity. In addition, this study offers an analysis of the prototype and identity construction processes in social work and elementary education, both of which have low numbers of men in the occupation. Because prototypes and professional identity are important for career outcomes including commitment and identification, I also explore how these concepts influence other career outcomes, including socialization of others and sensemaking of career moves.

First, I summarize the existing literature that provides the theoretical and conceptual foundations of this study. This includes social identity theory, the communication theory of identity, identity work, socialization, and sensemaking, which are used to frame identity construction and development processes. Then, I describe the method used in order to conduct this research. Data collection consisted of in-depth, semi-structured interviews (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), and data analysis was completed using constant comparative analysis (Christians & Carey, 1989; Tracy, 2013). To ensure qualitative rigor, verification strategies were applied to demonstrate participants' voices were conveyed accurately and the findings represented their experiences accurately (Creswell, 2007). Finally, I conclude by providing implications of findings for this study and presenting avenues for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Professional Life and Gender

Professions and Occupational Segregation

Profession, as a concept, has been defined based on characteristics and traits such as status or prestige, expertise, autonomy, influence, and skill of workers (Carr-Saunders, 1955). Although what constitutes a profession is debated, early research utilized a trait approach and identified four categories of professions: established or true professions, new professions, semi-professions, and would-be professions (Carr-Saunders, 1955). Established professions refer to superior occupational groups based on prominence and status, such as white-collar occupations associated with high financial rewards like medicine or law (Abbott & Meerabeau, 1998). New professions include professions from foundational disciplines in natural and social sciences like engineering or chemistry. Traditionally, members of both of the above professions are recognized for possessing expert knowledge, intellectual training, and a code of ethical conduct (Carr-Saunders, 1955).

The caring professions represent a third category of professions (Abbott & Meerabeau, 1998), also referred to in the literature as semi-professions (Carr-Saunders, 1955), subordinate professions (Adams, 2003), and aspiring professions (Adams, 2003). These professions are based on technical skills and training members must acquire to perform the work (Abbott & Meerabeau, 1998). Caring professions illustrate work that is rooted in caring for other people as the foundational premise of the work such as social work, teaching, and nursing (Abbott & Meerabeau, 1998). In contrast to the other categories, Carr-Saunders (1955) also identified occupations based on the requirement of business administration skills and an understanding of modern skills in general (e.g., hospital managers).

As shown by the above categories, initial research about professions was concerned with which occupations could claim professional status based on traits. These traits were often tied to establishing legitimacy of work and financial rewards for those groups. However, distinguishing professions as a symbol of status and a collection of traits was deemed problematic. Eventually, research started to focus more on professionalizing strategies occupational groups engaged in to gain widespread perceptions of “professional” status (Adams, 2003) and the roles professionals play in society (Abbott & Meerabeau, 1998). Given the societal and structural elements present in early research of professions, topics such as professionalization have been studied more prevalently in sociology and management than in other disciplines. However, a communicative approach is vital to the study of professions as well as the study of professional membership. Communication scholars have started to facilitate discussions on how professions are created, maintained, and changed, through discourse (Peterson, 2014), and how individuals make meaning of their role through narratives and other communicative techniques (McEntee-Atalianis & Litosseliti, 2017; Medved, 2009). Communication theory and concepts can help investigate social interaction and messages as important elements influencing male caring professionals’ identity development and contributing to career navigation through understanding identity, socialization, and sensemaking narratives.

Issues with Professions

Abbott and Meerabeau (1998) explained that the trait approach to characterizing professions, as described above, was an issue because characteristics were based on “an idealized conception of the characteristics of the archetypical professions – medicine and law” (p. 4). In the current work environment, many professions do not fit into these clear occupational distinctions. Specifically, this ideal created problems due to the exclusion of marginalized groups

who did not always have access to participate in these professions, and thus, were constrained from the status and rewards associated with joining and participating in these professions (Abbott & Meerabeau, 1998). Although much work has been done to define professions, the definitions are still unclear due to constructs involved in categorizing professions (Freidson, 2001), but the scope of professions is expanding in the literature. For the purposes of this study, professions are viewed as occupations that require specific knowledge, skills, and abilities rather than by their titles. This definition acknowledges the multiple and overlapping identities and roles individuals may hold in the changing work landscape that create a more complex understanding of their professional identity (Caza & Creary, 2016).

One construct that has received significant attention in the literature addressing problems with professionalization and the professional status of occupations is gender, which leads to occupational segregation. Although knowledge about the gendered nature of occupations and outcomes is expansive, research on narrative construction of identity and gender must continue to develop support for individuals building and negotiating a professional identity, especially in sex-segregated professions (McEntee-Atalianis & Litosseliti, 2017), and understand the reproduction of the professional narratives that perpetuate sex and gender segregation in the workplace, such as prototypes (Williams, 1993).

Gender influences how work is organized, segregated, and defined. Scholars have attributed this division of men and women in the workplace to a variety of factors, including industrialization, benefits to capitalism (Clark, 1982), and patriarchal motivations (Hartmann, 1976). Early arguments about the cause of labor division were that capitalists and men had the most to benefit from occupational segregation in the workplace because it allowed women to be paid at lower rates and men to pursue careers that raised their social status (Williams, 1993).

Given the descriptions provided above, professions have been characterized as gendered social institutions. This means that gender influences individuals' perceptions of the work (i.e., occupational stereotypes) as well as who has access to certain types of work (i.e., occupational prototypes), which create occupational segregation (Witz, 1992). An example of this can be seen through descriptions of who represents an ideal social worker or teacher. Prototypical characteristics including caring, nurturing, and patient may attract or hinder individuals' choices in these professions. McEntee-Atalianis and Litosseliti (2017) define occupational sex-segregation as the "non-proportional distribution of men and women in occupations," due to the "large concentration of men and women employees in specific occupations, where sex is the particular demographic marker for segregation" (p. 3). For example, a 2019 report from the U. S. Bureau of Labor statistics about occupation, race, and sex of employed individuals revealed that the percentages of men and women in social assistance professions, overall, were about 16% and 84%. In contrast, the percentages of men and women in architecture and engineering occupations, overall, were approximately 84% and 16%. Such differences exist across many occupations.

As a result of occupational segregation and historical gender differences, the professions that have been most successful at obtaining professional status are male-dominated (Ortner, 1974). In addition to across professions, occupational segregation is a problematic issue in many societies that occurs within professions, vertically and horizontally (Williams, 1993; Williams, 2013). Vertical segregation involves upward mobility and men progressing to higher status positions such as administration more quickly, whereas horizontal segregation is concerned with the lateral separation of men and women to different professions and roles within a profession. For example, a male teacher choosing a specialization more associated with masculine

characteristics such as a high school teacher or physical education teacher instead of early childhood education illustrates horizontal segregation. Individuals are often constrained to or select certain occupations as a result of expectations placed on different social groups, and “crossing over” creates conflict by disrupting gender norms. A lack of gender representation in certain occupations reinforces occupational stereotypes, which are the perceptions of traits and attributes that are expected of professional members in a particular occupation (Triandis, 1959). Occupational stereotypes, then, create occupational prototypes for what type of person is seen as an ideal member of a profession. These stereotypes and prototypes serve as expectations for how to behave, how to act towards others in the workplace, and how to determine what occupations are good fits for individuals.

Gender is often a factor in perceptions of occupations, and is present in these occupational stereotypes and prototypes. Gender becomes important in the workplace by influencing how others view colleagues and how profession members view themselves. For example, Hatmaker (2013) found that, in engineering, women’s interactions at work were inhibited by individuals placing more of a focus on their gender identity rather than their professional identity as engineers. Further, Hatmaker (2013) provided a description of four types of interactions experienced by these women that marginalized their professional identity. First, participants experienced interactions that amplified gender, which included drawing attention to names that highlighted femininity. Second, interactions imposed gendered expectations. These interactions included women being asked to perform tasks that were aligned with gendered stereotypes, such as collecting money for gifts or being asked about their roles as wives and mothers. Next, interactions involved tuning out contributions and a lack of overall attention given to women’s input. Finally, women also experienced questioning of their abilities and

intelligence until they were proven. These types of interactions with others in occupations perpetuates a divide based on gender. However, women in male-dominated occupations can negotiate and position themselves to construct a professional identity based on qualifications (Jorgensen, 2002). According to Jorgenson (2002), professionals can choose not to acknowledge gender in constructing their professional identity due to concerns about being perceived as an outsider.

Early research found that men in professions that were majority female also have been shown to have different personality and background histories than men in sex-typical fields, including distant relationships with fathers, ethnic minority status, lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and less compliance to traditional role expectations (Lemkau, 1984). Similar to women, men face challenges in professions that are majority female; however, due to hegemonic masculinity and power, these challenges are not exactly the same, as sometimes men want to be perceived as different. Evans and Frank (2003) argued that men in atypical gender occupations (e.g., nursing) were more heavily criticized and unsupported than women nurses for “crossing over” and frequently had to defend their “career choice, contribution to nursing, and their sexuality” (p. 1). According to Evans and Frank (2003), male nurses engaged in behaviors to reinforce their masculine identity, both verbally and nonverbally, such as wearing wedding bands, avoiding conflict, reducing assertiveness in interactions, and not opening doors for women colleagues as ways to emphasize and deemphasize masculinity when needed. Unlike studies of women in atypical gender occupations, men received benefits based on gender, including increased pay, promotions, and preferential hiring (Williams, 1995).

Aside from behaviors and actions men take to perform masculinity, occupational labels also adapt to fit men. In a study of secretaries, Pringle (1993) stated that male secretaries were

not referred to or perceived as secretaries, but usually as administrative assistants. In this case, labeling men as secretaries often presumed there was an issue with their masculinity (Pringle, 1993). In addition to societal expectations of “being a real man” or “being a real woman,” which is communicated through the career path that individuals choose, male employees who “cross over” also face resistance from coworkers. For example, men in professions such as teaching must gain the trust and respect of women by proving themselves as genuine and capable in order to persevere in the position and not be viewed as privileged solely based on their gender (Allan, 1993). Even with these challenges, men still often benefit from being underrepresented in female-majority professions (Allan, 1993). According to Allan (1993), male elementary school teachers were often given a great deal of encouragement and support from the public and male principals simply because they were male teachers. In professions where men represent a lower number of workers, scholars have found that male bonding helped men attain these benefits.

Although having different experiences, research has demonstrated that men and women do adopt similar strategies to manage their identities in professions where they are the minority due to the highlighting of gender at work (Williams, 1993). However, it appears that how and why gender is highlighted is for different reasons for men and women. Due to structural disparities, like wages and advancement, research about occupational segregation has mainly investigated women being excluded from male-dominated professions (Jacobs, 1993). With few social or economic reasons to pursue caring professions, studying the narratives of men in caring professions provides an opportunity to understand their experiences and career decisions. Such narratives could encourage a shift in the image of these occupations, support men interested in pursuing these careers, and develop a deeper understanding of how men are “pulled out” of caring professions (Jacobs, 1993).

In an effort to understand the nature of caring professions, Jacobs (1993) concluded that the narratives and ideologies surrounding gender significantly influence the caring professions. First, the term “care” is perceived as an extension of roles performed by women. The practices undertaken in these roles typically put client needs at the forefront of the work and prioritize personalized care (Abbott & Meerabeau, 1998). For example, Abbott and Meerabeau (1998) describe social work as being “client centered,” with a strong commitment to respect the individual, to be “non-judgmental,” to “start where the individual is,” and to allow “client determination.” Second, the individuals or clients receiving the care are also often women who need care and protection. Taken together, these qualities represent work that is more other focused. The notions of duty, dedication, and commitment to client care make caring professions unique, but also drive perceptions that deem the work as prototypically feminine and less prestigious.

Additionally, research has demonstrated that gender influences who, historically, has access to gain knowledge, skills, and resources to do work related to higher pay and prestige (Witz, 1992). A main area of focus concerning research on professions and gender has been on the professional projects pursued by different occupations. Over time, caring professions have attempted to rise to professional status. Although social boundaries exist that separate professions based on characteristics of the work, gender has hindered the professionalization projects of certain occupations (Adams, 2003). Witz (1992) explained that only men have been able to achieve the distance and autonomy required of prestigious professions because women engage in the emotional aspects of work. As Jacobs (1993) explained, occupational segregation appears to be a consequence of women being “pushed out of male-dominated fields while men are more likely to be pulled out of female-majority fields” (p. 61). Thus, the relationship between

gender and professionalism is mutually reinforcing (Jacobs, 1993; Williams, 1993). When individuals “cross over” to atypical gender occupations, they are guided by systemic structures and people to specializations, positions, and areas that better align with their gender. Beyond many of the societal factors discussed so far, research about gender in the workplace also demonstrates that individual identity construction plays an important role in occupational choice. Jacobs (1993) explained that occupational segregation for men is the result of pressures to perform sex-typical work, the push to pursue work that has better wages and benefits, and a limited number of female-majority professions.

Although other names exist for professions consisting of a large number of women workers, for the purposes of this study, I will refer to these professions as caring professions to illustrate the type of work that is conducted in the field, to support caring as a form of work (Abbott & Meerabeau, 1998), and to highlight the discourse that aids in the gendering of these professions (Apesoa-Varano, 2007; Ashcraft & Mumby, 2003). The topic of professions is studied more prevalently in sociology than in other disciplines. However, a communicative approach is vital to the study of professions, as well as scholarly understanding about professional membership. Communication within and about professions illustrates how professions are created, maintained, and changed, and facilitates understanding of discursive practices that continue cycles of occupational segregation such as identity work, socialization, and sensemaking. With communication in mind, studying men in professions primarily composed of women provides a new area of depth to these literatures.

Identity: Construction, Maintenance, and Negotiation

Social Identity Theory, Communication Theory of Identity, and Professional Identity

Because individuals belong to multiple groups, and thus adopt the identities and behaviors of those groups, as professional group membership shifts, their understanding of professions and professional identities changes, too. Understanding personal identity is foundational to professional identity. Social identity is the “part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his[or her] knowledge of his [or her]membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1974, p. 69). Initial research on social identity proposed three stages of forming social identity: categorization, identification, and comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). These stages help individuals sort or classify others and situate themselves within the social environment (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Social identity theory (SIT) assists in explaining individuals’ relationship and interconnectedness to various group processes and outcomes (Hogg, 2006; Hogg & Terry, 2006). A person’s social identity originates partially from social groups the individual belongs to (such as being a man), impacts behavior (Hogg & Reid, 2006), and results in an individual’s self-categorization. Self-categorization theory focuses on the underlying cognitive mechanisms that cause people to identify with groups (Hogg & Reid, 2006). SIT is useful for exploring men in caring professions as it provides a framework for understanding how individuals assign themselves to particular group categories, adopt beliefs and values of the group to increase belongingness, and compare the worth of one group to another.

Although desirable, an outcome of this categorization and identification is the creation of prototypes, or broad categorical representations that define a group, especially occupations (Hogg & Reid, 2006). These depictions range from fuzzy to widely known and shape behavior

for group members. For example, the prototypical professor may elicit comments about being an old, man who is smart. Prototypes are also pervasive and often shared among members of a group. These categories allow for distinctions between the in-group and the out-group. Thus, the professor prototype assists individuals in determining their fit for a profession and allows professional members to judge the fit of others. Understanding prototypes as communicative rather than as a solely cognitive behavior is essential to understanding group behavior because prototypes carry meaning that represents group beliefs of a shared social reality (Turner, 1991); however, social identities are often explored in isolation rather than as overlapping and competing (Scott & Stephens, 2009). Individuals have multiple identities such as organizational, gender, occupational, cultural, or generational. Thus, it is useful to consider the identity conflict that individuals experience.

SIT describes intergroup behavior and how individuals view themselves in relation to a group. In addition to the cognitive aspect of identity, individuals constantly share aspects of their identity and receive feedback from others about their identity to create meaning, which makes identity a communicative construct as well. The communication theory of identity (CTI) addresses this need for communication in identity research by positing that identity is created, maintained and adjusted through discursive processes and social interaction (Hecht, 1993; Hecht et al., 2002) rather than simply identifying with a group, and describes identity as being fluid and changing through social interaction. For example, men's professional identity is related to meanings associated with and shared about certain professions. Interactions in childhood, with family, in school, and in the workplace are opportunities for others to exchange messages about work expectations and for men to validate their identity as part of a group. According to Hecht et al. (2005), there are four layers of identity: personal, enactment, relational, and communal.

Moving beyond individuals, scholars have explored identity in organizational and professional contexts. In the professional context, CTI can be applied in order to understand many workplace phenomena and identity construction processes such as identity management and negotiation.

Identity, more specifically professional identity, is related to the type of work an individual does, rather than where they work (Pratt et al., 2006) and is a key concept to understanding an individual's experience in professional work-life (Ashforth et al., 2011). Ibarra (1999) defined professional identity, or occupational identity, as a stable construct that represents the beliefs, attitudes, values, and motives people use to define themselves in relation to the work in which individuals engage. Dutton et al. (2010) and Gecas (1982) provided another perspective of professional identity that entails the meanings individuals attach to themselves and their experiences at work. Caza and Creary (2016) described professional identity as a cognitive mechanism that shapes individuals through three functions: providing purpose and meaning behind work, providing benefits to psychological well-being, and guiding important functions such as decision-making (Leavitt et al., 2012). Thus, examining positive (or negative) identities in the workplace is valuable for several aspects of organizational life (Dutton et al., 2010) Taken together, professional identities are constructed through individuals' social interactions with relevant others (e.g., coworkers, family, friends, media) as explanations of who they are at work based on personal characteristics, roles, and membership, which shapes their attitudes and behaviors (Ashforth et al., 2008; Siebert & Siebert, 2005).

