"Do You Want Excitement? Don't Join the Army, Be a Nurse!": Identity Work and Advantage among Men in Training for the Female Professions

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(ABSTRACT)

This study examines the identity work strategies that men students in nursing, elementary education, and social work programs employ in order to manage and assert their masculinity in the face of negative gender assessment, as well as the identity work involved in verifying their professional identities. It also examines the perceived benefits and disadvantages that men experience as numerical minorities in their fields of study. Interviews with 12 men students majoring in these disciplines reveal that while men do perceive disadvantages *as men* in these educational spheres, they believe that the advantages and benefits they enjoy in the form of special treatment, recognition, and access to opportunity far outweigh them. A key perceived disadvantage is the ongoing challenges they face to their social identity as men and their role identity as rising professionals. These men employ identifiable identity work strategies for doing masculinity; some of which have implications for gender equality in the educational setting, as well as in on-site training (i.e., workplace) settings as well. This study contributes to an understanding of how men verify contradictory identities, and how gender shapes, privileges, and constrains their lives. In addition, it builds on extant literature focusing on men's experiences in higher education as they prepare for careers in gender-nontraditional occupations.

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<u>DEDICATION</u>

For my family. To my husband, Eric, for being supportive and patient, and for believing

I could accomplish this during those times when I did not believe it myself. To my son,

William, for filling life with joy and laughs, and for giving me the drive to finish what I

started. To my son and guardian angel, Eric Angelo, who forever lives in my memory

and my heart. And to my daughter, Maggie, who will join our family in June 2008. You

are my life's sweetest gifts and I love you.

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I wish to express my deep appreciation to each of the men who participated in this project. This dissertation only deals with a thin slice of the overall depth and complexity of their lives and experiences as our future nurses, elementary school teachers, and social workers. I can honestly say that I was enriched by my interactions with each and every one of these individuals. I appreciate the time they devoted to this project, as well as their passion and dedication to their future careers.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines men college students' experiences in three higher education disciplines that are heavily numerically dominated by women and have traditionally been associated with "women's work." Specifically, it focuses on men in undergraduate and graduate programs pursuing degrees and future careers in nursing, elementary education, and social work. In this chapter I present the background context for the specific problem to be studied, outline the theoretical perspectives from which the research questions are derived, and provide a brief overview of the methodological approach.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Feminist epistemology asserts that perceptions of reality are shaped by structures of gender, race, class, age, physical ability, and sexual orientation. In terms of gender, this means that men and women experience the world differently. In U.S. society, from the moment a child is determined to be male or female, a gendering process ensues whereby maleness/femaleness is translated into masculinity/femininity (i.e., attitudes and behaviors considered to be appropriate for one's sex) (West and Zimmerman 1987). The social constructions of gender exaggerate the differences between men and women, and through the interplay of social structure and culture, these differences come to be taken for granted as normal and natural.

These socially constructed differences are not necessarily negative, however. Unequal outcomes result from the valuation of certain characteristics and the devaluation of others. In U.S. society, individuals with certain ascribed characteristics enjoy a privileged position over those who do not possess those characteristics (e.g., based on

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skin color, gender, physical ability, and so on). This privilege becomes embedded within institutions, and structurally, some individuals are provided with greater rewards (e.g., greater opportunities for occupational advancement, higher salaries, prestige, etc.). Feminist scholars who are working to eradicate gender inequality recognize gender as a constitutive element of social organization and as a signifier of power relations (Pierce 1995). Ultimately the gendered relations between women and men pervade all of society's institutions.

In this study I focus on the institutions of education and work. The literatures on gendered workplaces and identity anchor my thinking about gender and institutions, and stimulate my specific interest in how gender operates in the educational environment for nurses, social workers, and elementary school teachers in training. In addressing issues of gender in the workplace, Acker (1990), Williams (1993), Pierce (1995) and others have highlighted the two primary ways in which work is gendered: (1) individual workers bring their own gendered attitudes into the workplace, and (2) the workplace itself reproduces assumptions about gender. Both have a significant impact on the power relations between women and men. Traditionally the workplace has been viewed as a gender-neutral environment touched by gender only to the extent that individuals bring their gender through the doors with them. To the contrary, Britton (2000) asserts that "we should see organizations not as gender-neutral organisms infected by the germs of workers' gender … identities but as sites in which these attributes are presumed and reproduced" (pg. 418).

Cockburn (1988) captures the gendered nature of the workplace, stating that "[p]eople have a gender, and their gender rubs off on the jobs they do. The jobs in turn have a gender character which rubs off on the people who do them" (pg. 38). Furthermore, job descriptions themselves are not objective, neutral statements devoid of gendered meaning. Instead, "jobs are transformed when the gender of the worker changes" (Williams 1993:4). Thus, a given job will demand different things of men and women (e.g., Hall 1993; Hochschild 1983; Pierce 1995; Wajcman 1998; Williams 1993). The literature on gendered workplaces articulates the ways in which employees "do gender" as they enact the requirements of their jobs. West and Zimmerman (1987) assert that gender is not a set of traits; rather it is constituted through interaction. Persons socially construct gender, in part, through the identity work they do to signify membership in the category of "men" or "women" (Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2001). Also, when men and women "do gender" in the workplace, they concomitantly do dominance and deference, and thus reinforce and legitimate the gender hierarchy (West and Zimmerman 1987).

We also know that numerically, men and women do different work, with most workplaces in modern industrial society being sex segregated or all one sex. In fact, "at the beginning of the [21st] century, 52.1 percent of women would have to move into male occupations in order to achieve occupational integration" (Padavic and Reskin 2002:67). The female professions, including those in this study, are some of the lowest paid and generally offer very limited opportunities for mobility. Some researchers have argued that integrating more men into these professions would increase workers' salary, status, and prestige (Padavic and Reskin 2002), though others have highlighted the ways in

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which bringing in greater numbers of men serves to reinforce gender inequality by elevating men into positions of greater authority and higher compensation, while women remain in lower-status, lower paying echelons of the professions (e.g., Williams 1989; Williams 1995). Programs around the country, such as the Oregon Center for Nursing's "Are You Man Enough?" campaign and the MenTeach organization, have been established to recruit men into nursing and childhood and elementary education programs. Not surprisingly, they intentionally utilize images and other constructs of hegemonic masculinity in order to entice men to view these professions a viable career options for them *as men*.

What is known about men who opt to enter gender non-traditional careers? The literature on gender and work reveals that women and men have distinctly different experiences in the workplace, particularly token (i.e., numerical minority) men and women in gender nontraditional workplaces (e.g., men in nursing and women in engineering). Numerous studies have found that women's token status places them at a marked disadvantage, while token men often benefit from their privileged gender status (Cockburn 1991; Etzkowitz et al. 1992; Kanter 1977b; Williams 1992; Williams 1993). Williams (1995) finds that token men in nursing, librarianship, elementary school teaching, and social work enjoyed privileges and benefits in their experiences and relationships with faculty members and practitioners throughout their educational training. On the contrary, token female students in traditionally male-dominated disciplines in higher education often encounter barriers and experience marginalization that men do not face (Bellas 1999; Etzkowitz et al. 1992; Turner 2002).

Men who are numerical minorities in gender nontraditional fields may, however, have negative experiences as well. For example, men in female-dominated fields often are perceived as engaging in gender-inappropriate behavior (Jome and Tokar 1998), or as sexually deviant (Williams 1992). The popular media are excellent means for identifying what we as a society view as acceptable and unacceptable professional roles for women and men. The stigma associated with men's participating in occupations generally defined as "women's work" is scripted in the 2000 movie, *Meet the Parents*, wherein Gaylord "Greg" Focker is forever the target of jokes and insults because he is a male nurse. Throughout the film he is consistently mistaken for a doctor, and when it is revealed that he is a nurse, people presume that he is weak, unintelligent, and gay. The 90-minute film is peppered with scenes in which Greg faces ridicule for choosing a career in nursing, from being accused of not having enough intelligence to make it in medical school, to being called "Florence Nightingale" during a heated volleyball match, to being called "Gay" by his girlfriend's family as they insinuate he is homosexual. While *Meet the Parents* has a comedic tone, it speaks volumes about how men who deviate from normative gender behavior, particularly when in their career choices, are stigmatized.

What are the consequences of these perceptions for men who are pursuing educational training to be nurses, elementary school teachers, and social workers? How do they cope with the stigma and negative stereotypes they may face? How are they influenced by their status as numerical minorities? While the numbers are slowly growing, men currently constitute less than 15% of nurses, elementary educators, and social workers, with the lowest representation of men in nursing (i.e., only about 5% of the nurses in this country are men) (MinorityNurse.com 2008). Current research on

men's experiences in female-dominated, feminized fields has focused primarily on the workplace (e.g., Henson and Rogers 2001; Murray 1996; Pierce 1995; Williams 1989; Williams 1995). Less is known, however, about men's experiences in education and training as they prepare for careers in these fields. Most research on men's educational and training experiences in these fields is either generated through retrospective accounts in studies of the workplace (e.g., Williams 1995) or focus on broader issues, such as the antecedents of men's nontraditional career choices, stereotypes and societal perceptions about men who are pursuing nontraditional careers, men's perceptions of stigma, and the need for male mentors in these disciplines (e.g., Carmichael 1992; DeCorse and Vogtle 1997; Lackland and DeLisi 2001; Lawson 1993; Montecinos and Nielsen 1997; Stenberg and Dohner 1993). Existing studies in the latter category are heavily descriptive, but lack a theoretically informed examination of men's experiences *as men* in these educational and training programs. This dissertation contributes to the sociological understanding of men's gendered experiences within the educational context.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

As the term itself indicates, gender relations exist in *relation* to each other. That is, in a culture that posits men and women as opposites (e.g., instrumental/relational, rational/emotional, active/passive, and so on), masculine can only be understood if one knows what it means to be feminine, and vice versa. Both are part of a gendered structure. However, men are often viewed as "generic persons" (Kimmel and Messner 1998). As such, the social sciences have traditionally ignored the fact that men have gender and their gender affects them. This neglect has impeded our overall sociological

understanding of how gender operates in men's lives and how it shapes society's institutions.

How do men view their masculinity in the context of their discipline? When faced with others' negative assumptions and challenges, how do they assert their masculine identity?   Men in female-dominated fields are often assumed to be gay, effeminate, or lazy; in other words, not "real men." These negative assumptions and prejudices impact how men manage their gender identities on a daily basis (Williams 1989). Bradley (1993) argues that while the gains for women entering men's jobs are obvious in the form of better pay and more interesting work, men have less to gain and, in fact, much to lose in terms of their identity standards, or the meanings utilized to define the self. Williams (1992) states, "the stereotypes that differentiate masculinity and femininity, and degrade that which is defined as feminine, are deeply entrenched in culture, social structure, and personality" (pg. 264).

To make sense of men's experiences in light of these negative challenges to their gender behavior requires a better understanding of how men construct and preserve their masculinity in response to challenges to their masculine identity.   Identities are the sets of meanings people hold for themselves that define who they are "as persons, role occupants, and group members" (Burke 2004:5; Stets and Harrod 2004; Stryker and Burke 2000). These sets of meanings serve as identity standards or references to which people "compare their perceptions of self-relevant meanings in interactive situations" (Burke 2004:5). Burke's (2004) identity control theory suggests that when individuals' identity standards and their perceptions of others' views of them are congruent, no problem exists. When there is conflict between the two, however, the individual must

work to reestablish congruence. Burke terms this process "self-verification," but offers little explanation for how individuals do it. This study expands on Burke's theory by using the concept of "identity work" to talk about how people self-verify by using strategies to resolve discrepancies between their perceptions of others' views and identity standards.

Schwalbe (1996) defines identity work as "anything we do, alone or with others, to establish, change, or lay claim to meanings as particular kinds of persons" (pg. 105). In other words, identity work is what people do, e.g., through dress, gesture, associations, demeanor, speech, etc., that communicates to others who they are, how they are likely to behave, and how they expect to be treated. People also may do identity work by trying to reshape the sets of meanings that they attach to the self. Men in female-dominated disciplines may use a myriad of strategies in doing identity work, including, for example, *distancing* themselves from particular aspects of the field; *embracing* particular aspects of the field; *storytelling*, or offering cover stories, for why they do the work; and *reframing* the work in more masculine, or at least gender neutral terms (Boughn 1994; Dellinger 2004; Henson and Rogers 2001; Pierce 1995; Schwalbe 1996; Snow and Anderson 1987; Williams 1995).

What meanings are attached to the social identity of "man"? Connell (1995) defines masculinity as "simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage their place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality, and culture" (pg. 71). That is, masculinity consists of particular practices that are both historically and culturally situated. Notions of what constitutes acceptable displays of masculinity are themselves shaped by race, class,

sexuality, physical ability, and age. To recognize the interplay between gender, race, class, etc., is to recognize that multiple masculinities exist. Just as masculinity can only be understood in relation to femininity, various forms of masculinities can only be understood in relation to one another.

Hegemonic masculinity legitimates patriarchy, in which men are dominant and women are subordinate (Connell 1995). Thus, hegemonic masculinity is the form of masculinity that occupies the dominant position in the gender order. Contemporary hegemonic masculinity describes men who are strong, courageous, independent, self-reliant, stoic, powerful, competent, economically successful, of the dominant race, and visibly heterosexual (Connell 1995; Gershik and Miller 1998; Lorber 2001; Pierce 1995; Williams 1995). Hegemonic masculinity is very narrowly defined because it exists in relation to women, homosexuality, effeminacy, and other characteristics associated with femininity (Addleston and Stirratt 1998). Alongside hegemonic images of masculinity are cultural images of some groups of men that may be incongruous or in conflict with it, for example, men of color, disabled men, poor men, old men, and homosexual men (Connell 1992; Espiritu 1998; Nonn 1998; Schwalbe 1996; Staples 1998; Thompson 1998).

The meanings of masculinity and femininity, and attributes associated with men and women, shape the way individuals view others, as well as the expectations they have of them. Status characteristics theory provides insight into how assumptions about particular individual attributes shape or determine performance expectations, as well as perceptions of competence and ability. Status characteristics are distinctions based upon individuals' socially significant attributes, as well as the culturally held beliefs that attach

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presumptions of greater worth and competence with some attributes over others. In other words, persons tend to attribute capabilities to others based on identified status characteristics and the relevance of those attributes to the task at hand. Specific status characteristics are clearly and narrowly defined cultural expectations for competency that pertain to performance expectations within a narrow range of settings and situations. In contrast, diffuse status characteristics are social characteristics that carry a very broad range of cultural expectations for competence, and those assumptions impact the formation of performance expectations across a wide range of settings and situations. Gender is a diffuse status characteristic that shapes perceptions and expectations across a vast array of settings. As such, status characteristics theory is useful in understanding and articulating the different performance expectations and presumptions of competence that men and women face in a myriad of settings, as well as the behavioral outcomes associated with differential expectations and opportunities. For the purposes of this research, status characteristics theory helps to predict and explain men's perceived competencies in and contributions to tasks more closely aligned with women's "natural" abilities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this study, I draw from the theoretical and substantive literatures outlined above in order to investigate the benefits and disadvantages men face in their educational environments; their perceptions of challenges to their gender identity within the course of their educational training to become nurses, elementary school teachers, and social workers; and the identity work they must do in order to assert and maintain their sense of masculinity. To explore and better understand men's experiences as numerical minorities

in the higher education fields of nursing, elementary education, and social work, I address

the following research questions:

1. Do male students in female-dominated, feminized disciplines believe they benefit from their minority status as men? If so, in what ways? Do men feel at a disadvantage, or do they believe they are penalized for participating in these disciplines? If so, in what ways?

2. How do men view their masculinity in the context of their discipline? Do these male students face challenges to their masculine identity? From whom? How do they construct and/or preserve their masculine identity? Do they employ identifiable strategies in order assert or reassert their masculine identity?

The first set of research questions are derived from the literature on gender tokenism,

and the literature on gendered organizations that serves in part as its critique. What little

we know of men's experiences as "gender tokens" in higher education comes through

retrospective accounts, and the above literatures have limited their exploration of

gendered organizations to the workplace. This study examines higher education as a site

of gendered organization, and provides insights in the ways in which the gendering of

jobs begins at the level of education and training. Additionally, from a theoretical

standpoint, status characteristics theory offers a useful framework for examining and

making sense of the ways in which men perceive their specific and diffuse status

characteristics as benefiting them in these contexts. The second set of research questions

are generated from identity control theory and the literatures on masculinities and identity

work. Identity control theory posits that individuals strive to achieve congruence

between their own identity standards and their perception of input from others in

interaction, but offers little explanation for how individuals accomplish this "self-

verification." The literature on identity work sheds light on this verification process, and

the masculinities literature illuminates the meanings attached the social identity of *man*.

This study thus goes beyond the workplace to understand how men are advantaged and disadvantaged as numerical minorities in their fields, and how they employ strategies for managing and asserting their masculinity in the face of challenges.

This study has scholarly significance as well as implications for teaching, training, and learning in higher education. The historical lack of emphasis in social science research on the categories "men" and "masculinity" has impeded a broader understanding of gender relations. Much of social science research has tended to assume that only women have gender or are affected by gender, and much feminist scholarship has reinforced this notion by focusing solely on women's lives. Yet men and women alike are part of the same gendered structure. Examination of men's lives and experiences is needed in order to reveal how the gender order shapes, privileges, and constrains men's lives (Collinson and Hearn 1994; Connell 2001). Thus, this study analyzes men's experiences as gendered beings, offering insights into men's lives. By utilizing the concept of identity work, this study also expands upon social psychological theories of identity control as they are applied to interpreting the identity work that men do to assert, preserve, and/or shape their masculine identity by providing an explanation for how the process of self-verification happens. Finally, by giving voice to men's perceptions and experiences as numerical minorities in higher education programs in nursing, elementary education, and social work, this study may inform educational and training programs seeking to attract and train men, as a numerical minority, for traditionally female-dominated, feminized careers. Concomitantly, it may alert administrators and recruiters to some ways in which they could identify, address, and rectify the cultural and structural

gender inequalities that exist and are reproduced in educational and training environments in nursing, elementary education, and social work programs.

METHODOLOGY

In order to address the research questions, I conducted 12 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with men pursuing Bachelor's or Master's degrees in nursing, elementary education, and social work. The interview questions focused on participants' identity standards, the perceived challenges they may face to those standards, and the ways in which they "do masculinity" as a means of self-verification. In addition, interview questions probed participants' assumptions, attitudes and beliefs about masculinity and men in female-dominated, feminized careers, their experiences and interactions within their majors, how people both within and outside of the university setting responded to their major choice and career goals, and the perceived challenges and benefits they experienced as numerical minorities in their fields.

The interviews lasted an average of one hour, and they were tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Interview transcripts were carefully reviewed and coded for connecting threads, patterns, and themes, as well as divergent ones. This dissertation incorporates verbatim narrative accounts of men's experiences and perspectives.

ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

This dissertation is organized around five remaining chapters. The next chapter surveys the theoretical and substantive literature related to this study. Chapter Three presents the research design, including details about the research context, information about the participants in the study, an overview of the data collection instruments and

procedures, and the procedures employed to analyze the interview data. Chapter Four

examines the perceived benefits and disadvantages experienced by twelve men pursuing

degrees in nursing, social work and elementary education. Chapter Five explores the

challenges to gender identity that these men face in their education and training

environments and articulates the key strategies they use to affirm and assert their

masculine identity. The last chapter presents a summary of the findings, their theoretical

and practical implications, the contributions and limitations of the study, and ideas for

future research directions.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter surveys the theoretical and substantive literature that informs and provides context for this study. First, I outline Kanter's theory on tokenism. Then, I present theoretical and empirical literatures on gendered organizations. Third, I survey the literature on the experiences of token men in the workplace, and summarize status characteristics theory to highlight the significance of gender in shaping and determining performance expectations, as well as perceptions of competence and ability. Next, I review literature on masculinities and the meanings of identity, and how these affect men who do "women's work." Finally, I survey the literature on men's experiences in education and training as they prepare for careers in gender-nontraditional occupations.

GENDER TOKENISM IN THE WORKPLACE

Kanter (1977a) argues that "[p]roportions, that is, *relative* numbers of socially and culturally different people in a group, are seen as critical in shaping interaction dynamics" (pg. 965). She defines groups by the proportional representation of members and identifies four group types: balanced, tilted, skewed, and uniform. Of interest in the present study is the skewed group, which is described as follows:

> Skewed groups are those in which there is a large preponderance of one type over another, up to a ratio of perhaps 85:15. The numerically dominant types also control the group and its culture in enough ways to be labeled "dominants." The few of another type in a skewed group can appropriately be called "tokens," for … they are often treated as representatives of their category, as symbols rather than individuals. (Kanter 1977b:208)

Thus tokenism is a function of one's numerical minority status in a group. Kanter posits that if a group comprises less than 15% of an organization's total number, members of that group will be tokenized and will share similar experiences of marginalization and

exclusion. Though she focuses on token women in her study, she concludes that all

tokens (regardless of the status characteristics, whether based on gender, race, sexuality

or other) will suffer significant and similar handicaps in the workplace.

What are the consequences that tokens face due to their proportional scarcity in

organizations? As Kanter (1977a) explains, tokens are "people identified by ascribed

characteristics (master statuses such as sex, race, religion, ethnic group, age, etc.) or other

characteristics that carry with them a set of assumptions about culture, status, and

behavior highly salient for majority category members" (pg. 968). As such, they are

faced with perceptual challenges from dominants in their organizational environment.

First, dominants are more acutely aware of tokens, and consequently scrutinize, question,

and communicate with others about their performance ("heightened visibility"); the

dominant group exaggerates perceived differences between themselves and the token

group ("polarization"); and dominants view tokens as fitting stereotypes about the

group(s) they represent ("assimilation").

The consequences of these perceptual phenomena for interaction dynamics, as

well as token members' experiences in the workplace are significant. Heightened

visibility results in performance pressures, polarization creates feelings of isolation for

tokens, and leads to boundary heightening, and assimilation fosters a work environment

wherein tokens are encapsulated into a limited set of roles.   Ultimately, Kanter (1977a)

argues that "[a]ll of the phenomena associated with tokens are exaggerated ones: the

token stands out vividly, group culture is dramatized, boundaries become heightened, and

token roles are larger-than-life caricatures" (pg. 985).

GENDERED ORGANIZATIONS

Theories of gendered organizations, and the empirical literature based on this

theoretical perspective, offer a valuable critique to Kanter's universal approach to the

notion of tokenism. Kanter (1977a) asserts that

> Proportional scarcity is not unique to women. Men can also find
> themselves alone among women, blacks among whites, very old people
> among the young, straight people among gays, the blind among the
> sighted. The dynamics of interaction (the process) is likely to be very
> similar in all such cases, even though the content of interaction may reflect
> the special culture and traditional roles of both token and members of the
> numerically dominant category. (pg. 968)

This generalization that the effects of proportional scarcity on women in organizations

can be applied to other token groups has been criticized as ignoring power issues in

society at large, and in particular the ways in which the power differences between

women and men are reflected in organizations and institutions. In short, when

considering gender tokenism it is essential to recognize that the gender of the token

matters. In addition, the gendered logic that operates in organizations is essential to the

overall understanding of women's and men's experiences in the workplace.

Traditionally, the workplace has been conceptualized as a sex-neutral [and

gender-neutral, race-neutral, sexuality-neutral, etc.] institution. Theories of gendered

organizations inform us, to the contrary, that gender is not only a feature of the individual

(e.g., assumptions, attitudes, behaviors, etc.), but is also a built-in feature of institutions

and organizations themselves (i.e., they are constructed around a gendered logic). Thus

in the workplace gender operates in two primary ways, both of which have a significant

impact on the power relations between women and men: individual workers bring their

gendered attitudes into the workplace with them, and the workplace itself is a site for

reproducing assumptions about gender. As Britton (2000) argues, "we should see organizations not as gender-neutral organisms infected by the germs of workers' gender … identities but as sites in which these attributes are presumed and reproduced" (pg. 418).

In her theory of gendered organizations[1], Acker (1990) states that "the [very] concept of 'a job' assumes a particular gendered organization of domestic life and social production" (pg. 149). That is, the concept of "the job" embodies the ideal of the male worker – an able-bodied, full-time worker with a long-term career commitment, and the support of a woman to contend with reproductive tasks (e.g., attending to his needs and thus maintaining him as a worker [reproduction of labor power], managing his home and family, etc.). In addition, notions of higher-level job success are tied to notions of hegemonic masculinity. For example, the successful executive is strong, authoritative, unemotional, and aggressive – all traits that are associated with men and masculinity more than with women and femininity (Connell 1995).

Job descriptions themselves are gendered (Acker 1990), and what constitutes the requirements of a job depend on whether its occupant is male or female. In other words, job descriptions are not objective, neutral statements of expectations devoid of gendered meanings. They are, on the contrary, highly gendered in that they expect different things of men and women. As Williams (1993) asserts, "jobs are transformed when the gender of the worker changes" (pg. 4). The literature on gender and work is rich with examples

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[1] Though Acker's theory focuses on the institution of work, I extend her argument to apply to higher education as a gendered institution. As higher education prepares students for careers in specific professions, including nursing, social work, and elementary school teaching, the gendered logic of academic training and education reflects that of workplace and job expectations.

of this and, in particular, social science research on women and men in gender-nontraditional jobs (such as men in nursing and women in litigation) are very telling.

For example, in her examination of men and women childcare workers, Murray (1996) found that men who chose to engage in child care work were closely scrutinized and under suspicion, revealing the deeply embedded feminization of child care work. She argued that "[t]his suspicion manifests in restriction of men's access to children in child care centers. Restricted access of men workers to children … implies men's desire for access to children is pathological" (pg. 368). Evident in her findings is the notion that women are the only appropriate choice to serve as child care providers.

