

Depicting the possible self: Work-integrated learning students' narratives on learning to become a professional

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Professionalism is not easily defined for newcomers to the workforce. While much of the work-ready research focuses on desired graduate attributes and skills, the larger issue is the ways in which students conceptualize professionalism from their observations and experiences of others, and how these conceptualizations affect their professional identity construction. Twelve Canadian and six Swedish students enrolled in WIL programs were asked how they think they learn to become a professional. Participants described similar experiences of continually renegotiating their sense of self in an effort to construct a hoped-for-possible professional self. Rich Pictures (RPs) were also used to explore how students visually conceptualized the process of becoming "the professional". Participants from both countries emphasized the importance of self-management and self-censorship in terms of knowing how to look and sound like a professional. Participants used the RPs to visually depict their hoped-for possible self in contrast to the feared for self. (*Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education*, 2016, 17(4), 399-411)

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Research over the past two decades has shown that work-integrated learning (WIL) programs provide opportunities for students to test their knowledge and skills in an industry based setting (Billett, 2009; Bowen, 2011; Kramer & Usher, 2011; Jackson, 2015; Smith & Worsfold, 2015) and help them develop self-confidence regarding their employability after graduation (Qenani, MacDougall, & Sexton, 2014). WIL programs enable students to explore professional identities in preparation for post-graduation work (Trede 2012; Trede, Macklin, & Bridges, 2012) as well as develop self-efficacy. WIL programs help students to become more self-aware in an effort to evaluate their actions and attitudes in relation to what they observe in co-workers and supervisors in the workplace and through parents, professors and others on a daily basis (Dall'Alba, 2009; Johansson, Kopciwicz, & Dahlgren, 2008; Nystrom, 2009). While professions governed by accrediting bodies such as medicine and engineering may have clearly defined professional standards, professionalism as a concept is not easily defined outside regulated bodies, and even those who have worked in their field for many years may find it difficult to delineate the essence of what makes them a professional (Trede, 2012). How then are students who have limited exposure to the workplace, unpacking the concept of professionalism with little experience on which to draw, and how are they attempting to construct their own professional identity? Moreover, what strategies do they develop, what obstacles do they foresee in their quest to becoming the professional they believe will be respected and trusted, and what does this process look like to them?

Trede (2012, p. 163) offers a working definition of professionalism "as a responsibility to make judgments and decisions in the context of practice." Trede's definition is useful as a starting point for exploring WIL students' thinking about their observations and experiences in both academic and workplace contexts. The new networked and social media work worlds however, complicate the expectations and understanding of what is appropriate for which kind of environment. An important component of WIL programs however, is helping students develop the capacity to reflect on their experiences as an integral part of learning (Schoen, 1987; Smith, 2012). Reflecting on their experiences provides students with the

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opportunity to make sense of their interactions, observations and experiences and further opens up the space for them to wrestle with the task of developing a professional identity, by evaluating what they observe in others in different contexts and experimenting with those behaviors on their own terms. Reflection increases students' capacity for self-management and autonomy that facilitates developing professional acumen (Qenani, MacDougall, & Sexton, 2014).

This paper examines the perspectives of 12 Canadian and six Swedish internship students on how they think they learn about becoming a professional and how they develop a professional self. The theory of possible selves and the hoped-for professional self (Marcus & Nurius 1986; Zhou et al., 2008) provides a framework for analyzing the students' narratives about their identity work, and the use of Rich Pictures (RPs), a form of qualitative data collection through participant drawn pictures in response to a problem question, was used to explore affective aspects of negotiating the hoped-for-possible self (Pizzolato, 2007), by asking the participants to conceptualize their understanding of professionalism beyond words. Participants were asked to draw all the interpersonal (people) and the non-interpersonal (texts, guidebooks, YouTube, Popular culture, and personal experimentation) resources they use to learn about professionalism and professional behaviors and the possible connections between resources. The study also aimed to explore how the RPs contributed to participants' self-reporting during qualitative interviews.