Previous research has explored processes such as the construction, negotiation, maintenance or change of professional identity as individual experiences (Caza & Creary, 2016). Specifically, identity negotiation is the process of aligning various identity layers (Hecht et al., 2005). CTI is a useful theory based on which to explore identity negotiations between an

individual's personal or enactment layer of identity (e.g., gender) and an individual's relational or communal layer of identity (e.g., occupation; Hecht et al., 2005).

Additionally of interest to this study, CTI can also be used to explore the normative structure development of groups. Hogg and Reid (2006) found that group norms create prototypes that illustrate specific properties of the group and are shared through communication. Prototypes are, "fuzzy sets, not checklists, of attributes that define one group and distinguish it from other groups" (Hogg & Reid, 2006, p. 10), which, in turn, influences how individuals in that group are viewed and the characteristics they embody. These stereotypical characteristics serve several functions such as depersonalization and describing normative behavior. Characteristics become symbolic meanings that individuals internalize and express to others. According to CTI, symbols are primary channels for conveying meaning (Hecht et al., 2005). Prototypes help guide behavior, but they also remove the perception of unique attributes for individuals. For example, identifying the social category, "teachers," evokes certain perceptions, expectations, and beliefs from individuals within and outside of the group. Prototypes are communicatively constructed by identifying characteristics associated with a particular category, as people learn about those characteristics through social interactions with their own teachers, family members, and media images. Initially, these prototypes serve as foundational mechanisms for constructing professional identity and determining occupational fit. However, over time, prototypes can still be useful for other organizational processes such as evaluating group members and recruitment.

Several other factors influence professional identity development processes including race (Slay & Smith, 2011), gender (Hatmaker, 2013), and socialization (Pratt et al., 2006).

According to Slay and Smith (2011), stigmatized identities, such as race, undergo different professional identity development processes due to the taint associated with the stigma. In a qualitative study about overlapping identities, African American reporters' narratives of identity development revealed the advantages and disadvantages to their identity conflict. Advantages included being in demand because of a desire to increase diversity in journalism. However, individuals also faced disadvantages as a result of prejudice and inequity throughout their career in areas critical to their career. For instance race affected their assignments and feedback. Being Black and being a journalist are two separate identities that can create distinct challenges; therefore, individuals must learn how to navigate between both, integrate these identities, or, at times, choose one as their primary label (Hecht et al., 2005; Slay & Smith, 2011). Thus, when overlapping identities exists, it can be difficult to separate certain aspects of identity or explore them in isolation, as past research has done.

Professionals communicate identity and prototypes, in both explicit and implicit ways, in various contexts. For example, a person at work may communicate identity directly by using verbal communication and self-disclosure or through dress and personality. Contrastingly, people also receive information about how their identity is perceived from others. At work, activities that may challenge an individual's identity could be performance evaluations or awareness of competing and conflicting identities. In many professions, there is a significant amount of momentum to recruit more diverse individuals and create more inclusive work environments. However, this may be difficult to achieve when individuals consider the gendered nature of several professions. As a result of societal expectations, norms, and occupational stereotypes, men represent a minority in certain occupations such as social work and teaching. For men, congruity between their gender and professional identities can increase job satisfaction and

organizational and affective commitment (Wallen et al., 2014). Following propositions of CTI, which defines identity as changing, identity work provides a framework to understand how men achieve this congruity between identities.

Identity Work: A Conceptualization of Definitions and Strategies

For professionals, identity development is a conflict-laden process due to the intersection (or merging) of an individual's work and personal life (Kirby et al., 2013). Primary questions surrounding identity work involves who individuals want to be and how they construct that desired identity (Woo et al., 2017). Snow and Anderson (1987) define identity work as the "range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of self-concept" (p. 1348). In comparison to SIT, which is more fixed, identity work represents an "ongoing mental activity that an individual undertakes in constructing an understanding of self that is coherent, distinct, and positively valued" (Alvesson et al., 2008, p. 15). Ashforth (1998) similarly explained that identity is dynamic, temporary, and ever-evolving. Activities that aid in identity work include talk, selection into groups or social networks, construction and performance of identity, arrangement of personal appearance or physical settings, and engaging in activities that are related to a particular group (Eliot & Turns, 2011; Ibarra, 2004). In a qualitative study of male early childhood educators, Nentwich et al. (2013) found that identity work strategies helped position men as legitimate in an atypical gender occupation. Some of the discursive practices included emphasizing equality, appropriating femininity, and building the male niche. Similarly, at work, individuals engage in identity work strategies as responses to workplace tensions such as negotiation of social and organizational positions and reframing tensions (Woo et al., 2017). Thus, communication is fundamental to the

process of identity work. By using discourse, individuals are able to form and perform identity (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2003).

Identity work allows individuals to answer the following questions: “Who am I?” and “How should I act?” For example, in relation to professional identity, findings from Woo et al. (2017) revealed that identity was one aspect related to interns’ ability to manage tensions. Sources used to engage in identity work were important. For example, interns who reported being satisfied with their internship constructed identities around their work differently than interns who described themselves as dissatisfied. Satisfied interns focused on who they wanted to be, whereas dissatisfied interns relied on prototypes of members of their profession to guide who they should be, which led to feelings of confusion about their identity. By approaching professional identity construction as an ongoing process, it is evident that professional identity changes over the course of individuals’ professional lives and influences how individuals continue to navigate their field of choice beyond professional identity (Moss et al., 2014). Communication is central to professional identity processes such as construction and negotiation, and is shared through narratives throughout socialization experiences (Slay & Smith, 2011) and training (Goldie, 2012).

Assimilation and Socialization: Acquiring and Sharing Identity

The role of identity in occupational socialization or assimilation processes is explored less often in literature, although the two are reciprocally influential. Individuals entering a new work environment often face challenges. With most jobs, there is a learning curve. Organizational socialization refers to the process of learning organizational norms and an individual’s jobs and roles (Miller & Jablin, 1991; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). At the basic level, socialization is defined as the way newcomers become part of a group. Becker and Strauss

(1956) stated that socialization happens when current and new members of a group interact to build shared meaning regarding roles and rules. Later, Jablin (1987) renamed the phenomenon assimilation, which is the process of joining, engaging in, and exiting an organization. Within assimilation, there are two significant subprocesses: socialization and personalization (or individualization; Jablin, 2001). Socialization describes the organizational influence on individuals to match the organizational culture, whereas personalization is about what individuals do to make the organization align with their identity (Jablin, 2001).

The collective meaning and specific knowledge generated during the assimilation processes provide a way for individuals to become functional group members. Given the low numbers of men in caring professions, such as social work and teaching, the socialization of male employees is important, initially in the family and university settings as they prepare to enter the workforce, and later in the professional setting. Additionally, it is critical to understand how male group members, from newcomers to established group members, navigate their role in female-majority occupations and caring roles. This navigation includes how identity manifests in various career stages, despite the prototype for members of the profession, and how identity influences outcomes.

A significant amount of assimilation research has focused on the socialization processes employed by organizations rather than how individuals personalize the work or reject the socialization attempts (Kramer, 2010). This study explores socialization from the perspective of men in caring professions and how they attempt to socialize others. According to Anderson et al. (1999), socialization refers to how group members adapt to each other to accomplish goals. This involves both aspects of what is given from the organizational or professional members to influence newcomers to adopt a particular identity that aligns with the profession (socialization),

and what individuals do to seek information out and negotiate their role and identity based on their personal needs (individualization) (Jablin, 2001). Traditionally, it is common for caring professionals to receive formal training to gain knowledge and skills at the professional level as part of their socialization. Additionally, in college, through various channels such as instructors, textbooks, and coursework, individuals learn attributes and characteristics of their chosen profession that allow them to identify as members of the group. However, once professionals, individuals can also make changes to their role through negotiations about the work they will perform, or how they will perform it, along with more basic issues pertinent to the work. For example, as part of the individualization process, men who are elementary school teachers may choose to make guidelines about what they feel is appropriate in terms of discipline, working with women coworkers, or conducting home visits, due to the competing identities of being a man and being a teacher. To do this, they are also negotiating their identity and performing identity work.

Role negotiations are an on-going process in organizational and professional life, beginning with just accepting role behaviors communicated as acceptable to redefining roles and expectations later (Graen, 1976). The role negotiation process includes both role taking, which is similar to socialization, and role making, which is similar to individualization (Katz & Kahn, 1966). According to Graen (1976), during role taking, the leader or organization primarily assign tasks or responsibilities to an individual; however, role making allows the individual to further define these roles. The current study looks primarily at the individualization of career aspects, but also includes aspects of socialization to gain a more complete understanding of men's experiences in these caring professions. Due to the heavy occupational stereotypes surrounding

caring work, examining how men make meaning and conceptualize the role for themselves is valuable.

According to Anderson et al. (1999), socialization occurs in five phases: antecedent, anticipatory, encounter, assimilation, and exit. Similarly, other scholars describe the socialization process as anticipatory, entry/encounter, metamorphosis, and exit (Jablin, 2001; Van Maanen, 1975). First, in the antecedent phase, newcomers bring previous experiences, beliefs, attitudes, personalities, and other factors to the new group. Next, during the anticipatory phase, the focus shifts to the expectations group members have of one another. Expectations create standards for what is considered normal for the group. Third, in the encounter phase, learning begins for group members. This could occur in the form of training or professional development in the professional environment. Following the encounter phase is the assimilation phase, which is defined as full immersion into a specific group culture. At this point, the group fosters a shared identity. Finally, the exit phase involves individuals leaving the group. Often times, in organizational studies, leaving the group is associated with leaving the organization. This study explores assimilation by reflecting on how the process occurs through communication with a variety of people and how professional identity influences the process.

Beyond the organization, Costello (2004) explained that professional socialization requires members to obtain sufficient knowledge to complete work and engage in training to learn the norms and ethical conduct expected in the profession. Thus, assimilation into the profession is significant for group cohesion because this process teaches members how to align their behavior and actions with the norms of the group. From this perspective, professional identity is both functional and instrumental to work life because it regulates members' behavior

(Freidson, 1994), and helps engagement, retention, and adaptation to the work environment (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010).

Although research on socialization is prevalent, most literature in this area focuses on the efforts of organizational or institutional members to produce conformity to expectations rather than individuals' resistance or acceptance of those strategies or personalization of their role (Kramer, 2010). Personalization or individualization is a tool that, when experiencing identity dissonance in the workplace, can be used to reduce tension between an individual's professional identity and personal identity, by making work fit their needs (Hess, 1993; Jablin, 2001).

The construction, negotiation, maintenance or change of identity are key aspects of the socialization process. Individuals hold multiple identities such as gender, ethnic, status, and familial role. Due to the overlap, identities often do not integrate well. At times, professional identity can be threatening to one's personal identity. To address such identity conflict, Costello (2004) coined the term identity dissonance, which is the "disconcerting internal experience of conflict between irreconcilable aspects of self-concept" (p. 140). Related to cognitive dissonance, the goal of individuals experiencing identity dissonance is to resolve the conflict (Costello, 2004). Costello (2004) contends that there are two types of identity dissonance: positive identity dissonance and negative identity dissonance. Positive identity dissonance occurs when an individual's professional identity is preferred over their personal identity. Alternatively, negative identity dissonance occurs when an individual's personal identity is preferred over their professional identity. Professional socialization acceptance is related to how people view the dissonance. For example, a male social worker who is not able to integrate professional and gender identity may prefer their identity as a man over that of a social worker. Therefore, he may reject being socialized in a way that overly highlights characteristics of social work associated

with more feminine aspects of the profession (Costello, 2004). Professionals who experience dissonance often feel uncertain and seek to manage their identity for themselves and others.

To resolve identity dissonance, research has demonstrated several strategies individuals can utilize. One way to resolve identity dissonance is through discursive practices to alter the narrative of roles. Nentwich et al. (2013) identified six discursive practices men who were childcare workers used to resolve identity dissonance. For example, men may synthesize the relationship between teaching, childcare, and fathering or being the breadwinner for their families, all of which represent characteristics of masculinity (Nentwich et al., 2013; Warin et al., 2007). Linking masculinity and femininity together helps men to emphasize how they are different, but also highlight sameness with the others in the profession. Additionally, discursively, men identify the niche they fill in that profession to categorize themselves as belonging. A male social worker could emphasize his asset to the profession by describing his ability to serve as a role model for children in single-mother homes. These strategies include men integrating their personal and professional identities and focusing on equality rather than differences.

However, individuals experiencing identity dissonance also can engage in creating a disconnect between themselves and the role that is creating dissonance. In a study of absentee mothers, Babcock (1998) described mothers' attempt to reduce the discrepancy between societal ideals about motherhood and their specific circumstance by deconstructing the ideal, replacing it with stories of similar others and altering the identity standard. Thus, the goal is to replace the prototypical construction with something that aligns more with the experience of marginalized people. Research from this perspective shows how difficult it is to separate identities, and that

resolution must be achieved. Since professional prototypes are socially constructed, these negotiations can be achieved through communication.

In regard to professional identity, socialization starts prior to joining the professional affiliation in families and instructional settings and can be related to occupational stereotypes and prototypes. With identity conflict, such as professional identity and gender identity, individuals are affected by their family and cultural experiences, professional experiences, and possible selves (Slay & Smith, 2011). Some of the first ways in which individuals learn what is acceptable are messages shared in family, culture, and society. Gibson and Papa (2000) described the value of family communication on how seamlessly individuals adopt the norms and expectations of certain types of work. The close proximity and influential nature of family make narratives about what kinds of work are acceptable and valued hard to resist. When an individual chooses an occupation or role, often ambivalently, in opposition to those familial narratives and expectations, they risk being viewed as different (Lucas, 2011).

Although there is research on professional identity construction for men in female-majority professions, most existing research examines how men maintain a masculine identity (Williams, 1989). Few studies focus on identity negotiation and how men have negotiated their identities throughout the socialization stages. Scholars have mainly focused attention towards understanding the construction and negotiation of identity at isolated time periods, and how communication influenced their experience. Additionally, taking more of a systemic perspective, most research in this area leaves out the micro-level interactions of how men assist one another in socialization and identity development in female-majority professions. Thus, the literature does not include the benefit to men of having other men to encourage them in these roles. Similarly, socialization research does not often discuss minority members' attempts at

socialization. As communication during socialization is a significant part of professional identity construction and management, this approach connects various aspects of organizational communication to consider professional identity development processes at different career points. By only examining one time point of identity processes, and not examining the socialization of other males across multiple professions, our understanding of how people and structures such as education programs, trainings, and gender affect this process is limited. In addition, it is important to study how identity development and processes influence future career choices.

Sensemaking

Choosing a career path is an important step for young adults and adults wanting to transition to other careers. The careers individuals select are guided by gendered norms related to the work and are related to how they will manage their identity. Williams (1993) states that, “the man who crosses over into a female-majority occupation upsets these gender assumptions embedded in the work” (p. 3). Due to this upset, men face an identity discrepancy between their gender identity and their professional identity. Without the benefits associated with male-dominated professions such as pay, prestige, and expertise, men in caring professions must find other values, reasons for joining these professions, and the importance or meaning behind their work. Factors such as previous work experience or future work aspirations, family influences, and job availability demonstrate a few reasons men enter these fields (Williams, 1995). However, it is not clear how men continuously justify their choice communicatively. Research also highlights that men who pursue caring professions typically overemphasize their masculinity or distance themselves from the more feminine aspects of the work and female colleagues to cope with challenges in these careers and minimize association with identity

stereotypes (Evans & Frank, 2003). The meanings surrounding the value of roles in caring professions influence how individuals respond and act in the work environment. For these reasons, this study seeks to explain how sensemaking assists men in building positive frames and narratives around work in caring professions that allows them to remain in these professions.

Sensemaking is the retrospective, coping process of assigning meaning to uncertain events, experiences, and situations (Weick, 1995). Weick (1995) characterized sensemaking as being grounded in identity construction, ongoing, enacted, social, swift, and subtle in nature because individuals engage in the process subconsciously. The labels individuals assign to events and situations are important because labels guide individuals to specific behaviors. For example, men nurses who label nursing as “women’s work” may engage in more masculine tasks, such as lifting patients, that help them manage their gender identity and justify job choice (Williams, 1993). These labels gradually are woven into individuals’ personal narratives about work and influence professional identity development (Ibarra, 2004). As Ibarra (2004) explained, sensemaking controls the narrative construction process by allowing individuals to weigh the costs and benefits of work against their personal interests, wants, needs, and abilities. Throughout careers, new events, information, and changes occur that must be added an individual’s personal narrative to create a coherent story (Eliot & Turns, 2011).

Sensemaking is an important process to understand in order to effectively engage in identity processes. Individuals, typically, do not realize they are engaging in sensemaking in the moment. Triggered by anxiety and ambiguity, the individual begins to ask the two questions: “What’s the story?” and “What should I do next?” (Weick, 1995). When the story is the same and aligned with common experiences, the individual can label the experience subconsciously. It is only when the story is different than everyday life that sensemaking is brought to conscious

awareness and becomes observable (Weick et al., 2005). A different story requires individuals to “bridge external expectations and events to internal evaluations” (Eliot & Turns, 2011, p. 635). Ambiguity at the occupational level can stem from different interpersonal or organizational experiences or larger occupational changes such as funding cuts or implementing new mandates.