Pierce's (1995) research on litigators and paralegal assistants highlights the gendered nature of job performance expectations in the legal profession. She found that, as litigators, women who were unassertive, non-aggressive, and/or relational tended to be labeled as poor lawyers incapable of performing the demands of the job. However, when female lawyers embraced the "masculine" norms of the profession, they were generally chastised for being overly aggressive, charged with using their "feminine wiles" for personal gain, and labeled as unfeminine and domineering. "Doing masculinity" also cast suspicion on women's sexuality, revealing the underlying norm of heterosexuality that also operates within organizations. Her study revealed that women litigators struggled with a double-bind wherein they were scrutinized as either too masculine or too feminine, both of which undermined others' perceptions of their professional competence. Male litigators, on the other hand, enjoyed an assumed level of competence, legitimacy and respect as there was no lack of congruence between their sex, gender and

the expectations of the job. This finding led Pierce to ask the critical question: Can one

be both a litigator and a woman?

Pierce's research also examined the gendered nature of the paralegal profession

within law firms. She found that male paralegals were not expected to show deference to

litigators to the extent that women paralegals were, and especially that men paralegals

were not expected to perform the caretaker role. Male paralegal assistants were included

in extracurricular activities with litigators (such as socials and sporting teams), while

women were excluded from such social networks. In addition, it was acceptable in the

culture of law firms for litigators to associate with male paralegals, while socializing with

female paralegals was considered unprofessional. These findings show that being a

litigator or a paralegal assistant is not the same job for women and men.

Robinson and McIlwee's (1991) research on the engineering profession also

underscores the gendered nature of jobs. They argue that professional competence in

engineering is not simply a matter of who is better at the job. Instead it is largely based

on who is better at *enacting* competence, and in that sense, excellence becomes the

product of interaction. In the engineering profession, the competent employee has

masculine characteristics such as confidence, aggression, competition, and a highly

technical orientation. That is, professional competence is equated with masculinity, so an

engineer is by definition a man. West and Zimmerman (1987) illustrate this

phenomenon:

> [A] young woman … became part of that virile profession, engineering.
> The designer of an airplane is expected to go up on the maiden flight of
> the first plane built according to the design [and then] gives a dinner for
> the engineers and workmen who worked on the new plane. The dinner is
> naturally a stag party. The young woman in question designed a plane.
> Her co-workers urged her not to take the risk—for which, presumably,

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only men are fit—of the maiden voyage. They were, in effect, asking her to be a lady instead of an engineer. (pg. 139)

Ultimately, the [female] engineer took the maiden voyage and threw the party afterwards. However, she had one drink and departed early, demonstrating her "'essential' femininity through accountably 'ladylike' behavior" (pg. 139)

These studies underscore the differential nature of "the job" for men and women, but also highlight the ways in which employees "do gender" as they perform the requirements of their jobs. West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that gender is not a set of traits, rather it is something that is constituted through interaction. We socially construct gender, in part, through the identity work we do to signify our membership in the category of "men" or "women" (Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2001). In "doing gender" in the workplace men and women are concomitantly doing dominance and deference, and thereby "the resultant social order, which supposedly reflect 'natural differences,' is a powerful reinforcer and legitimator of hierarchical arrangements" (West and Zimmerman 1987:146).

The literature on gendered organizations has focused exclusively on the workplace, as well as the ways in which jobs are gendered. Scholars have paid scant attention to the ways in which other institutions are gendered, such as higher education. This study fills an existing gap in this literature by looking at the university setting as a site for gendered organization, examining the ways in which men perceive and experience their numerical minority status as men. Do they feel they benefit? If so, how? Do they feel penalized? If so, in what ways? In the next section I briefly review the literature of male tokenism in the workplace.

Consistent with theories of gendered organizations, and in contrast to Kanter's (1977b) generalization that the effects of proportional scarcity on women in organizations are applicable to other token groups, research on men in female-dominated, feminized occupations finds that token men experience significant advantages, including preferential treatment in hiring and promotion, inclusion in informal work networks, and being cast into leadership roles by colleagues (Acker 1990; Britton 2000; Murray 1996; Pierce 1995; Williams 1989; Williams 1995).

Williams (1995), in her study of token men's experiences in nursing, social work, librarianship, and elementary education, found that while men face discrimination in their professions, the consequences of that discrimination are far different from that faced by women in gender-nontraditional occupations. For token men, most of the discrimination and prejudice they faced came from the clients they served who were unaccustomed to seeing men performing "women's work." That said, most men and women in her study perceived that men were treated fairly and oftentimes preferentially. They enjoyed positive working environments, felt well accepted by colleagues and supervisors, and fared very well in hiring and promotion decisions. In addition, cultural and structural mechanisms operated in the workplace that advanced and elevated men in these professions, a phenomenon Williams refers to as "riding the glass escalator," pointing out that "[m]en take their gender privilege with them when they enter predominantly female occupations; this translates into an advantage in spite of their numerical rarity" (p. 263).

Cognard-Black (2004), in his investigation of sex-atypical work among token men who teach, found no support for the generalizability of Kanter's tokenism theory to men in the female-dominated field of teaching. He did, however, find strong support for the glass escalator phenomenon. Rather than suffering disadvantages as male tokens in the teaching profession, he concludes that "they benefit in one real, important way from their status as men: They are significantly more likely to advance upward into prominent school administrative positions" (pg. 133).

For token men who do face some of the same perceptual phenomena as those cited by Kanter, including heightened visibility, assimilation, and polarization, the consequences and outcomes are different from those faced by token women. An early study by Floge and Merrill (1986) found that both female doctors and male nurses experienced negative effects of their token status, including heightened visibility and polarization. However, the consequences were significantly different for the two groups. Female doctors perceived greater degrees of scrutiny and isolation and felt that they were viewed as less credible, while male nurses benefited from their relationships with male doctors and administrators, which provided them with access to networks. While male nurses did experience assimilation, or as fitting stereotypes about men generally, they were drawn into advantageous masculine roles such as leadership positions.

Heikes (1991), in his case study on men in nursing, found that men experienced *heightened visibility*. While for some it was uncomfortable, for most it was positive, as it allowed them greater opportunities for attention and recognition, and they felt it improved their overall job performance. The differentiation between dominants and

tokens, or *polarization*, was evident, but appeared to originate from the men themselves.

He states,

> "it seems logical that such differentiation might also originate with the token group in certain situations. Specifically, when tokens are of a higher social status than dominants, they may differentiate themselves from the dominants in order to improve their overall status or to avoid any social stigma which may be associated with the dominants in the larger society. (pg. 393)

Evidence supported the existence of the *assimilation* dynamic but for the most part in ways that bolstered rather than diminished them in anyway. Role traps that reinforced traditional notions of masculinity, such as "ladderclimber," "troublemaker," and "He-man" roles went uncontested by these men; however, the "homosexual" role was one that they openly and directly denied.

These studies underscore that men in nursing, and perhaps men in gender-nontraditional occupations more generally, experience and react to tokenism differently than do women. While Kanter's theory of tokenism can be applied to men in nursing, "many of the differences they experience compared to female tokens are attributable to socio-cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity as well as gender-based issues of status rather than group proportions alone" (Heikes 1991:389).

Men also encounter negative consequences, but sometimes even in the face of these they may benefit from their gender status. For example, token men reported facing negative sexual stereotypes (e.g., assumptions that token men are gay or pedophiles), yet despite this tended to benefit by structural pressures to move out of feminine-identified positions within these occupations and up through the ranks into positions considered more masculine (e.g., those with more authority, greater autonomy, higher prestige), and

thus more legitimate for men (Williams 1995). Thus, even when faced with stigma and stereotypes, men may ride the glass escalator to higher levels within the workplace hierarchy.

Again, extant literature on "token men" focuses almost exclusively on the workplace. The literature that looks at mens' experiences as tokens in higher education comes from retrospective accounts. This study fills the existing gap by focusing on the experiences and perceptions of men currently undergoing education and training to enter "the female professions." Next I provide an overview of status characteristics theory.

STATUS CHARACTERISTICS THEORY

Why are men in gender-nontraditional occupations so often cast into leadership roles and elevated to higher-level positions in workplaces where they perform tasks more closely aligned with women's presumed "natural" abilities? Status characteristics theory provides insight into how assumptions about particular individual attributes shape or determine performance expectations, as well as perceptions of competence and ability. Status characteristics are distinctions based upon individuals' socially significant attributes, as well as the culturally held beliefs that attach presumptions of greater worth and competence with some attributes over others. In other words, persons tend to attribute capabilities to others based on identified status characteristics and the relevance of those attributes to the task at hand.

Status characteristics theory is a subtheory of expectation states theory, which "seeks to explain the emergence of status hierarchies in situations where actors are oriented toward the accomplishment of a collective goal or task" (Correll and Ridgeway 2003:31). Expectations states theory is a macro-micro-macro explanation of inequality

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linking the individual and society. Correll and Ridgeway (2003) argue that "[c]ultural

beliefs about social categories at the macro level impact behavior and evaluation at the

individual level, which acts to reproduce status structures that are consistent with pre-

existing macro-level beliefs" (pg. 48).

Status characteristics can be specific or diffuse. Specific characteristics (e.g.,

technical competence or care-taking abilities) have associated with them a clearly and

narrowly defined set of cultural expectations for competency, and as such, are relevant to

performance expectations within a narrow range of settings and situations (e.g., in a

hospital setting or in regard to how well one interacts with children). Diffuse status

characteristics (e.g., male or female), in contrast, have associated with them a very broad

range of cultural expectations for competence, and those assumptions impact the

formation of performance expectations across a wide-range of settings and situations

(e.g., level of competence on the job or serving in a leadership role). These status

characteristics can include an individual's personal attributes (e.g., race and gender) and

the roles that s/he occupies (e.g., manager and nurse). Correll and Ridgeway (2003)

assert that:

> Gender is an example of a diffuse status characteristic in the United States
> and elsewhere. Widely shared cultural beliefs about gender have been
> shown to include expectations that men are diffusely more competent at
> most things, as well as specific assumptions that men are better at some
> particular tasks (e.g., mechanical tasks) while women are better at others
> (e.g., nurturing tasks). (pg. 32)

A diffuse status characteristic becomes relevant or salient in a particular situation

"when it differentiates those in the setting or because the characteristic is believed to be

directly relevant to the task at hand" (Correll, Bernard, and Paik 2007:1297).

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Assumptions about these salient characteristics are then utilized to inform behaviors and evaluations of performance. The greater the value placed upon the salient characteristic, the greater the performance expectation and evaluation. According to the theory, "actors then implicitly use the salient characteristics to guide their behaviors and evaluations" (Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007: 1301). Correll and Ridgeway (2003) argue that these status beliefs create self-fulfilling prophecies – a person with higher status is expected to perform better and, as such, is given more opportunities to perform. Ultimately they are assessed more favorably based upon original performance expectations. Interestingly, theorists argue that "even those disadvantaged by a status belief accept, as a social fact, that the other group is socially evaluated as better than their own" (Correll and Ridgeway 2003:32). Thus, status characteristics theory is predicated on shared assumptions about the value of given attributes. Correll, Bernard, and Paik (2007) assert, however, that these effects hold true unless "the task or setting is one for which lower-status individuals are believed to be 'naturally' better, such as a task requiring nurturing ability in the case of gender" (pg. 1301). Based upon these parameters, status characteristics theory makes a threefold set of predictions about the relationship between gender and sex-typed tasks:

> [T]he theory predicts that in a mixed sex group with a gender-neutral task, men will have an advantage over women in participation and influence. If the task is a masculine typed one, men's advantage over women in these behaviors will be even greater. But if the task is a feminine typed one, women will have a modest advantage over men in participation and influence. (Correll and Ridgeway 2003:38).

Based on these predictions, status characteristics theory asserts that specific characteristics will outweigh diffuse ones in shaping behaviors and performance expectations.

Status characteristics theory is built upon five assumptions linking status beliefs with behavior (Correll and Ridgeway 2003). First, the *salience* assumption asserts that for a given status characteristic to impact performance expectations, it must be relevant and significant to those in the setting. As such, there are no attributes that advantage or disadvantage individuals across all settings. The *burden of proof* assumption looks at how status characteristics shape performance expectations, despite their initial irrelevance to the task at hand. For example, if gender is a salient characteristic in a given situation it will impact performance expectations for men and women, even if gender itself has nothing to do with the task itself. The *sequencing* assumption concerns what happens as individuals join or exit a given setting and asserts that "performance expectations that formed in one encounter carry over to the next encounter, even if the specific actors change" (Correll and Ridgeway 2003:33). Fourth, the *aggregation* assumption examines the aggregation of performance expectations based upon the combination of multiple characteristics. This assumption allows for the theoretical prediction of how actors in the setting will "rank order" the salient attributes in order to derive performance expectations for individuals in the group. The final assumption concerns how these aggregated performance expectations shape behaviors. Ultimately individuals who are perceived as the most competent will be given more opportunities to act and will be evaluated more highly by other group members. This final assumption linking expectations and behavior is a crucial one because, as Correll and Ridgeway (2003) state, "status characteristics theory is ultimately a theory of behavior, not thought" (pg. 34).

MASCULINITIES AND MEN WHO DO "WOMEN'S WORK"

Despite structural advantages in doing gender non-traditional work, token men face scrutiny and challenges to their gender identity. As Williams (1995) argues, "For the men in these professions, masculinity is contested terrain: The outside world considers them failures as men, while inside their professions they are rewarded because they are men" (pg. 21). Men in occupational fields such as nursing and elementary education are often put in the position of having to defend themselves as real men, as their very presence in a female-dominated field challenges notions of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995).

Masculinities

> *In what might be termed the 'everyday world," those behaviours of males that are violent, dysfunctional and oppressive are frequently excused or explained away as 'natural' masculine behaviour, being understood in common-sense terms as fixed and, thus, as an inevitable aspect of social 'reality.' A key aim of feminism is to critique and destabilize such notions, the ultimate intention being to challenge those practices and beliefs that contribute to sustaining men's power. Likewise, central to the sociology of masculinity is a desire to name, examine, understand and hopefully change those practices of men that hinder or confront the possibility of gender equity. (Cowburn 2004:499)*

Though masculinity is as much a part of the gendered structure as femininity, male privilege has blinded us to the fact that men do, indeed, have gender. The tendency in social science literature has traditionally been to situate men as the unscrutinized norm or generic person and, as such, has obscured the fact that men, too, have gender and are profoundly impacted by it. Contemporary theoretical contributions on men and masculinit*ies* have been essential to dismantling the notion of the universal, monolithic group "men" (e.g., Addelston and Stirratt 1998; Collinson and Hearn 1994; Connell

1992; Connell 1995; Espiritu 1998; Kimmel and Messner 1998; Nonn 1998; Pierce 1995; Thompson 1998; Williams 1995).

Connell (1992) argues that masculinity should not be misunderstood as a "simple reflex" of patriarchy. Rather, different masculinities are constituted in relation to femininity and to *other* masculinities. These relations can be characterized by both cooperation and conflict. According to Collinson and Hearn (1994) "on the one hand, men often collaborate, cooperate and identify with one another in ways that display a shared unity and consolidate power between them. Yet on the other hand, these same masculinities can also be characterized simultaneously by conflict, competition and self-differentiation in ways that highlight and intensify the differences and divisions between men." (pg. 16). Furthermore, masculinities are not static – their particular forms vary historically and across cultures, and within particular cultures. The scholarship on masculinities is important to filling some of the gaps in understanding gender relations. To view men as not having gender, or as not being affected by their gender, is problematic in that it impedes our overall understanding of how gender operates in and shapes society and its institutions.

Masculinity is "simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality, and culture" (Connell 1995:71). Connell views masculinity as a gender project, consisting of particular configurations of practice that are both historically and culturally situated. Furthermore, he argues that in order to understand gender, we must always look beyond gender to other components of social structure, such as race, class, sexuality, physical ability, etc. To recognize the interplay

between gender, race, class, sexuality, etc., is to recognize that multiple masculinities exist. And just as the notion of masculinity can only be understood in relation to femininity, so too the various forms of masculinities can only be understood in relation to one another.

Connell (1995) describes *hegemonic* masculinity as "the accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (pg. 77). Thus, hegemonic masculinity is not in and of itself a particular "kind of masculinity," rather it is the form of masculinity that occupies the dominant position in a given pattern of gender relations. Lorber (2001) defines contemporary hegemonic masculinity as describing men who are economically successful, racially superior, and visibly heterosexual. Gershick & Miller (1998) apply the term to men who are strong, courageous, independent, and self-reliant. Still others, such as Williams (1995) and Pierce (1995) describe it using terms such as "stoic," "powerful," "economically successful," "authoritative," and "competent". While hegemonic masculinity is fragile, contestable, and its maintenance requires work, it is the dominant form of masculinity at any given historical moment and serves as an ideal that one need not embody in order to support (Connell 1995).[2]

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[2] For example, Addelston and Stirratt (1998) examine The Citadel as a site for investigating the construction and maintenance of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity exists in relation to any characteristics associated with femininity, so creating narrowly defined borders that police and preserve the boundaries of what constitutes acceptable masculinity is essential. The Citadel is described as a place where women and homosexuals are deliberately constructed as denigrated outgroups who demarcate the boundaries of the "whole man," and misogyny and homophobia are used to delimit what constitutes acceptable masculinity.

Another form of masculinity is *subordinate* masculinity, and Connell (1995) underscores the dominance of heterosexual men over gay men as the most important case in contemporary society. He states, "[g]ayness, in patriarchal ideology, is the repository of whatever is symbolically expelled from hegemonic masculinity…" (Connell 1995:78). In essence, homosexuality is the negation of masculinity. Connell (1992) argues that, while they rank lower on the 'masculinity hierarchy,' their masculine social presence, focus on private couple relationships, and lack of solidarity with feminism points to a lack of challenge to the gender order. Thus he concludes that a sexual identity incongruent with hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily interrupt the gender order as a whole.

Men do not necessarily have to embody hegemonic masculinity in order to support it; in fact most men do not. That said, most men do benefit from the patriarchal dividend that comes with hegemonic masculinity, specifically in terms of the advantages (e.g., prestige, honor, the right to command, etc.) that they gain from the subordination of women (Connell 1995). This *complicit* masculinity has very real material consequences: men's' greater earnings overall, men's concentration into higher status/high paying jobs, male domination of state power, and so on. Williams (1995) demonstrates this complicity, revealing how hiring decisions in the fields of nursing, social work, librarianship, and elementary education are often based on the supervisor's stereotypes of appropriate work roles for men and women, which often benefit men, as they are presumed to be better leaders, more aggressive, and more analytical. These are all hallmarks of prestigious positions specifically, and hegemonic masculinity more generally. By virtue of the fact that these men occupy positions in occupations that are

feminized, they are clearly not on the "front lines of hegemonic masculinity." However, their patriarchal dividend comes in the form of a glass escalator that carries them to the top of their chosen professions, despite their own ambitions and motivations.

While the relations among hegemonic, subordinate, and complicit masculinities are internal to the gender order, *marginalized* masculinities emerge from the intersection of gender with other bases of identity, including race, class, age, ability, etc. Connell (1995) asserts that "the relations between the masculinities in dominant and subordinate classes or ethnic groups [and] is always relative to the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group" (pg. 80-1).[3]

While the concept of hegemonic masculinity has attracted criticism on the grounds that it essentializes men (e.g., Petersen 1998; Petersen 2003) and that it is ambiguous (e.g., Martin 1998), its utility and applicability has withstood 20 years of research. The fundamental concepts of the existence of multiple masculinities and a hierarchy of masculinities, and the assertion that hegemonic masculinity is an ideal that individual men need not embody to uphold, are well supported (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

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[3] Espiritu (1998), for example, shows how during the pre-World War II period, Asian men served as domestic servants and as such were subordinated by both white men *and* women. He also investigates contemporary electronics work in Silicon Valley, wherein factories hire Asian immigrant women because their gender logic dictates that they are better suited to factory work due to their lesser monetary needs, their better dexterity, and a psychological predisposition towards routine and monotonous work. Thus it is often the women, not the men, who have greater employability and therefore occupy the breadwinner status in their homes, challenging the patriarchal authority of Asian men. Also see Thompson (1998) who highlights the challenges that aging presents to masculinity. Elderly men are seen as suffering significant losses such as their occupations (worker role, collegial relations, livelihood), their health, and their independence – all markers of masculinity, revealing a diminished masculinity at the intersection of gender and age, and underscoring the changing nature of masculinities as one proceeds through the life course.

Bases of Identity and Doing Identity Work

How do men construct and preserve their masculinity in response to challenges to their masculine identity? Identities are the sets of meanings people hold for themselves that define who they are "as persons, role occupants, and group members" (Burke 2004:5; Stets and Harrod 2004; Stryker and Burke 2000). These meanings determine what one expects of oneself, as well as how one responds to oneself. As well, these meanings are often shared, and so they indicate to others how to react to one's self (Burke 2003). These sets of meanings serve as identity standards or references to which people "compare their perceptions of self-relevant meanings in interactive situations" (pg. 5). In other words, individuals will strive to achieve congruence between their own identity standards and their perception of input from others in interaction. This process is known as "self-verification."

Multiple bases of identity exist. *Social identities*, based on membership in a group or category, give self-meanings that are shared with other group members, and are sometimes shared more broadly as well. According to Burke (2004), "[b]eing verified in terms of a social identity reinforces group—nongroup distinctions, thus maintaining boundaries and supporting the continued differentiations and cleavages in the social structure" (pg. 9). The category of 'man' is one that constitutes a social identity. *Personal identities*, or one's own traits or qualities, are more individual in nature, though they are rooted in internalized cultural expectations. What it *means* for one to be a man, or in other words one's sense of masculinity, is an example of a personal identity. While one may have some degree of agency in determining such meanings, they are still bound by normative expectations. Finally, *role identities*, or the positions one holds, are

categories defined within the culture that people learn to apply to themselves and to others. The meanings contained in role identities are generated both from shared cultural knowledge in a society, as well as one's own unique personal experiences. Burke (2004) asserts that a role identity "is tied to other members of the role set; verification comes by what one does, not who one is" (pg. 9). One's position as a college student or an elementary school teacher is an example of a role identity.

Individuals occupy multiple roles and have multiple identities at any given point in time. Stryker (1968) argues that for each of us these multiple identities are arranged a hierarchy. Stryker and Serpe (1994) assert that "the hierarchy in which identities are organized is based on identity salience" (pg. 17), meaning that an identity will be activated in a given situation based on salience, or its position in the hierarchy. Identity salience, of course, varies from individual to individual, so a given identity among different people will be more or less salient or important depending on who that individual is and where the given identity is situated compared to the other identities in their identity hierarchy.

What makes some identities more salient than others? Stryker theorizes that "the relative salience of identities is a function of commitment to the roles to which the identities are attached" (Stryker and Serpe 1994:19). Demonstrating the individual-society connection, the concept of commitment refers to the social and personal costs of an individual of giving up a particular identity (Burke 2003). In other words, how many connections does an individual have to others based on a given identity (i.e., "interactional commitment"), and how meaningful are those connections to the individual (i.e., "affective commitment")? Ultimately, Stryker posits that the greater the

commitment to an identity, based on the dimensions stated above, the greater the salience of that identity in a given interaction. Identities of greater salience take priority in the self-verification process.

Burke's (2004) identity control theory suggests that when individuals' identity standards and their perceptions of others' views of them are congruent, no problem exists. For example, when multiple identities share meaning (e.g., the social identity "man" and the role identity "litigator"), interactional situations tend to be simple. In other words, the activation and subsequent verification of one identity does not create a sense of discrepancy in other salient identities. When perceptions of others' input and identity standards are in conflict, however, individuals must work to reestablish congruence between the two. For example, the common cultural meanings attached to the role identities of nurse, elementary school teacher, and social worker share more meanings with the social identity of "woman" (e.g., nurturing and compassionate) than with the social identity of "man" (e.g., aggressive and dominant).

When multiple identities have incongruent meanings (e.g., "man" and "nurse"), conflict is sparked as the individual attempts self-verification. According to Burke, "it would be difficult if not impossible to maintain identities that have contrastive meanings" (2003:212). The discrepancy may cause distress, unless one's identity standards shift to a compromise position whereby they can be verified simultaneously (Burke 2004). This may require changing the meanings in one's identity standards or making one identity less salient or central. Individuals may also avoid situations in which both identities are likely to be activated, if possible. Finally, persons may forge shared meanings between

the seemingly contradictory identities (Burke 2003). Ultimately, incongruent identities

will require a significant amount of work to resolve.

Resolving contradictory identities and the process of self-verification require one

to do "identity work," defined as

> Anything we do, alone or with others, to establish, change, or lay claim to
> meanings as particular kinds of persons. As individuals, we must do some
> kind of identity work in every encounter. We do this when we give
> signs—through dress, speech, demeanor, posture—that tell others who and
> what we are, how we are likely to behave, and how we expect to be treated
> (Schwalbe 1996:105).

Schwalbe (1996) found that men in the Mythopoetic movement used identity work to

build a masculine collective identity. By referring to their collective activities as "men's

work,"—even when those activities consisted of hugging, dancing and reading poetry—

they rhetorically affirmed their masculinity. The mythopoetics also published articles

constructing a positive image of manhood, describing men as "wild, gentle, tough,

loving, fierce, sensitive, pioneering, wise, vital, spontaneous, zany, forceful, and natural"

(pg. 122). They also engaged in collective identity work through verbal and non-verbal

affirmations, including grunts, hugging, and touching, as they strived to "reinvest 'man'

with positive meaning" (pg. 133).

Snow and Anderson (1987) investigate the use of "identity talk" as a form of

identity work employed among homeless street people. Strategies for identity talk

included *distancing*, wherein the homeless disassociated from role identities (e.g.,

transient or bum), from other street people, and from street institutions such as soup

kitchens; *embracement*, which included acceptance of or attachment to the identities of

transient or bum and to a "survival role" (e.g., dumpster diver or street performer); and

fictive storytelling, including embellishing past or present experiences and fantasizing about future ones. For homeless street people, "identity talk constitutes the primary form of 'identity work' by means of which [they] construct and negotiate personal identities" (Anderson and Snow 1987:1336).

Killian and Johnson (2006) examine the identity work engaged in by North African immigrant women in France as they negotiated their identities. These women employed strategies such as managing personal appearance, identity talk, and selective association with other individuals and groups in order to affect how they were perceived by others. North African women in this study also used these strategies for identity work to construct a "Not-Me" identity, or the claim that they there were not immigrants. These studies demonstrated some of the ways in which individuals use identity work to self-verify and resolve contradictions between and among identities.