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY AND THE CHALLENGES OF CONSTRUCTING A PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Learning to become a professional means identifying and adopting particular gestures, behaviors, values, and attitudes that enable one to be *seen* as part of a particular social group. Social identity theory describes the self as "reflexive" with the capacity to "categorize, classify or name itself in particular ways" in order to identify with and be seen as part of a particular social group (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 224-225). By self-identifying with a particular category, the individual sees how they will fit, or not, with the desired group who hold common views and goals. An individual will belong to a whole cacophony of social groups throughout their life time, continuously negotiating and adjusting their own behaviors, attitudes and perspectives to develop a relationship with the desired groups. Soon-to-be graduates have already been part of many social groups including the university community that has bestowed on them particular values and attitudes about the world. When students begin to categorize themselves as professionals, they engage in new work around identifying group norms and attitudes and then do the arduous work of adopting the required qualifications to be seen as a professional. Through this work they also anticipate high expectations yet grapple with unfamiliar roles as they enter into new communities of practice that they have only experienced through class discussions on industry best practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Another component of social identity theory is "social comparison" (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). Social comparison occurs when the individual compares themselves to other members of the social group in which they belong, or hope to belong, looking for similarities and differences. Self-categorization and self-comparison require the individual to firstly, identify the views and goals commonly held by the social group (i.e., how they define professionalism) and constantly evaluate their relationship to their social groups and to the world as they construct and reconstruct their identity across multiple contexts. Once the

individual identifies their desired social groups through self-categorization, they are inclined to adopt a role (Stets & Burke, 2000). Individuals assume roles through meanings, actions, speech and gesture, and how their interactions with others within the group. The individual uses their understanding of the role to make meaning on their terms and "act to represent and preserve these meanings and expectations" (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 227). Constructing a role identity appropriate for professional contexts can be an arduous task for a young adult, particularly if they are not quite sure what that role entails and the norms and expectations of the workplace group they will soon join.

In a response to increased rhetoric about skills, competencies and graduate attributes (this author assumes that capacity for autonomy and professionalism are graduate attributes). Holmes (2001) suggests a different approach in terms of graduate development and uses the term "graduate identity" as his focus (p. 113). He says that students are not just an accumulation of tools and knowledge, rather, they must know how to negotiate and interpret social relations composed of performances and activities that are given meaning in relation to the context in which they occur and align with the set of dispositions that are deemed appropriate for that activity in that context (Holmes, 2001). Holmes' rationale is that individuals interpret certain activities or behaviour based on the social context in which they occur with the expectation that the activity has a particular meaning specific to that context. Furthermore, behaviors and attributes deemed to be *professional* can only be interpreted as such in relation to the social context in which they are observed. To the inexperienced and somewhat confused new graduate/employee, the act of making sense out of which behaviors are appropriate or not appropriate in unfamiliar contexts can be stressful. The skills agenda and outcomes-based discourse so prominent in higher education today does not necessarily prepare students to face the ambiguity of many work cultures. Graduate identities as proposed by Holmes (2001) are "performances-of-a-kind" based on practices that are socially and contextually situated for the environments new graduates will negotiate (p. 113).

POSSIBLE SELVES AND HOPED-FOR-PROFESSIONAL SELVES

Markus and Nurius (1986) coined the phrase *possible selves* to describe how an individual's representation of self is constructed from past selves with a look toward the development of future selves. Possible selves provide a construct for the ways in which individuals assess their current self in relation to what they could become, and furthermore, identify their "imagined and desired goals" (Cameron, 1991, p. 181). Cameron (1991) proposed that the social identity of a university student or new graduate "facilitates the achievement of hoped-for-selves and the avoidance of "feared selves" - what not to become (p. 181). The possible self is "distinctly social" and represents how individuals hope they might become in the future as the "direct result of previous social comparisons in which the individual's own thoughts, feelings, characteristics, and behaviors have been contrasted to those of salient others" (Markus & Nurius 1986, p. 954). Possible selves represent "the ideal self", one the individual strives to become, such as an admired and respected professional. They also represent the self an individual does not want to become, "the feared self", someone who is seen to be lacking the desired attributes or values of a social group, whether that lack is through their own actions, or, in the case of new graduates entering the work force, the possible misinterpretations (especially of online profiles) of others (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954) or poor choices made through lack of experience (Pizzolato, 2007). Hoped-for-possible selves are constructed from the expectations and demands of varying contexts and situations where the individual performs self in relation to what they predict will help them

fit into those social contexts and situations and be seen as an authentic participant (Zhao et al., 2008). This becomes particularly problematic in an age where student readiness is measured by skills and knowledge outcomes more often than the capacity for adaptability, self-management and empathy. The hoped-for-possible self is a vehicle for new graduates to experiment with positioning themselves in a variety of professional contexts and situations as they develop their own professional identity.