When the story implies that a new experience is occurring, to make a label and sense make, the person will begin to look for cues to attend to. Next, the individual will label or name the occurrence. During the labeling stage, the individual is seeking the plausible story (Weick, 1995), which is the story, label, or explanation of an event or experience that bolsters or reinforces an individual’s identity. From there, the story informs the individual of an appropriate action to take. The goal of sensemaking is to be at peace with the experience and be able to go back to a life that is the same as before. In creating this peace, individuals are adopting an identity. For example, if a teacher demonstrates caring towards students, it indicates an identity as a good teacher, whereas if the teacher chooses to be overly stern, instead, then that creates an identity as a difficult teacher. As a theoretical framework, sensemaking has been used as a perspective to understand how individuals viewed issues within and outside the workplace that seemed confusing (Cornelissen, 2012). For example, Evans (2007) investigated how the sensemaking process affected interpretations of messages about race and demographic issues in a school. The way messages were interpreted had implications related to willingness to challenge or change the status quo and social structures.

One way individuals can challenge the status quo or career events is to leave professions. According to Hamel (2009), sensemaking about barriers to career advancement determined if women would exit the organization. Similarly, men in caring professions engage in sensemaking to understand workplace experiences and future aspirations. In the case of understanding

professions as gendered institutions, a sensemaking perspective enables researchers to explore how shared meanings about gender performance and narratives are being reconstructed or dismantled in caring professions and facilitating career decisions. This has broader consequences in relation to event interpretation and long-term narratives associated with occupational segregation. Communication is critical to sensemaking because it is through interactions that individuals gather cues to construct and share the story and create their identities. After individuals identify their stories, they then use that information to decide on a course of action (Weick et al., 2005).

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of men who “cross over” into occupations that are majority female. In these professions, men are members of the profession, but do not characteristically fit the group prototype. Using identity as the guiding concept for this study allowed me to explore the construction, maintenance, and communication of men’s identities from various angles during their careers in caring professions. Given the purpose of professional identity as a mechanism in the workplace, this research assumes that identity transforms over time due to micro-level, meso-level, and macro-level interactions and narratives with which the individual comes into contact. Thus, a communicative approach to identity (CTI) provides a way to explore norms and prototypes of professions as fluid, context dependent, and changing through communication and social interaction rather than fixed properties of groups (Hecht, 1993; Hogg & Reid, 2006).

Identifying the types of identity work strategies men employ throughout their career to maintain group status provides more understanding of how professional identity assists them in functioning within the workplace. Prior literature describes the behaviors that men engage in to

reduce the examination or obviousness of their masculinity or to be seen as more masculine despite occupational role (Evans & Frank, 2003). For those who stay, however, the idea of communicatively negotiating their roles in reference to others has been largely overlooked. In fact, early research in this domain explains that men often do not view themselves as trailblazers or upsetting occupational segregation, but in this occupation as a result of external factors (Williams, 1995).

Although research about men's experiences and behaviors in atypical gender occupations has been conducted, much of the research explains strategies that men enact to get by and survive rather than thrive in the work context or utilize professional identity to find purpose and meaning in the work. Furthermore, some previous literature takes a perspective that men concede portions of their masculinity in order to maintain their professional identity and that others' perceptions of their masculinity shape their behavior. The negotiation process in this context is often viewed as men's attempt to separate themselves from women through specialization choice, pursuing promotions, or disassociation from the work. However, aside from withdrawing or maintaining hegemonic masculinity, it is important to explore how men use communication to, intentionally or unintentionally, counter conflicting identities in female-majority occupations during their career to highlight similarities and move toward a prototype fit. With this in mind, the first research question asks:

RQ1: What identity work strategies do men in caring professions use to navigate prototypical notions of gender and professional identity expectations?

Rather than leaving their current role for a role perceived to be more aligned with masculinity, understanding how men find satisfaction and stay in these roles or professions provides useful insight into identity work and the sources men rely on to

negotiate their identity for more convergence and alignment between their gender identity and their professional identity.

Second, an area that is largely unexplored is the socialization of individuals into female-majority professions by other men. Although research findings suggest that men receive encouragement and guidance from other men, it is not evident how men communicatively assist one another as newcomers learning how to navigate caring occupations. For example, previous literature states that commonalities such as a shared affinity for sports or male teamwork creates gender alliances between men in the workplace (Allan, 1993). However, it is not apparent the socialization strategies, including information seeking or giving, that men engage in to teach other people, especially men, the norms, values, or expectations of their role and promote professional membership. Thus, the second research question is as follows:

RQ2: What messages do men use when socializing others into caring professions?

Furthermore, recruitment and providing support to others is valuable in caring professions that consist of highly emotional work. Since men are the minority and have to navigate the prototype themselves, understanding how they guide others in the profession adds to socialization literature.

Finally, the identities men adopt, in addition to the benefits received by men in atypical gender occupations, create opportunities for men to have different experiences in the workplace as a result of their masculinity and their own behavior. Men in caring professions must learn to interpret experiences and events in a way that promotes desired identities (Weick, 1995). Sensemaking as a theory helps illustrate the relationship between labeling experiences and then taking action as a result. Given the transitions of

men out of feminine occupations into more masculine specializations or professions, a more thorough understanding of the ways men who stay view themselves in relation to their work and make career decisions is becoming more critical (Jacobs, 1993).

Therefore, the final research question asks:

RQ3: How do men in caring professions make sense of their career choices?

Furthering this discussion about the sensemaking processes of men who remain in caring professions, potentially long-term, provides a more nuanced perspective of negotiation and its effects on career development. There is a need to explore the positive narratives and experiences that allow men to maintain membership in female-majority professions and acclimate to their work in productive ways.

In summary, gender identity in the workplace, socialization, and sensemaking processes have been examined in a variety of ways across disciplines, including communication, management, and sociology. Literature about gender identity in the workplace has explored causes of occupational segregation, benefits given to men in female-majority occupations, and strategies employed by men who “cross over” to maintain their masculine identity. Assimilation research has established phases organizational members go through when joining an organization and described how individuals experience and navigate these various phases. Combining these two areas and taking a career life span perspective allowed for a more nuanced examination of an increasingly common phenomenon: the assimilation and socialization processes that occur for men in female-majority professions and that happen when men choose to negotiate their identity within these roles to create coherence and harmony between their identities. A communicative perspective provides a lens to investigate how discursive

practices enable and constrain the blending of gender and professional life and facilitate adaptation to an occupational prototype.

Chapter 3: Method

Participants

In order to answer the three research questions proposed, this study utilized a qualitative research design. Men who are social workers and elementary school teachers are frequently confronted with messages and work experiences that potentially shape and challenge their professional and gender identity. Men in these caring professions, specifically, have professional identities that potentially align with a profession that consists predominantly of women, and that many individuals associate with women (Abbott & Meerabeau, 1998). By focusing on individual identity and men in these caring professions, this study extends identity literature by examining identity development within two professions.

I recruited 15 men who are social workers and 15 men who are elementary school and early childhood education teachers, currently in the profession, at different points in their career, from my professional network and via snowball sampling. I created categories for career stages, which included early-career professionals, mid-career professionals, and late-career professionals to obtain a well-rounded understanding of their professional experiences. Inclusion criteria limited participation to men currently in social work or elementary/early childhood education with a minimum of one year of experience in the field to provide time for professional identity to develop beyond an educational setting. Stated gender identity as a man was another criterion for participation in this study. As a result, this study included 30 men ages 23 to 62 (mean = 35.4, SD = 11.1) with an average of 9.5 years of work experience (range = 1 – 32, SD = 8.4). Men interviewed were also ethnically diverse. Participants identified as Caucasian ($n = 15$), Black ($n = 9$), Hispanic or Latinx ($n = 5$), and Native American ($n = 1$). Participants were from varying regions of the United States, such as Oklahoma, Michigan, California, New York, and South

Carolina. Additionally, social workers and teachers served in various capacities within their work context including varying occupational areas of social work and grade levels, and each participant was assigned a pseudonym using an online name generator (See Table 1).

Table 1
Participants' Demographics

Pseudonym	Age	Ethnicity	Time in Field	Position
1 ^A Raymond	29	Caucasian	2.5	Acting Social Work Director
2 ^A Blake	40	African American	7	Licensed Professional Counselor
3 ^A Bernard	57	Caucasian	22	Senior Integrated Dual Diagnosis Counseling Specialist
4 ^A Donald	42	African American	20	HUD-VASH Case Manager
5 ^A Bruce	36	African American	7	Social Services Manager
6 ^A Eric	25	Caucasian	4	Senior Program Specialist
7 ^A Jeremy	30	Latinx	8	MSW
8 ^A Jason	41	Caucasian	15	Social Work Assistant
9 ^A Joe	47	Caucasian	10	Program Specialist 2-Project Manager
10 ^A Martin	35	African American	10	Social Work-Clinical Team Lead
11 ^A Morris	29	Latinx	10	Director of Client Engagement - Homeless Services
12 ^A Ronald	30	Caucasian	8	Program Specialist
13 ^A Shawn	30	Native American	2	School Social Worker
14 ^A Travis	46	Caucasian	7	Child Welfare Specialist 3 Embedded Liasion
15 ^A Todd	28	African American	2	Peer Recovery Support Specialist
16 ^B Aiden	23	Latinx	1	5 th grade
17 ^B Carl	29	Caucasian	7	Early childhood
18 ^B Clarence	53	Caucasian	32	2 nd grade
19 ^B Carter	27	Caucasian	4	Special education
20 ^B Christian	27	African American	4	3 rd grade
21 ^B Damien	49	Caucasian	25	1 st grade
22 ^B Dean	28	African American	7	Kinder and PE
23 ^B Ethan	27	Latinx	3	3 rd grade

24 ^B Mason	25	Caucasian	2	2 nd grade
25 ^B Oliver	22	Mexican	1	4 th grade
26 ^B Russell	34	Caucasian	13	3 rd grade
27 ^B Roger	28	African	3	1 st grade
		American		
28 ^B Randall	54	African	20	4 th grade
		American		
29 ^B Stanley	28	Caucasian	3	Special education
30 ^B Bobby	62	Caucasian	26	5 th grade

Note

^A Social Worker

^B Teacher

Data Collection and Procedures

I conducted semi-structured interviews with men in caring professions to answer the research questions. I followed a 14-question interview guide to provide consistency across interviews, but asked follow-up questions to create a conversational aspect and a comfortable environment for the interview (Tracy, 2013). The structured interview questions focused on understanding how identity has shifted throughout men’s careers beginning in anticipatory socialization and continuing throughout their tenure in caring professions, and how resistance to occupational stereotypes created changes in communication and action in their work. Follow-up questions were used to foster deeper discussions for participants to elaborate on an answer further.

The interview guide was organized to follow participants’ career influences beginning with family and continuing up to their current position (See Appendix A). For example, men in caring professionals were asked about their experiences and messages in the anticipatory socialization phase through channels such as college and societal expectations that supported and challenged them in choosing their current profession. Also, participants were encouraged to share in-depth stories and examples to illustrate how they began to develop their professional identity. This style of questioning continued to sequentially explore the antecedent, encounter,

and assimilation phases of the assimilation process. Questions captured both the socialization and individualization aspects of assimilation which describe the prototypes given by institutional channels as well as what men caring professionals do to challenge or negotiate their role. Interviews ranged from 35 minutes to 107 minutes (mean = 71.4 minutes, SD = 18.85) and were audio recorded. The recordings were transcribed using a professional transcription service (Rev.com) and produced approximately 460 pages of single-spaced written text.

Data Analysis

I analyzed interview transcripts using constant comparative analysis to answer the research questions (Christians & Carey, 1989; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Tracy, 2013). The accuracy of the transcribed audio recordings was undertaken first. Using the NVivo software, I then thoroughly read the transcripts multiple times. First, I engaged in data reduction to remove information that was not related to the research questions, which allowed for a more focused analysis (Bisel, et al., 2014). For example, units of data related to social life outside of work were removed from this analysis. Next, during open coding, participants' responses received an initial code categorizing each theme based on the purpose of the study (i.e., to understand how men used communication to develop their professional identity, make career choices, and support others). Taking an iterative approach, this process included comparing comments and codes to sort similar and dissimilar themes. These initial themes involved NVivo and contextual codes as well as codes related to the theoretical concepts used in relevant literature. For example, gender, socialization of self, others, from school, and career aspirations were all initial codes. Throughout open coding, I continued to relate codes to one another to identify potential connections. Following open coding, I utilized focused coding to further refine the codes, which resulted in condensing the data. For example, I grouped initial codes into categories "metaphors"

and “resistance” were combined into “negotiation strategies.” This process continued until all codes were distinct and all data was accounted for. Finally, axial coding was conducted to explain how codes and themes found in this data relate to one another and align, or not, with current literature and research on the theories and concepts in this dissertation. For example, negotiation strategies and prototype descriptions allowed me to address the first research question. Thus, axial coding resulted in grouping strategies, messages, and processes found into broader categories based on the identity, socialization, and sensemaking literature.

Verification Strategies

To ensure a rigorous qualitative analysis and enhance credibility, Creswell (2007) recommends using a minimum of two methods of verification. For this study, I utilized thick description, member checks, and a negative case analysis. According to Creswell (2007), thick description is achieved by providing details about the context and participants to increase the transferability of concepts. In addition to these rich descriptions, I provide direct quotes from participants that allow readers to understand participants’ feelings, thoughts, actions, and motives. Second, I conducted member checks as an opportunity for participants to review findings to ensure the findings were representative of their experiences and interpreted appropriately (Creswell, 2007). Member checks allowed participants to read and comment on an earlier draft of the manuscript results. Participants who evaluated the initial findings shared that the analysis represented how they viewed their work in a balanced way. Third, I also accounted for all data using a negative case analysis and sought out data that did not align with early theorizing in order to revise all arguments (Tracy, 2013). In the following section I describe the negative case.

Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretation

RQ1: Identity Strategies

Analysis of the interview transcripts revealed how men used communication in caring professions to engage in identity work, socialize others into caring professions, and make sense of their own professional experiences and career trajectories.

Defining the Prototype

Initially, it was important to understand how men in caring professions defined an ideal social worker or teacher. When prompted to describe the prototypical or ideal person for their profession, participants provided characteristics, beliefs, and values they deemed necessary qualities for their respective professions. Overall, men described a balance of characteristics that did not specifically relate to gender, which is important given the disproportional representation in these professions as well as how these occupations are discussed. For example, Carl provided this description of ideal teacher characteristics:

I think they, they need to be **patient**. They need to be, uh, **respectful**. I think of everyone, you know, um, especially where like the age I'm at, we're getting kids before a lot of, you know, a lot of the world's stuff is put on them. And so just kind of taking every child as they are. . .I think a great teacher focuses on where the children are at now and like what is the best for them . . . Um, you also need to be really **flexible** because you never know what's going to happen on a minute to minute basis even. . .Do **silly** things . . . that will show, that just shows the children that you're **willing** to like have fun with them and get on their level. And sometimes you're going to do things that you think are silly, but that's going to be what's **best for the children**. So I think that's really important too, is to kind

of get past your own ideas of like how things should be and instead doing what's best for the children.

Carl explained that being a good teacher is about being student-centered, which should be the main focus for any educator, and prioritizing their needs provides a point of connection. In interviews, both social workers and teachers mentioned deriving these characteristics from experiences as well as trial and error in their workplace. Eric described prototypical traits for his profession as follows:

A very **patient** person and I think any, anyone who is working with children or you know, even diverse populations has to be patient because there may be barriers, you know, whether there are communication barriers, cultural barriers that take it, that take longer for you to kind of really, um, interpret like the messages that you guys are exchanging . . . I mean you have to **care** about people . . . I don't think anything's wrong with being successful, but, um, again . . . if your real goal is not to **ultimately better humanity** then you probably shouldn't be doing the work or anything like that . . . you have to have a **sense of enthusiasm** for your work . . . **kindness**. Um, I think you need to be able to learn to be an effective communicator . . . just a really a willingness to kind of consistently approved just as a human being.

Here, Eric discussed the traits associated with the overarching goal of the profession as being to better humanity, and other singular focuses, such as success, can inhibit doing work.

Many provided similar answers, but several participants shared unique insights. Here are some descriptors of the prototypical social work professional or teacher: givers, helpers, relationship builders, ally, patient, respectful, caring, adaptive, reassuring, flexible, compassionate, selfless, nonjudgmental, nurturing, inviting, organized, competent, and good

communicator. A typical description included several of these characteristics. These attributes became a prototype to mirror and define professional membership.

Although some men reported they aligned with their description of the ideal worker in their profession, often times, men defined the prototype using characteristics they felt they were still working on or characteristics they had worked to fit. Mason described the ideal teacher in this way:

Someone that is **caring**, someone that is first and foremost, an **advocate and an ally** to the community they're working in. I think that really needs to be the most important thing at this point for a teacher. Um, someone who is **passionate about education and educational justice**. Um, and someone that **enjoys working with kids**.

When asked to compare himself to his ideal, he stated he is becoming more like his ideal description of teachers:

I always strive . . . I have a vision in my head. Um I felt that my first year I did not do a great job. I had like small little seedling moments where you can see it peaking up through the dirt like oh cool there's something starting here, but I felt very little success in my ideal of a teacher.