Men Doing "Women's Work"

Evans and Frank (2003) suggest that "the struggle to maintain a positive masculine identity in an occupation that continually challenges masculinity results in practices by men to project a masculine identity" (pg. 280). For men employed in gender-nontraditional occupations, such as nursing, elementary school teaching, and social work, identifiable strategies for doing identity work are employed in order to protect their sense of masculinity. A body of empirical literature has developed as social science researchers investigate how men who do "women's work" negotiate the "contested terrain" of masculinity.

Sargent (2000) found that male elementary school teachers felt that they came under close scrutiny from women teachers and administrators when they were in contact with small children. They also felt pressured to serve as male role models for young children, but were uncertain and conflicted about what "type" of man they were expected to portray. Finally, they perceived a sexual division of labor within teaching that reinforced gendered expectations of men's and women's teaching styles. According to the author, "[i]n response to the cumulative effects of these phenomena, men must adopt compensatory behaviors causing them to unintentionally reproduce traditional forms of masculinity" (Sargent 2000:410).

Christie (2006) found that men employed in social work in England negotiated uncomfortable intersections between their gender and professional identities as social workers. In order to manage the stress this caused, they engaged in strategies to conceal their professions, or at least to be ambiguous about what they do. In addition, they refused to identify with their career choice, choosing instead to describe how they were "pushed," "drifted" or "fell" into the social work profession, a strategy that allowed them to distance or dis-identify with the profession. Finally, they participated (along with their female colleagues) in discourses of masculinity, including being represented in their profession as "gentle-men" and "heroic men," both of which served to enhance and justify their success in workplace hierarchies.

Williams (1995) demonstrates how men in female-dominated specialties tend to employ specific strategies in adhering to ideals of hegemonic masculinity. For example, they highlight the more masculine aspects of their work (e.g., technical competence, management, and autonomy) and distance themselves from the more feminine aspects of

their jobs (e.g., care-taking and deferential aspects). In the nursing profession, men have also traditionally chosen more masculine or male-identified specialty areas (Boughn 1994; Williams 1995). Boughn (1994) found that the vast majority of participants expressed interest in more "aggressive," technical nursing specialties, such as trauma, ER, Intensive Care, and anesthesiology.   Other smaller scale research studies on men in elementary teaching are consistent with Williams's (1995) findings, and support the assertion that men who enter these professions have their gender identity scrutinized and in response enact strategies for emphasizing their masculinity, such as defining their contributions to the profession as different from, and often times better than those of female teachers (e.g., Allan 1993; King 2000; Oyler, et al. 2001).

Henson and Rogers (2001) identify the gender strategies for "doing masculinity" employed by men doing temporary clerical work, an occupation not only numerically dominated by women but also one that affords few opportunities for advancement. These men distanced themselves from the more feminized aspects of their jobs by renaming their work (e.g., describing their work as word processor, proofreader, or bookkeeper, rather than as secretarial), and emphasizing the technical competence required of their job. They also told cover stories about why they were doing temporary clerical work, thus invoking "an alternative identity and [defining] one as truly temporary or occupationally transient" (Henson and Rogers 2001:232). Finally, they asserted their masculinity by refusing to enact subservience or deference with their bosses. This last strategy is one that Pierce (1995) also identified as one employed by male paralegal assistants who worked to resist the "feminized" expectation that paralegals do caretaking tasks for litigators in law firm settings.

How do men view their masculinity in the context of the higher education fields of nursing, social work, and elementary education? Do these men face challenges to their masculine identity? From whom? How do they construct and/or preserve their masculine identity? Do they employ identifiable strategies in order to assert or reassert their masculine identity? The masculinities literature reveals how men who deviate from the ideals of hegemonic masculinity are perceived by others as deviant or otherwise suspect. Identity control theory provides a theoretical foundation on which issues of men's gender identities can be explored, and the concept of identity work offers a way of examining how men assert or reassert their masculinity. Combined these three literatures inform a better understanding of how men do identity work in order to resolve identity conflicts that arise with challenges to their masculinity. In the next section, I survey the limited scholarly research on men's experiences as tokens in the educational sphere.

TOKEN MEN IN TRAINING: EXPERIENCES IN EDUCATION

Like the workplace, the institution of higher education is gendered. What little scholarly work exists on men's experiences as numerical minorities in higher education and training comes from retrospective accounts of men in gender-nontraditional occupations (Williams 1995). William's found that token status often worked to men's benefit for students as well as professionals. Though these men had heightened visibility due to their numerical rarity, this did not work to their disadvantage. They reported high levels of support from their faculty members, and they often felt explicitly encouraged because they were men. Male students in these fields also developed close relationships with male faculty members, which was critical in promoting their professional development. Interestingly, according to the men, female peers did not interpret this as

favoritism. On the contrary, "women in the class seemed to defer to men, again suggesting that men bring 'gender privilege' with them even when they are tokens" (Williams 1995:77).

The present study contributes to the literature on men who are enrolled in college majors that prepare them to enter gender-nontraditional careers by examining how men manage and assert their masculinity in the face of gender scrutiny. Extant literature on this topic is sparse and is predominantly descriptive in nature, examining such questions as: What motivates men to pursue gender-nontraditional occupations? What stereotypes and stigmas do they face? How do others perceive them? How do men feel about these perceptions? These are useful questions to examine, and provide a context for better understanding men's experiences in these educational realms, yet do not significantly contribute to an understanding of how men experience gender in this context.

Research on men in home economics education focuses on issues such as what influences men to make this nontraditional career choices (including mother's employment, parents' education, birth order, and other factors), the need for male mentors in home economics education, and men's fear of being stigmatized as homosexual (Dohner, Loyd and Stenberg 1990; Lawson 1993; Stenberg and Dohner 1993). While Dohner et al. (1990) assert that systematic recruitment strategies are needed in order to attract men into the field and retain them, they do not identify how such strategies may be employed to make home economics feel like a viable career option for men. Also, while they point to stigmatization as a significant factor pushing men away from home economics, they do not offer an account of what exactly those stigmas are (other than fear of being labeled as gay), and how men already pursuing the

profession manage their social identity as men in the face of negative assessments. Finally, while they tout home economics as a field wide open to men in terms of leadership opportunities and career advancement, they do not explore how men may be advantaged and disadvantaged by their numerical minority status.

Studies of men in elementary education also look at the factors that influence career choices, and how they think men in this traditionally female profession are perceived by others. In addition, they assert the importance of having male elementary school teachers to serve as role models for young boys (e.g., Galbraith 1992; Montecinos and Nielsen 1997; DeCorse and Vogtle 1997). Galbraith (1992) addresses the role conflict experienced by men pursuing careers in elementary education. He states, "The conflict occurs when men experience pressure from social norms and peers to behave in a traditional masculine manner that dictates a stoic disposition and the pursuit of power, control, and wealth, while they desire to expand their emotionally expressive nature" (pg. 246). While he addresses the conflict that men experience between social and role identities, Galbraith provides no insight into how men negotiate this conflict, and how this shapes their educational and career experiences and opportunities. DeCorse and Vogtle (1997) argue that men experience complex contradictions *as men* to their professional identities, and assert that in order to recruit and retain men into the field a positive model of male elementary school teachers must be promoted. Gender is absent from the analysis, however, and there is little contribution to the understanding of how men make sense of these contradictions and how they respond to them.

Due to the intensifying nursing shortage in the United States, the literature on men entering nursing programs is predominantly focused on understanding why men choose nursing and how recruiting efforts can be strengthened. For example, Boughn (1994) looks at men's practical motivations for entering the professions, including job security, salary and feelings of power. She also articulates strategies for recruiting more men into educational programs, including the acceptable portrayal of men as nurses in recruiting materials, journal articles, and advertising. Perkins, Bennett, and Dorman (1993) investigate the same set of issues, and also put forward similar recommendations. These studies provide a useful context for understanding some of the factors that may pull men into nursing training programs, but do not address gender as an issue impacting men who enter these programs en route to nursing careers.

SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of Kanter's theory of tokenism; theoretical and empirical literatures on gendered organizations; substantive literature on the experiences of token men in the workplace; status characteristics theory; theoretical frameworks on masculinities and the meanings of identity; and the sparse literature on men's experiences in education and training as they prepare for careers traditionally associated with "women's work." The present study is intended to build upon the existing literature on men in education and training in female-dominated, feminized career tracks, and utilizes a gender framework to advance the sociological understanding of men and masculinities in this context.

The research questions guiding this study are derived from the theoretical and substantive literatures reviewed in this chapter. The literatures on gender tokenism and gendered organizations have focused almost exclusively on the workplace. What little we know of men's experiences as "gender tokens" in higher education comes through retrospective accounts, rather than current accounts of their experiences and perceptions. This study addresses the gap in these literatures by examining higher education as a site of gendered organization. Additionally, from a theoretical standpoint, status characteristics theory, with its focus on how individual attributes shape or determine performance expectations, as well as perceptions of competence and ability, provided the foundation for exploring men's perceptions of advantage and disadvantage. The first set of research questions guiding this study emerged from these combined literatures, and is stated as follows:

> Do male students in female-dominated, feminized disciplines believe they benefit from their minority status as men? If so, in what ways? Do men feel at a disadvantage, or do they believe they are penalized for participating in these disciplines? If so, in what ways?

Identity control theory describes how individuals achieve balance or congruence between and among conflicting bases of identity. In other words, the meanings attached to the social identity "man" and the role identity "nurse," for example, are at times in conflict. Identity control theory argues that through the process of self-verification, individuals are able to eliminate this conflict. The literature on identity work sheds light on this one way in which this verification process may work, and the masculinities literature illuminates the meanings attached the social identity of *man*. Of particular interest in this study is *how* men do identity work in order to manage and negotiate

challenges to their sense of masculinity. From these combined literatures, the second set

of research questions emerged:

How do men view their masculinity in the context of their discipline? Do these male students face challenges to their masculine identity? From whom? How do they construct and/or preserve their masculine identity? Do they employ identifiable strategies in order assert or reassert their masculine identity?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study takes a qualitative approach to understanding men's experiences in three female-dominated, feminized (i.e., stereotypically feminine) disciplines in higher education. Qualitative research is congruent with my thinking about the process of scientific investigation, and allows me to adhere to my own ideas and beliefs about the nature of reality, the relationship between the knower and what is known, and the role of values in the research process (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). In addition, a qualitative approach is essential to illuminating how participants define and make sense of their identities (Schwalbe 1996; Snow and Anderson 1987). Using a qualitative approach to this study provided participants with the opportunity to share their perceptions, articulate their experiences, and explore the meanings that they attach to their identities. Finally, I believe qualitative methods to be essential when exploring gender issues because gender is tacit, invisible, and taken for granted. As such, researchers must explore the meaning of gender with participants, through questions carefully designed to get at its various dimensions, rather than rely on discrete questions that ask directly about gender.

In grounding my work within a tradition of qualitative inquiry, I broadly classify this as a biographical study (Creswell 2007). Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews, participants discussed their perceptions and told stories about their experiences, including why they chose to pursue careers in gender-nontraditional fields, their perceptions of the advantages and disadvantages that they faced in their disciplines, and how they experienced and negotiated their masculinity in feminized spaces. The biographical tradition of inquiry allows me to present accounts of these men's experiences, while also locating those experiences within their specific institutional,

social, and historical context. Furthermore, it allows me to reflect upon my own experiences in doing the research, and to describe my own role in interpreting and producing knowledge.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The Context

The professions of nursing, elementary education, and social work can require substantial education and training. For example, to be a licensed social worker, one must obtain a Master's degree. In order to secure a career in elementary school teaching, one must pursue additional education to obtain the required certification. Registered nurses obtain their credentials by completing either a three-year diploma program, a two-year associate's degree program, or a four-year baccalaureate degree program (Williams 1995). The implementation of Master's degree programs for entry-level nursing certification is a recent development.

The proportions of men enrolled in degree programs to prepare for these careers continue to be low, despite increased efforts to recruit them. Kanter (1977b) argues that the effects of token status are most evident when minority group percentages are 15% or less. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the entry-level professional degrees conferred on men in the fields of interest in this study remain below 15% (Digest of Educational Statistics 2002).

Table 1: Entry-level Professional Degrees Conferred Upon Men

Field of Study	Degree Conferred	Total # Men	Percent (%) Men
Nursing, RN & other	Associate's Degree	4,155	10.3
	Bachelor's Degree	3,683	9.8
	Master's Degree	1,277	11.1
Elementary Education	Bachelor's Degree	5,550	11.7
	Master's Degree	1,673	12.2
Social Work	Bachelor's Degree	1,648	11.7
	Master's Degree	2,347	14.9

Numerical imbalances, along with other aspects of status characteristics, influence the experiences of gender tokens. In particular, the status of one's gender category relative to the majority ("gender status"), the normative gender typing of a given occupational category ("occupational (in)appropriateness"), and the negative perceptions associated with a token group's entry into and/or increasing numbers in an occupation ("intrusiveness") must also be considered and examined (Yoder 1991). Therefore, to investigate men's experiences as numerical minorities in nursing, elementary education, and social work, I recruited men who were:

(1) *a numerical minority in their major*: that is, men pursuing degrees in disciplines wherein they constituted less than 15% of majors.

(2) *pursuing degrees in majors that prepared them for employment in female-dominated profession*s: that is, in addition to being numerical minorities in their majors, they were also planning to enter professions wherein they would continue to be a numerical minority.

(3) *majoring in and pursuing careers and/or further training/education in fields that are feminized, and wherein they risked possible stigmatization for their participation*: that is, fields that have traditionally been associated with femininity, deemed "women's work," and considered more congruent with

women's interests, talents, etc. Furthermore, commonly held assumptions about men who participate in these fields may be stigmatized.

The Participants

Based upon the above criteria, participants in this study were men pursuing degrees in nursing, elementary education, and social work, and who planned to secure professional employment and/or future graduate/professional training as a nurse, elementary school teacher, or social worker. Their commitment to a particular career trajectory was important, as the commitment to their professional role identity was assumed to be stronger. I chose to include a variety of majors in this study, rather than focusing on only one discipline (e.g., nursing), because too narrow a focus may simply yield information reflecting a particular departmental or occupational culture rather than a more general understanding of men's experiences as numerical minorities.

In order to recruit participants for this study, I used a combination of non-probability sampling techniques, including criterion sampling, theory-based sampling, and snowball sampling. I selected cases that met specified criteria for participation in the project, as well as intentionally selected a sample that would enable me to examine particular theoretical constructs (Patton 1990). In addition, I asked the participants themselves to suggest other potential interviewees for the study.

I targeted my recruitment efforts on one university and one community college, both located in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The university houses a college devoted to teacher preparation, as well as a college for health and human services. The community college houses a registered nursing program. In order to access potential participants, I first contacted college deans, program directors, and department heads. I

explained my research project and secured the necessary permission to recruit participants through departmental and program-wide listservs. In one instance, the dean explicitly endorsed this project, which led to immediate and positive response from his College's majors. I was also granted permission to post solicitation fliers around academic buildings and in main departmental offices. Finally, I was fortunate to have a colleague pursing a Master's degree in one of the programs from which I was recruiting. She distributed my fliers in her classes at the beginning of the fall semester, and within a month I had arranged interviews with three of her four male classmates.

In total, I interviewed 12 men pursing Associate's (N=1), Bachelor's (N=7) or Master's degrees (N=4): three in elementary education, four in social work, and five in nursing. In addition to their academic work, most of them were also doing fieldwork, internships, or other types of placements in their professional areas (e.g., student teaching, hospital rotations, and client work). In this sense, they were already participating in their chosen professions, and this participation was generally integral to their perceptions and experiences in the educational realm. For these individuals, work and school were one and the same. The participants predominantly identified as "white" or "Caucasian," with only two identifying as non-white. These men ranged in age from 21 to 48 years old, with the average age being approximately 33 years old.

The Instruments and Procedures

I conducted short screening interviews with potential participants at the time of first contact to determine their suitability for inclusion in this project. I turned away two potential participants because they did not fall within the parameters of the study. In total, I conducted screening interviews with 14 individuals who fit the study parameters,

12 of whom agreed to be interviewed. The interviews took place between July 7th and November 28th, 2005.

Most interviews lasted between one and two hours. Interviews were conducted in libraries, departmental conference rooms, participants' homes, and public restaurants. At the beginning of each interview, I provided an overview of the study, highlighted the IRB approval for the protection of human subjects and the steps I would take to protect their confidentiality, and asked the participant to sign a Statement of Informed Consent. Upon securing their permission to audiotape the interview, I started the tape-recorder. In all cases, the participant agreed to be recorded.

I used an interview schedule to guide my questions (see Appendix A), but also allowed for tangents and departures to explore ideas and issues important to each participant. In these face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, the men in this study offered detailed descriptions of their experiences in their majors and the meanings that they attached to those experiences. We explored participants' motivations for entering their chosen major, their identity standards, the perceived challenges they faced to those standards (from classmates and faculty in their major departments, colleagues in their workplaces, as well as from peers, family and friends outside of school), and the ways in which they may "do masculinity" as a means of self-verification. I also probed participants' own assumptions, attitudes and beliefs about masculinity and men in female-dominated, feminized careers, their daily experiences and interactions within their majors, how people within and outside of the university setting respond to their major choice and career goals, and the particular challenges and benefits they experienced as a numerical minority in these fields.

In order to elicit information on participants' perceptions of advantage and disadvantage in their educational spheres, I asked a series of questions focused on how they were treated, as men, by various groups, including their faculty members, other students, peers, and I also asked about family members in order to gauge the level of support they may or may not be receiving in their personal lives (see Appendix A, see Questions 10-13). I also asked them to talk about specific circumstances when they felt that being a man either helped or hindered them in their education and training (see Questions 16-17). Finally I probed into issues of departmental and workplace climate, how well accepted they feel within those environments, and how being male in these professions may help or hinder them professionally (see Questions 20, 27, 28, 30, and 31).

Data on men's identity standards and sense of masculinity were elicited less directly. In order to explore these issues, I relied on broader questions about men and women designed to encourage the participants to see and talk about gender, as well as to articulate the meanings they attached to their personal identity as men. The interview questions that produced the richest data on men's identity standards, included: "What is your image of a male [nurse/social worker/elementary school teacher]? How do you think you will live up/compare to that image?," "Do you think that there is a particular type of man who is most likely to succeed in [your field]? Why are those attributes important for success? Is there a particular type of man who is unlikely to succeed? Why are those attributes deterrents to success?," What specifically about you will make you success as a [nurse/social worker/elementary school teacher]? Anything about it that doesn't feel like a good fit?," and "Do you see yourself as being fundamentally different

from other men your age?" I also asked the men for specific examples of times when they felt others were making assumptions about them because of the major/career choices and how they responded, as well as what they believe people generally thought about men in nursing/social work/elementary education (See Appendix A, Questions 6, 7, 14, 15, 22, 23, and 26). Their responses to probes from these questions were rich with descriptions of how they managed challenges to their identity standards, and yielded identifiable themes for how men did identity work in order to resolve identity conflicts.

Throughout the data collection process, I maintained a fieldwork journal. After each interview, I used the journal to record my impressions of the interview, details of the surroundings, uncomfortable and meaningful moments, and frustrations or celebrations. I also used it as an opportunity to record thoughts about my interactions with the participants, and anything interesting or unique about the participant and/or the interview experience.

As a woman researcher interviewing men, I anticipated and encountered some challenges in the data collection process. Clearly my gender is imprinted on the data, as is each participant's. As Williams (1995) notes in her study of men in female-dominated occupations, "Every interview takes place in a gendered context—either the context of gender similarity or gender difference—and this context will structure the information collected. There is no Archimedean point outside the gender system that allows for the collection of pure and unbiased data" (pg. 193-94). Williams found social desirability bias to be particularly evident in her study, highlighting that men framed their responses more carefully than did a comparable group of men speaking to a male interviewer. Issues of gender lie at the core of this research project, with its primary focus being on

the identity work that men in female-dominated, feminized disciplines may do in order to ensure that others perceive and treat them as men.

Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) argue that the interactional context of the interview is itself both an opportunity for men to signify masculinity (i.e., to portray themselves as autonomous and in control) and a threat to masculinity (i.e., perceptions that the interviewer is in control). This is especially the case when questions probe into issues of gender, thus increasing the salience of participants' identities as men. The authors pose a number of strategies that researchers can employ to minimize threats to the masculine self, such as addressing the participant as an expert, invoking what other men have said, and prefacing questions in ways that yield status to the participant, among others. While I entered the interview setting armed with these strategies and strived to implement them early on, they grew to feel contrived. I found that rapport and a sense of trustworthiness were better established through casual conversation, being flexible in deviating from the interview schedule, and conveying to each participant my genuine interest in their experiences. For me, this approach to inquiry resulted in the candid, honest, and rich conversations for which I was striving. That said, the gendered context of these interactions was undeniable, and at times significantly and notably shaped our interactions. As noted in my fieldwork journal on September 2, 2005:

> I am feeling really frustrated by the limitations of that interview. [He] wanted to say so much more than he was allowing himself to. I'm almost nervous to listen to the tape, because I don't even know if he was using actual words, or if he was conveying meaning to me merely through non-verbals, like all of those winks and elbow ribs and "you know what I mean's?" What he was doing was demonstrating his heterosexuality. What he was trying to do was demonstrate his sexual prowess. He's had lots of conquests. He was doing masculinity! Did he not want to offend me? I wish he would have just said the words! I think if I were a man that would have been a very different conversation.

As Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) suggested, the interview context was indeed a space in which men signified their masculinity. In Chapter 5, I present the perceived challenges that men faced to their gender identity, as well as the strategies for identity work they employed in order to preserve and assert their sense of masculinity. One of the key strategies utilized was emphasizing their heterosexuality. Not only did they talk about heterosexuality, but they also demonstrated within the context of the interviews. This happened in three primary ways. First, some told stories of their sexual exploits. In these cases, stories of sexual encounters with women were peppered throughout their narratives, despite the fact that these stories had little or nothing to do with the particular interview question or issue being discussed. Second, in a few of the cases where interviews were conducted in public spaces, participants would indicate their attraction to the women around them (e.g., ogling women or "checking them out"). In my field journal I noted in these instances that I felt the behavior was for my benefit more than anything. In other words, it was a strategy for "doing heterosexuality," which in essence is "doing masculinity." Finally, in two separate instances, participants in this study were very flirtatious with me as the interviewer. Again, I noted after these encounters that these men were doing identity work in interaction with me, and that by their flirtations, were demonstrating heterosexuality, or "doing masculinity," throughout the interview. Thus men employed this strategy for doing identity work through claiming their heterosexuality, by discussing heterosexuality in their interviews, and by demonstrating their heterosexuality in interaction with me.

Data Analysis and Presentation

I transcribed verbatim eight of the audiotapes, and hired someone to transcribe the remaining four, all of which were from interviews conducted in public spaces. Since time lapsed between interviews, I used those opportunities to transcribe completed interviews as I continued to conduct new ones. Through the process of transcription, I began to thematically code the data (Merriam 2001). I kept notes during the transcription process of the common themes and interesting ideas that I identified. I found this approach very helpful, as topics and issues raised in some of the earlier interviews prompted me to ask some questions differently and even add some new ones to my interview schedule. Once the hired transcriber submitted the final four completed interviews to me, I read through each of them while listening to the audiotape to ensure complete accuracy. Unfortunately I lost short segments of data from three of the four interviews conducted in public spaces. The background noise interfered with the audiotape so that verbatim transcription was impossible. In most cases I was able to garner the content of the conversation, simply unable to capture the narrative verbatim.

Once I had all twelve completed transcripts in hand, I read and reread them carefully, studying the narratives for connecting threads, patterns, and emergent themes around participants' assumptions, perceptions, and experiences as numerical minorities in their respective majors, and the strategies they may have employed in "doing masculinity," and other forms of identity work. In total I carefully read through each transcript twelve times. The themes that I identified and explored in this dissertation were shaped by the theoretical frameworks that informed the research, the research questions used to guide the data collection, a thorough review of the literature, and the

interview narratives themselves (Fruhauf, Jarrott, and Allen 2006). Specifically, my review of the transcripts revealed clear and consistent forms of advantage that the participants perceived both in the classroom and in on-the-job training environments. Another them I identified, though far less often, was the ways in which participants felt penalized or disadvantaged in these environments. My review also revealed the universal experience among the participants that they faced a myriad of challenges to their sense of masculinity, and they employed identifiable strategies of identity work on order to resolve identity conflicts. Finally, I relied on my fieldwork journal to reflect throughout on my own assumptions and how these shaped my understanding, from the gendered context of the data collection to the ways in which they influenced my interpretation of the transcripts.

In this research, I strove to achieve trustworthiness and credibility (Merriam 2001) with the validity and reliability of the findings. First, peer examination was employed throughout the process by having members of my committee comment on coding and conceptual categories as they were defined. Second, I utilized field notes to reflect upon my own assumptions, biases, and experiences throughout the reporting. Third, verbatim narratives offer descriptions of participants' experiences and perspectives in their own words. Through the use of these basic strategies, I believe this to be a credible and trustworthy study of men's experiences in selected female-dominated fields of study. In addition, through the review of relevant literature, discussion of the theoretical frameworks employed, careful description of the population studied, and the inclusion of the interview schedule utilized, I believe that replicability of the study and the ability for readers to determine transferability of the findings are strong.

Since the participants in this study constitute only a small handful of their department's total majors, they are at risk of being identified. Thus I have taken several precautions in order to protect their confidentiality. In the presentation of the data I have eliminated personal descriptors that might reveal their identity, though I do identify them individually by pseudonym, program, and academic level. In addition, while I quote their words verbatim throughout, in some instances I alter some of the details of their account in order to protect their confidentiality. I have striven to remain true to each participant's words, and through their individual accounts, to present a descriptive account of men's experiences as numerical minorities in female-dominated, feminized disciplines in higher education.