The *hoped-for-possible-professional self* is a specific version of the hoped-for-possible self. Young adults are becoming more conscious of who is reading their online profiles and they are censoring their images and text and what they choose to publish on other sites in order that they are seen as having the moral and ethical attributes appropriate for becoming a professional in the workplace (Bowen, 2010, p. 51). Constructing and performing a *hoped-for-possible-professional self* enables students and new graduates to experiment with what they observe in others, identify boundaries and develop a professional identity that will be trusted by others in the workplace. However, how do students articulate and manage their hoped-for-possible self in terms of experimenting with and exhibiting professional behaviors appropriate to the particular context they find themselves in? What are the obstacles or challenges to this process, how can they overcome these obstacles and how do they see themselves as professionals at this early stage of career development?

METHODOLOGY

Twelve Canadian internship students (3 males, 9 females) from a communications program and five Swedish internship students (2 males, 4 females) from a wellness marketing program and one from engineering (male), were recruited in two stages from two institutions as participants in the study. The two institutions, one Canadian and one Swedish, were chosen for convenience and for their commitment to WIL programs. The findings from the Canadian participants were analyzed first and reported (Bowen, 2016) using a theoretical framework based on Dervin's (1999) theory of sense-making as an information seeking strategy and Trede's (2012) three broad concepts around identity. The research was approved by the University of Toronto Research Ethics committee as protocol 30603.

While the sizes of the two participant groups were too small to do a comparative analysis, they did provide data for exploring students' thinking about the challenges, strategies and attitudes for learning about professionalism across different contexts and how they conceptualized that thinking both verbally and visually. The intent was to see if differences emerged due to context, whether that context was culture, discipline, age (there were 2 mature students, one each Canadian and Swedish) or gender. Participants were involved in a 45-60 minute face-to-face interview which was audio recorded and transcribed. They were also asked to draw a Rich Picture of all the resources they use to learn about professionalism mid-way through the interview. The interviewer left the room for 15-20 minutes to enable the participant to begin the drawing so they could focus without feeling self-conscious. The participants were then told that they could continue drawing as the interview resumed.

The Rich Pictures methodology used most often with groups to work through complex systems and problems (Berg & Pooley, 2013), was intended to help the participants recall and reflect on how they think they learn about becoming a professional, and to provide them with a way to respond to aspects of their story beyond words. While the interviews explored the participants' thinking, reflecting and capacity to develop a narrative based on what they think they do, the RPs offered an opportunity to express pressures, anxieties, and

contradictions in ways that words could not (Bell & Morse, 2010; Berg & Pooley, 2013). The RPs add further description and insight into the social and informational networks an individual confronts and uses when trying to work through a challenge, dilemma or problem; and, as a way of representing relationships, obstacles and pathways through particular situations or problems (Zweifel & Van Wezemaal, 2012). Defining what it means to be a professional is like working through a problem with barriers, obstacles, experimentation and unknowns. The RPs enabled the participants to design and use their own icons and symbols to represent the information sources (interpersonal and non-interpersonal) and visually spatialize their experiences within different contexts.

The interview transcriptions were coded using NVivo in two separate groups; first the Canadian and second the Swedish participants. Grounded theory was used to identify and categorize text segments from the transcripts and develop themes. The themes were continually revised throughout the process in keeping with the grounded theory approach and to eliminate overlap and redundancy (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin 1998). Themes were developed specific to each group independently then compared and examined for similarities and differences, noting the context of the differences. Analysis of the RP iconography was completed independently using the icon coding framework developed by Berg (2014). Icons were grouped thematically and the themes compared to those of the interview transcripts again, for similarities and differences.