Mason explained a desire to be more aligned with the prototype and how that can be a struggle early in one's career. However, he believed it was worth working towards the ideal prototype.

As shown, participants illustrated possessing some characteristics and working to develop others. Several participants explained general or overall improvement toward the prototypical professional in their field. Others focused on specific areas of growth that could make them more like the ideal caring professional. Aiden stated he could improve as well:

I think there's still a lot I could work on. Um, I would say my strength is, um, mostly like my, my motivation to teach. Like I'd definitely find it fulfilling, identify with a lot of my kids . . . but, um, there are a lot of things I definitely want to improve . . . I've had a big challenge like shifting the way I think or explain things to like the way a 10-year-old can understand. Like I just, you know, the whole idea of like scaffolding things a lot. Like that's, it's just been a challenge to, to shift my mindset to like how, how will the fifth grader get this.

Although he has strengths, here, the teacher described a specific struggle he was having in meeting his standards of the ideal teacher, explaining content to 10-year-olds. Men shared how social work and teaching were challenging jobs that required some adaptation and development of skills.

Men who aligned with the prototype narrative the best, or who felt like they were growing beyond the baseline of a good social worker or teacher, were those who had been in the profession longer. When asked how he measured up to the ideal, Bernard said:

I'm pretty good. I care about every one of my clients. Uh, I do as well as I can. My job is to do as good as I can for every client and, uh, I do that. Um, that's not to say I couldn't have done better, but I do as well as I can at the moment. And uh, you know, sometimes you know it's just different. Uh you, you're doing good one day and not doing so good the other, uh, but I'm giving it my best and I feel like everybody deserves your best shot.

Damien, another long-time teacher, emphasized that he was in his 25th year "but has lots to learn yet." Russell echoed this as he explained:

I think that I have the traits that I believe are important, but the thing that I didn't mention . . . the area that I always feel that I fall short is when measuring myself against, um, [making] that impact academically.

As caring professionals, being the right kind of person is valuable. These messages illustrate how, over time, men were able to view how well they did in the bigger picture of a social worker or teacher, beyond specific traits, even though their work is hard.

These initial descriptions of the prototypical social worker and teacher provided by participants created a prototype that coincides with the larger narrative describing the type of person who provides care. However, although the prototype descriptions included some characteristics that are more associated with women, they did not mention being a woman as a quality of the ideal social worker or teacher. They avoided *gendered* descriptions of the ideal. Overall, the prototypical member of these professions needed to have strong relational qualities, such as nurturing and communication, but also needed to have task related qualities, such as organizational and skills and knowledge of the job. A common thread among the men's narratives was that, although they may have felt like they had several qualities needed in relation to providing care, most suggested that they were working on prototypical qualities they did not fully have yet. Participants' responses describing the prototype served as a foundation to explain how they constructed gender identity into the narrative, communicated about the profession with others, and determined their career path.

Identity Work Strategies to Manage Gender and Professional Identity

To answer RQ1, using identity work, I examined narratives men communicated in order to manage their competing identities (gender and care professional) in caring professions. Through analysis of interview data, I identified two primary strategies employed by social

workers and teachers: 1) alignment and 2) realignment strategies. Alignment strategies enabled men to highlight similarities between them and others in the profession and integrate their gender identity and professional identity toward the prototype. Additionally, alignment strategies focused less on a gendered understanding of being caring and more on caring in action or doing care. Alignment strategies occurred through three subcategories: *work metaphors*, *balancing characteristics*, and descriptions of *growing into the prototype*. In contrast, realignment strategies were present when gender differences between the male caring professionals and others in the profession were overemphasized. Realignment strategies occurred through three subcategories: *embracing*, *rejecting*, and *distancing*. With each strategy, caring professionals were able to emphasize and de-emphasize gender for themselves in order to maintain their professional identity and justify their position in the profession. Alignment and realignment strategies are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Table 2
Identity Work Strategies Among Caring Professionals

	Identity Work Strategies	Examples
Alignment	Work metaphors	“Swiss Army Knife,” “Jack of All Trades”
	Balancing characteristics	“Firm but Fair,” “Warm but not too warm”
	Growing into the prototype	“I’m working on it”
Realignment	Embracement	“Father figure”
	Rejection	“Unicorns,” “Parental disapproval”
	Distancing	“Physical distancing”

Alignment Strategies

First, alignment strategies refer to how men in caring professions use communication to eliminate various gendered identity differences that exist in their work environment. These strategies were used in interactions with others in the workplace including supervisors, coworkers, or outsiders, and during interviews when attempting to describe professional identity, work, or strengths and weaknesses they possessed. By communicating likeness and similarity with the prototype, men were able to orient the focus towards the work and away from stereotypical characteristics of their gender (i.e., focus on doing over being). In addition, achieving alignment with the prototype frequently resulted in easing the uncertainty of others who had doubts.

One way this strategy emerged from the data was through framing. Men likened their professional identity to a “swiss army knife,” “sales person,” and “Jack of all trades.” Male caring professionals consistently evoked identity descriptions that were masculine but were applicable to most people who worked in the profession. Travis described his job like this:

I facilitate anything that they need from the facility or I help the facility get anything... that they may need from the worker or anybody else that's connected to the state for that child. Um, I'm sorta like the **Swiss army knife** for both child welfare and the facility that I am at. I try to have a **tool** ready for anything that may pop up. And if I don't have a tool, I educate myself to make sure that I can put it in the toolbox for the next time.

When asked about the ideal professional in his line of work, Travis also said:

I would say somebody that's sort of a, a **Jack of all trades**, but a master of none really. I mean, you got to have the relational piece. You gotta have the organizational piece. You gotta have sort of that techie piece. You gotta you gotta be flexible. You gotta be

communicative, you gotta relational, uh, social is the front of the title for a reason for the work we do. Like there's, there's you gotta be able to communicate with strangers, some people that you may not agree with and uh, people a little that are way beyond your station in your career.

Using metaphors turned the attention from internal characteristics individuals needed in these professions to external competence needed to perform the work successfully, which was applicable to everyone. As caring professionals, participants were expected to complete many tasks in service of their clients, which included working with others to provide complete care. Caring professionals are engaging in difficult work that requires many skills.

The characteristics described by participants as needed to do their jobs effectively were also communicated by balancing stereotypical gender values through dichotomies such as, “firm but fair,” and being caring but needing “tough skin”. Carter discussed the balance needed to teach elementary age children:

I think that my experiences at the rehab center kind of showed me that I could do that job and that like I had the, I had the right balance of like, um, nurturing instincts but then also like kind of a stern demeanor and like the ability to like kind of walk that line between I think the, the famous like, uh, the cliché line in the behavior world is that you kind of have to be mother Teresa and **general Patton**.

A comment from Roger also explained this balance:

I will say the ideal teacher would have a positive balance between the warm and the strict. Yeah, that's definitely, that's definitely something that all teachers battle with. Um, and there are teachers who are very, very, very, very strict. And, um, so you may have, so you gotta have the strict and the warmth to put together a positive balance.

He continues on to explain why this is such a critical balance to strike for effective classroom management:

Cause if you're too, if you're too warm, which I found out in the first couple of weeks of my, uh, being a teacher and um, and kindergarten you can't be, you can't be that warm. Like you gotta you gotta can't be warm, you can't be, you can't be like, you know, over, over warm and you know nice and wanting to be like, you know, quote unquote buddy buddy with the kids and all that kind of stuff. And the, um, so that balance between warm and strict is where the ideal teacher is to that actually, um, goes out to all other areas of teaching within the classroom.

Here, Roger explained that an overabundance of warmth could cause behavior issues. The balance discussed in this quote resulted in “high expectations and high support” for the students.

All social workers and teachers explained the necessity of having both what could be described as masculine and feminine characteristics to be successful in the field. From this perspective, truly caring for others involves more than the standard characteristics individuals associate with caring professions. They also emphasized that lacking balancing characteristics could lead to burnout as well as current workplace challenges with clients or students. In describing another dichotomy of personal and detached, Martin said:

I think the people that do well in the field kind of embody [my ideal]. Um, I think the people that have had difficulty in this field, um, they might not be as empathetic as they thought they were. Uh, they might be emotionally invested in some, sometimes it could seem like you're too emotionally invested in a case. So it's hard. So I don't take things personal. And I think that's what leads to burnout in people in this field sometimes.

He described the detriment that could occur from being too emotional or “losing control of your emotions,” to the point where this strategy was not effective due to the “high stakes” of the work being done. However, he pushed for individuals to be “emotionally strong”.

Notions of how men describe growing to match the prototypically caring professional, generally, also represented an alignment strategy. The characteristics and values the participants deemed as important to do well in the field were also traits they believed they possessed or had acquired. Morris described himself in relation to the work that he does this way:

I think, I think I measure up to [the ideal]. I really do. And, um, you know, I, I, I definitely, this wasn't something that was natural to me, but through my experience in college and then working in politics, I learned to become more personable. I, you know, prior to this I was, um, I still feel, and I want to say am very much introverted and stuff like that, but I realized that you need to connect with people in order to grow, to get things done.

He explained how he was becoming more like the prototype through time and work experience. Specifically, he was learning the prototypical characteristic of being more outgoing and building connections with others.

At times, caring professionals like the one above recognized that they aligned with the ideal caring professional significantly. More frequently, however, when asked how well they matched their own ideal, participants instead described ways in which they were working to reach the ideal. Overall, participants sought alignment with the prototype in specific and more general ways through work metaphors, balancing characteristics, and explaining how they were becoming more like the prototype. However, navigating competing identities can result in misalignment, which is moving away from or expanding the prototype.

Realignment Strategies

Second, realignment strategies refer to instances when men in caring professions used communication to enact identities which more stereotypically matched their gender identity. However, these identities embodied important qualities for their role. These strategies were used in interactions with others and during interviews to describe their professional identity or work in a way that highlighted the uniqueness of their gender in the work they did. Particularly, the need for realignment strategies surfaced in situations when others in the work environment expected men to fill certain roles. Men discussed realignment mostly as a result of others' expectations imposed on them.

Caring professionals demonstrated some understanding of how gender influenced their jobs. However, descriptions of men in caring professions as “unicorns,” “sons,” or “disciplinarians,” created challenges for growth in their work and relationships. Communicating differences enabled and constrained men, simultaneously creating and limiting unique roles men could fulfill to be of assistance to others. Realignment was communicated in three ways: *embracement, rejection, and distancing.*

One way realignment was communicated was through embracing the gendered position that was assigned. Dean stated, “I realize a lot of teachers, male or female, I guess because I'm a male and I'm an African American male, being a disciplinarian to the males, they automatically assume it.” A comment from Damien echoed this narrative:

Let me preface this by saying that I can be **gruff** when I need to be and the way I am with kids sometimes I've been known as um, more so **hard and crusty** on the outside, but soft and gooey on the inside. Yeah. All right. So with that being said, you know, I was approached, even in kindergarten, the way I interacted with kids was a lot more diff. It

was, was drastically, I don't want to say drastically, but it was **markedly different** than the two nice elderly ladies who were my mentors. So, not that I got a reputation for being **a mean jerk**, but I was the one who could handle the behavior problems.

As a result of this positioning, this gendered expectation contributed to men being put in this disciplinary role often. These participants, and others, explained not being offended by the label of disciplinarian or tough but just learning to expect it. By embracing this identity, men viewed their role as creating balance and serving a need. However, they simultaneously shared not wanting their gender to be a main highlight of who they were professionally. Embracing allowed them to not overemphasize gender further by challenging it.

Not only did this happen in classrooms, but this **position as tough** also carried over into relationships with co-workers as well. Some participants described being asked to mentor or work with individuals who were deemed as challenging or difficult frequently. Morris described an experience with a mentee who he was asked to work with when others had given up on her:

And you know, sure enough, like I, the first month of supervising . . . you know, this person, um, she was very hesitant . . . didn't interact much, was a little combative, but I was just like, hey, like I'm here to learn from you. Like I, yes, I'm your supervisor, but you're the master of your craft. You know, you're the one that knows what's going on.

Because he was a man, Morris described being assigned a mentee that other women did not want to work with. However, he went on to describe this person as one of the best people he had ever supervised. Although not always seeking the authoritative position, sometimes this position is assigned to men because people believe they should be able to handle it.

In addition to disciplinarian, another identity position that was utilized was that of a “father figure”. Although present in both narratives of social workers and teachers work

experiences, the father figure label was especially significant in teachers and central to a role they fulfilled for students who did not have male role models in their lives. Embracing the father figure position contributed to a sense of occupational balance by supporting the motherly aspect of teaching. Bobby explained the importance of this role:

Some kids seem to do a little better with a male teacher, just maybe it has to do with, you know, their own family situation for whatever reason. Um, they maybe their own, maybe their **own dad is not there** very much. And so there's a little bit of a **father figure** for them. Um, and every now and then a kid loves to call me dad. It'll just slip and they'll feel a little embarrassed. But, uh, in some ways I, I just kind of, depending on the kid, I, I feel like I might represent a little bit of that to them, you know, a little dose of stability where they might not have quite as much at home.

In this father figure example, Bobby voiced the purpose of men in classrooms and the support and stability he provided for students as well as how students responded to him.

Embracing the father figure identity is also what initially encouraged some men to pursue social work and teaching in the first place. Another teacher, Randall, said, "I grew up without a father. And so, uh, one of the things that . . . I wanted to try and do was give them someone to look at, look up to or look at as a model." His motivation for pursuing elementary education was to be a role model for students. Due to a lack of men teaching in early childhood and elementary education, and the family demographic of some students, men discussed how critical their presence was, to be role models for students. Identity as a father figure suggests that men, in many ways, see themselves as similar to women who teach. Being a father figure represents caring for students' needs, which matches the teacher prototype.

Another realignment strategy is to *reject* a position or identity that others try to project or impose men that illuminates difference and causes misalignment with who they are trying to embody in their professional roles. One example of this is illustrated by the term “unicorn”. Men in this study recognized how others often viewed them as rare and unique. Upon entering the profession four years ago, Christian described the term:

I remember the woman who recruited, uh, who recruited me coming into my senior level class and I was the only guy in there as well. So it even struck [sic] a chord when she pointed me out and she directly talked to me in front of everyone and said, and they could especially use you because you're a black male. And she mentioned the fact that I was a unicorn. And you know, of course I laughed at that, but it stuck with me like that, that new unicorn, you know, it's that **mythical creature** that everyone's so fascinated about. It's so, you know, awing and people want to know more about it. And I wish it was, you wish there was more and wish that this unicorn was theirs.

Here, Christian explained how the term “unicorn” was not based on being a good teacher or skill, but solely on external characteristics. He also discussed how the term was condescending and did not truly demonstrate appreciation of diversity. It only reminded him of how different he was; thus he rejected this label. Further, this view does factor into hiring, which was unexpected, causing uncertainty and doubt for the men who experienced this. The participant shared that he now mentored other teachers. He said, “So [the lack of diversity] made me feel even more so like a unicorn. But in that sense it made me, it gave me even more of a perseverance to be great because they’re assessing an anomaly.” To combat the idea of being a “unicorn,” this teacher placed more emphasis on being a great teacher through skill development and relationship building.

Unfortunately, other gendered identities to *reject* were centered around questions of why men in caring professions would want to do the type of work that they did. Many male social workers and teachers, especially working with younger kids, have been confronted by parents about not wanting their child to work with them, and by administrators about being careful around children. Rejecting this label was communicated through explaining support and empowerment for one's decision. Clarence explained a situation he was in:

I still have parents that will not let their child be in my room really though. I don't want, I don't want no man teacher. . . I had [a parent] this year, surprisingly. That was her exact words. 'I don't want no man teacher. Oh, he's nice. I hear good stuff. I just don't want no man teacher.' I'll be, I have a very, very good relationship and standing at my school. I mean I know a lot of the parents of the kids above of course, and below. And I know every kid in second grade and uh, the parents have been very nice but just some people they just do not want that. They don't think teachers should be men. Teachers are women. Although upset by the stigma, he responded by saying he was "glad she took a position in his education because she stood up for [her child]." Because of the stigmatization of men working with children, men often had to reject these stereotypes that others had about them in order to maintain their identity as a professional social worker or teacher.

The final realignment strategy is distancing, which is both nonverbal and verbal. Mason also explained being in an uncomfortable position concerning the school dress code policy because of his gender:

There was an issue with the dress code. I'll put it like that. And to make a point, it was suggested that the men wear that article of clothing to show how inappropriate it was. Now that also goes into bad leadership skills, but there's like, listen, there are a lot of

overlaps to this. Yeah, I was about leggings because of, there were some teachers that were wearing leggings when the school did not feel it was appropriate. So we suggested, Oh, well, [you], will you wear leggings? Oh, well, you know, we, you should just, just do it. Just wear leggings to show how inappropriate is for men to wear. It's a, women don't have to. And I promptly walked out of the office after that happened going like, I don't even know how to respond to this because the entire administration was there just kind of watching this unfold because it was an office. This office staff member talking to me about it and everyone's yacking it up and laughing and I'm like, Nope, I'm going to head out now.

Here, Mason described being used by administration to make a point to women teachers about appropriate dress and how the only way to resolve the position he was placed in was to leave the conversation. Ultimately, in order to realign himself from the discussion of gender back to being a teacher, he physically left the room.

