

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

IS PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE GENDERED?  
CLIENTS' ROLE IN THE GENDER PAY GAP PROBLEM

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## **DISSERTATION ABSTRACT**

I designed a mixed methods study to explore the role of gender stereotypes and discrimination in the gender pay gap problem. I concentrate my study on occupations that require professional degrees—lawyer, veterinarian, and clinical social worker—because of the severity of the gender pay gap for women with professional degrees relative to women with lower levels of education. I address a gap in the existing literature by focusing on the beliefs and actions of a group that has largely been ignored by researchers: clients. I distributed a factorial vignette survey to participants from a crowdsourcing website (potential clients) to test if individuals hold negative stereotypes about women professionals' work competency. I also conducted interviews with individuals who have hired lawyers, veterinarians, and clinical social workers to address their personal problems. These interviews allow me to examine whether clients exhibit patterns of discrimination against women professionals. I present my results in three articles. My results reveal that clients possess and act on gender stereotypes about professionals that likely reinforce gendered work segregation and the devaluation of professional fields dominated by women workers.

## **Chapter 1: Gender Work Inequalities and the Role of Clients**

In 1979, Lilly Ledbetter began work as a shift and area manager at the Gadsden, Alabama plant of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company (Coluccio 2010; Johnson 2010; O’Neill 2010; Roby 2011). Ledbetter was one of few women managers at the time of her hiring, but her supervisor assured her that all managers received the same pay in accordance with federal legislation, such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963 (EPA) which prohibits employers from setting disparate pay rates for men and women workers who complete the same work tasks under similar work conditions (Houghton 1999). Under this legislation, job equality is determined by the content of work tasks, rather than job title or classification. The law allows for pay differentials that are based on merit, incentive systems, seniority, or any other factor than sex (Diehl 1980; Hicks 1982; Rogers 1982). Furthermore, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in employment based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (Bergmann 2005).

When Ledbetter’s plant transitioned to a performance-based pay system, supervisors officially barred employees from discussing their paychecks with each other (Coluccio 2010; Johnson 2010; O’Neill 2010; Roby 2011). Over the years, Ledbetter suspected that she was earning significantly less pay than her men colleagues. She did not formally investigate the matter until 1998, when she received an anonymous note in her office mailbox listing each manager’s pay. Ledbetter discovered that she was making nearly \$600 less per month than the lowest paid man on the list. She filed EPA and Title VII violation claims with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)—the enforcement agency for federal employment legislation. Ledbetter claimed that that in the first few years of her employment with Goodyear, supervisors engaged in gender discrimination and gave her unfairly low scores on work performance evaluations. Within the performance-based pay system, this resulted in

poor financial compensation for her work. Although Ledbetter received much higher scores on work performance evaluations later in her career, her lawyers argued that she suffered from continuing discrimination because each new check was tainted by the early instances of gender discrimination. She never received a pay raise that rectified the impact of the allegedly biased work performance scores, so the pay gap that formed between Ledbetter and her men colleagues at the start of her tenure with Goodyear persisted and grew over the course of her career.

When Ledbetter brought her lawsuit against Goodyear to the US District Court for the Northern District of Alabama, the judge decided in favor of her case (Chang 2010; Coluccio 2010; O’Neil 2010). However, Goodyear brought the case to the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals, which reversed the lower court’s decision. The judge in the appeal case decided that Ledbetter had filed her pay discrimination lawsuit past the statute of limitations set by the EEOC—within 180 days of the discriminatory act. The judge determined that the discriminatory act in Ledbetter’s case was the first paycheck she received after her supervisor gave her a biased work performance score. Ledbetter continued her legal battle all the way to the Supreme Court in *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.*, 550 US 618 (2007) (Chang 2010; Coluccio 2010; Johnson 2010; O’Neill 2010; Roby 2011). The Supreme Court upheld the decision handed down in the 11<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals.

Less than a month after the Supreme Court made its decision, US Representative George Miller (D-CA) and fellow Democrats in the US House of Representatives proposed The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2007 (Coluccio 2010; O’Neill 2010; Roby 2011). The legislation would allow a worker to file a Title VII violation claim within 180 days of any paycheck that is impacted by a discriminatory workplace act or practice. The intent of the legislation was to account for cases like Ledbetter’s, in which a worker may not learn about a discriminatory act or

practice for a very long time due to formal pay secrecy rules or informal rules of workplace culture that discourage conversations about pay (Kim 2015). The House approved the proposal, but it was blocked in the Senate. Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) mounted a second push for the act—The Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009—when President Barack Obama was elected to office. This time the act (which was largely identical to the one proposed in 2007) was passed by Congress and became the first legislation President Obama signed into federal law.

The type of gender pay inequality that Ledbetter faced has been a persistent problem in US workplaces despite the passage of federal legislation that prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of sex (US BLS 2015). When Ledbetter started her job at Goodyear in 1979, the nation's full-time women workers earned 62 percent of men's median weekly earnings. The gender pay gap has steadily closed since then, with two brief periods of stalled advancement for women in the early 1990s and the late 2000s. In 2014, women who work full-time earn 83 percent of men's wages and salaries. About 53 percent of all US women were employed in the paid labor market in 2014 and they constituted nearly half (47 percent) of all employed workers. Half of married heterosexual couples were dual-earners in 2013, meaning both the wife and the husband were engaged in paid labor. A wife's earnings made up about 37 percent of a dual-earner household's total income that same year. Yet, despite the significance of contemporary women's labor to the vitality of the US labor market and to the financial stability of families, women earn less than men. When women's earnings are compared to those of men who share their racial/ethnic status, women's earnings as a percentage of those of men are 78 percent for Asians, 81 percent for whites, 89 percent for Hispanics, and 90 percent for blacks. News media outlets have identified the gender pay gap as one of the central social problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (e.g., Shapiro and Goldin 2016).

The gender pay gap exists at every level of educational attainment (US BLS 2015). Women workers are more likely than men to have some college experience or a post-secondary school degree. However, women can expect to face *greater* income inequalities as they invest more time in their education. Gender pay gaps are narrower at the lowest levels of educational attainment and wider at the highest levels—with the exception of doctoral degree recipients (Council of Economic Advisers 2015; US BLS 2015). Women with less than a high school education or who only have a high school diploma earn 79 percent of the median weekly earnings of men with the same educational background (US BLS 2015). In contrast, women with master's degrees and professional degrees earn 74 percent and 71 percent (respectively) of men peers' earnings. The gender pay gap is smallest among workers with doctoral degrees: women earn 82 percent of men's income.

Labor inequality scholars maintain that the gender pay gap is the result of unequal pay for women and men who occupy the same job positions (Babcock and Laschever 2003; Bennett 2012; Bowles and Babcock 2012), as well as the segregation of women into occupations and jobs that pay less than those dominated by men (occupational and job segregation) (Blau, Brummund, and Liu 2013; Cohen and Huffman 2003a,b; Cotter et al. 2001; England 2005; England, Budig, and Folbre 2002). What other forces may be underlying the gender pay gap problem? To examine this question, I designed a mixed methods study to explore the role of gender stereotypes and discrimination in the gender pay gap problem. I concentrate my study on occupations that require professional degrees—lawyer, veterinarian, and clinical social worker—because of the severity of the gender pay gap for women with professional degrees relative to women with lower levels of education. I address a gap in the existing literature (e.g., Bobbitt-Zeher 2011; Castilla and Benard 2010; Heilman 2012; McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone

2012) by focusing on the beliefs and actions of a group that has largely been ignored by researchers: clients. I distributed a factorial vignette survey to participants from a crowdsourcing website to test if individuals hold negative stereotypes about women lawyers and clinical social workers' work competency. I regard these survey respondents as potential clients. I also conducted interviews with individuals who have hired lawyers, veterinarians, and clinical social workers to address their personal problems. These interviews allow me to examine whether clients exhibit patterns of discrimination against women professionals. My results reveal that clients possess and act on gender stereotypes about professionals that likely reinforce gendered work segregation and the devaluation of professional fields dominated by women workers.

### **EXPLANATIONS FOR THE GENDER PAY GAP**

Unequal pay for equal work is a prominent explanation for the gender pay gap (Babcock and Laschever 2003; Bennett 2012; Bowles and Babcock 2012). In 2015, the EEOC resolved 1,018 EPA charges (includes concurrent charges with Title VII, Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967) (US EEOC 2016). Monetary benefits totaled \$5.9 million. However, it is unlikely that these EEOC statistics accurately reflect the full extent of the unequal pay for equal work problem. Due to formal or informal pay secrecy rules found in some work organizations, many women are prohibited from discussing their wages and salaries with co-workers and, thus, are unable to determine if they are victims of pay discrimination under the law (Kim 2015).

Work segregation is another explanation for the gender pay gap (Blau, Brummund, and Liu 2013; Cohen and Huffman 2003a,b; Cotter et al. 2001; England 2005; England, Budig, and Folbre 2002). There are two types of work segregation that are of interest to gender inequality scholars: occupational segregation (Blau, Brummund, and Liu 2013; Cohen and Huffman

2003a,b; England 2005; England, Budig, and Folbre 2002) and job segregation (Cotter et al. 2001; Maume 1999; Wright, Baxter, and Birkelund 1995). Occupational segregation refers to gender-based segregation *between* occupations. Women are more likely than men to work in care occupations, which offer lower wages and salaries than all other occupational groups (Duffy 2011; England, Budig, and Folbre 2002). Care occupations include maids and housekeeping cleaners (89 percent of the workers are women), elementary and middle school teachers (81 percent women), childcare workers (96 percent women), and registered nurses (90 percent women) (US BLS 2015). Job segregation refers to gender-based segregation *within* occupations. Particularly in men-dominated occupations, women are likely to face a “glass ceiling” in their workplaces (Cotter et al. 2001), a commonly used metaphor for the overrepresentation of men in prestigious and lucrative leadership positions and the overrepresentation of women in low and mid-range positions (Bendl and Schmidt 2010; Cech and Blair-Loy 2010).

Gender theorists maintain that gender-based discrimination on the part of employers, managers, and work colleagues is the underlying explanation for unequal pay for equal work and work segregation (e.g., Fiske et al. 2002; Heilman 2012; Ridgeway 2009). At the organizational level, employers may engage in “statistical discrimination” (Aigner and Cain 1977; Bielby and Baron 1986; Correll and Benard 2006)—relying on perceptions (based on known statistics or cultural stereotypes) about a gender group’s productivity to evaluate the individual. Supporting this hypothesis, an Atlanta-based study found that employers across several white-collar organizations reported that they were reluctant to hire women because they feared that the responsibilities of motherhood would make them unreliable workers (Browne and Kennelly 2006). Employers expressed greater apprehension about hiring black women because they assumed that most were single mothers who lacked stable childcare arrangements. In another

example, Vincent J. Roscigno et al. (2007) reviewed gender-based employment discrimination cases brought before the Ohio Civil Rights Commission between 1988 and 2003. Pregnant plaintiffs reported employers who demoted or fired them without ever asking if their doctors regarded them as fit for work duties or inquiring whether they had future plans for childcare. This study demonstrates that an employer or manager may perceive information about a particular woman's qualifications or productivity as unreliable and unfairly devalue her labor based on gender and racial stereotypes.

An interactional explanation of discrimination is that hegemonic cultural gender expectations for social interactions bestow men with a certain measure of privilege in the workplace that help to explain job and occupational segregation. "Hegemonic masculinity" (Connell 1995; Pascoe 2007) is associated with a number of pragmatic traits that employers also desire in their managers and executive leaders: rationality, authority, and competitiveness (Blair-Loy 2005; Eagly 2007; Haveman and Beresford 2012). "Hegemonic femininity" (Pyke and Johnson 2003; Schippers 2007) is characterized by warmth traits that are also linked with less lucrative support positions: emotional sensitivity, sociability, and nurturance (Blair-Loy 2005). Unsure of women's abilities to meet the demands of leadership positions and highly specialized work fields, important power holders are less inclined to invest in women's career advancement (Ibarra, Carter, and Silva 2010; Lyness and Thompson 2000). Supporting this theory, a mixed methods study of MBA graduates finds that while women have more professional mentors than men, they receive fewer promotions and pay raises than their men counterparts (Ibarra, Carter, and Silva 2010). Women's mentors tend to serve primarily as emotional support while men's mentors serve as advocates for advancement. Qualitative analyses of gender inequalities in private law firms identify a similar phenomenon between men partners and young, professional

men (Boyer et al. 2009; Kay and Wallace 2009; Pierce 1995). These advocates cultivate friendships between young men and senior colleagues and vouch for their leadership potential during promotion hearings. This struggle to procure dedicated advocates is a major explanatory factor in accounting for why women hold just 15 percent of equity partnerships among the 200 largest private law firms (ABA CWP 2013).

Women in leadership positions face a unique set of challenges in their efforts to maintain authority. Some researchers have found that women leaders must blend their masculine expressions with feminine ones in order to temper their defiance of hegemonic gender roles (e.g., Harris and Giuffre 2015; Pfafman and McEwan 2004). The women chefs in Deborah A. Harris and Patti Giuffre's (2015) qualitative study told interviewers that they avoid being too assertive for fear of being labeled "bitches." They also shared that they avoid adopting too many communal traits so that their subordinates do not dismiss them as passive "girly girls." Instead, most women chefs in the study made a conscious decision to lead like moms or big sisters by offering nurturance and mentorship. In contrast, Zaibu Tufail and Francesca Polletta (2015) found that women in debt settlement firms exhibit emotional flexibility by selectively engaging in hegemonic masculinity performances. Employers expect these women to be assertive when negotiating with creditors on behalf of their clients. However, they demand that women immediately switch back to feminine warmth in their interactions with co-workers and clients. A slightly softened leadership role leaves women in men-dominated professions vulnerable to critiques about their competency (Pfafman and McEwan 2004). Women leaders struggle to perform as well as their men colleagues when subordinates constantly rebuff and attempt to constrain their authority (Harris and Giuffre 2015; Pfafman and McEwan 2004; Tufail and Polletta 2015).

In contrast to the discrimination theories, some theorists suggest that gender-based differences in human capital records account for gender work inequalities (e.g., Miller 2011). Human capital is a history of one's work knowledge, skills, and experience. Employers rely on a worker's human capital record to create a custom compensation package. Women endure more disruptions to their careers than men due to domestic and caregiving responsibilities (England 2005; Moen and Sweet 2003). Young, married mothers are more likely than fathers to reduce their work hours or take time off from the labor force to care for infants and preschool-aged children. These women not only miss critical work experience and on-the-job training, but they also affirm employers' negative assumptions about mothers' abilities to balance family and work responsibilities. The result is a "motherhood penalty" (Budig and England 2001; England 2005; Miller 2011)—lower pay for mothers than for men and childless women. The motherhood penalty is smaller for older mothers (Miller 2011) and highly skilled professionals (Budig and Hodges 2010), likely because they are able to rely on work privileges they have accumulated over a lifetime of service (e.g., paid sabbaticals) (Damaske 2011). Overall, human capital explanations of the gender pay gap appear less compelling in the face of analyses that still report significant gender disparities in pay despite controlling for gender differences in credentials, work experience, occupation, and race/ethnicity, among other related factors (Blau and Kahn 2000; Budig 2002; Corbett and Hill 2012; Mandel and Semyonov 2014; Schilt 2010).

Current explanations for gender inequalities in the workplace consider the discriminatory actions of employers, managers, and colleagues, as well as the human capital investments of workers themselves. These explanations offer narrow analyses of social life in work organizations. "Open systems" theorists in the field of organizational studies contend that researchers must analyze organizational motivations, actions, and outcomes within the context of

a larger external environment (Scott and Davis 2007). The external environment includes international/federal/state laws (e.g., EPA, Title VII), competing organizations, and, of course, the clients who come into contact with organizations. Clients may possess gender preferences when it comes to hiring professional service providers and gendered expectations for social interactions with professionals that could help to explain the gender pay.

### What about Clients?

There is a dearth of literature on clients' role in establishing or maintaining gender inequalities in the workplace. There is some research on clients' behaviors in low-wage service industries, but little work on those who interact with expert knowledge workers (Roth 2004). The research on clients to date has demonstrated how clients' gender preferences compel organizational leaders to engage in gender-based job sorting (Larwood, Szwajkowski, and Rose 1988; Roth 2004). Social psychologist Laurie Larwood and her colleagues (1988) developed the "rational bias theory of managerial discrimination" to explain gender discrimination in the workplace resulting from clients' biases. They state that

if discrimination is thought to be expected or preferred by powerful superiors or major clients, ... the self-interested manager might engage in discrimination even when he or she has no personal prejudice, and is aware of and supports regulations prohibiting bias. (11)

In her study of Wall Street securities firms, Louise Marie Roth (2004) spoke to men and women with MBAs who admitted that company leaders rely on clients' expressed gender preferences, as well as their personal expectations of clients' gender preferences, to assign caseloads. Men end up dominating such lucrative career tracks as investment banking and sales and trade because they require an extensive amount of contact with men clients. Some clients insist that women finance workers are less competent at their jobs than their men colleagues and fear that women

will refuse to engage in the “masculine” bonding activities that traditionally solidify Wall Street business relationships (e.g., patronizing gentlemen’s bars, hunting).