While the sample size of both groups is small and limiting, the intention of this exploratory study was to gain insight into the possible cultural or contextual similarities and differences of students who are doing the ideological work of developing a professional self and to test the contributions of the RP methodology for exploring students' thinking about and depicting themselves within a professional context. The findings reported in this paper are meant as a starting point to explore the attitudes and perspectives of WIL students toward becoming professionals in a rapidly changing globalized world with increasing transnational work cultures.

FINDINGS

Both the Canadian (CDN) and Swedish (SWE) study participants were reflective in their approach to answering the questions and constructing a story about how they learn about professionalism. The major themes identified in the first report (Bowen, 2016), did not change when the second group of Swedish participant transcripts were analyzed. For most, defining professionalism was a difficult task that caused them to pause, reflect, and rethink their experiences in light of whom they were and who they hoped to become. The participants described how they learned about becoming a professional through observing and interacting with others, whether in the workplace or at school. However some of the participants (both Swedish and Canadian) expressed their concern that sometimes too many different perspectives is not good since some advice might be outdated, some perspectives might contradict their personal values, and some information gathered from online sources might lack credibility.

Both the Canadian and Swedish participants described their continual renegotiation of self, and adjusting their behaviour to adapt to the workplace using observation and experimentation. Participants from both groups stressed the importance of presenting a professional self through appearance, language and gesture and used their interactions with family members, professors and placement supervisors to develop and practice their

professional behaviors. While all the participants remarked that it was important for them to construct a professional identity through their behaviour, some also acknowledged the dilemma of compromising who they were through a process of self-regulation and self-censorship which they saw as necessary for becoming a professional. The most prominent themes emerging from the data for both the Canadian and Swedish students, focused on the need for self-regulation by adjusting behaviors to fit the work culture, including controlling their emotions, evaluating their views on current events so that they aligned closely with what they perceived as the social norm, and managing how much they exposed of their personal lives, so they could be seen as a professional by others. However, they also expressed their fear of being misinterpreted because of their online profiles thus projecting a negative impression. All of the participants used observation as a primary means to gather information about becoming a professional and experimentation through trial and error for evaluating and testing the professional behaviors they saw as appropriate for constructing a *hoped-for-possible-professional* self that would be acknowledged and respected, and avoid a *feared-for* self that would be seen as less desirable.

Most of the RPs contained connectors in the form of arrows and lines to illustrate the process of seeking out and consulting sources as ongoing and continuous. Most participants drew stick figures representing interpersonal resources such as family and friends as well as social media icons, sometimes with Xs drawn through to denote an obstacle and sometimes as a connection to interpersonal resources.

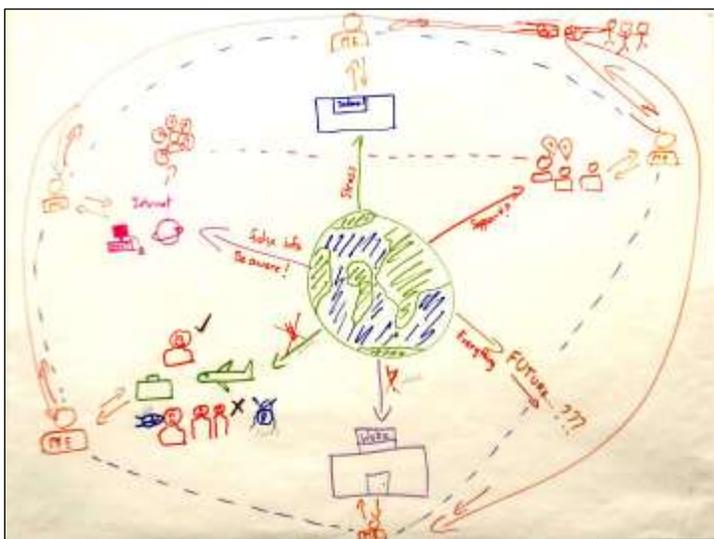


FIGURE 1: The feedback loop

Self-Regulation and Imagining the Hoped-for-Possible Professional Self

All participants stressed the importance of self-regulation when it came to how they interacted with teachers, co-workers and supervisors. They used the words “self-regulate” and “adjust” to describe the work they needed to do to become a professional. One important aspect of self-regulation focused on managing personal information and controlling emotions:

I think professionalism is when you can adjust to the environment [...] you have to be professional so they can take you seriously. If you want to be a professional you don't show your feelings, you have to adjust, and you have to self-regulate your feelings [...] you have to self-regulate your face. (SWE#3).