In this chapter I have presented my overall research design, including details of the research context, information about the participants in the study, and the instruments and data collection procedures that were utilized. I also provided an overview of the data analysis process, including strategies employed to ensure trustworthiness and credibility in the study. The next chapter examines the perceived benefits and disadvantages experienced by twelve men pursuing degrees in nursing, social work and elementary education

CHAPTER 4: BENEFITS AND DISADVANTAGES FOR MALE STUDENTS IN NURSING, SOCIAL WORK AND ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

The literature on gender and work highlights the distinctly different experiences of women and men in the workplace, particularly token (i.e., numerical minority) women and men in gender nontraditional workplaces (e.g., men in elementary education and women in engineering). Numerous studies have found that women's token status places them at a marked disadvantage, while men in the numerical minority often benefit from their privileged gender status (Cockburn 1991; Etzkowitz et al. 1992; Kanter 1977b; Williams 1992; Williams 1993). Williams (1995) argued that men in nursing, librarianship, elementary school teaching, and social work enjoyed privileges and benefits in their experiences and relationships throughout their educational training, many of which resulted in increased opportunities once they entered the job market. On the contrary, research has shown that token female students in gender nontraditional disciplines in higher education often encounter barriers and experience marginalization in their academic programs, and ultimately these can impede their academic performance as well as their access to opportunities post-graduation (Bellas 1999; Etzkowitz et al. 1992; Turner 2002).

It is also true that men who pursue careers in female-dominated and historically feminized careers face unique challenges. As a numerical minority, they encounter many of the interactional dynamics outlined by Kanter's (1997b) research on tokenism, however, according to Heikes (1991):

[T]heir experience is substantially different from that of female tokens because of socio-cultural factors that interact with group proportions in forming patterns of group interaction. Not only do male nurses react differently to the dynamics of visibility, polarization, and assimilation, but gender-related issues of status and stigma are also important to them. (pg. 389)

Williams (1995) asserts that "men [entering these professions] are seen as violating the traditional male role" (pg. 54) and Jome and Tokar (1998) argue that they often are perceived by others as engaging in gender-inappropriate behavior. As such, they encounter negative reflected appraisals in their educational and training spheres, and other negative consequences as the result of their numerical minority status.

Extant literature of men's experiences as numerical minorities doing "women's work" has focused on the workplace, with only retrospective accounts of their educational and training experiences. This study fills a gap by examining men's experiences as they undergo their education to become nurses, social workers and elementary school teachers. This chapter examines the perceived benefits and disadvantages experienced by twelve men pursuing degrees in nursing, social work and elementary education. The key questions explored are "Do male students in female-dominated, feminized disciplines believe they benefit from their numerical minority status as men? If so, in what ways?" and "Do men feel at a disadvantage, or do they believe they are penalized for participating in these disciplines? If so, in what ways?" The participants in this study articulated a number of perceived advantages in the educational realm, including easy admissions into their academic programs, heightened recognition for their contributions, and special treatment and encouragement from professors and practitioners. They described advantages in on-the-job training, including increased access to information and training opportunities, as well as greater recognition

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for their work and preferential treatment. In addition, they anticipated that, as men, they would easily secure jobs upon entering the workforce and would likely enjoy unimpeded upward mobility in their careers. Some participants did, however, recount instances of discrimination and unfair treatment at the hands of their professors, and they expressed concern over controlling their career trajectory, given subtle workplace pressures and assumptions that, as men, they would "naturally" aspire to leadership roles within their professions. Finally, these men faced a myriad of challenges to their gender *and* professional identities, an issue that will be explored in depth in the next chapter.

BENEFITS AND DISADVANTAGES IN THE EDUCATIONAL REALM

Most of the men in this study, prior to applying to nursing, elementary education, and social work degree programs, were confident that they would gain admission, regardless of their previous academic performance or experience. This was partly due to input they had received from family members, friends or work colleagues, as well as an awareness of contemporary professional trends to recruit more men into these fields. During the interviews, one of the issues that arose frequently was the perception that doors opened easily for them *because* they were men. Rather than viewing their numerical minority status as an impediment to acceptance or success, they identified the benefits of their status *as men* for gaining entrance into their fields. According to some, this was evident as early as their college admissions process. One Master's degree student stated:

> I think that because I was a man and applied for the School of Social
> Work and this is jut a guess, but I think I could have been half dead and
> not very bright, and they would have accepted me anyway. Just because
> they realize there aren't a lot of men in the program. I may be
> exaggerating a tad, but I think that anybody who is a man and applied to
> this school for the Master's program in social work, if they were marginal

or borderline in meeting the requirements, I think they would have let you in. [Tom, social work Master's student]

An undergraduate elementary education student highlighted the fact that schools of education are intentionally pulling in as many male students as they can in order to draw more men into elementary school teaching:

There is that factor that within the education field they want to get more males in the classroom. They're glad to see another man there trying to get into that particular field. [Jack, elementary education undergraduate student]

A Master's degree student in the nursing program echoed the perception that being a man made entry into graduate school all but guaranteed:

First of all I looked at [going into nursing] in some pretty pragmatic ways. Number one, how can I be a white male and become a minority? But guess what? If you're a white male in nursing, you're a minority. So to me, in some ways, that told me, you know what, when you get out of school you're going to get a job. And it also told me when I want to go to school I wasn't going to have to wait. Because they were going to take me in over somebody else simply because I was a male. … So you know, it was an easy thing as far as getting into school. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

Interestingly, while all three respondents identified easy acceptance into their academic program as a benefit for themselves as men, the nursing student attributed this benefit to being a minority rather than to his privileged position as a man in a field intentionally recruiting more men. Thus, for him, educational access centered on his minority status. Overall, however, they perceived that they advanced easily into undergraduate and graduate programs because they were men. In fact, an undergraduate nursing student who aspired to enter a Master's program en route to a career as a nurse anesthetist mused:

Maybe having the Y chromosome will help my chances of getting into the Master's program. [Bill, nursing undergraduate student]

Once enrolled in their respective programs, these men were acutely aware that they stood out. They were merely one of a handful of men pursuing education in disciplines that were significantly numerically dominated by women. And in many cases, they were the only man in individual courses of 30 or more students. For women in male-dominated environments (i.e., workplaces and/or educational realms), this heightened visibility can often lead to intense performance pressures resulting in over- and underachievement (Kanter 1977b). The men in this study, on the contrary, perceived their heightened visibility as an overall benefit, as well as an opportunity for them "to shine." When asked how faculty members responded to the presence of him and his male peers in the nursing program, this graduate student stated:

> [The faculty response to our being here] is very positive. First of all, I did very well. I graduated with honors in the undergraduate program here. I made a name for myself here. And I'm a guy. Hey, all eyes are on you because there are not many of you. You stand out. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

This undergraduate social work student highlighted how being a man in an environment comprised predominantly of women fueled his confidence and provided an opportunity for him to be noticed. He said:

> Being in a classroom surrounded by girls, there's something about that that gives me a little more. I want to show off a little more. [Christopher, social work undergraduate student]

For these men, heightened visibility thus provided the impetus for them to excel and be recognized for their excellence, rather than a basis for discrimination or unfair treatment. Furthermore, these men were participating in an environment where their gender status was salient and a relevant one in shaping others' performance expectations of them as leaders and fostering a shared perception of competence and ability. As status

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characteristics theory would predict, based upon their more valued gender status as men, a diffuse characteristics associated with leadership, the participants in this study believed that faculty and other students expected them to assume a leadership role and to perform that role competently. As such, they appear to have been afforded more opportunities to do so and were generally evaluated highly. Also as status characteristics theory would expect, even those in the disadvantaged group (i.e., women in this case), may "buy in" to the presumption of men as stronger and more capable leaders, as evidenced in their tendency to cast their male peers and classmates into this role.

In her study on male tokens, Williams (1995) found that women in these disciplines were generally unconcerned and not upset that their male classmates tended to be more vocal or that they stood out amongst their classmates. She stated:

> [T]he heightened visibility of the male token is not resented by the female students as a form of favoritism—which is in contrast to the experience of female tokens. Rather, women in the class seem to defer to men, again suggesting that men bring 'gender privilege' with them even when they are tokens. (pg. 77)

The participants' comments alluded to the fact that women, for the most part, welcomed their male peers and deferred to them as leaders in the classroom. This undergraduate social work student said that being in a classroom full of "girls" prompted him to take a leadership role, something he felt encouraged to do:

> Well, so far I've taken 4-5 different classes and what I see in terms of activities and such is that I'm more of a leader. I'm unafraid to voice my opinion. I'm unafraid to talk in class. You know, if I have a question on a project or a comment on what we read, I will definitely raise my hand. I think it's just because I feel more confident being a man. … So I definitely take the leadership role whenever possible. [Christopher, social work undergraduate student]

Other students described how they were often times cast into leadership roles by their female classmates, something they themselves did not always welcome. This elementary education undergraduate student, while he recognized it ultimately as an opportunity to be visible as a class leader, was also frustrated that he was continually expected to know more than his peers:

> It's funny because sometimes [the other students] look to me for answers on certain things. And I'm like, "I'm right where you are on this. We're in the same class. I'm not above you." So that has been one aspect of it that I have had to overcome to some degree. Well, it may not be an obstacle to overcome, but if these people come to me, these ladies come to me with questions, well, I'm in the same boat! [Jack, elementary education undergraduate student]

For this Master's degree student in social work, the tendency of his female classmates to cast him in a leadership role was frustrating to him because, due to his already heightened visibility, he felt that he rarely had the opportunity to be a passive participant in the learning process. He also highlighted the fact that both his gender and his age were contributing factors to the deference he received. He stated:

> One thing I have noticed, and I don't know if it is because I'm a man or because I'm older, is that some of the [female] students, if we're working in small groups will look to me to lead the group. I'm not sure if that's positive or negative. Because there are times when I would just rather sit back and let someone else do it. But when you sit down, three or four people together, and they all turn to you and look at you, like, "What do we do next?" "What would you do?" [Tom, social work Master's student]

The participants in this study perceived that, as men, they gained easy access into their academic programs and, once there, experienced a heightened visibility, which they regarded as a positive outcome of being numerical numerical minorities in their fields. Not only did they seek opportunities to "stand out" amongst their peers, but they were also presumed to be leaders by the female classmates and peers.

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How do men enrolled in nursing, elementary education, and social work perceive the overall departmental or programmatic climate? For the most part, these men described an educational climate that was very welcoming and supportive of them, and in their perception this was particularly the case *because* they were men. Because nursing, elementary education, and social work programs are actively engaged in recruiting greater numbers of men, these men were met by positive and encouraging faculty members who conveyed the message that they were needed and wanted, both in the program and in the profession. When asked about the faculty's response to his participation in the elementary education program, this undergraduate student stated:

> [The reaction has been] positive. It is nice to feel like you are needed. Like you are welcome. And I'm not saying that at the school where I'm teaching they are [not] like that. I think both are like that. But I think it is even more so evident here at [the university] with the instructors. [Jack, elementary education undergraduate student]

A social work graduate student highlighted a similar feeling upon beginning his program:

> [The faculty are] very happy. They are very happy to have males in the field. I have no problems with them. They are really happy for us to be in the program.

When prompted to discuss what in particular his faculty had said or done to convey this message to him, he described an interaction with a professor wherein the very few male students in the program were assembled, welcomed to the program, and encouraged to stick together as a group. He stated:

> There was one professor who said, "This year we have more male students in the program. Try to stick together." We have an advantage. … She said, "You guys should work together and stick together." She said we should work together on projects. [Brad, social work Master's student]

Another benefit that these men mentioned was the opportunity to secure a male professor who could serve as an academic and career advisor, as well as a mentor or role-

model to them as men in the field. This level of relationship was the sole domain of men.

In no cases did any of these students identify a woman faculty as a mentor or role model..

Rather a number of participants viewed their male faculty members as being particularly

encouraging and helpful to them. Most notably, this undergraduate student in the nursing

program described his relationship with his male advisor:

> There's only one male professor and I have the best relationship with him
> out of all my teachers. He's my advisor. I go to him for everything. I
> mean he wants to do almost anything to help me out. Like he knows
> references he can talk with to help me get a job. [He has] insights into
> what next semester will look like and what we'll need to do to prepare.
> What reference he will write. Resumes. … I'm lucky enough that he
> hand chose me to be one of the three students he's working with here.

He later went on to say:

> He was also my teacher in pharmacology. And our Intro class. I saw him
> a lot and worked with him a lot. He told us about all the bullshit they
> teach you and then what you do in *real* life. And here's how you do it.
> He gave us the straight path, and not all the sugar coating. [Phil, nursing
> undergraduate student]

For students like him, men on the faculty often times provided extra assistance

and unique insights that enabled them to more easily navigate the rigors and demands of

their educational programs, as well as additional support in networking and identifying

and securing jobs after graduation. While their male advisors may have been more

instrumental in providing specific academic guidance and career direction,

encouragement came from both men and women on the faculty. According to another

undergraduate nursing student, the women faculty specifically identified men as future

leaders in the field:

> Around here the professors, and most of them are women, they seem very
> supportive about males in the field. They are like, "Males are in a good
> position to be doing this. They are in a good position to be getting
> managerial positions and things that women might not want to do as

much." [As a man in nursing] you can always keep going. [Alex, nursing undergraduate student]

For the participants in this study, an overarching perception was that being a man is extremely beneficial in gaining access to and succeeding in the female-dominated educational arenas of nursing, social work, and elementary education. Several said that being accepted into their chosen academic discipline was all but guaranteed to them *because* they were men, despite their prior educational achievements or lack thereof. Once in their respective programs, they encountered welcoming and highly encouraging environments wherein faculty members and practitioners in their fields worked to recruit more men, both in educational programs and the careers themselves. Furthermore, even though the men were highly visible due to their numerical rarity as men, they did not feel increased performance demands or pressures, but rather perceived that they benefited from standing out. Subsequently they had the opportunity for greater recognition for their successes and contributions as leaders.

While these students, in most cases, enjoyed positive relationships with their faculty members and peers, some recounted experiences of strained relationships or instances of being discriminated against or treated unfairly because they were men. Generally they attributed these experiences to women faculty who were "old school" or to feminist practitioners who did not accept men entering into "their" professions. Some students had been forewarned by other men already practicing in the professions. An undergraduate nursing student told of being warned by practicing male nurses as he was preparing to enroll in the nursing program that, as a man, he would encounter prejudice and resistance by women, both in school and in the workplace:

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I: What were some of the specific things you heard in terms of people giving you a head's up?

P: Um, that by being male, I would be one of the only guys or one of the few. You'll always be the center of attention to be either ruled out or if teachers are old school they'll think you don't belong there. There's a lot of prejudice stuff within faculty and staff, so they said to watch out for that. … It's all focusing on they will do whatever possible to alienate me just because I'm a guy and I don't fit their view and their criteria. [Phil, nursing undergraduate student]

A Master's degree student in social work was given a similar "head's up" that he would

likely encounter resistance from female social workers in the field. He said:

P: I'll call this guy John who I described [earlier] as my mentor. When I first approached him about going into the program, um, he said he thought I would do well, but he also cautioned me that we, as white males, are in the minority and not to be surprised if that gets held against you.

I: So what conversation did you have?

P: What he said was that because [social work] has been a female-dominated occupation or career that there can be some resentment from women in the field about white men coming in. Especially some of the feminist social workers who may think "Here we have a career that we can call our own and men are coming and are going to dominate." … Though the majority of social workers are female, men are still being put up into the positions of authority. I think that causes some resentment.

He went on to talk about the ways in which this sense of resentment may ultimately

impede his career advancement:

I don't want to be misunderstood on this. I'm not saying that each and every female social worker out there has resentment about men coming in and doing it. But I think as a population there is a resentment against men coming into the field. So that general resentment might prohibit me from advancement at one point or another. Or maybe a reverse type of discrimination. If I'm applying for a job and it is down to me and a woman with equal qualifications, then that would be given to the woman because she's female. [Tom, social work Master's student]

Interestingly, while this participant identified men's greater attainment of high-level authority positions within the profession as the primary reason for women's resentment, he concomitantly feared that this sense of resentment could lead to a "reverse discrimination" that would impede his own upward mobility. Later in his interview, however, he said that his faculty members in the social work program encouraged him to continue with his education through the doctoral level, and that he should expect to attain a high-level position within the profession, regardless of whether or not he actually aspired to a leadership role.

In most cases, these men fairly easily dismissed the actual experiences of strain and perceived unfair treatment. They generally attributed these experiences to either individual personalities or to particular women faculty needing to "get up to speed," understanding that with the reality of more men entering into the programs, new approaches and ways of assessing student contributions were needed. This social work Master's degree student underscored this issue when he stated:

> Some of the faculty here I think, and this is not going to be politically
> correct, but are what I would call "feminazis." And they are so way far
> out there the other way that they're not going to like whatever I've got to
> say as a man. To their credit they generally don't let that manifest itself
> outwardly. But some of the comments I've gotten back on papers when
> I've been expressing my opinions, some of my comments in class, I don't
> know if the reaction would have been the same if it had come from a
> female classmate as when it came from me. [Tom, social work Master's
> student]

An undergraduate nursing student discussed how, as a man, he often times felt that he was not doing things the way that his female professors expected or that he was not performing in the same way that they were accustomed to seeing female students perform. In his estimation, this placed him at a disadvantage in his coursework. He said:

I try to be as active as possible. I mean, I admit, I show off. I try to show that I'm better in some way. … And I try to stay away from a lot of sappiness. Like in class with essays like "How has this influenced your life or changed you?" I'm like, "It is normal, everyday stuff to me." And I get, well, not punished, but berated a little bit. I don't want to write this sappy stuff that they want to hear. I want to tell them the truth. We had to watch this HBO movie, *Wit*, about a woman with cancer. And I'm laughing my ass off at this movie. [It was] an overdramatic soap opera that is an insult to the medical profession, doctors, nurses, techs, all that. It is a disgrace to what they do. And I'm getting all of these faces [from everybody], like "Oh my God, [you're] terrible." And I try to write in my essay how bad the video was, how insulting it was, and I just can't write it good enough, I guess, or they're not used to hearing what I have to say.

In his opinion, the course instructor wanted the students to give an emotional reaction in their paper, something they were accustomed to the female nursing students doing. He, however, was both unable and unwilling to do this and in his final evaluation felt that he was penalized for it. Later in his interview, he angrily recounted a negative encounter with a female instructor which he specifically attributed to his being unwelcome as a man:

I've had one problem with a faculty member because of what I at least perceived as gender-based. That was my OB class. We have to do these group presentations on these random topics. She would just randomly hand out the topics. The first one I got was "Family Planning and How to Get Pregnant." I did it. The next week I got the weirdest one, and I *knew* she purposely gave it to me. I knew it. I just knew it. It was "Breastfeeding." So I did what I had to do and gave a presentation on feeding, an overview of problems you need to look for, and the different positions. Then she picked up this life-size baby doll, [handed it to me], and said "Show us how to hold it." And I'm like, "What? You're kidding, right?" And she says, "Do it now." So I'm like haphazardly showing one way and another. And she says, "No, put the head as if ..." [Participant shows me putting the baby doll to his breast.] Right. And then basically I threw it down and let her do all the talking while I'm standing there looking like a fool. And I mean I know she either did that to embarrass me or gave me the worst thing just because I'm a guy. … [Phil, nursing undergraduate student]

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While this encounter clearly angered him on principle, he nevertheless easily dismissed it as having no bearing on his educational experience or successful career trajectory. His bottom line was that the professor was disrespectful to men in the field, so he responded in kind, stating, "She showed me no respect at all. So I showed her no respect at all."

An undergraduate social work student experienced strain not between himself and his faculty members, but rather with his female peers in the program. He described it like this:

> Sometimes I think that the girls [in my classes] don't really believe I should be there. I think sometimes, well, like you said, it's a field dominated by females, and they [think] they should be the best ones or they should have the top ranks or they should be the ones asking the questions. So sometimes I do feel that they're looking down on me a little bit, like "What are *you* doing here?" or "What are *you* talking about?" But I just brush it off. [Christopher, social work undergraduate student]

Generally while there was a degree of perceived discrimination or unfair treatment from women faculty and some female peers, these men were easily able to dismiss these negative encounters, generally by dismissing the individuals involved. They focused instead on the benefits they enjoyed through their positive relationships with faculty members and peers. Ultimately there existed a trade-off between isolated instances of discomfort in the classroom and the longer-term benefits of mentorship and direction, especially as those extended into future career-building opportunities. So while there were evident disadvantages in the classroom for some of these men, they were outweighed by the overall perceived advantages.

On-the-job training is an integral part of the overall educational experience for students in elementary education, nursing, and social work. Elementary education students are expected to do one-year of observation and classroom teaching in the schools. Social work students secure internships and field study placements to gain hands-on experience in counseling, social services, and other applied settings. Nurses participate in hospital rotations wherein they engage a variety of duties and receive training to develop their medical and caretaking skills. In these "real world" settings, students participate in the realities of career life in their chosen fields and thus glimpse their future as professional nurses, elementary school teachers, and social workers. These workplace settings also provide the context for devising plans and setting expectations for their future careers.

Participants in this study not only received special treatment and encouragement from faculty members in the college setting, but they also perceived similar benefits and privileges within the workplace. As men, they believed that they stood out and received special recognition for their presence in the workplace. Furthermore, they believed that they received additional attention, training, and opportunities, again mostly from male professionals, that ultimately strengthened their learning experience and forged opportunities for their futures. Evident in these interactions is a tendency for what Kanter (1977b) termed "homosocial reproduction," a phenomenon whereby those in privileged positions tend to pick people like themselves to groom and perhaps even recruit into positions of power. In Kanter's words, keeping these positions "in the hands of people of one's kind provides reinforcement for the belief that people like oneself actually deserve

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to have such authority" (pg. 63). For the participants in this study, this tendency

translates into special attention and increased access to opportunities and networks. An

undergraduate elementary education student described the special attention he received

from his school's principal. For him, the daily recognition along with feeling a personal

and professional connection with the school's lead administrator bolstered his sense of

belonging and accomplishment. In response to the question "Are there specific

circumstances when you felt that being a male was helping you in any way?", he

responded:

> The principals at the school, they are both male, and I think I talk to them
> a lot more than anyone else at that school who is student teaching because,
> you know, I call them by their first names and things like that, where
> another student teacher wouldn't do that. It's like for them, [the principal]
> will walk into the room and not really say anything to them. Whereas for
> me, he'll walk in and say, "Hey [student's name], how are you doing?
> How are things going?" So I mean that's one difference.

Ultimately, as a man, he felt that there were no limitations or barriers to his future success

as an elementary school teacher:

> I can't think of anything [I can't do as a teacher]. I can't really think of
> anything. If anything, being a male only helps me. [Andrew, elementary
> education undergraduate student]

An undergraduate nursing student highlighted the fact that male doctors and technicians

at the hospital afforded him additional information and training opportunities during his

hospital rotations. Furthermore, this extra attention was a perk that he did not have to

pursue; rather he perceived it as something that came easily to him because he is a man.

He stated:

> I: Can you think of a time when you thought being a man was helping you
> [in your professional training]?

P: Yes. Absolutely. It goes back to the center of attention thing. It seems that especially doctors focus more on me, give me more information, and ask me more questions. And they want me to respond more in an educational type way than I've seen with anyone else. I've probably gotten the most hands-on experience. I've seen things that other people probably wouldn't have seen, or gotten inside information from doctors and other techs.

I: What do you think that was about?

P: I think it is just on the male level. … I got a lot more of the inside information. A lot more educational opportunities. And just the place I want to go in the field that a lot of people don't want to go into, it gives me opportunities. Because if I got into the OR, I talk to the anesthesiologists and I say, "I want to become a nurse anesthetist when I get out of graduate school. Can you give me any hints?" They tell me everything. … So I think being unique gives me a better opportunity than most people. I mean, those who actively and constantly seek out that kind of information probably get the same thing, but I get it without having to try too much. [Phil, nursing undergraduate student]

A Master's degree student in social work highlighted similar experiences where recognition from others and access to opportunities came to him more readily because he was generally the sole male in a work group numerically dominated by women. He underscored the fact that even though his female colleagues were often more skilled or experienced, he nevertheless was generally singled out amongst the group as the one with the greatest competence and ability. Furthermore, this happened routinely despite his own efforts to deter it. He detailed two recent experiences as examples of this tendency:

You go over to the [hospital] and the head of all the social workers is a guy. He's walking us through the building, and it's me and five women who are students with our group over there, and he is giving direction to me. He pointed and [talked] to me. And I'm the ADHD adult here. … But he chose me because of my gender.

I worked at a private agency. And when I met the people that ran that agency, here I have an associate's degree. The guys that are running that for-profit agency ask me if I want to open an office for them. And these guys don't know me. And there's other people in the room, all licensed, experienced, have the education. More so than me. … But I don't react

well to that. But this whole, "We're going to run this." No. And they're
looking at me like there's something wrong with me. That is not my
thing. [Mark, social work Master's student]

The latter comment also underscored a culture of camaraderie that some believed

existed among men in female-dominated workplaces. Not unlike the social work student

quoted earlier who said that his faculty member encouraged men in the program to

recognize their advantage and stick together as a group, an unspoken camaraderie was

presumed to exist in workplaces, one that encouraged men to unite around their common

interests to bolster their own standing in the workplace hierarchy. An undergraduate

social work student, though he distanced himself from other men in his educational

program, nevertheless believed that they would ultimately draw support and help from

one another once practicing in the profession.