There is also empirical evidence that clients’ gender preferences are able to directly impact an organization’s hiring practices and distribution of job rewards. When Christine M. Beckman and Damon J. Phillips (2005) reviewed the practices of nearly 200 large US law firms operating between 1996 and 2001, they found that the gender composition of a law firm positively correlates with the gender composition of their corporate clients. In other words, if a law firm forms a relationship with a corporation that has placed a woman in the CEO or legal counsel seat, the law firm is inclined to hire, retain, and promote more women to the partner position in subsequent years. This finding holds true even after controlling for the possibility that women-led corporations seek out “women-friendly” legal firms. Organizational leaders are not likely to reward or promote women in significant numbers unless they perceive gender-based demands on the part of clients.

In this study, I seek to determine if client bias is a mechanism of gender inequality among professions. I ask: Do clients have expectations for women professionals’ occupational knowledge and skills that may negatively impact women professionals’ career advancement?

## **THE STUDY**

In this mixed methods research study, I analyze clients’ and potential clients’ gender beliefs and actions. In one part of the study, I developed a series of experimental vignette surveys (Rossi and Anderson 1982) and distributed them to a non-random sample of 1,000 workers at the crowdsourcing website, Amazon Mechanical Turk. While undergraduate students are commonly recruited for experimental studies (e.g., Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007; Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2004), I recruited workers from Amazon Mechanical Turk (commonly referred to as “MTurks”

on the website) because I assumed that they are more likely than students to have some work history and some experience searching for and hiring professional service providers. In this way, I regard them as potential client-employers. Each survey respondent received the short profile of a professional. I used the surveys to gather preliminary data on the cultural gender beliefs that people apply to men and women professionals. In the first analysis, I randomly manipulated three independent variables for each survey respondent: the professional's gender (man, woman), the professional's occupation (masculine law, feminine social work), and work experience (2 years, 11 years). I added work experience as an independent variable so that I may test if increased work experience promotes gender equality in work trait evaluations. In the second analysis, I randomly manipulated the professional's gender (man, woman), occupation (law, social work), and hobby (volunteering in elementary school classrooms—a feminized hobby, traveling—a gender-neutral hobby). I added a gendered hobby as an independent variable in this survey to test the impact of highlighting an individual's after-work feminine activities on work trait evaluations. For both analyses, I asked respondents to provide their first impressions of the professionals. Using a seven-point Likert scale, respondents evaluated the extent to which given traits describe each professional. The traits—drawing on my own pre-testing research—include pragmatic characteristics that are usually associated with leadership positions (knowledgeable, assertive, and hardworking) and warmth characteristics that are usually associated with support positions (compassionate and trustworthy) (e.g., Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007; Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2004).

For the second part of the study, I conducted 46 qualitative interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann 1996; Weiss 1994) with clients of clinical social workers, veterinarians, and lawyers in private practice. I selected these professions because clinical social workers and veterinarians

provide traditionally feminine care labor (Freeman and Valentine 2004; Irvine and Vermilya 2010; Murdach 2006), while lawyers provide traditionally masculine non-nurturance labor (Kritzer 2015; Nelson, Trubek, and Solomon 1992). This variation allowed me to make comparisons based on the gendered nature of work tasks. I asked clients questions about how they searched for and selected their professional service providers, as well as questions about what they liked and disliked about their providers. I relied on interviews to gain more information about clients' evaluations of professionals, to analyze the logic behind clients' evaluations of professionals, and to determine patterns of client discriminatory behavior.

### Chapter Summaries

Across all three studies, I found that revealing information about women and men professionals' experiences (both on the job and beyond the job) impacts evaluations of their work competency in different ways. I present my results in three chapters that structure as standalone journal articles. In the first article, titled "The Unequal Effects of Work Experience on Evaluations of Men and Women Professionals' Work Competence," I offer my analysis of data from the first survey. Survey respondents ascribed pragmatic traits—specifically, knowledgeable and assertive—to highly experienced men in law and highly experienced women in social work. In other words, the men professionals featured in the vignettes received favorable evaluations for their extensive work experience in a traditionally masculine profession, while women received favorable evaluations for their work longevity in a traditionally feminine profession.

In the second article, titled "The Impact of a Professional's Feminized Hobby on Evaluations of Work Competence," I present my analysis of responses to the second survey. Revealing a man or woman lawyer's involvement in a feminized hobby did not negatively

impact their pragmatic trait ratings. As for men social workers engaged in a feminized hobby, they received significantly higher pragmatic trait (hardworking) and warmth trait (compassionate) ratings than men social workers engaged in a gender-neutral hobby. I speculate that men social workers receive a boost in valued pragmatic trait ratings when they reveal their feminized hobby because it challenges the assumption that they are incompatible with a feminine profession.

In the third and final article, titled “Expert Knowledge or Emotional Connection?: Examining Clients’ Expectations for Highly Skilled Professional Care,” I discuss analytical themes from the interviews with clients of clinical social workers, veterinarians, and lawyers. Clients of all three professional groups stated that they appreciate when providers demonstrate their ability to empathize with clients by sharing emotional stories from their personal lives (e.g., caring for family, falling out with friends). However, clients of the feminine care professions expressed greater concern than clients of the masculine non-nurturance profession that their providers’ efforts to form intimate emotional bonds with clients obstructs providers’ abilities to provide solutions that are based on formally acquired professional knowledge. Clients of the non-nurturance profession accepted the emotional distance that their providers established and maintained because it resulted in more efficient access to professional knowledge solutions.

## **THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO GENDER AND WORK STUDIES**

The data from my mixed method study reveal that individuals possess gendered expectations for professional service work. They regard women as knowledgeable and commanding in care professions, which require the provision of feminine warmth in the service of clients. Men are evaluated as knowledgeable and commanding in care professions only if they present evidence of a personal commitment to femininity, such as engaging in a feminized hobby

outside of paid work hours. In contrast, individuals regard men as knowledgeable and commanding in a non-nurturance profession that eschews emotionality in service relationships with clients. A woman's longevity in a non-nurturance profession, like lawyer, does not improve pragmatic trait evaluations. The differential impact of human capital factors on evaluations of men and women professionals across gendered occupations highlights the relative (in)flexibility of gender roles. Men's personal experiences are sufficient proof that they are feminine enough to potentially excel in a care profession, but women's professional experiences are not enough to prove that they can potentially excel in a non-nurturance profession. More latitude is likely given to men who challenge hegemonic masculinity by working in a low-prestige care profession because they are voluntarily giving up the social/economic power that is afforded to them based on their gender (Connell 1995; Pascoe 2007). Women who work in a non-nurturance profession may be criticized for challenging hegemonic femininity and competing with men for a spot in a lucrative occupation (Pyke and Johnson 2003; Schippers 2007). When clients act on these gender stereotypes during the processes of selecting and evaluating professionals, they engender and uphold the gender-based segregation of work that underlies the larger gender pay gap problem.

Care professionals' provision of emotional warmth can be a source of tension for clients, which may explain the lower pay for women-dominated care work relative to all other occupations. Unlike previous studies on semi-skilled care jobs (e.g., nannies, housecleaners) (e.g., Hondagneau-Sotelo 2001; MacDonald 2010; Tuominen 2003), I found that clients value emotional labor on the part of highly skilled care professionals like clinical social workers and veterinarians. Clients value empathy from care professionals only when it is balanced with traditional professional knowledge that they acquired in professional degree programs. If providers provide too much empathy or too much professional knowledge, clients give them

poor evaluations or threaten to leave the service relationship. Women professionals are concentrated in occupations in which clients' complex emotional and knowledge demands are difficult to decipher and professionals face greater career consequences when they do not sufficiently address them.

## **Chapter 2: The Unequal Effects of Work Experience on Evaluations of Men and Women Professionals' Work Competence**

Women workers in the US face disadvantages in hiring (Aranda and Glick 2014; Browne and Kennelly 2006; Morgan et al. 2013), pay (Blau, Brummund and Liu 2013; England, Budig, and Folbre 2002; US BLS 2015), and assignments to leadership positions (e.g., Haveman and Beresford 2012; Ibarra, Carter, and Silva 2010; US BLS 2015) when compared to men workers. When researchers control for differences in individual human capital that could explain gender differences in career outcomes (e.g., years of work experience, level of educational attainment), an unexplained force still remains (Blau and Kahn 2000; Corbett and Hill 2012). Part of the unexplained share of the gender career gap may be attributable to gender-based discrimination, despite federal legislation such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009 that were enacted to deter intentional gender discrimination on the part of employers and managers.

Gender discrimination against women workers is often rooted in negative gender stereotypes about women (Fiske 1998). There is extensive empirical evidence that the specific content of stereotypes regarding women workers changes by women's status and interdependence (e.g., Correll, Benard, Paik 2007; Fiske et al. 2002; Fiske et al. 1999; Heilman and Okimoto 2007). Researchers working with laboratory samples (e.g., undergraduate students) and field research samples (e.g., hiring managers) have determined that people who evaluate women as emotionally warm assume that they are also incompetent workers, while people who evaluate women as competent assume that they are also emotionally cold and combative colleagues. In this study, I test if stereotypes about women workers also shift by women's work

experience and occupation in ways that may help to further explain the persistence of gender inequalities in career outcomes.

I conducted a survey study using an experimental vignette design (Rossi and Anderson 1982). I asked workers from a crowdsourcing website (Amazon Mechanical Turk) to read short profiles of fictional professional service providers and offer their first impressions of the providers' work personalities. Examples of professional positions include physician, elementary school teacher, lawyer, and social worker. I selected professional occupations for two reasons. One, these work positions require specialized higher education (Abbott 1988; Gorman and Sandefur 2011). Individuals often make hefty personal sacrifices in pursuit of professional careers, such as taking time away from the labor force while they attend professional education programs and accruing student loan debt. Two, recent data suggests that the gender pay gap is largest between men and women with professional degrees and smallest between men and women with less education (with the exception of those with doctoral degrees) (Council of Economic Advisers 2015; US BLS 2015). My motivation for the study was to uncover some of the underlying reasons why women's extraordinary investment of time and money into professional careers does not yield the same career rewards as men's investment.

I asked respondents to rate the extent to which they perceived the professionals in my vignettes as exemplifying pragmatic traits (knowledgeable, assertive, and hardworking) that are usually associated with professional leaders and warmth traits (compassionate and trustworthy) that are usually associated with professionals in less prestigious support positions. I randomly manipulated the provider's gender (woman, man), work experience (2 years, 11 years), and occupation (traditionally masculine law, traditionally feminine social work) for each survey respondent to test if women's work experience and occupation impact assessments about women

workers. I anticipated that all women workers with 11 years of experience would be rated as more pragmatic than women with 2 years of experience. Given previous literature on differences in women's experiences in men-dominated versus women-dominated workspaces (e.g., Eagly 2007; Snyder and Green 2008), I also hypothesized that highly experienced women workers in a culturally masculine occupation would be judged as colder than less experienced women workers in the occupation, while highly experienced women workers in a culturally feminine occupation would be rated as warmer than their less experienced peers. I compare evaluations of women professionals with evaluations of men professionals to contextualize my gender analysis.

To preview my findings, respondents' pragmatic and warmth trait ratings did vary by women's work experience and profession. A t-test analysis of the survey data reveals that respondents gave women social workers' higher assertive ratings when they had 11 years of experience rather than 2 years of experience. Yet this finding is likely to be of little consequence in the campaign to narrow gender career gaps—such as inequalities in pay—because leadership positions in feminine professions are less lucrative and less autonomous than in men-dominated professions (Westphal 2012; Williams 1995). Survey results also show that respondents do not give higher knowledgeable ratings to women lawyers with 11 years of experience than to those with 2 years of experience. In contrast, men lawyers receive a significant boost with increased work experience. This evidence suggests that men in men-dominated professions are likely to garner greater career rewards from their human capital investments because of their gender status. I conclude by discussing the implications of these study results in exposing the social mechanisms of occupational segregation, which is a contributing factor in gender pay and leadership inequalities (Cohen, Huffman, and Knauer 2009; Levanon, England, and Allison 2009; Shauman 2006).

## **GENDER STEREOTYPES AND WORK INEQUALITIES**

Gender stereotypes—generalizations about the characteristics and habits of men and women—can trigger gender discrimination against women in the workplace (Fiske 1998). Susan Fiske et al. (2002) propose that the content of all group stereotypes varies by two dimensions: competence and emotional warmth. An individual's status (e.g., prestige of occupation, level of educational attainment) impacts our perception of the individual's competence and an individual's interdependence in a given social context (competitive or cooperative) impacts people's perception of the individual's emotional warmth (Fiske et al. 2002; Fiske et al. 1999). In the case of the workplace, a hiring manager will judge a high status job applicant as highly competent and a low status job applicant as less competent. In addition, the manager will perceive an achievement-oriented (competitive) job applicant as emotionally cold (or hostile) and a service-oriented (cooperative) job applicant as emotionally warm. Stereotypes about men and women specifically are further shaped by hegemonic beliefs about masculinity and femininity. In the US, hegemonic masculinity is characterized by rationality, achievement-orientation, and working for pay in order to support a family; while complementary hegemonic femininity is characterized by emotional warmth, service-orientation, and domesticity (Connell 1995, 2000; Schippers 2007). As a result, women workers are usually reduced to two stereotypes: the “family-committed” professional (Blair-Loy 2005) who is warm but incompetent, or the career-focused professional who is competent but cold (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2004; Fiske et al. 2002).

According to the competence/warmth stereotype model, managers and colleagues regard working mothers as emotionally warm because they are primarily associated with unpaid domestic labor (e.g., childcare, household cleaning). Yet, this same group is also often judged as

incompetent because motherhood status appears in the popular imaginary as incompatible with a successful professional career (Blair-Loy 2005). The empirical research on perceptions of working mothers offers support for this theoretical framework (e.g., Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007; Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2004). Mothers are passed over for management and executive leadership positions within work organizations because employers fear that these women's domestic responsibilities will inevitably compete with job responsibilities (Blair-Loy 2005; Hoobler, Wayne, and Lemmon 2009). Hiring managers perceive childless women of childbearing age as “soon-to-be mothers” with low future productivity value and express a preference for hiring men (Browne and Kennelly 2006). Black childless women are even more likely to face discrimination because hiring managers assume that they do not have the means to acquire reliable childcare services.

In contrast, managers and colleagues regard career-focused women professionals—especially those in leadership positions—as competent because they occupy prestigious and lucrative positions in the paid labor market. They are also regarded as emotionally cold because the source of their social power is in the masculine realm of paid labor, not the feminine realm of domesticity. Using a series of experimental studies, Madeline E. Heilman and Tyler G. Okimoto (2007) demonstrate that undergraduate students rate women managers with successful work records as highly competent, but they also rate them as less likable, more hostile, and more undesirable leaders than equally qualified managers. Some researchers have found that men subordinates actively resist the authority of women leaders as backlash against their nonconformity with the hegemonic gender belief system (e.g., Harris and Giuffre 2015; Pfafman and McEwan 2004). The competence/warmth stereotype model has been primarily used to investigate the effects of the “(childless) woman professional” and the “working mother” statuses

on the content of stereotypes about women workers, but any number of status markers will impact stereotypes as well.

Is work experience another status that impacts the content of stereotypes about women workers? According to a study by Trond Petersen and Ishak Saporta (2004), longevity in a career may improve employers' perceptions of women's work outcomes. When the authors analyzed personnel records of full-time professionals in an engineering firm, they found that women's starting salaries were 3 to 7 percent lower than those of men (controlling for education, age, occupational group, and job level). However, about seven years later, the pay differential disappeared. In fact, women earned more promotions than men at the highest organizational level when individual characteristics were not taken into account (however, there are no differences between women and men when individual characteristics are added). As Petersen and Saporta note, their research results are supported by other studies that demonstrate that women toward the top of organizational hierarchies experience higher promotion rates and greater salary increases than women toward the bottom of organizational hierarchies (Gerhart 1990; Spilerman and Petersen 1999). These researchers posit that as women gain seniority, employers compensate women for the work that they are able to observe rather than relying on negative gender stereotypes.