A Canadian participant also confirmed the difficult work that created internal tension:

trying to accomplish tasks, you don't realize that there's lots of battles within yourself and even outside of the responsibilities that you have to do so it's not that easy. You really have to grow up a lot role [...] I'm constantly struggling between my professional self and my actual self. (CDN#6).

Both of these participants were female. They emphasized the need to self-censor their emotions, also echoed by other females in both groups. While this was a concern expressed through words, the concept of self-regulation was not as clearly depicted. Happy and sad faces, Xs and checkmarks were used to illustrate correct or accepted behavior in terms of dress.

Another aspect of the self-regulation theme was the notion of the divided self with three of the Canadian participants naming the process of having two selves or a split self as in Figure 2a, "representing two different personas that I guess I have to put on" the actual or now self and the other, a hoped-for-professional self who could manage their emotions and their actions to meet the predicted expectations of others. Another participant drew a "raw authentic self" that required transformation through an interactive space in order to perform for others, experimenting with the space in-between as illustrated in Figure 2b.

The Swedish participants did not name this process of dividing, nor did they draw a divided or multiple self, but they did acknowledge the need to set boundaries between their "real" self and what they could expose to coworkers, a hoped-for-possible self. They commented on the need to put forward a different self, one that was focused on work and not on personal matters.

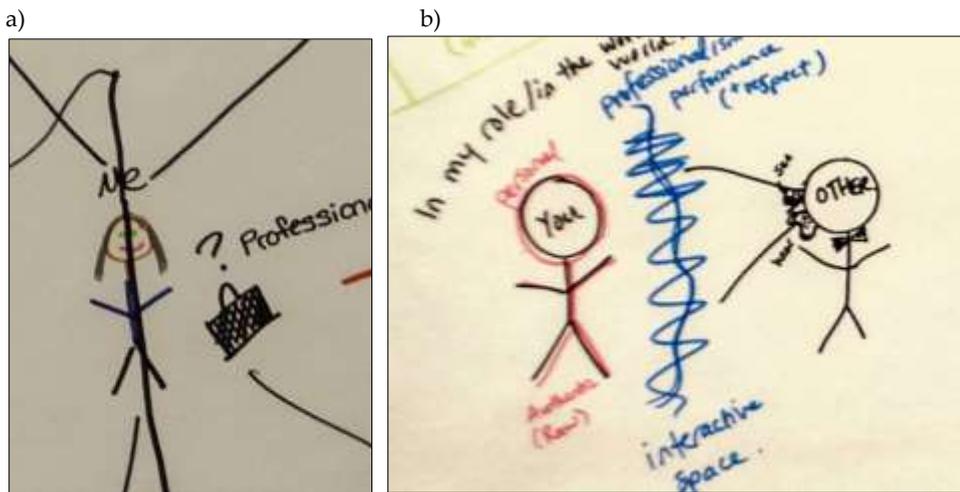


FIGURE 2: a) Self divided, and b) The performative space of professionalism

Self-regulation, an essential component of developing a professional self, was learned through trial and error testing. The participants adjusted themselves, their attitudes, assumptions and skills to fit the demands of the context they worked within, and focused on identifying the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviors manifested through the dress, language and interactions of coworkers. One Canadian participant described his experience of trying to identify the boundary for “keeping it professional”:

we're talking about sports [with a client], things we have in common but still keeping it professional where you're not like crossing the line [...] you have to balance that idea between *bro-ing* it out [a term he used to name the friendly guy talk exchange] and being professional and kind of find that in-between that fits their mindset right? So I think that was kind of a challenge in a sense [...], bro it out and they're going to get along with you or do you also want to show that you can go out to client meetings and be professional [...]they want to see that they're dealing with someone they can trust and rely on. (CDN #3).