For others, distancing from a negative situation based on gender looked like modified behavior. Donald said it was important to adapt, in some circumstances, to clients' comfort and needs:

When I would be with a female client, I would . . . just tell my female colleagues I'm getting ready to have someone in my office. . . I've also had a door cracked as well. . .from a clinical standpoint, this is making it known to people and ensuring that the, that the, that the culture of the agency was okay with that. Not to say that it was going to be common practice, but it's the way we have to do that. When it's appropriate, it's okay. . .to be the cognitive professional and being able to make certain decisions. . .to ensure that, that, that I'm safe and the client is safe.

For Donald, distancing from the negative stereotype of not being safe was achieved through relying on coworkers and adjusting his physical space.

In both areas of embracing and rejecting identities and narratives, there are stories of just needing to move on. When too extreme, engaging in realignment manifested feelings of not belonging and making work harder. Clarence commented:

I have to prove myself constantly. That's a big thing. Prove myself that everything's fine, everything's good. Um, I mean, I'd, like I said, I've had to take a step back many times in situations because I am male. I mean, even to the point of uh having a sick child, I have to get my partner teacher uh to help me with that child or to carry that child, to help you watch me carry that child or go down the hall carrying a child because I can't by myself.

Because men wanted to be good social workers and teachers, the labels and stigmas placed on them by others for being male were described as challenging to manage at times.

Rejection of others' views was critical in maintaining worth in the field, as gendered narrative affected bonding and fulfilling aspects of care. Of the identity work strategies identified, alignment and realignment strategies required internal and external behaviors and manifested in interactions with others.

RQ2: Socialization Messages to Others

Throughout interviews, participants discussed their own socialization as well as the role they play in socialization attempts with others in social work or teaching. These messages occurred in both direct and indirect ways when talking about work, including advice and providing encouragement or discouragement. The analysis for the second research question identified messages men used to socialize others into social work and teaching at different stages, including prior to being in the profession as well as after they were already a member of

the profession. Although some research has explored factors that influence men’s socialization experiences (Williams, 1989), (1) the studies usually do not take a communicative approach specifically, and (2) the studies focus on men as the recipients of socialization attempts, not the socializers. Participants reported not working with many men, but actively playing a role in the socialization of others, both men and women.

In answer to RQ2, three major categories emerged from men’s interviews based on message content: *socio-emotional*, *skill*, and *presence-oriented* messages. A subcategory of socio-emotional messages, benefits-oriented messages, directly related to tangible and intangible material or value received from professional membership.

Table 3
Socialization Messages from Caring Professionals

Message Type	Definition	Exemplars
Socio-emotional-oriented	Messages about work related to an individual’s career choice based on social and emotional traits needed	Heart piece and coping mechanisms
Benefits-oriented	Subcategory of socio-emotional messages specifically focused on positive benefits of professional membership	Fulfillment and job flexibility
Skill-oriented	Messages addressing an individual’s career choice based on skills	Being a helper
Presence-oriented	Messages where meaning about professional membership is indirectly communicated to others	Mentorship and modeling

Socio-emotional oriented-messages

These messages were often used when talking to individuals interested in joining these professions and evaluating or supporting individuals who were already in the professions, like co-workers. Raymond described the emotional toll of social work this way to a potential professional:

And [the fulfillment you receive] is not without having trauma or scars that's going to keep you up at night as well. So you have to, I mean, do you want a job that you know you're going to feel like you're doing the right thing every day. This is for you. If you want a job where you're not going to ever have, um, complications . . . then it's not the job for you cause he has to figure out a way to juggle both of those things.

This participant described encouraging others by making them aware of how challenging social work can be, but that it is possible, with balance.

Participants explained social and emotional aspects of the work and they took this theme seriously. Another social worker, Travis, said he always talked to people interested in social work about the 'heart piece':

I do talk a little bit more about the heart piece. Like if you're a tender person, you gotta be able to make sure that you have really good coping mechanisms for yourself. You have to have outlets. You have to make sure that you balance that, that difficult work with the joy and the smiles and everything that you need.

Here, Travis explained the importance of being able to care for yourself as well in order to be a good fit for this type of work. For many caring professionals, socio-emotional-oriented messages were not only about making sure individuals have the heart for the work to care for clients but also that they could care for themselves.

Benefits-Oriented Messages. In addition, benefits-oriented messages were a subcategory of socio-emotional messages directly about fulfillment and rewards. These messages often followed descriptions of how hard these careers were and functioned as a highlight to the work. Aiden explained encouraging some of his friends who were interested in becoming teachers:

I gave them like really honest advice. I'm pretty much saying like, Oh, it's like these kinds of programs are pretty tough. Um, like it is very time consuming and draining. But at the end of the day, like I, I tell everyone that it's like very fulfilling, at least for me.

Here the participant explained recognizing that it is tough work, but the fulfillment benefit was worth it.

Alongside newcomers or those consider social work or teaching careers, benefits-oriented messages were also used to encourage people who were already members of these professions, as support. Roger discussed what he told someone who was still in school:

. . . There's challenges, but this is one of the most fulfilling things you can possibly do with your life. Like, please keep going. Do not change your major. People are still in school right now. Do not change your major. Please. Like, seriously, um, keep with the course and all that because I know that we need more people. Like you enter into these classrooms and um, do not hear what the, uh, what other people's experiences, other people's experiences dictate your experience. Yes. I'm not gonna lie to you and say that lower elementary is, you know, roses and fairytales and just happiness. It's really challenging. It is. But, um, all the more for the it, but the more challenges you have and it's also a bigger opportunity to win, like the biggest, it's the bigger the challenge, the greater the win, you know?

As shown here, benefits-oriented messages highlight how the fulfillment experienced in these professions far outweigh the costs.

Many benefits-oriented messages focused on intangibles; however, some caring professionals stated that financial rewards can be good, depending on the route you take. Martin said he has had the opportunity to encourage other black men considering social work about the financial opportunities present:

And even though that's not the main reason to get into social work, and if you do get into social work for that reason, you probably get out. But there are ways to make a very decent living doing social work.

Similarly, Clarence shared his stance on the benefits of being an educator:

I give them the truth. You know, it's hard, it's a lot of work, but you're going to be asleep at seven o'clock. . .you go over your sleep because you are tired. And I tell them the money is not good, but it'll pay your bills. I mean I had a BMW. It's, it's fine. You can do it. It's just all about how you want to spend your money.

In addition to financial benefits, social workers described freedom of route avenues as a benefit.

For example, Raymond shared this about people he talked to about social work: "I always encouraged them to go the social work route with LCSW 'cause it does open up more doors."

Although concerns arise for individuals considering caring professions, participants rarely discouraged anyone but provided realistic expectations for the careers. Instead, they focused on the positives social work and teaching could bring to others' lives. Social workers and teachers shared messages with others who were interested in caring professions about the social and emotional requirements that would be expected of them in order to do this type of work. Participants overwhelmingly described the work as difficult. Phrases such as "vicarious

trauma” were used to depict the challenge workers faced. High social and emotional capacity are significant parts of providing care.

Skills-Oriented Messages

Second, male social workers and teachers shared messages about necessary skills for caring professions and skill development, although this was the least frequently mentioned of the three messages (socio-emotional, skills, and presence). Caring professionals used skills-oriented messages to encourage people to go back to school or if they noticed someone had particular qualities that demonstrated they were capable of the work in caring professions. Blake said this of a friend he was encouraging to become a therapist:

She was, she's already a like a super compassionate person. Um, um, and so she, she, there was a level of, of help that she wants to provide to people that she would talk to me about, that she could do. And I think it's just because she didn't know, she didn't know what, what to do next.

He recognized her competency and helped support her returning to school. He even put her on cases which further influenced her socialization process.

Another social worker, Shawn, described why he was encouraging his brother to pursue social work:

His undergrad is in public health and worked in HIV research. Um, and um, was finding that he loved getting to meet with his participants and, and talk with them. Um, but he wasn't able to, you know, go much further than what, you know, the research was that he was doing.

The participant recognized how applicable and useful an interest in public health could be in the social work field.

Skills-oriented socializing messages align with the prototype of ideal caring professionals and are shared with people members of the profession think could be successful.

Presence-Oriented Messages

Finally, presence-oriented messages were predominately shared by male social workers and teachers just by being in these professional positions and interacting with others. Participants who used presence-oriented messages often had informal or indirect contact with people, but did not always know their future career paths or what they said, specifically. Modeling is a mode of presence-oriented messages. For example, social workers and teachers described receiving letters from former student teachers, interns, friends, or students who wrote them letters later, thanking them for being a good model. Several of those individuals went on to careers in social work and teaching. Bobby described two more casual encounters with potential future educators:

I actually had a student teacher who was, uh, a student in my class in fourth grade and she reached out to me a few years ago and said she's getting her credential and she always enjoyed my class and wanted to know if I would ever be a student teacher. And, and that was a fantastic experience. You know, we spent a lot of time after hours talking about, you know, ways to go about teaching this and that. And, um, that was, that was fantastic. Um, so what are some other examples? Um, I currently have a kid who is now in seventh grade, former student who has been staying in touch with me and she, you know, she emails me, sometimes I go to a play she's in or something and she was asking if she could help, um, do some community service in my class since we're all sheltering in place and we can't go on our end of the year trip.

This teacher discussed how being involved in people's lives may spark them to consider teaching. Social work and teaching are challenging fields, and men viewed the mentoring

process as valuable, considering some of them did not have that. Even though there is no guarantee how these experiences guide people into the field, presence messages were valuable for learning about professional opportunities. Morris, who was in a Latino fraternity, described how his presence has influenced others:

I've had members of my organization even to this day that tell me like, Hey, I see the work that you're doing and it's inspiring me to focus more and to see that I can, I can achieve a career in government or a career in social services, you know, stuff like that. So maybe not someone that I directly was like, Hey, switch over to this, do this. But I've definitely seen the, um, you know, the effects of it kind of trickle on to people I know or people that I barely met.

Other participants, like Russell, now had the opportunity to serve as a mentor to a male first-year teacher at his school. He described the experience as follows:

I'm definitely trying to keep this, um, this guy afloat... he actually, you know, did not struggle in the way that most first years struggle in terms of like, um, classroom management or like I, I've heard a call, a community building, but yeah, he still had a lot to learn. But you know, and often my school is a very challenging environment. So just helping to navigate the politics and the bureaucracy of it.

Because the first year of teaching is challenging, many caring professionals, like this teacher, valued socialization and support as ongoing endeavors, beyond getting people into the field. Therefore, once men are in these professions, support such as a first-year mentor can help by sharing their experience and communicating with them early enough in their career to encourage them to stay in the profession.

Alternatively, these message types can be used to discourage people from joining the profession. No social work professional or teacher in this study stated actively discouraging anyone. However, some participants discussed passively discouraging others. For example, a Joe explained how he indirectly discouraged people:

I just kind of passively, you know, give out the whole, you know, it's not a lot of money, you know, and clinical, you know, really stressful. And, you know, just kind of a passive thing there. I don't actively try and discourage anybody though.

This quote shows benefits-oriented and socio-emotional-oriented messages being used to discourage, rather than encourage, professional membership. Statements like this suggest that, although male caring professionals in this study did not directly turn people away from the field, they engaged in selectively recruiting and supporting others.

RQ3: Sensemaking and Professional Career Choices

The purpose of the third research question was to identify how men engaged in sensemaking to navigate their career choices. How individuals construct narratives around (or label) events that occur is a central concept in sensemaking that determines the course an individual will take to affirm their identity. Despite the ambiguity and challenges related to gender and the hardships of caring work, participants managed the discrepancies present between remaining in a caring profession and pursuing career alternatives. In the analysis of men's responses, it became apparent the men engaged in sensemaking of their positions in caring professions through a reflective process termed *identity clarification*, which included remembering and evaluating. By using this process, men remembered why they started this work, evaluated their impact and experiences, and made a choice that resembled their desired

professional identity accurately. *Identity clarification*, in this study, is defined as the process of exploring alternative identities.

Table 4
Sensemaking of Caring Professionals' Careers

	Identity Clarification Strategies	Examples
Remembering	Narratives of family	“My mom was a teacher,” “Giving back”
	Narratives of self	“Physical disability,” “Caretaker of siblings”
Evaluating	Confirming	“The only thing I see myself doing”
	Denying	“I won’t continue to teach”
	Expanding	“I’m torn,” “I’m also passionate about”

Remembering

All male caring professionals engaged in reflection related to how they started in these professions. Their reflection resulted in two stories related to character: narratives of family and narratives of self. Both narratives focused on the initial reasons for pursuing a caring profession.

Narratives of Family. A key aspect in socialization and professional identity construction is one’s family as it is likely to have influence on an individual’s choice of career path (Jablin, 2001). For men, narratives of family typically occurred first in their explanation of their career history, and were expressed through a supportive or unsupportive framework. This framework included both verbal and nonverbal communication, and, at times, was directly or indirectly shared to the men pursuing caring professions, specifically. The narrative became more important as men appeared to be continuing a legacy of parents’ or other family members’ careers. Russell explained his initial idea to teach as coming from his family:

My mom was a teacher, although she wasn't in the classroom, um, when, when I was growing up and I was definitely raised with a, um, like a moral system or moral code of like helping others and um, and giving to your community. Um, so I did some mentoring as a high school student and I did some volunteer tutoring.

Although he did not always see himself teaching, being an educator was an opportunity to serve the community, which was a familial value. Similarly, Jeremy, who was the first in the family to go to college, acknowledged family upbringing and friends:

So, um, we grew up very, very poor. Um, we didn't have really many resources. We went to a school district that, um, was very under resourced. Um, one of the most under, uh, most low income, uh, school, I guess, in the city, um, or district. So that's kind of what the context of where I grew. . . There was this woman who was my case worker, um, at a local nonprofit, um, on the West side who found me somehow. I showed up in one of our organization meetings and she said she was looking for people that were like, um, willing to, um, mentor children, um, so elementary age children, and they would pay people for that. . . And I was like, okay, I'll do that. So it's weird because her intervention in my life, right. So her recruiting me to go, um, and that's where children, um, also came with college access services.

The above examples represent the encouragement participants received. However, family did not always support their choices. Even with three elementary school teachers in his immediate family, Raymond explained they did not understand what he did:

A lot of my family are, are conservative and you know, anti-welfare and anti-helping, um, you know, people in lower SES, but you know, they're all very excited to receive the stimulus check that, you know, with is for all intents and purposes, it is a form of

socialism. And I found that very odd that whenever it's not happening to them, they're against it. But whenever it benefits them, they're definitely for it. And you know, I think they're not looking at it from a different lens. They're just looking at it from, this is benefiting me type of lens. But it's, it's funny that, you know, it'd be nice if they would just take a step back and see that this is what would benefit other people all the times that we're just ignoring.

Here, Raymond discussed challenges that arose around careers based on political differences. Because caring work can include job roles such as getting support for others or financial strain such as lower pay, family values about economics contributed to family perceptions of participants pursuing caring professions.

Narratives of Self. Perceptions of oneself influenced career choices and professional identity. Narratives of self-assisted participants in judging their fit based on skills and characteristics and served as a primary narrative in the *identity clarification* process. These narratives focused on characteristics and life experiences men had that translated well to caring professions. Many participants expressed always being helpers. Because such narratives clearly persisted after gaining professional membership, men used these narratives to explain joining the profession and everyday work life including interactions, decisions, and performance. Raymond, expressed the purpose behind having a strong sense of self in social work:

Burnout is such a huge part of social work. So, I mean, I think, I think the big part about burnout is if you settle into a role that may not be right for you or maybe too emotionally draining for you. Um, and, and that just happens a ton because especially at my job . . . these cases are stuff that I see on a weekly basis and that is difficult.

He directly referred to the complicated life of a social worker; however, this is applicable to all caring professions. Participants referred to burnout and emotional exhaustion often in interviews, as an inevitable career point they would encounter. Narratives of self were revealed in the data when participants identified the prototypical characteristics they always had. Ronald said he “always thought [he] wanted to be a therapist,” because he liked to work with people. Carter echoed that idea:

I have a younger sister and a younger brother who are three and five years younger than me. Um, both of my parents worked full time growing up. Um, and a lot of the time it kind of fell to me to be responsible for, um, for my siblings may be a little more than the average older sibling. Um, and so I think that I developed some of those kind of like caretaker and nurturing instincts from a really young age. Um, I went to school, um, I studied psychology in school. Um, and I thought maybe I wanted to [teach], I've always been like really interested in like people and helping people.

Caring professionals described the motivation to help and support others as traits that were internal and manifested early. Jason said his desire to pursue social work was because he could really connect with families:

I, uh, decided that it was something that I was interested in doing. Uh, I myself have a physical disability, so I thought I'm, might be able to, uh, have some, uh, having some insight as far as some services that I've had to go through in my life that I might be able to share with, uh, other families that come in, um, for that, uh, for those services.

Men often assessed their life experiences and determined where those experiences could have the most impact. This caring professional explained that his disability was a significant factor in his

career decision; for another social worker, it was foster care. After working in the manual labor field, a Travis shared how he came into social work:

So, we started doing foster care and uh, at our second placement, um, who eventually became our forever son, our youngest son. Um, we had a really awesome worker in that area, the place where I was living at this time. And I thought to myself, well, I could do what she does and I could probably finish my degree a little bit faster and get to helping kids.

The ability to clearly articulate a self-narrative related to professionals' discussions of other aspects important to their careers such as investment, sense of purpose, and satisfaction. The examples show narratives of family and self function as a foundation for professional identity formation. By engaging in storytelling, professional identity can be bolstered.