There is a lack of empirical evidence that supports the conclusion that the content of stereotypes shifts according to a woman worker's years of experience. Therefore, I have constructed a study to test previous researchers' suppositions. Identifying such changes in stereotypes would help to explain why some women gain access to lucrative and prestigious work rewards later in their careers than equally qualified men colleagues. I predict that a woman's status as a highly experienced professional will positively impact competency

perceptions.

Hypothesis 1: Women professionals with more years of experience will be perceived as more competent and exemplary of leadership qualities than women professionals with fewer years of experience.

I also predict that shifts in perceptions of emotional warmth will be different between traditionally masculine professions (i.e., men-dominated occupations that are culturally linked with masculine work tasks) and traditionally feminine professions (i.e., women-dominated occupations that are culturally linked with feminine work tasks). Men experience lucrative promotion advantages in masculine professions like the culinary arts (Harris and Giuffre 2015) and business (Blair-Loy 2005; Pfafman and McEwan 2004) not because managers and subordinates perceive them as more competent than women. Rather, managers and subordinates perceive women in leadership positions as unfeminine and hostile (Heilman and Okimoto 2007). This perceived hostility is seen as an impediment to leadership. In the case of advanced experience in masculine professions, I draw on findings about the competence/warmth stereotype model's frame of a professional woman (Fiske et al. 2002): highly experienced women professionals will be judged as competent, but cold.

Hypothesis 2: Among traditionally masculine occupations, women workers with more years of experience will be perceived as emotionally colder than women with fewer years of experience.

Unlike the case of men in masculine professions, there is not conclusive evidence that women experience similar career advantages in feminine professions like social work and nursing (Wingfield and Myles 2014). However, some research suggests that women dominate leadership positions if they require feminine traits or if more subordinates are women (e.g., Eagly 2007; Snyder and Green 2008). Therefore, in the case of advanced experience in feminine professions (e.g., social work, nursing), I challenge the competence/warmth stereotype model's

frame that the impression of a woman worker's warmth results in the perception of incompetence. Rather, I theorize that a woman's long-term employment in a feminine profession may lead an evaluator to assume that she has grown warmer, but the evaluator will not necessarily assume warmth diminishes her competence.

Hypothesis 3: Among traditionally feminine occupations, women workers with more years of experience will be perceived as emotionally warmer than women with fewer years of experience.

## **METHOD**

To better understand the underlying cultural forces driving gender-based career inequalities (Gerhart 1990; Petersen and Saporta 2004; Spilerman and Petersen 1999), I ask if work experience and occupation are statuses that impact the content of stereotypes regarding women professionals. I seek an answer to this research question by constructing and distributing an experimental survey (Rossi and Anderson 1982; Webster and Sell 2007). The research presented here is part of a series of factorial vignette surveys I created to examine gender expectations in professional fields. This is an ideal method for manipulating gender, work experience, and occupation among fictional workers so that I can test for differences in evaluations by these variables. Peter H. Rossi and Andy B. Anderson (1982) pioneered this experimental design in social science research in order to study complex and sensitive phenomena. The experimental stimuli are vignettes, or brief scenarios, and the outcomes are usually judgments and evaluations (Webster and Sell 2007). The distinctive feature of factorial vignette survey design is that investigators include independent variables of theoretical interest in each vignette and randomly change the variable values for each survey respondent so that they can compare evaluations across value differences. Factorial vignette studies usually have a high

level of validity because participants are randomly assigned to experimental conditions (Ganong and Coleman 2006).

My survey respondents rated the extent to which fictional professionals featured in a short profile exemplify pragmatic character traits that are associated with successful organizational leaders, as well as warmth character traits that are primarily associated with workers in less prestigious support positions (Ames and Flynn 2007; Heilman 2012). The pragmatic traits cover competency (knowledgeable) and leadership skills (assertive, hardworking). The warmth traits cover geniality (compassionate) and intimacy (trustworthy). I present the results of a subset of surveys that manipulated the gender (man, woman), work experience (2 years, 11 years), and occupation (lawyer, social worker in private practice) of the professionals. To test my hypotheses, I examine if there are differences in pragmatic and warmth trait ratings between women with 2 and 11 years of work experience. I also vary the occupations—first culturally masculine legal work and then culturally feminine social work—to determine if there are additional differences in gender stereotypes by gendered occupations.

### Sample and Procedures

I constructed a web-based survey using Qualtrics Survey Services and hosted it on their site. Survey respondents accessed the survey using a web link and, with each click of the link, the independent variable values randomly changed (guaranteeing random assignment to experimental conditions). I distributed the survey to Amazon Mechanical Turks (MTurks). A person with internet access can sign up to be a MTurk on the Amazon.com website, though they must be willing to provide their bank account information for payment purposes. Individuals, groups, or organizations hire MTurks to complete tasks that cannot easily be completed by a computer, such as image identification and audio transcription. I selected MTurks for my sample

because respondents are likely to be individuals with actual occupations and workplace experiences, unlike college students who are commonly used for experimental studies. The use of MTurks for opinion and experimental survey research is a recent venture in academia, valued for its convenience and modest costs (Christenson and Glick 2013; Mason and Suri 2011). There is evidence that the behavior of MTurks is comparable to the behavior of traditional laboratory subjects (Mason and Suri 2011; Steelman, Hammer, and Limayem 2014).

I posted a job request on the MTurk forum that included a short description of the survey. Following the suggestions of recent survey experts (Christenson and Glick 2013; Weinberg, Freese, and McElhattan 2014), I restricted the job posting so that only MTurks who had high approval ratings on previous tasks and whose IP addresses were located in the United States could view it. Upon accepting the request, MTurks received a link to the survey. I paid each MTurk \$.50 for completing a survey, an estimated five-minute task.

The sample has 196 respondents. It is majority men (60 percent) and white (71 percent). The mean age is 30 years old ( $SD=10.07$ ). Most of the respondents are highly educated: 49 percent have earned at least a Bachelor's degree and 42 percent have a two-year degree or some college experience. According to self-reports, respondents come from all four regions of the US: 20 percent reside in the Northeast, 21 percent in the Midwest, 29 percent in the South, and 30 percent in the West.

#### Vignette Factors

Each respondent read the short profile of a professional service provider. Three independent variables were randomly manipulated.

*Gender.* The professional was either a man or a woman as indicated by a traditionally gendered name. The names—Jessica and Michael—were selected from the US Social Security

Administration's (2013a,b) lists of 100 top baby names of the 1970s and 1980s for women and men, respectively.

*Occupation.* The professional was described as a lawyer or a social worker in private practice. I selected these professions because they are culturally masculine and feminine fields, respectively (Baumle 2009; Freeman and Valentine 2004; Murdach 2006). Women have gained parity with men when it comes to law school enrollment (ABA CWP 2016; Kay and Gorman 2008). Yet qualitative studies demonstrate that employers, colleagues, and clients perceive women as clumsily infiltrating a "boy's club" (e.g., Baumle 2009; Martin and Jurik 2007). Gender discrimination and harassment contribute to women's low retention rates in the legal profession (Baumle 2009; Kay and Gorman 2008; Noonan, Corcoran, and Courant 2008): A little more than two-thirds (67%) of currently employed lawyers are men (US BLS 2015). Men are the face of such prestigious leadership positions as private law firm partner, judge, and law school administrator (ABA CWP 2016).

About 82 percent of employed social workers are women (US BLS 2015). Social work is portrayed as women's work in films and television shows (Freeman and Valentine 2004; Murdach 2006). On-screen social workers "...mostly work in child welfare, ...mostly work with people living in poverty, and mostly function to maintain the societal status quo" (Freeman and Valentine 2004, 159). In media representations, the social work profession is depicted as an extension of women's familial caregiving role into the paid labor market.

*Work experience.* The professional was described as having either 2 or 11 years of work experience. Professionals with 2 years of experience are at the start of their careers while those with 11 years of experience are likely to be up for promotions to leadership positions. Petersen and Saporta's (2004) qualitative study of an engineering firm confirm that 2 and 11 years is a

sufficient gap for this analysis.

Each respondent received 1 of 8 possible conditions in this 2 x 2 x 2 design. The vignette reads as follows:

[Jessica, Michael] has enjoyed a career as a [social worker, lawyer] for [2,11] years. [She, He] currently practices in a private office. In [her, his] free time, [she, he] likes to travel.

The vignette is meant to present a short biographical paragraph similar to one that may be found on a business website. Traveling is a gender-neutral hobby that should not impact the gender evaluations (Lawson 1994; US DCITA 2012) (see Appendix A, “Sample First Impressions Survey I,” for full sample survey).

### Dependent Measures

I asked respondents to share their first impressions of the professional by rating him or her on five character traits. I modeled my survey after a previous vignette study of gender-based hiring discrimination (Cuddy, Fiske and Glick 2004). I instructed subjects to indicate how much they felt that the listed traits described the fictional professional using a 7-point Likert scale where 1 means “Not at All” and 7 means “Extremely.” Three of the traits—knowledgeable, assertive, and hardworking—measure competency and leadership skills (together, I refer to these as pragmatic traits). The other two traits—compassionate and trustworthy—measure geniality and intimacy (warmth traits). I selected these particular terms because they appear in similar experimental studies on gender work inequalities (e.g., Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007; Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2004) and they allow me to test the effects of work experience on Fiske et al.’s (2002) conceptualization of competency/warmth gender perceptions.

### Analysis Strategy

In my analysis, I calculate means for each of the five trait ratings by the occupation,

gender, and experience of the professional. I run a series of two-tailed t-tests to measure the statistical significance of differences between means of interest. While I predict effects in one direction, I conduct two-tailed t-tests so as not to miss unanticipated significant effects in the opposite direction. If I find that all women workers with 11 years of experience receive significantly higher mean knowledgeable, assertive, and hardworking ratings than women workers with 2 years of experience, then I will provide empirical support for my first hypothesis. If women lawyers with 11 years of experience acquire significantly lower compassionate and trustworthy ratings than women lawyers with 2 years of experience, I will confirm my second hypothesis. As for my third hypothesis, I expect women social workers to receive significantly higher compassionate and trustworthy readings than women social workers with 2 years of experience. In my analysis, I also present data on men workers to serve as a theoretical contrast.

## **RESULTS**

### Comparison of Means

*Pragmatic Trait Ratings.* Table 1 includes means of the trait variables by the occupation and gender of the professional. In Table 2, I display means for the five trait ratings by the occupation, gender, and work experience of the professional. This table demonstrates that there is mixed support for my first hypothesis. Women social workers with 11 years of experience have a significantly higher mean assertive rating than women social workers with 2 years of experience. The mean assertive rating for women social workers with 11 years of experience ( $M=5.17, SD=1.34$ ) is .97 greater than the rating for women social workers with 2 years of experience ( $M=4.20, SD=1.44$ ). The difference is statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level and large at 66 percent of the standard deviation of the mean assertive rating for all women social workers ( $M=4.67, SD=1.46$ ). There are no significant differences in the mean knowledgeable and

hardworking ratings between women social workers with 2 and 11 years of experience.

Table 1: Means of Trait Variables by Occupation and Gender of Professional (Varied Work Experiences).

	SOCIAL WORKERS		LAWYERS	
	Women <i>n</i> =48	Men <i>n</i> =48	Women <i>n</i> =51	Men <i>n</i> =49
<b>Pragmatic Traits</b>				
Knowledgeable	5.29 (1.09)	5.40 (.98)	5.61 (.96)	5.78 (.77)
Assertive	4.67 (1.46)	4.85 (.90)	5.41 (1.06)	5.47 (1.00)
Hardworking	5.63 (1.27)	5.56 (1.03)	5.73 (1.06)	5.65 (1.01)
<b>Warmth Traits</b>				
Compassionate	5.67 (1.23)	5.44 (1.05)	4.39 (1.13)	4.43 (1.14)
Trustworthy	5.48 (1.22)	5.23 (.95)	4.76 (1.14)	4.35 (1.22)

*N* = 196. SDs in parentheses. Source: author.

Table 2: Means of Trait Variables by Occupation, Gender, and Work Experience of Professional.

	SOCIAL WORKERS				LAWYERS			
	Women		Men		Women		Men	
	2	11	2	11	2	11	2	11
	Yrs	Yrs	Yrs	Yrs	Yrs	Yrs	Yrs	Yrs
	<i>n</i> =25	<i>n</i> =23	<i>n</i> =23	<i>n</i> =25	<i>n</i> =28	<i>n</i> =23	<i>n</i> =29	<i>n</i> =20
<b>Pragmatic Traits</b>								
Knowledgeable	5.12 (1.17)	5.48 (.99)	5.13 (.97)	5.64 (.95)	5.57 (1.00)	5.65 (.93)	5.59 (.78)	6.05* (.69)
Assertive	4.20 (1.44)	5.17* (1.34)	4.70 (.76)	5.00 (1.00)	5.50 (1.17)	5.30 (.93)	5.48 (.87)	5.45 (1.19)
Hardworking	5.40 (1.41)	5.87 (1.06)	5.30 (1.02)	5.80 (1.00)	5.64 (1.16)	5.83 (.94)	5.66 (.90)	5.65 (1.18)
<b>Warmth Traits</b>								
Compassionate	5.36 (1.44)	6.00 (.85)	5.17 (1.07)	5.68 (.99)	4.54 (1.14)	4.22 (1.13)	4.52 (1.02)	4.30 (1.30)
Trustworthy	5.32 (1.44)	5.65 (.93)	5.04 (.88)	5.40 (1.00)	5.07 (1.12)	4.39* (1.08)	4.31 (1.17)	4.40 (1.31)

*N* = 196. SDs in parentheses. T-test results among women and men samples (women social workers with 2 years of work experience vs. women social workers with 11 years of experience; men social workers with 2 years of work experience vs. men social workers with 11 years of work experience; women lawyers with 2 years of work experience vs. women lawyers with 11 years of work experience; men lawyers with 2 years of work experience vs. men lawyers with 11 years of work experience): \*  $p < .05$  (two-tailed tests). Source: author.

There is no support for the first hypothesis among the women lawyers sample. In contrast, I find that men lawyers with 11 years of experience received a significantly higher mean knowledgeable rating than men lawyers with 2 years of experience. The mean knowledgeable rating for men lawyers with 11 years of experience is 6.05 ( $SD=.69$ ) and the mean knowledgeable rating for men lawyers with 2 years of experience is 5.59 ( $SD=.78$ ). The

difference in means (.46) is great; it is 60 percent of the standard deviation of the mean knowledgeable rating for all men lawyers ( $M=5.78$ ,  $SD=.77$ ).

*Warmth Trait Ratings.* I find partial support for the second hypothesis that highly experienced women workers in a culturally masculine occupation will be perceived as colder than less experienced women in the occupation. Women lawyers with 11 years of experience were rated as significantly less trustworthy than women lawyers with 2 years of experience. The mean trustworthy rating for women lawyers with 11 years of experience is 4.39 ( $SD=1.08$ ), compared with 5.07 ( $SD=1.12$ ) for women lawyers with 2 years of experience. There is no significant difference in the mean compassionate ratings between women lawyers with 2 and 11 years of experience.

Finally, I do not find support for my third hypothesis regarding an increased warmth trait rating for highly experienced women workers in a culturally feminine occupation. There are no significant differences in mean compassionate and trustworthy ratings between women social workers with 2 and 11 years of experience.

## **DISCUSSION**

A limitation of this study is that I did not solicit respondents' personal definitions of the five traits included in the study so that I can contextualize results. While I gathered the traits from research studies with similar aims (Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007; Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2004), and respondents in my pre-testing experiments confirmed scholars' definitions of the traits in brief qualitative interviews, I am not able to state with certainty if or how final survey respondents shifted their definitions of the traits based on the gender, work experience, or occupation of the professionals they evaluated. Nonetheless, the significant decrease in a warmth trait rating for highly experienced women lawyers, paired with no change in any of their

pragmatic trait ratings, likely indicates that these women are viewed in a slightly negative light as they gain experience. Women in masculine professions are frequently perceived as emotionally cold and hostile (Harris and Giuffre 2015; Heilman and Okimoto 2007; Pfafman and McEwan 2004). Among the social worker sample, the increase in a pragmatic trait rating for women without a loss in warmth (as well as no change in men's pragmatic ratings) leads me to conclude that women in this feminine profession are viewed in a positive light as they gain experience.