> Well, like I said, [male social worker students] are all in this for a reason.
> So we all have that one common thing. You know, I'm here because of
> what happened. And he's here because of what happened. He's here
> because of what he believes in. So we all have that common thread. And
> I think that once I get into the social work field that I'll definitely see that.
> Even if these aren't people that I'm going to be hanging out with, they're
> still people in the field with me that I can draw on for support. I mean,
> we're kind of like a little clique of guys together in social work.
> [Christopher, social work undergraduate student]

Another benefit that these men identified in their workplace settings was a

presumption that, *as men* engaged in gender nontraditional work, they were actually

perceived as more competent than their female counterparts. Based on the gender and

work literature, we could presume that men would be identified as possessing unique

qualities and skills that they then bring to the work that they do, which is indeed

something these men articulated and a topic explored in greater depth in Chapter 5. That

said, for token women in male-dominated work, the presumption is often that they are

less competent, predicated on an assumed incongruence between femininity and the requirements of the tasks they are required to perform in doing their work. This is evidently not necessarily the case for men. Although men do face negative reflected appraisals and stereotypes as men doing "women's work," (an issue to be examined in the next chapter) they also often times have the opposite experience, and are viewed by others as unique or exceptional specifically *because* of their choice of careers. For this nursing undergraduate student, being cast as "exceptional" was something that he experienced immediately upon sharing the news that he enrolled in a nurse training program. He said that while he did not feel he was treated differently as a man pursing a career in nursing, he did find others' reactions to the news to be very interesting. He specifically noted the degree of praise he received from a veterinarian with whom he worked just prior to entering the nursing program, who he described as "a very Mr. Macho, Mustang driving, I-can-do-anything type of guy." He recalled that the doctor addressed him as a "noble man." He went on to say:

> He just looked at me and said, "Wow, that's a really noble thing to do." I
> was like, "Wow, okay. I never really thought of it that way, but wow."
> [Bill, nursing undergraduate student]

Similarly, this undergraduate student in elementary education stated that, as a man, he received very positive responses from colleagues at his school who told him that he was a "very special person" to choose to work with high needs children. They also acknowledged his patience with the kids and lauded him as "a gifted person." An undergraduate nursing student said that, in the hospital, it is often times actually easier for men to do patient care because patients assume that if you are a man and choose to work in a caring profession like nursing, then you must be an exceptional professional. As he

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explained it, this tendency is highly gendered, as men are not expected to be nurturing

and compassionate while women are "naturally" expected to be so. When female nurses

display these qualities it is taken for granted and not associated with their professional

competence. For male nurses, it is unexpected, so when they display these qualities,

patients identify them as fundamentally "special," and presume a high degree of

professional competence. He explained it this way:

> P: [It is helpful to be a man] I think a lot of times with patients. When
> they see you as a male and see you being compassionate. … You will
> stand out more to the [patient]. "That male nurse is so sweet, so nice." …
> So I think you stand out in situations, like "Oh, wow, my nurse was a
> man." They remember you for that. For a female nurse, if she's really
> nice, well, that's just expected.
>
> I: I see. They just take for granted that she will be nice.
>
> P: Right. Or they see him and assume he'll be a jerk. They feel men
> don't have emotion for people or they won't show it. But when you do,
> they are like, "Wow," and they remember your name. Not so much for
> female nurses, they have no idea. But [they remember me]. I have found
> that a lot. [Alex, nursing undergraduate student]

Another nursing student in the Master's degree program echoed this sentiment,

highlighting the positive feedback that he routinely received from patients who had a

preference for male nurses because they felt that they provide better care than female

nurses do. He said:

> A lot of times it is a novelty to have a male nurse. … One of the things
> I've been told many times by patients is that they love having male nurses
> because they feel that the care they have gotten has been better than
> they've gotten from women. … But I think a lot of men go into nursing
> because they have this dedication to caring and it is something they really
> strive for. And it seems like what patients have told me is that when
> they've had male nurses a lot of times they've found them to be better than
> some of their female nurses. Maybe to some degree it is the personality of
> the men who go into nursing. That really a lot of us have this attitude of

"I'm going to take care of you the way I want to be taken care of." A lot of times for women to go into nursing, they don't go into it because of that. They go into it just like they go into teaching, because that's what women do. It's a field for women. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

For this nursing student, there may indeed be something unique about the character of men who choose to pursue nursing. Nevertheless, evident in his remark is also the recognition that male nurses who provide good care are regarded more highly as competent professionals by the patients they serve.

This finding underscores an interesting contradiction and challenges status characteristics theory, in particular the prediction that in feminine-typed tasks, women (despite their less valued diffuse status) will have a moderate advantage over men in terms of being perceived as competent and capable due to cultural assumptions that women are "naturally" better-suited to caring and nurturing work. Based on the excerpts above, it is evident that this prediction does not hold true across all settings, in particular for the performance expectations associated with men who engage in "women's work."

As discussed above, a recurring issue that arose throughout the interviews with this group of social work, elementary education, and nursing students was the perception that doors opened easily for them *because* they were men. A number of them asserted that their college admissions process was fairly simple and that they were all but guaranteed acceptance because these female-dominated, historically feminized fields are implementing deliberate strategies to recruit more men into training programs and workplaces. For these men, they anticipated that the gender benefits would extend well beyond the college-level. Based on the feedback and encouragement they received in their educational programs, as well as through their placements as interns, student teachers, and nurse trainees in the workplace, they expected that the benefit of easy

access would continue as they entered the professions. Thus, at a time when many students may be concerned about the next step after graduation or contemplating what opportunities may exist for them in the workforce, this group of men conveyed a sense of optimism and confidence that the doors to their chosen profession would be open for them when the time came to secure a job. This sentiment is evident in the following excerpts:

> Actually, you know, from what I had heard, and this is mainly from people who worked in the field, I looked at [being a man in this field] as more of an opportunity than a challenge. And the reason for that is because I was being told by people in the field, whether it be teachers, principals or people here at [the college] that there was a need for males in the classroom. [Jack, elementary education undergraduate student]

> You're going to be a minority so you're almost always going to get a job. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

> A lot of times I've heard that I should be able to get a job anywhere. I heard that several times from different teachers and people in the social work field. "Oh, you're a guy, so you should be able to get a job anywhere." [Christopher, social work undergraduate student]

> I: Did you at any time have any reservations about going into early childhood education because you're a guy?

> P: No really. It really didn't bother me at all. If anything it helps me because of job security. I have a leg up on everybody else trying to get a job. I mean, it's true because really they need more guys in teaching. [Andrew, elementary education undergraduate student]

> Well, you know, I mean, like I say, I know I'm always going to have a job. I know that if I went up against a woman who was equally as well trained and equally as competent as I was, chances are I am going to get the job over her, simply because of numbers. So, that's a nice cushion. It's a nice cushion. Of course, there's no nurse that's without a job unless they choose not to have one. There are plenty of jobs. But until things change, I'm still a minority and I'm not going to fight it. If it does good things for me, then so much the better. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

But as far as me being a man, well, the one thing I guess they look at me as, well, as a minority in the field, which I am. And I've been told that I probably won't have much of an issue getting a job. … Yeah, that's one factor that they have keyed in on, that I'm going to get a job easily. [Jack, elementary education undergraduate student]

I never thought about [being a man in this field] in a negative sense. I have always thought you know one of the benefits is job security just because there is definitely a lack of men. I always hear "well, you'll always have a job, they're always looking for men", so that's definitely a plus factor. [John, elementary education undergraduate student]

Ah, well it is probably more my own personal feelings, but I can't help but believe knowing what I know about the way the workplace works, and the way employment law works, and all that kind of thing that being a male in an overwhelmingly female profession right now where there is a shortage, where there is a critical need, can't do anything but help my chances to be able to do whatever I want to do. Because you know EEOC numbers you know I kind of jokingly said you know I have all these things going for me. I am over 40, I am non-traditional, I am a male, and I'm a veteran. You know so I have all of these things laying in my favor for a change instead of weighing against me competing with everybody else who has the same thing. [I: Right.] And that really is only kind of half joking because I think on some level it probably is true. [Bill, nursing undergraduate student]

In addition to easier access to jobs in their chosen fields, these students also anticipated that, as men, they would enjoy the benefits of career advancement. This is an issue that a number of them described as an expectation in the field, as well as the general societal expectation that men want to be upwardly mobile and obtain a high level of authority in the workplace. In other words, they asserted that men face the pressure of others' assumptions that they will climb the professional ladder to the top ranks of their profession. This is, of course, also a pressure that some men place on themselves. In her study of men doing "women's work," Williams (1992; 1995) coined the term "glass escalator effect" to shed light on the subtle mechanisms that push men up through the ranks in their careers. According to Williams (1992), "[o]ften despite their intentions

[men] face invisible pressures to move up in their professions. As if on a moving escalator, they must work to stay in place" (pg. 256). In the workplace, this "glass escalator effect" ultimately enhances men's careers despite their own motivations and ambitions.

The participants interviewed for this project, although still in college and in training, were already privy to the existence of these expectations and pressures. For some, it was simply an overarching assumption that their career trajectory would be wide open to them, as men, and that they would advance easily. This sentiment is also captured in some of the earlier comments about having easy access to job. This undergraduate student articulated his professional goal of career advancement, and an expectation that he, as a man, would have an excellent chance of attaining a position of authority. He stated:

> P: I know working with kids I'm going to see some really terrible things.
> … What I want to do eventually is get out of that and once I see how
> things work and see who we're missing and who is falling through the
> cracks, I want to eventually be up at the top. I want to be the guy making
> the rules and saying "This is what we need to do and these are the people
> we need to be looking out for." I guess anyone wants to end up on top and
> that's definitely where I see myself. Like a policy maker and things like
> that. …
>
> I: Can you think of something that you'd like to do as a social worker that
> you may not be able to do if you were a woman?
>
> P: Well, maybe make it up to that highest level, that highest tier. I don't
> know how many social workers, females that is, that start at the bottom
> and have actually made it to the top like that. I don't think it's really
> realistic for women. I think I may be able to have a better chance of doing
> that, of being a lawmaker or something like that. … But because I'm a
> man I think I have a better chance of getting up to that top part.
> [Christopher, social work undergraduate student]

A bachelor's student in nursing indicated that professors in his program emphasized

upward mobility in the profession as a perk that men can expect to enjoy. Evident in his

comment was the presumption that men will move easily to the top professional ranks.

He said:

> Around here the professors, who you know most of them are women, they
> seem very supportive about males in the field. They are like, you know,
> males are in a good position to be doing this. They are in a good position
> to be getting managerial positions and things that women might not want
> to do as much. You can always keep going. [Alex, nursing undergraduate
> student]

A graduate student in the social work program echoed this sentiment, again underscoring

the expectation that men will move into leadership roles. He stated:

> P: People say, "You're going to be a supervisor." And I'm like, "No."

> I: Talk to me about that. Do you feel that there's pressure for you to do
> something bigger?

> P: It is definitely just assumed that you're going to be a supervisor. I
> don't think they're assuming that the women are going to be supervisors.
> [Mark, social work Master's student]

Apparent in his comment is an interesting bind, however, that men in these female-

dominated fields may encounter. That is, despite their own ambitions and motivations,

the expectation is that they will move up through the ranks. This presents a problem for

those who do not aspire to such a role. A number of the men interviewed expressed a

distinct desire to remain in positions viewed by some in the professions as "entry-level"

work. This was particularly true for two of the social work graduate students. Both of

them recovering addicts, they intended to spend their careers working one-on-one with

other recovering alcoholics and drug abusers. Regardless, they were aware that they may

not be able to remain in such "low level" positions. Though they did not use the term,

they were fully aware that the glass escalator may move them upwards, despite their own desire to stay put. One of the social work graduate students explained it like this:

> The Code of Ethics tells us that we are supposed to really be advocates for policy and change. Having a policy class, I know that's not where my interests lie and that's not where my strengths are. And I don't really know that I want to get into a mid-management position or an upper management position. My hope is to be able to work directly with the alcoholics and substance abusers. I have expressed that interest to one of the professors here and she has told me that I may not have a choice. As an MSW and a man, if you go out there and do your job and do it well, you're probably going to get kicked up the ladder whether you like it or not. I guess that's just a bridge I'll have to cross when I get to it. [Tom, social work Master's student]

Evident in his comment is a realization that subtle mechanisms exist in the workplace that push men upwards into high level position for which they are presumed to be best suited.

In this chapter I explored the perceived benefits and disadvantages that male nurses, social workers and elementary school teachers encountered in their educational and workplace environments. First, they believed that, as men, they were easily accepted for enrollment into their academic programs, and also anticipated that they would enjoy the same easy entrance into the professions once they graduated from college. They viewed their numerical minority status not as an impediment to success, but rather as a beneficial status that gained them access to their fields. For these men, heightened visibility was a consequence of being a numerical minority in a female-dominated environment, but they focused on the benefits of this visibility, both in their academic departments and classrooms and in the workplace. As men, they believed that they stood out and received special recognition for their presence and contributions. In addition, they recounted instances of special attention, additional training, and increased opportunities provided by professors and practitioners, experiences that strengthened

their learning experiences and expanded opportunities for their career development. While some participants did recall times when they felt discriminated against or unfairly treated, they alluded that the negative interactions were outweighed by the long term benefits they experienced. They also felt advantaged, particularly in the workplace, from the presumption that they were more competent than their female counterparts. Finally, they articulated the expectation that once in their chosen career they would be afforded the opportunity to move into positions of authority and leadership. While this structural mobility was viewed as an advantage that men in the professions enjoy, some also expressed concern that they would move into higher-level positions despite their own career plans and ambitions.

While Chapter 4 has primarily examined the benefits and disadvantages men encounter in their educational realm, as well as some of the benefits they experience in their training on-the-job, Chapter 5 takes a more in-depth look at the challenges and disadvantages they face in the professional realm. As men pursuing careers as nurses, elementary school teachers, and social workers, they encounter frequent reminders from significant others (e.g., family, friends, and colleagues) that they are different from other men and may not measure up. Chapter 5 examines how men respond to these challenges and articulates the identity work strategies they employ to verify their identities as men and as competent professionals in their chosen careers.

CHAPTER 5: IDENTITY WORK

Identity work is "anything we do, alone or with others, to establish, change, or lay claim to meanings as particular kinds of persons" (Schwalbe 1996:105). In other words, identity work is what people do, e.g., through dress, gesture, associations, demeanor, speech, etc., that communicates to others who they are, how they are likely to behave, and how they expect to be treated. In this chapter I present the challenges that men in nursing, social work, and elementary education encounter to their gender identity, including others' perceptions that they lack ambition or intelligence, presumptions of homosexuality, and suspicions of sexual deviance and distrust. Next I touch on the challenges confronting their professional role identity that impede their ability to do their job and how these men do identity work in order to resolve the conflict. I then explore the key strategies they implement in order to assert their masculine identity in the context of their educational and work spheres. These include emphasizing the masculine as workers, emphasizing the masculine in the work, underscoring heterosexuality, and negotiating the contradiction that exists between being a man and performing work tasks that are aligned with women and femininity.

SOURCES OF MEN'S IDENTITIES AS NURSES, SOCIAL WORKERS, AND ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

Identities are the sets of meanings people hold for themselves that define who they are as "persons, role occupants, and group members" (Burke 2004:5). Burke's (2004) theory of identity control assumes that these sets of meanings serve as identity standards or references for people to "compare their perceptions of self-relevant meanings in interactive situations" (pg. 5). People have multiple bases of identity. Social identities based on membership in a group or category give self-meanings that are

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shared with other group members (e.g., "man"). Role identities are categories defined within the culture that people learn to apply to themselves and to others. The meanings attached to the role identities of nurse, elementary school teacher, and social worker (e.g., nurturing, compassionate, care-taking) are aligned more closely with the social identity "woman" than with the social identity "man." Personal identities consist of individual traits and provide meanings that define who one is as an individual (e.g., "manly" or "masculine").

How central is the professional role identity to this group of men? The question of how men come to be involved in the professions, and what their work *means* to them, is a key one for understanding the importance and relevance of a given role identity. In her study of men in gender non-traditional occupations, Williams (1995) found that most of her participants were drawn into their careers through previous job experiences (e.g., military corpsmen going into nursing or prior part-time work experiences in school libraries leading to careers in librarianship). In this study, in contrast, most participants' career pursuits were deeply rooted in their own histories and biographies. In this sense, their role identities as nurses, elementary educators, and social workers were far more central to their identities (i.e., importance to their sense of who they are). In contrast to Williams's participants, this group described far more personal motivations for pursuing their chosen fields.

The challenges to their professional role identity are problematic for this group of men because, for most of them, their identity as a nurse, social worker, or elementary school teacher is a highly central one. In contrast to Williams's (1995) finding that men are drawn into these professions through earlier job experiences, the men in this study

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were drawn into these professions through profoundly personal life experiences. For example, two social work graduate students talked in depth about their own recovery from drug and alcohol addiction as motivation for providing other recovering addicts what was provided to them through intervention and counseling. An undergraduate social work student planned to devote his life to supporting children in foster care and the adoption system, as his own personal experience growing up in these systems was so difficult. An undergraduate nursing student planned to devote his career to geriatric nursing, an almost exclusively female-dominated specialty area, because his family cared for his grandmother at the end of her life and he was so profoundly affected by the experience. In addition, as a young person he struggled with health problems, so brought to his work a significant degree of sensitivity and understanding. A graduate social work student had his sights set on marriage and family therapy, a career path he decided on when he witnessed the impact of a family divorce on two young children in his neighborhood. Two undergraduate elementary education students chose to pursue teaching careers because they themselves grew up without fathers and wanted to be positive role models and father figures to young boys in their communities. Personal stories such as these surfaced time and again throughout the interviews, and underscored the very personal nature of these individuals' career decisions.

CHALLENGES TO MEN'S IDENTITIES

> *Well, I have yet to see the movie "Meet the Parents." But one of the things I do see is that the media and movies [promote] the idea that men in nursing is some sort of aberrant phenomenon. [graduate nursing student]*

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When one perceives that others' views of them (i.e., reflected appraisals) match their identity standards, no problems exist. When reflected appraisals and identity standards do not match, individuals must work to reestablish congruence between the two, a process termed self-verification. The concept of "identity work" sheds light on how people self-verify. In this study, I examine how men self-verify by using strategies to resolve discrepancies between their perceptions of others' views of them and their own identity standards, in particular their gender identity as men.

Evans and Frank (2003) argue that "the struggle to maintain a positive masculine identity in an occupation that continually challenges masculinity results in practices by men to project a masculine identity" (pg. 280). Research on men in female-dominated occupations has identified a myriad of strategies men use in doing identity work, including, for example, distancing from particular aspects of the professional role identity or from other men who do the same work (e.g.," I'm not like other men who go into teaching"), embracing particular aspects of the field ("I was born to work with kids"), storytelling, or offering cover stories for why they do the work ("I'm only doing this until I save enough money to go to medical school"), and reframing the work in masculine, or at least gender neutral terms ("You have to be tough and in control to deal with the pressures of the ER") (Boughn 1994; Dellinger 2004; Henson and Rogers 2001; Pierce 1995; Schwalbe 1996; Snow and Anderson 1987; Williams 1995). Like men who are nurses, social workers, and elementary school teachers, undergraduate and graduate men in training are subject to scrutiny and challenges to their identity standards. Here I explore situations in which these men enact strategies of self-verification; in other words, the specific ways in which they verify their identity as "a man" through identity work.

Challenges to Hegemonic Masculinity

Hegemonic masculinity is the normative standard or culturally dominant ideal of masculinity that men are expected to embody (Connell 1987). Contemporary qualities of hegemonic masculinity include "physical strength and bravado, exclusive heterosexuality, stoicism, authority, and independence" (Williams 1995). While many men, if not most, fall short of this ideal in one way or another, most men feel the societal pressure to conform to it. As men pursuing education and training in nursing, social work, and elementary education, the men in this study confronted ongoing challenges to their masculinity. According to Evans and Frank (2003), "for men who participate in the non-hegemonic relations of masculinity by entering a woman-identified profession, the result is a perception of spoiled masculinity" (pg. 278). As men, they encounter frequent reminders from the people in their lives (e.g., family, friends, and colleagues) that they are different from other men and may not measure up. In this section I explore three challenges to masculinity that these men encountered: others' perceptions that they lacked ambition or intelligence, presumptions that they were homosexual, and suspicions of sexual deviance and distrust oftentimes associated with men who care for women and children. I also investigate the ways in which their professional role identities as competent nurses, elementary educators, and social workers are simultaneously undermined.

First, a key challenge for some of these men was the negative reflected appraisal that men in the "female" occupations lack career ambition or cannot do work deemed more appropriate for men. A nursing student highlighted the fact that, in his experience, people assume that nursing is just something men do either en route to a medical career or because they lack what it takes to become a doctor. He stated,

> I mean you will tell people what you do and a lot of people [assume] you are going to be a doctor, and they're like, "When are you going to go to medical school after that?" They just assume that, of course, you cannot stop there as a nurse, because that's not what men do.

When asked what assumptions he is confronted with when people learn that he is pursuing a career in social work, this undergraduate student responded,

> [They assume] that we're meager. That we can't cut it in different fields. That we can't do anything else. [Alex, nursing undergraduate student]

A nursing undergraduate echoed this sentiment when addressing the stereotypes faced by male nurses:

> [The assumption is] that they are not man enough to become a doctor or smart enough to become a doctor. Or to become a real man and join the army or become a fireman or a police officer. [Phil, nursing undergraduate student]

> Receiving negative feedback and criticism from family members was not

uncommon amongst participants, though it was by no means everyone's experience. One participant, a social work Master's degree student who was a practicing substance abuse counselor, as well as a husband and father, talked about the ongoing criticism he received from his own father, who felt that he was not living up to his role as a breadwinner and contributing member of his household. He stated,

> The paperwork to be certified in Virginia is this thick [demonstrated with hand gesture] for substance abuse counseling. And I mean, I've been working my ass off. I've driven all over this state. I'm working with

clients in these horrible settings and they're on drugs and in jail. They're here, there, under bridges. So [my father says to me], "When are you going back to work?" I've worked at this company for four years. It's not work though. Men don't see it as work. It's not work. It's just for someone to go volunteer. It doesn't take any real skills. You just show up and hold somebody's hand. And that was a month ago that I got that from my Dad. "When are you going to work?" That sums it up. You don't want to remember what your family says to you sometimes.

When asked how people other than his father reacted to his choice of career path, he responded:

It's not real positive. It's just not. People will say, "You what? What do you do? When are you actually going to work?" Guys who are the generation of my dad, it's like, "You what?"

He went on to say,

P: I've finally gotten to a place, well, you're either going to stress out about this or do the acceptance thing. It takes a long time. And during the day it can alter depending on how long it's been since I got off the phone with someone.

I: Are comments like "When are you going to work?" geared towards you taking time to go to school or because of the type of work you're doing?

P: All of it. Going to school at this age. Doing the kind of work that I do. It's considered women's work. [Mark, social work Master's student]

An undergraduate student in nursing described his father's reaction to his decision to enter nursing school:

Well, believe it or not, when I told [my father] about what I was doing and stuff, he gave me this, like, "Yeah, I can see that you're not really doctor material," whatever that means. But, "Yeah, nurse, I can see you probably doing that sort of work." To me I felt like he was looking down on it. [Alex, nursing undergraduate student]

Some of the men dismissed the comments and criticisms they encountered as friendly teasing or folks just giving them a hard time. Regardless of how good-natured the comments were deemed to be, they still underscored the fact that these men were

deviating from acceptable male roles. When asked how his friends regarded his

academic major and career aspirations, this social work undergraduate replied:

> My friends were kind of surprised by it. Some of it was heckling, good
> natured I think, and I'm in a girl's profession. [Christopher, social work
> undergraduate student]

An undergraduate nursing student described his friends' reactions like this:

> Well, in general, my guy friends said, "Oh, you're going into nursing?
> Well, I may be doing this [or that], but at least I'm not a nurse." … I
> mean, in some ways they know it's an easy shot to go against me. But it's
> not like they are shying away from me completely. [Phil, nursing
> undergraduate student]

Finally, another nursing undergraduate stated,

> Of course my brother and sister-in-law like to poke fun at me. And they
> call me "Focker," you know? [Paul, nursing undergraduate student]

Whether the tone used by family, friends and coworkers was critical or humorous, the

underlying message was that they were engaging in work considered inappropriate for

men.

The stereotypes that these men faced while training in the workplace were

oftentimes negative. An undergraduate student in nursing addressed the negative

assumptions about male nurses that he was warned about in his educational program as

well as by co-workers in the hospital:

> There's a lot of prejudice stuff within the faculty and staff, so you have to
> watch out for that. Patients, well, they're not used to [men in this field].
> People may not want you to treat them. It's all focusing on they will do
> whatever possible to alienate me just because I'm a guy, and that I don't
> fit their view and their criteria.

He did, however, highlight one positive outcome of this resistance to men practicing nursing:

> I've been told that the only good thing is that you'll always be called "Doctor." [Phil, nursing undergraduate student]

The second challenge to masculinity commonly cited was the generalized assumption that men who participate in presumed women's occupations are gay. While all of the men who participated in these interviews electively identified themselves as heterosexual, many of them conceded that they believed the societal assumption is that they were indeed gay men. This nursing undergraduate student described common encounters during hospital rounds wherein he was routinely addressed as "one of the ladies." He described the tone of these interactions:

> It happens all the time. Especially in the hospital when we're in groups. It's like, "All right ladies, follow me." It's this batch of women and I'm invisible or they just don't take the extra time to say "and gentlemen." Some do and it's nice. I just get an irky feeling that people have stereotypes in the back of their minds that they're trying to see if they can apply [to me].

When asked to elaborate on what those stereotypes were, he responded,

> The big one. [Male nurses] are gay. It's the big one. That the only reason a guy wants to do this work is because they can treat other guys and get a quick feel. [Phil, nursing undergraduate student]

Another undergraduate nursing student stated:

> Well, to be honest with you, I mean, I am not going to lie. We have this thing in our culture that if you say you are a nurse, people think you are gay. Just because they automatically assume it's a female thing, so you have to be gay. You know you think about doing something that females do, and it takes a lot for you to tell [other people] what you do. [Alex, nursing undergraduate student]

This sentiment was routinely echoed throughout the interviews, with the participants reinforcing the perception that men who do social work, nursing, and elementary school teaching do not conform to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity and as such are presumed to be homosexual.