Evaluating

Second, male caring professionals experienced *identity clarification* through the process of evaluation. Evaluating involved matching current experiences to narratives of self to determine congruency and fit with their position. This stage related to a variety of work factors such as impact, perceived belonging, and emotional labor. The evaluation process manifested through three communicative strategies: *confirming*, *denying*, and *expanding*.

Confirming. In this study, confirming was one strategy utilized when navigating next career steps. When asked to explain what was next, participants often discussed the future by confirming their self-narrative and intent to stay in their current role. For example, many participants described not knowing what else they would even do for a living. Bernard said social work is “the only thing I could see myself doing.” Shawn also said, “I definitely, I love staying in the school system and so would certainly, you know, stay in, um . . . the school systems for the

next foreseeable future.” In both quotes, participants express contentment with their identities. Other examples of confirming were present in participants turning down opportunities for advancement. Randall was asked to pursue administration:

Then they told me I need to be an administrator; I need to be an administrative administrator. Uh, I have no plans for a better administrator. Uh, even though that would be, you know, the next step because of my experience . . . my plans are not to ever become an administrator. My plans are to teach, you know, and keep teaching for as long as my old body allowed me to do so.

Many participants, like Randall, were encouraged to move into leadership positions, but many declined and expressed being happier working with students and clients. Roger said, “I see myself teaching in lower elementary. I’m kind of a consistent guy unless somebody really changes it.”

In this quote, he identified lower elementary teaching as a part of his identity. He referenced moving grades as the only change he would be making any time soon. Overall, confirming was used to affirm professional identity and position within the occupation.

Participants who engaged in confirming were confident of their role and contribution to social work and lower elementary education. Unlike the other evaluation strategies, confirming was discussed by participants with little uncertainty, thus, demonstrating a firm commitment.

Expanding. Second, participants used expanding to navigate their career choices. Essentially, expanding allowed caring professional to view themselves beyond their current role by explaining how they have grown beyond the role and how they could be more effective in another capacity. Expanding included other full-time jobs within the profession and part-time opportunities to serve extra. Data analysis revealed *expanding* through participants’ interest in

transitions into “administration,” being a “stay at home parent,” “train[ing] other educators,” consulting in schools for “behavioral intervention,” for children and working in “curriculum design”. However, Bobby still described educating as part of that retirement. He stated, “I probably won't teach in any traditional sort of way, but there's some community colleges nearby. I might, uh, do some volunteering or a coaching or ceramics video or tutoring one-on-one.” This quote illustrates the common expression “Once a teacher, always a teacher.” A comment from Oliver represented a commitment to the professional identity in a different way. He explained:

Um, definitely keep teaching. I just don't know if I'll be teaching elementary, maybe high school. Yeah. Um, I think high school I like high school history or high school social studies. Um, I'm so passionate about. So one of my degrees was ethnic studies, so like, um, African-Americans, Chicano, Latino, Asian in America, um, Asian American also like, um, the different . . . like studies . . . I think they're, I don't know, it's just super important.

Expanding for Oliver involved changing context in order to integrate more of his identity with his professional identity.

Although some participants had considered leaving their current role, many still identified with the core of the work they did. For example, Bruce explained his career plans:

The future plan is to get my master's degree in social work. I'm kind of torn because I don't know if I want to continue, uh, in healthcare, which I do now, where I do enjoy doing it. . . But I'm also torn between the possibility of opening my own practice and doing therapeutic counseling for people, especially for us, there's not a lot of spaces for people to talk to someone who looks like them. So, I'm torn between the possibility of applying to counseling and maybe providing a low cost housing alternative for people

who may not have insurance or if or if it even be possible to know my regular nine to five do medical social work and man in my spare time, you know, have my own practice of therapeutic counseling. I don't know if it's possible to do both but we'll see.

Bruce showed that care provider or social worker as a professional identity can grow to encapsulate other jobs, and can be fluid. This communicative strategy for sensemaking of professional identity highlighted an additive approach that allowed participants to manage the uncertainty of moving on by maintaining their current identity even when changing contexts. Interestingly, the broad range of opportunities and skillsets in caring professions provides several chances for expansion, in comparison to other careers. Thus, by assigning meaning to their experiences, communication enabled participants to resolve their uncertainty about career changes.

Caring professions entail helping others, an emotional task. Working in these professions involved men moving beyond typical gender profession opportunities to “cross over” into caring work. There were financial, time, and relational sacrifices. Participants frequently evaluated their position in the profession and outlined their career trajectory. Deciding to start or maintain positions in caring professions was shrouded in uncertainty and anxiety participants needed to manage. Uncertainty stemmed from lack of family and friend support, lack of training or background in the field, and not feeling as if they belonged in the profession, which are all important factors in socialization and developing a strong sense of professional identity. Difficulties also arouse from being one of a small number of men in their workplace. The majority of participants indicated some level of concern and struggle over career choices at different points. To navigate the tension, men often responded by dismissing the concern and, thus, maintained professional membership. However, some participants indicated that they

wanted to move on from the current work they did. Data analysis revealed *expanding* through participants' interest in transitions into other related areas. Although some professionals described intense feelings of frustration and desire to do something else, most of the men interviewed expressed a desire to stay in their current work role.

Negative Case: Denying. The third strategy, which was only rarely mentioned by participants when explaining their career trajectory, was denying. Evidence of denying was present when a man acknowledged that his currently held professional identity was not desirable. Having difficult workplace circumstance created space for this strategy. Only one participant engaged in denying and a desire to break completely from the profession. However, rather than an outlier, I categorized it as denying because it could be relevant to other professionals. Aiden was a fifth-grade teacher early in his teaching career. He did not know what he wanted to do after teaching, but he was adamant that he would not remain in education in any capacity.

I'm more than certain that I probably won't teach after next year. Yeah. Um, I'll probably go back to New Jersey. Um, but I still don't know what I would do after teaching. Um, I think something I could fall back on is like as political science, like going to DC and working for like, I don't know, like a think tank or a congressional office.

Initially, Aiden studied political science and got into teaching because of his upbringing. Teaching provided an opportunity to give back to communities similar to where he grew up. He said, "So I liked the idea of, um, teaching somewhere similar to how I grew up. Um, so I thought it'd be something fulfilling and, um, yeah, that's why it seemed attractive to me." The challenges and hardships of the first year, lack of support, unexpected roles and responsibilities, and feeling "underprepared," all contributed to his decision to pursue something else. His expectations of teaching compared to the reality of teaching did not align.

I thought it would be a lot simpler than this. Yeah. So I didn't really know too much about teaching. Um, like my, in college, I think the last like followed memory about like features that I could think of was like high school. Um, but like I have no idea what teaching fifth grade would be like. Um, I kept hearing some people that would be tough, you know, um, like long hours. A lot of your like personal time gone.

His position was new and, therefore, there were not many resources to support him. Kyle continued to explain his surprise:

So, it was a lot of me figuring out things on my own. So, um, coming into this I thought that there'd be like a little more structure, a little more like district provided things for me to fall back on. But like the, the position was unique and I couldn't have like, um, predicted that.

Although his intentions were good, in comparison to other participants' descriptions of professional identity, strengths, and weaknesses, Aiden described the ideal teacher in a more simplistic manner.

I think the teacher, um, I think an ideal teacher was, um, I think the most important thing is like care. They have a care for the job. Um, and the students, um, after that I would say, um, I would say like patience, definitely a trait a teacher would have, especially like, um, in the lower grades like, um, I think it's taken a special kind of person to, I'm hear from like over 20 different kids every single day, like throughout the whole year and not lose their patience at one point.

Aiden said his strength was a "motivation to teach." Unfortunately, due to the difficulty of caring work, motivation is not always enough. Throughout his narrative, Aiden described the choice to remain in education not as an opportunity to align occupational desires with personal

narratives or as a way to grow into other roles but as a choice separate from other considerations. His decision and perspective on continuing in education differed from the other participants which could be attributed to various reasons. First, Aiden was recruited by a program to teach. He was not directly interested in it first and described little interests prior to learning more about the program in college. Second, Aiden was also at the end of his first year of teaching which is a challenging year. As a result, in regard to teaching, Aiden had not developed a stable story of who he was in this profession. This example illustrates the difference between professional identities that are durable and those that are fragile and built on other foundations such as previous work experience and misperceptions of the work. He did not express a narrative of self or a narrative of family that was related to caring professions, specifically. This negative case demonstrated the significance of narratives of self and/or narrative of family when determining career choices and highlighted that professionals rely on these to make decisions and align themselves with work. Although his case does not fit the pattern in the way other participants do, analyzing his case supports the explanations presented here. As the case above indicates, denying is a strategy that allowed Aiden to detach from the profession to pursue a career more aligned with his overarching view of himself.

Summary of Findings

The findings presented demonstrate how men navigate (enter, manage, recruit, and potentially exit) caring professions through a variety of communication strategies. Alignment and realignment strategies were communicatively shared to assist men in negotiating professional identity and gender identity. To engage in alignment or realignment, men relied on verbal and nonverbal communication acts. Additionally, men also attempted to provide support to others considering or currently in the social work or teaching professions, both intentionally

and unintentionally. These socialization messages included socio-emotional-oriented messages, benefits-oriented messages, skills-oriented messages, and presence-oriented messages. Finally, men assessed their position in caring professions communicatively through *identity clarification*. *Identity clarification* provided an opportunity to dissolve or reaffirm professional identity using two communicative processes: remembering and evaluating. Throughout the *identity clarification* process, male caring professionals used four communicative tactics: narratives, confirming, denying, and expanding. In the following paragraphs, contributions and implications of these results for theory and practice are discussed.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Gender is a foundational aspect of identity that impacts occupational narratives of professional members, especially in caring professions (Abbott & Meerabeau, 1998; Williams, 1989). Gender identity has significance at work because prototype distinctions of who fits in occupations are created and perpetuated in communication, limiting individuals' access to certain occupations (i.e., occupational segregation; Williams, 1993). These boundaries create a challenge for professionals who want to pursue occupations with characteristics that do not match their gender identity. Although this is a challenge for women in male-dominated professions, such as women engineers or doctors, this division is also challenging for men who enter caring professions due to the stigma associated with care and due to competing gender narratives. For example, the gender narrative for men is that they should be the breadwinner, but structurally caring professions do not provide financial resources to meet this ideal due to their generally lower salaries. Despite these challenges, some men enter caring professions and remain in them for long periods of time. Much research about men in caring professions, or other gendered occupations, focuses on the structural or organizational elements that perpetuate occupational segregation (Ashcraft, 2013; Williams, 2013). Prior research that investigates work at the micro level has primarily focused on how men enact masculinity through practices such as projecting hegemonic masculinity or distancing themselves from women (Evans & Frank, 2003). Traditionally analyzed from a sociological or psychological perspective, scholars have started to investigate how men find congruence in their identities in caring roles through discourse that furthers the understanding of occupational segregation (Nentwich et al., 2013).

The aim of this qualitative, interview-based study was to extend previous literature by highlighting the experiences of men in caring professions to identify how men negotiated their

gender identity and professional identity despite the prototype, how they encouraged others to pursue or maintain careers in caring professions, and how they determined their professional route through *identity clarification* during sensemaking. The study revealed that men engaged in distinct processes to achieve identity alignment and support socialization of others. Prototypes were a fundamental model for caring professionals' identity development, socialization, and sensemaking practices. As men navigated these professions, they referred to the prototype to negotiate their professional identity and to determine the messages that would best prepare others to start or maintain careers in social work and teaching. Once the prototype was defined and internalized, men were able to better socialize others and determine their career paths. In the following paragraphs, I discuss the theoretical and practical contributions of this study to identity, socialization, and sensemaking literatures.

Professional Identity

The endurance, fragility, and strength of men's professional identity in caring professions was communicatively constructed through continuous matching to the prototype (Niedenthal et al., 1985), which facilitated how they measured success and belonging. In order to fit the prototype, men engaged in identity work by focusing on what they did at work (impact) more than who they were (traits). For example, building connections with clients and students is a critical part of social work and teaching. Instead of focusing on what type of person does well at building relationships and rapport with others, men explained the importance of building relationships to make others comfortable. Focusing on the act of relationship development rather than traits that facilitate that, more men viewed themselves as successful at it because they were able to perform the task in any way that was authentic to them.

This study supports aspects of theories about how individuals select certain occupations (i.e., prototype matching theory) in that individuals engage in self evaluations to match themselves with organizations and occupations that fit their self-perceptions (Niedenthal et al., 1985). Findings of this study suggest that communication, which is limited in prototype matching research, is a component in the matching process. Although men did discuss characteristics needed, the primary justification for joining and maintaining membership in caring professions was through communicative processes: identity work strategies and *identity clarification* strategies to assess meaningfulness of their work. For example, when participants described initially considering these roles or switching contexts, they most frequently stated that it was a chance to make a difference. More than how they perceived themselves and others in the profession, the interviewees discussed membership in relation to how they could have the greatest influence. For some caring professionals, the greatest influence was being in schools to bring balance and mirror a traditional family home to students that included a male figure; for others, it was switching to another role such as training other special education professionals to have a bigger impact outside of a single classroom. The notion of focusing on what you do rather than self-concept traits introduces the possibility that prototype matching could be extended to other communicative qualities in caring professions.

By focusing on the collective goal of the work and the specific roles they filled, the caring professionals in this study did not explicitly work to perpetuate male dominance and privilege in the same ways previous studies have demonstrated. Men frequently mentored, and were mentored, by women. Through mentoring and experiences, men constructed a professional identity which explained men's views of who they were in these roles (Schein, 1978). These professionals described their roles as similarly and complementary to women professionals in the

field, as a way to best serve clients who might be uncomfortable seeing or working with a man, or who could benefit from being taught or counseled by a man. Thus, their professional identity development relied on close alignment with the prototype more than crafting identity toward their gender.

Contrary to some previous research on professional identity, by using current professionals at different stages and in caring roles, this study answers the call to consider how identity construction and management function when work is a key source of meaning and related to who you are (Pratt et al., 2006). In caring professions that require various individuals working together to provide services, relying on the prototype created consistency with other occupational members. Although models of professional identity (e.g., Pratt et al., 2006) consider benefits of identity construction and alignment, this research continues to expand our understanding of how meaningfulness of work and how the interconnectedness of personal and professional identity impact construction and commitment to one's professional identity (e.g., a social worker who also has a disability). Because the work is about bettering the life of others, caring professions are rich contexts in which to help explain the influence of meaningfulness, especially on stigmatized identities (in that context).

Identity Work

By using a communicative perspective, the current findings offer new perspectives on negotiating identity in an atypical gender profession. Participants' strategies did not result in dismissing masculinity as some research has shown (Evans & Frank, 2003), but highlighting similarities between men and women when performing caring work. Caring professionals interviewed engaged in balancing their identities and, at times, transcending gender to highlight collective callings and a "we" identity (Jablin, 2001). Several communication strategies

integrated gender and professional identity, such as the teachers describing themselves as father figures, and social workers explaining their role in metaphors such as a swiss army knife. These strategies generated positive feelings about their work and worth and created a desire to continue in the profession rather than planning to leave it. The majority of interviewees described plans to stay in their current profession and role for the foreseeable future. A few participants mentioned moving to another grade or type of work (e.g., private practice and therapy) but staying in the profession. Only one participant spoke of clear intentions to leave their role as a teacher for another profession in the near future.

Workers in social work and teaching, which are socially tainted professions (i.e., occupation includes contact with stigmatized people) (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999) were able to maintain positive identities through identity work. Men hold an identity that is privileged; however, in stigmatized professions they describe having to engage in identity work to maintain their professional identity. The alignment identity work strategies of work metaphors, balancing characteristics, and growing into the prototype were similar to reframing tactics (Ashforth & Kreiner (1999). Reframing involves changing the meaning of a stigmatized occupation, which is usually connected to specific tasks. In contrast, these data show that men in this study used the discursive practice to reframe the prototype rather than the tasks conducted as shown in previous studies (e.g., McIntyre, 1987).

The objective of investigating identity negotiations was to understand the identity salience of men in caring professions and how the choice of strategy relates to an outcome. This was achieved by examining how gender identity arose in different workplace situations faced by men. Identity work strategies such as relating professional role to fatherhood (Nentwich et al., 2013) or focusing on the unique nature of their work (Nentwich et al., 2013; Tracy & Scott,

2006) were consistent with previous literature. By focusing on the prototype, several new strategies were highlighted that professionals used for different purposes including alignment with the prototype through new metaphors, and realignment strategies that described how men worked to reduce gender differences. For example, men often rejected messages that highlighted their gender and placed their value on being a man (e.g., unicorns) or strained their professional identity (Jorgensen, 2002). First, the results of this study extend identity work research by demonstrating participants had goals for identity work besides legitimacy (Nentwich et al., 2013) or feeling good about stigmatized work (e.g., dirty work; Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). For these participants, identity work often served the function of maintaining professional membership, matching the prototype, providing optimal care, and highlighting purpose. Participants in this study experienced difficulties at work, including emotional strain and being treated as unwanted by some. Identity work helped sustain them in doing the work they did. Participants who were not able to engage in this identity work expressed a desire to join other occupations. Thus, identity work is a way to overcome conflict with others faced in the workplace in addition to internal alignment of identities. Caring professionals' ability to engage in identity work was related to their socialization thus far.