Survey results demonstrate that the content of gender stereotypes likely changes for women by their work experience and profession. This evidence helps to explain gender differences in career outcomes. In my study, women social workers were linked with a leadership trait—specifically, assertive—as they gained experience, but not men social workers. Highly experienced women social workers were not evaluated as colder than less experienced women social workers, despite the boost in a leadership trait rating. As I theorized, the perception of gained competence for women in a feminine profession does not result in a perception of lost warmth. These results confirm the need for a competence/warmth stereotype model (Fiske et al. 2002) that fully considers gender stereotypes at the intersection of gender and gendered occupation. These results also explain why some research shows that women are selected for more leadership positions in feminine workspaces (Eagly 2007; Snyder and Green 2008). Employers, colleagues, and clients may assume that women are more naturally suited for feminine fields than men, and thus, more qualified than their men counterparts. However, the positive implications of this finding for the gender leadership gap are dampened by the fact that leadership positions in feminine professions like social work come with relatively little pay, little autonomy, and short career ladders (Westphal 2012; Williams 1995).

Women professionals with 11 years of experience were not rated as more competent (knowledgeable) than women professionals with less years of experience in either the feminine or masculine profession. In contrast, highly experienced men in the masculine profession received a significant boost in the knowledgeable rating over their less experienced counterparts. It is possible that people evaluate these men's investments in their careers as more directed, productive, and/or valuable than women's investment because their gender is more compatible with the field. If employers and clients do not recognize the same knowledge growth in women lawyers as they do in men, these power holders may decide that women are less capable of positive career growth in this masculine field. This would help explain why women are granted fewer pay raise and leadership promotions in masculine occupations.

Highly experienced women in the masculine profession were rated as less trustworthy—a trait associated with being “cold”—than less experienced women in the profession. Contrary to the competence/warmth stereotype model, these women were rated as colder without a corresponding rise in the competence trait rating. Respondents could have reasoned that a woman's survival in a masculine profession highlights her rejection of hegemonic femininity, but does not necessarily signal full devotion to her career. Previous research suggests that when women leaders in masculine workspaces downplay their feminine traits, they are far more likely to be perceived as uncongenial and divisive leaders (e.g., Harris and Giuffre 2015; Pfafman and McEwan 2004).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Highly experienced women received a pragmatic trait rating boost in the feminine profession, while highly experienced men received a pragmatic trait rating boost in the masculine profession. Advanced experience did not help women in the masculine profession, nor men in

the feminine profession. The shift in valued trait ratings according to the occupation, gender, and work experience of the professionals indicates a need for further research on social processes that lead to occupational segregation. Do gatekeepers, such as professional school recruiters, hiring managers, and professional mentors, possess negative stereotypes about women in traditionally masculine fields? Do gatekeepers place a greater value on the human capital of women in feminine fields rather than men in feminine fields? Occupational segregation by gender is a contributing factor to gender pay and leadership inequalities in the US labor market (Cohen, Huffman, and Knauer 2009; Levanon, England, and Allison 2009; Shauman 2006). The occupations that women workers are concentrated in pay less and have shorter career ladders than occupations that are dominated by men. Qualitative interviews with gatekeepers could reveal if and why they engage in gender-based job sorting.

Identifying the content of gender stereotypes in the workplace and delineating how they shift by context would allow organizations to develop workplace solutions that effectively minimize the impact of negative gender stereotypes on women's careers. Blind evaluation procedures (e.g., standardized tests for hiring and promotions, hiring interviews by third-party juries) are one possible solution that is applicable to feminine and masculine professions alike because they suppress the activation of gender stereotypes in the evaluation process (Goldin and Rouse 2000).

### Chapter 3: The Impact of a Professional's Feminized Hobby on Evaluations of Work Competence

Experimental design studies demonstrate that women workers are more likely to be discriminated against in the hiring process than men workers (e.g., Aranda and Glick 2014; Morgan et al. 2013). When a traditionally feminine name (Steinpreis, Anders, and Ritze 1999) or information about one's motherhood status (Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007; Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2004) is included on a *résumé*, it can trigger negative gender stereotypes about the worker for the employer or hiring manager. Theorists propose that women workers are regarded as either career-oriented women who are competent and emotionally cold, or as distracted working mothers who are emotionally warm and incompetent (e.g., Correll, Benard, Paik 2007; Fiske et al. 2002; Fiske et al. 1999; Heilman and Okimoto 2007). In a tight and competitive US job market, some job applicants are trying to distinguish themselves to employers by including information about their hobbies on *résumés* (Gillett 2016; Lucas 2011; Nish 2012)—but can this rising trend also harm women workers? I test if stereotypes about women workers are also impacted by information about their involvement in a feminized hobby and their employment in a gendered occupation.

I designed an experimental vignette design survey (Rossi and Anderson 1982) and distributed it to workers from a crowdsourcing website (Amazon Mechanical Turk). I asked them to read a short paragraph about a fictional professional and provide their first impressions of the professionals. I examine gender discrimination in professions specifically because the gender pay gap is largest between men and women with professional degrees (Council of Economic Advisers 2015; US BLS 2015). Survey respondents rated the extent to which they perceived the professionals in the vignettes as exemplifying pragmatic traits that are highly valued in the

workplace (knowledgeable, assertive, and hardworking) and less valued warmth traits (compassionate and trustworthy). The experimental survey design allowed me to randomly manipulate three independent variables for each respondent: the professional's gender (woman, man), occupation (traditionally masculine law, traditionally feminine social work), and hobby (volunteering in elementary schools, traveling). I classified volunteering in elementary schools as a feminized hobby because of its link with childcare, while I considered traveling to be a more gender-neutral hobby. Data shows that US women are as likely to travel as men (Lawson 1994; US DCITA 2012). In light of the research on women's varied experiences between men- and women-dominated workplaces (e.g., Eagly 2007; Snyder and Green 2008), I predicted that evaluators would rate women in a masculine profession who volunteer as warmer, but less competent, than women who travel. I also predicted that evaluators would rate women in a feminine profession who volunteer as warmer and more competent than women who travel.

In a t-test analysis of survey results, I find that women lawyers who volunteer were rated as significantly warmer than women lawyers who travel. However, women lawyers who volunteer were not rated as less pragmatic. In the case of masculine professions, revealing information about a woman's involvement in a feminized hobby may not negatively impact evaluations of her competence. I also find that women social workers who volunteer were not rated as either warmer or more pragmatic than women social workers who travel. Men social workers who volunteer were rated as significantly warmer and more pragmatic than men peers who travel. Generally, men may be regarded as incompatible with a feminine profession because of their gender, but information about their engagement in a feminized hobby may challenge this assumption. This study highlights the need for further research on how gendered occupations and hobbies complicate the dominant competence/warmth stereotype model (Fiske et al. 2002).

## EMPLOYMENT DISCRIMINATION

Social scientists have designed experimental research studies to test the role of stereotypes in employment discrimination against marginalized job applicants, including racial/ethnic minority individuals (e.g., Kang et al. 2016; Nunley et al. 2015), mothers (e.g., Aranda and Glick 2014; Morgan et al. 2013), and women (e.g., Steinpreis, Anders, and Ritzke 1999). Scholars value the experimental design because it allows them to control and test variables of interest while closely approximating real-life decision-making situations (Alexander and Becker 1978; Jasso 2006). A popular experimental research design among labor scholars is the use of fictional *résumés* to test hiring discrimination (e.g., Kang et al. 2016; Pedulla 2014). Experimental researchers divide study subjects into a test group and a control group using random assignment (Rossi and Anderson 1982; Webster and Sell 2007). In the case of *résumé* experiments, the fictional *résumés* that both subject groups receive are identical in terms of content (e.g., job applicant's education, work history) and format (e.g., font), except the *résumés* that the test group receive include some indicator of marginalized status (e.g., woman, Black American, criminal record) and the *résumés* that the control group receive do not. Some researchers have conducted laboratory experiments with college students and national population samples (e.g., Aranda and Glick 2014; Pedulla 2014). These researchers generally ask subjects to evaluate job applicants' work quality and potential. Other researchers have conducted field experiments with actual employers (i.e., audit studies) (e.g., Morgan et al. 2013; Nunley et al. 2015). They send fictional *résumés* to employers in a local job market and keep track of which applicants are offered job interviews or positions.

There are potentially debilitating elements of the job application that are not necessarily required but are commonly included. Job applicants sometimes include hobbies and community-

building activities on their *résumés* to demonstrate transferrable skills they have acquired outside of the workplace; however, experimental design studies show that the inclusion of this information on *résumés* can reveal one's marginalized status and trigger negative stereotypes for employers (e.g., Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007; Kang et al. 2016; Pedulla 2014). Experimental studies demonstrate that workers are less likely to receive invitations for job interviews if they include information in their applications about participation in racial affinity groups on their *résumés* (e.g., member of black graduate student association) (Kang et al. 2016; Pedulla 2014). Also, women are less likely to be offered callbacks if they reveal information that signals their motherhood status (e.g., member of elementary school parent-teacher association) (e.g., Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007; Morgan et al. 2013). This latter phenomenon is called “the motherhood penalty” (Budig and England 2001; England 2005; Miller 2011). Working mothers with preschool-aged children report lower earnings and more limited career mobility than mothers with older children, childless women, and men.

Shelley J. Correll and her colleagues (2007) designed a dual laboratory study with a student sample and an audit study with actual employers to test the underlying social mechanisms of the motherhood penalty. Their laboratory subjects evaluated mothers as less competent than fathers. Both laboratory participants and employers in their audit study were significantly more likely to select fathers for an open job position than mothers. The authors theorize that motherhood status highlights the feminine devotion to family care labor, and individuals assume that mothers will prioritize childcare over their careers. In other words, they perceive mothers as warm, but incompetent (Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2004). Since fatherhood status highlights the masculine devotion to paid labor (“family breadwinner”), individuals assume that fathers will fully commit themselves to the careers. Mothers who are able to address

employers' concerns about lack of commitment to their careers are less likely to suffer from employer discrimination in the hiring process (e.g., Aranda and Glick 2014; Morgan et al. 2013). In their field experiment, Whitney Botsford Morgan and her co-researchers (2013) found that when they sent out women in pregnancy prostheses to apply for jobs in the retail sector, they encountered more hostility from hiring managers than when they applied for jobs without wearing the prostheses. However, when the women wearing the pregnancy prostheses told hiring managers that they were able to work flexible hours and did not require additional work accommodations, these women reported fewer instances of hiring discrimination.

If mothers are discriminated against because of their engagement in feminized domestic labor outside of the workplace, does revealing information about a woman worker's engagement in a feminized hobby negatively impact assessments of her work competence as well? There is little research on this question. Given the previous research on the impact of a worker's involvement in personal activities on assessments of his or her competency, I decide to examine the impact of women's involvement in another feminized personal pursuit besides mothering. I use the experimental laboratory research design not to test women's hiring outcomes, but rather to determine potential shifts in the evaluations of women's work-related traits based on reported hobby. My aim is to understand the stereotypes about women workers that underlie reported gender differences in hiring and promotion outcomes (e.g., Elliott and Smith 2004; Steinpreis, Anders, and Ritzke 1999; Snyder and Green 2008).

I predict that women professionals will be judged as emotionally warm if they reveal engagement in a feminized hobby.

Hypothesis 1: Women professionals who are engaged in a feminized hobby will be perceived as emotionally warmer than women professionals who are engaged in a gender-neutral hobby.

I theorize that the perception of women's warmth coincides with different competency ratings by gendered occupation. Researchers have shown that women in traditionally masculine professions (i.e., men-dominated, culturally linked with masculine tasks)—like the culinary arts (Harris and Giuffre 2015) and business (Blair-Loy 2005; Pfafman and McEwan 2004)—are regarded as inadequate workers when they express feminine warmth. I expect a similar outcome for women who are engaged in a feminized hobby. I agree with the competence/warmth stereotype model's family-committed professional frame in the case of the feminized hobby in masculine professions: women involved in a feminized hobby will be judged as warm, but incompetent.

Hypothesis 2: In traditionally masculine professions, women workers who are engaged in a feminized hobby will be perceived as less competent and exemplary of leadership qualities than women workers who are engaged in a gender-neutral hobby.

Some research shows that women experience a promotion advantage when a leadership position is specifically described as requiring feminine traits or when the majority of subordinates are women (e.g., Eagly 2007; Gorman 2005). Studies of nurses, for example, reveal that these professionals use emotional intimacy and warmth to establish trust with emotionally vulnerable clients so that they may complete complex work tasks that require a high level of pragmatism (e.g., inserting IVs, deciphering troubling medical symptoms and side effects) (e.g., Rodriguez 2014; Ruchti 2012; Stone 2000). Therefore, I challenge the competence/warmth stereotype model's woman professional frame in the case of the feminized hobby in feminine professions: women involved in a feminized hobby will be perceived as warm and very competent.

Hypothesis 3: In traditionally feminine professions, women workers who are engaged in a feminized hobby will be perceived as more competent and exemplary of leadership qualities than women workers who are engaged in a gender-neutral hobby.

## **METHOD**

Using the factorial vignette survey design (Rossi and Anderson 1982; Webster and Sell 2007), I test if a woman's hobby and occupation are statuses that affect respondents' evaluations of her as a worker. I wrote a short biography of a fictional professional and built a web survey that allowed me to randomly manipulate three variables of interest for each survey respondent: gender (woman, man), hobby (volunteering in elementary school classrooms, traveling), and occupation (lawyer, social worker in private practice). I selected volunteering with children because it is likely to be regarded as a feminized hobby (that may also signal parenthood status and a devotion to family childcare), while traveling is likely to be viewed as a gender-neutral hobby. Lawyer and social worker are masculine and feminine professions, respectively. I asked survey respondents to rate how much the professional featured in the vignette exemplify competency (knowledgeable) and leadership traits (assertive and hardworking)—together, I refer to these as pragmatic traits. I also asked respondents to rate how the professional exemplifies warmth traits (compassionate and trustworthy).

### Sample and Procedures

The survey I analyze in this article is one in a collection of factorial vignette surveys that I designed to examine gender inequalities in the workplace. I distributed the web survey to workers at a crowdsourcing website, Amazon Mechanical Turk. These workers (referred to as “MTurks”) are individuals from around the world who sign up with Amazon.com to answer work requests from individuals and groups. MTurks is a useful sampling source for learning about the underlying forces of hiring discrimination on the part of client-employers. Client-

employers are individuals who hire providers for customized professional services. I regard MTurks as potential client-employers of the private practice social workers and lawyers included in my survey.

I posted a short description of my survey on the MTurk website. Like other researchers who have conducted experimental research with MTurks (e.g., Christenson and Glick 2013; Weinberg, Freese, and McElhattan 2014), I placed restrictions on the job request so that it could only be viewed by MTurks who had earned high approval ratings on previous projects and had IP addresses in the US. I paid each MTurk \$.50 for completing the five-minute survey. Experimental researchers have found that MTurks act much like respondents who are recruited through traditional means (e.g., undergraduate students) (Mason and Suri 2011; Steelman, Hammer, and Limayem 2014).

A total of 184 MTurks responded to this survey. About 18 percent reported that they live in the Midwest, 24 percent in the Northeast, 27 percent in the West, and 31 percent in the South. The sample is men-dominated (60 percent), largely white (80 percent), and young (mean age is 31 years old,  $SD=10.92$ ). The sample is highly educated: 41 percent reported that they have a two-year degree or some college experience and 47 percent reported at least a Bachelor's degree.

#### Vignette Independent Variables

I constructed a vignette in which I introduced participants to a fictional professional. The definitions of three independent variables were randomly altered for each participant.

*Gender.* The professional was either a man or a woman. I selected traditionally gendered names from the US Social Security Administration's (2013a,b) lists of popular baby names during the 1970s and 1980s. The names are Michael and Jessica.

*Occupation.* The professional was a lawyer or a social worker in private practice. Law is a culturally masculine profession (Baumle 2009). Men constitute about 67 percent of all employed lawyers (US BLS 2015) and dominate leadership positions in the legal field (e.g., judge, private law firm partner) (ABA CWP 2013).

Social work is a culturally feminine profession—in the media (e.g., television shows, movies), women are portrayed as naturally-suited for the profession (Freeman and Valentine 2004; Murdach 2006). Women are an overwhelming majority (82%) of the profession (US BLS 2015).

*Hobby.* The professional was engaged in a hobby that either indicated a feminized devotion to child welfare (volunteering in elementary school classrooms) or not (traveling). Traveling is gender-neutral personal pursuit (Lawson 1994; US DCITA 2012) that suggests that the professional does not have many obligations at home that hinder his or her freedom to pick up and go (e.g., children, pets).

The vignette, a 2 x 2 x 2 design, reads:

[Jessica, Michael] has enjoyed a career as a [social worker, lawyer] for 11 years. [She, He] currently practices in a private office. In [her, his] free time, [she, he] likes to [volunteer in elementary school classrooms, travel].

Professionals with 11 years of experience are likely to be well-established in their careers and to be in consideration for supervisory and executive positions (see Appendix B, “Sample First Impressions Survey II,” for full sample survey).