As numerical minorities, men experience greater visibility in the nursing, elementary education, and social work professions. Congruent with Kanter's (1977b) assertion that tokens experience increased job performance pressures associated with heightened visibility, men in this study alluded to the pressures of standing out *as men*. This greater visibility coupled with the implications of presumed spoiled masculinity led to these men believing that they needed to conduct themselves very carefully in professional interactions. The third challenge to masculinity cited was the continual worry that others might misinterpret their actions. One undergraduate student pursuing his degree in elementary education feared that others might think him deviant for desiring to work with children:

> Yeah, I think, you know, as soon as I say the words "elementary special ed," what's the first picture that a construction worker might get of me? I think, to be honest, one of the weirdest things that scares me most is like what are they thinking, you know? What's this guy doing? Is there some kind of perversion in it for the guy to be in this field? I think that makes me somewhat paranoid like, you know, does it ever cross anybody's mind or is that something people might think of me, you know? I mean, what they might think of a guy wanting to work with kids. [John, elementary education undergraduate student]

For other participants, the stereotype of men as perverted, sexually aggressive or pedophilic significantly affected the way they thought about and approached routine work tasks in their professions, as well as their interactions with patients, students, and clients. They felt the need to conduct themselves very carefully so that nothing they did

as professionals could be misunderstood as sexually inappropriate or predatory. This issue is evident in the following participants' comments:

> I mean, you can't be alone with a female patient and do a below-the-waist exam. Because who knows what will happen behind closed doors without the supervision of another female. It is that whole thing of nobody trusting guys in the profession. [Phil, nursing undergraduate student]

> I think I'm going to have to mind what I do. It has been my experience that girls are scandalous. Girls are very scandalous. Not all of them. But they can manipulate. And I think I'll have to watch out for that. I have to pay attention to what I want to happen and what will happen and what should happen. So I really have to watch out. [Andrew, elementary education undergraduate student]

> I mean sometimes when you are trying to console a female client or what have you, you have to be careful about whether or not you can give this person a hug because you are a male and they are a female. That has happened a little bit. For the most part if you establish a relationship with the patient they will let you give them a hug and they won't think it is in a weird kind of way. So, I think sometimes maybe you don't feel like you can do everything you wanted to do as far as females being comfortable with you [helping them]. [Alex, nursing undergraduate student]

> One time I was playing with one of my friends' kids, and usually I'll pick them up and hold them and swing them around and be really physical. And [at work] you've got to think if this is a little girl you don't want to give the wrong idea or wrong impression, even if you're totally harmless in what you're doing. You still have to be careful, because there are *those* people out there and you can't tell which one is which. So I just think about that and it does affect my behavior. I wouldn't pick up a girl of a certain age. [Christopher, social work undergraduate student]

Some men highlighted the double standard that exists for men and women in the professions. The sex stereotype of sexual aggression exists almost exclusively for men, so it is a unique stressor that men face in performing their work. An undergraduate social work student who also facilitated a tutoring and mentoring group with first and second graders stated,

I think about this a lot. I'm sure some people have been thinking about [why I want to work with kids], but they just don't have the courage to tell me that to my face. But I have to be really careful with what I'm doing so there can't be any mistaking. I have to be careful about what I say and what I teach the kids. … A woman could come along with a little 8-year-old boy, and no one would be worked about it. But if a guy does the same thing, it is looked at in a totally different light. [Christopher, social work undergraduate student]

A graduate student with a varied nursing background said,

When I worked in psych, absolutely, positively I really did have to protect myself against any kind of possible innuendo. Yes. Especially when it comes to, say, teenage girls or young women. Whereas a woman in the exact same setting reversed would not. There have been times where I have had staff members or other nurses come in with me when I'm doing things. This is simply to protect myself. And it doesn't happen the other way. There is a double standard. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

Men who pursue education and training en route to careers in gender nontraditional fields face some negative consequences, including the presumption of a spoiled masculinity. In short, they are often perceived as engaging in gender-inappropriate behavior (Jome and Tokar 1998), or as sexually deviant (Williams 1992). In the face of criticism and, in some cases, ridicule, these men have to defend themselves as "real men," as their very presence in a female-dominated field challenges notions of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995). Furthermore, they must devise strategies for altering the ways in which they perform their work in order to protect themselves from misunderstandings and even accusations.

Challenges to Role Identities

As these men faced evident challenges to their gender identities as they pursued educational training and jobs in gender-nontraditional fields, they concomitantly faced challenges to their role identities as rising career professionals. A consequence of this identity double-bind is that, as nurses, elementary educators, and social workers, their

sense of professional competence and mastery were at times undermined because they encountered particular aspects of the work that they simply could not perform. Since they were confronted with perceptions of stigma and stereotypes *as men* in their professions, the resulting discomfort and/or distrust on the part of those they served at times made it difficult or impossible for them to do their job, thus undermining their professional role identities. This undermined both their sense of masculinity (e.g., feeling competent, in control, and autonomous on the job) and their role identity as capable nurses, social workers, or elementary school teachers.

As eager and committed rising professionals, a number of the participants in this study expressed frustrations over the ways in which their presence, *as men*, at times impeded their ability to do their jobs. While for the most part they understood their clients'/patients' feelings of discomfort, they nonetheless felt helpless at times and unable to perform their work, especially when caring for women in need. An undergraduate nursing student speculated about why this is a problem for men in his profession:

> A lot of average people out there, you know, when they see a guy coming into their room who is a nurse, there's going to be a concern. They are going to be wondering what they are getting into there, you know, by having a male nurse. [Paul, undergraduate nursing student]

An undergraduate nursing student described the limitations and barriers he faces on a routine basis:

> Well, a lot of times there are females that won't let men work on them in any way. There have been religious factors where men can't do any kind of care on a female patient. That has come up a lot. Elderly clients and women, they don't want males working on them. … A lot of times you won't even think you can try to do it. You will just ask someone else to do it. … I have heard other male nurses like, "Oh, if you give the vaginal suppository then I will do your IV." So, that is where a lot of times men are at a disadvantage [in nursing]. Whereas men will take the women nurses and let them do whatever. They don't care, you know?

As he elaborated on his experiences, he discussed how upset he felt at times when female

patients would not let him help them. As a male nurse, he felt at a loss for how to

demonstrate his competence and professionalism in a way that would put them at ease.

For him, this was a tremendous challenge for him professionally. He stated:

> I think sometimes maybe you don't feel like you can do everything you
> want to do as far as females being comfortable with you helping. And
> there are situations where there have been females who have to go to the
> bathroom really badly and need help. I am like, "Okay, I will help you."
> And they are like, "No, no, no." And I am like, "It will take a while and
> you feel bad because you won't let me help you. I want to help you."
> And they are like, "No, no, I am sorry." I've had a woman soil the bed
> before because I can't find a female nurse to help her fast enough. So, that
> does kind of hurt your ego. That has happened. [Alex, nursing
> undergraduate student]

An undergraduate social work student conveyed similar frustrations. Despite

comprehensive education and training, he recognized that there would be times when he

would not be able to do his job. He stated:

> Working with girls. I definitely think they think, "What do you know
> about this situation?" I have to tell them, "I don't really know, but this is
> what I've learned and this is how I'm trying to help you." I guess they
> want to have a girl around. Someone who has gone through it and
> understands what they're saying. That's one of the biggest challenges. …
> Girls definitely look down [on you] a little bit when you're trying to help
> them. [Christopher, social work undergraduate student]

Another graduate nursing student described the same limitations:

> I do have times where I have had people who did not want me to be their
> nurse because of the fact that I am a man. Or [they don't want me] to give
> certain procedures because I'm a man. … It doesn't go the other way.
> There's very seldom a time when a guy is going to say, "I don't want a
> female nurse here." Every once in a while, but not often. And not to the
> degree that it reverses for men.

In the most extreme instance, a nursing graduate student abandoned his original plans to

work as a labor and delivery nurse, anticipating the barriers he would likely face in

getting a job and effectively meeting its demands. He stated:

> P: When I was coming out of school, one of the things I really thought
> about was becoming a midwife. I love labor and delivery. I loved it. It is
> one of the places in healthcare where most people are happy. It is a fun
> event. People are happy. You get to drink when you're done. People are
> popping champagne and stuff. But to become a male midwife, well, there
> are not many. And the reason is that they are not encouraged to do it. In
> fact, I was actively discouraged from doing it.
>
> I: Really. What did people tell you?
>
> P: One of the things that was told to me by a woman who works in OB
> nursing, she said, "Carl, you have the skills and the compassion and ability
> to do it. But when that woman is having a baby, she wants another
> woman there. She doesn't want a man there. She's got a man there. He's
> the OB doctor." [Carl, nursing Master's student]

In order to resolve discrepancies triggered by the negative reflected appraisals to

their professional role identity, these men were again required to do identity work in

order to restore and reassert a sense of professional competence and ability.

Interestingly, verification of the professional role identity required them to rely on shared

assumptions about men who participate in gender non-traditional work. In other words,

by understanding and accepting the assumptions and stereotypes underlying the

challenges they encounter to their gender identities, they were better able to dismiss

negative reflected appraisals and verify their professional role identity. This strategy was

evident in the understanding these men displayed when talking about the challenges they

faced in the workplace. Even though they conveyed a clear sense of frustration, they also

acknowledged that patients and clients are still getting used to seeing men in these roles

and that it will take time to build trust and rapport. They acknowledged that these

patients and clients, particularly women and children, would understandably be worried and distrustful at first. An undergraduate nursing student captured this sentiment in the following comment:

> [Their fears] are things you will have to overcome. As a guy going into something like this, well, it's just like anything else. You have to show them that you're capable. You have to show them that you know what you are doing and that you care. You have to show them that you are compassionate and have their best interests at heart. [Paul, nursing undergraduate student]

Men who pursue careers in nursing, social work, and elementary education face challenges to their masculinity, as they fall short of culturally dominant ideals of what constitutes appropriate career pursuits for them. This message comes to them through criticisms and teasing from family members, friends and co-workers. These challenges come in the form of others' perceptions that they lack motivation and/or intelligence, the assumption that they are gay, and stereotypical fears of men as pedophilic or otherwise sexually deviant.

IDENTITY WORK: RESPONSES TO IDENTITY CHALLENGES

In order to preserve their sense of masculinity, the participants in this study must do the identity work necessary to counter these assumptions and to protect themselves from misunderstandings and possible accusations. They must also do identity work in order to maintain their sense of themselves as competent rising professionals in their fields, as the challenges they face to their gender identities also work to undermine their professional role identities by preventing them from performing some of the routine tasks of their work.

Emphasizing the Masculine as Workers

In her research on men employed in "women's" professions, Williams found that "(m)en creatively appropriate tasks or even aspects of tasks that can be labeled 'masculine' to legitimize their presence in these fields" (Williams 1995:17). Part of the identity work that men in this study do when participating in presumed women's occupations is to underscore the unique contributions they make *as men* to the work they do. They cited numerous significant contributions they make to their fields which they felt women could not make and which also emphasized their masculinity. These include men's unique perspectives and work styles, physical strength, being a disciplinarian, the ability to serve as a role model or father figure, and being a 'safe space'.

One way that men verify their masculinity is to focus on men's unique perspective and approach to the work, allowing them to connect better with other men and get the job done. Some of the social work students indicated that, as men, they may be in a better position to help clients in need:

> Sometimes men will be able to work with certain populations better than women. And it's not because of being a man or woman, but has to do more with what the client perceives. There are a lot of chauvinist men out there that don't think a woman can do anything for them. They don't want a woman doctor. They don't want a woman president. Or this, that, or the other thing. The guy who shaves every morning, well, that's another thing. If it's a man, they're willing to sit down and talk to him. [Tom, social work Master's student]

> There are some potential clients who don't like to deal with women. They've got issues with women. And [we] would like to see more men in the field because as a group, social workers in general, the more people we can reach the better. [Tom, social work Master's student]

> I guess kind of working with men in general, young men, old men, whatever, about this macho culture stuff that we've talked about over and over again. Like helping them process that. I think coming from a man it would be more effective. They've all experienced it first hand. Not here,

I don't think a woman could work in that. [Mark, social work Master's student]

This social work undergraduate echoes the sentiment that oftentimes men are more effective at working with other men:

It is going to be easier for me to relate to the males. If a female social worker comes up to a guy and says, "You beat your wife, you don't have a job, etc., etc." then he's going to take offense to that. But then if another guy comes and challenges him and what he's doing, I think they might accept that a little easier. I'll be able to relate with that guy. They may not want to talk to a girl. Does she know what's going on? And they can't show weakness to a girl. So I think that's where I can come in and really help a lot. [Christopher, social work undergraduate student]

A graduate student pursuing his degree in nursing echoed this sentiment, highlighting his ability to establish rapport with hospital patients:

I'm very genuine with my patients. I like to make them feel comfortable. And I really strive to do that first before I start putting my hands on you. I like to talk to my patients. I like to find out about them. I like to know about their families. I like to know about why they're in the hospital, what brought them there. So I like to ask them those questions before I ever do any kind of care. So you establish that kind of rapport. The great thing about guys in the hospital is that you can joke about guys being in the hospital. First of all, the very first thing that we always talk about is gowns. You know what? Guys don't wear nightgowns. We're not used to them. We don't like them. The last time I was in the hospital I kept pulling mine off, you know? Its little things like that you can establish a rapport and joke about. And I love it when I've got a couple of guys in the room who've kind of hit it off. You get two different guys in a room, especially if they have a similar condition and they can share their war stories. And then you all three get in there talking about it. I think it provides a level of comfort for men that they otherwise would not have with a female nurse. It's a guy-to-guy rapport thing. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

In response to being asked if men bring special qualities to the field of social work, an undergraduate student highlighted men's ability to bring a balanced perspective to the discipline:

Just that they have a different perspective on things. That depends on what type of guy it is. If it's a guy who is just conforming to what all the women in the field say, then that's not going to help anything at all. But if it's someone who will take that and also speak their own mind about things. An example about that is like when a female talks about how all men are bad because they hit their wives, etc., etc. … Well, if a guy goes along with them and says "screw guys" then that's not helping anything at all. But if there's a guy who says well, maybe rape is committed by all guys, but you can't forget there are women out there who commit rape and abuse children, if you can bring that sort of balance and perspective to it, then I think guys can do a lot more. Stop the male bashing as much and make the woman understand that it's not all one side's fault or the other. It's a combination.

He went on to underscore the benefits of a man's approach to getting the job done:

It's a heavy-fisted thing. If someone says no to a grant or something like that, I think women may be more likely to give up and think this isn't going to happen. I'm more of a person, and a lot of guys are like this, where "I'm not going to take no for an answer. This is what we need to do and how we're going to do it. Let's get on this and think in a different way." I think that kind of drive a guy could bring to the workforce. [Christopher, social work undergraduate student]

An undergraduate nursing student indicated that, in his opinion, men are quite simply more knowledgeable and better skilled in nursing work than are female nurses. He stated:

[Male nurses are] smart. Dedicated. Well, not all. I've seen lazy male nurses. But they just seem to be a lot more direct and more knowledgeable and incorporating their knowledge in practice and passing that knowledge on. In my experience, male nurses have more people sills for caring for the patients than female nurses. [Female nurses] are just in and out and do what you need to do. Guys take a little more of an active approach to health care. [Phil, nursing undergraduate student]

Participants highlighted their ability to do "heavy lifting" as one of the benefits of men entering these professions and an expectation that they face in the workplace. A nursing student doing hospital rotations stated:

I guess, you know, like the heavy lifting stuff. I'm sure [the women nurses] are happy to see us guys coming in to help with some of that stuff. [Paul, nursing undergraduate student]

Another undergraduate nursing student echoed this sentiment:

I have been working in hospitals while I've been in school, and I have seen plenty of men doing it and there are more and more doing it. And they need [us] to do it because of strength and things like that. [Alex, nursing undergraduate student]

An elementary education undergraduate employed as a teacher's aide in the schools, also addressed the strength work necessary to meet the demands of his job:

There's a kid I work with, this boy, and he has MS. So he needs to be changed daily and there's a lot of lifting involved with him. And so they have me there. They prioritize me to be there to lift him and work with him. … They ended up asking another employee to switch her schedule to accommodate for that.

While he indicated his ability to do the "heavy lifting" was as a benefit of his being in an elementary school environment, he also shared his frustration over the expectation that because he is a man he is ultimately responsible for performing this sort of task:

Right now I'm in the situation where the girl I work with just had surgery and she can't lift anything over 15 pounds. So I have to carry around a walkie-talkie in the school. When they call me I have to drop everything. I have to be the one that picks it up. So that's a disadvantage for me right now. Not only to me in the sense that it is somewhat frustrating to have that responsibility in the middle of having other responsibilities, but it also frustrates the other kids that I am working with. [John, elementary education undergraduate student]

Another undergraduate nursing student contested the idea that men are best suited to perform the strength work on the job, and resisted the inequities of this assumption:

When I put the scrubs on and am at the hospital, it doesn't matter what kind of chromosomes I have. And just because I'm the male doesn't mean I'm the one to lift the 300-pounder out of the bed. Everyone does their share. If there's something that I have the unique ability to do in certain situations that other's don't, then that's okay. But I will try hard to squash

any different expectations, whether good or bad. I'm just a nurse. [Bill, nursing undergraduate student]

In addition, a couple of men emphasized their role as a disciplinarian in the classroom environment. In these instances, they specifically indicated that because they are men they are more effective in this area. One participant briefly discussed how well-suited men are to the role of disciplinarian, and that it is "much more powerful and effective coming from a man than coming from a woman." In other instances it was stated:

> There are times like the other day when I had to call the class down. Those kids were getting rowdy. It was like, geez, what's gotten into these kids? And I was like, "Kids, you need to be quiet" [emphatic tone]. And you could hear a pin drop in the class. But I mean in instances such as that it has helped [to be a man]. [Jack, elementary education undergraduate student]

> I would say the only difference that I would see in myself from females would be the reactions that I draw from the children right away. I guess they would look at me at more … of a disciplinarian figure in a way. I mean seeing myself in the future I would see kids maybe steppin' it up more quickly around me than they would the ladies. [John, elementary education undergraduate student]

The most commonly cited strategy for emphasizing the masculine was to identify as a role-model for the groups they served. As the numerical minority, these men felt that they could be a model for others to look up to. For one graduate nursing student, it was about being someone that other young male nursing students could look to as a mentor:

> I: As a man, how do you feel that you can make unique contributions to nursing education?

> P: Hopefully I'm going to be a role model. That's really what I'm hoping to see. Right now there's one male faculty member at [my university]. Hopefully I am going to be the second one. And hopefully I'm not the last one. I really hope that more men go into the educational part of it because then we will be role models to bring people in. And our styles are different. Men's and women's styles are different, especially if you look at things like education. I think it's nice to be able to have that other side of the coin to be part of your educational experience. In the majority of

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nursing programs you don't have male instructors. So you don't get that other side of it. Not that we're that different, but in a lot of ways we are that different. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

For others, the emphasis was on being a positive role-model, or "bringing a fatherly quality in" for young boys and girls who come from homes where there is no male head of household. A number of the participants, particularly those pursuing careers in elementary education, took this aspect of their work very seriously and felt that men bring something to kids that they would otherwise not have:

> If I were a woman I would not be able to impact young kids that are male as much. I would not be able to be a father figure to them and not be able to fill a void they might have for a father. [John, elementary education undergraduate student]
>
> And the interesting fact about that, and I'm not sure who it was whether it be an instructor that I had here at [the college] or a counselor in the program tell me, but there is one county, a rural county, that had an elementary school classroom with 24 students. Of those 24 students, 21 of them came from homes where there was only one parent in the home. And of those 21, I don't believe any of them were in a male-headed household. They were either female-headed households or the child was residing with a grandparent. But they alluded to the fact that there was such a need for males as positive role models. And I never really had thought about it at that time, but I guess I could be a role model. I think I do a pretty good job of being a positive role model. [Jack, elementary education undergraduate student]
>
> To get on a personal level, too, I when I was younger my dad separated from my mom when I was about 14 and so growing up at that age without a dad, without that father-figure, I know that it has impacted me in a way that I want kids to be able to have that if they don't have it. There are a lot of kids in the school system now who are fatherless children. And they don't have any sort of male influence in their life. So I know the impact that it makes to have that role model there because I've had other guys in my life that have, you know, just mentored me or helped me or just wanted to walk beside me like a father-figure. So I know the power that can have in a kid's life. … If I was a woman, I would not be able to impact young kids that are male as much. I would not be able to be a father figure to them and not be able to fill a void they might have for a father. [John, elementary education undergraduate student]

I get nothing but praise. The other teachers say, "The kids really need you. They really need strong male role models in their lives." So, yeah, it has been really good. I get a lot of praise. Nothing but positive feedback. [Andrew, elementary education undergraduate student]

Similar to those who identified their unique ability to serve as a role-model or father-figure for young kids, a Master's student pursuing his degree in social work highlighted his role as a "safe" male for women and children who had survived abuse:

I think [being a man] has helped me when I've worked with the women and children in that program. I was the only male there and was able to show them a safe place with a man that could be caring and loving to them, and who could be non-threatening. A safe place where they hadn't really seen that much at all, if ever in their lives. … So if I can be a small part of something that is a safe place. That's a great role for me to do a lot of great therapy. [Mark, social work Master's student]

Men employ a number of strategies to emphasize their masculinity in the context of their work as social workers, elementary school teachers, and nurses in training. These include emphasizing men's perspectives and approaches to working with other men, capability for doing the "heavy lifting," men's proficiency at enforcing discipline, their unique contributions as role models and father figures, and finally serving as a 'safe space' for victims of interpersonal abuse. This form of identity work allows men to lay claim to hegemonic masculinity in a context that may otherwise cast doubt on it.

Emphasizing the Masculine in the Work

While many of these men did identity work focused on emphasizing their own masculine qualities and the unique contributions that men make in the professions, they also engaged in identity work centered on emphasizing the masculine aspects of the work itself. One strategy for doing this was highlighting specialty areas within the professions that were considered more male-identified. An undergraduate nursing student highlighted the tendency for men in his field to do this. He stated:

I ask most of the men in my classes, and I hear that a lot of them want to do Intensive Care Unit or the Emergency Room, and things like that. I think a lot of it is because that's what men, if they're going to be nurses, think they *should* do. Or they want to do anesthesia or something like that. [Alex, nursing undergraduate student]

In no instance did any of the participants in this study indicate that they were pursuing a specialty area specifically *because* it attracted greater numbers of men or because it was considered more appropriate for men, but a number of respondents did discuss their intentions to specialize in male-dominated areas of the professions. An undergraduate nursing student discussed his desire to go into anesthesia:

I: So you are pursuing a specialization in anesthesia?

P: Yes, nurse anesthetist. If everything goes 100%, that's what I want to do.

I: And how did you pick it?

P: Money. I'll be blunt. I'll basically be paid on average $120K-plus right out of school.

I: Wow, really?

P: Yes. Dead serious. The majority of nurse anesthetists are men. It's a male-dominated graduate program. Like how nurse practitioners are majority women. [Phil, nursing undergraduate student]

Another nursing undergraduate student discussed how he had originally applied to enter a College of Sciences for a training program in surgical technology that prepared students to work in hospital operating rooms, another male-dominated nursing specialty. He passed all of the entrance exams, observed surgeries, and was prepared to enter the surgical technology program when the College terminated it due to low enrollments. He stated:

> So that was the only place around here that offers that program. So the only other way I could do something like that was to go through the LPN program and get on-the-job training to work in the operating room. So that is what I'm doing.

He talked about the male-to-female ratio in the program, with him being the only male in a class of 32 students. When asked if he had any hesitations about entering an LPN program rather than the surgical technologies program, he said:

> I mean of course you think about something like that, but at the same time this is just a means to an end for me. [Working in the OR] is what I always wanted to do so that's what I needed to do. [Paul, nursing undergraduate student]

Two of the four social work students interviewed planned to specialize in substance abuse counseling, another area of the profession that attracts greater numbers of men. Though neither one highlighted the career path as male-dominated, both did allude to the dangers involved in this type of work and indicated that men may be better-suited to it than women.

Another strategy for highlighting the masculine aspects of the work was to focus on the evolution of the career field from one that was once vocational or volunteer-oriented to one that is increasingly theoretical and professional. In this sense, they cast the profession as something far more difficult and challenging than it is often presumed to be. This Master's degree student described the evolution of the nursing profession like this:

> What happened is there's been a change in nursing say over the last 20 years. It went from being a vocation to being a discipline. Before it was all very rote. You memorized things. You did your baths this way. You did your meds this way. And it was all very much a vocation. Whereas now, you know, now there's nursing theory. There's theories of how you take care of people. There are multiple mid-range theories that look at little things in nursing. It has become more of an academic discipline. And then in that way it is starting to come into its own.

He later went on to say,

> What I would expect to see is as it became more of a hard discipline, I'd expect to see more men go into it because it became harder and not so fluffy. But that's not the case. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

A graduate student in social work also highlighted a shift in professional orientation when asked to compare his image of a female social worker with that of a male:

> In the women's program they used to call them "House Mothers." They were not trained social workers, but they were helpers. I was coming at it more from a 'get your education' spot. Everything is moving that way now. Trying to bring the profession up so it is more of a profession than someone volunteering to help. And so my original thought was more of a volunteer, a church kind of social worker. But now that I'm in the field and seeing people out there that are professional, that have their education and being more professional. Still caring, but a more professional kind of thing, because it is. [Mark, social work Master's student]

The act of reframing or re-labeling how they referred to the work was another strategy employed in doing identity work, though it was not a common one. An undergraduate nursing student underscored the power that the name itself has in framing others' perceptions of the profession. He highlighted the difference in the reflected appraisals one receives based on whether they call themselves "nurse" or "respiratory therapist" (i.e., a specialty area in nursing):

> I: Why do you think more men aren't pursuing an education in nursing?