The same participant illustrated the challenge of balancing his different selves in Figure 3a, and another participant depicted an independent self without the constraints of parental pressure in Figure 3b.

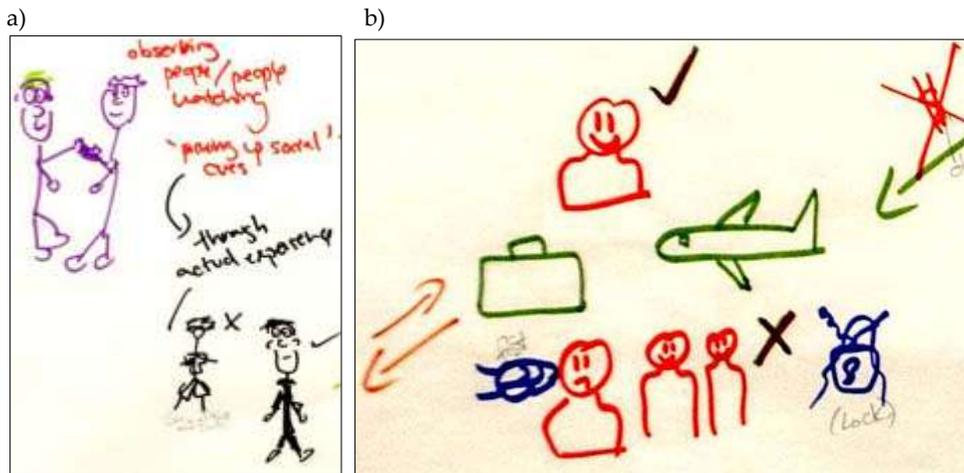


FIGURE 3: a) Balancing the Hoped-for-Possible-Professional with the feared self, and b) A hoped-for-possible self-unconstrained by family

One of the Swedish participants was also faced with the dilemma of how to draw the line when observing the financial officer at a smaller firm he worked for posting on social media in a way the participant questioned. The participant noted that this same coworker dressed in jeans and a t-shirt which gave a less than professional impression and, on reflection, the participant realized that these observations had an impact on his own work with that company. He said that he compromised his values and lost site of the boundary he had set for professional behavior. It was at this point of “muddling through” that he returned to his own family values to restore order and alleviate the tension he felt. The tensions and anxieties around misinformation and too many different perspectives on what a professional is, also created challenges for self-regulation. The participants were left to evaluate what information was appropriate for them, on their terms; what parts of themselves they needed

to obscure, and what characteristics they predicted as being professional as illustrated in Figures 3a and 3b.

Being professional isn't about changing who you are completely: it's about modifying things so that you're more acceptable - I guess. (CDN #2)

Professionalism, it's your – my ability to maintain my values and do a good job and do something that keeps up the standard that I have set for myself and that I want to be able to achieve. (SWE#6)

Finding a balance between different selves was part of the identity work the participants of both groups described in terms of reconciling what they thought others would expect of them and an inward sense of maintaining their own integrity often developed through family values.



FIGURE 3: a) The pressures of learning the language and, b) Finding the “right” direction

Looking the Part and Talking the Talk

Subtle differences between the Canadian and Swedish participants emerged in terms of conceptualizing “the professional” through visual and verbal cues. Terminology and “knowing how to talk” were essential components for constructing a professional identity stressed by all the participants; however the Swedish students emphasized listening as important for knowing what to say and how to talk to others.

now I'm going to learn something different and a different language and a different use of words and a different way of thinking instead of being told what to do I'm maybe going to be the one to tell people what to do. (SWE#2)

They also stated that knowing how to talk about one's field of work was an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and expertise, an important element for being recognized as a professional. All the participants acknowledged that a professional knows what to say and to whom, and what not to say. The Canadian participants however placed more emphasis on visual conceptualizations of the professional through appearance and attire;

I would say that professionalism is kind of like someone's overall aura, so how they physically manifest themselves in terms of their dress, their speech, their actions so certain things that they do that maybe make them appear as a more professional person. (CDN#9).

While half of the Canadian participants specifically described the importance of a professional's visual appearance through their choice of dress and illustrated the decisions

involved (Figures 4a and 4b), only two Swedish participants briefly acknowledged dress as part of professional behavior.