#### Vignette Dependent Variables

I directed survey respondents to rate professionals on five given character traits. Drawing from previous experimental research on gender labor inequalities (e.g., Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007; Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick 2004) and my own pre-testing experiments, I include pragmatic traits (knowledgeable, assertive, and hardworking) and warmth traits (compassionate and

trustworthy). The survey instructions are similar to those written by Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick (2004) for their factorial vignette survey on perceptions of working mothers. Respondents used a 7-point Likert scale: “1” means “Not at All” and “7” means “Extremely.”

### Analysis Strategy

I calculate mean trait ratings for the five trait ratings by occupation, gender, and hobby. I run two-tailed t-tests in order to test my hypotheses. Although I predict effects in one direction, I run two-tailed t-tests because I do not want to overlook unanticipated significant effects in the opposite direction. I present data on men professionals to serve as theoretical contrast. Given my first hypothesis, I expect all women professionals who volunteer to receive significantly higher mean compassionate and trustworthy ratings than women professionals who travel. Per my second hypothesis, I anticipate women lawyers who volunteer to receive lower mean knowledgeable, assertive, and hardworking ratings than women lawyers who travel. Finally, I expect women social workers who volunteer to receive higher mean knowledgeable, assertive, and hardworking ratings than women social workers who travel.

## **RESULTS**

### Comparison of Means

*Warmth Trait Ratings.* In Table 3, I present means of the trait variables by the occupation and gender of the professional. Table 4, which displays mean trait ratings by the professional’s occupation, gender, and hobby, offers some support for my first hypothesis. Women lawyers who volunteer were rated as warmer than women lawyers who travel. The mean compassionate rating for women lawyers who volunteer is 5.57 ( $SD=1.12$ ); it is 4.26 ( $SD=1.20$ ) for women lawyers who travel. The means difference (1.31) is statistically significant at the  $p < .05$  level and substantial at 100 percent of the standard deviation for the mean compassionate rating for

women lawyers ( $M=4.86$ ,  $SD=1.30$ ). Women lawyers who volunteer also received a higher mean trustworthy rating ( $M=5.38$ ,  $SD=1.60$ ) than women lawyers who travel ( $M=4.39$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ) at statistically significant level ( $p<.05$ ). The difference in means (.99) is 70 percent of the standard deviation of the mean trustworthy rating for women lawyers ( $M=4.86$ ,  $SD=1.42$ ).

Table 3: Means of Trait Variables by Occupation and Gender of Professional (Varied Hobbies).

	SOCIAL WORKERS		LAWYERS	
	Women <i>n=52</i>	Men <i>n=46</i>	Women <i>n=44</i>	Men <i>n=42</i>
<b>Pragmatic Traits</b>				
Knowledgeable	5.71 (.85)	5.78 (.89)	5.86 (.95)	5.91 (.82)
Assertive	5.12 (1.15)	5.17 (1.22)	5.32 (1.14)	5.29 (1.02)
Hardworking	6.08 (.88)	6.09 (.89)	5.86 (.93)	5.71 (1.04)
<b>Warmth Traits</b>				
Compassionate	6.12 (.73)	5.96 (.92)	4.86 (1.30)	4.88 (1.48)
Trustworthy	5.83 (.86)	5.57 (1.19)	4.86 (1.42)	4.64 (1.25)

$N = 184$ . SDs in parentheses. Source: author.

Table 4: Means of Trait Variables by Occupation, Gender, and Hobby of Professional.

	SOCIAL WORKERS				LAWYERS			
	Women		Men		Women		Men	
	Vol <i>n</i> =29	Trav <i>n</i> =23	Vol <i>n</i> =21	Trav <i>n</i> =25	Vol <i>n</i> =21	Trav <i>n</i> =23	Vol <i>n</i> =22	Trav <i>n</i> =20
<b>Pragmatic Traits</b>								
Knowledgeable	5.90 (.67)	5.48 (.99)	5.95 (.80)	5.64 (.95)	6.10 (.94)	5.65 (.93)	5.77 (.92)	6.05 (.69)
Assertive	5.07 (1.00)	5.17 (1.34)	5.38 (1.43)	5.00 (1.00)	5.33 (1.35)	5.30 (.93)	5.14 (.83)	5.45 (1.19)
Hardworking	6.24 (.69)	5.87 (1.06)	6.43 (.60)	5.80* (1.00)	5.90 (.94)	5.83 (.94)	5.77 (.92)	5.65 (1.18)
<b>Warmth Traits</b>								
Compassionate	6.21 (.62)	6.00 (.85)	6.29 (.72)	5.68* (.99)	5.57 (1.12)	4.22* (1.13)	5.41 (1.47)	4.30* (1.30)
Trustworthy	5.97 (.78)	5.65 (.93)	5.76 (1.37)	5.40 (1.00)	5.38 (1.60)	4.39* (1.08)	4.86 (1.17)	4.40 (1.31)

*N* = 184. SDs in parentheses. T-test results among women and men samples (women social workers who volunteer vs. women social workers who travel; men social workers who volunteer vs. men social workers who travel; women lawyers who volunteer vs. women lawyers who travel; men lawyers who volunteer vs. men lawyers who travel): \* *p* < .05 (two-tailed tests). Source: author.

There is not support for my first hypothesis among the social worker sample. Women social workers who volunteer were not rated as significantly more compassionate or trustworthy than women social workers who travel.

Men who volunteer received a significantly higher mean compassionate trait rating from respondents than men who travel among both occupations. The mean compassionate rating for men lawyers who volunteer is 5.41 (*SD*=1.47), while the mean compassionate rating for men lawyers who travel is 4.30 (*SD*=1.30). The difference in means (1.11) is great—75 percent of the

standard deviation of the mean compassionate rating for men lawyers ( $M=4.88$ ,  $SD=1.48$ ). Men social workers who volunteer have a mean compassionate rating of 6.29 ( $SD=.72$ ); men social workers who travel have a mean compassionate rating of 5.68 ( $SD=.99$ ). The difference in means (.61) is 66 percent of the standard deviation of the mean compassionate rating for men social workers ( $M=5.96$ ,  $SD=.92$ ).

*Pragmatic Trait Ratings.* Survey results do not support my second hypothesis. Women lawyers who volunteer were not rated as less knowledgeable, assertive, or hardworking at statistically significant levels than women lawyers who travel.

I do not find support for my third hypothesis either. Women social workers who volunteer were not rated as more pragmatic than women social workers who travel.

However, men social workers who volunteer were rated as more hardworking than men social workers who travel ( $p<.05$ ). The mean hardworking rating for men social workers who volunteer is 6.43 ( $SD=.60$ ); it is 5.80 ( $SD=1.00$ ) for men social workers who travel. The difference in means (.63) is large at 71 percent of the standard deviation of the mean hardworking rating for men social workers ( $M=6.09$ ,  $SD=.89$ ).

## **DISCUSSION**

A limitation of this study is that I did not ask survey respondents for their personal definitions of the pragmatic and warmth traits. I cannot say for sure if respondents attached negative or positive connotations to each of the traits, nor can I say if respondents shifted their definitions of the terms between gender, occupation, or hobby. However, given previous research, some information can be gleaned from the shifts in ratings between statuses.

In my study, women lawyers who are engaged in a feminized hobby were rated as significantly warmer (compassionate and trustworthy) than women lawyers who are engaged in a

gender-neutral hobby, but there is not the corresponding significant decrease in pragmatic trait ratings as predicted by the competence/warmth stereotype model (Fiske et al. 2002). This suggests that the gender stereotype regarding warm women's incompetence was not triggered in this experimental study or it did not significantly influence pragmatic trait evaluations. This is the same outcome for men lawyers who volunteer. I conclude that the perception of warmth derived from one's engagement in a feminized hobby is not regarded as particularly negative in the masculine profession.

As for the feminine profession, there are no significant changes in warmth or pragmatic trait ratings for women by hobby. While I theorized that a woman social worker with a feminized hobby would be rated as warmer and more competent than a woman social worker with a gender-neutral hobby, I found this to be the case for men social workers instead. Men social workers who volunteer were rated as significantly more compassionate and hardworking than men social workers who travel. The impression of warmth is likely seen as positive in the case of men in this feminine profession since it is linked with an increase in a pragmatic trait rating.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

My findings suggest that revealing one's involvement in a feminized hobby produces different work trait evaluations for women and men across gendered professions. For women in a masculine profession, including information about a feminized hobby on a *résumé* may not be as detrimental as including information about motherhood status. In my study, the women lawyers who volunteer were rated as warmer than their women peers who travel, but they were not rated as less competent or exemplary of leadership traits. Evaluators may believe that a woman lawyer carving out time in her busy schedule for a feminized hobby is the mark of a balanced individual,

while a working mother's familial duties will inevitably intrude on her professional duties without warning (e.g., taking sick days to care for an ailing toddler).

For women in a feminine profession, listing involvement in a feminized hobby on a résumé may have no effect on evaluations of their competence. Evaluators may assume that these women are naturally compatible with a feminine profession like social work, whether they are engaged in a feminized hobby or not. Yet, for men in a feminine profession, a feminized hobby could be beneficial. Men social workers who volunteer were rated as warmer and more competent than men social workers who travel. When these men reveal information about their volunteer activities, it may dispel evaluators' fears that they are too masculine for a feminine professional field.

## **Chapter 4: Expert Knowledge or Emotional Connection?**

### **Examining Clients' Expectations for Highly Skilled Professional Care**

Current conceptualizations of substantive and experiential professional knowledge emphasize the rational and pragmatic tasks associated with professional labor, offering little theoretical insight into emotional and intimate tasks (e.g., Barley 1996; Blasi 1995; Sandefur 2015). This lack of analysis leaves important questions unaddressed, such as “What is the nature of professional expertise in professions that offer a great deal of intimate, emotional care?” The labor category “care work” is applied to occupations in which workers address clients’ mental, emotional and/or social welfare problems through face-to-face interactions (Duffy, Albeda, and Hammonds 2013). Care occupations range from semi-skilled positions like childcare providers and school cafeteria workers to highly skilled positions like nurses, clinical social workers, psychologists, and elementary school teachers (Duffy, Albeda, and Hammonds 2013; Duffy, Armenia, and Stacey 2015). Perhaps because women dominate the field of care work, workers and clients tend to associate this type of labor with hegemonic feminine traits and skills (Pyke and Johnson 2003; Schippers 2007), including nurturance and love.

Most research on care work is about semi-skilled workers like nannies and maids (e.g., Duffy 2005; Hondagneau-Sotelo 2001; Nelson 1990; Tuominen 2003). As a result, we know very little about the particularities of professional expertise in highly skilled care positions. Existing literature suggests that clients discredit semi-skilled care workers’ claims that they possess substantive knowledge, and place greater value on these workers’ ability to provide clients with the kind of love and affection they display for their own families as wives and mothers (Hondagneau-Sotelo 2001; MacDonald 2010; Tuominen 2003). I refer to such a characterization of care workers’ expertise and labor as *from the heart* knowledge and care. I

distinguish it from the assumption of substantive knowledge and skills acquired during the course of work—*on the job* knowledge and skills—that typically accompanies the professions. In this study, I examine whether clients of professional care workers expect them to offer *from the heart* knowledge and care.

I conducted qualitative interviews with clients of two categories of care professionals: clinical social workers and veterinarians. I also interviewed clients of lawyers, a non-nurturance professional group, for the purpose of a theoretical contrast. I found that clients of all three professional groups desire men and women providers to offer both *from the heart* knowledge and care labor and *on the job* knowledge and skills. Yet, clients of lawyers reported that they tolerated providers who fail to offer *from the heart* knowledge and care labor because such labor was not seen as a central requirement for a non-nurturance profession. Clients of lawyers noted that emotional distance with non-nurturance professionals can result in some personal benefits related to costs of services and access to guarded *on the job* knowledge. In contrast, clients of care professionals complained about the quality and effectiveness of professional services if their providers did not offer *from the heart* knowledge and care labor.

However, I also discovered a tension over reciprocity in the care professional-client relationship. Clients want care professionals to share stories from their personal lives that demonstrate their ability to address clients' complex emotional needs, but clients do not want to provide reciprocal emotional support to care professionals if it prevents care professionals from addressing clients' problems. I conclude that clients of highly skilled care professionals desire and value *from the heart* knowledge and care labor from professionals. However, they only value this knowledge and care if professionals also manage to offer solutions that are rooted in *on the*

*job* knowledge, too. For care professionals, having a professional degree means that they have to meet two client demands that are often difficult to balance.

## **ELEMENTS OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE**

Professionals distinguish themselves from other occupational groups by establishing, articulating, perpetually reconfiguring, and preserving a body of esoteric knowledge that guide their work (Abbott 1988). Examples of long-standing professions in the US include medicine, law, and the professoriate. Professionals acquire this substantive knowledge and related specialized skills by spending several years enrolled in difficult academic degree programs and engaging in hands-on internships (Abbott 1988; Freidson 1986, 1994). Academic knowledge legitimates professionals' authority to define and solve clients' complex problems (Abbott 1988). Although contemporary professionals are more likely to work in bureaucratic organizations than professionals working in decades past, they are still granted considerable autonomy by government agencies and occupational associations to formulate expert knowledge solutions for clients (Abbott 1988; Boulis and Jacobs 2008; Freidson 1986, 1994; Kritzer 2015). Sociologists generally recognize any work position that requires specialized higher education as a profession (Gorman and Sandefur 2011).

While substantive knowledge is a distinctive feature of professional expertise, experiential knowledge (Gorman and Sandefur 2011) is another important component (Abbott 1988; Freidson 1986). Experiential knowledge is tacit knowledge about how to address clients' concrete problems that professionals gain through time in the job (Gorman and Sandefur 2011). When a professional spends time on the job working with actual clients and real-life problems, the professional develops a personal list of cases that he can reference when trying to determine best solutions for future clients with similar problems (Blasi 1995). Past mistakes can be as

informative as past achievements. The professional also develops knowledge about the specificities of an organization, institution, or field (Blasi 1995; Kritzer 1999). This includes information about the personalities of formal and informal power holders, as well as the stated and implicit rules of operation.

Contemporary labor researchers have turned their attention to the relative significance of experiential knowledge and substantive knowledge (Gorman and Sandefur 2011; Sandefur 2015; Sternberg and Horvath 1999). Scholars theorize that professionals deploy experiential knowledge more than substantive knowledge when completing daily work tasks (e.g., Barley 1996; Blasi 1995; Freidson 1986). Organizational limitations, the diversity of clients' characteristics, and professionals' firsthand experiences may prompt professionals to question the efficiency and effectiveness of their substantive knowledge. When a physician diagnoses a patient, for example, she may deviate from the standard course of treatment because the patient cannot physically tolerate it, the patient lacks access to specific medical resources, and/or it is more efficient within present organizational constraints to seek an alternative treatment (Cimino 1999). A professional must integrate and reconcile substantive knowledge and experiential knowledge in order to effectively address clients' problems. Substantive knowledge allows professionals to distinguish themselves from low skilled workers. I refer to the combination of substantive knowledge and the skills learned through work experience as *on the job* knowledge and skills.

## **HOSTILE WORLDS, CONNECTED LIVES,**

## **AND THE DELIVERY OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE**

In an effort to control the superior quality of their members' knowledge solutions, professional associations (e.g., American Bar Association, American Nurses Association) establish codes of conduct that promote strict social boundaries in the professional-client

relationship (Zelizer 2005). For example, doctors, psychiatrists, nurses, clinical social workers, and other medical professionals are advised to avoid friendships with their patients that involve social obligations outside of the medical practice lest they allow intimate emotions to cloud their rational professional judgment (Boulis and Jacobs 2008; Ruchti 2012; Stone 2000). They are also assured that adherence to these codes of conduct will protect against abuses by the client, such as requests for non-monetary exchanges (Zelizer 2005). This boundary work reflects the pervasive cultural doctrine that Viviana Zelizer (2005) calls “hostile worlds,” a belief that the intimate personal sphere (the household and related warmth emotions evoked in caring for family members) is wholly incompatible with the rational public sphere (the market economy and related emotional distance expected in economic transactions).

The hostile worlds doctrine is not exclusive to highly skilled professions. There are instances in which childcare providers avoid economic rationality so as not to spoil the quality of their intimate labor (e.g., Brown 2011; MacDonald 2010). As parents engage in prolonged intimate relations with paid childcare providers (e.g., nannies, daycare workers), they are likely to mask the economic-rational aspect of their relationships with providers by referring to them as “helpers,” “friends,” and “stand-in family members.” Regardless of whether this gesture of familiarity is genuine or an intentional attempt to promote a sense of obligation in the worker, low skilled care workers experience ambivalence about initiating contract negotiations for increased wages and benefits (Chang 2006; Colen 2006; MacDonald 2010). They do not want to appear more interested in personal financial gain than in providing intimate care for families. It appears that the hostile worlds doctrine influences workers and clients to force unnatural and irrational divides between the intimate personal sphere and the rational public sphere.