> P: I honestly think because a lot of times people will start to judge them, like I said before. "Why are you doing *that*?" "Aren't you going to become a doctor?" Or a respiratory therapist. That's just fine. If you're dealing with secretions and opening airways and running codes, then that's just fine. You know? I think a lot of times it is more okay to go to "respiratory therapist school" or whatever. They say *that's* okay. [Alex, nursing undergraduate student]

An undergraduate social work student described the difference in others' reactions when he described his work as "substance abuse counseling" in contrast to "social work." He stated:

> P: There is not an understanding [of social work], I don't think, in general. That is an interesting thing. I guess when I would tell them that I am a substance abuse counselor [there was some understanding], but now I'm a social worker because I have a degree. And it is different. [Before] it was like, "You're out there changing the world with those substance abusers!" But social work, I don't think they really get it.
>
> I: Interesting, so it is almost the term. Like there's a difference between being a substance abuse counselor and social worker?
>
> P: Yeah! You're out there fixing people. You're a guy and you're going to go in there and make them stop drinking. And the clients' families act that way, too. In the last several years I've been working with teenagers, and their parents are like, "Oh, you're here. You told them to quit, right?" And I'm like, "Didn't you? Didn't the teachers? Didn't the cops and the judge and the nurse and the doctor?" So, yeah. There is definitely a different reaction there. I mean, people get their heads around the substance abuse thing because they know about that. I mean, they know how horrible it is because someone in their family has it, or everyone knows someone who is an alcoholic or on drugs. But the social worker thing, well, they picture a woman in a light-colored dress somewhere. [Mark, social work Master's student]

While a small number of men highlighted the masculine aspects of their work by focusing on the areas of specialization that they intended to pursue in the professions or by re-labeling how they referred to their job in interactive situations, the majority of men engaged in identity work by framing their profession as requiring and reinforcing masculine characteristics. The professions of nursing, social work, and elementary education are often cast as "nurturing" and "caring" professions, and as such are associated more so with "women's work." While the men in this study, for the most part, recognized these gendered assumptions as impediments to more men getting involved,

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others cast their professions in a different light and in more masculine terms.

Recognizing the feminized nature of the nursing occupation, one undergraduate nursing

student stated:

> There are some guys that they are too big and tough to do something like [nursing]. You know, they want to work in a factory or something like that, you know, where they are doing something that seems more masculine, I guess. They have to feel like they are being a man, you know. [Paul, nursing undergraduate student]

A Master's degree student echoed that men tend to gravitate towards more "masculine"

professions, but cast the nursing profession itself in a more masculine light, underscoring

the challenges and physical rigors of the work:

> Men are going into areas of information technology, computer programming, things like that where they can go and when it gets right down to it, it is a lot easier to be a computer programmer than it is to be a nurse. You make a lot of money. Sure you may work long hours, but I work long hours. I lift people. I've hurt my back. I've been stuck by needles, bitten, attacked, had my hair pulled, been poked in the eye. There's a lot of physical stuff that goes along with being a nurse and, you know, some people may get turned off by that. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

As he described it, a nurse's work entails an element of danger, the need for strength, and

a sense of perseverance. This picture of the nurse deviates significantly from the image

of the nurturing helper who spends his/her time and energies on patient care.

One approach to emphasizing the masculine aspects of the work was a focus on

being challenged by the demands of the job. This group of men identified their

profession as dynamic and one that offered them a sense of excitement and challenge that

was absent from some career tracks presumed well-suited for men. An undergraduate

elementary education major expressed this sentiment:

I am a realist so I can see that I could never be in like an office atmosphere all day, sitting in a cubicle and tied to a computer. You know I would make big bucks, but you have got to be happy, you know, and I want to go with something that's different everyday and constantly changing. The students are going to be different everyday and you're doing to get a different class every year. Whereas if you go with an office job it is the same thing all year. [Andrew, elementary education undergraduate student]

An undergraduate student pursuing his nursing degree touched on this a number of times throughout the interview. He stated,

At first when I was in high school, I was thinking about doing stuff that was in the computer science field, like programming or designer, so I got an internship [at a university] working at a computer tech repair facility. And I hated it. I hated sitting on my ass doing absolutely nothing.

For him, the nursing profession offered an alternative to career boredom. In sharp contrast to his internship experience, he described the excitement of working as a nurse in training:

I just loved the excitement and the variety. I guess that's a stereotypically guy point-of-view of nursing, but just the excitement without having to go eight years of school to become a doctor.

The first ten minutes [of being in the ER], the first thing I did was bag a body and bring it to a morgue. And then the traumas that were coming in, the wide variety. And just the problems, they're coming in with A, B, and C. What do they have? What could go wrong? I've always used a lot of critical thinking. I mean, I make mistakes and don't always see the big picture, but I like the way that thinking challenges me. And there's a guarantee that I'll see something new, or not always in the same light. It just draws me in.

I think it's just the desire for excitement and wanting to constantly do something and have the thrill of knowledge. That's the way I view it. That's why I want to go into [nursing]. And that's how it should be advertised more. Do you want excitement? Do you want things you've never seen before? Don't become a cop. Don't join the army and see the world. How about these cool things that you see as a nurse. And get paid better than most. [Phil, nursing undergraduate student]

For this graduate nursing student, being a nurse provided him with the opportunity to be on the front-lines of his profession. In the following comment, he conveyed his excitement over being the one who knows everything first, even before the doctor:

> But I've always been one of these people, I want to know things. I want to know why does that happen and why does this happen? So that's kind of where the research part of it is and it is exciting to me to be the first person to know things. It is kind of like, well, like being the stenographer. Here I am working for a cardiologist who is the brains of the operation, so to speak, but I'm the guy who puts that transducer on somebody's chest and goes to him and says, "This person needs to go to the hospital right now." "This person is going to need a heart transplant." "This person is okay." I'm the first person that knows, and to me that's kind of cool. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

For a number of participants, in particular the nursing students, the profession offered them a sense of stability and autonomy. For some, it provided a sense of confidence and reassurance in being the breadwinner and being able to support a family. One graduate nursing student who was also a husband and father stated:

> At [the medical center] I think we're getting more and more [men]. It's becoming more acceptable for [men to be nurses] because I think people find when they do it is stable work. They can always find a job and when like, for example, if you are a male and a nurse and you know [you'll be able to] support a family. Your wife who is a businesswoman got laid off from her job, but you know the male always has work and income coming in. [Alex, nursing undergraduate student]

Job stability was at the heart of another undergraduate nursing student's appreciation for what the nursing profession had to offer. In discussing his parents' opinion of his educational and career choices, he stated:

> [They said] great. Good. Good choice. The right choice. My dad and my mom were always supportive, and it goes back to you not having any problems with getting laid off or getting into a menial job working for just barely above minimum wage, doing the same thing every single day from nine to five. [Phil, nursing undergraduate student]

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In addition to stability, his comment revealed the importance of money and earning a

good living. This theme emerged as men underscored earning potential as an attractive

aspect of working specifically in the nursing field:

> I get paid better than most paid officials. If I go to graduate school I'll get
> paid more than most doctors do with less schooling and less time of no
> pay. I have the best of both worlds. [[Phil, nursing undergraduate
> student]
>
> As far as a career for a man goes, [nursing is] perfect. You'll come out of
> school and you'll make a good salary. [Carl, nursing Master's student]
>
> There are not a lot of fields where you can come straight out of school and
> go to somebody for a job and say, "We're going to pay you this," and you
> say, "No, I want this." And you know what? They'll probably give it to
> you because they need you. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

Finally, an emphasis on career flexibility and variety emerged as an approach that

these men utilized to emphasize the masculine aspects of the work. For these men,

participation in the professions, again specifically the nursing field, offered them a sense

of autonomy and control over how they could shape their career trajectory. An

undergraduate nursing student stated,

> I can create my own schedule. And go where I want to go in the world.
> Really everything is open to me. [Phil, nursing undergraduate student]

A graduate nursing student reinforced this idea:

> [Nursing is] a great job. It has a lot of flexibility. One of the things about
> being a nurse is it has infinite directions. There are so many different
> fields you can work in. There are so many different levels of complication
> you can work with. There are so many different hours you can work. If I
> got into it and I don't like that job, we'll then I can take this job over here
> … And you can go anywhere in the world and work. [Carl, nursing
> Master's student]

In doing identity work, these men emphasized the masculine aspects of work that is generally viewed as nurturing and care-giving. This allowed them in some ways to reframe their profession, particularly nursing, as a career that has much to offer them *as men*. These include emphasizing the physical and intellectual challenges of the work, career stability and work autonomy, a high salary that supports their breadwinner role, and the flexibility and opportunity available to them as men. Through this form of identity work, men were able to focus on the aspects of the professions that support and reinforce their gender roles, and as such, uphold their sense of masculinity.

Emphasizing Heterosexuality

Men who undertake education in social work, nursing, and elementary education, and who are training for careers in these fields, do not conform to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1992) argues that, in essence, homosexuality is the negation of masculinity. A consequence of their participation in these professions which are associated with women's work and feminine attributes is that they are oftentimes presumed to be gay. This was an issue that arose during the interviews time and again. While all of the participants in this study electively self-identified as heterosexual, and most expressed that the presumption of homosexuality was not an issue that bothered them most of the time, there was nevertheless a significant amount of interview time spent on addressing issues of sexuality. Evident in their comments was a strategy for doing identity work. By emphasizing their heterosexuality in interactional settings, they set themselves apart from women and gay men and ultimately underscored their masculinity. For example, an undergraduate student described his strategy for responding to his friends who teased and mocked him for majoring in nursing:

I just have to backfire with all the positives. [I say] "Yeah, but I get to look at naked ladies all day and do this and that and this."

Later in the interview, the same nursing student stated,

> I mean one of the main reasons why I was looking forward to going into the nursing program was because as a single guy I am around 40 women. Can't get better than that. And that backfired completely. I think the majority of the relationships that I have with the people, while good, are on that professional friendship level, which kills me. … Yeah, some people think I got into this program for the wrong reasons because of that part, but I see it as a side benefit. … A dating pool. [Phil, nursing undergraduate student]

In response to a question about his concerns regarding professional conduct as a social worker, this undergraduate student responded,

> Yes. The interactions with women. I won't have any inappropriate relations with anyone because that would be a major concern. I'll have to watch myself with being surrounded by so many women in the field though. That always gives rise to temptations, so that's the thing I need to worry about in terms of how I interact with them. [Christopher, social work undergraduate student]

A graduate nursing student said that he uses the numerical dominance of women as a selling point to recruit other men into the profession. Along with good salary, autonomy, and career opportunity, he also emphasizes:

> And if you're single, you're going to be around a lot of women, and a lot of times they're single. So you know, it's got a lot of positive things to it. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

An undergraduate student highlighted the fact that his female peers viewed him as a "sensitive" social worker, and went on to talk about how his academic major "works to my advantage" with women. A Master's student in social work talked at great length during his interview about past sexual relationships with women and how there was a time in his past life that he would have used his professional position to gain sexual

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access to weak and troubled women. During an interview with an undergraduate nursing student, I jotted down the following entry in my fieldwork notes:

> This participant was <u>really</u> preoccupied by women passing our table in the library. This preoccupation totally coincided with our discussions around stereotypes of men in nursing as gay. He stated in the interview that he was not gay. I felt like he was trying to demonstrate this for my benefit. Interesting.

Men in this study employed various strategies to resist the presumption that they may be gay. By doing this form of identity work they were able to emphasize their masculinity through underscoring, and at times demonstrating, their heterosexuality. Ultimately they were able to verify their gender identity in the face of reflected appraisals that challenged it.

Emphasizing Care and Compassion

> *The women think it is great [that I'm in social work]. But the men just don't understand it. They just don't get it. I don't know what the deal is. I don't know where the shut-off of caring about people comes from in men. [graduate student in social work]*

Another strategy for doing identity work involved negotiating the apparent contradiction that exists between being a man and performing work tasks that are more aligned with women and femininity, specifically in that they are presumed to require an ethic of caring and compassion. While these men strived to emphasize both the masculine aspects of their profession, as well as the masculine aspects of the contributions they make as men, they varied significantly in the degree to which they rejected or embraced this ethic. One of the participants, a graduate student in nursing, articulated his sense of why more men do not go into fields like nursing. His comments underscore the binary that exists between men and women, masculine and feminine. He

pointed to men's lack of socialization to be caring and compassionate as one of the key

issues preventing more men from entering into the "caring professions":

> Nursing is very much of a caring, compassionate kind of field, and men are not socialized to be caring and compassionate people. We are much more socialized to be independent, to keep our feelings to ourselves, to think about caring maybe for a whole group, like you take care of your family. But it's not the same thing as going into a situation and taking care of someone who is sick and being that kind of caring, compassionate person. And I have a feeling that part of that is a big reason why men don't go into it is because of the socialization of how we're brought up. We're not brought up to be nurses. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

One of the participants, an undergraduate nursing major, firmly rejected the notion that

an ethic of care and compassion is a prerequisite for doing the job well. In fact, he

indicated that being a man would serve him well in the profession since men are better

able to detach from their emotions:

> P: It seems heartless, but I take this kind of view for most people no matter what they have. Why get emotionally attached? It's not going to help. Just treat the problem, know they're a person so you have to be understanding of their problems, but to bow to their every need and just because they ask or it is the *nice* thing to do, doesn't mean it is the *right* thing to do. Some people think I'm cold-hearted because of that. Everybody thinks I'm the nurse version of Dr. Kavorkian. You know, be willing to put anybody out of their misery. I mean, I'm for that but I know boundaries. I've got to keep my license. But I view people as machines. I completely admit it. I look at the problem, fix the problem, and the person is happy about it. There are just some cases where you have to do it, and I do it. I've had dozens of people die. I had two people literally die in front of me and others of my patients died, and I'm not going to go emotional and "I can't believe he died." Nothing I could have done would have changed it. A lot of these people are chronically ill. So why get all torn up and upset and affect the care of other patients while getting emotional. Just move on. It's no big deal. It's life. It's the truth. It's the most efficient way to be. You can't be in healthcare and be overly caring.
>
> I: That's a really interesting perspective. Most people frame nursing as a very nurturing profession and very caring. How do you respond?

P: I'll be honest, it's bullshit. It completely is. If you cared about every single person you treat as if they're your own family member and you'll do anything and everything to make them well, even just happy, you'll go insane. Even if you just do one thing wrong you'll just flip out and that will be the end. The less attached I am, the less hard it will be for me to move on and do something else. [Phil, nursing undergraduate student]

Another Master's level nursing student identified ways in which he could detach himself from some of the more emotional aspects of his work. These capabilities were specifically attributed to gender:

Men are socialized, as I said early on, we're socialized to control our feelings. And we're socialized to be intellectual. And I think, yeah, there are a lot of times when you think about certain procedures you're doing. Things that you know are painful and that you wouldn't want to happen to you. "Oh my God, please don't let this ever happen to me so I don't have to go through this procedure." I have the ability to go up to somebody and do something that I know is going to be painful to them. It's going to be uncomfortable. But at the same time it is going to be beneficial to them. And I am able to separate myself from that fact. You know, I don't cringe.

I have had to do plenty of bad things to people. And really I can separate myself from it pretty easily because I know in the long run what we're doing is beneficial. Sometimes I say, "Well, listen, you're going to feel a big stick. It's probably going to hurt. I'm sorry, but we have to do this." And we do it. And get it over with. And maybe that is a thing that does make men different in nursing. Because when I look at some of the things that I have seen male nurses have to do, and the areas that they work in like trauma and stuff like that, but you do a lot of things that are not comfortable to people, but it needs to be done. And you don't get wrapped up in it. You don't get tied up in it. You don't make an emotional scene. You just do it. [Carl, nursing Master's student]

While some see the ability to detach from the emotional aspects of the work as a benefit, others resist that practice:

See, for me I feel like I don't want to be separating it because when I do that the patient becomes a room number. You start not to be personal. I don't ever want to get that way. … To me I don't want to separate [my emotions]. But I'm sure there are some men who will. [Alex, nursing undergraduate student]

The most common strategy of identity work was to articulate an alternative masculinity, incorporating an ethic of care and compassion into the meanings they attached to their gender identities as men. For these participants, in order for men to be successful professionals, they needed to embrace their emotions and their role as nurturers. This strategy demonstrates the degree of agency one has in defining the meanings incorporated into one's identity standards. For this group, there did not exist an incongruence between being nurturers and compassionate, traits often associated with women and femininity, and being men. An undergraduate nursing student indicated that as a man going into the nursing field, he did not view himself as a "typical" guy:

> I think men who choose to go into nursing are, well, I don't want to sound egotistical, but they kind of by definition are not going to be your average, you know, beer-swilling, Nascar kind of guys. I think that men who go into the profession are bringing a sense of compassion and caring that maybe most people who go into the hospital as a patient maybe aren't used to seeing. As far as professionally, I think anybody who goes into that field, if you put all the effort into going into school and taking boards, you have to have some basic level of competence and compassion. [Bill, nursing undergraduate student]

> I: Do you think there's a particular type of man who is going to be most successful as a social worker?

> P: Yeah, I would say for someone who is more connected to their nurturing side than they are to any typical male role. More with their female side, right? In general, those roles are, well, I think there's some validity to that. That's just sort of the way things have been. So the baby does come out of a woman. She's holding the baby, feeding the baby. I mean, that's a nurturing thing. And if it was set up like that for men, we would be feeding the baby and holding it to the breast. I think those roles are just sort of natural, but not to be abused. People shouldn't be abused because they're in that kind of a role. So I think it's a shift for a male from way back when, like genetic stuff, to be in that more nurturing role. So I think it's more of a stretch for men to get there. But I think it's there. I know it's there in me. And I see other men out there that certainly have got that nurturing thing. [Mark, social work Master's student]

An undergraduate nursing student stated:

> I am not afraid to be emotionally expressive. I think there are a lot of men
> that never cry and never really allow themselves to be sad. But I really
> delve into my emotions a lot more than I think most men do. My brother
> is a very caring person, but he would never outwardly show emotion. Me,
> I might. And I wouldn't be ashamed of it either. [Alex, nursing
> undergraduate student]

This graduate social work student emotionally described how meaningful it was to him

when he discovered a career path that allowed him to connect with other people and help

them achieve a better life. He described what a life-altering shift it was for him as a man

and how it led to a new sense of personal value and self-respect:

> I just went, "Wow!" It was like the first time I saw my natural self had
> value. That my male role, all my bullshit, loud-mouthed, macho, fighting,
> angry kind of stuff that I was putting out there on the face wasn't what
> was needed to have value. [Mark, social work Master's student]

A number of participants indicated that they were specifically drawn to their chosen

fields specifically because they are the type who cares about and feels compassion for

others:

> I was highly encouraged to go to medical school when I was working in
> psych. The psychiatrist I was working with said I was very good and
> should become a psychiatrist. What it comes down to is I look at what
> does medicine look at and what does nursing look at. Medicine focuses on
> treating diseases and conditions. People that have them are secondary.
> They don't look at them so much as people as they are conditions.
> Nursing does not look at conditions. Nursing looks at how people respond
> to these conditions. And so for me, having a background in psych, being a
> people person, being somebody who really cares about people, for me the
> logical step was nursing and not medicine. [Carl, nursing Master's
> student]

> I would like to know why so many people who are caring aren't going into
> this. Like I said, it's probably the money but it may be more factors out
> there. It could be also the emotional factor. Everyone tells you, there's no
> hiding it. You're going to get emotional. And I think a lot of guys, even
> in this day and age, are afraid of their emotions or afraid of showing their
> emotions to people. So I think that might have something to do with it.

They think "I'm going to have to go through these emotions everyday. How am I going to feel when I've seen a kid whose been starved for twos weeks because their parents didn't want to feed them." I don't know if guys are going to handle their emotions as well as some ladies do. I've seen enough and done enough to see that emotions are for everyone. I think that's one of the things that is going to help me as well. Not being afraid to show that emotion if need be, but also not being ashamed of it if other guys see me cry. [Christopher, social work undergraduate student]

I have compassion towards people. When they talk to me, when they approach me to talk about their life difficulties, I am able to show compassion and listen to them, give them time. I'm just, again, showing empathy towards people. That's what makes me good in the profession. [Brad, social work Master's student]

I think I am more of a caring, compassionate type of person. Just naturally. That's just how I was raised. I was raised in a Christian home, so you know that's just how I have always been. I've always cared about others and just trying to do what I can to help others. So I will just kind of do well with this kind of profession, I think. [Paul, nursing undergraduate student]

These men varied in the degree to which they embraced or rejected the presumption that one must be caring and compassionate in performing the professional role of a nurse, social worker, or elementary school teacher. Some felt that, as men, they were better equipped to handle and distance themselves from the emotionally difficult aspects of the work. Others identified themselves as caring and compassionate men, and thus well-suited for the work they do. For these men, the helping or caring role was a valued meaning attached to their role identities as professionals, their personal identities as caring individuals, and their social identities as men. For them, an alternate construction of masculinity emerged that incorporated meanings congruent with the nurturing aspects of their work.

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In this chapter I explored the challenges to gender identity that male nurses, social workers and elementary school teachers in training face. These include negative reflected appraisals that convey the message that they lack ambition or intelligence, that they are gay, and that they are sexually deviant. I touched on the challenges to these mens' professional role identities that impeded their ability to do their jobs, as well as the ways in which they resolved the conflict such challenges triggered. Finally I explored the key strategies they implement in order to assert their masculine identity in the context of their educational and work spheres, including emphasizing the masculine as workers, emphasizing the masculine in the work, underscoring heterosexuality, and negotiating the contradiction that exists between being a man and performing work tasks that are aligned with women and femininity. In the next chapter I will present a discussion of the findings in Chapters Four and Five, and identify future directions for research on men pursuing education and training in female-dominated careers, as well as ideas for expanding on Burke's identity control theory.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This study examined men's experiences in educational programs in nursing, elementary education, and social work, all college majors and career tracks that are heavily numerically dominated by women and have traditionally been associated with "women's work." To better understand their experiences and perspectives, I conducted 12 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with a non-probability sample of undergraduate and graduate men in these disciplines. The interviews probed into participants' identity standards, the perceived challenges they faced to those standards, and the ways in which they "did masculinity" as a means of self-verification. In addition, questions were designed to elicit participants' assumptions, attitudes and beliefs about masculinity and men in female-dominated, feminized careers, their experiences and interactions within their majors, how people both within and outside of the university setting responded to their major choice and career goals, and the perceived challenges and benefits they experienced as numerical minorities in their fields.

In this chapter I summarize the key findings from the study, outline the contributions of the study as well as its limitations, and offer suggestions for future research. Now I turn to an overview of the findings derived from the key research questions that guided the study.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The first area of inquiry was informed by the following research questions: "Do male students in female-dominated, feminized disciplines believe they benefit from their minority status as men? If so, in what ways? Do men feel at a disadvantage, or do they believe they are penalized for participating in these disciplines? If so, in what ways?"

The participants in this study described a number of perceived advantages in both traditional academic/classroom settings, as well as in their on-site training settings. They also articulated perceived disadvantages in those realms, though ultimately believed that the benefits of their numerical minority status far outweighed any disadvantages they encountered.

Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages: The Academic Setting

The participants in this study articulated a number of benefits and advantages that they believed directly resulted from their numerical minority status as men in these three disciplines. First, they viewed their numerical minority status as men in nursing, elementary education, and social work as a significant benefit that provided them with easy entrance into their chosen fields, and they anticipated that they would enjoy the same benefit in the workforce after college graduation. Aware of the intentional recruitment of more men into these professional arenas, they believed that they had been easily admitted into their academic programs. For this group of men, access to their educational program was a clear benefit to them *because* they were men, though for one nursing student this benefit attached to his being in a numerical minority rather than his privileged status as a man.

Heightened visibility was another issue that emerged as an overall benefit to men in a number of ways. In their academic settings, participants believed that, as men, this visibility afforded them opportunities to stand out among their peers, and they believed that they received special recognition for the presence and contributions. Consistent with status characteristics theory, participants believed that their professors and peers expected them to assume a leadership role in the classroom and to perform that role competently.

Not only did they have more opportunities to be leaders, they also were generally evaluated highly for their leadership. While the men in this study believed this expectation benefited them overall, they did not always welcome the expectation and the pressures that went along with it.

Another perceived benefit of their status as numerical minorities as men in female-dominated fields was the sense that the educational climate was extra welcoming, encouraging, and supportive of them specifically because they were men. While most participants described positive interactions with both male and female professors, they only identified male faculty members as role-models. They often described these mentor-mentee relationships as unique. In their view, male faculty members provided male students with extra assistance and insights that enabled them move more easily through their academic programs, and they supported them in networking and pursuing jobs after graduation. Though male students only had such relationships with men professors, they received encouragement and support from both men and women professors in their departments.

While participants for the most part recounted positive interactions and relationships with their faculty members, some described experiences of being treated unfairly or feeling discriminated against. Such incidents solely occurred between male students and their women professors and peers. Some students had been forewarned before starting school that they would likely encounter resistance from some women in these disciplines. Generally the men attributed these negative encounters to "old school" women faculty or to feminists who wanted to keep men out of "their" professions. Ultimately, these men believed that the benefits of being men in these programs far

outweighed isolated negative interactions with women in their programs. Most often they dismissed these experiences by criticizing or underscoring the weaknesses of the individuals involved.

Perceived Advantages and Disadvantages: The Workplace Setting

As on-the-job training is an integral part of education for students in nursing, elementary education, and social work, the participants in this study also talked at length about their experiences in workplace settings. Some of the perceived benefits mirrored those experienced in the classroom and other academic settings. For example, as men, they believed they stood out in the workplace and received special recognition for their presence. They described numerous instances wherein they received additional attention and training opportunities, mostly from male professionals and practitioners, which strengthened their educational experience and forged opportunities for their future careers. Evident in some of their comments was the perception of a culture of camaraderie among men in female-dominated workplaces, one that encouraged men to unite around their common interests and ultimately bolstered their standing in the workplace.

Another benefit in the workplace that these men identified was a presumption that because they were men engaging in gender nontraditional work, they must be exceptional. Thus, they thought that they were actually perceived as more competent than their female colleagues. They routinely received praise from others, being called "noble," "special," and "gifted." Interestingly, due to the gendered assumptions that surround the work that nurses, elementary school teachers, and social workers do (e.g., that they are compassionate, caring, nurturing, etc.), and because women are "naturally"

expected to possess such traits and characteristics, it is taken for granted when women display these qualities in the performance of their work. People do not necessarily expect that men will possess or demonstrate these qualities, so when they do, people perceive them as special, and possessing a high degree of professional competence and ability. This finding reveals an interesting departure from what status characteristics theory would predict to be true; that is that in feminine-typed tasks, women (despite their less valued diffuse status) will have a moderate advantage over men in terms of expectations of competence, in this case because women are presumed to "naturally" be better-suited to caring and nurturing work.