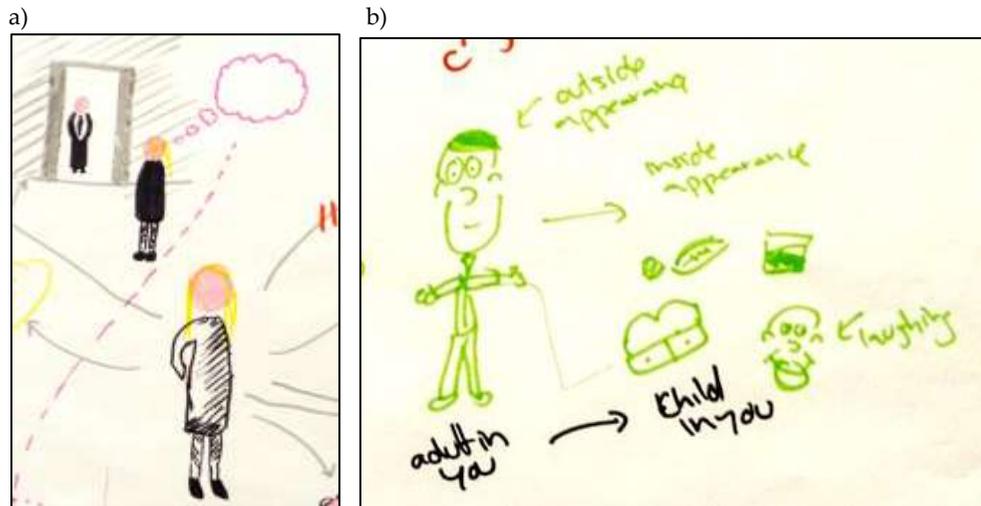


FIGURE 4: a) Hoped-for possible self and, b) Managing the inside/outside self

Self-Management, the Fear of Misrepresentation and the Feared for Self

All the participants expressed their concerns about managing perceptions others have of them on social media. It is this particular aspect of becoming a professional that appeared to offer the most anxiety due to the fear of misinterpretation. As much as all the participants talked about adjusting their behaviors in the physical work context, they described how they had “cleaned up” any online profiles and were very careful in what they posted both in terms of visuals and comments on other sites such as political forums. Some merely refrained from posting on sites altogether.

DISCUSSION: DEPICTING THE POSSIBLE SELF

While the themes that emerged from the transcripts describe the various selves the students were juggling, hoping for, and avoiding, their RP depictions provided further insight into their hoped-for-possible-professional versus the feared for self. Several of the RPs were organized in terms of a continuous circle of connections visualizing the participants’ descriptions of a process that included observation (and listening) interpretation, evaluation, experimentation, adjustment, and then a return to further observation to assess whether they were close in approximating the behaviors they thought they observed emerged as a hybrid form of feedback loop (Figure 1).

Emerging professionals often see the identity that they perform for others as somewhat fragile and “in need of being protected from misrepresentation” (Bowen, 2010, p. 48). Both Canadian and Swedish participants described a process of learning to become a professional that is grounded in social identity theory in which the participants identified the common attributes within the group they classified as “professional” (Stets & Burke, 2000) to inform their own behaviors, and used their observations of others to develop their own concept of

professionalism. They tested their new conceptions of professionalism through their interactions with others and experiences on their work terms. Many times this testing was iterative using trial and error, to test their self-regulation, to adjust their behaviors, their appearance, language and actions; and then taking stock, reflecting, adjusting then trying again – a hybrid feedback loop. However, contradictory and mixed messages made the task of self-management more complicated and heightened the participants' need for sense-making to restore order.