Zelizer rejects the hostile worlds supposition, supporting instead the “connected lives” perspective. Connected lives means that people are constantly constructing and negotiating intimacy and economic activity in their social lives, such that they are able to mediate and accept contact between the two spheres without experiencing anxiety about contamination. Given the nature of care work, the *on the job* experiences of care workers are quite likely to reflect the connected lives perspective (Duffy, Armenia, and Stacey 2015; Zelizer 2005). Care work is relational in nature because workers typically have reciprocal and sustained emotional connections with clients. This relationality, Duffy et al. (2015) assert, is distinct from the “emotional labor” that Arlie Hochschild (1983) positions as required of workers in low-wage service occupations (e.g., manicurist, bank teller). Service workers’ encounters with clients are usually fleeting and span a short period of time. Clients rarely reciprocate—and are not expected to reciprocate—the same kind of pleasantness and attentiveness offered by such workers. In contrast, care workers spend a lot of time with their clients and learn intimate details about their clients’ lives. In such situations, care workers may form friendships with their clients that extend beyond traditional professional-client encounters. In the care work fields, then, the intimate private sphere and the rational public sphere are harder to separate.

Sociological studies of nursing—a highly skilled care profession—offer some of the most revealing illustrations of the connected lives perspective (e.g., Rodriguez 2014; Ruchti 2012; Stone 2000). Although physicians and nurse supervisors instruct subordinate nurses to complete their work without getting emotionally attached to their patients, these care professionals can feel compelled by clients to engage in relational work. In her ethnographic study of a hospital, Lisa Ruchti (2012) observed nurses initiating small talk with patients to ease their concerns about intimate, embarrassing, or frightening care procedures (e.g.,

catheterizations, IVs). Nurses shared personal stories about overcoming fearful and painful life events. Ruchti contends that nurses foster “intimate trust” (2012, 6) with patients by gaining familiarity with them and by revealing personal information about themselves. Once this trust is established, nurses and other medical professionals on the healthcare team are finally permitted by patients to complete their technical tasks. Nurses commonly distinguish themselves from physicians by referring to themselves as “healers” or “care providers” (Ruchti 2012; Trotter 2015). They maintain that physicians adopt a hostile worlds approach and use substantive knowledge to determine the source of patients’ bodily ailments, while nurses adopt a connected lives approach and use a combination of technical skills and *from the heart* knowledge and care labor to treat those ailments.

These examples I have provided about professionals who share personal feelings and emotional experiences with clients for the purpose of getting work done illustrate what I term *from the heart* knowledge and care. Abundant research demonstrates that clients of semi-skilled care workers value their providers’ *from the heart* knowledge and care labor more than any *on the job* knowledge and skills providers may claim to possess (e.g., Hondagneau-Sotelo 2001; MacDonald 2010; Tuominen 2003). We know less about how clients of highly skilled care professionals value *from the heart* knowledge and care labor, though studies of the nursing profession suggest that these clients may appreciate it as much as *on the job* knowledge and skills. I am interested in whether professional training changes client’s expectations about *from the heart* knowledge and care labor. To explore this question, I examine clients’ knowledge expectations for highly skilled professions.

## METHOD

In this study, I interrogate clients' conceptualizations of professional expertise, and the social role they desire professionals to adopt in their working relationships. To this end, I conducted qualitative interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann 1996; Weiss 1994) with clients of two highly skilled care professions—clinical social work and veterinary medicine—and one “non-nurturance” profession—law. By including care professions at opposite ends of the “emotional duties” spectrum, I consider the diversity of care professionals in my analysis. Below I detail each profession and its relationship to *from the heart* knowledge and care labor.

I identify clinical social work as an emotionally intensive care profession because workers' primary responsibilities are diagnosing and treating clients' emotional, mental, and behavioral disorders in private practices (NASW CWS 2006; US BLS 2015b). Social workers serve as school counselors, family therapists, and substance abuse counselors, among other positions. Those individuals who want to become state-licensed clinical social workers must complete a two-year Master of Social Work (MSW) program. The curricula in these programs often include graduate courses in psychology and sociology, training in maintaining social boundaries with patients, and internships in clinics. Social workers' compassionate devotion to addressing the needs of vulnerable populations (NASW CWS 2006), as well as women's long-standing numerical dominance in the profession (Abrams and Curran 2004), has fostered the public's perception of social work as a nurturing occupation (Freeman and Valentine 2004; Murdach 2006). The National Association of Social Workers' Code of Ethics emphasizes that care should be provided to clients while maintaining a professional boundary, as illustrated by items that discourage social workers from engaging in physical contact with clients or from receiving goods and services from clients as payment for professional services (NASW 2016).

Veterinarians' primary responsibilities are to diagnose and treat animals' medical conditions (CHWS 2013; US BLS 2015c). Veterinarians typically study for an additional four years at an accredited veterinary medical college after completing a bachelor's degree. Their training includes advanced science courses, laboratory experiences, and clinical hours in medical centers. Every state requires veterinarians to obtain licenses to practice. Demographic shifts in gender and practice types within the profession have contributed to the evolution of veterinary medicine as a care profession (Irvine and Vermilya 2010). The field has been shifting from majority men to majority women over the last 40 years (Irvine and Vermilya 2010; Lincoln 2010). Since women constitute more than three quarters of new graduates from US veterinary medical colleges (CHWS 2013), the future of the profession is decidedly feminine. Veterinary medicine may seem to require little or no emotionality because professionals' duties are to address medical conditions, but sometimes it does because pet owners frequently regard their animals as family members (Podberscek, Paul, and Serpell 2000). In the rapidly expanding field of small animal practice, women veterinarians report that clients appreciate the gender shift because they perceive women as naturally caring and compassionate with their pets (Irvine and Vermilya 2010). Field research confirms that women veterinarians spend more time than men veterinarians talking with their clients and establishing a rapport (Shaw et al. 2012).

Lawyers advise and represent clients on legal matters; emotional care is not a core task of the legal profession (Kritzer 2015; Nelson, Trubek, and Solomon 1992; US BLS 2015a). A lawyer's main responsibilities are to extract the summary points of the legal issue from a client's account of his or her problems and construct a solution that offers maximum legal or financial benefits. Those who want to become lawyers must attend law school after earning a bachelor's degree and pass the professional bar association's examination in order to practice law.

Historically, men have dominated the legal field. Though more women are graduating from law schools in recent decades, the top positions in the legal field remain dominated by men (Kritzer 2015; Nelson, Trubek, and Solomon 1992). Lawyers use emotions strategically in their pursuit of desirable legal outcomes; sometimes lawyers exhibit concern for their clients in order to make clients feel comfortable sharing the details of their cases, but quietly listening to clients is usually the extent to which lawyers are willing to provide emotional support (Kritzer 1999; Mather, McEwen, and Maiman 2001).

I recruited clients of these professions in Southern California and New England. I posted paper advertisements in public spaces (e.g., libraries, coffee shops), contacted interest groups on social media websites (e.g., Meetup.com, Facebook.com), and followed up on personal referrals from the people I interviewed (“snowball sampling,” Weiss 1994). I offered to enter respondents who completed a one-time interview into a raffle for a \$100 Target or Apple/iTunes card as an incentive. I conducted interviews with 46 clients over a three-year period. Participants selected the time and location of their one-time, individual interviews. I met with participants in coffee shops, in their homes, at their work offices, and in my home. I obtained consent from participants to audio record the interviews. I asked clients about how they found their professional service providers, why they selected their providers, what they like/dislike about their providers, their referral habits, and their gender preferences for providers. The interviews lasted an average of thirty minutes.

I restricted interviews to adults who were at least 18 years of age and had last met with their professional service provider within two years of the interview. Thirteen of the participants were clients who sought out clinical social workers for mental health services. Sixteen of the participants were clients who hired veterinarians to care for their dogs and cats. Seventeen of the

participants hired lawyers for divorce, child custody, estate planning, and labor discrimination cases. The mean age of the participant sample was 48 years old. A majority of the participants were women (74 percent) and white (85 percent). All but three of the participants had some college experience or a postsecondary school degree. Given the lack of gender and racial diversity in my final sample, the results of my research are not generalizable to the total possible population of clients. I have mostly gathered women's opinions, so I cannot confirm if men possess different knowledge expectations based on their gender status. Nor can I confirm differences in knowledge expectations between whites and racial minorities.

I conducted a qualitative content analysis (Schreier 2012; Weber 1990) of the interview data using the computer-assisted qualitative analysis software (CAQDAS), Dedoose. I searched for themes in the interviews that reflected empirical research and theories on professional expertise. I began my analysis with codes drawn from relevant literature. I noted when interviewees discussed professionals' substantive knowledge (e.g., years and curricular content of professional training, prestige status of professional degree programs), *on the job* knowledge (e.g., years of work in the profession or a given workplace, knowledge of local professionals' work habits and expectations), and *from the heart* knowledge (e.g., sharing personal experiences about family and friendship relationships, exhibiting empathy and investment in clients). When interviewees discussed a desire for their professional service providers to promote emotional intimacy, I identified this as a preference for the connected lives relationship with professionals. When interviewees discussed a desire for rational knowledge solutions only, I regarded this as a preference for the hostile worlds professional relationship. I added secondary codes to the primary codes (nested subsets) as I examined each interview transcript. I sought to uncover nuanced conceptualizations of connected lives, hostile worlds, and professional knowledge in

these interviews. I reexamined transcripts several times in order to compare and contrast codes and to determine each code's relative importance.

## **RESULTS**

### Ideal and Valued Professional Knowledge and Skills

There is some variation in the problems that clients had and the types of services they sought from professionals. Both clients of clinical social workers and veterinarians sought medical attention. The former group required mental health services for themselves, while the latter group needed physical health services for their animals. Clients of lawyers, on the other hand, sought legal protections (e.g., wills, child custody) and compensations (e.g., settlement for employment discrimination, alimony from divorce). While clients' legal cases were sometimes entangled with personal anxieties (particularly in the case of divorce and child custody), clients did not feel that they hired lawyers to directly address intimate emotions. Clients of all three professional groups relied mainly on recommendations from friends, neighbors, family members, and consumer reviews posted on internet websites (e.g., Yelp.com). Geographic proximity to home or work was the primary factor in their selection processes. The cost of services and the quality of office amenities were also important factors. A minority of clients searched for additional information about professionals' training and skills before setting up their first appointment. In general, clients reported that they choose to evaluate the quality of professionals' services for themselves after establishing working relationships with them.

*On the Job Knowledge and Skills.* Clients across the three professional groups expect their clients to possess *on the job* knowledge and skills. In the case of the legal profession, clients said they wanted professionals who were familiar with all the requisite steps for moving their

cases through the legal system. Valerie asserted that early career mentors are essential to exposing young lawyers to the inner-workings of the courts:

You hear like, “Oh, if they went to Harvard then they’re going to be a real good lawyer.” So I don’t know if it’s so much that. I think it’s probably—definitely experience. I think it’s mentoring. You know, you are a young lawyer, you get in with the firm or you get in with a partner that teaches you. Role model. That kind of thing....

Legal clients imagine that lawyers gain valuable information about the operations of the legal system by working on real cases. Xavier, who had recently hired a family lawyer for his child support case, said:

[I think what makes a good lawyer is] experience over time. Not to say that you need to hire someone who is 75 years old. But I think if they’ve been doing their type of work for twenty years, they’ve gained a lot of experience on how to deal with people. How to deal with the court system. Where the person who has been out of school for two years—and I’m not trying to belittle—but I do think the experience with a good lawyer is, you know, knowing the areas to look for whatever case that it happens to be.

These clients expect lawyers to draw on their experiences from past cases to predict next steps in their own cases. Joe, another father working with a family lawyer on divorce and child custody cases, remarked:

An expert [lawyer] has an accumulation of expertise about what you can expect the courts will—how the courts will settle on certain issues. So you can preempt somebody from dragging their feet or help guide people to what the court is going to deem a reasonable solution.

The *on the job* knowledge and skills that clients describe here is cherished because it is not easily accessible to the public. Esoteric knowledge, which professionals gain in lengthy and challenging professional degree programs, is the hallmark of professions (Abbott 1988; Freidson 1986, 1994). Clients hired their lawyers as guides through a foreign environment with cloaked rules of engagement.

Clients of care professionals assumed that their providers possessed *on the job* knowledge and skills that they obtained in graduate education programs. Pet owners speculated that their veterinarians had attended veterinary medical schools to learn a range of animal anatomies and practice complex diagnostic and treatment techniques (e.g., reading x-rays, performing surgeries). Social work clients guessed that their providers had completed master's- or doctoral-level coursework in psychology and participated in clinical internships – though, again, very few clients had done any research to establish the credentials of the educational professional they hired. Clients searched for more information about a provider's specific training only when they wanted someone with in-depth knowledge of a professional specialty (e.g., feline oncology, domestic abuse).

*From the Heart Knowledge and Care Labor.* All the clients I interviewed said they expected their professional service providers to be personable, by which they meant, upon further discussion, to be kind and congenial. Some clients said that congeniality was sufficient, while others considered it to be a baseline level (i.e., they wanted more emotional intimacy). Desires varied by occupational groups. Looking first at the clients of lawyers, they reported that they hoped to hire someone who was friendly but expected little else in terms of personality or affect. Melanie, the client of a divorce lawyer, observed, “[The legal professional is] a rewarding profession, but it must feel cold, too, to them. ...It's a professional line. Don't expect them to be your best bud, OK.” Legal clients were more likely to use the word “professional” in their descriptions of providers' personalities, a descriptor that they understood as denoting the ability to respectfully listen and respond to a client's problem while maintaining emotional distance.

Although clients regarded social work and veterinary medicine as care occupations, they also identified them as skilled professions. Clients in these cases expressed an initial fear that the

care professionals they hired might adhere to the traditional professional philosophy of clinical distance and eschew *from the heart* care—a style most clients found hard to bear in a situation in which they were seeking help for an intimate problem or for a beloved pet. Clients were happy when care professionals challenged these fears in their initial meeting. Felicia was relieved to learn that her counselor adopted a humorous approach in treatment. She noted that she could not help but laugh when he playfully teased her about some of her peculiar fixations:

I think in this particular case having someone (a substance abuse counselor) who has a bit of a, you know, sense of humor—that, for me, makes it more comfortable I can say. I wouldn't do well with a rigid person. With a by-the-book person, you know. I like the relationship we have.

Unlike legal clients, professional care clients expected providers to foster familiarity with them. Danielle liked that her family counselor "...was very down to earth and very direct and personable. That she wasn't distant." Chloe appreciates that her marriage counselor "...was very real...", explaining further:

Sometimes some [counselors] want to keep it very clinical, you know what I mean? Whereas I could just have a conversation with him (my current counselor) about the situation and that was a style that worked very well for me. Like, I didn't need the fake—what's the word I'm looking for? [*pauses briefly*] Clinical distance.

Similarly, pet owners said they needed more than warm smiles and clinical inquiries from their veterinarians. They wanted veterinarians to take the time to learn and appreciate the colorful personalities of their pets.

Clients of care professionals also expected providers to empathize with them. When I asked Zora, "What makes a good clinical social worker?", she responded:

They (social workers) need to be a good listener. I want to say sympathetic to what someone is going through, even though it may seem so silly, you know, from another perspective. But to not make them feel way that.

When I asked Pete, parent to two small children and a Labrador Retriever, a similar question about veterinarians, he replied that veterinarians should be as adept at empathizing with human owners as they are at diagnosing and treating animal ailments:

Well, um, they (veterinarians) certainly have to be caring. ... Yeah, dealing with situations when you're seeing people's beloved pets coming in with something wrong or they have to be put down. It's something that you'd have to be able to deal with. ... What they really have to deal with are the humans, not the pets. You know, you have to figure out how to interact well with people.

Alicia, who had recently adopted two kittens from a rescue shelter in Los Angeles, echoed Pete's response:

...[Y]ou (a veterinarian) would have to love animals, and I think you would also have to be personable and relatable to your clients, because like me, so many people that are going [to veterinarians] don't know what they're really going for. They either notice there's something wrong with their animal and therefore they're probably upset, or they're worried about maintenance and stuff....

Sabrina, a cat owner, brought up the empathy theme in her depiction of the ideal veterinarian, although she was more self-conscious about her response than the other clients I interviewed:

I think they (veterinarians) need to know how to deal with people, too, because—especially when you have a sick animal—it's really hard and you need to make them feel better, too. It's a weird thing to say, but I want the vet to make me feel better when I leave [the veterinary appointment], too.