Socialization Messages

Another contribution of this study is the examination of the verbal and nonverbal socialization messages men used to socialize others in caring professions. Although research has been conducted on socialization factors such as family (Gibson & Papa, 2000), little research has focused on specific messages for male caring professionals, especially how they socialize others. This study provides original insight into how the prototype continues to be shared through messages even by members who do not embrace the stereotypical professional member,

Occupational stereotypes limit career choices (Kramer, 2010), but this study demonstrates that these expectations heavily influence messaging as well and that similar others can help mitigate the perpetuation of these stereotypes because they have a different perspective.

Men were able to engage in socialization mainly in the anticipatory phase of others, that is, before they entered these professions, but also when others had already entered the profession. Data revealed that messages constructed were centered around reducing the stigma of these professions. Specifically benefits-oriented messages had the opportunity to deconstruct harmful narratives of these occupations that discourage others from joining, such as low wages and lack of purpose or fulfillment (Tracy & Scott, 2006). A critical idea emerged from interviews that, especially in challenging occupations where men worked to meet the prototype, it was important to recruit others who matched the prototype. Men engaged in the socialization of both men and women; however, the majority of direct socialization encounters were with women due to the gender imbalance within the profession. Although the message types contained different content, the messages all contained prototypical information for the specified profession.

Only a few participants referenced discouraging someone from joining or remaining in the profession. These discouraging messages were expressed due to perceived prototype misalignments of prospective professional members (e.g., the perceived gendered trait of impatience). Prior studies on socialization also primarily consider the socialization process from the perspective of the individual being socialized rather than the socializing agent (e.g., Kramer & Danielson, 2015). This study furthers the discussion on the socialization process in two ways. First, the current study takes the perspective of the current employee which provides insight into how they are sharing socializing messages with others. Their perspective of socialization is different than the interpretation provided by a person receiving the message. Additionally, this

research highlights the need to consider why discouraging messages are given by examining why current professional members engage in practices of discouragement toward others, and how they guide others away from specific careers.

The current research extends our understanding of what is important to current professionals when considering who else is qualified for the work they do and their motivations for these messages. Anticipatory socialization is the phase in which individuals learn about the groups they want to join (Jablin, 2001). Men directly and indirectly engaged in others' socialization processes. Studies of socialization are vast, as scholars and organizational members recognize the importance of socialization on career development and identity construction. However, the contradictory messages or conflicting messages, individuals' motivation for sending such messages, and the intention of the messages individuals send and receive is less of a focus. The present study suggests that message intent, although prototypical, is meant to help professionals, especially in the face of emotionally taxing work. However, these messages may discourage people who would be good at these jobs if they feel they do not have what it takes. Discouragement was uncommon because men in this study believed that, if someone wanted to try social work or teaching, they should. One teacher explained that some of his background did not point to teaching, but he is now a teacher and anyone who wants to try teaching, can. However, a socialization message that focused on needing certain emotional traits could make someone feel they are not qualified. In an attempt to provide a realistic preview and be honest about the challenges of caring professions, men may inadvertently discourage someone despite not wanting to do so.

The data demonstrates a conflict that, although men engage in identity work that turns attention to impact, certain socialization messages focus more on who you have to be rather than

skill or talent. For example, socio-emotional messages about needing to be emotionally strong, or that referenced that caring professions were not for the faint of heart, imply traits an individual would need to possess to be successful. Men were also less likely to have the opportunity to engage in the socialization of other men during the anticipatory socialization phase because they often predetermined how difficult it is to get men into caring professions, or were just not given the opportunity. However, building connections with and supporting other male professionals they had met in later stages of the socialization process were common.

Sensemaking

A unique finding of this study is that men regularly evaluated their future career steps in caring professions for reasons that differed from other professionals who engage in this behavior. A specific contribution of this study is examining sensemaking processes and career trajectory (i.e., remaining in the profession). Prior research predominately considers the larger societal structures that influence men's career decisions (Williams, 2013). The majority of caring professionals in this study described having preconceived expectations of the field that they concluded were different upon joining, as well as other experiences during their careers that made them consider if the profession was right for them (e.g., Covid-19 stay-at-home orders and providing online school and social services). Sensemaking is a valuable theoretical framework to help explain the significance of individual agency, or the ability to choose otherwise, on career decisions (Hamel, 2009). Weick (1995) conceptualized sensemaking as a social process where individuals collectively assign an interpretation to events or experiences. Men in this study discussed having similar experiences as one another. However, they interpreted the events differently, and planned to pursue different courses of action in regard to maintaining occupational membership. For example, a subset of participants interpreted gendered experiences

in the workplace as minor, whereas another subset of participants interpreted the events as hurtful. Both groups could decide to continue professional membership, although they do not agree on the interpretation of such experiences (Dougherty & Smythe, 2004). In comparison to organizational studies of sensemaking, this study shows collective meaning and sensemaking at the occupational level may function differently than at the organizational or group level where direct contact with an overall message is lessened, and individuals rely more on a broader narrative, prototype, expectations, or other strategies to cope with challenges. With fewer men in caring professions, there are also fewer similar others to engage in sensemaking with in a work environment to develop collective meaning.

Additionally, this study contributes to the need for further investigation of the prospective sensemaking process (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). This study adds value to our knowledge of sensemaking and how stories connect to behavior. The findings illustrate that men in caring professions were able to make sense of their work experience and its importance to sustain them in their careers. Similar to Hamel (2009), sensemaking can allow individuals to rationalize remaining in a career and waiting on things to change. The caring professionals interviewed for this study did not face barriers to career advancement but experienced challenges within their current careers and still found satisfaction in their work. However, the notion of collectivist and individualist framing that is present are similar in both studies (Hamel, 2009). The advancement of social workers and teachers in general and their identification of how it was important for their own careers were key components in men's sensemaking and overall career plan. This process shows how adaptive sensemaking was associated with more resilient professional identities, whereas maladaptive sensemaking was related to more fragile professional identities. Each participant in this study had considered if their profession was right for them, constantly

redefining and assessing their professional identity based on experiences (Weick, 1995).

Analysis discovered how men make sense of experiences to determine whether they maintain or relinquish occupational membership. During the *identity clarification* process, remembering and evaluating represent both retrospective and prospective sensemaking (Gioia et al., 1994; Rosness et al., 2016). Men engaged in sensemaking through communication about events after they happened but also relied on anticipation to determine if they could have more impact in another aspect of the profession or another profession entirely. As Jorgenson (2002) states, continuous obtrusion on identity may influence career progress and trajectory. The assessment of various possible selves (Ibarra, 1999) or future work selves (Strauss et al., 2012) presented in this study demonstrate the intentional consideration of other career routes through meaning construction of professional identity, or prospective sensemaking. Men in caring professions also had to consider the steady changes these professions have undergone as major events that will likely continue to worsen, such as reduced funding and resources in education and the continued undervaluing of caring work by society, have occurred. They had to anticipate and factor these aspects in as future unexpected events that will require interpretation.

In summary, these findings extend research on identity work, socialization, and sensemaking. By including other professions, identifying new strategies, and explaining how specific others play a role in the identity work process this study shows that identity work, indeed, allows individuals to reconcile identity dissonance (Nentwich et al., 2013) and make meaning of their work by framing it in ways that combat the dissonance and occupational stereotypes (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Tracy & Scott, 2006). However, it does raise further questions about the outcomes of successfully managing identity such as the contribution others in the workplace have in the process and the notion of dissolving or maintaining identity.

Additionally, socialization messages about caring professions were revealed in definitions of the prototype and participants' explanations of why they do the work. The sensemaking process of *identity clarification* through remembering and evaluating allowed participants to develop meanings about their role, which influenced potential career trajectory, even with few similar others to interact with in their work. *Identity clarification* processes that contained narratives of family and self, in conjunction with experiences at work, had tensions that implied decision-making about next step career choices can be complex. The nature of caring professions is centered on service and help, and research shows that men are provided vertical mobility often (Williams, 1995). Instead of distancing or moving into leadership roles, many participants portrayed interests in expanding their professional identity base or maintaining roles. Caring professionals demonstrated making the long-term decisions they do for their career based on impact and prototype matching in order to manage their identity and maintain positive, resilient identities related to their profession.

These findings have important implications for caring professionals, specifically men entering caring professionals. Men caring professionals in this study shared how they communicated with others about entering social work or teaching. First, families, peers, administrators, and university programs should recognize the perceptions around caring work when considering the low numbers of professionals (especially male professionals) entering and remaining in these careers and how they perpetuate harmful narratives such as “anyone can teach” or “those who can’t do, teach.” Individuals in this study described their jobs as the most important thing they could be doing. Treating these professions as valued careers could increase their prestige and societal value.

Second, because of the emotional strength necessary and the inevitable burnout mentioned in the study, individuals in the profession should reflect on support that could be provided to all caring professionals to manage these outcomes. Some support will come from community within the profession (some men reported having other male professionals in their field with whom they have connected). Rather than “pulling” men out of these roles and placing them in administrative roles as a solution, it is important to develop support that would help them endure the stress associated with these professions. Additionally, in interviews, men also described the need to increase the perceived value and prestige of these caring professions through higher pay.

Finally, when considering impact, organizations and occupations should consider additional ways for caring professionals to contribute. By creating more opportunities to engage in leadership, advocacy, and policy, without creating overload, individuals may be able to expand their perceptions of impact without having to leave the profession or become administrators. The roles explored, mainly teaching, are fairly rigid. This role flexibility and opportunities for personalization could come from restructuring work schedules, policies, workloads, and providing more opportunities for job crafting and innovation that does not require a career change. For example, more schools are considering shortened work weeks which free up teachers to engage in other professional activities, aside from being in a classroom.

Limitations and Future Research

Similar to other interview-based studies, the current research relied on a small convenience, snowball sample of social workers and elementary school teachers. However, given the intentional sampling of individuals at different career stages, of various diverse backgrounds, of different specializations, and of the small number of men in these professions, the findings

appear to represent the experiences and identities of men at this time. Analysis also reached data saturation in which no new themes appeared in the final few interviews of each group (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Additionally, although the notion of potential career changes was examined in this study, the current findings cannot predict if the participants will follow through on their plans.

The current findings clearly suggest several noteworthy opportunities for future research and have important implications for considering how identity work and sensemaking enable and constrain next steps in professionals' careers, especially individuals in atypical gender occupations. First, using aspects of sensemaking provided a way to examine communication to better understand how men navigated career decisions and also provided guidance to others. Many studies that include gender lack other types of diversity. The participants for this study included diversity of ability, race, ethnicity, sexual identity, family background, and career tenure to name a few. Diversity added additional complexity to participants' narratives. Future data analysis may attempt to parse out if additional factors including race, sexuality, or demographics of schools were important factors in men's experiences. Research should explore intersections of identity (e.g., sexuality, race, ethnicity, gender, and professional identity) to gain a more nuanced understanding of professional identity within gendered occupations and the effect of multiple identities on identity processes. For example, research could focus on identity salience and how that influences the narrative professionals choose to accept or how professionals understand their professional identity. Further, future research in this area could identify narratives that are not productive and result in turnover, as well as narratives that hinder individuals at the onset of joining a profession. For example, men in this study described having expectations that social work would have an extreme amount of crying, or that teaching would mean being a hero. Although these expectations highlight aspects of individuals' professional

lives, they often are not representative of the day to day work. One way to achieve this is by expanding our understanding of identity work goals and adding a focus on occupational outcomes.

Also of significance are the effects of gender on doing care work. Although studies have explored gender in various work relationships, such as between supervisors and subordinates and coworkers, future research might also investigate clients' or students' perceptions of these professionals and how they interpret and behave because of gender. Caring professionals' work is centered on providing direct services to help and empower others. Therefore, especially in caring professions where trauma may be associated with men or when parents may be uncomfortable with men caring for their small children, the perceptions of individuals receiving services are important. By taking this approach, we begin to build a more complex view of occupational segregation, which includes additional voices in the narrative. Additionally, it is equally valuable to study men and women in professions side by side to understand shared professional narratives as well as compare professions in order to understand the problematic, foundational elements that underlie more masculine or feminine career roles. In this study, the purpose was to understand similarities within these professions. Although social work and elementary education professionals had similar experiences, differences were present that should be explored, such as the differences between social workers and teachers as well as the differences based on stage of career (e.g., early, middle, late). Future research may find that the structure of work or services provided relates to differences across professions.

As reported in other studies (Kreiner et al., 2006), caring professions are often labeled as "callings". Caring professions frequently undergo undesirable occupational changes (e.g., reduced funding for education, more oversight in client care). Organizational scholars should

explore conflicting identity and societal labels of events and how individuals engage in sensemaking in these circumstances. Future research could also consider how occupational meanings and professional perceptions influence the sensemaking process. In order to determine career steps, men engaged in sensemaking by using *identity clarification*, a process that encouraged them to remember why they were in these careers and evaluate whether they fit in these professions. One way this avenue could be explored is through macro level discourses of educators as babysitters, even though teachers think what they do is important. By examining how professionals see themselves in comparison to the message they receive from government or other societal actors could expand our understanding of how they then interpret occupational events such as budget cuts and why they stay when they are not valued.

Additionally, along with prototypical descriptions of caring professionals as kind, responsible, and honest, men in the study also used terms such as ally, advocate, and culturally responsive in their descriptions. Given the changing nature of professions, with inequities being highlighted in services provided, it will become important for scholars and workers to reimagine what it means to provide care and how that relates to gender. This study further illustrated the need to adjust narratives about what *care is* and who is *able to provide care*. Also, for a few participants in this study, being a social worker or elementary school teacher was their second career. However, there were aspects of their first job that led them to this work such as software development or volunteering with children. As individuals are more frequently changing careers to make a difference in the world, understanding the continual development of professional identity is essential. Since professional identity is typically described as stable and tied to a specific role, this study raises the question of how professional identities can expand and grow. Identity expansion is seen by looking at current career professionals.

Finally, researchers should continue to investigate other professions that face similar issues with occupational segregation for both men and women. Initially, this study was meant to include nurses initially, and one interview with a male nurse was conducted, although he was not included in the analysis. He revealed that he had faced many challenges initially with clinicals as he was excluded from particular activities, such as the labor and delivery rotation. However, interestingly, nurses experience time points where society increases their professional status, prestige, and value, such as being medics in war or working to save lives during a global pandemic. The increase in nobility around a profession may influence how gender is perceived due to a perception of being a necessity and of higher value. Future studies should focus on professional narrative shifts and how these events influence professional membership, identity, and perceptions.

Conclusion

Although research on the influence of gender in professions exists, studying the identity and sensemaking processes of men in caring professions provides deeper knowledge into how men navigate these professions populated primarily by women. Caring professions require the ability to care for others. These characteristics often permeate other aspects of an individual's life. Low numbers of men in caring professions can be attributed to various structural components such as low wages and low occupational prestige. However, a communicative approach considers the agency of men in navigating these career dynamics. Even in challenging fields, rather than thinking of getting out, men in this study demonstrated identity adaptation and commitment to their professional roles. Caring professionals who were considering going into other areas of social work or education struggled to disidentify with their current professional identity. Instead, they expanded their professional identity to include their current profession as

well as a future role they may take on. Their narratives described switching areas within the profession as more about broadening impact and the ability to give back to the community rather than prestige. Their understanding of the prototype was now a part of how they socialize and support other caring professionals. Given the lack of gender diversity in caring professions and an overall negative societal narrative, the idea, value, and fulfillment of providing care has to be supported and reiterated by professionals in the field and other influential people. We must show value to these professions with action. Continuing to investigate men's experiences in atypical gender occupations and identity processes that create positive relationships with their work can help foster more resilient identities in challenging occupations that are not based on gender. The goal of this study is not just to understand how to motivate men to join these professions, but also how to retain and keep good people that can create change in the professions, instead of them moving on to "better" careers and roles.

References

- Abbott, A. (1988). *The system of professions: An essay on the division of expert labor*. University of Chicago Press.
- Abbott, P., & Meerabeau, L. (1998). Professionals, professionalization and the caring professions. In P. Abbott & L. Meerabeau (Eds.), *The sociology of the caring professions* (pp. 1-19). UCL Press.
- Adams, T. L. (2003). Professionalization, gender and female-dominated professions: Dental hygiene in Ontario*. *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue Canadienne de Sociologie*, 40(3), 267-289. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1755-618X.2003.tb00247.x>
- Allan, J. (1993). Male elementary teachers: Experiences and perspectives. In C. L. Williams (Ed.), *Doing "women's work"* (pp. 113-127). Sage.
- Alvesson, M., Lee Ashcraft, K. L., & Thomas, R. (2008). Identity matters: Reflections on the construction of identity scholarship in organization studies. *Organization*, 15(1), 5-28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508407084426>
- Anderson, C. M., Riddle, B. L., & Martin, M. M. (1999). Socialization processes in groups. In L. R. Frey, D. S. Gouran & M. S. Poole (Eds.), *The handbook of group communication theory and research* (pp. 139-163). Sage.
- Apesoa-Varano, E. C. (2007). Educated caring: The emergence of professional identity among nurses. *Qualitative Sociology*, 30(3), 249-274. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-007-9069-6>
- Ashcraft, K. L. (2013). The glass slipper: "Incorporating" occupational identity in management studies. *The Academy of Management Review*, 38, 6-31. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5465/amr.2010.0219>

- Ashcraft, K. L., & Mumby, D. K. (2003). *Reworking gender: A feminist communicology of organization*. Sage.
- Ashforth, B. E. (1998). Identification with organizations. In D. A. Whetten & P. C. Godfrey (Eds.), *Identity in organizations: Building theory through conversations* (pp. 209-272). Sage.
- Ashforth, B. E., Harrison, S. H., & Corley, K. G. (2008). Identification in organizations: An examination of four fundamental questions. *Journal of Management*, *34*(3), 325-374.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308316059>
- Ashforth, B. E., & Kreiner, G. E. (1999). "How can you do it?": Dirty work and the challenge of constructing a positive identity. *The Academy of Management Review*, *24*, 413-434.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/259134>
- Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *The Academy of Management Review*, *14*(1), 20-39. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258189>
- Ashforth, B. E., Rogers, K. M., & Corley, K. G. (2011). Identity in organizations: Exploring cross-level dynamics. *Organization Science*, *22*(5), 1144-1156.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/41303108>
- Babcock, G. M. (1998). Stigma, identity dissonance, and the nonresidential mother. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, *28*(1-2), 139-156. https://doi.org/10.1300/J087v28n01_10
- Becker, H. S., & Strauss, A. L. (1956). Careers, personality, and adult socialization. *American Journal of Sociology*, *63*(3), 253-263. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2772919>
- Bisel, R. S., Barge, J. K., Dougherty, D. S., Lucas, K., & Tracy, S. J. (2014). A round-table discussion of the "big" data in qualitative organizational communication research.