Finally, the participants in this study believed that, as men, they would have an easy time securing jobs after graduation. Throughout their education and training, professors and practitioners have reassured them that they are wanted and needed in these professions, and as such, they could expect the doors to open easily for them. In addition, they were confident that they would enjoy upward mobility throughout their careers and many were optimistic that they would attain leadership roles and positions of authority within their chosen professions. While most identified this as an obvious benefit of their gender status, a few expressed concerns over the pressures men face to move up through the ranks of the workplace hierarchy. In short, they were aware and had been warned that they would be forced to move into higher-level positions regardless of their own career plans and ambitions.

At this point I will summarize the more significant challenges and disadvantages that these men faced in their workplace settings. As men pursuing careers in gender-nontraditional professions, they encountered frequent reminders from family, friends,

colleagues, and others that they were different from other men and did not measure up. In order to better understand the challenges these men faced and how they were able to preserve and assert their masculinity in the face of ongoing criticisms, I explored the following set of research questions: "How do men view their masculinity in the context of their discipline? Do these male students face challenges to their masculine identity? From whom? How do they construct and/or preserve their masculine identity? Do they employ identifiable strategies in order assert or reassert their masculine identity?"

The first key challenge that some of the men in this study faced was the negative reflected appraisal that they lacked career ambition or were not capable of doing work deemed better suited for men (e.g., becoming a doctor). While these men, for the most part, claimed to dismiss these sorts of comments and criticisms, they nevertheless received the message that they were deviating from acceptable male roles. The second most commonly-cited challenge to their sense of masculinity was the general assumption that men who are nurses, elementary school teachers, and social workers are gay. All of these participants identified as heterosexual, but were well aware of the stereotype. Finally, these men talked about the workplace pressures that came along with heightened visibility as men. Their visibility coupled with the implications of presumed spoiled masculinity created an environment wherein they felt they needed to conduct themselves with great care in professional interactions. Thus, the third challenge to their sense of masculinity was the ongoing fear that others might misinterpret their actions. Since men in these professions are at risk of being perceived as engaging in gender-inappropriate behavior or as sexually deviant, these participants feared that their actions and interactions might be misinterpreted as perverted, sexually aggressive, pedophilic, or

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otherwise predatory in nature. This last challenge created an additional stress of challenging their role identities as nurses, social works, and elementary school teachers. In short, the stigma and stereotypes of men as potentially predatory sometimes led to distrust by those whom they served, and at times made it difficult or impossible for them to do their jobs. These situations both undermined their sense of masculinity (e.g., competence, autonomy, control) and their role identities as professionals (e.g., being able to perform the work to their highest ability). Interestingly, they verified their role identities by drawing on some of the challenges they faced to their masculinity, acknowledging that patients and clients, especially women and children, would need more time and exposure to men in these professions in order to overcome fear and distrust.

Strategies of Identity Work

The men in this study described a number of strategies for identity work that they employed in order to counter negative perceptions and reflected appraisals and to protect themselves from misunderstandings and potential accusations. Their experiences point to the fact that men who do nursing, social work, and elementary school teaching must do identity work in order to affirm and assert their masculinity, as well as to maintain their role identities as competent rising professionals in their fields. The strategies they employed for doing identity work also underscore the gendered nature of work; that is, the ways in which individuals bring gender to the work they do, and how expectations and the gender character of jobs transform depending on the gender of the worker (Cockburn 1988; Williams 1993).

The first strategy for doing identity work was to emphasize the masculine as workers. This strategy included underscoring the unique contributions they make *as men* to the work that they do. These emphasized their masculinity and focused on aspects of the work where they believed women could not contribute, including men's unique perspectives and work styles, physical strength, being a disciplinarian, the ability to serve as role models or father figures, and being a "safe space" for women and children. Second, they did identity work by emphasizing the masculine in the work itself. This strategy included pursuing male-identified specialties within the professions; detailing the evolution of their professions from vocational/volunteer to theoretical/professional; reframing or re-labeling how they described their work; describing the challenges, rigors, and demands of their jobs; and recasting the work from "nurturing" and "care-giving" to challenging career tracks that have much to offer them as men, including physical and intellectual challenges, career stability, work autonomy, flexibility and opportunity, some of which were cited as supporting their roles as husbands, fathers, and breadwinners in their families. Third, they did identity work by emphasizing their own heterosexuality, which set them apart from women and gay men and ultimately reinforced their masculinity. This strategy was evident in both the experiences they described in the interviews (e.g., discussing sexual exploits), as well as demonstrations of behavior during their interviews (e.g., sexually commenting on various women in the setting). Finally, and most commonly they did identity work by embracing care and compassion as important qualities that they possessed *as men*, demonstrating the degree of agency that individuals have in defining the meanings they incorporate into their identity standards. For these men, seeing past the binaries of male/female and masculine/feminine was an

essential part of the identity work they had to do. Embracing their emotions and their role as nurturers was an essential aspect of their success as men in these professions.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research contributes the growing body of literature on men and masculinities, as well as to the mounting research exploring the ways in which individuals "do gender" in social interactions. The historical lack of emphasis in social science research on the categories "men" and "masculinity" has impeded a broader understanding of gender relations. Much of social science research has tended to assume that only women have gender or are affected by gender, and much feminist scholarship has reinforced this notion by focusing research solely on women's lives. Men and women are part of the same gendered structure, and more critical examination of men's lives and experiences is needed in order to reveal how the gender order shapes, privileges, and constrains men (Collinson and Hearn 1994; Connell 2001). Furthermore, masculinities and femininities are relationally constituted, thus learning about masculinities will provide additional insights into femininities as well (Martin 2001). Analyzing men's experiences as gendered beings offers insights into gender as an institutions, and thus affords a better overall understanding of men's and women's lives.

The purposeful sampling techniques utilized in this study, including criterion, theory-based, and snowball sampling, yielded a homogeneous sample in regards to race, class, and other relevant identity dimensions. This lack of diversity within the group of 12 participants is a limitation of the study, as it has implications for how men may employ strategies for "doing masculinity." That is, acceptable forms of masculinity are themselves shaped by race, class, sexuality, physical ability, and age. While this research

does make a valuable contribution to the literature on men and masculinities, in particular how men do identity work in order to at once verify their social and role identities, the range of potential strategies and forms of identity work are no doubt limited by the absence of diversity among the participants. The sample is also very small, limiting the ability to generalize from this sample population to the larger population of men in education and training for the female professions.

This research contributes to the literature on men's experiences in educational programs, specifically those that are numerically dominated by women and which prepare men to enter into careers traditionally associated with "women's work." Extant scholarly research in this area focuses almost exclusively on retrospective accounts of men's experiences in higher education settings (e.g., Heikes 1991; Williams 1995). Other studies offer descriptive analyses of issues such as influences on men's nontraditional career choices, why more men are needed in these professions, men's fears of stigma, and how they believe others view them as men pursuing gender-nontraditional careers, but offer little in the way of understanding men's gendered experiences in these academic arenas. This study contributes to a scholarly understanding of how they experience barriers and privileges in educational institutions, as well as in on-the-job training settings. It also provides insights into how they negotiate and manage the ongoing conflicts that arise due to a perceived incongruence between their gender and their professional role identities. The identity work that they do not only manages and reasserts masculinity, but also begins to shape the different expectations of men and women who perform these jobs.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Men in nursing, elementary education, and social work programs perceive advantages to their numerical minority status before they even enter into educational programs. Aware of intentional efforts to recruit more men into these programs, and thus into the careers themselves, men expect to enjoy easy access, both to education and to jobs. Once in the educational sphere, men continue to enjoy privileges and advantages as numerical minorities. Already at the educational level they are engaged in homosocial relations with those in positions of power and authority (namely their male faculty members); relationships that open doors and provide them with special insights into their programs and training sites, as well as with access to workplace contacts and networks. In this way, it is evident that many of the advantages that men experience in these gender-nontraditional workplaces begin at the point of admissions into their university program(s).

Through their experiences in classrooms and on-the-job training sites, male students in these programs are essentially groomed to expect preferential treatment. Professors and practitioners have reinforced the notion that they have a "leg up" on women in the professions, and that they will easily secure jobs, attain leadership positions, and enjoy a great deal of authority and autonomy as professionals. In fact it seems as though many professors (men and women alike) who have left professional settings in order to teach in training programs recreate and reinforce in those educational environments the advantages that men experience in the workplace. A number of the men interviewed recognized the gender inequality inherent in this arrangement, yet identified autonomy, authority, and vast opportunity as pull factors in their decision to

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become nurses, social workers, and elementary school teachers. Furthermore, many are aware of the "glass escalator effect," and while some are worried that it will cause them to be forced up and out of their desired career tracks, they do not critique it as a basis for inequality between men and women in these occupations. Ultimately, the privileges they enjoy may not necessarily be the result of their numerical minority status at all; rather the male advantage that is built into workplace settings generally (Budig 2002).

Men also experience challenges and disadvantages when making gender-nontraditional college major/career choices. Identity work begins at the educational level as well, as men are put in the position of defending their choice of college major/career while also protecting their sense of masculinity. The strategies they employ for doing identity work reinforce hegemonic ideals of masculinity, while also relying on and reinforcing the differential gendered expectations of the jobs themselves. For example, when men emphasize the masculine as workers as a strategy for identity work, highlighting such competencies as physical strength, being a disciplinarian, and serving as role models or father figures to young boys, they are at once reflecting and reinforcing the gendering of jobs in these three professions. Men learn early on in their educational training that what constitutes the requirements of their job as a nurse, elementary school teacher, or social workers is different for them than it is for women in their fields. In addition, in many ways the requirements for men in these professions are more highly valued, recognized, and ultimately, rewarded.

Through their educational and training experiences, they also learn that performing the requirements of their work may not come as easily as it does to women. While men are often praised and rewarded for engaging in gender-nontraditional work,

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they are more often scrutinized and seen as suspect for doing presumed "women's work." As such, while they do identity work to protect and assert their masculinity, they must concomitantly do identity work to protect and assert their professional competence as nurses, social workers, and elementary educators. This has implications for resolving identity conflicts, as attempts to verify one identity often comes at the expense of the other.

There exists an apparent contradiction for men who are in training to enter these "female professions." On the one hand, they acknowledge their perceived advantages in the form of access, preferential treatment, mentorship, etc., yet in the face of challenges to their masculinity they also must work to establish congruence between their social identity as men and their role identities as nurses, elementary school teachers, and social workers. How do these men reconcile this contradiction? Primarily they accomplish this through dismissing outsiders' negative comments, even as they do the identity work necessary to manage them. By dismissing this input as "ignorance," "teasing," or "friendly joking around," these men are able to focus on the benefits and advantages they enjoy as numerical minorities in gender non-traditional fields.

Implications for Theory

Identity control theory examines how the self is tied to the social structure (Burke 2004). This connection happens through one's identities, which are the sets of meanings people hold for themselves that define who they are as individuals, as the occupants of roles, and as the members of groups (Stets and Harrod 2004; Stryker and Burke 2000). Burke coined the term "self-verification", a process whereby in social interactions, individuals will strive to achieve congruence between these sets of meanings and their

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perception of input from others. While Burke articulates the purpose of "self-verification," he offers little explanation for how persons do it. This research contributes to identity control theory by utilizing the concept of "identity work" to talk about how individuals self-verify. By investigating the ways in which men in nursing, elementary education, and social work programs "do gender," this study illuminates a *process* whereby conflicting social and role identities can be resolved thus achieving self-verification.

The theoretical developments in identity control theory have in large part been derived from quantitative research studies, in particular experimental research. I suggest that ongoing developments and refinements in identity control theory would benefit from qualitative research approaches. The rich experiential descriptions provided through these interviews provided history and context in ways that illuminated and challenged aspects of Burke's theory; contributions that would have been absent in quantitative approaches. For example, Burke (2004) argues that disturbances to one's identity standards cannot be known in advance of interactive situations and, as such, acts of self-verification cannot be planned or predicted. To the contrary, it is evident in this research that when multiple bases of identity are consistently in conflict across a wide range of situations and settings, then individuals absolutely anticipate and predict these disturbances, and as such, enact identifiable strategies in order to self-verify. In short, they anticipate the conflict and are prepared with response strategies that will allow them to resolve the conflict between their gender and role identities.

Findings of this study challenge status characteristics theory and the argument that in feminine-typed tasks, women (despite their less valued diffuse status) will have a moderate advantage over men in terms of being perceived as competent and capable. To the contrary, it appears that men are actually at a moderate advantage, challenging the assumption that the gendered nature of a task is what makes this determination. The findings of this study suggest that a difference exists between workplaces and task groups, with men enjoying an overall advantage as workers. As Acker (1990) and Williams (1992; 1995) argue, jobs and organizations themselves are structured to advantage men. This appears to hold true regardless of the gender-typing of the tasks involved in doing the job. In addition, according to Budig (2002), men's advantages exist in female-dominated, male-dominated, and balanced jobs.

Implications for Praxis

In terms of praxis, by giving voice to men's perspectives and experiences as numerical minorities in nursing, elementary education, and social work, this study can benefit educational programs seeking to attract and train more men for entry into professions numerically dominated by women and historically considered to be "women's work." It sheds light on the factors that pull them into these professions, and makes them want to stay, as well as the significant challenges they face, as men, in occupations still considered more congruent with women's dispositions and capabilities. While there are concerns over the push to recruit more men into gender-nontraditional occupations (e.g., Williams 1995), the fields of nursing, elementary school teaching, and social work are nevertheless trying to increase the number of men in their ranks. Recruitment campaigns such as MenTeach and "Are You Man Enough?" have

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deliberately promoted cultural images of hegemonic masculinity in order to encourage men to view these professions as compatible with their manhood. Findings from this study suggest that this is a critical strategy and may serve to support and supplement the identity work that men do in order to embrace these occupations as viable career paths, and to justify their participation in nursing, elementary school teaching, and social work.

Beyond benefiting programs seeking to integrate more men and other underrepresented groups into these fields, my hope is that the findings yielded from this study also might benefit these programs by illuminating the ways in which educational institutions and workplace settings often reinforce cultural beliefs and institutional structures that concomitantly unfairly benefit men to the detriment of women *and* create stress and conflict in men's lives. Institutions of higher education and workplaces must devise strategies for achieving the gender diversity they want without reinforcing the invisible mechanisms that place men on "the glass escalator" and thus structurally advantage them over women. In addition, they must address existing cultural assumptions and structural practices that impede men's professional and personal well-being.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this research I sought to learn about men's experiences as gendered beings and how they negotiate ongoing conflict among their social identities as men and their role identities as nursing, social work, and elementary education professionals in training. Thus it was a critical first to step to hear directly from men to gauge their perceptions, experiences, and strategies for doing identity work. That said, this study is based solely on self-reported data from men and, as such, represents only their perceptions and

thoughts. Research on men's perspectives and experiences would benefit from the inclusion of women's perspectives and voices. As Martin (2001) argues, "[t]he growing body of research [on gender and organizations] tends to focus on masculinities from men's standpoint(s) and to ignore women except as objects of men's actions. Studies of men from women's standpoint are thus rare. Yet approaching the subject in this way can reveal dynamics that are ignored … and illuminate how gender affects [organizations] through interactions and interpretations between the sexes" (pg. 589). Thus an important next step in this research agenda would be to hear from the women who interact with these men, in particular colleagues, peers, faculty members, and practitioners. Their inclusion would offer a critical avenue for generating knowledge about men, masculinities, and gender relations more broadly. As Martin (2001) asserts, "[s]ituated in women's standpoint(s) in the gender institution, their accounts show masculinities in action, making visible and subject to critique practices that are normally invisible, unacknowledged, or denied, offering knowledge that otherwise is unavailable" (pg. 607).

Future research on issues similar to those addressed in this study should recruit a sample of men who are diverse along dimensions of race, class, age, and other relevant bases of identity. Most men do not attain the hegemonic ideal of masculinity. In fact, pervasive cultural images of some groups of men are in direct conflict with it, such as men of color, disabled men, poor men, old men, and gay men (Connell 1992; Espiritu 1998; Nonn 1998; Schwalbe 1996; Staples 1998; Thompson 1998). Thus as men differ by race, physical ability, class, age, sexuality, etc., they are expected to experience unique challenges to their masculinity. These challenges may lead to different as well as similar identity work strategies for protecting and asserting their masculinity. This approach

would enrich our understanding of masculinities, as well as the multiple ways in which men may self-verify.

As mentioned above, future studies utilizing identity control theory would benefit from qualitative research approaches. Qualitative research can provide historical and contextual information that would help develop and refine of the theory. In particular, studies that investigate pervasive and ongoing conflict among multiple identities may reveal differences in the ways individuals approach and achieve self-verification.

As these men utilize strategies for doing identity work they manage and assert their masculinity when training to become nurses, social workers, and elementary educators. The findings of this study also suggest that the identity work they do begins to shape the different expectations of men and women who do these jobs. In other words, the gendered nature of these jobs begin to take shape at the level of education and training. In fact, it may well be at this level where future professionals learn that being a nurse or a social worker or an elementary school teacher is in fact a different job for men than it is for women. Much scholarly research has been done to explore workplaces as gendered organizations. This study suggests that there is great value in studying universities as gendered organizations as well.

For the purposes of this research, status characteristics theory provided a useful framework for understanding how assumptions about particular individual attributes shape or determine performance expectations, as well as perceptions of competence and ability. It offered a theoretical explanation for why men in nursing, elementary education, and social work training programs were elevated into leadership roles, time and again, by their professors, female peers, and workplace practitioners. One

contradiction did emerge, however, that challenged the prediction that in feminine-typed tasks (e.g., performing the care work involved in nursing), women will have a moderate advantage over men in terms of being perceived as competent and capable, despite their less valued diffuse status. It should be assumed that due to cultural assumptions that women are "naturally" better-suited to caring and nurturing work that they would be perceived as more competent and capable than men in these professions, but this was not the case according to participants. One explanation for this contradiction may be the salience of the connection between masculinity and professional competence, or the structure of jobs and workplaces that advantage men. This connection may carry more weight in determining performance expectations in a workplace setting than the connection between femininity and the performance of "caring" tasks. Future research may want to further investigate how additional cultural meanings may attach to given status characteristics to alter the conditions under which gender characteristics benefit and disadvantage women and men.

Finally, while this study has advanced empirical and theoretical understandings of men's gendered experiences and how the gender order shapes, privileges, and constrains their lives, future studies must focus on praxis. First, future studies can build upon such advances to outline an "action plan" for challenging the structural and cultural mechanisms in educational and workplace settings that serve to benefit men to the detriment of women *and* those that impede the quality of life and well-being of both men and women.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Schedule

1) Tell me how you came to make the decision to study to become a(n) _____ (nurse, daycare workers, elementary school teachers, social worker)? When was it? What went into your thinking about this?
2) Because you're a man, did you have hesitations about pursuing _____ or majoring in _____? Why? Were you worried about what other people would think?
3) Who did you first talk to about your decision to become a _____? Did you have any hesitations/reluctance about telling them? How did they react? How did you feel? How did you respond?
4) Who was the next person you told about your decision to become a _____? Did you have any hesitations/reluctance about telling them? How did they react? How did you feel? How did you respond?
5) Aside from the examples you've talked about so far, what were the reactions of other friends & family members to your decision to pursue a degree in _____? [PROBE: Did anyone react negatively? Can you share an example or two? How did you feel about those reactions? How did you respond to them?]
6) What is your image of a female _____?
7) What is your image of a male _____? How do you think you will live up/compare to that image? What makes _____ a good fit for you?
8) How do faculty members react to your majoring in _____? Can you give me an example that sticks in your mind?
9) How do other students react to your majoring in _____? Can you give me an example that sticks in your mind?

The following 4 questions may sound redundant, but I'm going to ask about four groups of folks individually:

10) As a man majoring in _____, do you feel that you are treated differently by faculty on account of your sex? Can you give me an example of a time when you felt you were treated differently because you are a man? Have there been other times? If so, can you describe these?
11) As a man majoring in _____, do you feel that you are treated differently by other students on account of your sex? Can you give me an example of a time when you felt you were treated differently because you are a man? Have there been other times? If so, can you describe these?
12) As a man majoring in _____, do you feel that you are treated differently by your peers on account of your sex? Can you give me an example of a time when you felt you were treated differently because you are a man? Have there been other times? If so, can you describe these?
13) As a man majoring in _____, do you feel that you are treated differently by your family on account of your sex? Can you give me an example of a time when you felt you were treated differently because you are a man? Have there been other times? If so, can you describe these?

14) Can you think of any specific times when someone has made an assumption about you as a man majoring in _____? Who made this assumption? How was it conveyed to you? How did you feel about it? How did you respond to that person? [PROBE: Can you identify any differences between how you felt internally and how you reacted/behaved to the person?]

15) What assumptions do you think people in general make about men majoring in _____? [PROBE] How do you feel about that? How would you respond to them?

16) Talk to me about any specific examples/circumstances when you have felt that being male has helped you. Do you know any other men who have been helped/had advantages because they are male? Can you talk about some specific examples?

17) Talk to me about specific examples/circumstances when you have felt that being male has put you at a disadvantage. Do you know any other men who have been disadvantaged because they are male? Can you talk about some specific examples?

18) How many men do you see in your department/classes/education-related environments? Do you socialize any more frequently with them than your female peers? Why/What contributes to this? Do you socialize with any faculty members outside of class? What sorts of things do you do?

19) How well accepted do you feel in your academic environment (classroom, department, etc.)? Have you ever felt excluded by other students in your major because of your sex? By your professors? In what ways were you excluded/What did others do to exclude you? How did you feel about that? How do you respond to this? Do you know any other men who have experienced feeling excluded?

20) How well accepted do you feel in your social environment (hanging out with friends, meeting new people, etc.)? Have you ever felt excluded by other students in your major because of your sex? By your professors? In what ways were you excluded/What did others do to exclude you? How did you feel about that? How do you respond to this? Do you know any other men who have experienced feeling excluded?

21) Are you pursuing/Do you have a specialization? How did you come to select this particular one?

22) Do you think that there is a particular type of man who is most likely to succeed in _____? Why are those attributes important for success? Is there a particular type of man who is unlikely to succeed? Why are those attributes deterrents to success?

23) What specifically about *you* will make you successful at being a _____? Anything about you that doesn't feel like a good fit?

24) Do you think men in _____ bring special qualities to the occupation? Do you think male _____ are suited to a particular role in the profession? Do men make unique contributions to training and education in your field?

25) Why do you think more men don't pursue education in _____? How are you different in that way?

26) Do you see yourself as being fundamentally different from other men of your age? [PROBE: If yes, can you explain how? If no, can you explain why/how?]

27) Do you think, as a man, you will have to do things differently as a professional _____? As a man, do you think you will have to present yourself differently in professional interactions?

28) Are there any ways in which you as a man will do things differently than women in _____ do?

29) What do you see yourself doing in the future as a _____? [PROBE: Work environment, position, leadership roles, etc.]

30) Can you think of something you'd like to do as a _____ that you *might not* be able to do if you were a woman?

31) Can you think of something you'd like to do as a _____ that you *may not* be able to do because you are a man?

STATEMENT OF INFORMED CONSENT

Identity Work in Gendered Spaces: Men in Nontraditional Fields of Study
Principal Investigator: Anna F. LoMascolo, Department of Sociology, Virginia Tech

1. Purpose of the Research. The purpose of this research is to gain insight into your experiences in your major at Virginia Tech. For example, I would like to hear about your relationships with professors and other students, your career goals and aspirations, and your perceptions of gender issues relevant to your chosen major.

2. Procedures. I would very much like for you to participate in an interview. We will meet to talk in a mutually agreed upon place where you will be comfortable. We'll want a quiet room since the interview will be tape-recorded and noise may interfere with the recording. The interview may last anywhere from one to two hours. I am interested in what you have to say, so I want to allow sufficient time for you to express your opinions. I will begin by asking you to select a pseudonym. After the interview, I will transcribe the tape-recording verbatim.

3. Risks. There are a couple of potential risks in this research project. First, you may be asked a question that makes you uncomfortable. If you prefer, simply ask to skip the question. You may answer only those questions you are comfortable answering. You are also free to end your participation at any time you choose. Second, since the interview will be tape-recorded there may be a miniscule risk to your confidentiality. I will take every precaution to protect your confidentiality. Also, I will take special care to eliminate any personal descriptors from the final manuscript that would allow someone to identify you.

4. Benefits. I cannot promise you any benefits of participating. However, you will have the opportunity to express your views and opinions about your department and college. You will also have a chance to share your ideas on ways in which your university might better address students' needs. While this research is not specifically intended for your university's use, it may offer some insights into how fields of study in higher education might create more positive, inclusive, and equitable learning environments for all students.

5. Confidentiality. As mentioned above, this interview will be tape-recorded. I will take the following precautions to protect your confidentiality:
- Tapes and consent forms will be securely stored at the Principal Investigator's (P.I.'s) home;
- The P.I. will transcribe the tape-recorded interviews. If I hire a transcriber, I will brief her/him about how to ensure confidentiality and have him or her sign a confidentiality agreement;
- Special care will be taken to eliminate personal descriptors (such as name, university, major department, etc.) which might lead to the identification of a specific participant;
- Only pseudonyms will be used when reporting the research.

6. Freedom to Withdraw. I hope that you will agree to participate in this project. Be assured that your participation is voluntary and you may discontinue participation in the interview at any time and for any reason. If you would like to participate in this project, please read the statement below and sign your name. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask at any time.

7. Approval of Research. This research project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have read and understand the above Statement of Informed Consent and understand the description of the research project. I have had all of my questions answered. I further understand that I am free to withdraw from participation at any time.

_____   _____

Name of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Anna F. LoMascolo, Principal Investigator   Date

Should I have any pertinent questions about this research or its conduct, and research subjects' rights, and whom to contact in the event of a research-related injury to the subject, I may contact:
> Anna F. LoMascolo, Principal Investigator, 961-6660, alomasco@vt.edu
> Dr. K. Jill Kiecolt, Faculty Advisor, 231-8973, kiecolt@vt.edu
> Dr. John Ryan, Department Head, Department of Sociology, 231-6878, johnryan@vt.edu
> Dr. David M. Moore, Chair, IRB, 231-4991, moored@vt.edu

This Informed Consent is valid from October 11, 2004 to October 10, 2005.