Care clients suggested that empathy on the part of professionals makes them more receptive to professionals' advice and solutions—again, an expectation that clients of lawyers did not share.

In addition to this desire for emotional intimacy (*from the heart* care), about a third of the professional care recipients in my study said they prefer providers who use *from the heart* knowledge to address clients' problems. When I asked Zora to describe what makes a good clinical social worker, she mentioned listening skills and a “sympathetic” personality first. Then, she added:

Life experience, too, I think. I think that's always good. I always valued my parents' opinion because they experienced more life than me. She (my social worker) was quite a bit older than me, so I felt like she had the same kind of experiences and wisdom that she could pass onto me. You know, not just something she just learned in school, but maybe something she had lived through or something she had experienced with other patients.

Grace ranked life experience as the most important factor in her evaluation of a social worker. In clarifying and bolstering her opinion, she told me more about the social worker she hired to guide her through bariatric surgery and a post-surgery weight management plan:

I do happen to know a little bit about his (my current counselor's) background. That he had a form of addiction that he overcame and learned from that. ... The reason that he went to [graduate] school [for clinical social work] is because he is a recovered addict. And I think that somebody who, like, comes up through the ranks and just has that real experience has an edge. Of course education is really important and, um, you know, learning the proper way to deal with the legalities [of professional counseling]. You know, there are certain do's and don'ts [of the counseling profession]. ... Education is very important, but I think there, real life experience—that's something that would mean a lot to me when I was looking for someone to help me through something. That they lived it already. They've experienced it.

When care clients talked about “life experience,” their descriptions included everything from ordinary social statuses (e.g., senior citizen, pet owner, woman) to noteworthy events (e.g., death of a family member, applying to graduate school). It is in contrast to *on the job experience*, which is about experiences in the workplace.

Clients suggested that when a care professional acquires relevant *from the heart* knowledge, his or her capacity to empathize with clients grows. Kevin, a cat owner, told me that all veterinarians ideally have “...a pet themselves because they can relate more. If you (a veterinarian) don't have a pet and somebody's crying about how their pet is their best friend, you wouldn't understand why they're their best friend.” Wendy felt strongly that a social worker should be old enough to have personally experienced certain life hardships. She said:

[Social workers should have] a certain amount of personal wisdom and experience. I know I mentioned age before, but I guess I have a bias against someone who would, like, go straight through [from undergraduate school to professional school] and be 24 and be a counselor. ... There are just certain things that come with time. Most people by my age (45) have had some serious illness type of things and they can have empathy. They've had some family deaths, so they can have empathy.

Rebecca, another client of a mental health counselor, offers a similar theory about the significance of *from the heart* knowledge:

I think it (life experience) just helps. They (social workers) can relate to other people if they've had a lot of life experiences. It's easier to relate to someone. You know how they say, "Don't actually judge someone until you've walked in their shoes?" So the more life experiences you have, I think, the more you'd be able to understand what somebody's going through. You can read books and you can learn ways to help people and to listen to people, but I think living in something is a lot different than reading a book.

Clients maintain that *from the heart* knowledge helps professionals to comprehend the emotional complexities of clients' problems.

Professional care recipients regard *from the heart* knowledge as important and sometimes even more significant than *on the job* and substantive knowledge. During their very first meeting, Leah's veterinarian, Dr. Juarez, revealed that her own dog had recently died from the same kind of tumor that Leah's dog is battling. Dr. Juarez was able to share her dog's experiences with the side effects of various cancer treatments and offer tried-and-true remedies. Leah told me that overall, Dr. Juarez was "...very informative, very empathetic..." in this meeting. Lucy, a cat owner, said she became more confident in her veterinarian's skills once she learned a bit more about her childhood:

At first I was nervous because she was so young, and I kind of felt like I wanted someone who had been around a little bit longer, but she had grown up on a farm, they had cats, like wild cats and whatever, so she kind of—It's like she was older without having been, because she had been taking care of animals since she was very small and kind of just had an intuitive nature of what was wrong, and kind of just fell into being a vet, just because she already could do it and so it sort of

made sense. It was nice, and I felt like I could call her on the phone and just explain what was happening, and she would be able to give me a pretty good understanding of what was probably wrong.

Clients characterized professionals' relevant *from the heart* knowledge as supplementing and enriching their professional education. The care labor literature from which I developed the concept of *from the heart* knowledge may help to explain why care clients value professionals' lived personal experience and legal clients do not. When clients bring their emotional and psychological problems to clinical social workers for professional assistance, for example, it seems natural for these professionals to exhibit some emotions in reaction to clients' painful or jubilant stories. In contrast, when clients ask lawyers to push their legal cases through the highly rational and bureaucratic justice system, any emotions that lawyers exhibit seems misplaced and unprofessional.

*Identity-Based Experiential Knowledge.* Eleven of the professional care recipients stated they intentionally seek out care professionals who share their social statuses. These clients also discussed their own marginalized social statuses (e.g., LGBTQ, women) while reiterating the theme of empathy and rapport. Ryan, a gay man, felt it was important for him to hire a social worker who was also homosexual:

I just wanted someone who was...gay or lesbian. That was more important [in my search] because I wanted someone who had that experience. That life experience. How you connect and interact with people and relationships, it's just different. I mean, same-sex relationships are not the same as opposite-sex relationships. I mean, there's a lot of similarities, but they're not the same. And so, to have someone who can identify with that I think is important.

I asked all my interview subjects if they possess gender preferences when it comes to hiring professional providers and a total of ten—all of them women—expressed a preference for professionals who share their gender identity. Two of the women reasoned that women can better

relate to other women because they are likely to possess the same gender experiences. Rebecca, a social work client, explained:

...I feel like men and women are totally different. So totally different. For a man to understand a woman's feelings and emotions and who she is as a mother, a grandmother, a wife—he just doesn't have a clue. You know, I feel like most women would be able to associate more with me as a woman. I mean, we're just totally different creatures. Not better, not worst, but totally, totally different.

Alicia argued that there is a mutual respect among women that evolves from the shared struggle of being members in a subordinate gender group. In past experiences with men veterinarians, Alicia found that they adopted a "...condescending tone..." with her during appointments. She imitated these veterinarians during our interview by standing up, peering over me, and saying sternly, "I am going to father you and treat you like a child." For this reason, Alicia searched for a woman veterinarian for her newly adopted kittens. "I feel like women have a tendency to at least be on the level with each other," she said. The rest of the women who stated a preference for women providers assumed that women naturally possess feminine personality traits that make for inviting professional-client relationships; they expected women professionals to be "very warm," "easy to talk to," and "less intimidating." Overall, these professional care recipients described an ease of communication with providers who share their social statuses.

#### Shifts in Clients' Desires for Hostile Worlds and Connected Lives

Clients had relatively strong opinions about the kind of service relationships they expected with professionals and, in some cases, these opinions significantly shaped the course of clients' search and hiring processes. However, once clients hit "breakdown" moments, their desires usually shifted. Legal clients thought that brief and formal conversations with their lawyers would suffice, but when clients began to wrestle with emotionally charged legal battles they expressed appreciation for those rare moments when their lawyers offered comforting hugs

or promptly responded to tearful phone messages outside of business hours. Still, legal clients accepted the hostile worlds approach that their lawyers established because it helped to cap service charges. Care clients said they prefer emotional intimacy with their service providers, but when providers offered more emotional labor than professional knowledge-based solutions clients wished for more emotional distance. Most care clients endured these less desirable conditions and remained with their providers, likely due to the mutual emotional investment in the relationship. These breakdown moments reveal the conflicts between the hostile worlds and the connected lives ideologies for clients.

*Relationships with Non-nurturance Professionals.* When I asked Eva about her first meeting with her divorce lawyer, Carol, she replied: “She was a super straight shooter and she wasn’t, like overly nice to me. ...She was just, like, very matter of fact.” Eva went on to explain that when she brought up her suspicions about her husband’s infidelity, Carol told her emphatically that all the evidence pointed to a prolonged affair. Eva said that she tried to hide her watering eyes as Carol quipped, “I’m not here to make you feel good.” In our interview, Eva sighed and told me, “...I would have wanted a little more compassion from her, but I understand that wasn’t her role.” Legal clients did not place fault on the lawyers in these situations, but rather, described their desire for emotional intimacy as an issue that they had to resolve themselves.

Given lawyers’ hefty retainer fees and hourly rates (clients reported paying up to \$500 per hour), many legal clients grew to appreciate their lawyers’ directness and brevity. Xavier told me, “I tried to keep the calls [to my family lawyer] to a minimum because he charges through the nose every time you call.” Providing emotional care, such as small talk, takes time. With lawyers, time is money. Nadia, a client of a divorce lawyer, said:

Well, I'd have to say that he (my divorce lawyer) pulls no punches. Like, he's blunt. I don't need him to hold my hand. That's what I see my shrink for. ...I need [him] to tell me how it is, because I don't have time—excuse my language—but I don't have time to dick around. I just don't. I just don't. The sooner [he] tells me up front, the less it's going to cost me. I don't need for him to be like, "Oh, are you OK?" Although there has been times where he's done that. At \$350 an hour, I'm like, "Let's go! I'll suck up my tears!"

In another interview, Valerie expressed a similar mixed emotion about her divorce lawyer, stating, "She's also strong sometimes in, like, cutting me off and stopping me." Then she paused and said, "Maybe that's saving me money!" The professional care recipients did not report any such financial penalties related to emotional care. Veterinarians do not typically charge by the hour, and the individuals I spoke to selected social workers who accepted their health insurance subsidies. The legal profession is a case in which emotional distance has monetary benefits for clients that outweigh any potential emotional benefits associated with professional intimacy.

Most of the interview subjects who required legal representation in courtrooms (e.g., divorce, child custody) told me that their lawyers provide sufficient information about the legal process. Two of the clients I interviewed said that their divorce lawyers outlined long-term legal strategies at the very first meeting:

...[H]e (my divorce lawyer) was showing me what was possible and what was not, and what was reasonable and what was not, and what was better or not good to fight for because we were going to waste our time...." (Barbara)

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So what I liked about it (my first meeting with my divorce lawyers)—I liked the fact they're knowledgeable about all of this paperwork that needs to be done and things that are filed correctly and right. I liked the professionalism of their knowledge of the court system and how it works. I liked how they said, "Well, this is how it works. This way: A, B, C, D." (Melanie)

Those legal clients who did not receive such detailed plans from their lawyers reasoned that the legal process is not always predictable. Jackie labeled herself a “planner,” so when I asked her what her divorce lawyer could do to improve their professional relationship, she replied:

Be proactive. Kind of see things coming and give me a call and say, “This is coming. Just relax. This is what it means. This is what’s going to happen.” Maybe walk me through a bit more of the culture that I was to expect in this process. But, they’ve probably seen such a variety that maybe there is no way to really say what’s to be expected....

Most clients trusted their lawyers enough to work on their cases while providing only occasional updates.

*Relationships with Care Professionals.* While legal clients expressed ambivalence regarding the emotional distance that their service providers established in their professional relationships, clients of care professionals were apt to refer to their providers as friends:

[Visiting my social worker was like] sitting and talking with a friend. It wasn’t like a doctor or a stranger.... (Rebecca)



[I appreciate] the fact that she (my veterinarian) cared as much as she did. We’d have been closer friends if I’d have had the time to establish that kind of relationship with her. (Ella)

Clients maintained that when care professionals take the time to gain familiarity with them, these professionals establish a trusting and comfortable working relationship that allows clients to easily communicate their problems and concerns.

Clients expressed gratitude for care professionals who they felt demonstrated genuine investment in their lives. Viola stated that the first time she sat down with her social worker to talk about her anxiety, “I felt that she cared about me and that she cared about my problem. ...She was going to be supportive in any way she could. And that it (my problem) mattered [to her].” For clients, genuine investment means that care professionals regard them as more than

faceless medical, mental, or behavioral problems. They want care professionals to recognize that clients are individuals with unique pasts and presents before offering to help shape clients' futures.

Chloe's marriage counselor, Henry, is, for her, a model professional in this respect. Chloe started seeing him because she wanted to save her unraveling marriage. However, as Henry compassionately listened to her list one physical injury after another at the hands of her husband, he strongly urged her to get a divorce. He deciphered her husband's pattern of abuse based on Chloe's detailed accounts of previous incidents before offering any advice on how she should tell her husband that she was initiating divorce paperwork. When Henry and Chloe agreed that the time had come for her to tell her husband the news, Henry walked her through a few possible reactions that he believed her husband might display and diagrammed safe escape routes out of their home based on sketches that Chloe had drawn during the session. Henry assisted her in finding legal advice whenever he could as she grappled with the emotional fallout of a vicious child custody battle. At the end of my interview with Chloe, she smiled broadly and said:

I know this sounds silly, but I feel like he (Henry) genuinely has a desire for me to go on to have a good and better life, you know what I mean? That he has my best interests at heart. That I'm not just a box to check. I'm not just number 427-03 [in his patient files].

Clients remarked that this level of attentiveness to their lives demonstrates a professional-level ability to create solutions that are specifically tailored to their unique problems.

While clients reported that their care professionals possess adequate substantive knowledge, about a fifth of all professional care recipients (6) also lamented that the onus is on them to coax this knowledge out of their providers. Clients described the stress of placing boundaries on care professionals' emotional work so that they could extract the substantive solutions they desperately needed. They portrayed their providers as too empathetic and not

rational. Wanda brought her 14-year-old dog into the veterinary office soon after he exhibited incontinence and limited physical mobility. She told the veterinarian that the dog had valiantly fought and "...overcame cancer twice..." so she was ready to euthanize him. Wanda said the veterinarian refused, telling her, "Yeah, maybe it's time for him to go, but *I* can't do it." Wanda was shocked. She said to me, "I've never met a vet who said, '*I* can't put him to sleep because I love him.' ...I was like, 'I love him, too! But he's gotta go!'" Eventually, Wanda persuaded the veterinarian's associate to euthanize the dog.

More social work clients than veterinary clients told stories of providers who spent too much time talking about feelings instead of solutions. Some complained that their social workers talked too much about themselves. When I asked Wendy if there is anything she does not like about her social worker, Sara, she explained:

She talks a lot sometimes and I don't really like small talk. And sometimes I'm like, "OK, that's really nice about your cat, Sara. ...But, OK, Sara, we're past the part where we're talking about the cats and the orchids that you got for your birthday because I've really got to tell you all this stuff [about my life]." ...I'm always thinking about time. I've only got 57 minutes left and [she's] talking about [her] cat, you know? So I don't know. I don't like it that much.

Linda said that she "...really used to wonder why [my current] counselor, she would say, 'I, I, I' when she [talked to me about dealing with my abusive ex-husband]." Linda, who had enrolled in a mental health policy graduate program just two months before our interview, had come to conclude that clinical social workers are trained in their professional schools to use *from the heart* and *on the job* knowledge only to create solutions for their clients. Linda said she tried to discuss the implications of some quantitative psychology studies with her social worker, Anne, in an effort to develop strategies for mediating a child custody battle with her ex-husband, but she found that Anne "...is not interested in numbers or statistics." Other social work clients told me that their providers let them talk too much about their feelings without providing professional

feedback. Yolanda complained that her counselor simply nodded as she talked to her during sessions. “I tend to like people who give me suggestions of what to do,” she said. “I’m consulting an expert because I need information I don’t have. If I want to just think about my feelings in a vacuum, I can do that at home, you know?” Still, clients recognized that emotional care is an integral part of care professionals’ work, so they deemed these consequences of care work as preferable to visiting uncaring providers. All but two of the professional care recipients (pet owners) told me that they are satisfied with their current providers. It is likely that clients did not seek out new providers for two reasons. First, clients would take significant emotional risks by revealing their vulnerability to a new provider—who may not be as caring as the last provider. Second, clients may not want to abruptly withdraw their emotional support for providers who have boldly shared the intimate details of personal struggles that mirror their own problems.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

In this study, I set out to expand the evolving social theory on care workers’ work roles. I wanted to determine if clients expect highly skilled care professionals to operate more like low skilled care workers and promote emotional intimacy with clients, or if clients expect care professionals to operate more like other professionals who boast esoteric knowledge (e.g., lawyers, physicians) and maintain emotional distance from clients. I also assessed the relative significance of care professionals’ *on the job* knowledge and skills and *from the heart* knowledge and care labor to clients. I examined two care professions in my study: clinical social worker and veterinarian. Although the latter profession requires less emotional care duties than the former, clients of both professional groups demonstrated similar care expectations and valued similar

professional qualities. I also examined a non-nurturance profession—lawyer—to determine if clients of all highly skilled care professionals possess the same expectations.