Management Communication Quarterly, 28(4), 624-649.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318914549952>

Brott, P. E., & Myers, J. E. (1999). Development of professional school counseling identity: A grounded theory. *Professional School Counseling*, 2, 339-348.

Carr-Saunders, A. M. (1955). Metropolitan conditions and traditional professional relationships. In A. M. Fisher (Ed.), *The metropolis in modern life* (pp.). Rooksbury.

Caza, B. B., & Creary, S. J. (2016). The construction of professional identity. In A. Wilkinson, D. Hislop, & C. Coupland (Eds.), *Perspectives on contemporary professional work* (pp. 259-285). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781783475582.00022>

Christians, C. G., & Carey, J. W. (1989). The logic and aims of qualitative research. In G. H. I. Stempel & B. H. Westley (Eds.), *Research methods in mass communication* (pp. 354-374). Prentice Hall.

Clark, A. (1982). *Working life of women in the seventeenth century*. Routledge.

Cornelissen, J. P. (2012). Sensemaking under pressure: The influence of professional roles and social accountability on the creation of sense. *Organization Science*, 23(1), 118-137. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1100.0640>

Costello, C. Y. (2004). Changing clothes: Gender inequality and professional socialization. *NWSA Journal*, 16(2), 138-155. <https://doi.org/10.2979/NWS.2004.16.2.138>

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Dougherty, D. S., & Smythe, M. J. (2004). Sensemaking, organizational culture, and sexual harassment. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 32, 293-317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0090988042000275998>

- Dutton, J. E., Roberts, L. M., & Bednar, J. (2010). Pathways for positive identity construction at work: Four types of positive identity and the building of social resources. *Academy of Management Review*, 35, 265-293. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.35.2.zok265>
- Eliot, M., & Turns, J. (2011). Constructing professional portfolios: Sense-making and professional identity development for engineering undergraduates. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 100(4), 630-654. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.2168-9830.2011.tb00030.x>
- Etzioni, A. (1969). *The semi-professions and their organisation*. Free Press.
- Evans, A. E. (2007). School leaders and their sensemaking about race and demographic change. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 43(2), 159-188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X06294575>
- Evans, J., & Frank, B. (2003). Contradictions and tensions: Exploring relations of masculinities in the numerically female-dominated nursing profession. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 11(3), 277-292. <https://doi.org/10.3149/jms.1103.277>
- Freidson, E. (1994). *Professionalism reborn: Theory, prophecy and policy*. Polity.
- Freidson, E. (2001). *Professionalism: The third logic*. University of Chicago Press.
- Gecas, V. (1982). The self concept. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 8, 1-33. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.08.080182.000245>
- Gibson, M. K., & Papa, M. J. (2000). The mud, the blood, and the beer guys: Organizational osmosis in blue-collar work groups. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 28(1), 68-88. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00909880009365554>
- Gioia, D. A., Thomas, J. B., Clark, S. M., & Chittipeddi, K. (1994). Symbolism and strategic change in academia: The dynamics of sensemaking and influence. *Organization Science*, 5, 363-383. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.5.3.363>

- Goldie, J. (2012). The formation of professional identity in medical students: Considerations for educators. *Medical Teacher*, 34(9), 641–648.
<https://doi.org/10.3109/0142159X.2012.687476>
- Graen, G. B. (1976). Role making processes within complex organizations. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 1201-1245). Rand-McNally.
- Hamel, S. A. (2009). Exit, voice, and sensemaking following psychological contract violations. *Journal of Business Communication*, 46, 234-261.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0021943608328079>
- Hartmann, H. (1976). Capitalism, patriarchy, and job segregation by sex. *Signs*, 1(3), 137-169.
<https://doi.org/10.1086/493283>
- Hatmaker, D. M. (2013). Engineering identity: Gender and professional identity negotiation among women engineers. *Gender, Work, and Organization*, 20(4), 382-396.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0432.2012.00589.x>
- Hecht, M. L. (1993). A research odyssey: Towards the development of a communication theory of identity. *Communication Monographs*, 60, 76-82.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03637759309376297>
- Hecht, M. L., Faulkner, S. L., Meyer, C. R., Niles, T. A., Golden, D., & Cutler, M. (2002). Looking through *Northern Exposure* at Jewish American identity and the communication theory of identity. *Journal of Communication*, 52, 852-870. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2002.tb02577.x>

- Hecht, M. L., Warren, J. R., Jung, E., & Krieger, J. L. (2005). The communication theory of identity. In W. B. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Theorizing about intercultural communication* (pp. 257-278). Sage.
- Hess, J. A. (1993). Assimilating newcomers into an organization: A cultural perspective. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 21, 189-210.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00909889309365366>
- Hochschild, A. R. (1983). *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. University of California Press.
- Hogg, M. A. (2006). Social identity theory. In P. J. Burke (Ed.), *Contemporary social psychological theories* (pp. 111-136). Stanford University Press.
- Hogg, M. A., & Reid, S. A. (2006). Social Identity, self-categorization, and the communication of group norms. *Communication Theory*, 16(1), 7-30. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2006.00003.x>
- Hogg, M. A., & Terry, D. J. (2000). Social identity and self-categorization processes in organizational contexts. *Academy of Management Review*, 25, 121-140.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2000.2791606>
- Ibarra, H. (1999). Provisional selves: Experimenting with image and identity in professional adaptation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(4), 764-791.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2667055>
- Ibarra, H. (2004). *Working identity: Unconventional strategies for reinventing your career*. Harvard Business Review Press.

- Ibarra, H., & Barbulescu, R. (2010). Identity as narrative: Prevalence, effectiveness, and consequences of narrative identity work in macro work role transitions. *The Academy of Management Review*, 35(1), 135-154. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.35.1.zok135>
- Jablin, F. M. (1987). Organizational entry, assimilation, and exit. In F. M. Jablin, L. L. Putnam, K. H. Roberts, & L. W. Porter (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 679-740). Sage.
- Jablin, F. M. (2001). Organizational entry, assimilation, and disengagement/exit. In F. M. Jablin & L. L. Putnam (Eds.), *The new handbook of organizational communication: Advances in theory, research, and methods* (pp. 732-818). Sage.
- Jacobs, J. A. (1993). Men in female-dominated fields: Trends and turnover. In C. L. Williams (Ed.), *Doing "women's work"* (pp. 49-63). Sage.
- Jorgensen, J. (2002). Engineering selves: Negotiating gender and identity in technical work. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 15, 350-380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318902153002>
- Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. (1966). *The social psychology of organizations*. Wiley.
- Kirby, E. L., Wieland, S. M. B., & McBride, M. C. (2013). Work-life conflict. In J. G. Oetzel & S. Ting-Toomey (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of conflict communication: Integrating theory, Research, and Practice* (pp. 377-402). Sage.
- Kramer, M. W. (2010). *Organizational socialization: Joining and leaving organizations*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.
- Kramer, M. W., & Danielson, M. A. (2015). Developing and re-developing volunteer roles: The case of ongoing assimilation of docent zoo volunteers. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 30(1), 103-120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318915612551>

- Kreiner, G. E., Hollensbe, E. C., & Sheep, M. L. (2006). Where is the “me” among the “we”? Identity work and the search for optimal balance. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 49, 1031-1057. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2006.22798186>
- Leavitt, K., Reynolds, S. J., Barnes, C. M., Schilpzand, P., & Hannah, S. T. (2012). Different hats, different obligations, plural occupational identities, and situated moral judgment. *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(6), 1316-1333. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.1023>
- Lemkau, J. P. (1984). Men in female-dominated professions: Distinguishing personality and background features. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 24(1), 110-122. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791\(84\)90070-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/0001-8791(84)90070-8)
- Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B.C. (2011). *Qualitative communication research methods*. Sage.
- Lucas, K. (2011). The working class promise: A communicative account of mobility-based ambivalences. *Communication Monographs*, 78(3), 347-369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2011.589461>
- McEntee-Atalianis, L. J., & Litosseliti, L. (2017). Narratives of sex-segregated professional identities. *Narrative Inquiry*, 27(1), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ni.27.1.01mce>
- McPhail, B. A. (2004). Setting the record straight: Social work is not a female-dominated profession. *Social Work*, 49(2), 323–326. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/49.2.323>
- Medved, C. E. (2009). Crossing and transforming occupational and household gendered divisions of labor reviewing literatures and deconstructing divisions. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 33(1), 301–341. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2009.11679090>

- Miller, V. D., & Jablin, F. M. (1991). Information seeking during organization entry: Influences, tactics, and a model of the process. *Academy of Management Review*, 16, 92-120.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1991.4278997>
- Molleman, E., & Rink, F. (2015). The antecedents and consequences of a strong professional identity among medical specialists. *Social Theory & Health*, 13(1), 46-61.
<https://doi.org/10.1057/sth.2014.16>
- Moss, J. M., Gibson, D. M., & Dollarhide, C. T. (2014). Professional identity development: A grounded theory of transformational tasks of counselors. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 92(1), 3-12. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00124.x>
- Nentwich, J. C., Poppen, W., Schälin, S., & Vogt, F. (2013). The same and the other: Male childcare workers managing identity dissonance. *International Review of Sociology*, 23(2), 326-345. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03906701.2013.804295>
- Niedenthal, P. M., Cantor, N., & Kihlstrom, J. F. (1985). Prototype matching: A strategy for social decision making. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 48, 575-584.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.48.3.575>
- Ortner, S. (1974). Is female to male as nature is to culture? In M. Rosaldo & L. Lamphere (Eds.), *Women, culture and society* (pp. 67-87). Stanford University Press.
- Packham, A. (2018). Why we need more male primary school teachers: 'Kids need to know men care about education as much as football'. Retrieved from
https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/male-primary-school-teachers-role-models_uk_5ae81441e4b04aa23f267365

- Petersen, E. J. (2014). Redefining the workplace: The professionalization of motherhood through blogging. *Journal of Technical Writing & Communication*, 44(3), 277-296.
<https://doi.org/10.2190/TW.44.3.d>
- Pratt, M. G., Rockmann, K. W., & Kaufmann, J. B. (2006). Constructing professional identity: The role of work and identity learning cycles in the customization of identity among medical residents. *The Academy of Management Journal*, 49(2), 235-262.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/20159762>
- Pringle, R. (1993). Male secretaries. In C. L. Williams (Ed.), *Doing "women's work"* (pp. 128-151). Sage.
- Rosness, R., Evjemo, T. E., Haavik, T., & Wæro, I. (2016). Prospective sensemaking in operating theatre. *Cognition, Technology, & Work*, 18, 53-59.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10111-015-0346-y>
- Schein, E. H. (1978). *Career dynamics: Matching individual and organizational needs*. Addison-Wesley.
- Scott, C., & Stephens, K. K. (2009). It depends on who you're talking to...: Predictors and outcomes of situated measures of organizational identification. *Western Journal of Communication*, 73(4), 370-394. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570310903279075>
- Siebert, D. C., & Siebert, C. F. (2005). The caregiver role identity scale: A validation study. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 15, 204-212.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049731504272779>
- Slay, H. S., & Smith, D. A. (2011). Professional identity construction: Using narrative to understand the negotiation of professional and stigmatized cultural identities. *Human Relations*, 64(1), 85-107. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726710384290>

- Snow, D. A., & Anderson, L. (1987). Identity work among the homeless: The verbal construction and avowal of personal identities. *American Journal of Sociology*, 92(6), 1336-1371. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228668>
- Strauss, K., Griffin, M. A., & Parker, S. K. (2012). Future work selves: How salient hoped-for identities motivate proactive career behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97, 580-598. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0026423>
- Tajfel, H. (1974). Social identity and intergroup behaviour. *Social Science Information*, 13(2), 65-93. <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847401300204>
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The sociology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33-48). Brooks/Cole.
- Tracy, S. J. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Wiley.
- Tracy, S. J., & Scott, C. (2006). Sexuality, masculinity, and taint management among firefighters and correctional officers. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 20, 6-38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318906287898>
- Triandis, H. C. (1959). Differential perception of certain jobs and people by managers, clerks, and workers in industry. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 43(4), 221-225. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0045311>
- Turner, J. C. (1991). *Mapping social psychology series. Social influence*. Thomson Brooks/Cole.
- U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019). *Employed persons by detailed occupation, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity*. [Data file]. Retrieved from <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>

- Van Maanen, J. (1975). Police socialization: A longitudinal examination of job attitudes in an urban police department. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 20(2), 207-228.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/2391695>
- Van Maanen, J., & Schein, E. H. (1979). Toward a theory of organizational socialization. In B. M. Staw (Ed.), *Research in organizational behavior* (pp. 209-264). JAI Press.
- Wallen, A. S., Mor, S., & Devine, B. A. (2014). It's about respect: Gender-professional identity integration affects male nurses' job attitudes. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities*, 15(3), 305-312. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0033714>
- Warin, J., Maddock, M., Pell, A., & Hargreaves, L. (2007). Resolving identity dissonance through reflective and reflexive practice in teaching. *Reflective Practice*, 7(2), 233-245.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14623940600688670>
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations*. Sage.
- Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K. M., & Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of sensemaking. *Organization Science*, 16(4), 409-421. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1050.0133>
- Williams, C. L. (1989). *Gender differences at work: Women and men in nontraditional occupations*. University of California Press.
- Williams, C. L. (1993). Introduction. In C. L. Williams (Ed.), *Doing "women's work"* (pp. 1-9). Sage.
- Williams, C. L. (1995). *Still a man's world: Men who do women's work*. University of California Press.
- Williams, C. L. (2013). The glass escalator, revisited: Gender inequality in Neoliberal times, SWS feminist lecturer. *Gender & Society*, 27(5), 609-629.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243213490232>

Witz, A. (1992). *Professions and patriarchy*. Routledge.

Woo, D. (“DJ”), Putnam, L. L., & Riforgiate, S. E. (2017). Identity work and tensions in organizational internships: A comparative analysis. *Western Journal of Communication*, 81(5), 560-581. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2017.1312510>

Appendix A
Interview Guide (for male participants)

1. Tell me about your background. Explain how you became a _____.
What was school/training/education like?
When did you first realize you wanted to go into _____?
What excited you about it?
What concerns did you have?
2. When you started, what were your expectations of being a _____?
Where did these expectations (pictures) come from?
What did you hear in college?
Professional life?
Family and Friends?
What information did you specifically seek out? (How do you think it helped your decision? Where did you get the information from?)
3. How did you explain your career choice? What was your family and friends reaction to your professional choice? How did you explain it to them?
Tell me about a time you had to defend your career choice or received an unsupportive message about your career choice.
Tell me about a time where you received a supportive message about your career choice.
4. If you could change anything about the training you received, what would it be?
How could you have been better prepared?
5. How would you describe the ideal _____?
How do you think others describe the ideal _____?
Tell me the ways you think you fit your ideal? Don't?
Tell me the ways you think you fit others ideal? Don't?
6. What interactions have you had that made you feel that you were similar to the ideal?
What interactions have you had that made you aware that you were different than the ideal?
How did you respond to these interaction?
7. Once you got a job, tell me about how your professional identity changed from being in school (or employed longer)? Personal identity?
How do you describe your professional identity?
8. Can you describe a time when you were self-aware of being a man in a female-majority profession?
9. Can you tell me about other roles that you have at work? How do you balance the additional roles?

10. How does being a man change the way you do your work or your interactions or relationships at work? (e.g. coworkers, supervisors, clients, other interactions?)
What are the biggest challenges you face as a man in this profession?
What are the biggest strengths that you think you have as a man in this profession?
11. How have you adapted to meet work expectations? How do you make your work fit your needs?
12. How do you socialize other men employees with the new prototype you've created?
What would you tell another male coworker about considering this profession?
How is that similar or different than what you'd tell a woman coworker considering this profession?
-What about children?
-What about people thinking about this profession?
13. What do you think it will take for _____ to no longer be viewed as a female-majority profession or "women's work"?
14. Do you see yourself continuing in _____?
What is the main factor driving that decision?

Are there any final thoughts you would like to share with me?

Demographics:

Occupation?

Gender?

Sex? Male/Female/Other

Number of years in this profession?

Number of other males you work with regularly in your occupation?

Race/Ethnicity?

Marital Status?