The participants do not explicitly describe a hoped-for-professional self, rather their intentions for the professionals they think they should become emerge more implicitly in their descriptions of professional attributes. The feared-for-possible self (Cameron, 1991) is much more explicit when the participants, both Canadian and Swedish discuss self-representation through social media. The participants did not experiment with their online profiles in the same way they did with their offline persona. They all stressed the need to be careful about their online profiles since they did not have control over how they were viewed by others. This tension however was not restricted to their appearance or posting of "party pictures" but also in how they viewed the world. The participants implied that they did not want their political or social views to be seen as too far from what they had identified as the social norm. Perhaps this is what was being implied by one participant when she described the "battles outside yourself and even outside the [work] responsibilities". Pizzolato (2007) contends that much of the identity work around possible and feared-for selves for individuals developing their career goals is focused on creating a balance between what they would like to become – a desirable self and an undesirable self that compromised the hoped-for-possible self.

A specific example of a slight difference in the struggle to reconcile selves emerged when analyzing the participants' descriptions about how they self-regulated and adjusted their behaviors, attitudes, gestures and language to fit into the workplace. While the ability to regulate and even hide any emotional responses or feelings within the workplace was seen to be an attribute of professional behavior, four Canadian and two Swedish female participants made this point very explicit. As one Swedish participant remarked, "If I don't show my feelings, if I'm not open then who am I?" A word search across all 18 transcripts showed that none of the male participants discussed feelings or emotions during their responses – the words were not part of their narratives about professionalism, self-regulation or work culture. While the sample size, particularly the male to female ratios are very small and limiting in this study, the implications for further research are important in terms of not only the gendering of professional behaviors, particularly cultural expectations of young female professionals, but also in the possibly gendered ways that students conceptualize professionalism in relation to what others think about them. Are their observations and experiments gendered because of assumptions and predicted expectations based on social norms around how women and men should act (differently perhaps) and interact within the workplace? When soon-to-be and new graduates imagine their hoped-for-professional selves, are they constrained by perpetuated notions of gender, emotional stability and success, often reinforced by popular culture or their own observations?

The RP icons emphasized the stress of balancing multiple selves, the stress of ambiguity, and the iterative process of learning to become a professional. The pressures of learning the "right" or avoiding the "wrong" behaviors and protocols were made more explicit by Xs, check marks, and red lines crossing out a connection. All the participants remarked that the

drawing exercise helped them to see what they have learned so far and what they still need to consider.

CONCLUSION

Students are invested in doing a great deal of work around constructing their possible selves and WIL programs provide students with a context to experiment and test who they are at the moment and explore who they want to become as professionals. As previously mentioned, the sample sizes of the two groups are limiting, and the findings can only represent an exploration of students' thinking and attitudes. However, the findings are intended as a starting point for looking at students' professional identity construction from a global perspective, particularly in light of the globalization of business, commerce, and knowledge sharing and piloting the RP methodology and as a complement to interviews. Further research should focus on gender differences in how professionalism is perceived by those already in the workforce who are the role models new graduates are observing, as well as the perceptions of those new graduates in terms of which attributes are accepted and valued. Additionally, further research on cultural nuances and gendered expectations that are impacted by the social values that drive disciplines and work cultures more globally will provide insight for the level of diversity and cultural competency needed to work on distributed teams that are more prevalent throughout the global workforce. Finally, and most importantly, educators must focus on nurturing world-ready graduates who are confident, open, self-assured, and compassionate global citizens who have the confidence to affect change responsibly, ethically and professionally, without the fear of bias toward them.

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The Asia-Pacific Journal of Cooperative Education publishes peer-reviewed original research, topical issues, and best practice articles from throughout the world dealing with Cooperative Education (Co-op) and Work-Integrated Learning/Education (WIL).

In this Journal, Co-op/WIL is defined as an educational approach that uses relevant work-based projects that form an integrated and assessed part of an academic program of study (e.g., work placements, internships, practicum). These programs should have clear linkages with, or add to, the knowledge and skill base of the academic program. These programs can be described by a variety of names, such as cooperative and work-integrated education, work-based learning, workplace learning, professional training, industry-based learning, engaged industry learning, career and technical education, internships, experiential education, experiential learning, vocational education and training, fieldwork education, and service learning.

The Journal's main aim is to allow specialists working in these areas to disseminate their findings and share their knowledge for the benefit of institutions, co-op/WIL practitioners, and researchers. The Journal desires to encourage quality research and explorative critical discussion that will lead to the advancement of effective practices, development of further understanding of co-op/WIL, and promote further research.

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