I found that clients of care professionals and non-nurturance professionals alike command *on the job* knowledge and skills from providers. Clients also expect all professionals to maintain social and emotional boundaries with clients, though clients prefer congeniality, warmth, and intimacy on the part of professionals when the situation permits. Professional care recipients appreciate when providers exhibit emotionally intimate care labor and identify the connected lives approach as the mark of a good provider. Legal clients find solace in the financial benefits of the hostile worlds approach because of how they view the legal system. They need lawyers to guide them through the foreign environment that is the legal system, so they cannot so easily dismiss their services. Care clients, on the other hand, appreciate a companion to support them as they navigate the familiar territory of everyday life (e.g., family, workplace, school), but their presence is not critical in the same way.

My findings suggest that clients value *from the heart* knowledge and care labor from highly skilled professionals if it is not provided at the expense of dispensing *on the job* knowledge. Some professional care recipients found that if they want to bring the warmth of the intimate sphere into the public professional sphere, they must be prepared to actively manage the balance of emotionality and rationality in the client-professional relationship. This small group of clients described the burden of setting emotional boundaries with their care professionals and setting priorities for their meetings. Still, they preferred a connected lives approach to their relationships with care professionals because establishing trust through intimacy was paramount. I find support for Ruchti's theory of intimate trust (2012). Those clients who reported intimate friendships with their care professionals said they felt very comfortable detailing the full scope of

their problems for the purpose of receiving professional help. Care professionals must gain clients' trust first if they intend to sufficiently assess and address clients' problems, and intimacy fosters this trust. In addition, clients described their problems as complex, in that the problems usually induce a mix of emotional, physical, mental, and/or financial strains on the individual. They had more confidence in care professionals who could prove that they understood the intricacies of their problems, and professionals' lived experiences were the best evidence. Only then could care professionals conduct a directed and thorough survey of their *on the job* knowledge to formulate remedies. This finding stands in contrast to previous studies that have reported clients' devaluation of low skilled care workers' *from the heart* knowledge and care labor (e.g., Hondagneau-Sotelo 2001; MacDonald 2010; Tuominen 2003).

I also explore the limits of Zelizer's (2005) conceptualization of the connected lives approach by highlighting the link between status and worker-client relationship. She maintains that all worker-client relationships exhibit some degree of a connected lives approach. Zelizer argues that some workers' efforts to eschew the connected lives approach in favor of a hostile worlds approach (like lawyers) is futile and unproductive. When urging workers to consider a connected lives approach, there needs to be acknowledgment of the role of status in producing varied positive and negative occupational outcomes. The same qualities of warmth, empathy, and treating people like friends and family that are valued and rewarded in this professionalized context, are valued but "unrewarded" in low wage care contexts. The high occupational status that clinical social workers and veterinarians enjoy due to their acquisition of guarded professional education affords them some privilege in adopting the connected lives approach without losing clients' respect.

Yet, the privilege of adopting the connected lives approach without the threat of negative consequences is only afforded to professionals so long as they maintain an unarticulated but strict balance of emotionality and rationality. I find that a connected lives approach is not always beneficial for professionals relative to the hostile worlds approach. Clients force highly skilled care professionals into a tug-of-war between providing empathy and providing traditional forms of professional knowledge solutions. If they go too far in the connected lives direction or the hostile worlds direction, clients complain. Complaints can eventually result in the termination of professional relationships. Meanwhile, clients give non-nurturance professionals a pass when they are emotionally cold and permit them to fully embrace the hostile worlds approach.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions**

The intention of my study was to test if client bias is a mechanism of gender inequality among professions. Much of the research that has been conducted to date falls into two camps: the one that interrogates women's investment in their human capital (e.g., Fiske et al. 2002; Heilman 2012; Ridgeway 2009) and the other that examines employers'/managers'/colleagues' discrimination against women workers (e.g., Miller 2011). Of the small body of research on clients' contributions to gender work inequalities, much of it focuses on low-wage service industries (Roth 2004). This is despite the fact that the gender pay gap is largest between workers with professional degrees and smallest between workers with lower levels of education (with the exception of workers with doctoral degrees) (Council of Economic Advisers 2015; US BLS 2015). I suspected that clients are missing from the discussion, as they are just as capable of bringing biases and gender preferences to work organizations as employers, managers, and colleagues (Roth 2004). In this concluding chapter, I provide a thematic summary of findings from my survey research with potential clients of clinical social workers and lawyers and my interviews with recent clients of clinical social workers, veterinarians, and lawyers.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

#### Adding Clients to the Gender Inequalities Debate

The question I posed at the start of this study is, "Do clients have expectations for women professionals' occupational knowledge and skills that may negatively impact women professionals' career advancement?" In my interviews with clients of service professionals across gendered occupations, I found that all clients expect professionals to provide some combination of emotional labor and professional counsel. However, clients of service providers in a men-dominated non-nurturance profession were more merciful when providers failed to

meet these service expectations than clients of service providers in women-dominated care professions. When lawyers maintained emotional distance with clients during the darkest emotional moments of their legal cases, clients reasoned that emotional labor will not meet their most critical service need—guidance through the highly rational and cryptic legal system. Care clients’ inability to precisely quantify the optimal balance of emotional labor and professional counsel did not stop them from giving harsh evaluations of professionals who focused “too much” on feelings or “too much” on esoteric professional knowledge. Women may be more likely to be found among professions in which they are susceptible to poor evaluations from clients who cannot fully articulate their complex service desires. Poor evaluations can lead to fewer future clients and, in the case of professionals who are employed by organizations, fewer merit-based pay raises and promotions.

#### Expanding the Definitions of Professional Knowledge and Skills

The clients I interviewed said they expected all professionals to possess traditional forms of professional knowledge and skills, including esoteric knowledge acquired in professional school degree programs (Abbott 1988; Freidson 1986, 1994; Gorman and Sandefur 2011) and familiarity with the everyday practices of a professional field one usually absorbs while working on real client cases (Gorman and Sandefur 2011; Sandefur 2015; Sternberg and Horvath 1999). I refer to this as *on the job* knowledge and skills, and it has been thoroughly documented and researched in the professional studies research field (e.g., Boulis and Jacobs 2008; Kritzer 2015). Clients also said that they expect their professionals to be kind and caring, and they insisted that professionals are better able to effectively empathize with clients if they acknowledge and share emotional episodes from their own lives. I have named this *from the heart* knowledge and care labor. Research on women-dominated care occupations (both semi-skilled and professional

level) has always presented a discussion of clients' empathy expectations (e.g., Hondagneu-Sotelo 2001; MacDonald 2010; Ruchti 2012; Tuominen 2003), but my study results demonstrate that these expectations are not exclusive to the "care" category of professions.

I used MTurks as proxies for clients. Survey results suggest that clients may have underlying gendered assumptions about who is more likely to naturally demonstrate competency in different professional categories. When I manipulated a professional's gender, occupation, and work experience in the first factorial survey, MTurk survey respondents gave more favorable leadership trait evaluations to highly experienced women among a women-dominated care profession, but not to highly experienced women among a men-dominated non-nurturance profession. Specifically, they rated highly experienced women social workers as more assertive than their less experienced women counterparts, but there was not a parallel outcome among the men social workers sub-sample. Also, they rated highly experienced men lawyers as more knowledgeable than their less experienced men counterparts, but there was not a parallel outcome among the women lawyers sub-sample. Respondents may have gendered definitions of professional knowledge and skills. They possibly assumed that men are more naturally suited for the non-nurturance profession and women are more naturally suited for the care profession.

These survey results, much like the interview data, point to the possible centrality of the work segregation explanation for the gender pay gap problem. Women dominate care professions, which pay less than all other occupations (Cohen, Huffman, and Knauer 2009; Levanon, England, and Allison 2009; Shauman 2006). Professional gatekeepers of men-dominated non-nurturance professions (e.g., powerful clients, professional school recruiters, mentors) may act on gender stereotypes about women's work competency by engaging in hiring, pay, and promotion discrimination (Blair-Loy 2005; Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007; Harris and

Giuffre 2015; Roth 2004). As a consequence, women may feel discouraged from pursuing careers in non-nurturance professions and pushed into the lower tier of a hierarchical labor system.

### Theorizing Gender Flexibility

Results from both surveys suggest that potential clients have gendered conceptions of who can excel in non-nurturance professions versus care professions, and the flexibility of these gendered boundaries vary based on the combination of a professional's gender and human capital record. As I have discussed, in the first factorial vignette survey, respondents gave higher leadership trait ratings to women with increased work experience in a care profession, but not to women with increased work experienced in a non-nurturance profession. Similarly, respondents gave higher leadership trait ratings to men with increased work experience in a non-nurturance profession, but not to men with increased experience in a care profession. In this case, the gender boundaries seem to be strict. Work experience is not enough for women to prove their potential in a men-dominated non-nurturance field and for men to prove their potential in a women-dominated care field.

In the second factorial vignette survey, I manipulated the gender, occupation, and hobby of the professional. I found that respondents rated men social workers who were engaged in a feminized hobby (volunteering in an elementary school) as more exemplary of both a warmth quality (compassionate) and a pragmatic leadership quality (hardworking) than men social workers who were engaged in a gender-neutral hobby (traveling). The hobby variable had no impact on respondents' evaluations of women social workers. While work experience did not improve pragmatic trait evaluations for men social workers in the first survey, their engagement in a feminized hobby helped them in the second survey. Respondents may have interpreted

men's involvement in a feminized hobby as evidence of their deep commitment to the feminine aspect of professional care labor (e.g., emotional comfort, empathy) (Duffy, Albeda, and Hammonds 2013; Duffy, Armenia, and Stacey 2015). Men professionals may have an easier time proving their ability to demonstrate the femininity needed to excel in a women-dominated care profession than women professionals who are trying to prove their devotion to men-dominated non-nurturance professions. Greater latitude may be given to men to cross gendered occupational boundaries because they are not challenging power structures in the process—they are giving up their masculine privilege and sliding down the occupational prestige hierarchy.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR PROMOTING GENDER WORK EQUALITY**

### Reevaluating Care Professionals' Emotional Boundaries with Clients

Women are concentrated in care professions and, as my research shows, they are at high risk of receiving negative client evaluations due to clients' complex emotional and knowledge expectations. Professional organizations, such as the National Association of Social Workers (NASW 2016), discourage social workers from engaging in dual relationships with clients, particularly romantic encounters with clients and the receipt of goods and services from clients as payment for professional services. Such restrictions are critical for minimizing incidences of exploitation on the part of both professionals and clients. However, clinical social workers report that the singular focus on these egregious emotional transgressions in their professional training programs makes them blind to clients' needs for relatively minor displays of empathy and compassion in practice—comforting smiles, gentle teasing to lighten the mood, and similar subtle gestures (Alexander and Charles 2009). More research must be conducted to determine which particular emotional gestures that clients commonly demand are less likely to lead to exploitative professional-client relationships. Once this research is conducted, social work and

other care profession education programs should train students how to address clients' requests for emotional labor in a manner that does not undermine their professions' ethical standards and that still allows them to provide professional knowledge-based solutions to their problems.

### Minimizing the Impact of Gender-Biased Client Evaluations

My research highlights the need for interventions around the negative impact of gender-biased client evaluations on individual professionals' hiring, pay, and promotion outcomes. Professional employers (e.g., hospitals, law practices) sometimes construct and distribute surveys to clients to get their feedback on their satisfaction with services provided by professional employees. These surveys can be used to determine if an individual professional merits a higher base salary, a pay raise, or a promotion. Contemporary clients also have the opportunity to submit evaluations of their professional service providers to review websites, like Yelp.com and AngiesList.com. Review websites are searchable business directories. Visitors to these websites are permitted to create member profiles, rate individual service providers/businesses using a given Likert scale (Yelp.com's five-star scale ranges from "Eek! Methinks not." to "Woohoo! As good as it gets!"), and write open-ended comments about their experiences. Potential clients may turn to review websites to help them make hiring decisions—some of the clients I interviewed did just that. How much are employers and clients unintentionally relying on gender-biased client evaluations?

Yelp.com states in its "Terms of Service" that it will delete any customer reviews that contain "illegal hate speech" or "promote bigotry or discrimination" (Yelp 2017). One could imagine that employers also destroy client surveys that include hate speech or bigotry. However, this is the extreme end of the gender bias spectrum. Since Yelp.com does not publish information about its filtering algorithm, I cannot determine whether the company relies on academic

research regarding the subtle transmission of sexist ideologies in social media (Fox, Cruz, and Lee 2015) to fine tune its filtering algorithm. Scholars can put pressure on Yelp.com and other review sites to improve upon their algorithm based on academic research if that is not done already. Review websites can reduce the prominence of sexist reviews on their websites by placing them toward the bottom of users' search results or by adding labels that caution users of potentially biased language. Review websites could also provide a service in which employers are given the opportunity to run client surveys through their improved filtering algorithms.

## **FINAL CONCLUSIONS**

My research highlights the limitations of current sociological theories to predict what clients desire and demand from their professional service providers. Sociologists distinguish professions from other occupations because of their maintenance of exclusive, esoteric work knowledge. The clients in my study said that they sought out professionals to address personal problems that were too difficult for them to solve themselves. Yet, the clients did not necessarily prefer professionals who demonstrated mastery of traditional professional knowledge. They were rarely impressed by professionals who had attended elite universities or received accolades from their professional organizations. I found that, at times, clients regard professionals' formal training as important as their informal training—that is, lessons learned from personal life events. At other times, clients prioritize professionals' informal training over their formal training. Determining the mechanisms by which clients determine their professional service desires and needs is critical to determining gender-based and other inequalities in the labor market.

## Appendix A: Sample First Impressions Survey I

INSTRUCTIONS: We’re studying how people form first impressions—that is, how people make decisions from little information. Please read the following profile of a professional working in Chicago, Illinois. We’d like you to give us your first impressions of the professional. Imagine you're a client who is trying to choose a professional service provider. The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. You must be at least 18 years of age to complete this survey.

SECTION I PROFESSIONAL PROFILE: Please read the following profile of a professional working in Chicago, Illinois. Give us your first impressions of the professional.

1. Michael has enjoyed a career as a lawyer for 2 years. He currently practices in a private office. In his free time, he likes to travel.

Please indicate how much the following traits describe the professional, where 1 means “Not At All” and 7 means “Extremely.” (Please indicate one answer for each trait.)

	<u>1</u> Not At All	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u> Extremely
Compassionate	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Knowledgeable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Trustworthy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Hardworking	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Assertive	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

SECTION II BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Please provide us with a bit of information about yourself.

1. How old are you?

\_\_\_\_\_ years old

2. What is your sex? (Check one)

Female

Male

3. What is your ethnicity? (Check one)

Hispanic or Latino

Not Hispanic or Latino

4. What is your race? (You may check more than one)

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

White

Other (Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

5. Where do you currently reside? (Check one)

U.S. Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)

U.S. Midwest (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI)

U.S. South (AL, AR, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV,

District of Columbia)

U.S. West (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY)

6. What is the highest level of education you have obtained? (Check one)

Less than high school

High school diploma or GED

Some college or 2-year degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate degree

Thank you for your participation!

## Appendix B: Sample First Impressions Survey II

INSTRUCTIONS: We’re studying how people form first impressions—that is, how people make decisions from little information. Please read the following profile of a professional working in Chicago, Illinois. We’d like you to give us your first impressions of the professional. Imagine you're a client who is trying to choose a professional service provider. The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. You must be at least 18 years of age to complete this survey.

SECTION I PROFESSIONAL PROFILE: Please read the following profile of a professional working in Chicago, Illinois. Give us your first impressions of the professional.

1. Jennifer has enjoyed a career as a social worker for 11 years. She currently practices in a private office. In her free time, she likes to volunteer in elementary school classrooms.

Please indicate how much the following traits describe the professional, where 1 means “Not At All” and 7 means “Extremely.” (Please indicate one answer for each trait.)

	<u>1</u> Not At All	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u> Extremely
Compassionate	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Knowledgeable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Trustworthy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Hardworking	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Assertive	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

SECTION II BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Please provide us with a bit of information about yourself.

1. How old are you?

\_\_\_\_\_ years old

2. What is your sex? (Check one)

Female

Male

3. What is your ethnicity? (Check one)

Hispanic or Latino

Not Hispanic or Latino

4. What is your race? (You may check more than one)

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

White

Other (Please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

5. Where do you currently reside? (Check one)

U.S. Northeast (CT, MA, ME, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VT)

U.S. Midwest (IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI)

U.S. South (AL, AR, DE, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV,

District of Columbia)

U.S. West (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY)

6. What is the highest level of education you have obtained? (Check one)

Less than high school

High school diploma or GED

Some college or 2-year degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate degree

Thank you for your participation!

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